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THE ASSUMPTIONIST MOVEMENT AS PRECURSOR TO VATICAN II:  
A CASE STUDY ON THE DOGMATIC DEFINITION OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY  
AND THE TEACHINGS OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Eric Lafferty

May 2021

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Eric Lafferty

2021

THE ASSUMPTIONIST MOVEMENT AS PRECURSOR TO VATICAN II:  
A CASE STUDY ON THE DOGMATIC DEFINITION OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY  
AND THE TEACHINGS OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

By

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## ABSTRACT

# THE ASSUMPTIONIST MOVEMENT AS PRECURSOR TO VATICAN II: A CASE STUDY ON THE DOGMATIC DEFINITION OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY AND THE TEACHINGS OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

By

Eric Lafferty

May 2021

Dissertation supervised by Kenneth L. Parker

The Assumptionist movement (1863–1950) was a theological movement within the Roman Catholic Church that worked to obtain a dogmatic definition for the Assumption of Mary. This study employs a form of reception theory to argue for the doctrinal continuity between the Assumptionist movement and Vatican II. The first chapter examines the Assumptionist movement's overlooked history. It uncovers two major characteristics of the movement. First, it was a global movement. Support for the Assumption dogma emerged from every populated continent. Second, it was a movement that involved every rank in the Church. The laity, priests, religious, and bishops worked together towards a common mission. Notably, the laity's activity and vocal support challenge assumptions about the passivity of the laity in the pre-conciliar Church. The second chapter analyzes theological arguments on the definability of the Assumption published at the height of the movement (1946–1950). This reveals the diverse

methodologies Catholic theologians used to explain the phenomenon of doctrinal development. The third chapter analyzes Catholic biblical scholarship on the Assumption at the height of the movement. These scholars interpreted Scripture in light of tradition to discern the Assumption in revelation. The fourth chapter recalls the role of the laity in the Assumptionist movement and examines the limited theological reflection that affirmed the laity's active role in the development of doctrine. The gifts of the Holy Spirit made it possible for all the faithful to deepen their understanding of supernatural truth. This included intuiting details that had remained obscure in official teaching. The fifth chapter examines the teachings of Vatican II on the laity and revelation. It argues that material continuity exists between the Council's formal teachings and the theological principles operative in the Assumptionist movement. Understood as loci of reception, doctrinal continuity between the two theological events suggests continuity in horizons of reception. What the Council solemnly taught was already present in the life and theology of the Assumptionist movement. In this way, the Assumptionist movement was a precursor to Vatican II.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. May contemplation of her Glorious Assumption into Heaven, body and soul, bring all people to an acute awareness of the dignity of the human person at every stage of life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to the many people who assisted in the development and completion of this dissertation. I am particularly thankful to Kenneth Parker for his support and guidance both prior to and throughout the dissertation process. This study's topic and scope largely emerged from our conversations. His advice and careful editing have made me a better scholar and writer. My appreciation also extends to Bill Wright and Bud Marr. They both graciously agreed to assist as committee members and provided helpful feedback and suggestions. In addition to my committee, several others have assisted by providing sources, reading drafts, and conversing about the project. Among these, Shaun Blanchard, Kenny Hoyt, Elizabeth Huddleston, Tony Marco, Erin Meikle, Eileen Newara, and Dan Waldow deserve special mention. This dissertation would not have been possible without the financial support of John and Catharine Ryan. I am thankful to them and admire their generosity. Most of all, I am indebted to my wife Mary, whose love and sacrifice made it possible for me to complete my doctoral studies. The inception, research, and writing of this dissertation largely overlapped with the first year of our son Dominic's life. Throughout this process he has been an immense source of joy and helped keep everything in perspective.



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## INTRODUCTION

The Assumptionist movement (1863 – 1950) was a theological movement within the Roman Catholic Church that worked to obtain a dogmatic definition for the Assumption of Mary. The present study recovers the history and theology of this overlooked pre-conciliar movement. It then applies these new insights to evaluate doctrinal continuity between the Assumptionist movement and Vatican II. It is a work of historical theology and a case study in doctrinal development. As such, its goal is to present original research on the events leading up to the dogmatic definition of the Assumption and the arguments Catholic theologians made prior to the definition. In so doing, this research establishes a vital point of contact with pre-conciliar Catholic theology which can augment the understanding of doctrinal continuity in the Church. The history of the movement reveals significant support and activity from the laity. This discovery challenges assumptions about the passivity of the laity in matters of doctrine prior to Vatican II's more positive teaching on the laity. The movement also had to overcome theological hurdles pertaining to definability and locating the Assumption within the deposit of faith. A surprising amount of intellectual diversity appeared among Catholic theologians on these topics, though dominant trends emerged. Several points of continuity appear when comparing the life and theology of the Assumptionist movement to the teachings of Vatican II on revelation, Scripture, and the laity. This study contends that the Assumptionist movement was a precursor to Vatican II. The Council's teachings solemnly affirmed the authenticity of the activity and theology already operative in the Church during the Assumptionist movement. This new evidence disrupts narratives of discontinuity that interpret the entire council through a lens of theological novelty disconnected from the prior tradition.

The Assumptionist movement lasted for nearly a century and consisted of activity from around the globe, so defining an appropriate scope is essential. The historical narrative presented in this dissertation covers the movement from its origins in 1863 to its successful end in 1950. Narrating every event and contribution that occurred during this time is neither feasible nor desirable. The events, people, and efforts selected for inclusion serve to draw out certain aspects of the movement while maintaining an accurate, succinct, and readable narrative. One of the major aspects this narrative seeks to showcase is that the movement involved the entire Church, not just ecclesiastics and theologians. Numerous lay faithful testified to their belief in the Assumption and requested a dogmatic definition. The laity also helped spread devotion to the Assumption, promoting the goal of the movement through prayer. This activity did not occur in isolation from other ranks within the Church, rather, one finds in the Assumptionist movement an ordered cooperation between the laity and the hierarchy. Another major aspect highlighted is the global nature of the movement. The movement enjoyed more popularity and support in certain countries but expanded beyond the European continent. Support for the Assumptionist movement appeared around the world and the historical narrative draws attention to evidence of its global appeal. Beyond these major aspects, details of the movement that demonstrate its growth, setbacks, and successes receive preferential treatment.

When the focus turns to the theological scholarship surrounding the Assumptionist movement, the scope narrows further. With only one exception, this study limits its analysis to theological scholarship published between 1946 and 1950. These years represented the height of the Assumptionist movement when a flurry of theological activity occurred. The increased activity resulted from Pius XII's 1946 inquiry to the bishops about a possible definition. Naturally, 1950 marked the end of the movement with the achievement of a dogmatic definition.

Thus, theological scholarship on the Assumption after 1950 had a different purpose than what the Assumptionist movement worked towards. Furthermore, during these final five years of the movement a definition appeared as a real possibility and Assumption scholarship had matured.

Within this timeframe, this dissertation further limits its analysis of published scholarship to three theological topics: revelation, Scripture, and the laity. In part, this is because any hope of contributing to discussions of doctrinal continuity at Vatican II necessitates focusing on theological issues related to topics the Council taught on. Vatican II promulgated teachings on all three of these topics and therefore they constitute suitable points for detailed investigation. Justification for focusing on these topics extends beyond an apparent connection to Vatican II. They are also the three most critical theological topics pertaining to the movement itself. Revelation and Scripture both received significant consideration in the theological scholarship. The most frequent topic treated regarded the Assumption's definability as a dogma. Fundamentally, this was a question about the nature of revelation. Theologians tried to explain how a new dogma could appear if revelation never changes. Closely related to this topic were theological arguments about the place of Scripture in a possible definition. The Assumption biblical scholarship examined the relevance of different passages for the Assumption. Analysis reveals insights into how these scholars interpreted Scripture and appealed to tradition. Finally, during the years of the movement, the laity received little theological attention. Yet they made contributions towards achieving a dogmatic definition and demand further consideration.

### *Literature Review*

The present study uniquely examines the Assumptionist movement as a locus of inquiry into pre-conciliar Catholic theology. The lack of sustained scholarly interest in the Assumptionist

movement has left a lacuna in nineteenth and twentieth century Catholic scholarship. This is an indefensible omission given the movement led to a dogmatic definition outside of an ecumenical council. Recent publications on the Assumptionist movement are almost non-existent.<sup>1</sup> This study relies heavily on the primary sources of the Assumptionist movement to recover its historical and theological significance. The essential text for any study of the Assumptionist movement is the massive two volume collection of petitions and documents published in 1942 and compiled by Guilhelmo Hentrich and Rudolfo Gualtero de Moos, *Petitiones de Assumptione corporea B.V. Mariae in caelum definienda ad Sanctam Sedem delatae propositae secundum ordinem hierarchicum, dogmaticum, geographicum, chronologicum ad consensum Ecclesiae manifestandum*.<sup>2</sup> Scholarship published during the final years of the Assumptionist movement made frequent reference to these documents. Over seventy years later they remain the premier source of information on the Assumptionist movement prior to 1942. This dissertation makes some of the information in these dense Latin volumes accessible in English for the first time.

Theological publications regarding the Assumption appeared in numerous Catholic journals during the movement's final years.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the published proceedings of the Franciscan Assumptionist Congresses included a wealth of historical and theological research.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The exception is Stefano Cecchin's treatment of the movement in his work on the Franciscan Mariological School. Stefano Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria nella Scuola mariologica francescana," in *L'Assunzione di Maria Madre di Dio Significato storico-salvifico a 50 anni dalla definizione dogmatica: Atti del 1° Forum Internazionale di Mariologia, Roma, 30-31 ottobre 2000*, ed. Gaspar Calvo Moralejo and Stefano Cecchin (Città del Vaticano: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 2001), 585-646.

<sup>2</sup> Guilhelmo Hentrich and Rudolfo Gualtero de Moos, *Petitiones de Assumptione corporea B.V. Mariae in caelum definienda ad Sanctam Sedem delatae propositae secundum ordinem hierarchicum, dogmaticum, geographicum, chronologicum ad consensum Ecclesiae manifestandum*, 2 vols. (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1942) (hereafter cited as *Petitiones*).

<sup>3</sup> Pertinent to this study are articles published in *American Ecclesiastical Review*, *Angelicum*, *Divus Thomas*, *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, and *Revista Española de Teología*.

<sup>4</sup> The theological papers presented at these congresses were published as the first seven volumes in the *Studia Mariana* series. Chronologically they appeared as *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d'Italia: Roma, 29 aprile-3 maggio 1947*, *Studia Mariana I* (Roma, 1948); *Actas do Congresso Mariano dos Franciscanos de Portugal, Lisboa-Fátima, 9 e 13 outubro de 1947*, *Studia Mariana II* (Lisboa, 1948); *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español celebrado en Madrid, 21-26 de octubre, 1947*, *Studia Mariana III* (Madrid, 1948); *Vers le*

The seven congresses were held in Italy, Portugal, Spain, Canada, Argentina, France, and the United States. These congresses represented the most focused theological efforts to overcome any perceived hurdles to a dogmatic definition. Any study of Assumption theology during the Assumptionist movement must have recourse to this scholarship.

Regarding the limited secondary scholarship, Stefano Cecchin contributed a lengthy chapter on the Assumption of Mary in the Franciscan Mariological School as part of an Italian volume celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Assumption's dogmatic definition.<sup>5</sup> While Cecchin provides a helpful roadmap, the nature of his contribution did not permit a more detailed examination of other elements of the Assumptionist movement. He only provides a cursory overview of the movement's history and did not detail the scope of the petitions sent to the Holy See. This dissertation provides greater detail on the petitionary movement and places them in the larger context of Assumptionist activity including the rise of international Marian congresses. Cecchin also did not analyze the theological scholarship at the height of the movement. That scholarship receives substantial attention here with three chapters dedicated to theological publications of definability, Scripture, and the laity. The theological difficulties and solutions were a vital component of the Assumptionist movement, and a complete picture of the movement can only emerge when they receive due consideration.

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*dogme de l'Assomption: journées d'études mariales, Montréal, 12-15 août 1948*, Studia Mariana IV (Montreal, 1948). *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina: Buenos Aires 28 septiembre – 4 octubre 1948*, Studia Mariana V (Buenos Aires, 1949); *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge: Congrès marial du Puy-en-Velay, 11-15 août 1949*, Studia Mariana VI (Paris: Vrin, 1950); *First Franciscan National Marian Congress in Acclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption, October 8-11, 1950*, Studia Mariana VII (Burlington, WI: George Banta, 1952).

<sup>5</sup> Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 585-646. Cecchin frames the long history of belief in the Assumption leading up to its dogmatic definition as a developmental process of the Spirit leading the Church into the whole truth. The primary focus is on contributions from his fellow Franciscans and includes a survey of the teachings on the Assumption from a host of medieval Franciscan masters. His treatment of the Assumptionist movement only highlights its major moments: its origins in the mid-nineteenth century, the push for a definition at Vatican I, several key publications, and the Franciscan Assumptionist Congresses in the late 1940s.

More recently, Matthew Levering published *Mary's Bodily Assumption*.<sup>6</sup> This monograph investigates theological issues related to the Assumption but is not a historical project. He touches on a few theological sources from before the definition to contrast pre-conciliar and post-conciliar approaches to the Assumption.<sup>7</sup> The historical focus of this dissertation offers essential context to Assumption scholarship prior to the definition. Furthermore, the wider scope of theological publications considered here demonstrates the theological diversity that existed in the Assumption scholarship prior to the definition. An accurate portrayal of pre-conciliar Catholic theology necessitates uncovering and presenting these fundamental disagreements in past Assumption scholarship.

Aidan Nichols' recent monograph, *There is No Rose: The Mariology of the Catholic Church*, includes a chapter on the Assumption that points toward the need for this present project.<sup>8</sup> Nichols investigates on what grounds the dogmatic definition occurred. Exploring the different methods theologians historically used, he notes the neo-scholastic tendency to downplay the value of history and to rely solely on arguments demonstrating the Assumption as implicitly revealed.<sup>9</sup> Nichols based his analysis of the topic on Kilian Healey's essay on the Assumption in connection to other Marian privileges. Healey published his essay, however, after the dogmatic definition.<sup>10</sup> Nichols' and Levering's recent publications have a different focus

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew Levering, *Mary's Bodily Assumption* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015). Levering's work is more systematic than historical and pursues an apologetic goal. He is not concerned with the Assumptionist movement as such.

<sup>7</sup> Three key sources he considers first published before the definition include, Joseph Duhr, *The Glorious Assumption of the Mother of God* (London: Burns & Oates, 1950); Aloïs Janssens, *The Assumption of Mary* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954); Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour and our Interior Life*, trans. Bernard J. Kelly (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1954). Levering claims that pre-conciliar theological and magisterial teaching mostly stressed the Church's authority in interpreting revelation and the fittingness of the Assumption. Post-conciliar theology, on the other hand, tended to stress biblical typology. Levering argues that all three elements are critical in presenting the Assumption as a reasonable belief for contemporary Christians who might struggle to accept the Marian dogma.

<sup>8</sup> Aidan Nichols, *There Is No Rose: The Mariology of the Catholic Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>10</sup> Kilian Healey, "The Assumption among Mary's Privileges," *The Thomist* 14 (1951): 72-92.

than the present project but are rare contributions in this neglected field of Catholic theological scholarship.

The most substantial Assumption scholarship has focused on the early history of the belief. Simon Claude Mimouni's *Dormition et assomption de Marie: histoire des traditions anciennes* examines the ancient literature and argues that a discernable shift occurred in the traditions about the end of Mary's life from only speaking about the Dormition, to eventually only speaking about the Assumption.<sup>11</sup> Exploring a similar topic and critical of Mimouni's work is Stephen J. Shoemaker's *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*.<sup>12</sup> This text also details the various early narrative traditions that emerged about the end of Mary's earthly life. Additionally, the author provides English translations of several ancient narratives.<sup>13</sup> Shoemaker followed up his study on the narrative traditions with a later work, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion*.<sup>14</sup> This text does address the Assumption, but again only in the context of the early Church. Also falling within this set of historical scholarship on the Assumption (and Dormition) in the early Church is Brian E. Daley's *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies*.<sup>15</sup> This text makes several homilies available in English that provide evidence for the belief in the early Church about the end of Mary's life. These historical studies are valuable contributions to Assumption scholarship, but they are only marginally relevant to the present study since they focus on the earliest evidence of belief and not the Assumptionist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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<sup>11</sup> Simon Claude Mimouni, *Dormition et assomption de Marie: histoire des traditions anciennes* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 290-414.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Brian E. Daley, trans., *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998).



While there is no shortage of scholarship on Vatican II, none make use of the Assumptionist movement to analyze the continuity of the Council's teachings with pre-conciliar Catholic theology. Instead, scholars have typically traced the influence of singular theologians, considered the Council as a completion of Vatican I, or framed the Council as the triumph of *nouvelle théologie*.<sup>16</sup> More historically focused scholarship has highlighted the shift between the original schema of Vatican II and the final documents.<sup>17</sup> This is a meaningful contribution for the work of this present study. However, such research can give the impression that Vatican II represented a rupture with the *longue durée* of the Catholic tradition. The original schema become implicitly associated with a monolithic pre-conciliar Catholicism at odds with the final documents. Nevertheless, these studies contribute to better understanding the development of doctrine in the history of the Church.

### *Methodology*

As explained above, this is primarily a work of historical theology. It aims to recover awareness of a neglected theological movement in Catholic history and apply that newly uncovered knowledge in such a way as to contribute to current debates regarding doctrinal continuity in the Church. This project employs a methodology based on Hans Robert Jauss's

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<sup>16</sup> For example, one recent publication traces the influence of John Courtney Murray on the Council's teaching on religious liberty. See, Barry Hudock, *Struggle, Condemnation, Vindication: John Courtney Murray's Journey Toward Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015). For a recent publication that interprets and evaluates the two councils in light of each other, see Kristin M. Colberg, *Vatican I and Vatican II: Councils in the Living Tradition* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016). Though not about the Council itself, Jürgen Mettepenningen's work on *nouvelle théologie* examines the movement and its major figures from the perspective that they were forerunners of the Council's eventual teachings. See, Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie - New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: T & T Clark, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Two sources this project employs include, Aurelie A. Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars, 1994); Jared Wicks, *Investigating Vatican II: Its Theologians, Ecumenical Turn, and Biblical Commitment* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2018).

reception theory to assist in this process.<sup>18</sup> Jauss's theory sought to highlight the active role of the audience in the process of determining the meaning and value of a text.<sup>19</sup> According to his theory, the audience exists within a triad alongside the author and the text itself.<sup>20</sup> Though the author invested the text with meaning, the meaning the audience derived from the text was not necessarily the same. Rather, the audience experiences the text within a horizon of expectation which affected its reception.<sup>21</sup> Jauss's theory was meant for literary works and requires some modification when applied to a theological context. Here, the 'text' under consideration is revelation itself. From a Catholic perspective, this includes more than the text of Scripture and extends to the entire deposit of faith. If revelation is the text, then God is the author. In Catholic teaching, the revelation God gave is complete and pertains to realities of eternal significance and truth.<sup>22</sup> Humanly speaking, reception of revelation occurs in and through the Church, the audience in this modified triad. Yet the Church, as the People of God scattered through the world, individually and collectively experience revelation in a variety of ways. The Church, in its human dimension, perceives meaning on ever-developing horizons of expectation and, at times, is met with a horizon of change. If judged compatible, the Church embraces the horizon of change into its larger horizon of expectation. Mapping revelation, God, and the Church to Jauss's triad in this way suggests, in doctrinal terms, horizons of reception that correspond to the

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<sup>18</sup> For the fundamental features of Jauss's reception theory, see Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," trans. Elizabeth Benzinger, *New Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1970): 7-37. For a more comprehensive treatment, see Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

<sup>19</sup> Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, November 18, 1965, Vatican website, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html), sec. 4 (hereafter cited as *DV*).

phenomenon of an eternally complete revelation alongside an ever-increasing body of teaching in the Church.

This adaptation of Jauss's reception theory helps frame the results of this project's historical inquiry into the Assumptionist movement and the teachings of Vatican II. An application of the method occurs on two levels. First, the Church's ability to perceive the revealed nature of the Assumption was the result of an emerging horizon of expectation. Revelation had not changed, but the horizon of expectation had developed through a complex series of insights that emerged over the course of hundreds of years. The second application of this method occurs in the consideration of Vatican II. The teachings of the Council represented an updated reception or 'reading' of revelation within the Church's horizon of expectation. If those teachings are consistent with the activities and theology of the Assumptionist movement, it suggests continuity between the horizon of expectation operative in the Assumptionist movement and the horizon of expectation operative at the Council. Likewise, radical opposition would suggest a break in the continuity of the Church's horizon of expectation. Such a rupture could lead to novel teachings incompatible with the larger body of Catholic doctrine.

### *Chapter Synopses*

Chapter one of this dissertation traces the largely uncharted history of the Assumptionist movement from the mid-nineteenth century to the dogmatic definition in 1950. This historical endeavor uncovers some of the catalysts of this movement, including the major moments, advocates, methods, and hurdles. Though a few requests for a dogmatic definition appeared in prior years, the movement largely began in 1863.<sup>23</sup> In this year, Isabel II of Spain submitted a

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<sup>23</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1056.

petition to the Holy See and Remigio Buselli published his study on the Assumption's definability as a dogma.<sup>24</sup> Soon after, the first major attempt to obtain a dogmatic definition occurred at the Vatican Council.<sup>25</sup> The Council opened on December 8, 1869 but was suspended less than a year later, on October 20, 1870.<sup>26</sup> Despite the hope of many that the council would address the Assumption, the Council never formally discussed the topic or placed the Assumption on its agenda.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, those advocating for the definition garnered nearly two hundred signatures from council fathers in support of a dogmatic definition across several different petitions.<sup>28</sup> After the suspension of the Council, the Assumptionist movement continued to grow throughout the world. Luigi Vaccari, who promoted a definition at the Vatican Council, initially continued his efforts to promote the movement but by 1880 the Holy Office ordered him to stop working towards obtaining a definition.<sup>29</sup> After a brief lull in activity, the movement saw a resurgence attributed to a prayer crusade.<sup>30</sup> Bartolo Longo, the lay Marian advocate, assisted in spreading a prayer seeking a dogmatic definition and successfully petitioned bishops to attach indulgences to the prayer.<sup>31</sup> During the twentieth century, Marian congresses and largescale petitions from around the world arose in support of a definition.<sup>32</sup> After decades of various congresses and petitions, Pius XII issued *Deiparae Virginis Mariae* in 1946 asking the bishops

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<sup>24</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:576; Remigio Buselli, *La Vergine Maria vivente in corpo ed anima in cielo, ossia apparecchio teologico-storico-critico per la futura definizione dogmatica della corporea assunzione della Madre di Dio secondo il beneplacito della cattolica Chiesa* (Firenze: Cesare Bettazzi, 1863).

<sup>25</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:903.

<sup>26</sup> Colberg, *Vatican I and Vatican II*, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Ralph Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement and the Franciscan Marian Congresses," in *First Franciscan National Marian Congress in Acclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption, October 8-11, 1950*, Studia Mariana VII (Burlington, WI: George Banta, 1952), 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:903.

<sup>29</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:926.

<sup>30</sup> Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 21.

<sup>31</sup> "Chronique du Congrès," in *L'assomption de la très sainte Vierge*, 14; *Petitiones*, 2:625-626.

<sup>32</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1048-1050.

about a possible definition.<sup>33</sup> Soon after, the Orders of Friars Minor established the Central Franciscan Marian Commission and with Carlo Balić as president, organized a series of Assumptionist Congresses throughout the world that promoted historical and theological study of the Assumption.<sup>34</sup> The scholarship presented at these congresses helped solidify the foundation for a dogmatic definition. On November 1, 1950, the Assumptionist movement achieved its goal when Pius XII promulgated the Assumption of Mary as a dogma of the Catholic Church.<sup>35</sup> In the Apostolic Constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus*, the pope succinctly explained the definability, fittingness, and opportuneness of the new Marian dogma and made special mention of the Marian congresses for helping to show that the deposit of faith contained the Assumption.<sup>36</sup>

Chapter two addresses the fundamental theological difficulty of determining the dogmatic definability of the Assumption. Catholic theologians all affirmed the truth of the Assumption but debated if, and in what way, God had revealed it. The Assumption lacked explicit testimony in Scripture and in the writings of the early Church Fathers, making it difficult to demonstrate its inclusion in the deposit of faith. The majority opinion among Catholic theologians at the time affirmed that God had revealed the Assumption and that a dogmatic definition was possible. Nevertheless, not all Catholic theologians agreed and many who held the majority opinion disagreed on the proper theological method to demonstrate the Assumption's inclusion in revelation. After some initial comments on the difficulties of a dogmatic definition, this chapter presents Joseph Coppens's negative assessment.<sup>37</sup> The Catholic biblical scholar advised against

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<sup>33</sup> Pius XII, *Deiparae Virginis Mariae*, encyclical letter, May 1, 1946, Vatican website, [http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_01051946\\_deiparae-virginis-mariae.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_01051946_deiparae-virginis-mariae.html).

<sup>34</sup> Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 24-25.

<sup>35</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, apostolic constitution, November 1, 1950, Vatican website, [http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_apc\\_19501101\\_munificentissimus-deus.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-xii_apc_19501101_munificentissimus-deus.html), sec. 44.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Coppens, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 23 (1947): 5-35.

proceeding with a definition, a conclusion that arose from his commitment to historical method.<sup>38</sup> This chapter then proceeds to a series of positive assessments. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange and Juniper Carol argued in favor of definability, claiming the doctrine was formally-implicitly revealed.<sup>39</sup> Both theologians believed that the doctrine necessarily followed from two revealed premises. Carlo Balić, while agreeing with the definability of the Assumption, considered it unnecessary to contend that the doctrine was formally-implicitly revealed.<sup>40</sup> Instead, he argued the Church could proceed with the dogmatic definition based on virtual revelation.<sup>41</sup> Demonstration of a virtually revealed truth required only a single revealed premise in conjunction with a non-revealed, but certain truth. Balić appealed to the work of Egidio Magrini to support this claim.<sup>42</sup> Unlike the previous scholars, Gérard Philips did not employ scholastic method to argue in favor of definability. Instead, Philips appealed to an epistemology reminiscent of John Henry Newman, pointing to the convergence of probabilities in the development of doctrine as a suitable foundation for the Church to proceed with a definition.<sup>43</sup> This chapter, in addition to recovering underappreciated theological arguments, reveals the diversity of thought among pre-conciliar Catholic theologians; even on a matter as fundamental as determining the contents of revelation. This diversity of thought indicates the difficulty inherent in demonstrating how a new dogma can emerge from the Church's understanding of an unchanging revelation. The very existence of the debate discloses an underlying acceptance of doctrinal development, even if some disputed the concept itself.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>39</sup> Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," *Divus Thomas* 50 (1947): 81-86; Juniper B. Carol, "The Definability of Mary's Assumption," *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 118 (1948): 161-177.

<sup>40</sup> Carlo Balić, "Sulla definibilità dell'Assunzione della Beata Vergine," in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d'Italia*, 688-697.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 694.

<sup>42</sup> Egidio Magrini, "La morte e L'Assunzione della B. V. Maria nella luce del virtuale rivelato," in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d'Italia*, 647-682.

<sup>43</sup> Gérard Philips, "Autour de la définibilité d'un dogme," *Marianum* 10 (1948): 81-111.

Chapter three turns to the specific difficulty of locating the Assumption in Scripture. It begins with a brief historical survey of the developments in modern Catholic biblical studies up to Pius XII's 1943 encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*.<sup>44</sup> The Catholic biblical scholars working on the Assumption published in the context of this pivotal magisterial teaching, but also at a time when the *ressourcement* school was advocating for a return to spiritual exegesis. Locating the scholarship in this historical context, it is possible to determine in what ways Assumption biblical scholarship conformed to or deviated from magisterial teaching and other theological trends. Much like the previous chapter, the goal is to describe the variety of arguments from the era and not to pass judgment on the critical value of these approaches. This chapter primarily details the work of four theologians. José María Bover argued that the Assumption was formally-implicitly revealed in Scripture, though his interpretations often made unacknowledged use of tradition.<sup>45</sup> He primarily employed Genesis 3:15, arguing that Mary shared in Christ's victory over death and necessarily received an anticipated resurrection.<sup>46</sup> He also presented arguments based on the writings of Paul. Bover claimed Mary belonged to the resurrected 'first fruits' of 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 and made a more speculative argument for the Assumption rooted in Romans 5:12-21.<sup>47</sup> Luigi Gonzaga da Fonseca published a survey that divided commonly appealed to biblical texts into categories according to their potential for revealing the Assumption.<sup>48</sup> He deemed texts from the Psalms and Song of Songs as the least viable and Revelation 12 as slightly more promising.<sup>49</sup> The most viable texts for revealing the Assumption

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<sup>44</sup> Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, encyclical letter, September 30, 1943, Vatican website, [http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_30091943\\_divino-afflante-spiritu.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_30091943_divino-afflante-spiritu.html).

<sup>45</sup> José M. Bover, "La Asunción corporal de la Virgen María a los cielos en la Sagrada Escritura," *Revista Española de Teología* 6 (1946): 163-183.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 173, 177-181.

<sup>48</sup> Luigi Gonzaga da Fonseca, "L'Assunzione di Maria nella Sacra Scrittura," *Biblica* 28 (1947): 321-364.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 330-331, 337-338.

were Genesis 3:15 and Luke 1:28, 41-42. Regarding the latter, he thought the Assumption was discernable through a deeper understanding of Mary's fullness of grace.<sup>50</sup> Adrien Malo claimed that Scripture, isolated from tradition, did not teach the Assumption.<sup>51</sup> After carefully distinguishing between different senses of Scripture, Malo concluded that arguments for the Assumption based on Scripture required reading and interpreting Scripture in light of tradition and the teachings of the magisterium.<sup>52</sup> He largely agreed with da Fonseca's classification of the biblical texts and similarly judged Genesis 3:15 and Luke 1:28, 42-43 as the most viable texts for demonstrating the Assumption, even if he thought the text alone was insufficient.<sup>53</sup> Unlike the other scholars, Fulbert Cayré appealed to an organic theory of the development of doctrine to explain how Scripture implicitly contained the Assumption.<sup>54</sup> Scripture contained the Assumption in the same way a seed contained a mature plant.<sup>55</sup> Collectively, these theologians avoided using spiritual exegesis to locate the Assumption in Scripture. Instead, they gravitated toward reading prominent Marian passages in light of tradition to affirm a biblical foundation for the Assumption.

Chapter four focuses on the role of the laity in the Assumptionist movement and the laity's place in theological reflection at the end of the movement. This chapter first identifies two competing trends in Catholic theology on the role of the laity. Writing prior to the Modernist Crisis, John Henry Newman heralded the laity as an invaluable source for determining the faith of the Church.<sup>56</sup> The laity's testimony compensated for when a doctrine lacked explicit

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 355-358.

<sup>51</sup> Adrien-Marie Malo, "La Bible et l'Assomption," in *Vers le dogme de l'Assomption*, 103-122.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>54</sup> Fulbert Cayré, "L'Assomption aux quatre premiers siècles. État embryonnaire de la doctrine," in *Vers le dogme de l'Assomption*, 123-149.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>56</sup> John Henry Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," *The Rambler* (July 1859): 198-230.



articulation in Scripture and the sources of tradition.<sup>57</sup> Newman's positive treatment of the laity differed from the dominant trend in Catholic theology in the aftermath of the Modernist Crisis. In responding to the modernists, Catholic leaders asserted an ecclesiological model that stressed the teaching authority of the hierarchy.<sup>58</sup> This model emphasized the distinction between the teaching Church and the learning Church. The laity's restriction to the latter led some to infer the laity's role in the doctrinal life of the Church was exclusively passive.<sup>59</sup> Next, this chapter reviews the role of the laity during the Assumptionist movement and identifies three main attributes of their activity. The laity gave testimony to their belief through petitions, prayed and spread devotion, and collaborated with the members of the hierarchy to achieve a common goal. Turning to the place of the laity in theological reflection, only a small portion of Assumption scholarship considered the laity and presented their role in a positive light. Emanuele Chietini employed the teaching and learning Church distinction but affirmed the value of the latter's testimony.<sup>60</sup> Émile Neubert articulated the activity of the laity regarding Marian doctrine in terms of connaturality.<sup>61</sup> The laity had an advantage over scholastic theologians in their ability to grasp the whole of a divine reality.<sup>62</sup> He also believed the consensus of the faithful was a guarantee of infallibility.<sup>63</sup> Carlo Balić reflected on the laity's role in the doctrinal life of the Church shortly after the dogmatic definition.<sup>64</sup> He too recognized that the laity had the ability to

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>58</sup> In December 1900, The English bishops issued a pastoral letter that stressed the division between the teaching and learning Church. See, The Cardinal Archbishop and the Bishops of the Province of Westminster, "The Church and Liberal Catholicism: Joint Pastoral Letter," appx. B in *Letters from a "Modernist": The Letters of George Tyrrell to Wilfrid Ward 1893-1908*, ed. Mary Jo Weaver (London: Sheed and Ward, 1981).

<sup>59</sup> In the context of Assumption scholarship, Juniper Carol expressed this view. See Carol, "The Definability of Mary's Assumption," 166.

<sup>60</sup> Emanuele Chietini, "L'Assunzione di Maria SS. nella fede della Chiesa," in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d'Italia*, 561-580.

<sup>61</sup> Émile Neubert, *De la découverte progressive des Grandeurs de Marie: Application au Dogme de l'Assomption* (Paris: Éditions Spes, 1951), 33-37.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 39-42.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 63-65.

<sup>64</sup> Carlo Balić, "Il Senso Cristiano e il progresso del dogma," *Gregorianum* 33 (1952): 105-134.

make contributions and appealed to what he termed the Christian sense to explain this phenomenon. Through the Christian sense, the laity could help to discover, sustain, and develop doctrines that lacked clarity in official teaching.<sup>65</sup> Chiettoni, Neubert, and Balić all understood the laity as possessing an active role in the Church's doctrinal life, a position more consistent with the actions of the laity during the Assumptionist movement and Newman's view than the more dominant, passive understanding of the laity. The theology of the laity they articulated presaged future conciliar teaching.

Chapter five shifts the focus to the teachings of Vatican II to determine the relationship between the Council's teachings and the Assumptionist movement. It draws out key points of continuity between Vatican II and the Assumptionist movement's activities and theology. The scope of teachings examined corresponds to the topics of the previous three chapters: revelation, scripture, and the laity. *Lumen Gentium* encompassed the Council's teaching on the laity, contextualized in a larger ecclesiological teaching.<sup>66</sup> *Dei Verbum* contained the Council's teaching on revelation and Scripture. Several teachings in these dogmatic constitutions related to the activity and theology of the Assumptionist movement. *Lumen Gentium* eschewed the language of a teaching Church and a learning Church, and instead gave primacy to the oneness of the People of God.<sup>67</sup> Out of this oneness, the laity emerge as essential and active members of the Church. Though not possessing the ministerial priesthood, they still participate in the prophetic office of Christ by virtue of their baptism.<sup>68</sup> *Dei Verbum* affirmed the completion of public revelation and simultaneously taught that uncovering the full meaning of this revelation

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>66</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, November 21, 1964, Vatican website, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) (hereafter cited as *LG*).

<sup>67</sup> *LG*, sec. 9.

<sup>68</sup> *LG*, sec. 31.

was an ongoing process.<sup>69</sup> From the perspective of human understanding a development of doctrine occurs. *Dei Verbum* also included teachings on biblical interpretation. Catholic biblical interpretation must have recourse to tradition in seeking the authentic meaning of Scripture.<sup>70</sup> Exegetical efforts provide a great service to the Church, but their interpretations ultimately remain subject to the magisterium's judgment.<sup>71</sup> This chapter contends that the Assumptionist movement was a precursor to the teachings of Vatican II on revelation, Scripture, and, most notably, the laity. The Council's teachings articulated theological principles already active in the Church and visible in the Assumptionist movement. These teachings represented an updated reception of revelation within the Church's horizon of expectation at the time of the Council. The similarity and compatibility of these teachings with the activity and theology of the Assumptionist movement suggests continuity between the horizon of expectation of both theological events. This strengthens the position that Vatican II taught in continuity with the broader Catholic tradition and forces narratives that indiscriminately reject the Council to likewise reject the Assumptionist movement.

The neglect of the Assumptionist movement in contemporary Catholic scholarship is unacceptable. Failure to elucidate this movement's history and significance permits the proliferation of ahistorical narratives surrounding pre-conciliar Catholicism, particularly in its relationship to Vatican II. This dissertation rectifies this lacuna and recovers the Assumptionist movement as a meaningful locus of inquiry for the life and theology of pre-conciliar Catholicism. Knowledge of the movement's history and the theological debates surrounding the definition contributes to a fuller understanding of the human elements in the development of

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<sup>69</sup> *DV*, sec. 4, 8.

<sup>70</sup> *DV*, sec. 12.

<sup>71</sup> *DV*, sec. 23, 12.

doctrine. The 1950 dogmatic definition did not occur in isolation from the Church, rather it was the culmination of the efforts from every rank in the Church for nearly a century. The laity petitioned the pope, prayed, and spread devotion to the Assumption. In quantity, the testimony and requests of the laity were the largest. However, the testimony and requests of priests, religious, and bishops joined to create a harmonious call. This call came from every populated continent. It was not solely a European effort, or the work of a single religious order. The triumph of the new Marian dogma was likewise a triumph of the Church; not as a mere human institution, but as the People of God who, in diverse ways, collectively strived towards a deeper understanding of Mary's Assumption and its place in revelation. Catholic theologians debated the requirements for a definition and how best to demonstrate the Assumption's inclusion in revelation. They did not always agree. Even if a neo-scholastic approach was common, others recognized the value of history and life in theological reasoning. Catholic biblical scholars at the time recognized the Assumption did not simply follow from scientific exegesis. Rather, the Assumption was discernable when interpreting Scripture in light of tradition. This brought life to the words of Scripture and confirmed what the faithful seemed to know instinctively. Ultimately, the great consensus of the faithful brought certainty to the doctrine's inclusion in revelation. Pius XII acted as judge, but he did not act alone.

The recovery of the Assumptionist movement served as the foundation for this dissertation to contribute to ongoing discussions of doctrinal continuity. The Assumptionist movement was a precursor to Vatican II. The life of the movement presaged the Council's teachings on the oneness of the Church and the laity's ability to contribute to doctrinal development. It did this at a time when the mainstream ecclesiology stressed the division between the laity and those who held the teaching office. Likewise, the theological debates

during the Assumptionist movement revealed the acceptance of doctrinal development even if not all agreed on the nature of those developments. Catholic biblical scholars working on the Assumption recognized the need for something outside Scripture to locate the Assumption in revelation. But the Assumption was not simply contained within some nebulous repository of tradition. Rather, interpreting Scripture in light of tradition and magisterial teaching revealed the Assumption resided in the one deposit of faith. The theological principles operative during the Assumptionist movement foreshadowed the Council's later teaching on revelation and biblical interpretation. On these points, the Council's teaching was not materially foreign to the life of the Church. It did not represent a rupture, but a solemn confirmation that what already was occurring in the Church was good and true.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE ASSUMPTIONIST MOVEMENT

The Assumption of Mary occupies a peculiar place among Catholic beliefs. Neither the New Testament nor the extant writings from the nascent Church record a historical account of Mary's final moments on earth. As centuries passed, written accounts spread throughout the Church claiming the Mother of God's earthly life did not end with a simple death and burial.<sup>1</sup> Soon, liturgical feasts emerged celebrating Mary's Assumption into heaven, affording bishops and priests the opportunity to preach on the doctrine.<sup>2</sup> Saints and doctors of the middle ages reflected on the Assumption and counted it amongst Mary's unique privileges.<sup>3</sup> Marian devotion reinforced belief in the Assumption among the Catholic faithful and by the fifteenth century they meditated on the mystery of the Assumption while reciting the prayers of the rosary.<sup>4</sup> Though devotion among the faithful proved widespread over the centuries, it remained a doctrine on the periphery in pontifical teaching.<sup>5</sup> This changed in 1950 when Pius XII declared Mary's Assumption into heaven, body and soul, a dogma of the Catholic faith.<sup>6</sup> Whereas most

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Shoemaker dates evidence of these narratives back to the fifth century. He also provides English translations of several ancient narratives. For these narratives, see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, 290-414.

<sup>2</sup> These included liturgical celebrations of Mary's Dormition as well. Authors of the earliest homilies included Modestus of Jerusalem, St. Andrew of Crete, and John of Damascus. These and others are accessible in English translation. See, Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 47-257.

<sup>3</sup> *Munificentissimus Deus* referenced numerous and Franciscans were some of the most prominent, including Anthony of Padua, Bonaventure, and Bernardine of Siena. Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 29, 32-33. Many of the medieval Franciscans connected the Assumption to Scripture. See, Eric May, "The Assumption in the Exegetical Works of Franciscans," in *First Franciscan National Marian Congress*, 285-301.

<sup>4</sup> The mysteries associated with the rosary have their origin in Dominic of Prussia's method of praying the rosary that employed fifty meditative phrases. By the end of the fifteenth century these had become fifteen mysteries and included the Assumption. For more on the development of these mysteries, see Rolando V. de la Rosa, "History of the Rosary," *Landas* 19, no. 1 (2005): 97-98.

<sup>5</sup> Eamon Carroll observed that the first appearance of the Assumption in a papal document did not occur until 1943's *Mystici Corporis*. Eamon R. Carroll, "Mary in the Documents of the Magisterium," in *Mariology*, ed. Juniper B. Carol (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1955), 1:30.

<sup>6</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 44.

Assumption scholarship focuses on illuminating the origins of the belief, this chapter recounts the little-known history of the near century long efforts that culminated in the dogmatic definition.

Collectively, these efforts towards obtaining the new Marian dogma are known as the Assumptionist movement. The term denotes a global Catholic movement that involved the laity, theologians, and members of the hierarchy.<sup>7</sup> From its beginnings in 1863, the movement experienced significant growth and ultimately achieved its goal in 1950. Those involved advocated for a dogmatic definition through petitions, prayer, and research. The history of the movement demonstrates it involved the whole Church. The laity, theologians, and members of the hierarchy played active roles, though in different ways. The laity testified to their belief in the Assumption on a large scale. By the end of the movement, over eight million lay Catholics had participated in petitionary efforts. Lay movements also spread and promoted prayers aimed at obtaining a dogmatic definition. Theologians produced scholarship seeking to overcome perceived theological barriers to a definition and Marian congresses served as a focal point of these efforts. Members of the hierarchy pushed for a definition at the Vatican Council. Though unsuccessful, it was another step in the movement's long development. Bishops supported the movement by providing indulgences for the faithful in their dioceses who were praying for a

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<sup>7</sup> The Assumptionist movement should not be confused with the Augustinians of the Assumption who are commonly referred to as the Assumptionists. The latter was established around the same period, but obtaining a dogmatic definition was not its primary aim. The Assumptionists received formal approval as a religious order in 1864. The order's origins, however, date to 1843 with the establishment of the College of the Assumption in Nîmes, France. Despite its name, the order was not at the forefront of the Assumptionist movement. Still, as a movement of the whole Church it is not surprising to see individual members of the order made contributions. For example, chapter three considers the work of Fulbert Cayré, an Assumptionist, who participated in the Franciscan Assumptionist Congresses. Though not considered here in detail because it falls outside the project's scope, Martin Jugie was an Assumptionist who published a significant monograph on Mary's death and Assumption. Martin Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge: Étude historico-doctrinale* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944). Carlo Balić, a Franciscan, who will make multiple appearances in this project, was a harsh critic of Jugie. For a brief summary of Jugie's work and Balić's criticism, see Stefano Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 638-639.

definition. Finally, the pope himself received the testimony of the Church, affirmed its authenticity, and declared Mary's Assumption a dogma of the faith. As a movement of the entire Church, the Assumptionist movement extended beyond any one geographical region and included participation from members of the laity and the hierarchy. In this global, pre-conciliar theological movement, laity and hierarchy worked harmoniously towards a common goal. This historical narrative proceeds chronologically and draws out the movement's key moments and attributes.

### *The Origins of the Assumptionist Movement*

The Assumptionist movement began in 1863 with the petition of Queen Isabel II of Spain to the Holy See and the theological work of Remigius Buselli. There were, however, three requests for the dogmatic definition of the Assumption prior to these events. They did not spawn a movement but represent the first-known requests of their kind. A hundred years prior, in 1763, Cesario M. Shguanin petitioned Pope Clement XIII to define the Assumption.<sup>8</sup> The other two requests occurred in response to Pope Pius IX's encyclical *Ubi primum* promulgated on February 2, 1849. The pope addressed the encyclical to the patriarchs, primates, archbishops, and bishops, and asked for replies concerning their clergy's and people's devotion, belief, and desire pertaining to a possible Immaculate Conception definition. The pope concluded his request, "And especially, Venerable Brethren, We wish to know what you yourselves, in your wise

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<sup>8</sup> While it may seem that 1763 was the true beginning of the movement, this study considers these early requests more as a pre-history of the Assumptionist movement since no discernable connection between the first three requests and later activity exists. Stefano Cecchin begins his brief history of the movement with Shguanin, but also notes that the events of 1863 were the true catalyst of the Assumptionist movement. For Cecchin's comments, see Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 634. For more on Shguanin, see Salvatore M. Meo, *Immacolata Concezione ed Assunzione della Vergine nella dottrina del M. Cesario M. Shguanin O.S.M.* (Roma: 1955).



judgment, think and desire on this matter.”<sup>9</sup> Two responses included requests for the definition of the Assumption alongside the definition of the Immaculate Conception. Engelbert Sterckx, Archbishop of Mechelen, Belgium, responded on December 15, 1849, stating, “Rather, not only the Immaculate Conception, but I also ardently desire the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven be established by solemn decree.”<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Jorge Sàncchez, Bishop of Osma, explained in his response on June 27, 1849, that the definition of the Immaculate Conception, the unique privilege of the Mother of God at the beginning of her life, offered the opportunity to simultaneously declare the unique privilege of the Mother of God at the end of her life, her bodily Assumption into heavenly glory. Sàncchez deemed further exploration into the belief of the Church unnecessary. He declared, “This doctrine, so ancient and so universally received in the Church, is proximate to the faith, and it lacks nothing for itself, so that it might be expressed *de fide*, except the solemn and public definition of the Church.”<sup>11</sup> Pius IX did not grant either request.

If the first three requests constituted a pre-history to the later nineteenth-century Assumptionist movement, 1863 marked its formal beginning. Two key events established this year as the beginning of the Assumptionist movement: Queen Isabel II of Spain’s petition and the theological work of Remigius Buselli. Isabel II’s petition was not the first time the Spanish royal family had sought to obtain a new Marian dogma. King Felipe III, who reigned from 1598 to 1621, had petitioned Pope Paul V for a dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Pius IX, *Ubi Primum*, encyclical letter, February 2, 1849, Papal Encyclicals Online, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ubipr2.htm>, sec. 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1056. Latin: “Immo non solum Immaculatam Conceptionem, sed et ipsam corporalem B. M. V. in caelos Assumptionem solemnī decreto confirmari posse ardentē desidero.”

<sup>11</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1056. Latin: “Haec doctrina tam antiqua et tam universaliter in Ecclesia recepta est proxima fidei, et nihil ipsi deest, ut sit expresse de fide, praeter solemnem et publicam Ecclesiae definitionem.”

<sup>12</sup> The delegation the king sent to Rome was not successful, but it inadvertently led to the development of a permanent Franciscan convent in Rome that was devoted to the Immaculate Conception. In 1622, Spanish discalced Franciscans established Sant’Isidoro a Capo le Case. It was unsuccessful until a few years later when an Irish

Isabel II carried forward this Spanish royal tradition, when she petitioned Pius IX for a dogmatic definition of the Assumption. In a December 27, 1863 letter to the pope, the queen explained:

Though the entire Catholic world directs to Your Holiness most reverent supplications that you might deign to declare the Mystery of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy a dogma of faith, I as Queen and interpreter of the feelings of this Catholic nation, which is so loving of the glories of Mary, desire to be the first to petition Your Holiness for this reason.<sup>13</sup>

While the letter asked the pope to declare the Assumption a dogma, it made no mention of details pertinent to the belief. It contained no explicit mention of the Assumption being bodily, nor did it commit to any position on whether Mary died. The queen did, however, claim to communicate the feelings of the Spanish people.

Other records relating to the queen's request provided further detail. The queen entrusted her petition to the Apostolic Nuncio to Spain, Lorenzo Barili. He wrote a letter to the pope's Secretary of State, Giacomo Antonelli, accompanying the queen's petition. This letter revealed Barili's own thoughts on the queen's petition as well as whom he believed instigated the movement. Barili communicated to Antonelli that he "was surprised by the novelty of the petition," but added that the queen told him soon "the same pleas elsewhere would come to His Holiness."<sup>14</sup> His letter also claimed that Archbishop Anthony Mary Claret, the queen's personal confessor, prompted the petition.<sup>15</sup> Recounting the queen's petition at a later date, Claret

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Franciscan, Luke Wadding, took over and developed it for the training of Irish Franciscans. Though Wadding was Irish, he had entered the order in Portugal, which at that time was under the rule of King Felipe III. Wadding may have never been in Rome had the king not sent him as a theological advisor to the delegation requesting the new dogma. The convent's devotion to the Immaculate Conception remains readily visible in its late 17<sup>th</sup> century artwork. For more, see "History," Saint Isidore's College, Rome, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://stisidoresrome.org/history>.

<sup>13</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:576. Spanish: "Aunque todo el orbe catolico dirigiera a Vuestra Santidad las mas reverentes suplicas para que se digne declarar dogma de fe el Misterio de la Asuncion de Maria Santisima, yo como Reina e interprete de los sentimientos de esta catolica nacion, que tan amante es de las glorias de Maria, deseo ser la primera en rogar a Vuestra Santidad con este motivo."

<sup>14</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:577. Italian: "Mi sorprese la novita della petizione, ma S. M. mi soggiunse esserle noto che uguale supplica per altra parte sarebbe giunta a Sua Santita,"

<sup>15</sup> Claret was heavily devoted to Mary and established the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Just prior to the 1950 dogmatic definition, Pius XII canonized Claret. Whether intentional or not, it was appropriate

positioned the request for the definition of the Assumption as another Marian initiative of Spain paralleling that of the Immaculate Conception and indicative of the special role Spain played in Divine Providence. In Claret's estimation, "It appears that Divine Providence has arranged that the most honorable things for Mary be initiated by the Kings of Spain, and then continued by the other faithful of the world."<sup>16</sup> Claret was referencing King Felipe III's request regarding the Immaculate Conception and Queen Isabel II's role in what he presumed would culminate in the dogmatic definition of the Assumption.

Pius IX's response to the queen supported this confidence. A little more than a month after the queen's letter, the pope responded. In a February 3, 1864 letter, the pope declined the queen's request, but simultaneously affirmed the goodness of her hope and devotion. The pope explained:

There is no doubt that the Assumption in the manner in which it is believed by the community of the Faithful is a consequence of the dogma of her Immaculate Conception; but all things have their fitting time and I do not believe myself a worthy instrument to publish this second Mystery as dogma. A time will come when the holy desire of Your Majesty will be granted, but in the meantime it is better to continue in prayer...<sup>17</sup>

While the pope rejected the request, he did so because of its inopportune timing. He gave no reason suggesting a new dogma was an impossibility. Rather, he affirmed the Assumption was a consequence of the Immaculate Conception. In lieu of an immediate definition, the pope urged continued prayer and suggested an Assumption dogma would come later.

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timing given Claret's influence at the movement's origin. For a biography of Claret, see Fanchón Royer, *The Life of St. Anthony Mary Claret: Modern Apostle* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1985).

<sup>16</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:577-578. Spanish: "Parece que la divina Providencia ha dispuesto que las cosas mas honorificas para Maria sean empezadas por los Reyes de Espana, y despues continuadas por los demas fieles del orbe."

<sup>17</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:576. Italian: "Non vi e dubbio che l'Assunzione nella maniera colla quale e creduta dall cumune dei Fedeli e una conseguenza del dogma della sua Concezione immacolata; ma pero tutte le cose hanno il loro tempo adattato ed Io non Mi credo degno istromento per pubblicare come dogma anche questo secondo Mistero. Tempo verra che i santi desideri di V. M. saranno esauditi, ma intanto conviene proseguire nella preghiera..."

Isabel II's petition to the pope was the first instance of the laity asking the Holy See for a dogmatic definition, but another event helped cement 1863 as the origin of the Assumptionist movement: the publication of Remigio Buselli's study on the topic. Buselli first began planning his work on the Assumption in 1859.<sup>18</sup> Four years later he published his work, in Italian as opposed to Latin, titled, "The Virgin Mary living in body and soul in heaven, that is, a theological-historical-critical apparatus for the future dogmatic definition of the bodily assumption of the Mother of God following the approval of the Catholic Church."<sup>19</sup> Martini Bertagna later elucidated Buselli's work and his place in the history of the Assumptionist movement. He related Buselli's motivation for work as fourfold: his own personal devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the importance of continuing on the Franciscan heritage of defending Mary's privileges, reaction to Protestant theologies which obscured or removed Mary's role, and to urge his Franciscan brothers to push forward towards a dogmatic definition of the Assumption.<sup>20</sup> The first part of Buselli's work pulled together various historical testimonies about the Assumption. This included the use of apocryphal texts, considering them not on their theological merit, but as narratives containing ancient beliefs.<sup>21</sup> The second part of the text deduced arguments from the sources of revelation and appealed to prominent theologians in the Catholic tradition, liturgical practices, and the magisterium.<sup>22</sup> Bertagna helpfully summarized Buselli's conclusions:

... [Buselli] concludes in a maximalist position recognizing in the assumption a Catholic doctrine contained formally, albeit implicitly: 1) in the Holy Scripture, as

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<sup>18</sup> Martini Bertagna, "P. Remigio Buselli O.F.M. E Il Movimento Assunzionistico Contemporaneo," in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d'Italia*, 406.

<sup>19</sup> Remigio Buselli, *La Vergine Maria vivente in corpo ed anima in cielo, ossia apparecchio teologico-storico-critico per la futura definizione dogmatica della corporea assunzione della Madre di Dio secondo il beneplacito della cattolica Chiesa* (Firenze: Cesare Bettazzi, 1863).

<sup>20</sup> Bertagna, "Remigio Buselli," 407-6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 409. Bertagna commented that many scholars would consider Buselli's use of certain texts naive in light of later historical critical methods.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

a deposit of types and figures and especially as an expression of the reported total victory by the Virgin over evil, as well as fullness of grace and of blessing She obtained; 2) in the three Marian attributes: immaculate conception, divine motherhood and perpetual virginity, as an implied, crowning and immediate resultant of them; 3) in the centuries-old and unanimous teaching of tradition, which, investing the ordinary magisterium<sup>23</sup> of the Church, alone constitutes a criterion of revealed certainty.<sup>24</sup>

The third and final part of Buselli's work presented an argument for the Assumption based on Mary's unique role in the economy of salvation. He explained the Assumption as the necessary glorification of Mary to parallel Christ's resurrection and ascension. An event corresponding to Christ's glorious triumph over death was necessary because of Mary's intimate association with her Son and his mission.<sup>25</sup> Despite Buselli's study touching on many of the arguments the Assumptionist movement would continue to develop, the influence of Buselli's original work was unclear.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, its status as the first extended theological treatise arguing for the dogmatic definition of the Assumption made it a valuable historical marker for the movement. Buselli's role in the Assumptionist movement went beyond his published study. He also advocated for a dogmatic definition at the Vatican Council.

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<sup>23</sup> The use of phrase "ordinary magisterium" was Bertagna's and more common in 1947 than it was in 1863 when Buselli published his text. It is noteworthy that the first papal document to use the term "ordinary magisterium" also appeared in 1863. See, Pius IX, *Tuas Libenter*, letter to the Archbishop of Munich-Freising, December 21, 1863, in Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann, eds., *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 43rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), par. 2875-2880. For an overview of the emergence of "ordinary magisterium" in Catholic thought, see Klaus Unterburger, "Vom pastoralen zum ordentlichen Lehramt und wieder zurück? Theologie und Lehramt 1863-2013," in *Mehr als Theologie: der Würzburger Hochschulkreis*, ed. Erich Garhammer (Würzburg: Echter, 2017), 42-66. I am grateful to Shaun Blanchard for this reference.

<sup>24</sup> Bertagna, "Remigio Buselli," 409. Italian: "conclude in posizione di massimista ravvisando nell'assunzione una dottrina cattolica contenuta formalmente, per quanto in maniera implicita: 1) nella S. Scrittura, come depositaria di tipi e figure e specialmente come espressione della totale vittoria riportata dalla Vergine sul male, nonché della pienezza di grazia e di benedizione da Lei ottenuta; 2) nei tre attributi mariani: immacolata concezione, divina maternità e verginità perpetua, quale postulato, coronamento e risultante immediate di essi; 3) nel secolare ed unanime insegnamento della tradizione, che, investendo il magistero ordinario della Chiesa, costituisce da sola un criterio di certezza rivelata."

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 410.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 411-413. Bertagna's treatment of the book's influence suggests its difficult to reach a definitive determination. He noted that some later authors acknowledged the work and at least one cardinal tried to make the work more widely known.

## *The Vatican Council and the Aftermath*

Between the announcement of the Vatican Council and its commencement, a small flurry of activity occurred surrounding the possibility of the Council proceeding with a dogmatic definition of the Assumption. Articles appeared in two Italian journals, the February 1869 edition of *Civiltà cattolica* and the July 1869 edition of *Scienza e la Fede*. Both reported the possibility of a definition at the Council as the movement continued to grow.<sup>27</sup> More support for the definition appeared in England with the dogmatic thesis of the English Jesuit, Sylvester Joseph Hunter.<sup>28</sup> Formal requests for the definition emerged from this period even among the episcopacy. In the Republic of Ecuador, an 1869 provincial council held in the Diocese of Quito commissioned a letter to the pope expressing a desire for a dogmatic definition of the Assumption.<sup>29</sup> A similar request emerged out of an 1869 plenary council of Smyrna which included the bishops of Greece and Asia Minor.<sup>30</sup> One of the lengthy petitions of this time came from Cuba. On September 15, 1869, as the opening of the Vatican Council quickly approached, the Bishop of San Cristobal de la Habana, Jacinto Maria Martínez y Sáez, sent a petition to the pope in favor of a definition.<sup>31</sup> Even in the movement's infancy, these early indications favoring a definition suggested the desire for a definition had a global appeal.

The formal opening of the Vatican Council took place on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1869. Despite the hope of many that the council would address the Assumption, the topic received no formal consideration. In fact, consideration of a definition never made it on the agenda prior to the council's sudden suspension.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>27</sup> Paul Renaudin, *La Doctrine de l'Assomption de la T.S. Vierge: sa définibilité comme dogme de foi divine* (Paris: Téqui, 1912), 165. Renaudin's text reproduced short selections from the 1869 journal articles.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*; *Petitiones*, 2:892-893.

<sup>29</sup> *Petitiones*, 1:172-174.

<sup>30</sup> *Petitiones*, 1:163-167.

<sup>31</sup> *Petitiones*, 1:112-154.

<sup>32</sup> Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 20.

those advocating for the definition garnered 187 signatures of council fathers in support of a dogmatic definition across several different petitions.<sup>33</sup> In retrospect, the highest profile support among the council fathers came from the future pope Leo XIII, Cardinal Pecci.<sup>34</sup> Luigi Vaccari acted as one of the primary advocates at the council and distributed his recent publication and other materials in support of the Assumption to those in attendance.<sup>35</sup> Vaccari worked alongside Buselli and Giuseppe Benedetto Dusmet to draft the most prominent petition which garnered signatures from 113 council fathers.<sup>36</sup> The succinct petition addressed Mary's Assumption into heaven, body and soul, as occurring after her death and presented arguments in favor of a definition based on Scripture, tradition, theological reasoning, and the testimony of the doctors of the Church. As far as securing a definition during the council, the support for this petition and others gained no tangible result. The Vatican Council was indefinitely suspended on October 20, 1870.<sup>37</sup> It never reconvened.

Failure to secure a definition at the Vatican Council did not deter the Assumptionist movement, for petitions and theological works on the matter continued to appear. As Cecchin notes in his brief history of the movement, "Between the middle of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century, there was a continuous growth of studies and petitions aimed at requesting the dogma."<sup>38</sup> Cecchin highlights three Italian works published after the Vatican Council and prior to the twentieth century. These included Ludovico Colini da Castelplanio's

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<sup>33</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:903.

<sup>34</sup> *Petitiones*, 1:97.

<sup>35</sup> "Chronique du Congrès," 13. For the distributed text see, Luigi Vaccari, *De corporea deiparae Assumptione in coelum an dogmatico decreto definiri possit: disquisitio historico-critico-theologica domini* (Romae, Ex. typ. Salviucci, 1869).

<sup>36</sup> *Petitiones*, 1:97-103, 2:1056.

<sup>37</sup> Colberg, *Vatican I and Vatican II*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 637. Italian: "Tra la metà del XIX e i primi decenni del XX secolo, vi fu un continuo crescendo di studi e di petizioni finalizzate alla richiesta del dogma."

1873 work on Mariology,<sup>39</sup> Marcellino Ranise da Civezza's 1886 work on the life of Mary,<sup>40</sup> and Antonio Virdia's 1880 petition to Leo XIII.<sup>41</sup> The last of these claimed that Mary did not undergo death.<sup>42</sup> A publication also came out of France during this period, Auguste Lana's 1885 work on Mary's resurrection and Assumption.<sup>43</sup>

In the aftermath of the Vatican Council, Vaccari remained one of the champions of the Assumptionist movement's cause. The year after the Council's suspension, Vaccari became a bishop and "renewed his endeavors to obtain an authoritative pronouncement on the Assumption."<sup>44</sup> On January 17, 1880, the Italian Catholic daily newspaper, *L'Unità Cattolica*, published a letter from Vaccari.<sup>45</sup> Formally addressed to the director of the paper, the letter appeared for all to read with an admonition at its head:

It is strongly recommended that all the directors of religious periodicals and all devotees of Mary assumed into heaven give this letter from the Bishop of Sinope Monsignor Vaccari, from the Order of St. Benedict, clear for various publications, the maximum publicity.<sup>46</sup>

In the letter, Vaccari explained how he was inspired to write his work on the Assumption and its possible definition while residing at Montecassino. He went on to explain how he, along with some other devotees to the cause, secured two hundred signatures on petitions seeking the definition of the Assumption and claimed he would have been able to secure even more had the Council not been suspended.<sup>47</sup> After being raised to the episcopate in 1871, Vaccari claimed that

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<sup>39</sup> Ludovico Colini da Castelplano, *Maria nel consiglio dell'Eterno, ovvero la Vergine predestinata alla missione medesima con Gesù Cristo* (Napoli: 1873).

<sup>40</sup> Marcellino Ranise da Civezza, *La vita di Maria Vergine* (Roma: 1886).

<sup>41</sup> Antonio Virdia, *Pro dogmatica definitione integrae in caelos assumptione Deiparae Virginis* (Catanzaro: 1880).

<sup>42</sup> Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 637.

<sup>43</sup> Auguste Lana, *La Résurrection et l'Assomption en corps et âme de la Ste Vierge Mère de Dieu* (Dijon: Mersch, 1885).

<sup>44</sup> Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:921-923.

<sup>46</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:921. Italian: "Si raccomanda vivamente a tutti i direttori dei periodici religiosi e a tutti i devoti di Maria Assunta in cielo di dare a questa lettera del Vescovo di Sinope Monsignor Vaccari, dell'Ordine di S. Benedetto, chiaro per varie pubblicazioni, la massima pubblica."

<sup>47</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:921.



responsibility consumed him and he stopped thinking about securing a definition. He attributed his return to the cause to a message he heard on the first jubilee of the definition of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 1879), which mentioned a logical connection between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Vaccari also referenced a letter he received from D. Giuseppe Pennacchi, a professor of ecclesiastical history in Rome, and Giacomo Murena's then newly published work, which, despite the title indicating it was about St. Paul, included comments on the Assumption. Both the letter from Pennacchi and Murena's book communicated hope for a forthcoming definition.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, Vaccari's letter included a brief anecdote about how when he preached in the cathedral of Tropea about the mystery of the Incarnation and proclaimed that another dogma, the Assumption, still needed to be defined in relation to it, those in attendance were brought to tears. He interpreted this emotional response as "a spontaneous manifestation of the Catholic conscience."<sup>49</sup> After imploring others to help obtain a definition, Vaccari confidently expressed his belief that Leo XIII would make this pronouncement and subsequently become known as the "Pontiff of the Assumption."<sup>50</sup> Despite Vaccari's confidence, Leo XIII made no such pronouncement during his papacy.

Another letter from Vaccari revealed his attempt to gather more signatures for a petition to the Holy See and included a harsh assessment of those who worried a definition was inopportune. The extant copy included no date or addressee, though its content suggests Vaccari sent the letter to a bishop. Vaccari explained that while many bishops agreed a definition was possible, some thought it inopportune. He did not mince words on this point. Vaccari rejected the relevance of opportuneness in theological matters. He wrote, "The word opportunity is not

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<sup>48</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:922.

<sup>49</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:922. Italian: "una manifestazione spontanea della coscienza cattolica."

<sup>50</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:923. Italian: "Pontefice dell'Assunta."

theological stuff, but regards a profane vessel and is used when it comes to disputing the utility of earthly things; since regarding the things of heaven it is always appropriate to declare what God wanted man to know.”<sup>51</sup> Regardless of the immediate outcome, Vaccari believed working towards a definition of the Assumption also acted as a powerful force against the enemies of rationalism and materialism.<sup>52</sup>

Rome took notice of Vaccari’s efforts. The Holy Office determined that a definition was, in fact, inopportune. Additionally, the Holy Office sought to put an end to Vaccari’s efforts. A February 19, 1880 decision outlined four actions to be taken against Vaccari and his efforts to obtain a definition. First, and most directly, Vaccari must “desist totally from promoting and prudently withdraw any activity done on the definition of the bodily Assumption of Mary Most Holy.”<sup>53</sup> The other three actions included communicating a prohibition to Murena about publishing on the subject, informing the director of *L’Unità Cattolica* not to publish on the subject, and for the Benedictines to be warned not to get involved with promoting this cause, especially at their upcoming centenary meeting.<sup>54</sup> Within a couple months, Vaccari responded to the decree from the Holy Office. His response recorded his obedience to the order while still expressing his interest in the subject and desire for an eventual definition.<sup>55</sup>

The Holy Office’s actions halted Vaccari’s personal efforts. Nevertheless, there exists evidence of enthusiasm for the movement across the Atlantic in the Diocese of Puebla, Mexico. In March 1880, the Sociedad Católica de Puebla expressed their support for Vaccari’s continued

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<sup>51</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:924. Italian: “La parola opportunità non è roba teologica, ma di gabinetto e si usa quando si disputa di utilità di cose terrene; poichè circa le cose di cielo è sempre opportuno dichiarare ciò che Dio ha voluto che l’uomo sappia.”

<sup>52</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:924.

<sup>53</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:926. Italian: “desista totalmente da promuovere e ritiri prudentemente ogni pratica fatta sulla definizione dell’Assunzione corporea di Maria Santissima.”

<sup>54</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:926.

<sup>55</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:926-927.

efforts to secure a definition of the Assumption from the pope.<sup>56</sup> Significantly, 25,000 signatures from the priests and lay faithful of the diocese accompanied the society's statement.<sup>57</sup> Vaccari also received support from the bishop of Puebla, Francisco de Paula Vereá. The bishop issued a decree on April 26, 1880, declaring his support for the cause and his hopes that the efforts would result in a dogmatic definition from the Holy See.<sup>58</sup> The bishop of Puebla sent this decree and the letter from the Sociedad Católica de Puebla to Vaccari and included a separate letter addressed personally to Vaccari. In this letter, the bishop expressed his hope that the attached decree would "encourage the clergy and the faithful" in seeking a definition and his personal pleasure in contributing in any way possible "to honor and exalt the great Mother of God."<sup>59</sup>

### *The Movement Enters the Twentieth Century*

After the suspension of Vaccari's efforts, the Assumptionist movement underwent a period of limited activity. This changed at the turn of the century when the movement received a new impetus. The catalyst came in the form of a prayer crusade. The spread of prayers for the purpose of achieving a definition originated in a Carmelite Monastery in Vienne, France.<sup>60</sup> Abbe J. B. Chatain was an advisor to these Carmelites and helped spread the prayer crusade into Spain, and subsequently, Portugal.<sup>61</sup> This movement spread further around the globe thanks to the efforts of Bartolo Longo.<sup>62</sup> At the suggestion of a Carmelite nun from Tours, Longo, already an

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<sup>56</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:929-931.

<sup>57</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:929.

<sup>58</sup> *Petitiones*, 1:892-893.

<sup>59</sup> *Petitiones*, 1:893. Spanish: "de estimular al clero y a los fieles ... a honrar y exaltar a la gran Madre de Dios."

<sup>60</sup> Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 21.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 21n12; "Chronique du Congrès," 13.

<sup>62</sup> Bartolo Longo was a well-known Marian devotee and advocate. After earlier involvement in a satanic movement, he embraced the Catholic faith, became a third order Dominican, and was instrumental in the development of the Shrine of the Virgin of the Rosary of Pompei. John Paul II beatified Longo in 1980. An Italian biography was published shortly after Longo's death, see Scotto Di Pagliara, *Bartolo Longo* (Pompei: 1929). Some biographical information is also available in English in an article about the shrine in Pompei. See, "Our Lady of Pompeii,"

avid promotor of the rosary, took up the cause and helped initiate the prayer crusade in Italy, Malta, Dalmatia, Albania, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria, and Ireland.<sup>63</sup> The prayer crusade continued to spread until it reached parts of South America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania.<sup>64</sup>

Bartolo Longo sought to increase the spread of this devotion by asking bishops to attach an indulgence to the prayer. In an August 1901 letter from Longo to Cardinal Casimiro Gennari, Longo explained that he had sent the prayer he composed to all the bishops who had previously petitioned the pope for a definition, asking them to attach a once-a-day, forty-day indulgence to the prayer.<sup>65</sup> The prayer read:

*Prayer to be recited every day after the Rosary to obtain the dogmatic definition of the Assumption of Mary.*

O Immaculate Lady, invoked by the world as Queen of the Rosary in the Pompeii Valley, I hold for certain that you are in heaven, in body and soul; and for this highest privilege I am ready to give, if necessary, even my life.

O Jesus, eternal Son of the Father and Son of Mary ever Virgin, for the love that you brought to your Immaculate Mother, we pray that her glorious Assumption may soon be proclaimed a dogma of faith by your infallible Vicar.

Most Holy Trinity, who in the triumphant Church crowned Mary Queen of the Angels and Saints, seal the universal belief of the militant Church, which every day in the Rosary greets her Assumed, body and soul, into Paradise. Amen.<sup>66</sup>

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International Marian Research Institute, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/o/our-lady-of-pompeii.php>.

<sup>63</sup> “Chronique du Congrès,” 14.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:624-625.

<sup>66</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:625. Italian: “Preghiera da recitarsi ogni giorno dopo il Rosario per ottenere la definizione dommatica dell’ Assunzione di Maria. O Immacolata Signora, invocata dal mondo Regina del Rosario nella Valle di Pompei, io tengo per certo, che Tu sei nel cielo, in anima e corpo; e per questo tuo altissimo privilegio sono pronto a dare, se bisogna, anche la vita. O Gesù, Figliuolo eterno del Padre e Figliuolo di Maria sempre Vergine, per l’amore che portasti alla Madre tua Immacolata, ti preghiamo che la sua gloriosa Assunzione sia presto dal tuo infallibile Vicario proclamata domma di fede. Santissima Trinità, che nella Chiesa trionfante coronasti Maria Regina degli Angeli e dei Santi, suggella la universale credenza della Chiesa militante, che ogni giorno nel Rosario la saluta Assunta in anima e corpo in Paradiso. Così sia.”

The preserved Italian copy of the prayer also included a list of seventeen archbishops and bishops throughout Italy who had granted an indulgence.<sup>67</sup>

While quantifying the global spread and influence of a prayer is difficult, the preservation of petitions from around the world provide evidence that from 1900 onward the Assumptionist movement grew substantially. Just the petitions presented to the Holy See from Spain between 1900 and 1905 eclipsed numbers from the previous century. During this period, the dioceses of Serville, Badajoz, Vic, Barcelona, and Málaga presented petitions. These combined for support from nearly 300,000 lay faithful and over 5,000 priests and religious.<sup>68</sup> Central and South America was another prominent region of support. Even considering only those petitions originating in the first decade of the twentieth century reveals a large response from the laity. Lay support for a definition from Columbia totaled more than 120,000; from Ecuador, 50,000; from Brazil, 100,000; and from Mexico, 140,000.<sup>69</sup> Though the impact of each petition is difficult to ascertain, Pius X, who had supported the movement while simultaneously recognizing the need for serious study, declared his intention to examine the question of definability in response to the petitions arriving out of Brazil.<sup>70</sup>

Another important element of the Assumptionist movement moving into the twentieth century were Marian congresses. Beginning in 1900, the International Marian Congress met every two years until 1912. In 1914 they were suspended because of the Great War, and did not resume until 1950.<sup>71</sup> The first seven international congresses were held throughout Europe. The inaugural congress occurred in Lyon, and the next six took place in Fribourg, Rome, Einsiedeln,

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<sup>67</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:625-626.

<sup>68</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1048.

<sup>69</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1048-1050.

<sup>70</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:962. Also see Godfried Geenen, "L'Assomption et les Souverains Pontifes. Faits, documents et textes," *Angelicum* 27, no. 4 (1950): 339.

<sup>71</sup> For a full listing of these congresses, see "International Mariological Congresses," International Marian Research Institute, accessed February 4, 2021, <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/i/international-mariological-congresses.php>.

Salzburg, Zaragoza, and Trier. Despite the clear increase in interest surrounding a definition, the published report of the first congress included no formal discussion of the definability of the Assumption.<sup>72</sup> It has been suggested that the lack of formal discussion stemmed from a perception that the Holy See would disapprove of it.<sup>73</sup> Whatever the reasoning, other evidence indicated the topic was on the mind of those in attendance. Soon after the congress, a short petition and letter from the archbishop of Lyon expressed the thoughts and desires of those in attendance. In addition to asking the Holy Father to declare the Assumption a dogma of the faith, the petition explained their hope:

If it was enough for the glory of the nineteenth century which is ending to be able to name itself in history the century of the Immaculate Conception, it is perhaps possible to glimpse that the twentieth century will be called the century of the Assumption of Mary.<sup>74</sup>

Records indicate 34 prelates and 100,000 lay faithful supported the petition.<sup>75</sup> According to the archbishop of Lyon's letter to the pope, the three cardinals who signed the petition suggested communicating these desires without any publicity.<sup>76</sup> This subdued approach corresponded with the silence on the topic in the congress's official record.

More activity and support for a definition occurred two years later at the congress held in Fribourg. At least one recollection of the congress indicated that the congress had the "express license of the Supreme Pontiff Pope Leo XIII" to address a possible dogma of the Assumption.<sup>77</sup> The published proceedings of the congress included two papers to this end. The first briefly set

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<sup>72</sup> The proceedings of the congress were published in a two-volume set. *Compte rendu du Congrès Marial tenu à Lyon les 5, 6, 7, 8 septembre 1900*, 2 vols. (Lyon: Vitte, 1900).

<sup>73</sup> Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 21.

<sup>74</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:417. French: "s'il suffisait à la gloire du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle qui s'achève de pouvoir se nommer dans l'histoire le siècle de l'Immaculée Conception, il est peut-être permis d'entrevoir que le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle s'appellera le siècle de l'Assomption de Marie."

<sup>75</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1048.

<sup>76</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:418.

<sup>77</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:402. Italian: "espressa licenza del Sommo Pontefice Papa Leone XIII."

out an argument in favor of the definition and concluded with a call to “devote ourselves with the ardor of a holy zeal to extend this dear belief.”<sup>78</sup> The second also focused on the definability of the Assumption and supported the cause. Paul Renaudin, who would publish more scholarship on the Assumption in later years, began his paper by asserting that the Church has taught the truth of the Assumption of Mary, body and soul, through its ordinary magisterium. Therefore, the belief was “no longer an opinion, but a Catholic truth, which one cannot dismiss as doubtful without temerity and without committing a serious fault.”<sup>79</sup> Still, it remained for the pope to elevate the teaching through a dogmatic definition and the work of theologians to provide research as to its possibility.<sup>80</sup> Renaudin concluded by expressing hope that his work would help hasten a definition.<sup>81</sup> Beyond the formal discussion of the topic, this congress also featured a future pope supporting the movement. Then Patriarch of Venice and future Pope Pius X, Cardinal José Sarto, helped instigate a petition of 20,000 signatures asking for the definition.<sup>82</sup>

The next international congress took place in Rome in 1904. Given its location, one might expect an even greater effort or demonstration seeking a definition from the pope. In fact, the opposite occurred. In his brief history of the movement, Ohlmann explained that “the Commission of Cardinals in charge of preparations for the Roman Congress in 1904 forbade the addressing of any dogmatic questions to the Pope, stipulating the Assumption as a case in

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<sup>78</sup> Chanoine Pieraccini, “La Définibilité De l’Assomption de Marie,” in *Compte rendu du Congrès Marial, du 18 au 21 août 1902 à Fribourg en Suisse* (Blois: C. Migault, 1903), 1:190. French: “dévouons-nous avec l’ardeur d’un saint zèle à répandre cette croyance si chère.”

<sup>79</sup> Paul Renaudin, “La Définibilité de l’Assomption de la très Sainte Vierge,” in *Compte rendu du Congrès Marial, du 18 au 21 août 1902 à Fribourg en Suisse*, 1:190. French: “n’est plus là une opinion, mais une vérité catholique, que l’on ne peut révoquer en doute sans témérité et sans commettre une faute grave.”

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 192.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>82</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:404; Carroll, “Mary in the Documents of the Magisterium,” 29.

point.”<sup>83</sup> This is all the more surprising when recalling the ascension of Pius X to the papal throne in 1903 and his support for the cause as a cardinal at the previous congress.

Nevertheless, the following international congresses continued to push for a definition and received letters of support from Pius X. The 1906 congress in Einsiedeln, Switzerland included several petitions in support of a definition. The most prominent of these originated within the Spanish-American section of the congress.<sup>84</sup> The full congress took up this petition and sent it to the Holy See with the approval and support of eighteen prelates and delegates from twenty-one nations.<sup>85</sup> According to a letter from Pius X’s Secretary of State, Merry del Val, the pope received the petition with great satisfaction and was pleased with the work of the congress as a whole.<sup>86</sup>

The next international congress was held in Zaragoza, Spain in 1908. Two prominent features of this congress were the Marian Plebiscite movement and an increase in presentations supporting a definition. In the lead up to the congress, the Marian Plebiscite movement sought three actions from the pope. First, they wanted the pope to define the bodily Assumption of Mary as a dogma of the faith. Second, they wanted the holy father to consecrate the Universe to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And third, they wanted “to be permitted to add the word ‘Immaculate’ to the Holy Mary.”<sup>87</sup> Officially, the congress took a neutral stance towards the request, neither supporting nor denouncing it.<sup>88</sup> The Marian Plebiscite had obtained approximately 250,000 signatures in support, but the congress did not deliver these petitions to

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<sup>83</sup> Ohlmann, “The Assumptionist Movement,” 21.

<sup>84</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:398; García Garcés, “El movimiento asuncionista en España,” *Estudios Marianos* 6 (1947): 533.

<sup>85</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:957.

<sup>86</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:398-399.

<sup>87</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:384. Spanish: “permite añadir al Santa Maria la voz ‘Inmaculada’.” Presumably they wanted to add ‘Immaculate’ to the latter half of the Hail Mary, but it is unclear in the text.

<sup>88</sup> Garcés, “El movimiento asuncionista en España,” 534.



Rome.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, support had increased for the definition of the Assumption at the congress itself. Eight of the papers presented during the dogmatic section of the congress gave support for a definition.<sup>90</sup> Clino Crosta's paper detailed the status of the Assumption in Catholic belief.<sup>91</sup> Crosta's conclusion about the status of the teaching within the Church marked a departure from scholars such as Renaudin who held that the ordinary magisterium had taught the Assumption as a doctrine of the Church, but it was not yet a dogma. According to Crosta, the doctrine of the Assumption was already a dogma because "the Church with her infallible magisterium taught it to the faithful, as a truth revealed by God and therefore to be believed."<sup>92</sup> Though left unstated, his position assumed a maximalist interpretation of infallibility that tended towards equating any magisterial activity with infallibility.

The international congress in Salzburg, Germany, in 1910 included the approval of two resolutions in favor of a definition. Among the German section of the congress, Benedikt Bauer addressed the possibility and opportuneness of a definition. For Bauer, belief in the Assumption and the possibility of its definition did not hinge on the results of historical research since the tools of historical inquiry could not prove the fact of Mary's Assumption. Nor was belief in the Assumption based on the authenticity of ancient legends or private revelation.<sup>93</sup> Bauer stated emphatically that "our belief in the assumption of Mary into Heaven rests on the unshakable basis of a divine Revelation handed down by the Apostles of the Church!"<sup>94</sup> A definition was

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:383.

<sup>91</sup> Clino Crosta, "Dello stato attuale della fede nel mistero della Assunzione," in *Actas del Cuarto Congreso Mariano Internacional, celebrado en Zaragoza de España en los días 26, 27, 28, 29 y 30 de septiembre de 1908* (Madrid: El Iris de Paz, 1909): 622-631.

<sup>92</sup> This text was reproduced and quoted in *Petitiones*, 2:391. Italian text: "la Chiesa col suo magistero infallibile l'ha insegnata ai fedeli, come verità rivelata da Dio e perciò da credersi."

<sup>93</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:422.

<sup>94</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:422. German: "Unser Glaube an die Aufnahme Mariens in den Himmel ruht auf der unerschütterlichen Basis einer göttlichen, von den Aposteln der Kirche übergebenen Offenbarung!"

desirable now more than ever because it would bring great honor to Christ and Mary, assist the Church against the powers of darkness, assist in reuniting Eastern Christians with the West, and help society overcome the evils of materialism and naturalism, along with its addiction to pleasure.<sup>95</sup> After Bauer's stirring oration, the German section unanimously adopted a resolution to seek a definition from the Apostolic See.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, the Hungarian section of the congress approved a resolution on the Assumption following the German resolution.<sup>97</sup> Later, the entire congress formally approved both resolutions.<sup>98</sup>

The final international congress prior to the first World War occurred in Trier, Germany in 1912. Familiar names presented in favor of a definition, namely, Renaudin and Crosta. Renaudin addressed the French section on Mary's triumph as co-redemptrix. In this oration, he positioned the Assumption as the culmination and result of the Immaculate Conception, but reassured his audience that the Holy See remained the sole judge of the definability of the Assumption as well as how and when such a solemn definition should occur.<sup>99</sup> Crosta, speaking in the Italian section, likewise highlighted the connection between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. He, however, made special appeal to increasing the honor of the cult of Mary as a means of defeating modernism.<sup>100</sup> Crosta's presentation led the Italian section to pass a resolution which called for the solemn proclamation of the dogmatic truth of the Assumption and also urged students and ecclesiastics to consecrate their studies to the Immaculate Conception as a means of protection against the errors of modernism.<sup>101</sup> The congress approved

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<sup>95</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:423-424.

<sup>96</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:425.

<sup>97</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:421.

<sup>98</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:420.

<sup>99</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:472-473.

<sup>100</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:472.

<sup>101</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:471.

the resolution alongside another resolution seeking a definition of the Assumption originating in the Spanish section.<sup>102</sup>

The outbreak of the first World War, the devastation it wrought, followed by yet another World War put the International Marian Congresses on an indefinite hiatus. The international congresses did not resume until 1950. This extended break in international activity, however, did not signal a break in Assumptionist activity, as regional events and petitions continued after a brief decline. Part of this decline was at the pope's request. During the first World War, Benedict XV "requested that the sending of petitions be deferred until peace came again."<sup>103</sup> Excepting the petition out of Columbia which had begun prior to the outbreak of the war, the Holy See received relatively few petitions after the war began in 1914 through the end of the decade. The few sent did not include any signatures of the laity.<sup>104</sup> This general lull in requests somewhat mirrored the pope's own reported attitude towards a definition. The pope saw little need for papal intervention on a doctrine that the faithful already unanimously held and was not a cause of dissension.<sup>105</sup>

### *The Proliferation of the Movement*

The next decade featured numerous congresses on a national and regional level, as well as several petitions from the lay faithful and other members of the Church. It is impossible to do justice to each of these efforts in the context of this dissertation project. Here, the aim is to highlight efforts taking place that showcased the global spread of the movement and its increasing support. Specifically, this section draws attention to petitions which garnered the largest support from the laity.

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<sup>102</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:472.

<sup>103</sup> Carroll, "Mary in the Documents of the Magisterium," 29.

<sup>104</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1050-1051.

<sup>105</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:976-977; Geenen, "L'Assomption et les Souverains Pontifes," 340.

Two non-European Marian congresses took place in 1921. The first Pan-American Marian Congress held in Chile passed a resolution “to implore from His Holiness the dogmatic definition of the Assumption of Mary in body and soul to heaven.”<sup>106</sup> The congress sent the petition to the Holy See alongside a lengthy paper detailing many of the arguments in favor of a definition that the bishop of Pinar del Rio, Cuba presented at the congress.<sup>107</sup> On the other side of the world, the First National Marian Congress of India took place in the same year in the city of Madras. While no record exists indicating that the congress passed a formal resolution or sent a petition to the Holy See, the congress’s Subjects and Sessions Committee asked the bishop of Mangalore to preach on the Assumption. The bishop obliged, noting that the Assumption had not yet been solemnly defined because there was never a serious doubt about its truth.<sup>108</sup>

Beginning in 1923, the movement grew among the faithful of Spain through the efforts of two Jesuits: Joseph Humbertus Salvador and Pedro María Ayala. They planned to create a series of holy cards using some of the best paintings of the mystery of the Assumption adjoined to appropriate papal texts. Additionally, the holy cards would feature a prayer for the definition of the Assumption. Ayala sought to have the bishops attach an indulgence to this prayer.<sup>109</sup> He succeeded and soon nearly all the bishops of Spain had granted an indulgence.<sup>110</sup> The Spanish prayer read: “For the infinite love, that you have, *O Blessed Trinity!*, to our Mother and Lady, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, grant the prompt dogmatic definition of her glorious Assumption into heaven.”<sup>111</sup> The effort found continuing success and the two Jesuits soon obtained indulgences

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<sup>106</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:429. Spanish: “implorar de Su Santidad la definicion dogmatica de la Asuncion de Maria en cuerpo y alma a los cielos.”

<sup>107</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:431-464.

<sup>108</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:510-511.

<sup>109</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:630.

<sup>110</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:628-629.

<sup>111</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:630. Spanish: “Por el amor infinito, que tenéis, ¡oh Trinidad Beatísima! a nuestra Madre y Señora, la Inmaculada Virgen María, concedednos la pronta definición dogmática de su gloriosa Asunción a los cielos.”

for the prayer in other countries. By 1924, bishops in Ecuador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Paraguay had granted indulgences.<sup>112</sup> And within the next year bishops in Canada, India, Italy, and the Philippines had also attached an indulgence to the prayer.<sup>113</sup>

While prayer and devotion spread around the world during this period, so too did explicit calls from the lay faithful for a definition. A quarter century prior, Bartolo Longo, one of the prominent lay promoters of the Assumptionist movement, had likewise spread the movement through the propagation of indulgenced prayers. Between 1925 and 1927, the prominent Italian Marian devotee sought to use his periodical, *Il Rosario e la Nuova Pompei*, to collect signatures for a petition to send to Pius XI. The petition asked the pope for a solemn dogmatic definition of the Assumption, proposing that such a definition would increase faith and piety, help the peace of Christ to flourish, honor often neglected spiritual values, and ultimately lead the world into union with the pope.<sup>114</sup> Whatever the merits of Longo's claims, the call for signatures received an immense response. The twelve volumes containing the responses included signatures from over 500,000 lay faithful and nearly 8,000 priests and religious.<sup>115</sup> Another show of significant lay support for a definition at this time came out of the National Marian Congress held in Braga, Portugal in 1926. According to a letter from the archbishop, the congress asked the pope for a definition which included the support of more than 200,000 of the faithful.<sup>116</sup>

Among efforts to collect signatures in favor of the definition, all others paled in comparison to the work of Raffaele Asaro and Amedeo Balzaro. Operating out of Verona and

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<sup>112</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:634-637.

<sup>113</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:639.

<sup>114</sup> *Petitiones*, 1:4-6.

<sup>115</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1051.

<sup>116</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:526.

employing the periodical *Le donne italiane*, later known as *Le forze italiane*, Asaro and Balzaro launched a plebiscite seeking to honor Mary through a solemn dogmatic definition of the Assumption and Mary's universal mediation.<sup>117</sup> Their efforts began in 1929 and in that same year Pius XI communicated his approval and blessing to the movement through his secretary of state.<sup>118</sup> By 1937, the operation in Verona presented sixty volumes of petitions filled with signatures to the Holy See. Among the signatures were twenty Cardinals, five Patriarchs, 709 archbishops and bishops, of which 453 were from regions outside of Italy, and an estimated two million priests, religious, and lay faithful.<sup>119</sup> The Holy See received other largescale petitions during this period, but no other single initiative ever secured anywhere close to the number of signatures as this one.

Some other largescale petitions in support of a definition deserve a brief mention. In the same year as Asaro and Balzaro's work began, throughout Spain the faithful celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the definition of the Immaculate Conception. Part of this celebration included a new petition sent to the pope asking for a definition of the Assumption and Mary's universal mediation.<sup>120</sup> The petition received the support of fifty-two prelates and over 700,000 lay faithful. Two other largescale petitions appeared in 1933. Out of Canada, with the help of the Société de l'Assomption, there emerged fifty-four volumes of petitions which included signatures from over 20,000 priests and religious alongside almost 400,000 lay faithful.<sup>121</sup> Another call for a definition came from the Archdiocese of San Salvador in El Salvador which had the support of over 500,000 lay faithful.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:990.

<sup>118</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1031; Geenen, "L'Assomption et les Souverains Pontifes," 340.

<sup>119</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:989.

<sup>120</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:500-501.

<sup>121</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1006.

<sup>122</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1053.

The conclusions from Hentrich and de Moos's extensive cataloguing of the collected petitions through 1941 summarized the scale and scope of the movement. Petitions sent to the Holy See seeking a definition originated from every populated continent. The highest support among the lay faithful came out of Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Outside of Europe, the Latin American countries were the next largest areas of popular support. According to Hentrich and de Moos's calculations, through 1941 the number of petitioners calling for a definition of the Assumption included approximately 3,000 prelates, 80,000 priests and religious, and 8,000,000 lay faithful.<sup>123</sup> Though some criticized Hentrich and de Moos's method of calculation, the publication of the data indicated overwhelming support for a definition among the Catholic faithful.<sup>124</sup>

### *Pius XII and the Height of the Movement*

Shortly after the publication of Hentrich and de Moos's research, Pius XII issued the first papal encyclical that included a clear and explicit description of Mary's Assumption.<sup>125</sup> Promulgated on June 29, 1943, the pope's *Mystici corporis Christi* focused on the nature of the Church as the mystical body of Christ.<sup>126</sup> At the conclusion of the encyclical, the pope

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<sup>123</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1038-1039.

<sup>124</sup> Ralph Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 23. Ohlmann pointed to publications from Archangelus à Roc and Martin Jugie which contested Hentrich and de Moos's method of calculation. Archangelus à Roc, "Adnotationes circa petitiones de B. V. Mariae assumptione corporea in coelum dogmatice definienda," *Collectanea Franciscana* 14 (1944): 260-311; Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge*, 596. As Ohlmann noted, Hentrich replied to these criticisms. Guillelmo Hentrich, "De Definibilitate Assumptionis B. M. V. Circa recentem theologorum motum assumptionisticum et circa momentum dogmaticum 'Petitionum de Assumptione definienda ad S. Sedem delatarum,'" *Marianum* 11 (1949): 259-311.

<sup>125</sup> Geenen, "L'Assomption et les Souverains Pontifes," 347; Carroll, "Mary in the Documents of the Magisterium," 30.

<sup>126</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici corporis Christi*, encyclical letter, June 29, 1943, Vatican website, [http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_29061943\\_mystici-corporis-christi.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html). This marked an embrace of Johann Adam Möhler's early nineteenth-century work. See, Johann Adam Möhler, *Unity in the Church, or, The Principle of Catholicism, Presented in the Spirit of the Church Fathers of the First Three Centuries*, trans. Peter C. Erb (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996).

highlighted Mary's continued role in the Church. Mary is the "most holy Mother of all the members of Christ ... who now reigns in heaven with her Son, her body and soul refulgent with heavenly glory" and continuously intercedes on behalf of the Church.<sup>127</sup> The description of Mary reigning in heaven, body and soul, amounted to an implicit statement on her Assumption. Still, the pope's mention of Mary's body and soul residing in heaven was not a solemn definition, as defined by the First Vatican Council. There was no evidence that any of the recent popes, a significant portion of Catholic theologians, or the lay faithful denied Mary's Assumption. The question remained one of its centrality and certainty within the larger Catholic belief system; whether it was a piously held belief, a theological conclusion, or a revealed truth.

The pope's description of the Assumption in his encyclical was nothing in comparison to the catalyst he would give the Assumptionist movement a few years later. In May 1946, Pius XII published *Deiparae Virginis Mariae*, a letter addressed to all the bishops of the world, inquiring as to their thoughts on a possible definition. The short letter highlighted the substantial support for a definition found in the petitions sent to the Holy See over the past century and the desire of nearly two hundred council fathers at the Vatican Council.<sup>128</sup> The pope also noted the importance of prayer and discernment in such matters for the good of the Kingdom of Christ.<sup>129</sup> Ultimately, he followed the example of his predecessor, Pius IX, who prior to the definition of the Immaculate Conception asked the bishops for their thoughts on the matter. In the case of the Assumption, Pius XII asked the bishops:

... to inform us about the devotion of your clergy and people (taking into account their faith and piety) toward the Assumption of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. More especially We wish to know if you, Venerable Brethren, with your learning and prudence consider that the bodily Assumption of the Immaculate Blessed

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<sup>127</sup> Pius XII, *Mystici corporis Christi*, sec. 111.

<sup>128</sup> Pius XII, *Deiparae Virginis Mariae*, sec. 2.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 3.



Virgin can be proposed and defined as a dogma of faith, and whether in addition to your own wishes this is desired by your clergy and people.<sup>130</sup>

Though the pope directed his message to the bishops, the papal request helped spark a renewed effort throughout the Catholic theological world to call for the definition.

Already, in the Summer of 1946, support for the definition appeared through many professional Catholic theological societies and universities.<sup>131</sup> The newly established Catholic Theological Society of America was one of the first groups to send their petition to the pope in support of a definition.<sup>132</sup> The evidence from the previous century had confirmed that a dogmatic definition enjoyed popular support throughout the Church. The more crucial work at this juncture was to address the theological difficulties that could prevent a definition. This was a work for the *Schola Theologorum*.<sup>133</sup>

Though many contributed, the Order of Friars Minor played a significant role in this work.<sup>134</sup> On July 19, 1946, the Minister General of the Franciscans, Valentine Schaaf, distributed a letter throughout the order asking them to work towards bringing about a quick definition from the pope. In addition to sending petitions, the Minister General “asked that the Friars thoroughly investigate every argument possible by which the doctrine of the Assumption of the Blessed

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., sec. 4.

<sup>131</sup> Ohlmann, “The Assumptionist Movement,” 23-24. Ohlmann wrote, “Public Academic Sessions on the Assumption were held at various Pontifical Universities. Petitions poured in from the Catholic Universities and their Faculties, from the *Athenea Studiorum Ecclesiasticorum*, from the Pontifical Colleges and Seminaries, from the Catholic Colleges and Seminaries throughout the world.” Ibid., 24.

<sup>132</sup> Joseph C. Fenton, “Text of the Society’s Petition to the Holy Father that the Doctrine of Our Lady’s Assumption into Heaven be Defined as a Dogma of Divine Faith,” *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 1 (September 1946): 66-67. This was also the group’s first public act.

<sup>133</sup> For an understanding of this term within the context of Newmanian thought, see Michael J. G. Pahls, “School of the Prophets: John Henry Newman’s Anglican Schola and the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian” (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 2015).

<sup>134</sup> In 1951, Juniper Carol published a bibliography recording the known works on the Assumption published over the last century. According to his bibliography, there were approximately 250 publications about the Assumption from 1946 until the definition. This accounts for more than half of the works published over the previous century. Juniper B. Carol, “A Bibliography on the Assumption,” *The Thomist* 14, no. 1 (January 1951): 133-160.

Virgin might be proved to be contained in the *depositum fidei*.”<sup>135</sup> Soon after, the Franciscan governing council created the Central Franciscan Marian Commission and placed Carlo Balić as its president.<sup>136</sup> This new organ of Marian advocacy established national commissions around the world, seven of which held congresses focused on the Assumption prior to the definition in November 1950. Each of these congresses made contributions to the historical and theological study of the Assumption.

The First National Marian Congress of the Italian Friars took place in Rome from April 29 to May 3, 1947. The papers presented spanned an array of topics pertaining to the Assumption. Some addressed the topic of definability and revelation directly.<sup>137</sup> Others examined the Assumption in Scripture, apocryphal writings, and medieval literature.<sup>138</sup> Still others presented on the Assumption in the life of the Church, investigating the Assumption in liturgy, art, and the faith of the Christian people.<sup>139</sup> The congress reached a few conclusions, one of which foreshadowed the eventual dogmatic definition. The congress concluded that a definition would not need to address the issue of Mary’s death.<sup>140</sup> The majority of theologians believed that the end of Mary’s earthly life paralleled the life of Christ, so that Mary underwent

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<sup>135</sup> Ohlmann, “The Assumptionist Movement,” 24.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>137</sup> Balić, “Sulla definibilità dell’Assunzione della Beata Vergine,” 688-697; Magrini, “La morte e L’Assunzione della B. V. Maria nella luce del virtuale rivelato,” 647-682.

<sup>138</sup> Bonaventura Mariani, “L’Assunzione di Maria SS. nella Sacra Scrittura,” in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d’Italia*, 455-509; Donato Baldi and Anacleto Mosconi, “L’Assunzione di Maria SS. negli Apocrifi,” in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d’Italia*, 75-125; Celestino Piana, “La morte e l’Assunzione della B. Vergine nella letteratura medioevale,” in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d’Italia*, 283-361.

<sup>139</sup> Agostino Amore, “La festa della morte e dell’Assunzione della B. Vergine nella liturgia orientale (origine e natura),” in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d’Italia*, 197-222; Liberato Di Stolfi, “La morte e l’Assunzione di Maria SS. nell’arte,” in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d’Italia*, 163-193; Gabriele Giamberardini, “Il valore dommatico della liturgia assunzionistica,” in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d’Italia*, 513-557; Chietini, “L’Assunzione di Maria SS. nella fede della Chiesa,” 561-580; Gualberto Matteucci, “L’Assunzione di Maria SS. nelle Chiese separate d’Oriente,” in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d’Italia*, 417-450.

<sup>140</sup> *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d’Italia*, 10.

death, resurrection, and glorification. Nevertheless, an Assumption definition could forgo passing judgment on the specific details leading up to Mary's translation into heaven, body and soul.<sup>141</sup> The congress also concluded that a definition only required moral certainty. Scripture could only provide moral certainty because neither the literal or spiritual sense contained explicit reference to the Assumption event itself.<sup>142</sup> The congress supported a definition and noted its particular opportuneness as a defense against the errors of naturalism and materialism, showing forth the great dignity and eternal destiny of the human person.<sup>143</sup>

Later that year, the second Franciscan Assumptionist congress took place in Portugal from October 9 to 13, 1947. The published proceedings indicate it was a significantly smaller congress than the one held in Rome. In addition to several presentations particular to the Assumption in Portugal, the congress again featured papers pertaining to definability. This included another paper by Balić on the definability of the dogma, who presented a similar paper at the congress in Rome, as well as papers on the Assumption in patristic tradition, Scripture, and apocryphal writings.<sup>144</sup> Similar to the congress in Rome, this congress concluded that while explicit witness to the doctrine was lacking in Scripture and the earliest patristic tradition, enough evidence existed to reach a moral certitude of its revealed nature.<sup>145</sup> The congress linked a definition's opportuneness to the dangers of materialism.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 640.

<sup>142</sup> *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d'Italia*, 10; Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 26.

<sup>143</sup> *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d'Italia*, 10.

<sup>144</sup> Carlo Balić, "Vers un nouveau dogme marial," in *Actas do Congresso Mariano dos Franciscanos de Portugal*, 165-186; F. Lopes, "A Assunção na tradição patristica," in *Actas do Congresso Mariano dos Franciscanos de Portugal*, 45-64; D. de Sousa, "A Assunção na Sagrada Escritura," in *Actas do Congresso Mariano dos Franciscanos de Portugal*, 5-44; M. Taveira de Silva, "A Assunção nos mais antigos apócrifos," in *Actas do Congresso Mariano dos Franciscanos de Portugal*, 65-86.

<sup>145</sup> *Actas do Congresso Mariano dos Franciscanos de Portugal*, 205-206; Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 641; Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 26.

<sup>146</sup> *Actas do Congresso Mariano dos Franciscanos de Portugal*, 185.

A little more than a week after the congress in Portugal, the Spanish Franciscans held their congress in Madrid from October 21 to 26, 1947. Here, the topic of Mary's earthly death received significant consideration.<sup>147</sup> The dominant view of the congress was that the evidence greatly favored the theory that Mary underwent an earthly death as opposed to the theory of Mary's immortality.<sup>148</sup> Several other papers discussed the definability of the Assumption and its opportuneness, including an appeal to a principle drawn from the Benedictine tradition known as *lex orandi, lex credendi*.<sup>149</sup> Not surprisingly, the congress affirmed its support for the definability and based this support on the collective faith of the Church.<sup>150</sup> Balić's presentation at this congress explained the benefits of a possible definition of the Assumption in light of the victories over heresy and evil obtained through the definition of other Marian dogmas and the spread of Marian devotion.<sup>151</sup> As reiterated throughout these congresses, he hoped that a definition of the Assumption would usher in a victory over the present-day enemies of the Catholic faith.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> B. Aperribay, "La muerte y la Asunción de la Virgen en los representantes de la Mariología franciscano-española," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 263-284; Carlo Balić, "Codices manuscritos de las bibliotecas españolas en torno a la muerte y Asunción de la Virgen," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 245-261; D. Cabanelas, "La muerte y Asunción de la Santísima Virgen en la tradición islámica, en la ciencia y liturgia mozárabes," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 209-243; B. Ocerin Jauregui, "Año de la muerte de María Santísima," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 115-141; Pelayo de Zamayon, "La muerte y la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen en la literatura teológico-homilética de la Provincia Capuchina de Castilla," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 285-304; I. Rodríguez, "La muerte y la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen en San Epifanio," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 103-113; Crisóstomo de Pamplona, "La muerte de la Santísima Virgen a la luz de la Sagrada Escritura, de la tradición y de la teología," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 143-165.

<sup>148</sup> Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 641.

<sup>149</sup> A. Eguiluz, "Lex orandi, lex credendi," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 45-67; J. Pijoán, "Cuando una verdad es definible," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 69-83; B. Viñas, "Oportunidad de la definición dogmática de la Asunción," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 181-206; Carlo Balić, "Significado del actual movimiento asuncionista," in *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 263-376.

<sup>150</sup> *Actas del Congreso Mariano Franciscano-Español*, 380; Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 641-642.

<sup>151</sup> Balić, "Significado del actual movimiento asuncionista," 373. For example, he connected the victory of the Church over many ancient heresies to the definition of Mary's Divine Motherhood and perpetual virginity, the victory over the Cathars, Albigensians, and Turks to the spread of the Rosary, and the victory over Freemasonry, rationalism, and atheism to the definition of the Immaculate Conception.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*; Cecchin, "L'assunzione di Maria," 642.

The fourth Franciscan Assumptionist congress took place nearly a year later in Montreal from August 12 to 15, 1948. The standard topics relating to definability made an appearance, including the Assumption in Scripture, the Fathers, the liturgy, and determining if it was part of revelation.<sup>153</sup> Whereas the previous congress “went on record as agreeing that there is no motive for asserting the immortality of the Virgin Mother,” the congress in Montreal included an argument that upheld the possibility of Mary’s immortality on the basis of her Immaculate Conception.<sup>154</sup> This congress also featured a contribution from Bernard Lonergan in which the renowned Jesuit scholar claimed “a practically universal agreement and consent both down the centuries and throughout the Church provides the theologian with sufficient ground for affirming that the Assumption can be defined.”<sup>155</sup> Lonergan pointed to the Hentrich and de Moos volumes containing the petition data as evidence of this.

The fifth of these congresses met that same year in Buenos Aires from September 28 to October 4, 1948 and provided a platform for the voices of Latin America. The topics considered were akin to those at the previous congresses, but some unique contributions and approaches stand out. An Argentinian Jesuit gave the first paper and explored the Assumption from non-Catholic perspectives, including Orthodox traditions and, intriguingly, Nestorians and Monophysites.<sup>156</sup> A series of four papers detailed the evidence for belief in the Assumption

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<sup>153</sup> C. F. De Vine, “The Fathers of the Church and the Assumption,” in *Vers le dogme de l’Assomption*, 399-410; Léandre Poirier, “Le chapitre XII de l’Apocalypse fait-il allusion à l’Assomption?” in *Vers le dogme de l’Assomption*, 93-102; Malo, “La Bible et l’Assomption,” 103-122; C. Morin, “The Assumption and the Liturgy,” in *Vers le dogme de l’Assomption*, 391-397; Shaun Govenlock, “The Problem of the Assumption,” in *Vers le dogme de l’Assomption*, 381-390; Bernard Lonergan, “The Assumption and Theology,” in *Vers le dogme de l’Assomption*, 411-424; P. Vadeboncoeur, “Comment reconnaître une doctrine révélée,” in *Vers le dogme de l’Assomption*, 75-91.

<sup>154</sup> Ohlmann, “The Assumptionist Movement,” 29; Jean Bonnefoy, “L’Assomption de la Très-Sainte Vierge et sa prédestination,” in *Vers le dogme de l’Assomption*, 293-335.

<sup>155</sup> Lonergan, “The Assumption and Theology,” 412.

<sup>156</sup> Juan Rosanas, “Doctrina de las Iglesias separadas, sobre la Muerte y Asunción de la Santísima Virgen,” in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, 13-28.

found in Latin American countries, specifically Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.<sup>157</sup> These were unique contributions from local theologians that a purely Eurocentric movement could not produce. Three other papers explored the evidence for the Assumption through the lens of Mary's royalty and heavenly queenship.<sup>158</sup> The congress's resolutions included unanimous agreement that the Assumption should be defined as a dogma of faith. The congresses had considered the Assumption to consist of four principal parts: real death, corporeal incorruption, bodily resurrection, and heavenly resurrection. However, the unanimous resolution limited the desired dogmatic definition to mean "the Mother of God enjoys in heaven the most perfect beatitude, present in body and soul before the glory of the Most High."<sup>159</sup>

The penultimate Franciscan Assumptionist congress held prior to the definition returned to Europe the following year, this time taking place in Puy-en-Velay, France from August 11 to 15, 1949. Based on the published proceedings, the connection between the Assumption and other Marian privileges was a dominant theme. Three papers examined the Assumption in light of the Mary's Divine Maternity, Immaculate Conception, and Co-redemption.<sup>160</sup> Some of the research focused on regional evidence of belief in the Assumption, specifically in the French liturgy and

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<sup>157</sup> Bernardino Echeverría, "La Asunción de la Virgen María en la Historia, en el Arte y en la Literatura del pueblo ecuatoriano, en los siglos XVII, XVIII y XIX," in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, 97-125; Federico Richter, "El culto de la Asunción en el Perú," in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, 129-142; Buenaventura Vargas, "El culto de la Asunción de la Santísima Virgen María en Bolivia," in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, 145-155; Honorio Aguilera, "La Asunción en Chile," in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, 159-200.

<sup>158</sup> Serapio de Yragui, "La Realeza de la Virgen María en la Liturgia," in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, 31-65; Eduardo Rosales, "La Realeza de María en las Sagradas Escrituras," in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, 203-230; Jesús M. de Goicoechea, "Explicación teológica de la Realeza de María," in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, 259-304.

<sup>159</sup> *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, xxiii. Spanish: "la Madre de Dios goza en el cielo de perfectísima beatitud, presente en cuerpo y alma ante la gloria del Altísimo."

<sup>160</sup> Luc Laurent, "L'Assomption et la maternité divine," in *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge*, 135-150; E. Longpre, "L'Assomption et l'Immaculée-Conception," in *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge*, 243-282; Henri Rondet, "Assomption et Corédemption," in *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge*, 151-173.

devotion in the local diocese of du Puy.<sup>161</sup> As one would expect, papers also addressed definability.<sup>162</sup> Among the papers on definability, Hubert Délesty's broader consideration of the various positions Catholic theologians held regarding the conditions necessary for a dogmatic definition was noteworthy. Though not an argument for definability, it pushed back against the dominant neo-scholastic view, as represented by Garrigou-Lagrange, that a dogmatic definition could only occur if a doctrine was formally-implicitly revealed.<sup>163</sup>

Just prior to the definition, the seventh Franciscan Assumptionist congress took place in the United States. From October 8 to 11, 1950, American friars gathered in Washington, DC, anxiously awaiting the pope's promulgation of the new Marian dogma and presenting further research on its various elements. The majority of the congress focused on historical studies, whether on the Assumptionist movement itself, Marian devotion in the United States, or the Marian teachings of Catholic saints and theologians.<sup>164</sup> No papers argued for the possibility of the Assumption's definition. Those in attendance knew that the pope would define the dogma in less than a month on November 1, 1950. The one paper on the definition itself presented a

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<sup>161</sup> A. Fayard, "L'Assomption de la Liturgie Gallicane à la Liturgie Française," in *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge*, 29-45; André Chanal, "L'Assomption dans le diocèse du Puy," in *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge*, 47-55.

<sup>162</sup> Thaddée Soiron, "Nature et effets de la définition dogmatique," in *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge*, 175-188; Hubert Délesty, "Conditions de la définition dogmatique," in *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge*, 189-209; Jean Bonnefoy, "Définibilité de l'Assomption," in *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge*, 211-242.

<sup>163</sup> Délesty, "Conditions de la définition dogmatique," 204-209.

<sup>164</sup> Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement and the Franciscan Marian Congresses," 19-30; Marion Habig, "The Cult of the Assumption of Our Lady in the United States, 1598-1888," in *First Franciscan National Marian Congress in Acclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption*, 83-119; Maurice Grajewski, "The Franciscan Marian Cult in the United States in Our Times," in *First Franciscan National Marian Congress in Acclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption*, 120-125; Noel Moholy, "St. Irenaeus: The Father of Mariology," in *First Franciscan National Marian Congress in Acclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption*, 129-187; Raphael Huber, "Mariology of St. Anthony of Padua," *First Franciscan National Marian Congress in Acclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption*, 188-268; Nathaniel Sonntag, "The Marian Doctrine of St. Lawrence of Brindisi," in *First Franciscan National Marian Congress in Acclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption*, 269-282; May, "The Assumption in the Exegetical Works of Franciscans," 285-301.

general defense of the pope's upcoming action and lamented that "not all of Adam's children can share their [Catholics'] heartfelt joy" at the occasion.<sup>165</sup>

### *The Movement's Crowning Achievement*

Shortly after this seventh Franciscan Assumptionist congress, Pius XII gave an allocution to the College of Cardinals and hundreds of bishops.<sup>166</sup> Taking place only two days before the solemn definition, the pope revealed that the response to *Deiparae Virginis Mariae* had been overwhelmingly positive. The pope described how "in a wonderful and almost unanimous chorus, the voices of the shepherds and of the faithful from every part of the world reached Us professing the same faith and requesting the same things as supremely desired by all."<sup>167</sup> According to Pius XII, it was not the voice of a single region or class, but the voice of the whole Church, bishops and their flocks in unison from around the world. The unanimity served as a key factor in proceeding to the dogmatic definition. The pope explained that since it was impossible for the whole Church to be deceived, it was certain that "this truth, firmly believed by the holy shepherds and by the people, has been revealed by God, and can be defined by Our supreme authority."<sup>168</sup> Next, the pope turned to the cardinals and bishops in attendance, asking, "Is it your good pleasure, Venerable Brethren, that We proclaim and define, as a dogma revealed by God, the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven?"<sup>169</sup> The cardinals and bishops responded that it did please them. The pope expressed his joy at their reply, "because by this admirable agreement of the cardinals and bishops with the Roman Pontiff there emerges still

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<sup>165</sup> Thomas Plassmann, "The Papal Definition of the Dogma of the Assumption," in *First Franciscan National Marian Congress in Acclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption*, 302.

<sup>166</sup> Pius XII, *Nostis Profecto*, allocution, October 30, 1950, in *Papal Documents on Mary*, comps. William J. Doherty and Joseph P. Kelly (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing, 1954), 215-219.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.



more clearly what the holy Church believes, teaches, and desires in this matter.”<sup>170</sup> Though the pope made passing mention of the diligent research that had preceded this definition, he celebrated the agreement of the Church as a valuable criteria for knowing the truth.

Two days later, on November 1, 1950, Pius XII promulgated the Assumption of Mary as a dogma of the Catholic Church. In the Apostolic Constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus*, the pope addressed the definability, fittingness, and opportuneness of the new Marian dogma. The precise definition and its theological basis have particular relevance for the subsequent chapters of this study. The pope acknowledged the work of theologians on the Assumption, commending the Marian congresses specifically, for helping to bring “out into even clearer light the fact that the dogma of the Virgin Mary's Assumption into heaven is contained in the deposit of Christian faith entrusted to the Church.”<sup>171</sup> The next two chapters of this study will explore the theological complexities and debates surrounding the doctrine's existence in this deposit.

Affirmation that God had revealed the doctrine was essential. A definition was only possible because the Assumption of Mary was 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.”<sup>172</sup> The agreement among the people of God served as the primary justification for affirming its inclusion in revelation. Though the pope did not use the term *sensus fidelium*, it is applicable to his claim.<sup>173</sup> Invoking *Ineffabilis Deus* and quoting it directly, the pope explained

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 8.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., sec. 12.

<sup>173</sup> The term *sensus fidelium* became more common after Vatican II. It is heavily associated with the thought of John Henry Newman. For a detailed study on the usage of the term after Vatican II, see Daniel J. Finucane, *Sensus Fidelium: The Use of a Concept in the Post-Vatican II Era* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2016). For a recent constructive work relating to reception in the Church, see Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009). For recent Newman scholarship, see Ryan J. Marr, *To Be Perfect Is to Have Changed Often: The Development of John Henry Newman's Ecclesiological Outlook, 1845-1877* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books-Fortress Academic, 2018); Andrew Meszaros, *The Prophetic Church: History and Doctrinal Development in John Henry Newman and*

it was the “outstanding agreement of the Catholic prelates and the faithful” on the doctrine’s definability that “shows us the concordant teaching of the Church’s ordinary doctrinal authority and the concordant faith of the Christian people,” which is a certain and infallible proof of its inclusion in revelation.<sup>174</sup> Confirmation of the doctrine’s inclusion in revelation rested on the testimony of the whole Church, though other evidence existed. The pope highlighted several monuments attesting to belief in the Assumption in the tradition of the Church.<sup>175</sup> The testimony and teachings of numerous saints and theologians added further evidence.<sup>176</sup>

The pope also addressed the doctrine’s relation to Scripture. After surveying the testimony from saints and theologians, the pope asserted, “All these proofs and considerations [about the Assumption of Mary] of the holy Fathers and the theologians are based upon (Latin: *nituntur*) the Sacred Writings as their ultimate foundation.”<sup>177</sup> The word choice here matters. Claiming proofs were based upon Scripture suggested the Bible was not a self-sufficient source for ascertaining the doctrine. This conformed to the general conclusions of Catholic biblical scholarship in the years immediately preceding the definition.<sup>178</sup> But the pope’s claim also meant the Assumption had a real connection to Scripture. Mary’s Assumption was not relegated to some nebulous and, for several centuries, untraceable oral tradition from the Apostles. Rather, Scripture affirmed the truth of Mary’s Assumption, not explicitly recording the event in clear language, but as a truth discernable by interpreting the Bible in light of tradition.

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*Yves Congar* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016); Andrew Meszaros, “*Ecclesia Docens et Cogitans*: Doctrinal Development and the Illative Sense of the Church,” *Newman Studies Journal* 15, no. 1 (Summer 2018): 5-28; David P. Long, “John Henry Newman and the Consultation of the Faithful,” *Newman Studies Journal* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 18-31.

<sup>174</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 12.

<sup>175</sup> Foremost, the liturgy, but also the dedication of temples, art, patronage, and the rosary.

<sup>176</sup> Those named included John Damascene, Germanus of Constantinople, Modestus of Jerusalem, Amadeus of Lausanne, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Francis de Sales, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Peter Canisius, and Francisco Suárez.

<sup>177</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 38.

<sup>178</sup> Chapter three discusses this topic.

*Munificentissimus Deus* did not explicitly detail this connection but the pope implied as much when considering Mary's intimate union with Christ and unique role in the economy of salvation in relation to Genesis 3:15.<sup>179</sup>

The definition occurred at the conclusion of *Munificentissimus Deus*. Employing a near identical formula as Pius IX's definition of the Immaculate Conception, Pius XII proclaimed:

... by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.<sup>180</sup>

One immediately notices the simplicity of the definition and the possibility it left open for disparate beliefs pertaining to the end of Mary's earthly life. The definition altogether avoided the question of Mary's death. Regardless, the Assumptionist movement had, at long last, succeeded in obtaining a new Marian dogma.

### *Conclusion*

The Assumptionist movement was a movement of the whole Church towards the recognition of the Assumption of Mary as a truth revealed by God and contained within the deposit of faith. Pius XII's dogmatic definition confirmed the authenticity of this belief present throughout the Church. The history of the movement leading up to this definition is critical because without it, the pope could appear to have acted in an isolated way, disconnected from the life of the Church. The pope had a unique and definitive role in the movement's crowning achievement, but the laity, theologians, and members of the hierarchy all contributed. The laity provided testimony of their belief and urged the pope to act in immense numbers. Theologians

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<sup>179</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 38-39.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 44.

published research seeking to overcome obstacles to a definition and to explain how to locate the doctrine within revelation. Bishops and priests participated in these efforts as well, often collaborating with the laity.

Humanly speaking, the Church's ability to perceive the Assumption as part of revelation was the result of an emerging horizon of expectation within the Catholic Church. No single event in the Church's past conditioned the Church to perceive what had long been obscure. Nor had revelation changed. Rather, a complex series of insights and events, both prior to the Assumptionist movement and during it, produced a horizon of expectation in the Church capable of recognizing a reality that, it was argued, always existed.

The recovery of the Assumptionist movement continues in the next three chapters. In these chapters, the focus shifts to the theological scholarship published at the height of the movement. Chapter two explores debates surrounding definability and revelation. Chapter three looks specifically at biblical scholarship to better understand how theologians interpreted Scripture to discern the Assumption. Chapter four turns to the role of the laity and their treatment in theological reflection. Collectively, these chapters help to recover the Assumptionist movement as a meaningful locus of inquiry into the life and theology of pre-conciliar Catholicism.

## CHAPTER 2

### ARGUING DEFINABILITY

The previous chapter narrated the near century-long history of the Assumptionist movement's efforts to obtain a dogmatic definition. This was a movement of the whole Church. Both laity and members of the hierarchy from around the world participated. They testified to their belief and expressed their desire for a definition in a host of petitions. The movement fostered devotion through indulgence prayers aimed at quickly obtaining the new dogma. These efforts were ultimately successful, and Pius XII declared the Assumption a dogma of the Catholic faith in 1950. But the movement's efforts included more than amassing support and spreading prayers. There were significant theological difficulties surrounding a possible definition, and it was the work of theologians to find solutions.

Investigating the work of theologians during the Assumptionist movement requires a carefully defined scope. The movement spanned almost a hundred years and the theological context changed drastically during this time.<sup>1</sup> This chapter, as well as chapters three and four, considers theological work published at the height of the Assumptionist movement. I define the height of the movement as the period between Pius XII's *Deiparae Virginis Mariae* (May 1, 1946) and the dogmatic definition in *Munificentissimus Deus* (November 1, 1950). This era of scholarship had two distinct advantages over previous eras. First, theological research had nearly a century to mature. Theologians had both the benefit of prior scholarship on the Assumption and

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<sup>1</sup> To name just a few of these changes, scholarship from the beginning of the movement was published prior to Vatican I and the teaching on papal infallibility. Between Vatican I and 1950, theologians worked in the context of modernism and the anti-modernist reaction. Subsequently, there was the rise of the *ressourcement* movement. Theologians carried out their work in a changing geopolitical context too. New political and economic ideologies emerged that disregarded the dignity of the human person and the outbreak of two world wars brought about a scale of destruction previously unimaginable.

access to more recent historical and biblical scholarship. Second, since a papal definition appeared imminent, interest in the Assumption broadened. Much of the early scholarship was the product of the most avid supporters of the movement. At this later date, theologians who were less invested in the promotion of the movement also published. The result was differing perspectives entering the debate which in turn helped accentuate the most contentious points.

This chapter focuses on the most fundamental difficulty theologians addressed: definability. No amount of popular support could permit the Church to do the impossible. A dogmatic definition required that the Assumption be contained in revelation. If revelation included the Assumption, the pope could present a new dogma that taught the truth of the Assumption in clear and explicit language. However, if it stood outside of revelation, the pope had no authority to present it as a new dogma. While the magisterium was understood to be the final arbiter of this question, theological research and argumentation provided a valuable service and acted as a preliminary study.

Arguments about the Assumption's definability, in some form, stretch back to the beginning of the movement and proved a popular topic for scholarly attention among Catholic theologians.<sup>2</sup> Given the volume of publications, it is necessary to limit the present investigation to a selection of theological representatives. The majority opinion in published scholarship affirmed the possibility of a dogmatic definition of the Assumption. However, theologians diverged in their reasoning. Most held that the Assumption is formally-implicitly revealed. This meant it is possible to derive the doctrine from two revealed premises. The conclusion of a syllogism is contained implicitly in its premises. Thus, the conclusion of a syllogism that uses two revealed premises is itself revealed. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange and Juniper Carol

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<sup>2</sup> Juniper Carol's bibliography included at least 75 publications relating to definability prior to the definition. For a comprehensive list, see Carol, "A Bibliography on the Assumption," 133-160.

represented this position. The former, a French Dominican, was one of the most influential Thomists of the time and a staunch defender of scholasticism.<sup>3</sup> The latter, a Franciscan of Cuban descent, was a renowned Mariology scholar and founded the Mariological Society of America.<sup>4</sup>

Other theologians who affirmed definability did so based on virtual revelation. Like demonstrating a truth is formally-implicitly revealed, demonstrating a truth is virtually revealed relies on syllogistic reasoning. The difference is that a virtually revealed truth only requires one revealed premise. The other premise has to be a metaphysical certainty. This creates a conclusion believed to be virtually present in revelation. The most high-profile defender of virtual revelation's sufficiency was Carlo Balić.<sup>5</sup> As president of the Central Franciscan Marian Commission, Balić helped organize the Franciscan Assumptionist congresses.<sup>6</sup> At the first congress in Rome, Balić and the congress predictably affirmed definability.<sup>7</sup> As a practical matter, Balić claimed the consensus of the faithful sufficed for the pope to proceed to a dogmatic definition. But theologically, he thought it possible to justify a definition based on virtual revelation. He pointed to the scholarship of Egidio Magrini, a fellow Franciscan who presented at the same congress, in defense of virtual revelation and its place in the scholastic theological tradition.

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<sup>3</sup> For a biography on Garrigou-Lagrange that recounts some of the theological and philosophical disputes he was involved in, see Richard Peddicord, *The Sacred Monsters of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2005). For an accessible introduction to his thought, see Aidan Nichols, *Reason with Piety: Garrigou-Lagrange in the Service of Catholic Thought* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> For an overview on Carol's work and impact, see Peter Fehlner, "Fr. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M.: His Mariology and Scholarly Achievement," *Marian Studies* 43 (1992): 17-47.

<sup>5</sup> Balić played a pivotal role in the final years of the Assumptionist movement, founded the Pontifical Academy of Mary, and contributed to Vatican II's teaching on Mary and the Church. For more on Balić's contributions, see Gaspar Calvo Moralejo and Stefano Cecchin, eds., *Memoria eius in benedictione: atti del Simposio internazionale per il 1° centenario della nascita di P. Carlo Balić (1899-1999)* (Città del Vaticano: Pontificia Accademia Mariana Internazionale, 2001). For details on Balić at Vatican II, see Charles W. Neumann, "Mary and the Church: Lumen Gentium, Arts. 60 to 65," *Marian Studies* 37 (1986): 96-142.

<sup>6</sup> Ohlmann, "The Assumptionist Movement," 24-25.

<sup>7</sup> *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Frati minori d'Italia*, 10.

Beyond the realm of scholastic argumentation, Gérard Philips, who would become known for his role at Vatican II, supported definability based on an epistemology akin to the thought of John Henry Newman.<sup>8</sup> He rejected the need for strict syllogistic reasoning and instead appealed to the convergence of probabilities as a sufficient pretext for the magisterium to act.

While most theologians who published on the definability of the Assumption concluded the magisterium could proceed to a dogma, it was not unanimous. The publication of negative assessments was uncommon and often met with a flurry of critical responses. One such case occurred in 1947 when Joseph Coppens, a Scripture professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, published a critique of definability based on historical method which received significant backlash.<sup>9</sup>

Examining these select arguments aids in the recovery of the theological discourse about the Assumption's definability during the height of the Assumptionist movement. This decidedly historical approach serves to ascertain what theologians argued at a particular moment in the Church's life. After a brief explanation of the central difficulty surrounding a possible dogmatic

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<sup>8</sup> Philips served on the Preparatory Theological Commission prior to Vatican II and later as a peritus for the Belgian bishops. For a concise and accessible overview of Philips's role in Vatican II, see Jared Wick's review of Philip's published notes from the council in "More light on Vatican Council II," *The Catholic Historical Review* 94, no. 1 (January 2008): 76-80. Newman's thought here refers to his use of "antecedent probability" and the distinction he made between certitude and certainty. This appeared in his famous essay on development but more directly in his larger philosophical work on faith and certitude. Antecedent probably became more prominent in the revised 1878 edition of Newman's essay than in the original 1845 edition. For relevant passages on antecedent probability and method from Newman's 1878 edition, see John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6th ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 99-110. For relevant passages on Newman's understanding of certainty, see John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, ed. Nicholas Lash (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 173-208. For a helpful overview of Newman's usage of antecedent probability in argumentation, see Nicholas Lash, *Newman on Development: The Search for an Explanation in History* (Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos, 1975), 20-45.

<sup>9</sup> Carol's publication, examined in this chapter, was part of the backlash against Coppens article. Regarding Coppens, his work while at the Catholic University of Louvain focused on Old Testament exegesis. After he left the university in 1967, he turned his attention to messianic expectation. For more on Coppens, see Frans Neirynck, "J. Coppens, fondateur des Journées Bibliques de Louvain: Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense, 1949-1981," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 57, no. 4 (1981): 274-292. Some of Coppens's publications on the Old Testament included, *L'Histoire critique de l'Ancien Testament: ses origines, ses orientations nouvelles, ses perspectives d'avenir* (Paris: Casterman, 1938); *Histoire critique des livres de l'Ancien Testament*, 3rd ed (Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer: 1942).



definition, this chapter proceeds with an analysis of the various arguments expounded by the selected representatives. This analysis begins with Coppens's negative assessment before moving on to the majority opinion and reasoning articulated in Garrigou-Lagrange and Carol. Next, it takes up the argument put forth at the first Franciscan Assumptionist congress in the work of Balić and Magrini. Finally, it explores Philips's contribution which deviated from the scholastic approaches. Analysis reveals fundamental disagreements among Catholic theologians over determining the contents of revelation. The disagreements stemmed from disparate theological methods that differed on the use of history and philosophy in theological inquiry. This debate amongst prominent, faithful theologians suggests the complexity of doctrinal development.<sup>10</sup> It also highlights the existence of diverse theological perspectives in pre-conciliar Catholic theology; an era sometimes misconstrued as monolithic or stagnant. Despite methodological disagreements, the fact that theologians overwhelmingly supported a definition implied widespread acknowledgement of possible growth in the Church's understanding of an unchanging revelation.

### *The "Problem" of the Assumption*

Disagreements arose about the definability of the Assumption as a dogma because there was no explicit mention of the Assumption in the common sources of revelation. The problem of

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<sup>10</sup> The development of doctrine in modern Catholic discourse is nearly synonymous with the work of John Henry Newman. For his major text, see Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. For analysis of the essay, see Lash, *Newman on Development: The Search for an Explanation in History*. Owen Chadwick traced the idea of development through various stages in Church history. His study is helpful for understanding how Newman's understanding of development differed from other explanations. See, Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: The Idea of Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957). There is also the question of the reception of Newman's theory in Rome. It was long assumed that Newman's theory was inconsequential in Roman circles until the twentieth century. Recent research has successfully challenged that assumption. For details on the early reception of Newman's theory in Rome, see C. Michael Shea, *Newman's Early Roman Catholic Legacy: 1845-1854* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

definability then, was closely related to the difficulties of doctrinal development. Shaun Govenlock, a priest from the University of Montreal, presented a concise and instructive paper on this “problem” at the Franciscan Assumptionist congress held in Montreal from August 12 to 15, 1948. He explained that “there can be no dogmatic definition except where the matter concerned is *divinely revealed truth*.”<sup>11</sup> But where was divinely revealed truth contained? According to Vatican I, revelation was contained in Scripture and tradition.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the Assumption must be contained in Scripture or tradition for a definition to be possible. Furthermore, dogma, in its most proper sense, “can embrace only those truths about God and salvation which are the faithful expressions of what the Holy Spirit himself has directly made known to us.”<sup>13</sup> Dogmatic theology referred to these truths as the *formal* content of revelation. If revelation ended with the death of the last apostle, the call of the faithful for a new dogmatic definition nearly 1900 years later might justly cause some apprehension. How could the formal content of revelation remain hidden or obscured for so long? Govenlock recognized that this was a problem in every age. Theologians must reconcile the immutable nature of revelation with “the manifest *fact* of history that repeatedly through the centuries do we discover the Church proclaiming dogmas which had not been so enuntiated [sic] before.”<sup>14</sup> The call for a dogmatic definition of the Assumption was only the latest instance of this fact. Theories pertaining to the development of doctrine attempted to explain this recurring phenomenon. Here, Govenlock addressed doctrinal development in terms of the Church penetrating the depths of revelation with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> This deeper understanding was necessary because the formal

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<sup>11</sup> Govenlock, “The Problem of the Assumption,” 382; italics in the original.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 383.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.; italics in the original.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 384-5. Govenlock invoked Ambroise Gardeil’s three phases in doctrinal development. He summarized these phases as: “1. – the perception, the awareness of some unexplored depth in the deposit of revelation. 2. – a heightening and intensification of all the human energies in the effort to grasp fully and distinctly the fuller meaning

content of revelation was not always contained explicitly but often only implicitly. Since the Assumption was not formally-explicitly contained in revelation, its definability required demonstrating it was a formally-implicitly revealed truth.<sup>16</sup>

Govenlock's articulation of the requirements for a dogmatic definition corresponded to the majority view among theologians working on the issue at the time. Still, the requirement of demonstrating a truth was at least formally-implicitly revealed was not universally accepted. Even for those who dissented from the majority view, the difficulty remained of how to demonstrate the Assumption was contained in revelation. Ultimately it was understood that the magisterium was the final judge of revelation's contents, but it was theologians who first worked out potential solutions to the inherent difficulty of the Assumption's definability.

### *A Historical Critique*

Some theologians, however, remained unconvinced that a dogmatic definition was desirable or that apodictic arguments existed. Joseph Coppens published the preeminent critique of definability during this period. For Coppens, it was not a question of the Assumption as an accepted supernatural reality. The enshrinement of the Assumption in the Church's liturgy and preaching indicated its acceptance as part of the larger system of Catholic belief.<sup>17</sup> He had no qualms with the Church teaching and the faithful believing the Mother of God resided in a glorified state, body and soul, in Heaven. The real difficulty with definability was the desire to raise this common belief and teaching to the level of dogma. As Coppens articulated the crux of

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of the revealed truth. 3. – finally, the great endeavour to establish the harmony of the newly-acquired insight with the total pattern of revelation.” Ibid., 385. For Gardeil's text see, Ambroise Gardeil, *Le donné révélé et la théologie* (Paris: Édition du Cerf, 1932).

<sup>16</sup> Govenlock, “The Problem of the Assumption,” 386.

<sup>17</sup> Coppens, “La définibilité de l'Assomption,” 6-7.

his article, “it is a question of knowing if in the view of a rigorous theological science, this same privilege [the Assumption] appears as being part of the divine-Catholic faith; in other words ... as belonging to the deposit of revelation.”<sup>18</sup> If public revelation ended with the death of the last Apostle, evidence of the Assumption should appear in the common sources of this revelation, namely, Scripture and the writings of the early Church Fathers.<sup>19</sup>

However, Coppens noted that some promoters of a dogmatic definition desired the magisterium to proceed with a definition based solely on the common faith of the Church.<sup>20</sup> He did not doubt the authority of the magisterium to act in this way, but thought the Assumption failed to meet the necessary criteria. According to Coppens, the requirements were twofold. First, there was a need for a “real unanimity or at least an overwhelming majority of witnesses who confess their faith in the Assumption.”<sup>21</sup> Second, the bishops would need to express their faith in the Assumption as pastors, not private theologians, and their desire to make this belief binding on the faithful.<sup>22</sup> On both fronts Coppens believed the criteria was not met. He doubted the faithful were bold enough to assert the Assumption was a revealed truth and pointed to the lack of uniformity and clarity in the petitions, particularly those from the bishops, as to the doctrine’s containment in revelation.<sup>23</sup> Coppens explained that judgment of the sufficiency of the testimony resided with the magisterium. Should the testimony of the faithful and the bishops suffice in the magisterium’s eyes, Coppens still thought proceeding with a dogmatic definition incredibly inopportune. Proceeding with a definition, while supplying no evidence from the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 7. French: “il s’agit de savoir si aux regards d’une science théologique rigoureuse, ce même privilège apparaît comme ressortissant à la foi catholico-divine; en d’autres termes ... comme appartenant au dépôt de la révélation.”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. French: “vraiment unanimité ou, pour le moins, majorité écrasante de témoins qui confessent leur foi en l’Assomption.”

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

common sources, would show great indifference to theological research and lead to unnecessary reproach from non-Catholic Christians.<sup>24</sup> Essentially, Coppens was arguing against appealing to the magisterium to act in a way disconnected from Scripture, tradition, and theological research. Specifically, he warned against employing a sort of illuminism that did not include the use of reason and historical methods of investigation.<sup>25</sup>

Even if some sought a definition from the magisterium based solely on the consensus of the faithful, many theologians had put forward arguments using Scripture, tradition, and theological reasoning. Coppens believed the arguments were unconvincing. Before presenting his critique, he precisely defined what, in his judgment, these arguments would need to demonstrate. Reflections on the Assumption often included Mary's death and resurrection, as part of the whole Assumption event. This was not unanimous and, here, Coppens accepted the possibility of a narrower definition. All could agree that the Assumption must at least "attribute in anticipation to the Virgin the privileges of a glorious bodily transfiguration and of a no less glorious exaltation in heaven."<sup>26</sup> This also provided the key to what the theologians needed to demonstrate. It was not that Mary *would at some time* possess a gloriously transfigured body in heaven, for that was the fate of all saints. Theologians must demonstrate that Mary possessed this right of all saints in an anticipatory manner.<sup>27</sup>

Coppens critiqued four interpretations or deductions from Scripture typically used to build an argument demonstrating the Assumption was formally-implicitly revealed. First, many arguments made use of Genesis 3:15. The basic claim was that the foretold woman was the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 15. French: "attribuer par anticipation à la Vierge les privilèges d'une glorieuse transfiguration corporelle et d'une exaltation non moins glorieuse au ciel."

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 15.

Mother of God and her triumph over the serpent was a triumph over Satan which included victory over death. Coppens doubted the veracity of these interpretive leaps, but noted that even if all of this were the true meaning of the passage, one cannot deduce from it that the victory over death was necessarily anticipatory.<sup>28</sup> Second, using Luke 1:28, certain arguments began from Mary's fullness of grace to draw out her numerous privileges. Coppens rebutted that the original text made no mention of fullness and that it was highly unlikely that the evangelist meant to include the privilege of the Assumption in these words.<sup>29</sup> Third, some theologians appealed to the woman in Revelation 12:1-2 as a figure of Mary. Here, Coppens offered an extended commentary on the matter, but noted that the best commentators recognized the woman as a figure of the Church.<sup>30</sup> Fourth and finally, he examined the use of a series of Pauline texts from 1 Corinthians and Romans. In these texts, Paul taught resurrection and glorification were the completion of redemption and postponed until the parousia as part of the penalty for sin. The argument based on these texts was that since Mary was exempt from all stain of sin as defined in the Immaculate Conception, she need not await the parousia. Coppens believed this was one of the better arguments from Scripture but did not believe it rose to the level of an apodictic proof. Though any postponement in Mary's glorification could not result from sin, it could result from some unknown providential reason.<sup>31</sup>

Coppens's analysis of arguments from tradition was more limited. Typically, the writings of early Church Fathers served as sources. Yet, the extant corpus from early Christianity contained no explicit mention of the Assumption. Thus, the only possibility of establishing the Assumption based on tradition was to appeal to "the testimony of the apocryphal legends which

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 20.

inform us about the glorious end of Mary.”<sup>32</sup> For Coppens, two difficulties arose from this pursuit. First, the earliest trace of these legends that historical research could find was the testimony of a second-century heretic.<sup>33</sup> Second, the testimony only recorded that Mary’s body disappeared. The Assumption was offered as a possible solution to the disappearance of her body. Some other ancient authors even speculated that “the body of the Virgin had been somewhere hidden underground, reposed in a safe place, to wait there for the parousia.”<sup>34</sup> Needless to say, arguments from the common sources of tradition or even apocryphal legends were futile.

Turning to speculative theology, Coppens examined two types of arguments. One started from Mary’s unique role alongside Christ in the economy of salvation and another began with the Immaculate Conception. The first type of argument enlisted Mary as the new Eve, Mary as co-redemptrix, or some other language to highlight Mary’s unique union with Christ, as the major premise. Regardless of the minor premise used, Coppens perceived a few weaknesses in the primary claim. He questioned the certainty of Mary’s association with Christ in all the work of salvation, her immediate participation in redemption, the doctrinal depth of the title “new Eve,” and even the apostolicity of the title. Personally, he accepted the parallel between Adam-Christ and Eve-Mary, but he openly wondered if other scholars would concur.<sup>35</sup> The second type of argument sought to juxtapose Mary’s immunity from original sin with the penalties of sin to claim the inability of her body to remain in the grave. Coppens thought such argumentation

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 21. French: “le témoignage des légendes apocryphes qui nous entretiennent de la fin glorieuse de Marie.”

<sup>33</sup> Coppens was referring to Leucius Charinus, the attributed author of the five apocryphal “Leucian Acts.” The texts are sometimes referred to as “Apostolic romances.” In this claim, Coppens was following a theory presented by B. Capelle who traced the origins of accounts of Mary’s end back to this author. For that theory, see B. Capelle “La fête de l’Assomption dans l’histoire liturgique,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 3 (1926): 33-45.

<sup>34</sup> Coppens, “La définibilité de l’Assomption,” 22. French: “le corps de la Vierge avait été quelque part caché sous terre, reposé en lieu sûr, pour y attendre la parousie.”

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 25.

required too much speculation on the extent of the penalties of original sin.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, even though Mary was truly exempt from all sin, this was still the result of Christ's redemptive action, albeit in a unique way. Therefore, Coppens claimed that, unlike her Son, Mary was not completely "foreign to the order which suffers the penalties of a primordial sin."<sup>37</sup> He seemed to suggest that Mary might have more in common with the rest of the human race than other theologians wanted to admit.

Most of all, Coppens remained unconvinced that any of the arguments demonstrated the historical fact of the Assumption itself. In his own estimation:

one arrives at most, it seems, to establish a priori, with the aid of considerations principally speculative, to *the doctrine, or the notion, and a certain necessity of the Assumption*, while *the fact of the Assumption itself*, in what I would call *its historical reality*, that is to say in the concrete circumstances that have accompanied it here below and in the wrapping of testimonies which normally should be able to establish it, would continue to elude us.<sup>38</sup>

The Assumption, then, was "a *transhistorical or purely doctrinal fact*."<sup>39</sup> It arose out of a connection with other true teachings of the faith and not out of a connection with the historical sources of revelation.<sup>40</sup> There was no historical evidence to establish the commonly accepted steps preceding her glorification. Thus, the Assumption, as a truth of faith, must exclude Mary's death and resurrection, include her translation into heaven only indirectly, and include directly

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. French: "étrangère à l'ordre qui subit les peines d'un péché primordial."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 27. French: "on arrive tout au plus, semble-t-il, à établir à priori, à l'aide de considérations principalement spéculatives à, *la doctrine, ou la notion, et une certaine nécessité de l'Assomption*, tandis que *le fait lui-même de l'Assomption*, dans ce que j'appellerais *sa réalité historique*, c'est-à-dire dans les circonstances concrètes qui l'ont accompagné ici-bas et dans l'enveloppe de témoignages qui normalement devraient pouvoir l'établir, continuerait à nous échapper."

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. French: "un *fait transhistorique ou purement doctrinal*."

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 28.



“the celestial, spiritual and bodily glorification of the Virgin, with all the supernatural aspects that include for her a privilege so glorious.”<sup>41</sup> This was the most Coppens could accept.

Nevertheless, he still believed any dogmatic definition was inopportune. He noted the lack of apodictic demonstration and the abysmal evidence from positive theology.<sup>42</sup> Particularly, he thought the idea of obtaining a dogmatic definition of the Assumption in its total, integral concept that included Mary’s death and resurrection, “as a truth going back by way of tradition, therefore *historically*, to the *apostolic* deposit of faith, must necessarily be repugnant to minds trained in historical science.”<sup>43</sup> There were other reasons for its inopportuneness as well. Coppens highlighted the danger of the Church appearing to have little regard for historical science, the possibility of people believing dogma and history were unrelated, and the addition of another hurdle for non-Catholics seeking reunion with the Church.<sup>44</sup>

Recognizing he was one of the few scholarly voices not in favor of a dogmatic definition, Coppens hypothesized why few had voiced concern and suggested some alternatives to a dogmatic definition. In his estimation, the lack of published objections to a dogmatic definition among Catholic theologians did not indicate near universal approval. He noted the “eloquent silence” exhibited among many scholars.<sup>45</sup> Coppens interpreted this silence as “their embarrassment to admit the opportuneness of an intervention of the magisterium.”<sup>46</sup> Certainly

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. French: “la glorification céleste, spirituelle et corporelle, de la Vierge, avec tous les aspects surnaturels que comporte pour elle un privilège aussi glorieux.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. French: “comme une vérité remontant *par la voie de la tradition*, donc *historiquement*, au dépôt *apostolique* de la foi, devra nécessairement répugner aux esprits rompus aux sciences historiques.”

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>45</sup> Notably, Aloïs Janssens who published a study on the Assumption in 1931. Later, this was one of the few monographs on the Assumption translated and published in English. For the original, see Aloïs Janssens, *Maria's hemelvaart* (Antwerpen: Standaard-Boekhandel, 1931). For the English edition, see Aloïs Janssens, *The Assumption of Mary* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954).

<sup>46</sup> Coppens, “La définibilité de l’Assomption,” 31. French: “leur embarras à admettre l’opportunité d’une intervention du magistère.”

this was only conjecture, but Coppens feared that unchecked fervor was leading otherwise erudite scholars to rash conclusions.<sup>47</sup> There were, he insisted, viable alternatives to a dogmatic definition. On the one hand, he saw no harm in simply leaving the doctrine in its current state.<sup>48</sup> The Church taught the Assumption, Catholics believed in the Assumption, why seek anything further? On the other hand, there was always the possibility of elevating the doctrine without making it a dogma. The magisterium could define the Assumption as a dogmatic fact, a level of teaching that required only ecclesiastic faith.<sup>49</sup> He noted a third possibility as well. Martin Jugie had conjectured using an adaptation of the canonization process to affirm Mary's body and soul resided in heaven.<sup>50</sup> Coppens was surprisingly open to this more fringe proposal because it altogether avoided the difficulties of history and the development of dogma.<sup>51</sup>

Coppens's unfavorable assessment of the Assumption's definability as a dogma was largely based on his deep concern for historical science. The lack of any historical evidence of the Assumption in the common sources of revelation was, for him, an insurmountable obstacle to a definition that included Mary's death and resurrection. Though he doubted the certainty of some of the speculative arguments, he recognized that these arguments had the potential to demonstrate a narrow definition of the Assumption as a truth of faith through the emergence of its necessity in connection with other truths of faith. Nevertheless, he still thought a dogmatic definition inopportune. His greatest concern was the possibility of an ahistorical definition. Thus, he urged:

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 33. Coppens did not specify how the Assumption could be positioned as a dogmatic fact. This solution was naturally attractive to him because it would satisfy those seeking an elevation of the doctrine without requiring a demonstration of the doctrine's inclusion in revelation; a demonstration he thought was untenable.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 33; Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge*, 708-709. This potential solution appeared as a sort of appendix to Jugie's work. It was essentially conjecture and Jugie did not believe the Church would ever employ such a method.

<sup>51</sup> Coppens, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," 34.

whatever is the opinion finally adopted in the matter, let us avoid, in every hypothesis, to speak or write as if we wanted to obtain from the Church, or as if the Church herself envisaged, to sanction, on the plane of history, a doctrine as going back to the apostolic age, while any solid historical basis, to speak humanly, seems to be lacking.<sup>52</sup>

That other theologians would rebuke Coppens for objecting on historical grounds was indicative of the ongoing struggle to reach a consensus on the proper relationship between history and dogma. Whereas Coppens's theological method emphasized the historical, historical data was not a primary concern for theologians trained in the scholastic tradition.<sup>53</sup>

### *A Formally-Implicitly Revealed Truth*

Whereas Coppens was deeply concerned about the lack of historical evidence in the sources of revelation, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange thought strict logical deduction sufficed to demonstrate the Assumption was formally-implicitly revealed. His argument relied on precise definition of terms and a carefully crafted syllogism. Though he thought the fact that nearly all the bishops, being witnesses to tradition, had asked the pope for a dogmatic definition indicated its definability, he also recognized the importance of demonstrating how the Assumption resided in the deposit of faith.<sup>54</sup> Concurring with the majority opinion of theologians, Garrigou-Lagrange explained that a truth was only definable as a dogma if it was formally revealed, at least

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 25. French: "quel que soit l'avis finalement adopté en la matière, évitons, en toute hypothèse, de parler ou d'écrire comme si nous voulions obtenir de l'Église, ou comme si l'Église elle-même envisageait, de sanctionner, sur le plan de l'histoire, une doctrine comme remontant à l'âge apostolique, alors que toute base historique solide, à parler humainement, semble lui faire défaut."

<sup>53</sup> Aidan Nichols observes the same phenomenon regarding a lack of historical interest. He writes, "The peculiarity (in the pejorative sense) of the Neo-Scholastic theology of the assumption was, surely, its comparative lack of interest in historical enquiry, as though the deep consciousness of the Church could only contain a sense of the inner coherence of revelation and not any actual memory of revelational events." Nichols, *There is No Rose*, 107.

<sup>54</sup> Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," *Divus Thomas* 50 (1947): 81. For a broader look at his treatment of Mariological topics, see Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of The Saviour and Our Interior Life*, trans. Bernard J. Kelly (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1948). The original French text was published in 1941 and thus falls outside the narrow scope of this project.

implicitly. The Assumption, he argued, was definable because it was formally-implicitly revealed in the Mother of God's most intimate association with her Son's perfect victory over the devil. A closer examination of his definitions and argument illuminate the details of his thought.

According to Garrigou-Lagrange, there were two kinds of implicitly revealed truth. A revealed truth is implicit if it is a truth contained in words needing further explanation or a truth contained in an explicitly revealed truth as a part in a whole. In the former case, he pointed to the example of Matthew 16:18 and the definition of papal infallibility. He explained, "This is the same truth [papal infallibility] that Jesus expressed in a metaphorical way, and which was then solemnly defined without metaphor."<sup>55</sup> The Church could define papal infallibly as a dogma because it was implicitly revealed through metaphor in this text. Once the Church gave the further explanation the metaphor required, a more explicit articulation of the implicit truth was possible. As it pertained to the Assumption, however, Garrigou-Lagrange believed it was a case of implicitly revealed truth as a part in the whole. A truth was implicitly revealed if it was included in another revealed truth. It was included if the whole could not exist without the part.<sup>56</sup>

Formally-implicitly revealed truth also differed from virtually revealed truth. Garrigou-Lagrange regarded the latter as a mere theological conclusion deduced from a revealed truth, but not a revealed truth itself. Regardless of its certainty, the Church could not define a virtually revealed truth as a dogma. This was because a virtually revealed truth was not revealed in the strictest sense but required something outside revelation to obtain it. Defining one of these conclusions as a dogma would be tantamount to adding content to the deposit of faith, the

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<sup>55</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," 82. French: "C'est la même vérité que Jésus a exprimé d'une façon métaphorique, et qui a été ensuite solennellement définie sans métaphore."

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. He distinguished this type of inclusion from the way an essence requires a property or the way a cause produces an effect. The essence does not formally include the property nor does the cause formally include the effect.

content of which was entirely revealed. Since the Church has no authority to add to this deposit, any truth deemed definable as a dogma must be formally revealed, at least implicitly.<sup>57</sup>

Garrigou-Lagrange's rejection of virtual revelation was not a rejection of syllogistic reasoning. It was only a rejection of using a non-revealed premise. He argued the Assumption was formally implicitly-revealed in a carefully constructed syllogism that followed the argument presented in the largest Vatican Council petition.<sup>58</sup> If a valid syllogism contained two revealed premises, then the conclusion was not the deduction of a new truth, but the clear statement of a truth already contained within formally revealed truth. The conclusion was an explicit articulation of a truth formally-implicitly revealed.<sup>59</sup>

The major premise of his syllogism stated "*Christ carried out a perfect victory over the demon, which contains as parts a perfect victory over sin and consequently over death, manifested through his glorious resurrection and ascension.*"<sup>60</sup> He included references to various parts of Scripture to show that this premise was formally revealed.<sup>61</sup> His minor premise stated, "*However, the Blessed Virgin Mary, as the mother of the Savior God and called in the whole Tradition the new Eve, was most closely associated to the perfect victory of Christ over the demon and over sin, and even over concupiscence.*"<sup>62</sup> Again, he made reference to the pertinent

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 83. For the text of the referenced Vatican I petition, see *Petitiones*, 1:97-103.

<sup>59</sup> This type of theological reasoning was characteristic of the Salamancan school in the seventeenth century. For more on this logical approach to revelation, see Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, 21-48.

<sup>60</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," 83. Latin: "*Christus retulit perfectam victoriam de daemone, quae continet ut partes perfectam victoriam de peccato et consequenter de morte, manifestatam per ejus gloriosam resurrectionem et ascensionem.*"

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Scripture references included Romans 5:9-12; 6:12-17; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, 54-57; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15; John 12:31; 1:29; 6:40-44; 10:25; Acts 2:27, 31.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Latin: "*Atqui B. V. Maria, ut mater Dei Salvatoris et vocata in tota Traditione nova Eva, arctissime associata est perfectae victoriae Christi de daemone et de peccato, et etiam de concupiscentia.*"

parts of Scripture to show the premise was formally revealed, but also noted that Pius IX asserted as much in *Ineffabilis Deus*.<sup>63</sup> From these two premises, Garrigou-Lagrange concluded:

*Therefore, the Blessed Virgin Mary, as the mother of the Savior God and new Eve, was likewise most closely associated to the perfect victory of Christ over death, so that 'she could not have been pressed down (or retained) by the bonds of death' according to the liturgy; otherwise she would have been CONQUERED BY DEATH and not be the CONQUERESS, and the parallel with Christ, restored to life and elevated into heaven before the general resurrection of the dead, would be destroyed.*<sup>64</sup>

Assuming the conclusion validly follows from the premises, the syllogism demonstrated the Assumption was a formally-implicitly revealed truth and, thus, definable. Even though the dogmatic definition was still to come, Garrigou-Lagrange's certainty in the validity of his argument meant that any doubt pertaining to the truth of the Assumption necessitated doubt of at least one of the premises.<sup>65</sup>

The Dominican theologian also offered a brief evaluation of other arguments brought forward for the definability of the Assumption. He judged arguments based on the eminent dignity of the Mother of God, Mary's perpetual virginity, and Mary's Immaculate Conception incapable of demonstrating the Assumption was a formally-implicitly revealed truth. In addition to his own argument, he thought an argument based on Mary's blessed status among women and exclusion from the curses in Genesis 3 could potentially demonstrate the Assumption was contained in revelation.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 83-84. Scripture references included Genesis 3:15; Luke 1:28, 32, 42; 2:35; John 19:25.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 84. Latin: "*Ergo B. V. Maria, ut mater Dei Salvatoris et nova Eva, arctissime etiam associata est perfectae victoriae Christi de morte, ita ut 'mortis nexibus deprimi (vel retineri) non potuerit' secundum liturgiam; alioquin fuisset VICTA A MORTE et non VICTRIX et destrueretur parallelismus cum Christo redivivo et in coelum elevato ante resurrectionem generalem mortuorum.*"

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. The implication being that since no Catholic could rightly doubt the premises, no Catholic could rightly doubt the Assumption.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 86.

Juniper Carol also evaluated multiple arguments for the definability of the Assumption in an article framed, in part, as a response to Coppens's negative assessment of definability.<sup>67</sup> The renowned Mariology scholar rebuked critics for the deficiency of their method and stressed the importance of appealing to the ordinary magisterium of the Church. Coppens had demanded an abundance of historical data to proceed to a definition. Carol rejected this demand as unnecessary and illegitimate. Unnecessary, "because in order to prove the revealed character of a given doctrine it is sufficient that it be clearly taught as such by the *Magisterium ordinarium* of the Church."<sup>68</sup> Likewise, the demand was illegitimate since "they [critics] presuppose that our Lady's Assumption is merely a historical fact, while it is also, if not mainly, a theological fact, the existence of which should be decided, not by documentary evidence, but rather by recourse to theological principles."<sup>69</sup> History was not a primary theological concern.

Before Carol assessed the arguments for definability that had recourse to the ordinary magisterium and theological principles, he offered comments that shed light on his understanding of definability. For Carol, determining the contents of the deposit of faith depended largely on the belief of the living episcopacy. Since the nature of the Church was akin to a living organism, "whatever the Church of today holds and teaches as pertaining to the original deposit of revelation was also held and taught (at least implicitly) by the Church of the first centuries."<sup>70</sup> The large amount of bishops who petitioned the Holy See for a dogmatic definition was enough evidence to show the doctrine was part of the deposit, regardless of the state of historical evidence.<sup>71</sup> The important fact was the belief of the bishops as expressed in the

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<sup>67</sup> Carol, "The Definability of Mary's Assumption," 162-166.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. Coppens was not ignorant of this but saw a more prominent role for history. He was deeply concerned about claiming a belief had apostolic origins without any historical evidence.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

petitions. Many petitions contained arguments of varying complexity in favor of the definition, but Carol thought the validity of these arguments was irrelevant. The evidence of widescale belief among the bishops was proof enough since divine assistance only protected the bishops from teaching an erroneous belief as revealed and not from making an invalid argument.<sup>72</sup> Carol's argument from the teaching of the living episcopacy implied, but never stated explicitly, an elevation of the petitions to the level of teaching.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, Carol expressed a rather low view of consulting the laity as a source for determining the content of the deposit. He explained, "The *consensus fidelium* has always been considered a most cogent argument in doctrinal matters *because* it reflects the teaching of the bishops."<sup>74</sup> The lay faithful were members of the *Ecclesia discens* and only the bishops were members of the *Ecclesia docens*. The laity were taught, and it was the bishops who did the teaching. In Carol's articulation, consulting the laity became redundant because if they were faithful, they simply reflected the teachings of the living magisterium. This was the natural conclusion of Carol's maximalist application of the divine assistance granted to the episcopacy.

Beyond the argument from the living episcopacy, Carol also examined four theological arguments for definability. The first was an argument from divine maternity. According to this argument, "It is impossible to assume that the body of her who conceived and gave birth to the God-man and who, by that very fact, was endowed with an almost infinite dignity, should be indefinitely confined to the state of death."<sup>75</sup> Carol did not see how the Assumption necessarily followed from this fact. He judged this argument was only *ex convenientia*.<sup>76</sup> The argument had

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 165-166.

<sup>73</sup> One is left to wonder how petitions sent by bishops to the Holy See, and not addressed to the faithful under their jurisdiction, constituted an exercise of their legitimate teaching office.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 166; italics in the original.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. This was an argument of fittingness.



a certain persuasiveness to it, but Carol warned of the dangers of assuming one knows what would be unbecoming for the Mother of God.<sup>77</sup> Ultimately, however, the argument failed to demonstrate the Assumption was a revealed doctrine because it did not demonstrate how the divine maternity, which had been revealed, included the Assumption.<sup>78</sup>

The second theological argument Carol evaluated was based on the Immaculate Conception. The fundamental point of this argument was that Mary's exemption from original sin also exempted her from the penalties of sin. Carol explained that for this argument to demonstrate the Assumption was formally-implicitly revealed, "it would have to be proved that death, whether permanent or transitory, is *always and necessarily* a punishment due to sin, even after Christ paid our debt on the cross."<sup>79</sup> This premise was at least doubtful because of two facts. First, the Council of Trent taught that baptism remits guilt and all punishment of original sin. And second, the baptized still die and await the general resurrection.<sup>80</sup> Carol noted a possible solution "by distinguishing between punishments due to the *person* and punishments due to the *nature*."<sup>81</sup> This, however, was only conjecture and insufficient to overcome the difficulty. Thus, Carol rejected the argument from the Immaculate Conception as incapable of demonstrating the Assumption was a formally-implicitly revealed doctrine.

The third, and for Carol the weakest argument, was the one seeking to demonstrate the Assumption from Mary's perpetual virginity. The basic argument rested on Mary's status as ever-virgin, which was a revealed truth, and the implication of immunity from the curse listed in Genesis 3:16 pertaining to sorrow or pain in childbirth. If Mary's perpetual virginity truly

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. As a parallel, he mentioned the examples of Christ's poverty and death between two thieves. Had these details not been clearly revealed, they may seem unbecoming of Christ.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.; italics in the original.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 169; italics in the original.

implied immunity from one punishment of original sin, then, it was claimed, “it is logical to suppose that she was likewise immune from the corruption of the grave, which is but another aspect of the same general curse.”<sup>82</sup> Carol rejected this argument because immunity from one punishment does not necessitate immunity from another punishment and noted, “The two punishments are perfectly separable although resulting from one and the same sin.”<sup>83</sup> Even supposing the argument was valid, it would at most “prove that Mary’s body was not subject to the corruption of the grave.”<sup>84</sup> The argument from Mary’s perpetual virginity could not demonstrate the definability of the Assumption.

Ultimately, Carol concluded it was the fourth theological argument, from Mary’s co-redemption, that demonstrated the Assumption was a formally-implicitly revealed doctrine and thus definable. The argument was the same as the one Garrigou-Lagrangé presented, though here Carol employed the language of co-redemption and co-redemptrix. For Carol, Mary’s co-redemption referred to “the intimate and formal co-operation of our Blessed Lady with her divine Son through the process of man’s redemption.”<sup>85</sup> The argument for the Assumption ran:

The manner in which Christ fulfilled His office as Redeemer of the human race was precisely by obtaining a *complete* and *total* victory over the devil and his dominion; which victory culminated in His anticipated glorious resurrection. Now, our Blessed Lady, being the co-redemptrix of mankind, shared Christ’s identical victory over the devil and his dominion. Therefore, she, too, enjoyed the privilege of an anticipated glorious resurrection.<sup>86</sup>

If the major and minor premise were formally revealed, so too was the conclusion, albeit implicitly. Carol marshalled several familiar Scripture passages to show the major premise was

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 171; italics in the original.

formally revealed.<sup>87</sup> As for the minor premise, Carol pointed to the Protoevangelium of Genesis 3:15, the “constantly and universally believed in the Church” doctrine of Mary as the New Eve, and the teaching of the ordinary magisterium in Pius IX’s *Ineffabilis Deus*.<sup>88</sup> Whereas one could make, and Carol did, a theological argument for Mary as co-redemptrix based on the first two points, the final point aimed to demonstrate the pope actually taught it. Carol quoted the papal bull at length with added emphasis:

Therefore, just as Christ, the Mediator between God and men, having assumed our human nature, blotted out the handwriting of the decree which stood against us and triumphantly affixed it to the cross; so *likewise* the most holy Virgin, united with Him by a most intimate and indissoluble bond, together *with Him* and through Him waged a perpetual warfare against the poisonous serpent and, *completely triumphing* over him, *crushed his head* with her immaculate foot.<sup>89</sup>

The crucial point for Carol was that Mary waged war against the Devil not only *through* Christ, but *with* Christ. There existed a sort of co-agency. Certainly, Mary as a creature derived all her being from Christ, nevertheless the pope taught that “the complete overthrow of the devil’s empire (namely, the objective work of our Redemption) is the result of *two* joint and immediate agents.”<sup>90</sup> This was Carol’s primary evidence to support Mary’s co-redemption being a formally revealed truth. Having demonstrated the major and minor premise as formally revealed, Carol confidently concluded that “the doctrine of our most Blessed Mother’s anticipated resurrection and glorious Assumption into heaven is formally implicitly revealed in the total and complete victory which our Lady, as co-redemptrix of the human race, gained over Satan and his power.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 171-2. Scripture references included Genesis 3:15; Colossians 2:14-15; Hebrews 2:14; Romans 4:25; 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:17.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 172-3.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 174; italics in the original.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.; italics in the original.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 177.

Carol's argument for the definability of the Assumption relied on defending Mary's role as co-redemptrix as a formally revealed truth. He accomplished this by appealing to the words of a papal bull pertaining to the dogmatic definition of a different Marian dogma. This suggests Carol held to a relatively high, if not maximalist, interpretation of infallibility. Carol could have made the same argument and pointed to the papal bull in support of his position. But the pope's words were not mere support, but definitive proof. The final lines of his article corroborate this perception. He stated, "It is the firm conviction of the present writer that, in doctrinal matters, the *Magisterium Ordinarium* is *always* right."<sup>92</sup>

#### *A Virtually Revealed Truth*

Though not the majority opinion, some theologians argued that a dogmatic definition did not require demonstrating a truth was formally-implicitly revealed and that virtual revelation was sufficient. A virtually revealed truth is a truth contained substantially in a single revealed premise, drawn out using a metaphysically certain minor premise. At the first Franciscan Assumptionist congress in Rome, Carlo Balić delivered the concluding remarks which took the form of an argument in favor of the Assumption's definability.<sup>93</sup> He thought it unnecessary to demonstrate a truth was formally-implicitly revealed and invoked two alternatives. As it related to potential actions of the magisterium, the consensus of the faithful served as a suitable ground for proceeding to a dogmatic definition. But as it related to the work of theologians, demonstrating the Assumption was a virtually revealed truth sufficed to prove the doctrine was part of revelation and a proper object of divine faith. Balić's consideration of definability also highlighted the components a possible definition could contain or omit. Specifically, he

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.; italics in the original.

<sup>93</sup> Balić, "Sulla definibilità dell'Assunzione della B. V. Maria," 688-697.

expressed concern regarding the place of Mary's death in a future definition. Balić's remarks were representative of the congress and when he appealed to virtual revelation, he invoked Egidio Magrini's paper on the topic given at the same congress. Therefore, understanding Balić's argument on definability, at least in part, necessitates consideration of Magrini's explanation of virtual revelation.

Balić's comments on the theological notion of the Assumption emphasized the relationship between Mary's death and resurrection, and the translation of her body to Heaven, now glorified. He conceded that "an eventual dogmatic formula may remain silent on the death and resurrection, limiting itself only to defining as an object of faith that the Virgin lives eternally blessed in body and soul in heaven."<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, Balić and the congress concluded that the death and resurrection of Mary were intimately connected to the Assumption. Should the pope issue a dogmatic definition that spoke only of Mary's glorification in her Assumption, there was a hope that the papal document containing a narrower dogmatic definition would still mention Mary's death and resurrection as truths "of which one is not able to doubt."<sup>95</sup> The emphasis on Mary's physical death was in response to a minority opinion that Mary did not undergo death.<sup>96</sup> Balić and the congress rejected the idea that immortality necessarily followed from the Immaculate Conception. It was true that Mary's death could not be a penalty of sin, but this did not exclude the possibility of a natural death. The fact that the Immaculate Conception did not necessitate immortality and that historical research attested to the widespread belief in

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 687. Italian: "un'eventuale formula dogmatica possa tacere della morte e della resurrezione, limitandosi unicamente a definire come oggetto di fede che la Vergine vive eternamente beata in corpo ed anima in cielo."

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. Italian: "di cui non si possa dubitare."

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 689. He mentioned here a Canon Arnaldi as a defender of Mary's immortality. This is most likely a reference to Dominico Arnaldi's study on definability from the end of the nineteenth century. For that study, see Dominico Arnaldi, *Super definibilitate dogmatica Assumptionis corporeae B.V.M. Deiparae Immaculatae* (Augusta Taurinorum: Derossi, 1884).

Mary's death bolstered present affirmations of her death as the more probable case.<sup>97</sup> Still, Balić confessed his readiness to abandon belief in Mary's death should the magisterium judge otherwise.<sup>98</sup>

Though the congress dedicated many sessions to historical aspects of the Assumption, such pursuits could never demonstrate the supernatural reality that Mary, body and soul, reigns in heaven. Mere human argument could never prove a supernatural truth without an appeal to revelation. The historical studies could, however, point to the existence of such a belief among Catholics and evaluate the extent to which it was held. Balić asserted it did just that. He believed, "The argument of constant and universal faith, as it results from the rich historical investigation of the congress members, is undoubtedly the strongest [argument] to proclaim the revelation of the glorification, body and soul, of the Blessed Virgin."<sup>99</sup> This sufficed for the pope to proceed to a dogmatic definition, so long as it was "recognized with moral certainty and with a common agreement that it [the doctrine] is revealed by God."<sup>100</sup> The precise details of how or where the doctrine resided in the deposit of faith became superfluous to the possibility of a definition.<sup>101</sup> Balić's acceptance of the consensus of the faithful as a viable substitute for a lack of explicit testimony in the common sources of revelation would correspond to Pius XII's later assertion in *Munificentissimus Deus*.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Balić, "Sulla definibilità dell'Assunzione della B. V. Maria," 689-690. It also corresponded to the longstanding Orthodox emphasis on Mary's Dormition. That is, Mary died, but her death was more akin to sleep and unlike the common human experience of death.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 691.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 693. Italian: "L'argomento quindi della fede costante ed universale, quale risulta dalla ricca indagine storica dei congressisti, è senza dubbio il più forte per proclamare la rivelazione della glorificazione psicosomatica della beata Vergine."

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., Italian: "con morale certezza e con comune accordo riconosciuto che essa è rivelata da Dio."

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 12.

The carefully crafted theological argument demonstrating the inclusion of the Assumption in the deposit of faith, while unnecessary for a dogmatic definition, remained a meaningful work for the school of theologians. A papal definition would affirm the doctrine as revealed, but “theologians rightly strive to find *when, how, and to whom* the truth that is defined is revealed.”<sup>103</sup> Balić thought it was unnecessary to demonstrate a truth was formally-implicitly revealed. Rather, a virtually revealed truth could also be a legitimate subject of a dogmatic definition because it was truly contained in the deposit of faith.<sup>104</sup> This was not an innovation, but a claim rooted in the authority of major medieval scholastic theologians.<sup>105</sup> Like formally-implicitly revealed truths, virtually revealed truths still fell within the deposit of faith, but the argument used to discern these truths rested on a single revealed premise. Balić omitted a detailed explanation of virtual revelation and the argument for the Assumption as virtually revealed, instead referencing Magrini’s work on this point presented at the same congress. While Balić affirmed the Assumption was a revealed truth, he likewise thought it was impossible to prove the doctrine was formally-implicitly revealed because it had been revealed so obscurely.<sup>106</sup> A demonstration of the Assumption as a virtually revealed truth, however, was possible.

Magrini presented the more detailed examination of virtual revelation at the congress. His paper aimed to show the legitimacy of proceeding to a dogmatic definition from a virtually revealed truth and its application in the case of the Assumption. Though a minority opinion in his own time, Magrini argued that from the dawn of scholasticism to the middle of the sixteenth century, it was “unanimously believed that the theological conclusion, or the virtually revealed,

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<sup>103</sup> Balić, “Sulla definibilità dell’Assunzione della B. V. Maria,” 694. Italian: “teologi giustamente si sforzano di trovare *quando, come, a chi* la verità che viene definita sia rivelata.”

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. Though he did not elaborate, Balić mentioned Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

is the object of divine faith, at least after the definition of the Church.”<sup>107</sup> It was only in the latter half of the sixteenth century that an opposing theory began to gain acceptance which denied these conclusions could ever be the object of divine faith.<sup>108</sup>

Any truth that was the object of divine faith must be a substantial part of revelation.<sup>109</sup> Whereas Garrigou-Lagrange and Carol upheld the view that the demonstration of a truth’s inclusion in revelation required a syllogism containing only revealed premises, here, Magrini argued only one revealed premise was necessary under certain conditions. A virtually revealed truth, in its most proper sense, resulted from a syllogism that used a revealed major premise and a non-revealed, but certain, minor premise. This excluded, for example, the use of a so-called scientific fact based on observable phenomenon as a minor premise. Such facts were prone to human error and, even if not erroneous, remain susceptible to suspension by God.<sup>110</sup> Only a metaphysical truth sufficed because it was “based on the very essence of things, it has principles and laws that apply to all times, for all places and for all circumstances.”<sup>111</sup> Metaphysical truths were even unchangeable in the supernatural order, “because God in his own absolute power cannot change them except by destroying the essence of things and causing the foundations of human reason to collapse.”<sup>112</sup> When a metaphysical truth formed part of a syllogism with a revealed truth, the conclusion was virtually revealed. The virtually revealed truth was still an object of divine faith because it shares its substance with the revealed premise.

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<sup>107</sup> Magrini, “La morte e l’Assunzione della B. V. Maria nella luce del virtuale rivelato,” 648. Italian: “unanimemente ritenuto che la conclusione teologica, o il virtuale rivelato, è oggetto di fede divina, almeno dopo la definizione della Chiesa.”

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. He primarily appealed to Duns Scotus, but also thought Suárez agreed.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 659.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 665.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Italian: “fondandosi sull’essenza stessa delle cose, ha principi e leggi che valgono per tutti i tempi, per tutti i luoghi e per tutte le circostanze.”

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. Italian: “perchè Dio nella sua stessa potenza assoluta, non li può cambiare se non col distruggere l’essenza delle cose e far crollare i fondamenti stessi della ragione umana.”



Magrini's argument for the Assumption as a virtually revealed truth took its revealed premise from a principle used to support the Immaculate Conception and its non-revealed, but certain, premise from the essence of the human person. According to Magrini, the Immaculate Conception emerged as one aspect of a singular act. This was "the emission of the supreme act of redemption by Christ."<sup>113</sup> Mary's preservation from original sin was not, therefore, an isolated grace, but one effect of Christ's perfect redemption of his mother. This supreme act of redemption formed the major premise. The minor premise consisted of a metaphysical truth about the essence of the human person. The human person, by its very nature, is a composite of body and soul. If separated, perfection is lacking. And while all people undergo this separation of body and soul at death, it is "only when this reunion occurring for each one is accomplished ... is redemption accomplished by Christ; and that only towards this composite, towards this ultimate end, the redemptive action of Christ tends."<sup>114</sup> Put another way, Christ's redemption is for the human person, not only the soul. Since the human person is a composite of body and soul, redemption is not complete in a person until the reunification of body and soul. Applied to Mary, the inevitable conclusion was that her perfect redemption necessitated the reunion of her body and soul. Though Magrini did not reduce his argument to its simplest terms, it is helpful to do so. Christ issued a supreme act of redemption to his most holy Mother and the end of redemption is heavenly glorification. The human person is a composite of body and soul. Therefore, Mary, body and soul, having been perfectly redeemed, is glorified in heaven. To say anything less was to deny Christ's perfect redemption of Mary.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 676. Italian: "l'emissione dello atto supremo di redenzione da parte di Cristo."

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. Italian: "solo quando avverrà questa ricongiunzione per ognuno si compirà ... la redenzione operata da Cristo; e che solo verso questo composto, verso quest'ultimo fine, tende l'azione redentrice di Cristo."

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 677.

*A Truth Emerging from the Convergence of Probabilities*

Not all theologians, however, attempted to demonstrate the Assumption's inclusion in revelation through formal logic. Gérard Philips's theological method for uncovering the implicit content of revelation differed substantially from scholastic methods. His method also proved distinct from Coppens's historical focus. Though Philips accepted the critical role of history and philosophy, he thought theology ultimately relied on a method of totality.<sup>116</sup> Applied to the Assumption, the possibility of its definability was a question "of the place occupied by Mary in the total order of salvation."<sup>117</sup> A key component of this method was an epistemology that understood conclusions as emerging from the convergence of probable reasons and not from strict apodictic reasoning. That the magisterium possessed the unique gift of infallibility to affirm these conclusions was certain. Philips's argument in favor of the Assumption's definability, therefore, was neither presented as a syllogism nor based solely on historical evidence, but as a reflection on Mary's role in salvation.

Philips upheld historical research and philosophy as indispensable tools for theological investigation, but also recognized the tendency for their methods to usurp the method proper to theology. He affirmed the need for recourse to the resources of history and condemned in the harshest way theologians who neglected history. "The theologian who, assured of the support of faith, would neglect to surround himself with all the resources of history, before settling a debated question, would commit a sin against the Holy Spirit."<sup>118</sup> Historical research was an essential component of the theological project, but it was not sufficient on its own. Reason was

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<sup>116</sup> Philips, "Autour de la définibilité d'un dogme," 93.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 111. French: "de la place occupée par Marie dans l'ordre total du salut."

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 83. French: "Le théologien qui, assuré de l'appui de la foi, négligerait de s'entourer de toutes les ressources de l'histoire, avant de trancher une question débattue, commettrait un péché contre l'Esprit Saint."

likewise indispensable for penetrating the depths of revelation.<sup>119</sup> Philosophy, like history, contributed, but the object of theology was a supernatural revelation and irreducible to the conclusions of philosophy and history.<sup>120</sup> Historical facts and philosophical axioms were not the object of the Christian faith and therefore not the object of theological inquiry. As tools, they provided assistance. But he rejected theological methods that made disproportionate use of either of these tools. Because the object of theology was supernatural revelation, Philips recognized that “the theological content of the Assumption will never be historically verifiable.”<sup>121</sup> Similarly, syllogisms were helpful at times in the theological pursuit, but their application was not without risk of error or deviation.<sup>122</sup>

For Philips, the method proper to theology centered on the totality of revelation. He explained, “Theological reasoning, if it wishes to avoid serious risks of deviation, must be integrated into a method respectful of the totality.... In theology this means that it is necessary to reconsider everything in terms of Christ the Savior.”<sup>123</sup> As the mind tries to arrange different elements within a whole or explain the relationship between them, what emerges is a “*convergence of probable reasons*.”<sup>124</sup> This was a departure from the scholastic approach that sought to demonstrate certainty through apodictic reasoning. Philips doubted the certainty often attributed to such human endeavors and noted the rarity of entirely apodictic reasoning even in simplistic arguments.<sup>125</sup> Nor did he think this scholastic method reflected the way humans actually think. Philips elaborated, “Most of the time, the thinker will approach his subject by

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 89-90. French: “Le contenu théologique de l’Assomption ne sera jamais historiquement vérifiable.”

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 93. French: “Le raisonnement théologique, s’il veut éviter des risques sérieux de déviation, doit s’intégrer dans une méthode respectueuse de la totalité.... En théologie cela veut dire qu’il faut tout repenser en fonction du Christ Sauveur.”

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. French: “*convergence de raisons probables*.”

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

successive approximations, originating from diverse points of view.”<sup>126</sup> These approximations are not certain, but only probable. Certainty, though not of the mathematical order, emerges out of their combination.

Applied to the possibility of a dogmatic definition, Philips’s epistemology rejected the necessity of demonstrating formally implicit or virtual revelation through syllogistic argumentation. The convergence of probable reasons will always lack mathematical certitude, thus it was the magisterium’s role “to judge that a determined doctrine has reached a sufficient degree of certainty and to sanction with its supreme authority the result of laborious investigations.”<sup>127</sup> In this case, the magisterium’s judgment is concerned with the contents of revelation and not the particularities of theological methods. As Philips put it, “Life always precedes speculation about life. It does not have to model itself on the rules established by the analysts.”<sup>128</sup> The magisterium infallibly teaches the contents of revelation. The revelation itself, justly compared to life, precedes speculation about revelation. When the magisterium issues a dogmatic definition, it is not the result of following a specific theological method, even if certain theological arguments are presented, but confirmation of the revealed truth itself. This is why the magisterium’s infallibility is limited to the conclusion, the doctrine itself, and does not extend to the arguments purporting to demonstrate the conclusion.<sup>129</sup>

Arriving at the specific question of the Assumption’s definability, Philips applied his method of totality to argue in favor of a definition. He appealed to the special grace given to Mary as co-redemptrix and her total exemption from the law of sin. These truths did not prove or

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid. French: “La plupart du temps, le penseur abordera son sujet par approximations successives, parties de points de vue divers.”

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 94. French: “juger qu’une doctrine déterminée est parvenue à un degré suffisant de certitude et sanctionner de son autorité suprême le résultat d’investigations laborieuses.”

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 95. French: “La vie precede toujours la speculation sur la vie. Elle n’a pas a se modeler sur les règles établies par les analystes.”

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 110.

necessitate the Assumption. Rather, they were probable reasons in favor of the Assumption.

Unlike the more scholastic theologians, Philips's method was not concerned with constructing the perfect syllogism and he did not claim his argument was apodictic. The result was an argument that, in comparison to others, lacked precision and appeared more as a reflection on Mary's unique role in salvation.

The method of totality formed the basis of this reflection. Philips suggested, "Theological reflection, which does not consist essentially or principally of syllogistic deductions, leads us to gaining a clearer consciousness of the place which the Mother of God-the-Redeemer occupies in the order of salvation."<sup>130</sup> Her place was unlike that of Christ or all others whom Christ redeemed. The Mother of God occupied "not only a privileged place, but a separate order."<sup>131</sup> This unique order was the result of the perfect act of preservative redemption applied to her, which provided Mary with the ability to fulfill her vocation as co-redemptrix and completely omitted her from the law of sin.<sup>132</sup> The effects of this redemption spanned Mary's entire life, first appearing in the Immaculate Conception and concluding in her heavenly glorification.<sup>133</sup>

These details of Mary's role in salvation and the effects of her special grace were not immediately discernable through human efforts but emerged gradually. As Philips explained, "It [implicit revelation] is not obtained by a mathematical or strictly philosophical deduction from any axiom; it is worked out thanks to a more profound and more penetrating understanding of the ensemble of dogmatic truth."<sup>134</sup> The Assumption's harmony within the totality of revealed truth

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 106. French: "La réflexion théologique, qui ne consiste pas essentiellement ni principalement en déductions syllogistiques, nous amène à prendre une conscience plus nette de la place que la Mère du Dieu Rédempteur occupe dans l'ordre du salut."

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. French: "non seulement une place privilégiée, mais un ordre à part."

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 110. French: "Elle ne s'obtient pas par une déduction mathématique ou strictement philosophique à partir d'un axiome quelconque; elle s'élabore grâce à une intelligence plus profonde et plus pénétrante de l'ensemble du donné dogmatique."

suggests its high probability of being a revealed truth itself. At best, a moral certainty is reached, but theological reflection alone can never preclude the possibility of all error. It was the magisterium that must pass final judgment on the matter and remove any remaining doubt.<sup>135</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The disagreement over if and how the Assumption was definable was a result of differences in theological method. All agreed that revelation was complete and unchanging. Similarly, there was a consensus that the magisterium could promulgate new dogmas. These dogmas did not add to revelation but were explicit articulations of truths revealed obscurely. Theological method greatly impacted how individual theologians understood this development and evaluated legitimacy.

Coppens was the prominent objector to a definition in this era. His emphasis on historical method led him to argue against a potential Assumption definition because of a lack of historical evidence in the common sources of revelation. He was deeply troubled by the notion of the magisterium defining a dogma that had no discernable historical basis. While Coppens did not favor any definition, he believed that a definition on the purely supernatural element of the Assumption was preferable to one that would suggest the magisterium taught in defiance of history.

Garrigou-Lagrange and Carol cared little about the historical difficulties since their theological method focused on applying logical rules to revealed propositions. Garrigou-Lagrange was the more prominent practitioner of this method and firmly believed the Assumption was a formally-implicitly revealed truth, discernable through the combination of two

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 94, 111.

revealed truths. This development was strictly logical, even if its recognition occurred in time. Carol concurred, but also directly rebuked Coppens for his reservations. History, he argued, had almost nothing to do with dogma; or as Henry Manning had said of the dogmatic definition of papal infallibility, it represented “the triumph of dogma over history.”<sup>136</sup> Beyond Carol’s acceptance of syllogistic reasoning, he also expressed a high view of the ordinary magisterium. One of the keys to his theological method was to remember that the ordinary magisterium was always right and never wrong.

Balić admitted the value of the consensus of the faithful as a justification to proceed with a definition, but theologically, the method he promoted was more akin to Garrigou-Lagrange and Carol. The major difference was that Balić thought the Assumption was discernable as virtual revelation. It was a revealed doctrine, but demonstration required only a single revealed premise and a metaphysical certainty. He appealed to Magrini on this point who connected this method with the scholastic tradition. It was still, ultimately, a form of logical development. However, Balić’s practical consideration on the consensus of the faithful hints at a possible role for the Church’s growing consciousness of a truth in development.

Philips critiqued both excessively historical methods and excessively philosophical methods. The object of the Christian faith, and thus theology, was not facts and axioms but supernatural revelation. He employed a method of totality that relied on a convergence of probable reasons to reach conclusions. He believed the Assumption was definable, but not because of historical evidence or a carefully crafted syllogism. Mary’s role in salvation and the grace she received were probable reasons for the Assumption, and a definition was possible because this truth fit harmoniously into the totality of revealed truth. Development occurred over

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<sup>136</sup> Henry Manning, *Religio Viatoris*, 4th ed. (London: Burns and Oates, n.d.), 79. I am grateful to Professor Kenneth Parker for this reference.

time as the Church grew in its understanding of revelation. This growth made certain truths, once obscure, more visible.

These methodological differences are significant and help explain the conclusions and arguments theologians presented. But they also highlight the fundamental difficulty of explaining doctrinal development. While these theologians expressed confidence in their methods and conclusions, the existence of such diversity among theologians in good standing with the Church suggests there was no easy answer. Explaining how new dogmas emerge from an unchanging revelation defies simple solutions. Undoubtedly, history, reason, the magisterium, the faith of the Church, and the totality of revelation are involved. But theologians were, and still are, grappling with the complexities of the development of doctrine.

This analysis has also demonstrated that pre-conciliar theological methods were not monolithic. Scholastic method was prominent, but any blanket association of pre-conciliar theology with a recalcitrant scholasticism is misleading. This conclusion will be significant for the final chapter when the project turns its attention to Vatican II. For now, the next chapter will continue to investigate revelation and method, focusing on the Assumption in Scripture and biblical interpretation.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE ASSUMPTION IN SCRIPTURE

As the last chapter explored, most Catholic theologians leading up to the dogmatic definition of the Assumption affirmed the possibility of a definition based on the doctrine's inclusion in the deposit of faith. There was some disagreement among theologians on the requirements for demonstrating this inclusion, but outright denial of the possibility of a definition or its opportuneness was exceedingly rare. During the late 1940s, the prominent exception to the consensus was Joseph Coppens, a biblical scholar and professor at the Catholic University of Louvain. The source of his concerns over a possible dogmatic definition were largely historical. He recognized the truth of the Assumption as a doctrine that emerged through a series of connections with other doctrines, but not from an intimate connection with the historical sources of revelation.<sup>1</sup> For Coppens, the apparent silence of the Bible and the early Church Fathers was a serious reason to oppose a new dogma. While it is unnecessary to reproduce all Coppens's objections in this chapter, his historical concerns about the connection between the Assumption and Scripture serve as a helpful transition to the present topic. As the previous chapter explored, Coppens did not recognize a biblical foundation for the Assumption. Specifically, he had rejected arguments based on Genesis 3:15, Luke 1:28, Revelation 12:1-2, and the Pauline texts. Among scholarship more favorable to locating the Assumption in Scripture, these and other passages were commonly appealed to in support of the Assumption's inclusion in revelation. But not every potential connection to the Assumption was considered viable or legitimate, even among those well-disposed to a definition.

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<sup>1</sup> Coppens, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," 28.

This chapter investigates the biblical scholarship from the height of the Assumptionist movement to determine where and how theologians discerned the doctrine in Scripture. The investigation centers on primary representatives of Catholic biblical scholarship on the topic of the Assumption. The representatives examined in this chapter are José María Bover, Luigi Gonzaga da Fonseca, and Adrien-Marie Malo. Léandre Poirier and Fulbert Cayré also receive consideration, the latter of which was an historian of the early Church, not an exegetical scholar. These theologians are lesser known than those explored in the previous chapter, so it will be instructive to first preview their major lines of argument. Before more detailed analysis, this chapter also presents a brief historical overview of Catholic biblical studies from the end of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. This will help locate the Assumption biblical scholarship within the larger currents of Catholic biblical studies. On the surface, these scholars appear to make disparate claims about the Assumption in Scripture. While there was some legitimate disagreement, closer analysis reveals an underlying consensus. They all agreed that the Assumption was not explicitly revealed in Scripture but also agreed that the doctrine had a discernible foundation in Scripture when read in light of tradition and the teachings of the magisterium. Each theologian articulated the use of this interpretative key differently, but it was always present.

### *Summary of Arguments*

José María Bover was a Spanish Jesuit priest and biblical scholar.<sup>2</sup> He argued that the Assumption was formally-implicitly revealed in Scripture and set out to demonstrate this from

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<sup>2</sup> For biographical and bibliographical information, see Teófilo Ayuso Marazuela, “El Padre José María Bover, S. J.: Laudemus viros gloriosos,” *Estudios Bíblicos* 13 (1954): 333-368. Bover’s biblical scholarship focused on the New Testament and the writings of St. Paul particularly. He was appointed to the Pontifical Biblical Commission as a consultant and worked on preparing the dogmatic definition of the Assumption. Together with Francisco Cantera

three different biblical texts. The primary text he used was Genesis 3:15 to argue that Mary shared in Christ's victory over death and received an anticipated resurrection. However, Bover also made arguments for the Assumption from the writings of St. Paul. Through what he termed the 'principle of recirculation' and the 'principle of solidarity', Bover argued that Mary belonged to the resurrected 'first fruits' of 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. He also found support for the Assumption in Romans 5:12-21, but his argument quickly deviated from the biblical text into a more speculative argument.

Luigi Gonzaga da Fonseca was a Portuguese Jesuit priest and professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.<sup>3</sup> He made no definitive determination and instead divided commonly appealed to biblical texts into categories according to their potential for revealing the Assumption. He deemed the Old Testament texts that relied on Marian typology as the least viable because the types they relied on were not clearly intended and willed by God. These included Psalm 131(132), Psalm 44(45), and parts of Song of Songs. He considered Revelation 12 as a bit more promising as a revelation of the Assumption than the Old Testament typological readings, but ultimately concluded that the apocalyptic text was too difficult to interpret to provide clear evidence. Da Fonseca judged the Protoevangelium and Luke 1:28, 41-42 as the

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Burgos, he worked on a Spanish Bible translation based on original languages. He also published his own critical edition of the New Testament. For the translation, see Francisco Cantera Burgos and José María Bover, eds. and trans., *Sagrada Biblia: versión crítica sobre los textos Hebreo y Griego* (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1947). For the critical edition, see Bover, ed., *Novi Testamenti Biblia Graeca et Latina* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1943). And for his major publication on St. Paul, see Bover, *Teología de San Pablo* (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1946).

<sup>3</sup> For a concise biographical and bibliographical treatment, see Alberto Vaccari, "In memoriam P. Aloisii Gonzaga da Fonseca," *Biblica* 44, no. 3 (1963): 395-396. Da Fonseca's publications focused on the Gospels but he also produced a study on Our Lady of Fatima. For his work on the Gospels, see da Fonseca, *Quaestio Johannaëa*, 3rd ed. (Roma: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1948); *Quaestio Synoptica*, 3rd ed. (Roma: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1952). For his work on Fatima, see da Fonseca, *Nossa Senhora de Fátima: aparições, culto, milagres*, 5th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1954).

most viable for revealing the Assumption. Specifically, he thought the Assumption was discernable through a deeper understanding of Mary's fullness of grace.

Adrien-Marie Malo was a Franciscan priest and the inaugural president of *L'Association Catholique d'Études Bibliques au Canada*.<sup>4</sup> He claimed that the Bible, on its own, did not teach the Assumption. He carefully defined the difference between the literal sense and the spiritual sense of Scripture. Likewise, he distinguished between the consequent meaning and the implicit meaning of Scripture. Malo argued that while the Assumption was not implicit in the Bible itself, it could be shown to exist in the deposit of faith by reading and interpreting the Bible in light of tradition and the teachings of the magisterium. Like da Fonseca, he rejected the typological readings of Psalms and Song of Songs but also added issues arising from historical critical analysis to further reject Song of Songs as a clear revelation of the Assumption. Malo judged Genesis 3:15 and Luke 1:28, 42-43 as the two most viable texts for demonstrating the Assumption, but in both cases, this required the application of some outside knowledge from tradition. Instead of commenting directly on Revelation 12, Malo took the position of Léandre Poirier for his own.<sup>5</sup> Poirier argued that Revelation 12 did not reveal the Assumption and that the best interpretation of the woman was to identify her with the early Church of Jerusalem.

Unlike the other scholars, Fulbert Cayré appealed to an organic theory of the development of doctrine to discern the Assumption in Scripture. Cayré was a French

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<sup>4</sup> There is very little biographical information available about Malo. This is surprising given his numerous publications and long-term involvement in the *L'Association Catholique d'Études Bibliques au Canada*. His publications indicate a variety of interests, though aimed at a more popular audience. For one of his devotional works on Mary, see Adrien-Marie Malo, *Source de rajeunissement spirituel* (Montréal: Éditions Franciscaines, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> Poirier was a Franciscan brother and Scripture scholar. He completed his dissertation at the Catholic University of America on the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. He would later serve as the director of the *Société catholique de la Bible*. For his dissertation, see Léandre Poirier, "Les Sept Églises: ou Le Premier septénaire prophétique de l'Apocalypse" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1943). For a brief tribute, see "Hommage à Léandre Poirier, ofm," Société Expo-Bible du Québec, accessed February 12, 2021, <http://www.interbible.org/sebq/hommage.html>.

Assumptionist and specialized in Patristics as opposed to biblical studies.<sup>6</sup> He explained that the Assumption was implicit in the Bible in the same way a seed contains a mature plant. The seed required something outside of itself to grow, namely, time and life. Both Cayré and Malo presented their papers at the Franciscan Assumptionist Congress in Montreal and, side-by-side, initially appear opposed to one another. However, the apparent disagreement stems from each one's use of the term *implicitly revealed*. Once methodological differences are accounted for, a level of agreement emerges since both recognized some nascent element pertaining to the Assumption in Scripture, and, that this nascent element required something outside itself to reach maturity.

### *The Status of Catholic Biblical Studies*

Before presenting a fuller analysis of the scholarship on the Assumption in Scripture at the height of the Assumptionist movement, a survey of the status of Catholic biblical studies during the first half of the twentieth century is needed. This added context proves important in understanding the relationship between Assumption biblical scholarship, magisterial teaching on biblical interpretation, and exegetical trends from the era. The scholarship examined in this chapter was published soon after Pius XII's 1943 encyclical on Scripture, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. Thus, its content is particularly relevant as it was the most recent magisterial teaching on biblical interpretation at the time. Its influence on the Assumption biblical scholarship appears, to various degrees, on four points: first, the importance of determining the literal meaning; second, the value of historical methods in that pursuit; third, the strict requirements of spiritual

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<sup>6</sup> Cayré's publications focused on the early Church Fathers and Augustinian spirituality. Some of his works were also translated into English. Most notably is his massive two volume treatment of the Church Fathers. For the English edition, see Fulbert Cayré, *Manual of Patrology and History of Theology*, trans. H. Howitt, 2 vols. (Paris: Society of St. John the Evangelist, Desclée & Co., 1936–1940).

exegesis; and fourth, the necessity of interpreting Scripture in a manner consistent with and enlightened by tradition and the teachings of the Church. To grasp the full significance of this encyclical, however, it is necessary to locate it within the larger context of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century controversies, trends, and magisterial teaching. *Divino Afflante Spiritu* can be understood as the magisterial teaching that fully overcame these controversies, affirming both the truth of prior magisterial teaching and the value of historical methods. The Assumption biblical scholarship considered here was also published during an era when the *ressourcement* movement was advocating for a return to spiritual exegesis. This was an influential movement and deserves attention, but spiritual exegesis was generally rejected as a viable basis for a dogmatic definition.

The largest controversy related to Catholic biblical scholarship during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century stemmed from Catholic Modernism and the corresponding anti-Modernist reaction. Though each ‘Catholic Modernist’ varied in presuppositions and approach, certain trends emerged.<sup>7</sup> Modernists tended towards rationalism, rejected the immutability of dogma, and preferred in its place an evolutionary doctrine. The most well-known among the modernists focusing on Scripture was Alfred Loisy. Though Loisy intended to write a Catholic response to Adolf von Harnack, his application of historical methods in *L’Evangile et l’Eglise* produced results that opposed Catholic dogma. Loisy embraced an evolutionary theory of dogma and made strong assertions against Christ’s intentional founding of the Church.<sup>8</sup> He was ultimately excommunicated. Even prior to Loisy’s controversial publication, Leo XIII had

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<sup>7</sup> For an introductory survey to some of the major figures associated with Catholic Modernism, see Alec Vidler, *A Variety of Catholic Modernists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

<sup>8</sup> For Loisy’s treatment of dogma, see Alfred Loisy, *The Gospel and the Church*, trans. Christopher Home (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), 180-225. His controversial statement on Christ and the Church: “It is certain, for instance, that Jesus did not systematize beforehand the constitution of the Church as that of a government established on earth and destined to endure for a long series of centuries ... Jesus foretold the kingdom, and it was the Church that came.” Ibid., 166.

employed the papal encyclical to combat emerging modernist errors. In *Providentissimus Deus*, the pope rejected certain applications of historical methods, which he determined to be tainted with modern rationalist errors. Leo XIII emphasized that the doctrine of inspiration was incompatible with errors existing in Scripture.<sup>9</sup>

The manner of employing historical methods, by Loisy and others, led to a perception among Catholics of an opposition between history and dogma.<sup>10</sup> One of the earliest Catholic scholars to explicitly counter this perception was Maurice Blondel. In his essay on history and dogma, he rejected the binary choice as a false dichotomy.<sup>11</sup> Establishing history and dogma in a proper relationship required distinguishing between “critical history” and “real history.”<sup>12</sup> According to Blondel, too often critical history was assumed to be synonymous with real history. Yet Blondel argued that critical history was a mere abstraction, akin to a body without a soul or a lifeless set of data. It has value but requires something outside of itself to give it life. According

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<sup>9</sup> Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, encyclical letter, November 18, 1893, Vatican website, [http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_18111893\\_providentissimus-deus.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus.html), sec. 17-21. In this encyclical, the pope articulates a doctrine of inspiration that appeared, at times, more akin to divine dictation. He wrote, “For all the books which the Church receives as sacred and canonical, are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost; and so far is it from being possible that any error can co-exist with inspiration, that inspiration not only is essentially incompatible with error, but excludes and rejects it as absolutely and necessarily as it is impossible that God Himself, the supreme Truth, can utter that which is not true.” Ibid., sec. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Besides Loisy, one of the best-known figures associated with modernism was George Tyrrell. Among his many concerns, he promoted a symbolic interpretation of dogma to show the continued relevance of Catholicism for the modern mind. He was a fierce critic of Pius X’s 1907 encyclical condemning modernism, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, and Tyrrell’s comments on the encyclical ultimately led to his excommunication in 1908 only a year before his death. Contemporary scholarship tends to be sympathetic to Tyrrell and finds a level of vindication for Tyrrell in Vatican II’s teachings. For an overview of Tyrrell’s life and thought, see Oliver Rafferty, “Tyrrell’s History and Theology: A Preliminary Survey,” in *George Tyrrell and Catholic Modernism*, ed. Oliver Rafferty (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 21-37. For a more comprehensive treatment, see David G. Schultenover, *George Tyrrell: In Search of Catholicism* (Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos, 1981). Tyrrell makes a brief appearance in the next chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Blondel, *History and Dogma*, in *The Letter on Apologetics & History and Dogma*, trans. Alexander Dru and Illtyd Trethowan (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 224.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 239.

to Blondel, the tradition of the Church was the necessary vivifying force to bring critical history to life.<sup>13</sup> As it related to Scripture, the results of exegesis were likewise dead without tradition.<sup>14</sup>

While Blondel made a helpful critique of critical history and noted the necessity of tradition, a Catholic harbinger of the future of biblical scholarship argued for the value of historical method long before its full acceptance and articulation in magisterial documents. This scholar was the saintly Marie-Joseph Lagrange.<sup>15</sup> Lagrange saw the value of historical method and yet diverged from scholars like Loisy in his application of it. He believed Catholic scholarship could greatly benefit from the use of historical method so long as it rejected modern rationalist presuppositions. In this way, Catholic biblical scholars could add the good of the new to the invaluable goods of the old. He helped found the *École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem* for research to this end. Throughout his studies, Lagrange came to hold a strong belief in the importance of determining the intent of the author in order to determine the literal sense of Scripture. This necessitated discerning the literary genre of the text and the rhetorical form of the author. While Lagrange affirmed the Holy Spirit as the true author of Scripture, he recognized that the Bible contained both human and divine elements, or, divine communication in human form. His use of historical methods ultimately led him to reject the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Though the leading Catholic expert on the topic, he was forbidden to publish his findings. Unlike Loisy, Lagrange responded to this setback with humility and obedience; disappointed but trusting in Providence. Lagrange spent much of his life in a Catholic “no man’s land.” He was no modernist, but his research led him to reject certain

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 275-276. Blondel: “When it is a question of finding the supernatural in Sacred History and in dogma, the Gospel is nothing without the Christian life, exegesis is nothing without Tradition – the Catholic Tradition which is now seen to be not a limitative and retrograde force, but a power of development and expansion.”

<sup>15</sup> For an accessible biography, see Bernard Montagnes, *The Story of Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange: Founder of Modern Catholic Bible Study*, trans. Benedict Viviano (New York: Paulist Press, 2006). The following summation of his life is based on this work.



positions asserted by “conservative” Catholics at the time. He did not object to taking the anti-Modernist Oath and agreed with the condemnation of Loisy. Yet, because certain leaders in the Church resisted historically grounded judgments regarding Scripture, he was left with few allies.

During the pontificate of Pius X, the Pontifical Biblical Commission provided answers to numerous inquiries regarding acceptable beliefs pertaining to the historicity, authorship, and interpretation of Scripture.<sup>16</sup> The responses constrained certain forms of scholarly research, but also suggest an openness to historical method. Four main points are discernable throughout the varied responses. First, the commission was concerned with affirming the historical accuracy of Scripture, particularly the Gospels and Acts. The commission issued a warning that scholars should be cautious in assuming a non-historical literary genre to resolve apparent difficulties.<sup>17</sup> Second, the commission consistently upheld traditional authorship of the books of the Bible. Thus, for example, the commission rejected the thesis that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch.<sup>18</sup> Third, the commission demonstrated some openness to historical methods in its concession that Moses might have used written or oral sources in the composition of the Pentateuch.<sup>19</sup> One response of the commission acknowledged that changes made to a text after its initial completion need not be a detriment to the final text’s inspiration.<sup>20</sup> Fourth, the Commission emphasized that the Church is the final authority on questions about Scripture and its definitive interpretation. Many of the questions received responses giving the position of the Commission, but also noted that final judgment is reserved to the Church.

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<sup>16</sup> The responses of the Pontifical Biblical Commission are most accessible in Denzinger and Hünermann, eds., *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, par. 3372-3373, 3394-3400, and 3505-3593.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 3373.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 3394. It should be noted, however, that the response from the commission simply affirmed that current arguments against Mosaic authorship were not convincing at the time.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 3396.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 3526.

The next phase of development in Catholic biblical studies occurred during Benedict XV's pontificate. In 1920, Benedict XV issued *Spiritus Paraclitus*. This encyclical extolled the greatness of St. Jerome and used his example and teaching to make pronouncements related to biblical inspiration. The pope reaffirmed the Holy Spirit is the author of all Scripture, but also noted the existence of both human and divine elements in the Bible.<sup>21</sup> The human elements were a result of the doctrine of inspiration. They were not profane elements easily discarded, but the result of the Holy Spirit making use of each human author's particular gifts. All Scripture was composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and free from error. No division between sacred and profane was possible as a means of navigating around supposed errors.<sup>22</sup> The encyclical also stressed the importance of determining the literal meaning of Scripture.<sup>23</sup>

Often understood as the watershed moment in Catholic biblical studies, one could easily read Pius XII's 1943 encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* as a vindication of Lagrange's lifelong work. In this encyclical, the pope affirmed the value of historical methods for determining the literal meaning of Scripture. Here, the literal meaning was understood as that "intended and expressed by the sacred writer."<sup>24</sup> Accurate determination of the literal meaning often necessitated recourse to the original languages and an awareness of rhetoric and genre.<sup>25</sup> But interpretation did not stop at historical critical determination of this literal meaning. Rather, Catholic exegetes must interpret Scripture in a manner consistent with and enlightened by tradition and the teachings of the Church.<sup>26</sup> The pope also taught about the careful determination

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<sup>21</sup> Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus*, encyclical letter, September 15, 1920, Vatican website, [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_enc\\_15091920\\_spiritus-paraclitus.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xv_enc_15091920_spiritus-paraclitus.html), sec. 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 19-22.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 50.

<sup>24</sup> Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, sec. 26.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 16, 37-28.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 24.

of the spiritual meaning of Scripture. Catholic biblical scholars must “disclose and expound this spiritual significance, intended and ordained by God, with that care which the dignity of the divine word demands,” and “scrupulously refrain from proposing as the genuine meaning of Sacred Scripture other figurative senses.”<sup>27</sup> Other figurative readings, though not clearly intended and ordained by God, possessed an illustrative value if employed “with moderation and restraint.”<sup>28</sup> The pope concluded with a call for charity on all sides within biblical scholarship. He noted that the Church had given relatively few definitive interpretations and thus there was plenty of room for research and charitable debate.<sup>29</sup>

*Divino Afflante Spiritu*’s warnings about spiritual exegesis and affirmation of historical-critical exegesis were, at least in part, a response to Dolindo Ruotolo. The Italian priest had attacked Catholic biblical scholarship’s use of historical methods and believed a return to spiritual exegesis was necessary.<sup>30</sup> But the most influential movement from this era that pushed for a revival of spiritual exegesis was the Catholic *ressourcement* movement. Jean Daniélou’s classic essay articulated the movement’s major features.<sup>31</sup> The call for a return to the sources focused on three theological sources: the Bible, the Fathers, and the liturgy. As it related to Scripture, Daniélou explained that historical methods were helpful as a preparatory work, but as the Word of God, exegesis had to go beyond historical-critical conclusions.<sup>32</sup> He suggested the use of a spiritual exegesis akin to the method of the early Church Fathers to help restore Scripture as a source of spiritual nourishment for the world. This was particularly applicable to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., sec. 27.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., sec. 47.

<sup>30</sup> Marcellino D’Ambrosio, “Henri de Lubac and the Critique of Scientific Exegesis,” *Communio* 19, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 365-366.

<sup>31</sup> Jean Daniélou, “The Present Orientations of Religious Thought,” trans. Anna Mathie Lenshek, *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 18, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2011): 51-62.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 53.

the Old Testament to restore its “character of prophecy and prefigurement.”<sup>33</sup> Henri de Lubac, one of the most renowned *ressourcement* theologians, wrote extensively on the topic of spiritual exegesis and the history of exegesis in the Church.<sup>34</sup> The spiritual meaning was “the Old Testament understood in the spirit of the New.”<sup>35</sup> This was a legitimate and necessary component of Christian exegesis because it occurred from the perspective of the definitive event of all history, the Incarnation. The spiritual meaning “is only perceived in the light of Christ and under the action of his Spirit, within his Church.”<sup>36</sup> De Lubac even affirmed the legitimacy of extending this type of exegesis to include discerning Mary in the Old Testament, a practice which had a long tradition in the life of the Church.<sup>37</sup>

While one might expect Assumption biblical scholarship to apply spiritual exegesis of the Old Testament to discern the Assumption in Scripture, that approach was generally rejected. This was in part an adherence to *Divino Afflante Spiritu*’s warning that authentic spiritual meanings must be clearly intended and willed by God. Da Fonseca invoked this teaching explicitly and Malo alluded to the same. The Old Testament texts from Psalms and Song of Songs were deemed unsuitable for the basis of a dogmatic definition. Any potential relation of these texts to the Assumption was illustrative at best.

The influence of *Divino Afflante Spiritu* on Assumption biblical scholarship was not always explicit and uniform but appears at certain points regarding the literal sense and the need for interpretations to consider tradition. Both da Fonseca and Malo stressed the significance of determining the literal meaning and the latter made minor use of insights from historical critical

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>34</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of de Lubac’s exegetical work, see Marcellino D’Ambrosio, “Henri de Lubac and the Recovery of the Traditional Hermeneutic” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1991).

<sup>35</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, trans. Luke O’Neill (New York: Herder & Herder, 2000), 27.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006), 317.

analysis to this end. Poirier also implicitly upheld the importance of determining the literal sense when he sought the intended meaning of the woman in Revelation 12 against interpretations that had rested on pious gestures of faith rather than authentic exegesis. Bover was the most speculative in his interpretations and seemed to unconsciously drift from the literal sense. Cayré was not primarily an exegete and appealed to an organic theory of development in his consideration of Scripture. His methodology largely put him outside the scope of *Divino Afflante Spiritu*'s teachings. Nevertheless, Cayré and the more proper exegetes examined here all made use of tradition in their interpretations. Malo was the most exacting in distinguishing this interpretative step from a more scientific exegesis focused on determining the literal meaning. But this adherence to *Divino Afflante Spiritu*'s reiteration of this point allowed them all to affirm the Assumption's inclusion in revelation.

#### *José María Bover*

In 1946, José María Bover published an article outlining three arguments for the Assumption as a doctrine revealed in biblical texts.<sup>38</sup> Reflecting on the growing support for a dogmatic definition within the Church, Bover believed it was a theologian's duty to seek the revealed truth in the sources of revelation. He sought in Scripture "new light and new clarifications, which may perhaps contribute to hastening the long-awaited day of the dogmatic definition."<sup>39</sup> What Bover was looking for was not an explicit reference to the Assumption in the biblical texts, but evidence that the doctrine was formally-implicitly revealed. This concept of formally-implicitly revealed appeared in the previous chapter, but it is helpful to consider

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<sup>38</sup> José M. Bover, "La Asunción corporal de la Virgen María a los cielos en la Sagrada Escritura," *Revista Española de Teología* 6 (1946): 163-183.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 164. Spanish: "nueva luz y nuevas precisiones, que tal vez puedan contribuir a acelerar el suspirado día de la definición dogmática."

Bover's own definition. According to Bover, formally-implicitly revealed truths are "contained in the documents of divine revelation, those that are obtained by simple analysis or declaration of the terms, without the intervention of reasoning itself, that is, without resorting to alien concepts and especially to philosophical principles."<sup>40</sup> Bover recognized that some theologians believed virtual revelation sufficed for a dogmatic definition, but thought it desirable, and possible, to establish the Assumption as formally-implicitly revealed in the biblical texts.

The three arguments he used rested on his exegesis of Genesis 3:15, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, and Romans 5:12-21 respectively. The argument from Genesis involved demonstrating that the foretold woman was Mary and that the promised victory over death necessarily included her anticipated resurrection. Bover's argument from 1 Corinthians focused on Paul's teaching on resurrection, while his argument from Romans hinged on Paul's theology of sin and death. Bover concluded that while each of the individual arguments demonstrated that the Assumption was contained in the biblical text, together the three arguments corroborated each other and increased the probability of their shared conclusion.<sup>41</sup>

Genesis 3:15, often referred to as the Protoevangelium, was one of the most appealed to texts in support of the Assumption. The argument Bover presented required the demonstration of two points. First, the woman mentioned in the text must refer to Mary, and second, the promised victory over death must include an anticipated resurrection. Bover made an exegetical argument for the identification of the woman in Genesis 3:15 with Mary but found further support for the claim in the patristic tradition. Reading Genesis 3:15 as a prophecy formulated by God, two

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Spanish: "contenidas en los documentos de la divina revelación las que se obtienen por simple análisis o declaración de los términos, sin que intervenga raciocinio propiamente dicho, es decir, sin que se apele a conceptos ajenos y especialmente a principios filosóficos."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 182. Bover's appeal to probability has a passing similarity to Philips's use of "convergence of probable reasons" in theological method. Philips, "Autour de la définibilité d'un dogme," 92-93.

points emerged in Bover's analysis. First, "the offspring or son of the Woman is not and cannot be other than the announced Repairer or Redeemer, that is, Jesus Christ."<sup>42</sup> Second, "the Woman is presented as the mother of the Redeemer; and Mother of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, there is no other properly than the Virgin Mary."<sup>43</sup> Bover further supported the identification of the woman of Genesis 3:15 with Mary through an appeal to Revelation 12:1 and the relationship between the two texts. He believed the woman of Genesis 3:15 was, unquestionably, the same woman referenced in Revelation 12:1. He deemed this an "undeniable assumption" and only pointed to the text of Revelation 12:9 in support of the claim, highlighting the text's identification of the dragon with the ancient serpent.<sup>44</sup> In Bover's assessment, the best exegetes identified the woman of Genesis 3:15 with Mary, Eve, or woman in general, and likewise identified the woman of Revelation 12:1 as Mary, Israel, or the Church. Since the two texts referred to the same woman, for Bover the only solution was to identify the woman in both texts as Mary.<sup>45</sup> In addition to finding support for his conclusion in Pius IX's *Ineffabilis Deus*, Bover asserted that "the patristic tradition fully confirms the Mariological meaning that we have previously found in the protoevangelical prophecy by way of internal exegesis."<sup>46</sup>

The second part of Bover's argument hinged on demonstrating that the foretold victory over death necessarily included the anticipated resurrection of the woman. Reading the text as a prophecy, he saw in Genesis 3:15 "a prophecy related to human reparation, expressed under the

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<sup>42</sup> Bover, "La Asunción corporal de la Virgen María," 165. Spanish: "la prole o hijo de la Mujer no es ni puede ser otro que el anunciado Reparador o Redentor, es decir, Jesu-cristo."

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., Spanish: "la Mujer se presenta como la madre del Redentor: y Madre del Redentor, Jesu-Cristo, no hay otra propiamente que la Virgen María."

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Spanish: "supuesto, innegable."

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 167. Spanish: "la tradición patristica confirma plenamente el sentido mariológico que por vía de exégesis interna hemos antes hallado en la profecía protoevangélica."

image of a bloody struggle.”<sup>47</sup> Bover recognized three parts in this metaphorical image. The image included hostility or enmity, victory via crushing the head, and a bite of the foot.<sup>48</sup> This image is paradoxical: “the empire of death is destroyed precisely by death.”<sup>49</sup> Bover was quick to point out that if it was to be a true victory over death, the death which destroys death cannot be permanent. While this clearly relates to Christ’s victory over death, it is less clear how this image necessitates the anticipated resurrection of Mary. The necessity arises out of recognizing a rhetorical device in the text that parallels the woman and her offspring with the serpent and its offspring. As Bover explained, “The enmities of the Woman against the serpent, and of one offspring against another offspring are expressed separately. But this is a rhetorical figure, very usual and natural.”<sup>50</sup> Though he did not offer any detailed textual analysis here, the rest of the argument demonstrated how he was reading the text itself. It is not the woman who crushes the head of the serpent, at least not directly, but the offspring of the woman. For Bover, this reading demonstrated that the enmity, expressed separately, crosses over between the two pairs. The enmity is a shared hostility. The woman’s enmity is not exclusive to the serpent nor is her offspring’s enmity exclusive to the serpent’s offspring. Because of this shared enmity, Bover interpreted the victory and biting of the foot as also shared between the woman and her offspring. The consequence of this shared enmity, victory, and bite of the foot was that the woman likewise shared in her offspring’s victory over death and immediate resurrection.<sup>51</sup> Her resurrection was necessarily anticipatory.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 168. Spanish: “una profecía relativa a la reparación humana, expresada bajo la imagen de una sangrienta lucha.”

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Spanish: “el imperio de la muerte es destruido precisamente por la muerte.”

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 168-169. Spanish: “Se expresan separadamente las enemistades de la Mujer contra la serpiente, y de una prole contra otra prole. Pero esto es una figura retórica, muy usual y natural.”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 169.



Demonstrating the Assumption was formally-implicitly revealed, therefore, simply required combining these two truths. The woman of Genesis 3:15 is Mary and the woman shared in the complete victory over death that included an anticipated resurrection, ergo, Mary must have undergone an anticipated resurrection. This anticipated resurrection is “the characteristic point of the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven, and whose Dogmatic definition is desired.”<sup>52</sup> While Bover expressed confidence that his exegesis demonstrated the implicit inclusion of the Assumption in the deposit of faith, he also stated, “the certainty acquired by the Protoevangelium alone grows prodigiously in the light of the Theology of Saint Paul.”<sup>53</sup> Specifically, he turned to arguments from 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 and Romans 5:12-21.

Contextually, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 falls within Paul’s larger discussion about the resurrection of the dead. Bover turned to these four verses, which describe Christ as the first fruits of the resurrection, to argue for the Assumption via Mary’s inclusion within these first fruits. If he could demonstrate that the first fruits Paul spoke about included more than Christ, extending to Mary as well, then Christ’s resurrection prior to the general resurrection could also extend to Mary.

Bover began this argument with an analysis of the four verses. He read 1 Corinthians 15:20 as a dual affirmation. First, that the resurrection of Christ assumes a universal resurrection, and second, that Christ belongs to a different category of the entirety of those who will rise from the dead. This different category is one of priority since Christ belongs to the first fruits of the resurrection.<sup>54</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:21 affirmed that death came through a man and, likewise, the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Spanish: “el punto característico de la Asunción corporal de María a los cielos, y cuya definición dogmática se desea.”

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Spanish: “La certeza adquirida por solo el Protoevangelio crece prodigiosamente a la luz de la Teología de San Pablo.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 170.

resurrection of the dead came through a man. Bover referred to the principle undergirding this vision of reality as the recirculation principle. Applied to the words of Paul, “The mystery of life is explained by its correspondence with the mystery of death.”<sup>55</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:22 identified these two men. Death came through Adam and life came through Christ. It is through “the mystery of solidarity” that all people share in Adam’s death and are capable of sharing in Christ’s life.<sup>56</sup> The final verse of this pericope, 1 Corinthians 15:23, delineated between two categories within the resurrection to life. Christ is the first fruits and those who belong to Christ form a secondary group. Bover explained this second category as “those who by virtue of communion or solidarity are incorporated into Christ, are members of his mystical Body.”<sup>57</sup> The relationship between the two categories is one of giving and receiving. “Christ is the head, the other men are the members; consequently, Christ is life-giving, the active principle of life; other men are simply quickened, they passively receive life.”<sup>58</sup> As it relates to the Assumption, the question was whether there is reason to believe Mary belongs to the category of first fruits as opposed to the later general harvest.<sup>59</sup>

Though there is no explicit mention of Mary as belonging to the first fruits of the resurrection in Scripture, Bover argued Mary’s inclusion alongside Christ was demonstrable by an appeal to the principles of recirculation and solidarity. He turned his attention first to the use of the principle of recirculation. Rearticulating this principle, he explained that “by God's will,

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 171. Spanish: “El misterio de la vida se explica por su correspondencia con el misterio de la muerte.”

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., Spanish: “el misterio de la solidaridad.”

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. Spanish: “son los que en virtud de la comunión o solidaridad están incorporados a Cristo, son miembros de su Cuerpo místico.”

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 172. Spanish: “Cristo es la cabeza, los demás hombres son los miembros; consiguientemente, Cristo es vivificante, el principio activo de la vida; los demás hombres son simplemente vivificados, reciben la vida pasivamente.”

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

the order of reparation or life must correspond to the order of ruin or death.”<sup>60</sup> Paul used this principle to explain how death came from Adam and life came from Christ. However, despite Paul’s use of Adam as the cause of death, Bover highlighted that the Genesis narrative indicated death also came through a woman, Eve.<sup>61</sup> He found further affirmation of the role of woman in bringing death to humanity in Ecclesiasticus 25:33. He rendered the text, “Sin began with a woman, and through her we all die.”<sup>62</sup> Applying this to the recirculation principle, Bover thought it was legitimate to claim, “Since through a woman death came, also through a woman the resurrection of the dead.”<sup>63</sup> Following the traditional identification of Mary as the second or new Eve, Bover identified Mary as the woman through whom the resurrection of the dead comes. Being a cause of life, like Christ, Mary belongs to the first fruits of the resurrection. Since the first fruits undergo a resurrection prior to the general harvest, Mary’s inclusion in the first fruits sufficed for Bover to recognize the Assumption was implicitly revealed in Scripture.<sup>64</sup>

Bover also thought it was possible to affirm Mary belonged to the first fruits of the resurrection by appealing to the principle of solidarity. Those who belong to Christ made up the second category of the resurrection. These are not the first fruits, but the general harvest. While Mary is in solidarity with Christ, Bover alleged this solidarity was different from the solidarity of the rest of humanity and warranted a unique privilege. Whereas other Christians are one flesh with Christ legally, Mary is one flesh physically. Put simply, “That vital germ that produced the Fruit of blessing was the flesh of Mary.”<sup>65</sup> As the Mother of Christ, Mary’s solidarity with Christ

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Spanish: “por voluntad de Dios, el orden de la reparación o de la vida debe corresponder al orden de la ruina o de la muerte.”

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Spanish: “De una mujer tuvo principio el pecado, y por ella todos morimos.”

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Spanish: “Ya que por una mujer vino la muerte, también por una mujer la resurrección de los muertos.”

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 174-175. Spanish: “Aquel germen vital que produjo el Fruto de bendición, era carne de María.”

is not only more intimate physically, but also in priority.<sup>66</sup> The result is a solidarity between Christ and Mary that differs from that accessible to the rest of humanity. According to Bover, “If, then, solidarity with Christ is in itself the principle of resurrection, it cannot be denied that the solidarity of Mary, truer, fuller, and, above all, logically and chronologically prior to that of others, demands some advantage and privileged preference.”<sup>67</sup> What is this privilege? Bover asserted this privilege “cannot be other than the advantage of the priority or anticipation in the resurrection of the flesh.”<sup>68</sup>

The final argument Bover presented for the Assumption was more speculative. He made use of Romans 5:12-21 to explain the relationship between sin and death. The major point Bover drew from this pericope was that death is a real penalty of sin, not merely an effect.<sup>69</sup> He quickly turned to a more speculative approach, however, beginning with the assertion that Mary’s death is beyond all doubt.<sup>70</sup> The rest of the argument sought a suitable explanation for Mary’s death. It could not be the result of sin because of the Immaculate Conception. Nor could her death be a mere natural death because Mary did not exist in a state of pure nature.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately, Bover concluded that the reason for Mary’s death could only be found in her motherhood and her relationship of association to the redemptive work of Christ.<sup>72</sup> As he explained, “Mary, associated with the person and the work of the Redeemer, must also be associated with his death, she must die with him and like him.”<sup>73</sup> This likeness in death extended to a likeness in

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Spanish: “Si, pues, la solidaridad con Cristo es de suyo principio de resurrección, no puede negarse que la solidaridad de María, más verdadera, más plena, y, sobre todo, lógica y cronológicamente anterior a la de los demás, exige alguna ventaja y preferencia privilegiada.”

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Spanish: “no puede ser otra que la ventaja de la prioridad o anticipación en la resurrección de la carne.”

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 180. Spanish: “María, asociada a la persona ya la obra del Redentor, debía también asociarse a su muerte, debía morir con él y como él.”

resurrection. Since the death of Christ was free from sepulchral corruption and only momentary, so too Mary, as co-redemptrix, must have suffered a death without bodily corruption and received a swift resurrection.<sup>74</sup>

Whatever the legitimacy of Bover's argumentation, the Scripture scholar diverged from strict exegesis into speculation. The three arguments Bover chose to present in defense of the Assumption as a truth implicitly revealed in Scripture all hinged on establishing a unique relationship between Jesus and Mary. In each argument, Mary emerged as a partner to Christ in the process of redemption. The arguments were not, in the strictest sense, purely biblical arguments. Bover's arguments were based on Scripture, but Scripture interpreted and informed by tradition and the teachings of the magisterium. As will become apparent after the examinations of later contributions on the question of the Assumption in Scripture, Bover also exhibited a tendency to assert interpretations as beyond dispute which were, in fact, disputed within Catholic biblical scholarship of the time.

### *Luigi Gonzaga da Fonseca*

Originally presented to the Pontifical Biblical Institute in the beginning of 1947 and published soon after, Luigi Gonzaga da Fonseca surveyed the state of biblical evidence for the Assumption.<sup>75</sup> After quickly affirming the universal belief of the Church in Mary's Assumption was beyond doubt, da Fonseca raised the theological issue, asking, "whether the mystery of the Assumption of Mary is not somehow delivered in the principal source of revelation, in Sacred Scripture?"<sup>76</sup> Recognizing the variety of views on the question, da Fonseca set out to examine

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>75</sup> Luigi Gonzaga da Fonseca, "L'Assunzione di Maria nella Sacra Scrittura," *Biblica* 28 (1947): 321-364.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.,

the commonly appealed to biblical texts in support of the Assumption and evaluate their theological merit. He approached this task by grouping the biblical texts into three categories corresponding to the theological merit of each set of texts. Though he made no definitive determination, the three categories corresponded to the texts he believed were the least promising, somewhat promising, and most promising for demonstrating the Assumption was revealed in Scripture.

The biblical texts deemed least promising were those used to affirm the Assumption through Old Testament typology. Here, the focus was exclusively on types of Mary which seemed to suggest her Assumption. This included three typological interpretations: Mary as ark of the covenant in Psalm 131(132), Mary as queen in Psalm 44(45), and Mary as the beloved bride in the Song of Songs. Before examining da Fonseca's evaluation, it is helpful to recall each text and its supposed allusion to the Assumption. Psalm 131(132):8 reads, "Arise! O Lord! enter the place of your rest, you and your Holy Ark."<sup>77</sup> Read typologically, this text is a prophecy of the Ascension and the Assumption. Da Fonseca noted the popularity of this reading and claimed that "there is almost no Eastern or Western Father, of those who left us treatises on the Dormition or Assumption of Our Lady, who has not adduced this text of the Psalm in this regard."<sup>78</sup> Further confirmation of this typological interpretation would seem to exist in Revelation 11:19 which records a vision of the ark residing in the temple of God in heaven.<sup>79</sup> Psalm 44(45) is a messianic psalm and the latter half of 44(45):10 reads, "The queen stood at

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 326. Da Fonseca provided a Latin version and an Italian translation. The English is based off his Italian translation. Latin: "Surge, Domine, in requiem tuam, tu et Arca sanctificationis tuae." Italian: "Su! O Signore! entra nel luogo del tuo riposo, tu e la tua Arca Santa."

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Italian: "quasi non vi è Padre orientale od occidentale, di quanti ci lasciarono trattati sulla Dormizione od Assunzione della Madonna, che non abbia addotto in proposito questo testo del Salmo."

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 328.

your right hand, adorned with gold from Ophir.”<sup>80</sup> Here, the connection with the Assumption relies on a typological reading of Mary as queen. Thus, Mary, the queen, resides in heaven because the psalm reports that she stands next to the right hand of God. Lastly, da Fonseca highlighted three verses from the Song of Songs. First, 2:10, “Arise, hurry, my love, my dove, ... and come.”<sup>81</sup> Second, 3:6, “Who is she who ascends through the desert, like a pillar of smoke, overflowing with delight?”<sup>82</sup> And third, 4:8, “Come from Lebanon, my spouse, come from Lebanon, come, you shall be crowned.”<sup>83</sup> Reading these verses typologically makes the connections with the Assumption apparent. Setting aside the larger context momentarily, one could interpret these verses as Mary being called, ascending into heaven, and culminating in her crowning.

Da Fonseca highlighted two factors in favor of recognizing the Assumption in these typological readings of the Old Testament. First, there exists a commentary tradition, including saints and doctors of the Church, who have read these passages in this typological sense.<sup>84</sup> Second, “The Church herself in her liturgy, Latin, Greek, Coptic, Syriac accepts and consecrates those types.”<sup>85</sup> This evidence from the tradition and liturgy of the Church gives credence to the value of these texts for the Assumption. Da Fonseca reproduced the rhetorical question Paul Renaudin once asked arising from this evidence. Renaudin had asked, “What Catholic theologian would dare to claim that the bodily Assumption of Our Lady was not prophesied in the Holy

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Da Fonseca provides two Latin versions of this text. The English is based on the second version. First Latin: “Astitit regina a dexteris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietat.” Second Latin: “Regina adstat ad dexteram tuam, ornata auro ex Ophir.”

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 329. Latin: “Surge, propera, amica mea, columba mea, ... et veni.”

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. Latin: “Quae est ista quae ascendit per desertum, sicut virgula fumi, deliciis affluens?”

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. Latin: “Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni de Libano, veni, coronaberis.”

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Some of the more prominent names da Fonseca listed were John of Damascus, Peter Damian, and Bernard of Clairvaux.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 330. Italian: “La Chiesa stessa nella sua liturgia, latina, greca, coptica, siriana accetta e consacra quei tipi.”

Books, under the veil of types, to which God had attached this meaning?”<sup>86</sup> For this longstanding advocate of the Assumptionist movement, none would dare to make such a claim, and therefore, the Assumption was “based on the Word of God, which revealed it formally, albeit implicitly, in several types from the era prior to the evangelical economy.”<sup>87</sup>

Da Fonseca did not agree with this conclusion. His dissent was based on the proper use of Scripture in theological argumentation. According to da Fonseca, theologians must make use of the inspired literal sense unless the typological sense is demonstrated to be “truly intended and willed by God.”<sup>88</sup> This claim conformed to the recent teachings of *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. In the case of these Old Testament passages, da Fonseca thought the literal sense was clear. He read Psalm 131(132) as simply referring to this historical Ark of the Covenant. Thus, the meaning of 131(132):8 amounts to the entry of God, uniquely present in the Ark, into the Sanctuary.<sup>89</sup> Psalm 44(45) did refer to the reign of the messiah as king, but the queen was the mystical bride of the king. The messiah’s bride is the Church, not the Mother of God.<sup>90</sup> The Song of Songs “sings the love of God for his people or for every faithful soul,” and while Mary is represented here to the extent that she is the first among the faithful, the text gives no indication it is a unique reference to her.<sup>91</sup> Da Fonseca’s treatment of these passages did not permit them to serve as evidence that the Assumption was a doctrine implicitly revealed, typologically, in the Old Testament. The tradition of Marian typology regarding these passages was not without value, but it did not suffice for theological argumentation.

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<sup>86</sup> Renaudin, *La Doctrine de l’Assomption de la T.S. Vierge*, 160. French: “quel théologien catholique oserait prétendre que l’Assomption corporelle de Notre-Dame n’a pas été prophétisée dans les Livres Saints, sous le voile de types, auxquels Dieu avait attaché cette signification?”

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. French: “repose donc sur la Parole de Dieu, qui l’a révélée formellement, quoique implicitement, en plusieurs types de l’époque antérieure à l’économie évangélique.”

<sup>88</sup> Da Fonseca, “L’Assunzione di Maria nella Sacra Scrittura,” 330. Italian: “veramente inteso e voluto da Dio.”

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 331.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Italian: “canta l’amore di Dio per il suo popolo o per ogni anima fedele.”



If the first category of texts were ultimately unsatisfying for the present task, da Fonseca thought the second category had more potential. The first two arguments presented here are related in that they rest on the unique honor owed to Mary. The first combined the commandment in Exodus 20:12 to honor one's father and mother with the revealed truth in Luke 1:43 that Mary is the Mother of God. According to this argument, since Jesus never violated any of the commandments, he must have always honored his mother. In honoring his mother, "he [Jesus] preserved her from corruption while she lay in the tomb, and later raised her up and glorified her."<sup>92</sup> The argument, however, is flawed because the conclusion does not follow from the two revealed premises. Da Fonseca sought to augment the argument with another that perhaps, in combination, would prove more effective. This second argument relied on the Mariological principle that "all the privileges and favors granted by God to other Saints, must be attributed to the Blessed Virgin, so long as those privileges are compatible with the condition, mission, dignity of the Mother of God."<sup>93</sup> This principle was then applied in light of what Matthew 27:51-53 records about the saints rising with Christ. Da Fonseca readily admitted some of the difficulties of this argument. Specifically, one can only presume the saints went to heaven, the text does not say, and it is unclear if these saints possessed their bodies.<sup>94</sup> He judged that this argument rests on a dubious interpretation and relies on a principle outside Scripture. He did not consider either of these arguments to demonstrate Scripture implicitly reveals the Assumption.

The third biblical argument Fonseca examined in this category was based on Revelation 12:1. Even if the woman of 12:1 represents both the Church and Mary, this argument claims the

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 333. Italian: "l'ha preservata dalla corruzione, mentre giacque nel sepolcro, e l'ha dopo risuscitata e glorificata."

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 335. Italian: "tutti i privilegi e favori da Dio concessi ad altri Santi, bisogna attribuirli alla Vergine Santissima, una volta che quei privilegi siano compatibili con la condizione, missione, dignità della Madre di Dio."

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

woman is primarily Mary through a connection between Revelation 12:5 and Psalm 2:9.

Revelation 12:5 reveals that the woman's son will rule with a rod of iron. Da Fonseca explained that this is "an evident allusion to Psalm 2; and so, it follows that he can only be the Messiah, and consequently the Woman is the Virgin-Mother."<sup>95</sup> The other reason given to support this view was that the Church is more properly recognized in the offspring of the woman who remain on the earth.<sup>96</sup> Recognizing the woman as Mary, the argument in favor of Revelation 12 revealing the Assumption rests on an interpretation of her mysterious flight in 12:14. As da Fonseca articulated it, "in the mysterious flight of the Woman ... to the place prepared for her by God, where once and for all she remains sheltered from infernal persecutions, it is necessary to recognize the Assumption into Heaven."<sup>97</sup> Da Fonseca was skeptical regarding the value of this argument. There were simply too many difficulties with interpreting this apocalyptic text, ranging from the certainty with which it can be known that the woman is primarily Mary, if the vision took place in heaven, or if the woman was meant to be purely symbolic.<sup>98</sup>

Unsatisfied with any of the preceding biblical texts and arguments, da Fonseca turned to a third category of texts he judged the most promising for demonstrating the Assumption was revealed in Scripture. The first of these was the Protoevangelium and the argument of Mary's common victory over enmity and death with her Son.<sup>99</sup>

However, Da Fonseca believed there was another biblical text that implicitly revealed the Assumption: Luke 1:28, 41-42. These well-known verses communicate that Mary is full of

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 337. Italian: "allusione evidente al Salmo 2; donde segue che questi non può essere che il Messia, e per conseguenza la Donna è la Vergine-Madre."

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. Italian: "nella fuga misteriosa della Donna ... al luogo preparatole da Dio, dove una volta per sempre resta al coperto delle persecuzioni infernali, bisogna riconoscere l'Assunzione in Cielo."

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>99</sup> This argument received sufficient attention during the analysis of Bover's biblical arguments and there is nothing in da Fonseca's presentation of it unique enough to warrant restating it here. For Da Fonseca's treatment, see Ibid., 339-354.

grace, blessed among women, and that the fruit of her womb is blessed as well. Here, da Fonseca reproduced the texts in Latin. Luke 1:28 reads, “Hail full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women.”<sup>100</sup> And Luke 1:41-42 reads, “... And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and exclaimed with a great voice, and said: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”<sup>101</sup> He concluded that the Assumption is hidden in the depth of these words.<sup>102</sup> Da Fonseca focused primarily on the *Ave*. The blessing Mary received was “such a singular fullness of grace and charisms” given to her from the moment of her existence.<sup>103</sup> The Assumption was included in this unique fullness of grace and charisms. Da Fonseca argued for the Assumption’s inclusion based on Mary’s total exemption from sin and her fullness of grace. Since Mary was without sin, no penalty of sin was possible. And since the penalty of sin is “the permanence among the shackles of death and the corruption of the sepulcher,” Mary could not remain in the tomb to suffer corruption but was necessarily assumed into heaven.<sup>104</sup> Da Fonseca thought the same conclusion also followed from a deeper consideration of Mary’s fullness of grace. He first noted that all agree the soul of the Mother of God resides in heaven. Since “the glory of heaven is none other than the grace consummated in its term,” Mary must be full of glory in heaven.<sup>105</sup> But for this to be a true fullness of glory, it must include the glory of her body.<sup>106</sup> Hence, the Assumption becomes the necessary culmination of the grace Mary received from the moment of her conception. Though da Fonseca was primarily concerned with the *Ave* from Luke 1:28, he thought roughly the same argument could be made from the claim of Mary as

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 355. Latin: “Ave gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus.”

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. Latin: “... Et repleta est Spiritu Sancto Elisabeth, et exclamavit voce magna, et dixit: Benedicta tu inter mulieres, et benedictus fructus ventris tui.”

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. Italian: “una tanto singolare pienezza di grazie e di carismi.”

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 358. Italian: “la permanenza fra i ceppi della morte e la corruzione del sepolcro.”

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. Italian: “La gloria del cielo non è altro che la grazia consumata nel suo termine.”

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

blessed. This was because the statements of Mary's blessedness indicate she is "simply and absolutely 'Benedicta'" and excluded from all curses and penalties of sin.<sup>107</sup>

Da Fonseca's overall analysis of the biblical evidence for the Assumption concluded that only a few passages could sufficiently ground an argument for the Assumption as implicitly revealed in Scripture. He rejected the typological reading of Old Testament passages as a valid means of theological argumentation on the grounds that the Marian typology employed was not clearly intended and willed by God. Other biblical arguments revolved around the honor due to Mary as the Mother of God. These arguments, at best, only indicated the fittingness of the Assumption. He also considered Revelation 12 as evidence of Mary residing in heaven, body and soul, but judged that the vision in the apocalyptic text contained too many interpretive difficulties to serve as a solid foundation. Ultimately, da Fonseca concluded that only the Protoevangelium in Genesis 3:15 and the passages in Luke that speak of Mary as full of grace and blessed sufficed. The Assumption was only discernable in these texts, however, through the application of outside knowledge. Da Fonseca was not explicit on this point, but his appeal to a deeper understanding of Mary's fullness of grace and blessedness in Luke 1 was a tacit acknowledgement of interpreting these passages in light of tradition and the growing body of magisterial teaching on Mary.

*Adrien-Marie Malo and Léandre Poirier*

An instructive exchange of ideas that highlighted some of the nuance on what it means for the Bible to teach or reveal the Assumption took place at the Franciscan Assumptionist Congress in Montreal. The first part of this exchange was the paper Adrien-Marie Malo

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 360. Italian: "semplicemente ed assolutamente 'Benedicta'."

presented on the Bible and the Assumption.<sup>108</sup> Ultimately, Malo concluded that the Bible alone does not affirm the Assumption.<sup>109</sup> This conclusion was the result of a careful parsing of the senses of Scripture as well as his understanding of the relationship between Scripture, tradition, and the Church. It was only after Malo detailed these foundational issues that he examined the common biblical texts marshaled in support of the Assumption. Most of these texts were the same passages considered by other biblical scholars at the time. Malo's analysis led him to divide the texts into two unequal groups pertaining to their value for the Assumption but determined that even the most promising texts were insufficient on their own.

Though the topic of his paper was the Bible and the Assumption, it is telling that the Franciscan biblical scholar chose to begin his argument by establishing the relationship between Scripture, tradition, and the Church. The Bible alone would prove insufficient for demonstrating the Assumption, but finds its value situated in its proper relationship with tradition and the Church.<sup>110</sup> He explained that as the teacher of revelation, the Church draws "from two authentic sources: the Bible and Tradition; this is where, as in a repository, is found the truths that God wants to reveal."<sup>111</sup> As two sources of revelation, the Bible and tradition are distinct, but not independent. Malo explained that since "Tradition completes the Bible ... the Bible must be interpreted in the sense taught by Tradition."<sup>112</sup> Biblical testimony isolated from tradition is not required for the Church to affirm the Assumption as belonging to the deposit of faith. Nevertheless, the goal of Malo's paper was to assess what the Bible itself said about the

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<sup>108</sup> Adrien-Marie Malo, "La Bible et l'Assomption," in *Vers le dogme de l'Assomption*, 103-122.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>110</sup> Malo spoke of the Church as the teacher of revelation. His references to the Church are more accurately understood as the magisterium, even if he did not use the term himself.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 103. French: "aux deux sources authentiques: la Bible et la Tradition; c'est là que comme dans un dépôt se trouvent les vérités que Dieu veut révéler."

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. French: "la Tradition complète la Bible ... la Bible doit être interprétée dans le sens enseigné par la Tradition."

Assumption. He stated the question in simple terms: “Taken by itself, does the Bible teach the Assumption?”<sup>113</sup>

Turning his attention to the Bible, Malo distinguished between the literal sense of Scripture and the spiritual sense of Scripture. His explanation of the literal sense included four characteristics. The literal sense is immediate, inspired, expressed in human language, and its interpretation is entrusted to the Church. By immediate, he meant that the meaning “follows without intermediary from the words themselves according to their proper or figurative value.”<sup>114</sup> Calling the literal sense inspired indicated it “proceeds from God as principal author and from the sacred writer as inspired author of the Bible.”<sup>115</sup> As a meaning expressed in human language, determination of the literal sense could involve investigating “grammar, vocabulary, philology, context, and analogous passages.”<sup>116</sup> Unlike the literal sense, the spiritual sense of Scripture is mediated and indirect. It “proceeds from words not directly but through realities which are signified immediately and which by virtue of a link established by God herald future realities.”<sup>117</sup> Malo pointed to the bronze serpent in Numbers 21 as a helpful example in distinguishing between the literal sense and the spiritual sense. While the literal sense communicates the bronze serpent itself, the spiritual sense communicates the future reality of Christ’s crucifixion. Recognizing this spiritual sense emerges out of the resemblance between the Old Testament image and the crucifixion but is confirmed when Jesus himself appeals to the image in his conversation with Nicodemus.<sup>118</sup> Thus, Malo identified two conditions for determining the authentic spiritual sense. First, there must be a resemblance between the literal

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 104. French: “Prise en elle-même, la Bible enseigne-t-elle l’Assomption?”

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 105. French: “découle sans intermédiaire des mots eux-mêmes selon leur valeur propre ou figurée.”

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. French: “procède de Dieu comme auteur principal et de l’écrivain sacré comme auteur inspiré de la Bible.”

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. French: “la grammaire, du vocabulaire, de la philologie, du contexte et des passages analogues.”

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. French: “procède des mots non pas directement mais par l’intermédiaire de réalités qui sont signifiées immédiatement et qui en vertu d’un lien établi par Dieu annoncent des réalités futures.”

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

sense and the alleged spiritual sense. And second, there must be indication of “the clearly manifested divine will to add to this literal sense a spiritual sense; the revelation of this divine will is done by God, the Apostles, the constant tradition of the Church, the very ancient usage of the liturgy.”<sup>119</sup> These conditions, specifically the second condition, help eliminate fantastical interpretations prompted by an unrestricted imagination. Malo presented this explanation of the spiritual sense as consistent with *Divino Afflante Spiritu*.<sup>120</sup>

Malo also distinguished between two other types of meaning derived from Scripture: the consequent and the implicit. The two meanings were easily confused. According to Malo, “Implicit means etymologically in the folds, that is to say in the folds of a biblical text; the implicit does not appear in this text, it is however well contained there, it is necessary to find it there to express it.”<sup>121</sup> Though the immediate expression is not present, the implicit meaning has a real presence in the words which “is discovered with the help of an explanatory or expository syllogism.”<sup>122</sup> The link between the explicit meaning and the implicit meaning can be physical, metaphysical, or logical, which ensures the implicit is truly contained in the biblical text.<sup>123</sup> The implicit meaning differs slightly from the consequent meaning. Essentially, the consequent

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 106. French: “la volonté divine nettement manifestée de surajouter à ce sens littéral un Sens spirituel; la révélation de cette divine volonté est faite par Dieu, les Apôtres, la tradition constante de l’Église, le très ancien usage de la liturgie.”

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 107. French: “Implicite signifie étymologiquement dans les plis, c’est-à-dire dans les plis d’un texte biblique; l’implicite n’apparaît pas dans ce texte, il y est cependant bien contenu, il faut l’y retrouver pour l’énoncer.”

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. French: “se découvrir à l’aide d’un syllogisme explicatif ou expositif.”

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 107-108. Malo offered definitions for these three types of links. Physical: “The link is of the physical order when the implicit appears as the essential or integral parts of a physical being.” French: “Le lien est d’ordre physique quand l’implicite apparaît comme les parties essentielles ou intégrantes d’un être physique.” Metaphysical: “The link is of the metaphysical order when the implicit appears as the conclusion of a principle which contains it by virtue of the first principles of reason.” French: “Le lien est d’ordre métaphysique quand l’implicite apparaît comme la conclusion d’un principe qui la contient en vertu des premiers principes de la raison.” Logical: “The link is of the logical order when the implicit appears as the particular statement of a general affirmation which encompasses it in its extension.” French: “Le lien est d’ordre logique quand l’implicite apparaît comme l’énoncé particulier d’une affirmation générale qui l’englobe dans son extension.”

meaning is a theological conclusion derived from the biblical text in a way that results in a truth beyond what the text itself contains. While it is possible for these conclusions to belong to the deposit of faith, they are not, strictly speaking, biblical teachings. Malo distinguished between the implicitly revealed and the implicitly biblical.<sup>124</sup> This distinction is possible because revelation is not limited to Scripture, thus a truth can be implicitly revealed, but not implicitly biblical.

These considerations of sense and meaning led Malo to more precisely articulate the question at hand. The simple question about whether the Bible teaches the Assumption became more precise and now asked, “Does the Bible contain texts which in their literal or spiritual sense, either explicit or implicit, affirm the Assumption?”<sup>125</sup> To answer this question, Malo investigated two groups of biblical texts. The first group included texts which could illustrate the Assumption after its definition and the second group included texts which opened a path to the Assumption.

Malo placed four biblical texts among those which could illustrate the Assumption once defined. These texts were Psalm 44(45):10, Psalm 131(132):8, four verses from Song of Songs, including 2:10, 3:6, 4:8, and 8:5, and John 12:26. He concluded that none of these affirm the Assumption implicitly or explicitly in either the literal or spiritual sense. Having covered most of these texts previously, here it suffices to quickly present Malo’s interpretation of the texts and the difficulties he perceived with discerning the Assumption in them.

He rendered the text of Psalm 44(45):10 as “She stands, the queen, at your right hand, adorned with gold from Ophir.”<sup>126</sup> Malo interpreted the literal sense of this psalm as a

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. French: “La Bible contient-elle des textes qui dans leur sens littéral ou Spirituel soit explicite soit implicite affirment l’Assomption?”

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 109. French: “Elle se tient, la reine, à ta droite, parée d’or d’Ophir.”



description of an Israelite marriage ceremony and the spiritual sense as “the figure of the union of the Messiah, the true spouse, with Israel or the Church, Israel according to the spirit.”<sup>127</sup>

While this passage was sometimes read as indicative of the Assumption, such a reading required two changes to the text itself. First, Mary would need to replace Israel, and second, the location of the events would need to switch from earth to heaven. Malo noted that a tradition dating back to Modestus of Jerusalem (†634) existed for such a reading, but explained that “neither the consistency nor the antiquity of their testimonies is sufficient to demonstrate that God wanted to order this text to the Assumption of Mary.”<sup>128</sup> Put another way, the spiritual sense that saw in the text the future reality of the Assumption failed to fulfill the requirement of being made known by the divine will.

Turning to Psalm 131(132):8, Malo rendered the text as “Arise, Yahweh, to the place of your rest, you and the ark of your majesty.”<sup>129</sup> He explained this text as a liturgical psalm that “celebrates the transport of the Ark to Zion.”<sup>130</sup> Given the commonly employed figure of Mary as the Ark of the Covenant, he suggested that the potential for a spiritual meaning connected to the Assumption appeared plausible. Reading this text as figuratively foretelling the Assumption had a tradition again dating back to Modestus of Jerusalem and found support in Anthony of Padua and Thomas Aquinas during the medieval era.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, Malo judged these testimonies were insufficient to establish God had willed such a spiritual meaning. There were a couple reasons for this negative judgment. First, even though the figure of Mary as the Ark of the Covenant was attested to quite early, its application to the Assumption occurred much later and

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. French: “la figure de l’union du Messie, le véritable époux, avec Israël ou l’Église, l’Israël selon l’esprit.”

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 109-110. French: “ni la constance ni l’antiquité de leurs témoignages ne suffisent à démontrer que Dieu a voulu ordonner ce texte à l’Assomption de Marie.”

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 110. French: “Lève-toi, Iahvé, pour le lieu de ton repos, toi et l’arche de ta majesté.”

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. French: “célèbre le transport de l’Arche à Sion.”

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

inconsistently. Second, and Malo thought this reason more significant, the text makes no mention of when the ascent of the Ark would occur. The fact that the Assumption occurred at the end of Mary's life on earth is one of the doctrine's key components and the lack of any mention of time in the biblical text discredited such a spiritual interpretation.<sup>132</sup>

Moving past the Psalms, Malo commented on four verses from the Song of Songs often threaded together to find the Assumption contained within the text. Specifically, the pertinent verses are 2:10, 3:6, 4:8, and 8:5. Malo first reproduced these verses in French translation based on the Vulgate. Placed sequentially, the text reads:

Arise, hurry, my love, my dove, my beauty, and come (2:10); who is she that ascends through the desert like a column of smoke of spices, myrrh, frankincense and all kinds of powders of perfumes (3:6)? Come from Lebanon, my wife, come from Lebanon, come: you will be crowned (4:8); who is she that rises from the desert, filled with delights, leaning on her beloved (8:5)?<sup>133</sup>

Reading the verses outside of their context and placed side-by-side, there is a resemblance to the Assumption if Mary is identified with the beloved woman. Malo referred to this resemblance as “a magnificent picture of the Assumption.”<sup>134</sup> The difficulty with appealing to these verses as implicitly teaching the Assumption, however, was that they do not stand up to the scrutiny of historical critical analysis. Malo affirmed that only the original biblical text was inspired, and the Vulgate was not always faithful to the original text. Translating parts of the Song of Songs from the Masoretic text was fraught with uncertainty and recent translations of 3:6 and 4:8 suggested a removal of textual elements used in the Assumption reading.<sup>135</sup> Even beyond the issue of accurate translations, difficulties arise when identifying Mary with the beloved woman.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 111. French: “« Lève-toi, hâte-toi, mon amie, ma colombe, ma belle, et viens (2,10); quelle est celle qui monte par le désert comme une colonne de fumée d'aromates, de myrrhe, d'encens et de toutes sortes de poudres de parfums (3,6)? Viens du Liban, mon épouse, viens du Liban, viens: tu seras couronnée (4,8); quelle est celle qui monte du désert, comblée de délices, appuyée sur son bien-aimé? » (8,5).”

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., French: “un tableau magnifique de l'Assomption.”

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 111-112. For example, the complete removal of the promised coronation.

Collectively, these issues led Malo to conclude that “in the current biblical conditions, the uncertainty of the text and the exegesis of the mysterious Song of Songs makes the use of this writing in the question of the Assumption uncertain and very delicate.”<sup>136</sup>

The last biblical text placed within the category of texts that could illustrate the Assumption once defined was John 12:26; a text not highlighted in the previously discussed scholarship. Malo only offered a brief comment on this text which he rendered as “Where I will be, my servant will also be and if anyone becomes my servant, my Father will honor him.”<sup>137</sup> The basic argument for the Assumption was that since Mary is the greatest of all servants, she must be with Jesus in heaven. But Malo was quick to point out that the inspired content of this text, its literal meaning, has a universal scope and does not speak to special individual privileges. Thus, the Assumption cannot fall within its inspired meaning.<sup>138</sup>

After examining the biblical texts which were only illustrative of the Assumption after its definition, Malo turned his attention to texts which opened a path to the Assumption. He again examined four sets of biblical texts. These included Genesis 3:14-15, Matthew 27:52-53, Luke 1:28, 42-43, and Revelation 12:1-18. Among these, Malo determined that the texts from Genesis and Luke were the most viable, but even these did not implicitly teach the Assumption in the text itself. Knowledge from outside the biblical texts was required to discern the Assumption and this outside knowledge was found in tradition.

Theologians seeking the Assumption in the Bible consistently returned to the Protoevangelium. Here, Malo repeated the common argument based on this text. The woman and

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 112. French: “dans les conditions bibliques actuelles, l’incertitude du texte et de l’exégèse du mystérieux Cantique des cantiques rend aléatoire et fort délicat l’usage de cet écrit dans la question de l’Assomption.”

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. French: “Là où je serai, mon serviteur sera aussi et si quelqu’un devient mon serviteur, mon Père l’honorera.”

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 112-113.

her seed are identified as Mary and Jesus. They share a common enmity and foretold victory. Revelation reveals Jesus's victory was a conquest over sin, concupiscence, and death. Since Mary shared in this victory, she too must have shared in the conquest over sin, concupiscence, and death. Marian doctrines correspond to this triple-conquest. Specifically, "the dogma of the Immaculate Conception affirms victory over sin; that of perpetual virginity the complete victory over concupiscence; that of the Assumption must end the cycle by affirming complete victory over death."<sup>139</sup> The problem Malo found with this argument was that it is not strictly a biblical argument. It does not rest on exegesis alone but relies on tradition to unite Mary with Jesus in the same enmity and three-fold victory over sin, concupiscence, and death.<sup>140</sup> The argument may truly demonstrate the Assumption resides within the deposit of faith, but it accomplishes this through an appeal to Scripture *and* tradition.

The text of Matthew 27:52-53 records the account of the tombs opening and the resurrection of certain saints when Jesus died. The argument he outlined based on this text followed from a certain Catholic piety that "takes pleasure in contemplating Jesus, Mary and Joseph united in heaven in body and soul."<sup>141</sup> However, this argument rests on three dubious hypotheses. Namely, doubts as to the reality of this resurrection, its exact nature, and if it necessarily included the Assumption of Joseph. The claim regarding Mary's Assumption is that the privilege extended to Joseph would not be denied to Mary.<sup>142</sup> Though Malo included this text among those which open the way to the Assumption, he recognized this text presented far less biblical value in-favor of the Assumption than other New Testament texts.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 114. French: "le dogme de l'Immaculée Conception affirme la victoire sur le péché; celui de la virginité perpétuelle la victoire complète sur la concupiscence; celui de l'Assomption doit terminer le cycle en affirmant la victoire complète sur la mort."

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 115. French: "se plaît à contempler réunis au ciel en corps et en âme Jésus, Marie et Joseph."

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 116.

Alongside the Protoevangelium, the texts from the Gospel of Luke held a certain primacy among possible biblical indications of the Assumption. Luke 1:28 refers to Mary as full of grace. Whereas Malo brought up issues of historical critical analysis in his consideration of the Song of Songs, he did not bring up any similar issues here.<sup>144</sup> The simple question at hand was whether Mary's fullness of grace necessitated her Assumption. Malo referenced the opinion of da Fonseca but highlighted that the affirmation that fullness of grace necessitated the Assumption was based on the Bible and tradition.<sup>145</sup> Again, the text itself did not include the Assumption and only gained such value and meaning when combined with an explanation from tradition about what fullness of grace designated. Thus, the text "is at most a biblical-based argument that leads from the fullness of grace to the Assumption."<sup>146</sup> He reached a similar conclusion when considering the words of Elizabeth to Mary, focusing specifically on Mary's blessedness among women. As it relates to the Assumption, the argument is that her blessed status among women excluded Mary from the curse of Eve and therefore her body suffered no corruption and her glorious resurrection suffered no delay. Malo accepted that such a conclusion from the biblical text was possible in light of other teachings of revelation but maintained that the Assumption was not discernable from exegesis alone.<sup>147</sup>

Malo's consideration of Revelation 12:1-18 was the most limited. Here, he simply concurred with Léandre Poirier who presented exclusively on Revelation 12 at the same Marian

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<sup>144</sup> The previous chapter's consideration of Joseph Coppens's argument against a definition noted that Coppens was not favorable to arguments based on Luke 1:28 because the original text did not include fullness. For his comments, see Coppens, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," 16-17.

<sup>145</sup> Malo, "La Bible et l'Assomption," 116.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. French: "c'est tout au plus un argument à base biblique qui conduit de la plénitude de grâce à l'Assomption."

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 117. Malo also explained that if the Assumption was truly implicit in Luke 1:42, the privilege of the Assumption would have to be extended to Judith as well since a similar claim about her is found in Judith 13:23 (Judith 13:18 in modern editions). It should be noted that this presupposes the Book of Judith is a historical text and Judith was a real woman capable of receiving such a privilege.

congress.<sup>148</sup> Poirier argued against the legitimacy of basing belief in the Assumption on an interpretation of Revelation 12. On the one hand, apocalyptic symbols were prone to fantastical interpretations.<sup>149</sup> On the other hand, there were reasons to reject the identification of the woman with Mary and identify the woman, instead, with the early Church of Jerusalem. Poirier contended that the apocalyptic genre meant the mention of a woman did not necessarily suggest an identification with a singular historical woman and, based on the convention of the Old Testament, the individual woman could symbolize a collective group.<sup>150</sup> Two further points suggested the collective interpretation in this case. First, Poirier read Revelation 12 in connection to Isaiah 66:7-11. In this reading, the woman is a symbol of the mother Zion of the new people of God.<sup>151</sup> Second, he highlighted the significance of the number twelve and its association with the woman. Throughout the Bible, twelve is “the mystical number of the people of God.”<sup>152</sup> Given these details and the historical conditions of the Church when John wrote Revelation, Poirier concluded that the woman of Revelation 12 is “always the mother Church of Jerusalem.”<sup>153</sup> Understanding the woman as the early Church of Jerusalem, Poirier further identified her offspring with the first martyrs and the rest of the woman’s descendants as the Christians living beyond Palestine.<sup>154</sup> Though he thought this was the more accurate interpretation of the woman in Revelation 12, Poirier did not believe all identification between the woman and Mary was invalid in every sense. He recognized that “by showing Mary under

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<sup>148</sup> Léandre Poirier, “Le chapitre XII de l’Apocalypse fait-il allusion à l’Assomption?” in *Vers le dogme de l’Assomption*, 93-102.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 98. French: “le nombre mystique du peuple de Dieu.”

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 101. French “toujours l’église-mère de Jérusalem.”

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 99.

the features of the Woman with twelve stars, the Church makes a pious gesture of faith.”<sup>155</sup> But a pious gesture of faith, whatever its value, is not the same as biblical exegesis.

Returning to Malo, he summarized his conclusions from his examination of the Assumption in Scripture in four points. First, “the Bible considered in its literal and spiritual sense does not mention the Assumption.”<sup>156</sup> This conclusion diverged from the position of many other Catholic theologians of the time, but Malo found support in his position from the authority of Aquinas and Renaudin.<sup>157</sup> In the footnotes, Malo even took aim at da Fonseca who he believed misrepresented Renaudin’s view on the matter.<sup>158</sup> Second, Malo did not think the Bible implicitly taught the Assumption since “none of the proposed texts meets the conditions of the implicit meaning set out in the first part.”<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, his third point was to affirm the value of the Bible in relation to the Assumption. There was nothing in the Bible opposed to the Assumption and, moreover, read in the light of tradition, it was possible to form real arguments affirming the Assumption.<sup>160</sup> His fourth point was the natural result of the prior three: “Ultimately, the doctrine of the Assumption will remain a teaching of Tradition and of the infallible magisterium.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 102. French: “En montrant Marie sous les traits de la Femme aux douze étoiles, l’Église fait un geste pieux de foi.”

<sup>156</sup> Malo, “La Bible et l’Assomption,” 118. French: “la Bible considérée dans son sens littéral et spirituel ne mentionne pas l’Assomption.”

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. Aquinas noted the silence of Scripture on the Assumption while commenting on when Mary’s sanctification occurred. For this text, see Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 3.27.1.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 118n22. Malo referenced one of Renaudin’s later texts where the longtime Assumptionist advocate stated, “From Scripture alone the Assumption cannot be demonstrated.” Latin: “Ex sola Scriptura Assumptio probari nequit.” Paul Renaudin, *Assumptio B. Mariae Virginis Matris Dei: Disquisitio theologica* (Torino: Marietti, 1933), 107.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 119. French: “aucun des textes proposés ne remplit les conditions du sens implicite exposées dans la première partie.”

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 120. French: “En définitive, la doctrine de l’Assomption restera un enseignement de la Tradition et du magistère infallible.”

As it pertained to the Assumption, Malo thought the Bible had value only in light of tradition. The Assumption was a doctrine implicitly revealed, but not implicitly biblical. This distinction arose from his conception of revelation as consisting of two distinct sources. Scripture was only one of the sources of revelation and did not teach the Assumption explicitly or implicitly in its literal or spiritual sense. Consistent with *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, he sought the literal meaning of Scripture and rejected meanings that went beyond what the text could support. He acknowledged the value of historical critical analysis in determining the literal meaning, though here he only applied these tools to the Song of Songs. Even the most viable biblical texts for demonstrating the Assumption required something more than the text itself contained. This something more was tradition. While he acknowledged that arguments for the Assumption could have a basis in Scripture, they still required insights from tradition. However, Malo's repository conception of the sources of revelation suggests he believed the Assumption resided in tradition alone.

#### *Fulbert Cayré*

After Malo's paper, Fulbert Cayré presented his paper at the Assumptionist Congress in Montreal. Contrary to Malo, Cayré argued that the Assumption was implicitly revealed in Scripture. This was the result of methodological differences and the meaning each one assigned to the term implicit. On closer examination, the two scholars agreed regarding the Assumption's place in Scripture.

At first glance, it might appear that Cayré was uninterested in the biblical question as the title of his paper suggests a more historical focus.<sup>162</sup> Aiming to refute the objection to a dogmatic

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<sup>162</sup> Fulbert Cayré, "L'Assomption aux quatre premiers siècles. État embryonnaire de la doctrine," in *Vers le dogme de l'Assomption*, 123-149.



definition based on the silence of the first Christian centuries, he appealed to a theory of organic development. For this purpose, he divided the first four Christian centuries into three stages of development. The first was Revelation itself, specifically in Scripture; the second was a period of presumed silence for three centuries; and the third was “the very first manifestations of the doctrine.”<sup>163</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, the focus remains the Assumption in Scripture. The uniqueness of Cayré’s argument is not found in his exegesis of biblical texts, but in how he thought those texts functioned in a larger system of organic development.

An examination of Cayré’s understanding of the place of Scripture in doctrinal development reveals a fundamental difference between how he and Malo used the term implicit. According to Cayré, “capital truths are explicitly revealed in Scripture.”<sup>164</sup> These capital truths, however, are not the only ones revealed. He also recognized that “certain truths, on the contrary, are presented only in another which contains them in a somewhat larger way, as the seed contains the tree ... and this is the case with implicitly revealed truths.”<sup>165</sup> The Assumption was an example of the latter. Cayré further explained that “between the state of pure seed where the doctrine first presents itself and that of the plant, there is a period of latent life which is essential and which is too often forgotten.”<sup>166</sup> The imagery is key. It indicates development as opposed to strict discovery, suggesting the need for time and life. Cayré affirmed as much, stating:

The comparison of the germ here simply denotes one truth contained in another from which it will emerge in due course, as the tree emerges from the seed. It is, in

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 127. French: “toutes premières manifestations de la doctrine.”

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 126. French: “les vérités capitales sont explicitement révélées dans l’Écriture.” He provided the example of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Holy Eucharist as capital truths.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. French: “Certaines vérités, au contraire, ne sont présentées que dans une autre qui les contient en quelque manière plus large, comme la graine contient l’arbre ... et c’est le cas des vérités implicitement révélées.”

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. French: “Entre l’état de pure semence où se présente d’abord la doctrine et celui de plante, il y a une période de vie latente qui est essentielle et que trop souvent on oublie.”

other words, an implicitly revealed truth, the existence of which will manifest itself only slowly, by the favorable occasion.<sup>167</sup>

Thus, try as one might, scientific exegesis will only ever discover the germ or seed of a doctrine in the Bible, not the doctrine itself. Something outside the seed is necessary for its development.

Nevertheless, Cayré's embryonic understanding of the implicitly revealed allowed him to assert the Assumption was, in fact, present in Scripture. Turning to an examination of commonly appealed to Scripture passages, he noted that "it seems an exaggeration to say, like some, that in Scripture there is no attestation, even implicit, of the Assumption."<sup>168</sup> Cayré briefly reiterated common arguments for finding the Assumption in the Protoevangelium, the Gospel of Luke, some writings of St. Paul, and Revelation 12. There is no need to repeat these arguments. He concluded after this brief survey of the texts that the Bible contains real seeds of the Assumption and that "this implicit Christian doctrine will slowly develop like a seed sown in the ground."<sup>169</sup> The rest of Cayré's paper turned to the historical question of silence on the Assumption in the first Christian centuries which he considered relative and unsurprising given the realities of organic development.

On the surface, Cayré appeared to disagree with Malo regarding the Assumption being implicitly revealed in Scripture. This was the perception of one prominent Mariology scholar, Juniper Carol, who wrote in a review soon after that "against Fr. Malo, the author [Cayré] rightly contends that the Assumption is formally implicitly revealed in Sacred Scripture, namely, in

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 128. French: "La comparaison du germe désigne simplement ici une vérité contenue dans une autre dont elle sortira en temps opportun, comme l'arbre sort de la graine. Il s'agit, en d'autres termes, d'une vérité implicitement révélée, dont l'existence ne se manifestera que lentement, par l'occasion favorable."

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 129. French: "Il paraît exagéré de dire, comme certains qu'il n'y a dans l'Écriture aucune attestation, même implicite, de l'Assomption."

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 134. French: "Cette doctrine chrétienne implicite va se développer lentement à la manière d'une semence jetée en terre."

*Gen. 3:15.*<sup>170</sup> But such an evaluation missed the fundamental methodological difference and how each author used the term implicit. Malo was engaged in scientific exegesis. He held that the implicit was truly contained in the words and was discoverable through explanatory or expository syllogism. When Malo claimed the Assumption was not implicit in the Bible, it was because the doctrine was not in the meaning of the text itself. Concluding to the Assumption based on Scripture necessitated outside knowledge received through tradition. Ergo, for Malo, the Assumption was implicitly revealed, but not implicitly biblical. Cayré, on the other hand, approached the question from a theory of doctrinal development akin to John Henry Newman's theory.<sup>171</sup> Thus, for Cayré, the implicit could exist like a mature plant in a seed. This seed required something outside itself to grow into a mature plant, namely, life. The Assumption was implicit in Scripture in the same way a mature plant is implicit in a seed. The apparent disagreement between Malo and Cayré was a result of using the term implicit differently and stemmed from their divergent methodologies. Both agreed that something outside the text was necessary, but only Cayré's organic theory of development led him to use the term implicit to describe the Assumption's presence in Scripture.

## *Conclusion*

Locating the Assumption in Scripture was not an easy task. The representatives of Catholic biblical scholarship on the Assumption examined in this chapter considered a variety of

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<sup>170</sup> Juniper B. Carol, "Recent Literature on Mary's Assumption," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 80, no. 5 (May 1949): 380.

<sup>171</sup> Newman described the development of doctrine in organic terms in his consideration of preservation of type in doctrine. He wrote, "This [Preservation of Type] is readily suggested by the analogy of physical growth, which is such that the parts and proportions of the developed form, however altered, correspond to those which belong to its rudiments. The adult animal has the same make, as it had on its birth; young birds do not grow into fishes, nor does the child degenerate into the brute, wild or domestic, of which he is by inheritance lord." Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 171-172.

passages. Appeals to a typological reading or spiritual sense to locate the Assumption in the Psalms and Song of Songs were rejected. These rejections had a basis in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*'s warning about the need for spiritual meanings to be intended and willed by God. There was also some consideration of historical critical analysis, conforming to *Divino Afflante Spiritu*'s acceptance of historical methods, that cast doubt on the translation of some of these passages. The viability of discerning the Assumption in Revelation 12 generated some disagreement which is not surprising given the difficulty of interpreting apocalyptic texts. The biblical texts that emerged as the most promising were Genesis 3:15 and Luke 1:28, 41-42. But discerning the Assumption in these texts required something outside the texts themselves since the doctrine was not explicit.

Collectively, Catholic biblical scholarship on the Assumption at the height of the Assumptionist movement reached a consensus. The Assumption had a real connection to Scripture and the link between the Assumption and Scripture was tradition. The Assumption was only discernable in Scripture when interpreted in light of tradition which contained insights on Mary's unique role in salvation history. There was consensus on this point but not on how to articulate it. The scholars examined in this chapter all addressed this in different ways. Bover claimed the Assumption was formally-implicitly revealed in Scripture, but still made use of tradition in his identification of Mary as the woman in Genesis 3:15 and the new Eve. Da Fonseca presented a survey of texts and thought only a few could serve as a suitable foundation to argue for Mary's Assumption. He made no definitive claim but recognized that the most viable texts still required a deeper understanding of the realities reported in them to discern the Assumption. Malo thought the Assumption was implicitly revealed but not implicitly biblical. He claimed that the Bible did not teach the Assumption in its literal or spiritual meaning, even

implicitly. Thus, any argument for the Assumption based on Scripture required the light of tradition. Cayré argued the Assumption was implicit in Scripture based on an organic theory of development. This meant the doctrine resided in Scripture in an embryotic state and became discernable after a period of growth.

As noted in the opening chapter, *Munificentissimus Deus* affirmed this conclusion. The encyclical containing the dogmatic definition addressed the relationship between the Assumption and Scripture. It explained that the arguments of saints and theologians for the Assumption “are based upon (Latin: *nituntur*) the Sacred Writings as their ultimate foundation.”<sup>172</sup> The encyclical did not say that the Assumption was revealed in Scripture per se nor did it employ the theological language of implicit revelation. But this statement was consistent with the biblical arguments presented just prior to the definition. The arguments for the Assumption had a strong foundation in the tradition-grounded truths about Mary revealed in Genesis 3:15 and Luke 1:28, 41-42, but discerning the Assumption required something more than simple analysis of the text itself. Assurance of the doctrine’s inclusion in revelation, however, was not dependent on biblically based arguments alone. *Munificentissimus Deus* explained that the consensus of the faithful was sufficient proof of the Assumption being a revealed doctrine.<sup>173</sup> The laity made up the majority of the faithful and the next chapter turns to their unique role in the Assumptionist movement.

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<sup>172</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 38.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 12.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ROLE OF THE LAITY

When Pius XII issued the dogmatic definition of the Assumption of Mary in *Munificentissimus Deus*, the apostolic constitution included several references to the faithful.<sup>1</sup> As the petitions examined in earlier chapters demonstrated, the faithful, from the definition of the Immaculate Conception, had expressed hope that the Church would also define the Assumption as a dogma.<sup>2</sup> In seeking the fulfillment of this hope, the faithful joined with their bishops in petitioning for the new dogma.<sup>3</sup> When the apostolic constitution turned to the truth of the Assumption, it described the Assumption as a truth “thoroughly rooted in the minds of the faithful.”<sup>4</sup> And, invoking *Ineffabilis Deus*, the pope judged the Assumption definable because of the “outstanding agreement of the Catholic prelates and the faithful.”<sup>5</sup> The appearance of the faithful throughout the apostolic constitution raises the question of the nature of their role in bringing the dogmatic definition to fruition. Since the laity account for the majority of the faithful, it also evokes questions about the laity’s contributions. Naturally, *Munificentissimus Deus* did not focus on explicating the role of the faithful or the laity. Nevertheless, the numerous references to the faithful, coupled with the activity of the laity uncovered in the historical research of the Assumptionist movement presented in the first chapter, suggests a unique contribution.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but there is an important distinction. The laity are those members of the Church who are neither ordained nor professed religious. In numbers, they account for most of the Church. The faithful refers to all members of the Church, including the ordained and professed religious in their private capacity as believers.

<sup>2</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 41.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 12.

This chapter examines the role of laity in the Assumptionist movement and the theological reflection on that role. For the most part, theologians working in this era on the Assumption ignored the laity and instead focused on definability, the doctrine's relationship with Scripture, liturgical evidence, and other historical considerations. Sustained treatment of the laity and the value of their contributions was rare. The tendency to relegate the laity to a passive role as members of the learning Church negated the need for serious consideration of the laity on matters of doctrine.

The laity's activity and the limited theological reflection on the laity occurred in the historical context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century ecclesiological paradigm. A detailed history of this ecclesiological paradigm goes beyond the scope of this dissertation but some knowledge of it is required to grasp the full significance of the laity's actions and the theological reflection. This chapter presents two texts to help establish the dialectic of theological discourse in the era. On the "progressive" side, Newman's 1859 article, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," recognized the laity had an active role in the doctrinal life of the Church.<sup>6</sup> This article also included provocative statements about infallibility and the limitations of the teaching Church during the fourth century. On the "conservative" side, the English bishop's 1900 joint pastoral letter, "The Church and Liberal Catholicism," reasserted the sharp distinction between the teaching and learning Church in reaction to the growing Catholic modernist movement.<sup>7</sup> In this letter, the laity appeared in excessively passive terms who, as members of the learning Church, only repeated what the teaching Church taught them.

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<sup>6</sup> John Henry Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," *The Rambler* (July 1859): 198-230.

<sup>7</sup> Written in December 1900 and first published in January 1901, this document is accessible in a collection of George Tyrrell's letters. The Cardinal Archbishop and the Bishops of the Province of Westminster, "The Church and Liberal Catholicism: Joint Pastoral Letter," appx. B in *Letters from a "Modernist": The Letters of George Tyrrell to Wilfrid Ward 1893-1908*, ed. Mary Jo Weaver (London: Sheed and Ward, 1981).

Though the distinction between the learning and teaching Church became the dominant ecclesiological model, it faced criticism as well, principally among those associated with Catholic modernism.<sup>8</sup>

Having established the theological background, this chapter next reviews the actions of the laity during the Assumptionist movement. The laity were neither passive nor silent. Rather, the laity vocalized their belief in the Assumption and pressed for a dogmatic definition. Their activity displayed three major attributes. First, the laity participated in calls for a definition through massive petitions spread throughout the world. Second, the laity prayed for a definition and helped spread devotion to this end. And third, the laity participated in this work alongside and in collaboration with the members of the teaching Church. Their actions demonstrated the unity of the Church despite the theological distinction between its teaching and learning components.

The final section of this chapter moves from the practical consideration of the laity – what they did during the movement – into the theological reflections on the laity. While theologians largely ignored the laity’s ability to contribute to doctrinal development, notable exceptions can be found. This section first examines how Joseph Coppens’s evaluation of the testimony of the laity, previously covered, emerged in the context of his larger argument against a dogmatic definition. Juniper Carol, also previously examined, rebuked Coppens for even suggesting the laity’s testimony could provide any value beyond a mere repetition of the teaching office. After recalling this brief dispute, this section turns to the contributions from Emanuele Chietтини, Émile Neubert, and Carlo Balić. Chietтини presented a paper at the first Franciscan

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<sup>8</sup> George Tyrrell gave a particularly sharp critique of the pastoral in his letters to Wilfrid Ward. This chapter briefly covers the criticism in these letters. The pertinent letters are accessible in *Letters from a “Modernist”*, 59-63.



Assumptionist congress in Rome that focused on the Assumption in the faith of the Church.<sup>9</sup> His brief paper explored the topic through the lens of the teaching and learning Church. He affirmed the value of the learning Church's testimony and highlighted the connection between the laity's belief and devotional practices. Devotion to Mary in the rosary helped the laity recognize the centrality of the Assumption prior to the dogmatic definition. Neubert published a monograph on the topic shortly after the promulgation of the dogmatic definition.<sup>10</sup> He articulated the activity of the laity regarding Marian doctrine in terms of connaturality. The lay faithful, he explained, were often better able to grasp the whole of a divine reality whereas the theologians focused too much on the details of syllogistic arguments. He also highlighted the consensus of the faithful as one of three indications of infallibility. Balić's treatment of the topic took the form of a reflection after the accomplishment of obtaining the definition. In his estimation, the Christian sense played a critical role in obtaining the definition. The laity shared the faith they received from the teaching Church, but they also had the power to make unique contributions. Specifically, through the Christian sense, they could help to discover, sustain, and develop doctrines that lacked clarity in official teaching. Each of these three contributions – from Chietтини, Neubert, and Balić – expressed an understanding of the laity closer to Newman's and shifted away from the largely

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<sup>9</sup> Emanuele Chietтини was a Franciscan priest and professor of dogmatic theology at the Antonianum Pontifical University in Rome. His major publication was on the Mariology of St. Bonaventure. For this text, see *Mariologia S. Bonaventurae* (Roma: Officium Libri Catholici, 1941). An Italian biography was also published about Chietтини after his death, extolling his conformity to the order's origins. For this biography, see Henricus Recla, *P. Emanuele Chietтини: un francescano autentico* (Trento: 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Émile Neubert was a Marianist priest, scholar, and advocate of Marian devotion. He was the longtime rector of the Marianist International Seminary in Fribourg and a friend of St. Maximilian Kolbe. He published both academic and devotional works. His most popular work was a small devotional text originally published in 1933, *Mon Idéal, Jésus Fils de Marie*. It was translated into several languages and remains in print. For the English edition, see Émile Neubert, *My Ideal Jesus: Son of Mary* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2014). His autobiography was translated into English in 2007, see *Autobiography of Father Emile Neubert, Marianist*, trans. Thomas A. Stanley (Dayton, OH: North American Center for Marianist Studies, 2007). A brief biography is also available online, see "Émile Neubert: Educator of Saints," International Marian Research Institute, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/e/emile-neubert-educator-of-saints.php>.

negative and passive interpretation of the learning Church. In this way, these contributions also presaged the positive treatment the laity would receive at Vatican II.

### *Historical and Theological Background*

John Henry Newman has become synonymous with discussions on doctrinal development and his own beliefs underwent numerous developments as well. The focus here is Newman's thought on the role of the laity. Before his conversion to Roman Catholicism, Newman acted as a prominent leader of the Oxford Movement in the Anglican Church. During that time, Newman envisioned the laity's role as primarily consisting of prayer and support for their bishops.<sup>11</sup> But even in his 1933 historical study on the Arians, Newman recognized the ability of the laity to uphold orthodoxy in the face of an Arian episcopate.<sup>12</sup> As a Roman Catholic, he harkened back to his study on the Arians in his 1859 article, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine."<sup>13</sup> He believed that the history of the Church attested to the value of the laity's testimony. Recourse to the laity's testimony assisted in determining the contents of the faith and contained something valuable not present in the body of bishops. Contrary to an excessively passive understanding of the laity, he recognized the Church functioned best when the pastors and the faithful worked as a single body. Newman faced criticism for his positive treatment of the laity because some perceived it as an attack on the

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<sup>11</sup> Benjamin John King, "The Voice of the Laity in the Church: From the New Testament to the General Convention," *Sewanee Theological Review* 57, no. 2 (Easter 2014): 136-137. Specifically, liturgical prayer and support for bishops against the encroachment of state powers.

<sup>12</sup> John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century: Their Doctrine, Temper, and Conduct, Chiefly as Exhibited in the Councils of the Church between A.D. 325 & A.D. 381* (London: Printed for J.G. & F. Rivington, 1833).

<sup>13</sup> Newman's article on the laity appeared in the context of the Rambler Affair and in response to criticisms of his prior claim that the laity were consulted prior to the definition of the Immaculate Conception. For a fuller treatment of the historical context, see Marr, *To Be Perfect Is to Have Changed Often*, 16-21.

teaching authority of the bishops.<sup>14</sup> As time would show, Newman's perspective corresponded more to the reality of the Assumptionist movement and the emergent theology of the laity than to the more common, passive understanding of the laity.<sup>15</sup>

Newman began the article by elaborating on what it meant to consult the faithful as part of the preparations for a dogmatic definition. He explained that this consultation did not ask for a judgment but inquired about the state of the faithful's belief. Newman distinguished between his own, common use of the term "consult" in English with the more precise Latin usage. In its common usage, consult "is not so precise and narrow in its meaning; it is doubtless a word expressive of trust and deference, but not of submission."<sup>16</sup> Newman gave the example of consulting a barometer and a physician consulting the pulse of a patient.<sup>17</sup> In both cases, the barometer and the pulse did not make judgments, but merely presented facts. The one consulting the barometer or the patient's pulse inquired into the condition of the atmosphere or the vital signs of the patient. Moving beyond analogy, Newman applied this understanding of what it meant to consult the laity to the process of determining doctrine. He explained, "Doubtless their [the laity's] advice, their opinion, their judgment on the question of definition is not asked; but the matter of fact, viz. their belief, is sought for, as a testimony to that apostolical tradition, on which alone any doctrine whatsoever can be defined."<sup>18</sup> Inquiring into the belief of the faithful

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 20-21. This included a dispute with a theology professor, John Gillow, but this dispute extended into concerns coming from Rome. Gillow had communicated his concerns to the Bishop of Newport who subsequently sent Newman's article to Rome. There was some intervention from Cardinal Manning, but Newman was largely unaware of the delation to Rome for several years.

<sup>15</sup> During the twentieth century, Charles Journet, a renowned ecclesiologist, published his three-volume systematic treatise on the Church, *L'Église du Verbe Incarné*. The first volume was published in 1941 and focused on the hierarchy, further cementing the passive understanding of the laity in the Catholic theological milieu. The other volumes appeared in 1951 and 1969. See, Charles Journet, *L'Église du Verbe Incarné*, 3 vols. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1941-1969). I am grateful to Professor Kenneth Parker for bringing this important work to my attention.

<sup>16</sup> Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful," 199.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

served as a valuable source of evidence about the apostolic tradition. Newman addressed this source under the Latin terms *sensus fidelium* and *consensus fidelium*: the sense of the faithful and the consensus of the faithful.<sup>19</sup>

Though he already alluded to the answer, Newman next turned to the question of why the magisterium occasionally had recourse to the *sensus fidelium* and summarized his understanding of Giovanni Perrone's teaching on the matter. The magisterium consulted the faithful "because the body of the faithful is one of the witnesses to the fact of the tradition of revealed doctrine, and because their *consensus* through Christendom is the voice of the Infallible Church."<sup>20</sup>

Newman's articulation of Perrone's teaching on *sensus* and *consensus fidelium* helped to elucidate this claim. Newman wrote that Perrone "seemed to lay a great stress on what he considered to be the *sensus* and *consensus fidelium*, as a compensation for whatever deficiency there might be of patristical testimony in behalf of various points of the Catholic dogma."<sup>21</sup>

Determining the *sensus Ecclesiae* required investigating various indications of belief. These included "public acts, liturgies, feasts, prayers.... [and] consent of pastors and the people."<sup>22</sup>

Newman continued, explaining that the indications of belief were instruments of tradition. A deficiency of evidence from one instrument of tradition did not necessarily mean a deficiency of evidence in the whole tradition. The example presented was that "the strength of the *sensus communis fidelium* can make up (e.g.) for the silence of the Fathers."<sup>23</sup> But what about the claim of infallibility? Was a consensus among the faithful per se infallible? Newman interpreted

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. As Andrew Meszaros helpfully distinguishes, Newman used *sensus fidelium* to refer to "the faithful's sense, instinct, or understanding." This differed from *sensus fidei* which refers to "[an individual] Christian's understanding or sense of the faith." The *consensus fidelium* refers to agreement and when that agreement exists among the faithful and the pastors, the result is the *pastorum et fidelium conspiratio*. Meszaros, "*Ecclesia Docens et Cogitans*," 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful," 205; italics in the original.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 206; italics in the original.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 207; italics in the original.

Perrone's teaching to mean that infallibility did not consist in the consent of the faithful, but only that this consensus acted as "an *indicium* or *instrumentum* to us of the judgment of that Church which *is* infallible."<sup>24</sup> The Church was infallible and the consensus of the faithful acted as an indicator of that infallibility. Much like how a barometer cannot affect atmospheric pressure and only indicates the status of the atmosphere, the consensus of the faithful changes nothing, but only indicates the status of Church's judgment.

As Newman turned to the third section of this article, he briefly explained other aspects of the consent of the faithful before making some provocative conclusions about the role of the laity, historically, and what this demonstrated about the relationship between the *Ecclesia docta* and *Ecclesia docens*. Whereas Newman's comments on Perrone had focused on the consent of the faithful as a source of factual testimony to tradition, he noted four other aspects regarding how this consent manifested tradition. Pulling from Johann Adam Möhler's *Symbolique*, Newman recognized this consent "as a sort of instinct, or [phronema], deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ."<sup>25</sup> The next two aspects he sourced from Dionysius Petavius, though the first he attributed to Cardinal Fisher and the second to Augustine. He regarded the consent of the faithful "as a direction of the Holy Ghost" and "as an answer to its [the faithful's] prayer."<sup>26</sup> The final aspect of this consent Newman pulled from his own second *Lecture on Anglican Difficulties*. He described this final aspect "as a jealousy of error, which it at once feels as a scandal."<sup>27</sup> Much like how a living body fights to reject a foreign substance, the Catholic faithful, if presented with a heretical claim, will reject it as incompatible. These five aspects expressed in more detail the nature of the faithful's active role in the Church.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 208; italics in the original.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Grounded in his sense of a Catholic faithful endowed with great power to carry out an active role in the life of the Church, and informed by his historical studies of Arianism, Newman made provocative statements about the *Ecclesia docta* and *Ecclesia docens*. Though many renowned bishops lived in the fourth century, Newman concluded that “nevertheless in that very day the divine tradition committed to the infallible Church was proclaimed and maintained far more by the faithful than by the Episcopate.”<sup>28</sup> The bishops, Newman judged, had largely failed to uphold the true Catholic teaching on the nature of Christ’s divinity. The lay faithful made up for the failures of the episcopate. He continued, extending the failure, at times, to the pope and even the bishops gathered in general council. Newman asserted, “That at one time the Pope, at other times the patriarchal, metropolitan, and other great sees, at other times general councils, said what they should not have said, or did what obscured and compromised revealed truth.”<sup>29</sup> Here, Newman stopped short of accusing a pope or general council of teaching contrary to the Catholic faith, but the charge of obscuring and compromising revealed truth stood in stark contrast to ultramontane beliefs in that period. Newman had not intended to denigrate the hierarchy but wanted to highlight the often-ignored positive contributions of the laity. The history of Arianism demonstrated that the testimony of the faithful provided access to the tradition of the Apostles. Thus, the laity’s voice “is the voice of tradition.”<sup>30</sup>

What did this mean for the learning and teaching Church? Had a role reversal occurred? Not exactly. Newman argued that the *Ecclesia docens* had temporarily ceased to fulfill its function as the active instrument of infallible teaching. He concluded that during the fourth century:

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

... there was a temporary suspense of the functions of the ‘*Ecclesia docens*.’ The body of Bishops failed in the confession of the faith. They spoke variously, one against another; there was nothing, after Nicaea, of firm, unvarying, consistent testimony, for nearly sixty years. There were untrustworthy Councils, unfaithful Bishops; there was weakness, fear of consequences, misguidance, delusion, hallucination, endless, hopeless, extending itself into nearly every corner of the Catholic Church. The comparatively few who remained faithful were discredited and driven into exile; the rest were either deceivers or were deceived.<sup>31</sup>

During the suspense of this function, the laity remained faithful to orthodox Catholic belief regarding the divinity of Christ. Newman provided an abundance of citations testifying to the steadfast faith of the laity throughout the Christian world.<sup>32</sup> The laity remained a faithful mirror or echo of the faith they received. They did not become the teachers of the Church per se, but authentically reflected what the reigning bishops were failing to communicate clearly. Newman did not believe, however, that this commonly occurred in the history of the Church. He doubted that “such times as the Arian will ever come again” where the functions of the *Ecclesia docens* would be suspended.<sup>33</sup> In fact, he suggested that one of the reasons many overlooked the role of the laity in his own time was because the *Ecclesia docens* discharged its duties exceptionally well.<sup>34</sup>

The essential role of the laity in the doctrinal life of the Church emerged throughout Newman’s reflections on consulting the laity. The lay faithful did not hold the teaching office, nor did they receive some new revelation apart from the faith delivered once and for all. Rather, the faithful, in their consensus, provided testimony to the apostolic tradition. Yet, Newman also recognized that this testimony went beyond mere repetition of what the official teachers in the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>32</sup> Newman provided two series of quotations as evidence of his claims. For his claim that the teaching Church experienced a temporary suspension in function as infallible teacher, see *ibid.*, 214-218. For his claim that the faithful upheld the orthodox Catholic faith despite the failings of the bishops, see *ibid.*, 219-228.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Church taught. He noted that “there is something in the ‘pastorum et fidelium *conspiratio*,’ which is not in the pastors alone.”<sup>35</sup> The faithful were not redundant. Their testimony contained something unique. Newman did not expand on this point but noted in passing that consulting the faithful had particular importance “in the case of doctrines which bear directly upon devotional sentiments.”<sup>36</sup> The emphasis on devotion reiterated the active role of the laity. They testified to the faith they received, but their consensus emerged through an instinctive power, directed by the Holy Spirit, in the answer to prayer, and subsequently rejected everything incompatible with the Catholic faith.

If Newman’s claims about consulting the faithful challenged the association of the learning Church with a purely passive role, the onset of the Modernist Crisis provided ample opportunity for the members of the hierarchy to reassert the passivity of the learning Church regarding doctrine. In December 1900, more than forty years after the publication of Newman’s essay, the English bishops published a joint pastoral letter against the dangers of liberal Catholicism. In it, they appeared to reject an active role for the laity in the doctrinal life of the Church. The pastoral noted the rise in private judgment in religious matters and sought to remedy this error through affirming the sharp distinction between the teaching and learning Church. They presented these two components as constituting the visible Church, and explained:

Two orders of persons, therefore, constitute, by the design of Christ, the visible Church. The small body of chosen men, assisted by the Holy Ghost, who represent the authority of Jesus Christ; and the large body of the faithful taught, guided and guarded by the Divine Teacher, speaking through the audible voice of the smaller body. Theologians call the one the *Ecclesia docens*, the other the *Ecclesia discens*.<sup>37</sup>

The descriptions of each component and the activities of its members require consideration.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid; italics in the original.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>37</sup> The Cardinal Archbishop and the Bishops of the Province of Westminster, “The Church and Liberal Catholicism,” 135.



The teaching Church resided solely with the legitimate successors of the Apostles – the present-day bishops, and most of all, the pope. The pastoral explained their authority succinctly: “They are to teach, to be believed, and to be obeyed.”<sup>38</sup> This unique authority derived from the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, who resided with the Church. The pastoral’s articulation of the relationship between the Spirit that leads into all truth and the Church suggested that this gift of the Spirit only resided in the teaching Church. As the bishops explained, “the Holy Ghost was to abide in the teaching Church, in order to perpetuate Christ’s teaching and ministry to the end of time.”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the teaching Church required no outside assistance to fulfill its mission.<sup>40</sup>

Juxtaposed to the teaching Church, the learning Church consisted of the laity and the ecclesiastics in their private capacity. In this pastoral, the bishops explained the functions of the learning Church in primarily negative terms. Those in the learning Church “are simply disciples, but they are the disciples of Christ and of His Spirit. As disciples they have no right to legislate, to command or to teach in the Church, be they ever so learned.”<sup>41</sup> No positive articulation of the learning Church, the laity, appeared in this pastoral. This omission could lead one to infer no meaningful, positive engagement for the laity existed concerning doctrinal matters.

George Tyrrell, an Irish Jesuit priest associated with modernism, heavily criticized the pastoral along these lines. He believed the source of authority in the Church resided in the *sensus fidelium* and deemed the division between a teaching and learning Church an artificial and erroneous division.<sup>42</sup> In his letters to Wilfrid Ward, Tyrrell expressed his opposition candidly, writing:

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 137. “The Ecclesia docens is fully conscious of her Divine mission, and needs no dictation from without, as to the course she should pursue, in the guardianship of truth and the condemnation of error.”

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony M. Maher, *The Forgotten Jesuit of Catholic Modernism: George Tyrrell’s Prophetic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 233-238.

I think the bishops' pastoral much worse than irritating because it implies throughout a conception of Church-authority which can in no sense be explained away as a development of older ideas – the Church is cut clean in two; on one side a living, active *Ecclesia docens* ... on the other, a purely passive dead *Ecclesia Discens* with no participation in the thought, will and action of the organism; its duty being to contribute money, obey blindly, and ask no questions.<sup>43</sup>

Tyrrell's reading of the pastoral suggested the learning Church, comprised mostly of the laity, lacked any life or action proper to it. He did not think the view of authority expressed in the pastoral compatible, in any way, with Newman's thought and feared it justified episcopal absolutism.<sup>44</sup>

While Tyrrell's assessment fell outside of the mainstream Catholic discourse at the time, his comments highlighted a point of tension in an ecclesiological model which bifurcated the Church. Newman's publication and the joint pastoral predated the theological reflection on the laity at the end of the Assumptionist movement by nearly a hundred years and fifty years respectively. Nevertheless, this polarized discourse shaped the theological context. As will be shown, the few positive theological treatments of the laity published at the end of the Assumptionist movement expressed ideas similar to those found in Newman's work.

### *Lay Activity in the Assumptionist Movement*

Before examining how theologians from the era explained the role of the laity, it is helpful to reiterate the known actions of the laity during the Assumptionist movement. Since the laity often operate in a largely unofficial capacity, it is likely that many of their efforts have eluded the historical record. Still, the available evidence suggests three aspects of the laity's

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<sup>43</sup> Tyrrell to Ward, January 22, 1901, in Weaver, *Letters*, 59-60.

<sup>44</sup> Tyrrell wrote, "This view can no more blend with Newman's than oil with water. If one is all right, the other is all wrong." Tyrrell to Ward, January 28, 1901, in Weaver, *Letters*, 62. And soon after wrote, "This pastoral is in justification of recent episcopal absolutism, and elaborates a theory of which that kind of government is the legitimate consequence." Tyrrell to Ward, February 5, 1901, in Weaver, *Letters*, 63.

involvement in the Assumptionist movement. Primarily, the laity gave testimony to their belief in the Assumption and, often, their desire for a dogmatic definition through petitions sent to the Holy See. Second, the laity prayed for a dogmatic definition, helping to spread devotion to the Assumption of Mary. And third, their efforts commonly occurred in union with members of the hierarchy. While the first chapter presented a historical narrative detailing the major moments of the Assumptionist movement from its inception until the dogmatic definition, a brief reminder of the prominent actions of the laity is in order here.

One of the earliest large-scale petitions occurred in 1880 when the *Sociedad Católica de Puebla* gave formal support to Bishop Luigi Vaccari's continued efforts to secure a dogmatic definition of the Assumption after Vatican I. This support included the signatures of 25,000 priests and lay faithful from the diocese.<sup>45</sup> Entering the twentieth century, momentum began to build. Bartolo Longo, one the great lay advocates of Marian devotion in Italy, assisted in spreading a prayer crusade that had begun in France. He was credited with helping spread the prayer crusade in Italy, Malta, Dalmatia, Albania, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria, and Ireland. It continued to spread and reached parts of South America, Asia, African, and Oceania.<sup>46</sup> One of Longo's tactics to increase the spread of this devotion was to ask bishops to attach an indulgence to the prayer.<sup>47</sup> Though it is difficult to prove causation, during the spread of this devotion, petitions to the Holy See drastically increased. After the first International Marian Congress held in Lyon in 1900, the archbishop petitioned the pope for a dogmatic definition and the petition garnered support from 100,000 lay faithful and thirty-four prelates.<sup>48</sup> In Spain, between 1900 and 1905, petitions presented from the dioceses of Serville, Badajoz, Vic, Barcelona, and Málaga

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<sup>45</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:929.

<sup>46</sup> "Chronique du Congrès," 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:624-625.

<sup>48</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1048.

combined for signatures from nearly 300,000 lay faithful and over 5,000 priests and religious.<sup>49</sup>

In Central and South America, during the first decade of the twentieth century, the signatures from the lay faithful amounted to more than 130,000 from Columbia, 50,000 from Ecuador, 100,000 from Brazil, and 140,000 from Mexico.<sup>50</sup>

The following decade saw less petitions and activity as the First World War engulfed the world and Benedict XV explicitly requested a pause in sending petitions until after the war.<sup>51</sup> The 1920s, however, gave rise to another surge in activity. Between 1925 and 1927, Longo again endeavored to help the Assumptionist cause. He used his periodical, *Il Rosario e la Nuova Pompei* to call for a collection of signatures for a petition to send to Pius XI. The response included signatures from over 500,000 lay faithful and nearly 8,000 priests and religious.<sup>52</sup> Another petition signed by large numbers of the laity came out of Portugal in 1926. The National Marian Congress held in Braga petitioned the pope for a definition and more than 200,000 laity gave their support.<sup>53</sup>

All previous petitionary efforts, however, quantitatively paled in comparison to the efforts of Raffaele Asaro and Amedeo Balzaro. Operating out of Verona and employing the periodical *Le donne italiane*, later known as *Le forze italiane*, from 1929 to 1937, their petitionary initiative garnered signatures from twenty Cardinals, five Patriarchs, 709 archbishops and bishops, and an estimated two million priests, religious, and lay faithful.<sup>54</sup> The petitions presented to the Holy See filled a staggering sixty-volume set. During this same time, another petition out of Spain recorded the support of fifty-two prelates and over 700,000 lay faithful.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1048-1050.

<sup>51</sup> Carroll, "Mary in the Documents of the Magisterium," 29.

<sup>52</sup> *Petitiones*, 1:4-6; *Petitiones*, 2:1051.

<sup>53</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:526.

<sup>54</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:989.

<sup>55</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:500-501.

Likewise, in Canada, the *Société de l'Assomption* assisted in promoting a petition which collected signatures from 20,000 priests and religious alongside almost 400,000 lay faithful.<sup>56</sup> Yet another call for a definition came from the Archdiocese of San Salvador in El Salvador which boasted the support of over 500,000 lay faithful.<sup>57</sup>

These petitions, far more numerous than summarized here, were one of the primary ways the laity participated in the Assumptionist movement. According to Hentrich and de Moos's calculations, through 1941 the number of petitioners calling for a definition of the Assumption included approximately 3,000 prelates, 80,000 priests and religious, and 8,000,000 lay faithful.<sup>58</sup> Through these petitions, the members of the Church, which consisted mostly of the laity, gave testimony to their belief and desire for a definition. Some individuals, such as Longo, organized efforts to spread Marian devotion and encourage prayers for a definition, in addition to promoting petitions. In both cases, the laity's involvement took place in cooperation with the hierarchy. Many of the petitions represented a combination of the voices of the teaching and the learning Church. Bishops, priests, and religious voiced their support, but quantitatively, the call for a definition overwhelmingly emerged from the laity, even if theologians debated the qualitative value of their testimony.

### *Theology of the Laity in the Assumptionist Movement*

Theological evaluations of the definability of the Assumption mostly overlooked the role of the laity. Large portions of the laity desired a dogmatic definition, but theologians primarily concerned themselves with determining if, and in what way, the doctrine was revealed.

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<sup>56</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1006.

<sup>57</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1053.

<sup>58</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1038-1039.

Theological publications on the Assumption at the height of the Assumptionist movement generally ignored the value of the laity's testimony and their ability to contribute to doctrinal development. Against this trend, Joseph Coppens recognized the value of the laity's testimony, but discounted its application for the Assumption because of inconsistencies.<sup>59</sup> Juniper Carol's rebuke of Coppens's article revealed how an ecclesiology that emphasized the division between the teaching and learning Church led to a neglect of the laity's testimony. Carol considered the laity's testimony redundant because it mirrored the teaching of the bishops.<sup>60</sup>

Joseph Coppens argued against proceeding to a dogmatic definition of the Assumption; a rarity among Catholic theologians during the late 1940s. His negative judgment resulted from historical difficulties with tracing the doctrine back to apostolic sources. Nevertheless, he considered the role of the laity in a potential definition. Coppens believed that the magisterium could proceed to a definition based solely on the common faith of the Church. Determining the common faith of the Church included an examination of the laity's testimony.<sup>61</sup> Though he confessed final judgment resided with the magisterium, Coppens did not think the laity's testimony sufficiently demonstrated the Assumption was a revealed truth. A definition required a moral majority among the faithful and he doubted that existed. He rejected the evidentiary value of the petitions because they lacked uniformity and clarity. Specifically, he doubted that the laity were bold enough to assert the Assumption was a revealed truth. The laity might attest to their belief in the Assumption but attesting to a piously held belief did not demonstrate the belief

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<sup>59</sup> Coppens, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," 10-11. Coppens thought the petitions lacked uniformity regarding the nature of the Assumption's truth.

<sup>60</sup> Carol, "The Definability of Mary's Assumption," 166.

<sup>61</sup> Coppens, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," 10.

belonged to the deposit of faith.<sup>62</sup> Coppens accepted, in principle, the value of the laity's testimony, but rejected its application in the case of the Assumption.

Unlike Coppens, Juniper Carol advocated strongly in favor of a dogmatic definition. His evaluation of the role of the laity, however, reflected ecclesiological trends that sought to subjugate the learning Church to an exclusively passive role in doctrinal development. Carol rebuked Coppens directly for his claim that the laity's testimony had value apart from the teaching of the bishops. He asserted, "Nor is it theologically correct to suppose, as Dr. Coppens does ... that in order to furnish a conclusive argument the testimony of the bishops must reflect the belief of the faithful."<sup>63</sup> According to Carol, any appeal to the consensus of the faithful only had value because it reflected the teaching of the present-day bishops. This meant the laity had nothing unique to contribute on doctrine and any lay testimony at odds with the current teaching of the bishops was *ipso facto* irrelevant. Only the bishops belonged to the teaching Church and "it is to them, therefore, that *all* Catholics must look for guidance in doctrinal matters."<sup>64</sup> In addition to rejecting any unique value of the laity's testimony, Carol's articulation of the relationship between the teaching and learning Church suggested the impossibility of the bishops falling into error or failing to uphold the teachings of the faith with clarity and precision. Yet there were more positive treatments of the role of the laity in the Assumptionist movement.

Emanuele Chiettoni, Émile Neubert, and Carlo Balić each recognized an active role for the laity in the doctrinal life of the Church. Their perspectives differed but shared more in common with Newman's treatment of the laity than the predominant ecclesiological model of their time. Chiettoni still employed the teaching and learning Church distinction but recognized

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>63</sup> Carol, "The Definability of Mary's Assumption," 166.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid; italics in the original.

the value of the laity's testimony and the connection between devotion and doctrine. Neubert rooted the laity's contribution in their ability to know truths through connaturality. Balić made the boldest claims out of the three and credited the Christian sense as the true impetus behind the Assumptionist movement's success.

### *Emanuele Chietini*

At the first Franciscan Assumptionist congress held in Rome, Emanuele Chietini included the laity in his argument for the definability of the Assumption.<sup>65</sup> He based his argument on the current belief of the Church which included explicit consideration of the laity's belief. The paper examined definability in three sections that corresponded to the doctrine's object, degree of certainty, and origin. In each section he divided evidence for the Church's belief into two parts: the teaching Church (*la Chiesa docente*) and the learning Church (*la Chiesa discente*). The focus here is on Chietini's explanation of the relationship between the teaching and learning Church, the nature of the learning Church's consensus, and the evidence he presented regarding the consensus of the learning Church's belief. Chietini's argument granted the learning Church a limited, but active role in the doctrinal life of the Church. Their devotion to Mary in the rosary helped them perceive the centrality of the Assumption prior to the definition.

The central claim of Chietini's argument contained the distinction between the teaching Church and the learning Church. He wrote, "The Church as a whole, that is, both the teaching Church and the learning Church have long believed in the bodily assumption as a revealed

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<sup>65</sup> Emanuele Chietini, "L'assunzione di Maria SS. nella fede della Chiesa," 561-580.



truth.”<sup>66</sup> The use of this distinction in this era often suggested a passive role for the learning Church. Even in one of the previously examined publications, the Church appeared synonymous with the magisterium.<sup>67</sup> Chietini’s argument, however, emphasized that the Church included more than those who held teaching authority. The lay faithful made up most of the learning Church, and though it technically included members of the hierarchy in their private capacity, Chietini’s usage principally identified the learning Church with the laity.

At times, Chietini’s explanation of the laity’s role stressed its passivity in the reception of doctrine. When evaluating the laity’s testimony in terms of a ‘sense’ and ‘consensus’, Chietini emphasized the more passive role of the laity. He explained that when trying to determine if a doctrine was revealed, “it is customary to invoke the testimony of the *sensus* and of the *consensus fidelium*, which is nothing but the echo and reflection of the ecclesiastical magisterium.”<sup>68</sup> The imagery employed denoted the passivity of the laity. The laity did not have anything new to add, but only reflected and repeated what the magisterium taught. But Chietini went further and acknowledged an active role for the laity as well. Through their devotional life, the laity grasped doctrines still taught obscurely and he even alluded to the laity’s instinctive insight into the faith preceding formal theological explanation.<sup>69</sup>

Additionally, Chietini upheld that consensus among the faithful regarding a doctrine could indicate its inclusion in the deposit of faith. He elaborated on the nature of this consensus and explained how it did not require unanimous agreement or theological precision. A consensus

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 562. Italian: “La Chiesa nel suo insieme, cioè tanto la Chiesa docente quanto la Chiesa discente crede da molto tempo all’assunzione corporea come ad una verità rivelata.”

<sup>67</sup> Malo, “La Bible et l’Assomption,” 103.

<sup>68</sup> Chietini, “L’assunzione di Maria SS. nella fede della Chiesa,” 576. Italian: “si suole invocare la testimonianza del *sensus* e del *consensus fidelium*, il quale non è altro che l’eco e il riflesso del magistero ecclesiastico.”

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 578. Chietini did not state this clearly but eluded to it in a reference to the work of Alois Janssens, an earlier theologian who published on the Assumption. The context in which Chietini quoted Janssens suggested agreement. For the full comments of Janssens, see Alois Janssens, “L’Assomption de la Sainte Vierge,” in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 10 (1933): 441-444.

did not mean “all believers without exception think alike; some slight deviation or discord does not destroy the moral unity sufficient to achieve the aforementioned consensus.”<sup>70</sup> Much like the consensus sought among bishops in council, a moral majority sufficed. Contrary to Coppens’s critique on the lack of uniformity and clarity among the laity’s petitions, Chietini rejected the necessity of theological precision for a true consensus. He explained that “it is not necessary for every and each of the faithful to have an exact, precise, distinct concept of theological terms.”<sup>71</sup> The lay faithful might not express their belief with theological precision, but their testimony sufficed if “they are unanimously convinced that they know the Assumption in the same manner and by the same way, by which they know the Immaculate Conception, the virginity or the divine maternity of Mary Most Holy.”<sup>72</sup> Chietini did not elaborate on what he meant by same manner (*stessa maniera*) and same way (*stessa via*). The later evidence he presented suggests he meant belief communicated through authorized devotion.

Like others in the Assumptionist movement, Chietini affirmed the universal agreement of belief in the Assumption among the faithful as beyond doubt. He observed that “even the most demanding theologians recognize and candidly confess that with regard to the certainty of the assumption, the unanimity of the faithful is absolute.”<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the evidence he presented focused on the origins of the belief and not proving the belief existed. Specifically, he examined how the lay faithful spread around the world arrived at this consensus. While he acknowledged the influence of the solemnity established on August 15, he thought the consensus had its origins

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<sup>70</sup> Chietini, “L’assunzione di Maria SS. nella fede della Chiesa,” 576. Italian: “tutti i credenti senza eccezione pensino alla stessa maniera; qualche lieve deviazione o discordanza non distrugge l’unità morale sufficiente per realizzare il suddetto consenso.”

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Italian: “non occorre che tutti e singoli i fedeli abbiano un concetto esatto, preciso, distinto dei termini teologici.”

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Italian: “essi siano unanimemente convinti di conoscere l’assunzione nella stessa maniera e per la stessa via, per cui conoscono l’immacolata concezione, la verginità o la maternità divina di Maria SS.”

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 569. Italian: “Anche i teologi più esicenti riconoscono e confessano candidamente che nei confronti della certezza dell’assunzione, l’unanimità dei fedeli è assoluta.”

in the widespread devotion to the rosary.<sup>74</sup> The traditional fifteen mysteries of the Dominican Rosary focus on the life of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. One of these mysteries is Mary's Assumption.<sup>75</sup> Those who practiced this devotion regularly meditated on the mystery. Chietтини thought the inclusion of the Assumption amongst the other mysteries led devotees to place the Assumption on the same level as mysteries that corresponded to doctrines already recognized as revealed. As he explained, "the faithful in this way are necessarily induced to think that the Assumption has been manifested to human beings by the same way by which one comes to knowledge of the Resurrection of Christ, of his Ascension into heaven, etc."<sup>76</sup> This explained the consensus on the Assumption. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary through recitation of the rosary helped establish universal belief in the Assumption.<sup>77</sup>

Chietтини's treatment of the learning Church presented the laity as more than purely passive. They gave testimony to what they had learned, but through prayerful devotion also grasped truths of the faith that lacked clarity in official doctrinal teaching. In this way, the laity possessed truth beyond what the bishops formally taught. Like Newman, Chietтини affirmed the value of the consensus of the faithful and recognized their testimony contained something more than mere repetition. Furthermore, what Newman mentioned in passing about the primacy of consulting the faithful in matters pertaining to devotion, Chietтини affirmed as true in the case of the Assumption. The universal testimony of the faithful emerged through devotion to Mary in the rosary.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 576-577.

<sup>75</sup> In the Dominican Rosary, the fifteen mysteries consist of three sets of five. They are divided according to their content and apply named joyful, sorrowful, and glorious. The Assumption is the fourth glorious mystery. For more on the development of the rosary and the mysteries, see de la Rosa, "History of the Rosary," 92-100.

<sup>76</sup> Chietтини, "L'assunzione di Maria SS. nella fede della Chiesa," 576-577. Italian: "i fedeli in tale maniera vengono necessariamente indotti a pensare che l'assunzione sia stata manifestata agli uomini per la stessa via per cui si venne a conoscenza della resurrezione di Cristo, della sua ascensione al cielo ecc."

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 577.

Unlike Chietini's rather brief comments, Émile Neubert produced an early, sustained treatment on the theoretical foundation for the laity's role in the dogmatic definition of the Assumption. Neubert published his study, *De la découverte progressive des Grandeurs de Marie: Application au Dogme de l'Assomption*, after *Munificentissimus Deus*, but had nearly completed the entire monograph prior to the definition.<sup>78</sup> In this text, the theoretical basis for the laity's unique role revolved around two major claims. First, Neubert claimed that the discovery of Marian truths relied on connaturality as opposed to strictly syllogistic reasoning. He also addressed this connaturality in terms of 'grasping the whole' as opposed to dealing with discrete parts of a living reality. Second, Neubert claimed that the consensus of the faithful guaranteed infallibility. This consensus, Neubert concluded, existed in the case of the Assumption.

The core of Neubert's argument rested on determining the proper methodology for discerning theological truth. Syllogistic reasoning, he argued, was not always the most suitable method. He explained that "when it comes to simple and abstract notions, which come close to geometric notions, syllogistic reasoning is legitimate and fruitful."<sup>79</sup> But not all truth resembled abstract mathematical principles. Complicated truths were more than a series of logical deductions. The truth communicated in beautiful works of art or of life itself resisted the simple application of syllogism because it "is as incapable of embracing reality as straight lines are to express all the features of a human face."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Neubert, *De la découverte progressive des Grandeurs de Marie*, 9.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 29. French: "Quand il s'agit de notions simples et abstraites, qui se rapprochent des notions géométriques, le raisonnement syllogistique est légitime et fécond."

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 30. French: "est aussi incapable d'atteindre la réalité que les lignes droites le sont d'exprimer tous les traits d'un visage humain."

Neubert sought to highlight that another mode of judgment existed beyond syllogistic reasoning. Appealing to the authority of Thomas Aquinas, Neubert detailed two modes of correct judgment. The first was perfect use of reason and the second was conformity of nature or connaturality with the thing to be judged.<sup>81</sup> This connaturality was “an immediate judgment, which dispenses with reasoning (at least conscious reasoning), the result of a faculty of intuition.”<sup>82</sup> This type of judgment regularly occurred on a strictly human level of knowing but Neubert focused on the relationship between this faculty of intuition and supernatural truth. Christians could intuit supernatural truths through connaturality because they had received the Holy Spirit.<sup>83</sup> Neubert traced this intuitive power back to the gifts of intelligence and wisdom, and considered it the fruit of these gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>84</sup> These gifts refined and elevated natural human powers. Neubert concluded:

From this analysis one can, it seems, conclude that the more the truth in question is of a vital order, the more the love of the soul which contemplates it is pure, intense, tender, the more the docility to the conduct of the Holy Spirit is perfect, the more also the soul is able to guess, with an almost infallible certainty, the solution of the questions long and bitterly discussed by the masters in Israel.<sup>85</sup>

All Christians, having received the Holy Spirit, possessed the potential for making true judgments without an explicit use of reason. Judgments from connaturality were neither magical

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<sup>81</sup> Neubert followed Aquinas’s teaching in his article on the relationship between wisdom and the intellect. See, Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2.2.45.2.

<sup>82</sup> Neubert, *De la découverte progressive des Grandeurs de Marie*, 33. French: “un jugement immédiat, qui se passe de raisonnement (au moins de raisonnement conscient), résultat d’une faculté d’intuition.”

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 37. French: “De cette analyse on peut, ce semble, conclure que plus la vérité dont il s’agit est d’ordre vital, plus l’amour de l’âme qui la contemple est pur, intense, tendre, plus la docilité à la conduite du Saint-Esprit est parfaite, plus aussi l’âme est capable de deviner, avec une sûreté presque infallible, la solution des questions longuement et âprement discutées par les maîtres en Israël.”

insights nor emotional reactions. Rather, they arose from an intimate union with the Holy Spirit.<sup>86</sup>

Leading into the application to Marian doctrine, Neubert provided an example to explain the methodological validity of connaturality in opposition to strict adherence to syllogistic reasoning. He suggested one consider a fine piece of art. Here, he posited Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* as a case in point. Any analysis that focused on each individual detail would fail to grasp the picture itself and what it communicated as a whole.<sup>87</sup> Neubert considered the failure to grasp the whole regarding art analogous to certain theological treatments of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He questioned, rhetorically, if some theologians "get lost in their judgments by syllogizing on such-and-such detail, when the simple faithful have seen right by keeping their eyes fixed on the whole picture?"<sup>88</sup> The simple faithful, unlike the theologian, grasped the truth about Marian doctrine even before its solemn definition because they focused on the whole. The whole was not a series of axioms arranged like puzzle pieces, but a whole life, the life of Christ and the life of Mary, and the relationship between the Son and his Mother.<sup>89</sup> Neubert elaborated on this different way of knowing in reference to Marian privileges. Theologians primarily explained what the lay faithful already knew. Hence, "The notion of divine motherhood never made theologians discover the other privileges of the Virgin, it only provided them with the explanation once the Marian sense of the faithful had discovered them."<sup>90</sup> Neubert attributed this

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<sup>86</sup> Neubert's explanation on judgments from connaturality shares a resemblance to Newman's concept of the illative sense. For relevant passages, see Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, 270-299.

<sup>87</sup> Neubert, *De la découverte progressive des Grandeurs de Marie*, 37-39.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 39. French: "s'égarer dans ses jugements en syllogisant sur tel détail, alors que les simples fidèles ont vu juste en gardant les yeux fixés sur le tableau tout entier?"

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 60. French: "La notion de la maternité divine n'a jamais fait découvrir aux théologiens les autres privilèges de la Vierge, elle leur en a seulement fourni l'explication une fois que le sens marial des fidèles les avait découvertes."

phenomenon to the fact that theologians dealt in truths abstracted from a larger reality while the lay faithful tended to engage the whole reality.<sup>91</sup>

The truths the faithful grasped through connaturality and a consideration of the whole contributed to the development of doctrine in two ways. First, these truths directed future theological inquiry. Though Neubert had criticized theologians, they too had a role in the development of Marian doctrine. The theologian explained the relationship between the insight of the faithful and other doctrines. Neubert explained, “The faithful people perceive and affirm the truths of Mary; they are generally incapable of marking the links – even though they sense them – which connect them with the other teachings of the faith.”<sup>92</sup> In this way, the faithful indicate a path for theologians. They testify to their belief but cannot explain its precise relationship with other doctrines. Thus, “It is up to the theologian to discover these links, in order to fulfill one of his great obligations - that of *ordering*, of showing divine truth in all its harmony and beauty.”<sup>93</sup> In Neubert’s system, the faithful discovered deeper insights into revelation and the theologians harmonized this knowledge.

Neubert attributed another contribution to the faithful in doctrinal development. When a consensus emerged about a belief, this consensus guaranteed infallibility.<sup>94</sup> Neubert explained that “if an isolated faithful person, even a very intelligent and very holy one, is subject to error, the faithful people are infallible [since] Jesus always remains with his Church to keep her from any error.”<sup>95</sup> This amounted to an affirmation of the infallibility of the whole Church. The

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 87. French: “Le peuple fidèle perçoit et affirme les vérités mariales; il est généralement incapable de marquer les liens — encore qu’il les sente — qui les relient avec les autres enseignements de la foi.”

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. French: “C’est au théologien de découvrir ces liens, afin de s’acquitter d’une de ses grandes obligations — celle d’*ordonner*, de montrer la vérité divine dans toute son harmonie et beauté.”

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 63. Neubert recognized three guarantees of infallibility. These included the unanimous sense of the faithful, the ordinary teaching of pastors, and solemn definitions. Ibid., 63-72.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 63-64. French: “Si un fidèle isolé, même très intelligent et très saint, est sujet à l’erreur, le peuple fidèle est infaillible Jésus demeure toujours avec son Eglise pour la garder de toute erreur.”

faithful included every member of the Church. Any distinction between laity, theologians, and pastors faded away. The laity, however, played a significant role in achieving this consensus since they made up most of the Church. The consent among all members of the Church guaranteed infallibility. Neubert described this consent as unanimous (*unanime*).<sup>96</sup> However, he likely meant something akin to a moral majority since he later described this consent as agreement among the majority of the Church's members (*la majorité de ses membres*).<sup>97</sup>

After laying the theoretical foundation, Neubert made an application to the Assumption. The consensus of the faithful made a definition possible. He traced belief in the Assumption from the earliest days of the Church to his own time. Turning to the period of the Assumptionist movement, he highlighted the eight million petitions attributed to the laity.<sup>98</sup> The recent support, coupled with the long history of belief and devotion, led him to affirm that a consensus on the Assumption existed among the faithful. Neubert concluded, "We can say that for a long time the belief in the bodily Assumption of Mary was received nearly unanimously in the Church."<sup>99</sup> He compared the situation of the Assumption to the Immaculate Conception. The status of the two Marian doctrines differed only in that the former had yet to be solemnly defined.<sup>100</sup> But the consensus of the faithful, supported by the testimony of the laity, meant an Assumption definition could proceed.

Neubert's work presented two attributes of the laity's contributions vis-à-vis Marian doctrine. First, the laity, having received the Holy Spirit, possessed the power to perceive truths that escaped the syllogistic reasoning of theologians. This perception occurred through

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 191. French: "On peut dire que depuis longtemps la croyance à l'Assomption corporelle de Marie était reçue par la quasi unanimité de l'Eglise."

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.



connaturality and a grasping of the whole. These insights provided the impetus for theologians to explore how the perceived truth related to the larger system of doctrine. Second, the consensus of the faithful guaranteed infallibility. The laity comprised most of the faithful and their testimony provided a necessary indicator as to belief in the Church. On these two points, Neubert resembled Newman. Both recognized the consensus of the faithful as an indicator of infallibility. Whereas Newman noted in passing the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding the consensus of the faithful, Neubert went further and explained how the Holy Spirit led the faithful to perceive truths through connaturality. Neubert tended to address the laity through the larger category of the faithful. He did not develop a theology of the laity, but the role he attributed to the faithful acknowledged a role for the laity in doctrinal development. He recognized that the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of individual Christians allowed them to intuit truths before theologians and official magisterial pronouncements. Thus, like Newman recognized, their testimony included more than a mere repetition of what the magisterium taught.

### *Carlo Balić*

Carlo Balić, the organizer and leader of the Franciscan Assumptionist congresses, exercised great influence in the Catholic theological world during the final few years before the dogmatic definition. Soon after the definition, Balić presented a paper at the Pontifical Gregorian University on the relationship between the Christian sense (*senso cristiano*) and the development of dogma.<sup>101</sup> Though he presented and published the paper after the definition, it requires consideration because of Balić's central role at the end of the Assumptionist movement. It did not contain an argument for the Assumption based on the laity's testimony or activity. Instead, it

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<sup>101</sup> Carlo Balić, "Il Senso Cristiano e il progresso del dogma," *Gregorianum* 33 (1952): 105-134.

acknowledged the role of the Christian sense in the achievement of the definition and detailed its significance. Specifically, Balić focused on the Christian sense's nature, how it uncovered truth, and the relationship that existed between the teaching and learning components of the Church. He explained the Christian sense as a unique contributor to the development of dogma. Rooted in faith, the Christian sense allowed the laity to actively contribute to the doctrinal life of the Church and become more than passive repositories of magisterial teachings.

Balić's usage of the term "Christian sense" requires clarification. Though he preferred the term Christian sense, he considered the term interchangeable with *sensus fidei*.<sup>102</sup> The identification between the two terms highlighted the centrality of faith, as an infused theological virtue and gift of the Holy Spirit, in his usage. Neither 'sense' nor 'faith' denoted an affective power. He acknowledged the legitimacy of emotion in the Christian life but distinguished emotive powers from the Christian sense. The Christian sense had its foundation in faith, not emotion. Balić explained, "The Christian sense, in fact, is not essentially produced by feeling, but by faith, by grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit which illuminate the intellect and move the will."<sup>103</sup> The illumination of the intellect did not correspond to a new revelation. Illumination did not add to revelation but revealed its obscured content. Balić employed the analogy of the dissipation of mist that had concealed a truth.<sup>104</sup> The Christian sense was "a special supernatural motion, an illustration of the intellect, a supernatural instinct coming from faith and the gifts of the Holy Spirit."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 114. Italian: "Il senso cristiano, infatti, non è essenzialmente prodotto dalla sensibilità, ma dalla fede, dalla grazia e dai doni dello Spirito Santo che illuminano l'intelletto e muovono la volontà."

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 132. Italian: "una speciale mozione soprannaturale, una illustrazione dell'intelletto, un istinto soprannaturale proveniente dalla fede e dai doni dello Spirito Santo."

Applied to a Marian context, Balić explained that the faithful uncovered obscured truths primarily through devotional practices. When Christians devotedly and consistently prayed the Angelic Salutation and Magnificat, “they discover the various privileges of Mary with a spontaneous intuition, contemplating the intimate and indissoluble bond that binds Jesus to his Mother and concluding that the Mother has by the grace of the Son what he has by nature.”<sup>106</sup> This growing recognition of obscured truths received further nourishment through liturgical feasts and preaching until “what was considered simply probably, became certain, and then was sanctioned by the ecclesiastical authority as revealed by God.”<sup>107</sup> According to the pattern Balić outlined, the Christian sense functioned as an impulse of the Holy Spirit, sparked by devotional practices, nourished through communal liturgical celebration and teaching before reaching an apparent certitude that only required the sanction of the magisterium.

This process hinted at the relationship between the teaching Church and the learning Church, and Balić provided a more explicit treatment of this relationship as well. Because the two components of the Church both possessed the one Holy Spirit, they formed an organic whole.<sup>108</sup> For Balić, the proper understanding of the relationship between the two components rejected two opposing exaggerations about the learning Church. One erroneous exaggeration consisted of elevating the learning Church to a point that it usurped the magisterium’s legitimate teaching authority. The other erroneous exaggeration consisted of the opposite error, a failure to recognize any life and action proper to the learning Church.<sup>109</sup> In these considerations on the learning and teaching Church, he rejected Newman’s claim that “in the fourth century the

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 120-121. Italian: “con un intuito spontaneo scopre i vari privilegi di Maria, contemplando l’intimo e indissolubile vincolo che lega Gesù alla Madre sua e concludendo che la Madre ha per la grazia del Figlio ciò che questi ha per natura.”

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 122. Italian: “ciò che prima era considerato semplicemente probabile , divenne certo , e poi venne sancito dall’autorità ecclesiastica come rivelato da Dio.”

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 125-126.

teaching Church was not the active instrument of infallibility.”<sup>110</sup> Though Balić did not dwell on the matter here, he believed that Newman drew exaggerated conclusions about the magisterium and the laity from his fourth-century study.<sup>111</sup> The learning Church, composed predominantly of the laity, had no part in official teaching. These members of the Church received the teachings of the faith from those who held the teaching office. “However,” Balić added, “anyone who thought that this mass [the laity] is in a merely passive and mechanical state with regard to this doctrine would be wrong.”<sup>112</sup> Though the laity did not hold the teaching office, they actively contributed to the development of doctrine. In a revealing passage, Balić explained:

It is in fact the faith of the faithful, like the doctrine of the pastors, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the faithful, through the Christian sense and the profession of faith, [who] contribute to expounding, publishing, manifesting, [and] attesting to Christian truth. Indeed, it may be, as we said above, that some truth is discovered, sustained and developed precisely by means of the learning body, that is, the simple faithful.<sup>113</sup>

This passage demands careful consideration as it contains serious assertions. Despite not holding the teaching office, Balić enumerated a variety of ways the lay faithful contributed in spreading the truth of the faith. The laity expounded, published, attested to, and made manifest in their lives the teaching of the Church. These first four modes of the laity’s activity contributed to spreading Christian truth throughout the world. Balić went as far as to claim that in this profession of the faith the laity “already in a certain sense teach.”<sup>114</sup> The final three modes of the laity’s activity that Balić named related to truth itself. Balić recognized in the laity a role in discovering,

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 123. Italian: “che nel secolo IV la Chiesa docente non sia stata lo strumento attivo dell’infalibilità.”

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 125. Italian: “Errerebbe però chi pensasse che questa massa si trovi in uno stato meramente passivo e meccanico nei riguardi di questa dottrina.”

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 125-126. Italian: “È difatti la fede dei fedeli, come la dottrina dei pastori, subisce l’influsso dello Spirito Santo, e i fedeli, mediante il senso cristiano e la professione della fede, contribuiscono ad esporre, pubblicare, manifestare, attestare la verità cristiana. Anzi può darsi, come sopra abbiamo detto, che qualche verità sia scoperta, sostenuta e sviluppata proprio per mezzo del corpo discendente, ossia dei semplici fedeli.”

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 132. Italian: “già in certo senso insegnano.”

sustaining, and developing truth, or Christian doctrine. The work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the lay faithful through the Christian sense made this possible. One and the same Spirit operated in the learning Church and the teaching Church; the Church remained an organic whole. Thus, although the Christian sense operative in the laity differed in authority from the magisterium, “it must nevertheless be taken into consideration because of the great influence it exercises in dogmatic progress.”<sup>115</sup> Balić did not make the connection explicit, but one can infer from his statements that this great influence consisted of the laity’s contributions in spreading the faith throughout the world and discovering, sustaining, and developing doctrines still lacking definitive pronouncements.

As it related to the Assumption, Balić believed the Christian sense played a pivotal role in obtaining the dogmatic definition. Whereas theological arguments often rested on Scripture and the teachings of the Fathers, he acknowledged that occasionally arguments from these sources alone lacked certainty.<sup>116</sup> Arguments for the Assumption based on these sources lacked certainty. Thus, certainty emerged “only from the unanimous consent of the body of teachers and of the faithful.”<sup>117</sup> This led Balić to acknowledge a double triumph in *Munificentissimus Deus*. It issued a dogmatic definition of the Assumption, but also represented “a triumph of the Christian sense.”<sup>118</sup> The Christian sense fostered this unanimous consent in belief.

Balić’s treatment of the Christian sense, deliberately or not, pushed back against stark interpretations of the bifurcation between the teaching and learning Church that reduced the faithful to passive participants in the mission of the Church. The one Holy Spirit resided in both

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Italian: “deve tuttavia essere preso in considerazione a motivo del grande influsso che esercita nel progresso dogmatico.”

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 129-130.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 130. Italian: “solo dall’unanime consenso del corpo dei maestri e dei fedeli.”

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 131. Italian: “un trionfo del senso cristiano.”

the teaching and learning Church, forming an organic whole, even if the teaching Church held a unique authority. The laity shared the faith they received, but they also contributed in discovering, sustaining, and developing doctrines that remained obscured. The Christian sense, a supernatural instinct and spontaneous intuition that arose through devotional practices, allowed the laity to carry out these activities. In Balić's evaluation, the Christian sense was instrumental in the process of doctrinal development that culminated in the dogmatic definition of the Assumption.

Though he rejected Newman's claim that the teaching Church temporarily ceased to act as the active instrument of infallibility in the fourth century, Balić's treatment of the Christian sense shared a certain affinity with Newman's treatment of the sense of the faithful and consulting the faithful. Both recognized the value of the laity's testimony as a source for the Church when proceeding to doctrinal teachings. Like Newman, Balić highlighted the role of the Holy Spirit. The supernatural instinct the faithful possessed derived from sharing in the one Holy Spirit. Newman had noted that the consensus of the faithful arose in answer to prayer and was particularly attune to doctrinal issues closely related to devotional practices. Balić made a similar connection, attributing the activation of the Christian sense to consistent prayer. Whereas Newman referred to the Immaculate Conception as a case of the magisterium consulting the faithful, Balić now affirmed the laity's participation in the development of a new Marian dogma through the Christian sense and the consensus it helped establish.

### *Conclusion*

The history of the Assumptionist movement revealed the laity contributed to doctrinal development through petitions, prayer, spreading devotion, and working in collaboration with the

bishops. *Munificentissimus Deus* acknowledged the laity's desire for a definition, their petitionary efforts in union with the bishops, and the necessity of their testimony for establishing a consensus of the faithful. Nevertheless, theological reflection at the height of the Assumptionist movement rarely reflected on the laity's role or the value of their testimony. This lack of attention reflected the dominant ecclesiological model that implied passivity of the laity in matters of doctrine. Years prior, Newman had suggested the laity did have a role in doctrinal development and that the Church did, and should, have recourse to their testimony. A few theological publications at the end of the Assumptionist movement, however, acknowledged the importance of the laity in doctrinal development. Chiettoni, Neubert, and Balić each recognized a more active role for the laity as members of the learning Church. Chiettoni made the most modest claims. His articulation of the learning and teaching Church cast the learning Church in a primarily passive role. Still, he recognized the value of the laity's testimony for determining a consensus among the faithful. The connection he made between the laity's belief in the Assumption and their devotional practices suggested a limited, but active role for the laity in doctrinal development. Contemplation of the mysteries of the faith helped the laity grasp the centrality of the Assumption prior to its definition. Neubert explored the theoretical foundation that equipped the laity to participate in the development of doctrine. Following Aquinas, he stressed the ability of knowing through connaturality. This allowed the laity to grasp truth better than the syllogistic reasoning of theologians. He also recognized the laity's role in doctrinal development through the value of their testimony. The guarantee of infallibility present in the consensus of the faithful necessitated listening to the voice of the laity. Balić reflected on the significance of the Christian sense in the development of doctrine shortly after the dogmatic definition of the Assumption. Because the Holy Spirit resided in the whole Church, the laity, as

members of the learning Church, could contribute to the doctrinal life of the Church through the activity of the Christian sense. This sense empowered all members of the Church to discover, sustain, and develop doctrines that remained obscured.

Like Newman nearly a century prior, Chietтини, Neubert, and Balić each recognized an active role for the laity in doctrinal development. Neubert and Balić attributed far more activity than Chietтини, but even Chietтини pushed back against the tendency to disregard the laity's voice. In this way, their treatment of the laity corresponded to the historical evidence of the laity's activity during the Assumptionist movement. Concepts such as connaturality and the Christian sense help establish a link between the historical artifacts of the laity's involvement and the force behind these activities. These positive treatments of the laity also presaged future conciliar teaching. At Vatican II, the Council issued dogmatic constitutions on the Church and Divine Revelation. These constitutions eschewed passive understandings of the laity and taught that the laity shared in the one divine mission of the Church which included an active role in the development of doctrine. The next chapter explores those teachings in detail and connects them to the life and theology already present in the Church during the Assumptionist movement.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE ASSUMPTIONIST MOVEMENT AND VATICAN II

Over the previous chapters, this study has elucidated the Assumptionist movement. The first chapter traced the history of the movement and recounted the near century long efforts to obtain a dogmatic definition of Mary's Assumption. This historical research revealed some of the movement's catalysts, most notably the global petitionary efforts that included the support of over eight million lay Catholics.<sup>1</sup> The next three chapters each examined a specific theological difficulty pertaining to a possible definition and the scholarly contributions of Catholic theologians in the years immediately preceding *Munificentissimus Deus*. Chapter two explored the difficulty surrounding the definability of the Assumption as a dogma. Most Catholic theologians affirmed a definition was possible, but the published scholarship exhibited a variety of views on the necessary prerequisites for the elevation of a Catholic belief to a dogma. The third chapter focused on the Assumption and Scripture. Despite the absence of explicit biblical testimony to the Assumption, Catholic theologians argued that the Assumption had a foundation in Scripture. Discerning the doctrine required interpreting Scripture in light of tradition. Chapter four considered the role of the laity in the movement and investigated how Catholic theologians valued their contribution. The laity rarely received sustained, positive theological attention in this era, especially regarding matters of doctrine. The few who acknowledged a role for the laity in the development of doctrine recognized the significance of Marian devotion and the Holy Spirit. These helped the laity ascertain truths that had remained obscure.

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<sup>1</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1038-1039.

In this final chapter, the goal is to determine the relationship between the activity and theology at the height of the Assumptionist movement and the teachings of Vatican II. Relative to the long life of the Church, Vatican II occurred shortly after the end of the Assumptionist movement. The Council opened on October 11, 1962 and closed on December 8, 1965, meaning Vatican II ended just over fifteen years after the promulgation of *Munificentissimus Deus*.<sup>2</sup> The continuity of the Council's teachings in relation to the larger tradition is a continuing source of debate among various groups of Catholics.<sup>3</sup> Showing continuity between the activity and theology of the Assumptionist movement and a subset of Vatican II's teachings contributes towards a resolution.

An adaptation of Hans Robert Jauss's reception theory can assist in this process. Jauss highlighted the active role of the audience in determining the meaning of a text.<sup>4</sup> Adapting his literary theory to a Catholic theological project requires mapping his triad of author, audience, and text to God, Church, and revelation respectively. God (the author) communicated revelation (the text) to the Church (the audience). According to Jauss's theory, the audience experiences the text within a horizon of expectation that affects its reception.<sup>5</sup> Applied to the theological project, the Church experiences revelation within a horizon of expectation that affects its reception of revelation. When the Church convenes for a council and issues new teachings, it represents an updated 'reading' of revelation from within the Church's current horizon of expectation.

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<sup>2</sup> Colberg, *Vatican I and Vatican II*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Historically, this is traceable to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre's actions in the aftermath of Vatican II. He founded the Society of St. Pius X in 1970 which continues to be a force for a Catholic traditionalism that questions the authority of the Council. For an extensive account of Archbishop Lefebvre's life, see Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, *Marcel Lefebvre: The Biography*, trans. Brian Sudlow (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 2004). For an introduction to the common points of tension and proposed solutions, see Moyra Doorly and Aidan Nichols, *The Council in Question: A Dialogue with Catholic Traditionalism* (Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, 2013). Also, Thomas G. Guarino, *The Disputed Teachings of Vatican II: Continuity and Reversal in Catholic Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MN: Eerdmans Publishing, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

Continuity between different receptions or ‘readings’ of revelation suggests coinciding horizons of expectation.<sup>6</sup> Applied to this project, continuity between the teachings of Vatican II and the theological principles operative in the Assumptionist movement suggests the latter’s horizon coincides with the former’s horizon. This strengthens the position that Vatican II taught in continuity with the broader Catholic tradition.

The first section of this chapter examines Vatican II’s teachings on the laity, contained primarily in *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>7</sup> The Council emphasized the unity of the Church and the full participation of the laity. It taught that the laity are active and essential members of the Church who, sharing in the prophetic office, contribute in matters of doctrine. The second section details the Council’s teaching on revelation contained in *Dei Verbum*.<sup>8</sup> It acknowledged that development of doctrine is a historical process and confirmed the ability of the whole Church to contribute through contemplation and study. Both sections also signal points of continuity

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<sup>6</sup> Claiming the horizons of expectation were the “same” cannot be substantiated and would ignore any changes that took place in the Church between 1950 and 1965. “Coinciding” suggests the latter horizon encompasses the former but can also extend beyond it.

<sup>7</sup> Chapter four of *LG* is a dedicated theological treatment of the laity. Nevertheless, the ecclesiology taught throughout the document has implications for the laity, especially chapter two which taught on the People of God as a whole. Though the doctrinal basis for the laity’s role and mission appeared in *LG* the council also issued a dedicated decree on the apostolate of the laity. For that decree, see Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, November 18, 1965, Vatican website, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html) (hereafter cited as *AA*). For additional background, commentaries, and interpretations of *LG* and the laity, see Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1994); Paul Lakeland, *A Council That Will Never End: Lumen Gentium and the Church Today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013); Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making: Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, Rediscovering Vatican II (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> *DV* addressed revelation itself and its transmission but dedicated the final four of its six chapters to Scripture. Central to this chapter are its teachings on the nature of revelation, its development, biblical interpretation, and how all the faithful can participate in knowing revelation better. For a commentary focused on the conciliar document itself, see Ronald D. Witherup, *Scripture: Dei Verbum*, Rediscovering Vatican II (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2007). For consideration of Newman’s indirect influence, particularly through his influence on theologians who drafted parts of the text, see Juan R. Vélez Giraldo, “Newman’s Influence on Vatican II’s Constitution *Dei Verbum*,” *Scripta Theologica* 51, no. 3 (December 2019): 711-740. Other major works on the theology of revelation are helpful as well. Avery Dulles mapped out the different ways of speaking about revelation and their implications. See, Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 36-128. More recently, Guy Mansini offers a concise and cohesive treatment of revelation, tradition, Scripture, and dogma. He draws heavily from *Dei Verbum*. See, Guy Mansini, *Fundamental Theology*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 9-139.

between the Council's teachings and the Assumptionist movement. The fuller demonstration of this continuity is the subject of this chapter's final section.

### *Lumen Gentium and Vatican II's Teaching on the Laity*

On November 21, 1964, Pope Paul VI promulgated Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. Its opening paragraph expressed the Council's aim "to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its [the Church's] own inner nature and universal mission."<sup>9</sup> The constitution detailed the nature of the Church and its universal mission in eight chapters. The Council dedicated chapter four to a theological treatment of the laity. However, the Council's teachings on the laity resided within a larger ecclesiological context. Therefore, consideration of *Lumen Gentium*'s teaching on the Church is necessary to fully understand what the Council taught about the laity. *Lumen Gentium* presented the laity as full members of the People of God who actively participate in the one mission of the Church, albeit in their own way. Before detailing the Council's teaching on the laity, this section reports how the original schema on the Church developed into *Lumen Gentium*. Notably, the teaching on the laity underwent significant changes. After this background, attention turns to the theological foundations presented in *Lumen Gentium* that made a theology of the laity possible. The one priesthood of Christ, universal call to holiness, and unity of the whole Church meant the laity were more than a passive appendage in the Church. Though not fully articulated in conciliar and magisterial documents until the Council, these teachings corresponded to how the Church had operated during the Assumptionist movement. The laity and hierarchy joined in a common mission seeking a dogmatic definition. This ordered cooperation was an essential component of

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<sup>9</sup> *LG*, sec. 1.

its success. As *Lumen Gentium* later taught, this cooperation was possible because the laity have an active role in the one mission of the Church and participate in the prophetic office of Christ.

The Council's dogmatic constitution on the Church underwent a series of changes during the first three sessions of Vatican II. Aurelie Hagstrom helpfully outlines the development of *Lumen Gentium* during Vatican II and, specifically, highlights how its teaching on the laity emerged.<sup>10</sup> The suspension of Vatican I occurred before the Council could address the full schema on the Church.<sup>11</sup> The Council only approved and promulgated the section on the pope, *Pastor Aeternus*.<sup>12</sup> The other eleven chapters of Vatican I's schema on the Church remained dormant for nearly a century. The call for Vatican II brought these texts back into focus. As Hagstrom reports, "During the Preparatory Stage of Vatican II, the remaining eleven chapters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century draft were resurrected."<sup>13</sup> Over the course of three council sessions, this initial eleven-chapter schema was reduced to four chapters before incrementally expanding into its final eight-chapter form.<sup>14</sup> Objections and conciliar speeches during these sessions revealed a desire for the constitution to include a more substantive treatment of the laity, which it ultimately did. When the final draft emerged, the council fathers approved *Lumen Gentium* with near unanimity.<sup>15</sup>

Hagstrom records that "during the first session of the Council, the chapter on the laity met with many criticisms from the Fathers."<sup>16</sup> These criticisms included a lack of emphasis on the dignity, autonomy, spirituality, and charisms of the laity as well as the laity's participation in

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<sup>10</sup> Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity*, 38-52.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Vatican Council, *Pastor Aeternus*, Dogmatic Constitution, July 18, 1870, Vatican website, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/i-vatican-council/documents/vat-i\\_const\\_18700718\\_pastor-aeternus\\_la.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/i-vatican-council/documents/vat-i_const_18700718_pastor-aeternus_la.html).

<sup>13</sup> Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity*, 39.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. The final vote was 2156 *placet* and 5 *non placet*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office.<sup>17</sup> The revised schema presented at the second session consisted of four chapters and included the laity in chapter three together with the People of God.<sup>18</sup> Hagstrom summarizes the debates during the second session as focusing “on the need for more precise theological declarations about the people of God, the priesthood of all believers, the charismatic dimension of the Church, the apostolic responsibility of the laity, and in particular a theological definition of the laity.”<sup>19</sup> Conciliar speeches revealed the desire of many council fathers for a deeper teaching on the role and dignity of the laity. Bishop Wright of Pittsburgh called for the Council to make a positive statement on the laity and move away from the longstanding negative definition of being neither clerics nor religious.<sup>20</sup> Bishops from Latin America “wanted the dogmatic basis of the lay apostolate specified as well as the possibility of the laity to exercise certain Church functions if the hierarchy deems it necessary and opportune for the needs of the Church.”<sup>21</sup> Bishop De Smedt of Bruges “spoke on behalf of over sixty bishops” and voiced the desire for the Council to put a greater emphasis on the common priesthood of all believers and explain the role of the laity in light of their participation in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices.<sup>22</sup> Hagstrom notes that these interventions “seem to have had a definite impact on the third version of the chapter on the laity.”<sup>23</sup> The third schema

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 42. The title of the chapter was “On the People of God, particularly the Laity.”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 46. This way of articulating the ministry of the Church was foundational for *Lumen Gentium*’s teachings on the laity. The laity participate in the *tria munera* or three offices of Christ. The *tria munera* has an association with Newman’s thought though Nicholas Lash judged no discernable connection existed between the Council’s teaching on this point and Newman. For Newman’s treatment of the *tria munera*, see John Henry Newman, “Preface to the Third Edition,” in *The Via Media of the Anglican Church, Illustrated in Lectures, Letters and Tracts written between 1830-1841* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1901), 1:xv-xciv. For Lash’s evaluation, see Nicholas Lash, “Newman and Vatican II,” *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1038 (March 2011): 243-246. For further commentary, see Richard R. Gaillardetz, “Revisiting the Threefold Office of Christ in the Church,” *Newman Review*, October 22, 2020, <https://www.newmanreview.org/2020/10/22/revisiting-the-threefold-office-of-christ-in-the-church>.

<sup>23</sup> Hagstrom, *The Concepts of the Vocation and the Mission of the Laity*, 48.

presented at the third session had incorporated many of the suggestions of the council fathers during the previous session. Hagstrom summarizes the changes, noting that in the third schema the laity “were more clearly acknowledged as valuable members of the people of God,” given “a typological definition,” as well as a “a dogmatic basis” for their apostolate.<sup>24</sup> The threefold offices of Christ also became more prominent in the text.<sup>25</sup> The fourth schema contained “no essential difference in the description of the laity or in the description of their apostolate.”<sup>26</sup> This final revision became the definitive text promulgated as *Lumen Gentium*.<sup>27</sup>

In its final form, *Lumen Gentium* confirmed full membership of the laity in the Church. They were not half-members or cut off from the Church’s life and mission but essential and active contributors. The laity and the hierarchy formed an organic whole, each with its own proper action and domain. But any distinction remained secondary to the unity rooted in the one priesthood of Christ all the faithful received in Baptism. This was how the Church functioned during the Assumptionist movement even if the theological milieu maintained a division between the teachings and learning Church.

*Lumen Gentium* explained that members of the Church participate in the one priesthood of Christ in different ways. Baptism establishes a person in the royal priesthood and as a member of the People of God.<sup>28</sup> In addition to the royal priesthood common to all the faithful, the ordained members of the Church received the ministerial priesthood. These two priesthoods mark a true distinction among the People of God. The Council confirmed that these two priesthoods “differ from one another in essence and not only in degree,” but also that “each of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *LG*, sec. 9.

them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ.”<sup>29</sup> One who possess the ministerial priesthood “teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people.”<sup>30</sup> The lay faithful, sharing in the common priesthood, participate in the one priesthood of Christ by joining in the Eucharistic offering and “in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.”<sup>31</sup> *Lumen Gentium* maintained a real distinction among the members of the Church, but both groups received positive treatment.

Just as all the faithful participate in a single priesthood, the Council also affirmed the universal call to holiness. Roles and authority within the Church differ but the goal of all the faithful is the same. After explaining the power of the sacraments for the Christian life, *Lumen Gentium* explained that “fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect.”<sup>32</sup> The Council elaborated on this point in the constitution’s fifth chapter which detailed the ways Christians pursue holiness depending on their state of life. This call to holiness extended to every rank in the Church. *Lumen Gentium* explained, “The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one.”<sup>33</sup> Much like the differing participations in the one priesthood of Christ, the Council again affirmed a real distinction within oneness. How members of the Church pursue holiness depends on their state of life, but all the faithful, from the bishops to the laity, seek the same holiness.

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<sup>29</sup> *LG*, sec. 10.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *LG*, sec. 11.

<sup>33</sup> *LG*, sec. 41.



The Council dedicated the fourth chapter of *Lumen Gentium* to teaching on the laity. Though this was the first time an ecumenical council elaborated on the laity, its teachings corresponded to how the laity had already participated in the Church during the Assumptionist movement. In that movement, the laity actively contributed to a common mission together with members of the hierarchy. The Council taught that the laity are both distinct from the hierarchy and united to the hierarchy within the one People of God.<sup>34</sup> *Lumen Gentium*'s chapter on the laity began by emphasizing this common membership in the People of God. The Council affirmed, "Everything that has been said above concerning the People of God is intended for the laity, religious and clergy alike."<sup>35</sup> All belonged to the one People of God, even if the laity, religious, and clergy maintain functions proper to their own vocations. The Council's teaching on the laity elaborated on the laity's identity, apostolate, rights, and, most important for this study, confirmed their active role in the prophetic office. Collectively, these teachings presented a laity called to actively participate in the common mission of the Church.

*Lumen Gentium* used the term laity to refer to "all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church."<sup>36</sup> Their identity, however, extends beyond a negative definition and has a unique secular character. Baptism unites the laity to Christ and incorporates them in the Church as full members of the People of God. Through this membership, "they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world."<sup>37</sup> Unique to the laity's identity is their secular nature. Unlike the clergy and religious, the laity "by their very vocation, seek the

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<sup>34</sup> The laity are also distinct from religious. For the Council's teaching on religious, see *LG*, sec. 43-47.

<sup>35</sup> *LG*, sec. 30.

<sup>36</sup> *LG*, sec. 31.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.”<sup>38</sup> The laity participate more directly in the day-to-day realities of the world. The laity engage in secular work as well as family and social life. In this way, the lay Christian works “for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven.”<sup>39</sup>

The Council affirmed the laity’s work from within the world is a true apostolate and “a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself.”<sup>40</sup> Only a cursory treatment of the lay apostolate appeared in *Lumen Gentium*, however the Council issued a separated decree on the apostolate of the laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, that further detailed the apostolate. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Council taught that “the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstance where only through them can it become the salt of the earth.”<sup>41</sup> This is the laity’s unique activity within the whole apostolate of the Church that seeks to spread the kingdom of God. As *Apostolicam Actuositatem* explained, “No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as life of the body: so, too, in the body of Christ, which is the Church.”<sup>42</sup> This teaching corrected the dangerous tendency that arose from the older emphasis on the division between the learning and teaching Church. To share in a living body meant no part was merely passive.

The Council consistently reiterated distinction in unity as opposed to distinction alone. The laity actively participate in the life and mission of the Church. They are not charged with teaching, sanctifying, and ruling, but possess a real “share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> *LG*, sec. 33.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> *AA*, sec. 2. This decree quoted Ephesians 4:16 in support.

God in the Church and in the world.”<sup>43</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem* emphasized the role of the laity in bringing the Church into the world. The laity give witness to their faith in the world and work towards the “renewal of the whole temporal order.”<sup>44</sup> This unique, worldly aspect of the lay apostolate was not in place of an active role in the life of the Church. In addition to their witness and efforts of renewal in the temporal order, “as sharers in the role of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, the laity have their work cut out for them in the life and activity of the Church.”<sup>45</sup> This was a meaningful and necessary work. The decree claimed that the pastors of the Church would struggle to carry out their own apostolate without the assistance of the activity of the laity within the Church.<sup>46</sup> *Lumen Gentium* touched on this as well. It affirmed that while the laity have their own proper apostolate, they “can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy,” and that the laity “have the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.”<sup>47</sup> The Council’s inclusion of the laity’s ability to directly assist in the apostolate proper to the hierarchy and the overall attention given to the lay apostolate discredits any notion of a primarily passive role for the laity. Instead, the Council called on the laity to serve an indispensable and active role in the singular mission of the Church.

The Council’s teaching on the meaningful cooperation between the hierarchy and the laity corresponded more to what had already taken place during the Assumptionist movement than the dominant ecclesiology of that era. During the Assumptionist movement, the emphasized distinction between the teaching and learning Church suggested an impermeable wall between

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> *AA*, sec. 5.

<sup>45</sup> *AA*, sec. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> *LG*, sec. 33.

two groups within the Church. The activity of the laity in the Assumptionist movement, however, often defied such an imagined division. The laity worked in union with members of the hierarchy and a mutual exchange of support occurred. This occurred, for example, when the bishops supported lay devotional efforts by granting indulgences to prayers seeking a quick dogmatic definition.

In support of the laity's active role in the Church, the Council also affirmed that the laity possess rights and obligations. While *Lumen Gentium* did not enumerate an exhaustive list, it acknowledged certain rights of the laity and framed these rights in conjunction with the obligation of obedience owed to legitimate spiritual authority. This helped avoid a one-way, top-down authoritative system where the laity only receive. Instead, the laity and spiritual authority mutually give and receive according to each one's office. The Council's call for this mutual exchange demonstrated one of the ways the laity and hierarchy function as a singular organism.

*Lumen Gentium* taught that the laity have the right "to receive in abundance from their spiritual shepherds the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the word of God and of the sacraments."<sup>48</sup> The laity could not receive the fullness of spiritual goods the Church possesses without the hierarchy because the spiritual shepherds have powers and authority the laity do not. The laity's rights go beyond a right to receive from their shepherds. The Council called on the laity to make their needs and desires known to those appointed as their shepherds and taught that the laity are "permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church."<sup>49</sup> If the laity have a right to express their view on matters pertaining to the good of the Church, they must have something to contribute. *Lumen Gentium* explicitly recognized the laity's ability to make a unique

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<sup>48</sup> *LG*, sec. 37.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

contribution. When the laity expressed their views on “things which concern of the Church,” they did so based on their “knowledge, competence or outstanding ability.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, they brought some perspective or knowledge to the Church not present among the members of the hierarchy.

Nevertheless, the laity are not the teachers of the Church – they simply do not hold that office. While the Council called on the laity to express their view, this occurs in the context of obedience owed to legitimate spiritual authority. *Lumen Gentium* clearly taught that the laity should “promptly accept in Christian obedience decisions of their spiritual shepherds, since they are representatives of Christ as well as teachers and rulers in the Church.”<sup>51</sup> The laity have a voice, but they are not the final arbiter. The Council called on the shepherds to “recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity in the Church,” and urged them to “willingly employ their [the laity’s] prudent advice.”<sup>52</sup> The mutual exchange that takes place between laity and hierarchy ultimately enriches the Church in a way that could not happen if the entire Church consisted of one and the same rank. *Lumen Gentium* addressed this enrichment in terms of the “familiar dialogue” it desired between laity and hierarchy, concluding that “in this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, may more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world.”<sup>53</sup>

This recognition of the laity’s right to be heard affirmed the legitimacy of the Assumptionist petitionary efforts. The laity continually expressed their belief in Mary’s Assumption and their desire for a dogmatic definition. This occurred throughout the world for several decades and amounted to eight million lay voices expressing their view.<sup>54</sup> The laity could

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1038-1039.

not define the dogma, that was the role of the magisterium, but they could and did communicate what they hoped the magisterium would do. The magisterium remained the judge of this request which included both its validity and its opportuneness. Still, the magisterium had recourse to the scholarship produced by those who had specialized knowledge and competence on historical and theological aspects of the Assumption.<sup>55</sup> The Council's teaching on the value of these contributions further confirmed the legitimacy of the Assumptionist movement's activities.

The Council's teaching on mutual exchange between laity and hierarchy requires deeper consideration as it relates to the prophetic office. *Lumen Gentium* clearly stated that episcopal consecration confers the office of teaching and governing.<sup>56</sup> The laity, therefore, do not hold these offices. But *Lumen Gentium* also affirmed that the whole People of God "shares also in Christ's prophetic office."<sup>57</sup> The Council addressed the prophetic office of the whole People of God in terms of bearing witness to God and knowing the truth of his revelation. The whole Church gives witness to God through "a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise."<sup>58</sup> The Council also taught that the People of God share in the prophetic office through a unique assurance in their belief, explaining:

The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith when "from the Bishops down

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<sup>55</sup> Admittedly, priest-theologians overwhelmingly contributed to this field of work during the Assumptionist movement. But this was simply the result of historical conditions; lay theological scholarship was far more uncommon in the beginning of the twentieth century. The fundamental principle that the Council expressed regarding the value of the opinions of those who possess special knowledge and competence occurred during the Assumptionist movement.

<sup>56</sup> *LG*, sec. 21. "And the Sacred Council teaches that by Episcopal consecration the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred, that fullness of power, namely, which both in the Church's liturgical practice and in the language of the Fathers of the Church is called the high priesthood, the supreme power of the sacred ministry. But Episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the office of teaching and of governing, which, however, of its very nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college."

<sup>57</sup> *LG*, sec. 12.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

to the last of the lay faithful” they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.<sup>59</sup>

This represented a further departure from an excessively passive understanding of the laity since the laity’s testimony was a necessary component of this doctrinal determination. The infallible, supernatural discernment “is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth” and “exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority.”<sup>60</sup> The entire People of God accept the conclusion of this discernment as the word of God.<sup>61</sup> *Lumen Gentium* enumerated three further tasks the People of God undertake related to these infallible conclusions. Through the infallible conclusion resulting from universal agreement, the People of God “adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life.”<sup>62</sup> The first point clarified that an infallible conclusion is not a new truth, but included in the deposit of faith. Once clearly defined, the People of God can adhere to the truth in a more explicit manner. Possessing sure knowledge of a revealed truth also provides an opportunity for further inquiry into revelation itself and enhances the application of that truth. The Council did not define a unique role for the laity in the infallibility obtained through universal agreement. Nevertheless, as the majority rank within the Church, their testimony becomes indispensable. They do not make the final judgment, but the belief of the Church is known largely through their testimony. As full members of the People of God, the laity also participate in pursuing deeper knowledge of revelation and applying it more fully to their lives.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

During the chapter dedicated to the laity, *Lumen Gentium* returned to the topic of the prophetic office. The Council considered the laity's share in this office within the context of the Christ's continual fulfillment of it and taught:

Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of His Father both by the testimony of His life and the power of His words, continually fulfills His prophetic office until the complete manifestation of glory. He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave understanding of the faith (*sensu fidei*) and an attractiveness in speech so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life.<sup>63</sup>

According to this text, the laity's participation in the prophetic office of Christ occurs in their role as witnesses to Christ. This coincides with the role of the whole People of God in giving testimony to their belief. But this text also named two ways in which Christ equips the laity to give effective witness. The laity receive from Christ understanding of the faith and attractiveness in speech. While this does not suggest these gifts are exclusive to the laity, it further affirms the active role of the laity, even in matters of doctrine. The Council formulated the laity's participation in the prophetic office of Christ primarily in terms of evangelization.<sup>64</sup> But to better fulfill this mission, Christ equips the laity with understanding of the faith, and the Council urged the laity to continually pursue "a more profound grasp of revealed truth."<sup>65</sup>

The Council's teachings regarding the laity corresponded to how the laity functioned during the Assumptionist movement. *Lumen Gentium* affirmed the laity participate in the prophetic office which solidified the Council's rejection of a sharp division between those who teach and those who are taught. It upheld the existence and validity of a teaching office within the Church but acknowledged that the laity actively participate in matters of doctrine, not as

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<sup>63</sup> *LG*, sec. 35.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*



judges, but as members of the People of God whom Christ equips with understanding of the faith. During the Assumptionist movement, the lay faithful expressed their understanding of the faith regarding the place of Mary's Assumption in revelation. To use the words of the Council, the laity had arrived at "a more profound grasp of revealed truth."<sup>66</sup> What they had come to know contributed to the dogmatic definition. Pius XII judged a definition possible because of the "outstanding agreement of the Catholic prelates and the faithful."<sup>67</sup> The faithful's belief was an essential component in that definition. *Lumen Gentium* confirmed the vital role of the laity's belief when it acknowledged their participation in the infallibility of the whole Church through universal agreement.<sup>68</sup> In *Lumen Gentium*, the Council taught the laity participated in the doctrinal life of the Church, but in *Dei Verbum* the Council signaled how the laity arrived at a deeper understanding of revealed truth.

#### *Dei Verbum and Vatican II's Teaching on Divine Revelation*

On November 18, 1965, Pope Paul VI promulgated Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*. Positioning itself in continuity with the two previous ecumenical councils, *Dei Verbum* proposed "to set forth authentic doctrine on divine revelation and how it is handed on, so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love."<sup>69</sup> Composed of six chapters, the first two chapters addressed revelation and its transmission, while the final four chapters addressed topics related to Scripture. Before elucidating *Dei Verbum*'s content and relevance to the Assumptionist movement, it is helpful to briefly trace its development at the Council. Like

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 12.

<sup>68</sup> *LG*, sec. 12.

<sup>69</sup> *DV*, sec. 1.

*Lumen Gentium*, the initial schema on revelation underwent substantial changes during the Council. Periti greatly contributed to these changes. Importantly, the final text, far different than the original schema, confirmed the authenticity of theological principles operative during the Assumptionist movement. The most significant confirmation occurred in *Dei Verbum*'s teachings on doctrinal development, the faithful's ability to contribute to this development, and the interpretation of Scripture. Theologians at the height of the Assumptionist movement were already employing ideas of development to explain the doctrine's place in revelation.

The final text of *Dei Verbum* resulted from a series of revisions to the original schema, *De Fontibus Revelationis*, that occurred throughout the Council.<sup>70</sup> The change in title reflected the change in scope. Whereas the original schema focused on the sources of revelation, the final text was more expansive and included revelation itself.<sup>71</sup> Jared Wicks helpfully analyzes the content changes between the original schema and the final text. He finds that the original schema "was in several passages not a fresh treatment of its topic, but a confirmation of existing magisterial doctrines and guidelines."<sup>72</sup> One of the changes that occurred was the removal of admonitions in favor of a more positive tone. *De Fontibus Revelationis* affirmed the legitimacy of historical method taught in Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu* but adjoined a warning against dangerous excesses and neglecting the theological teaching of Scripture.<sup>73</sup> *Dei Verbum* "set aside the admonitory reminders of *De Fontibus* while calmly depicting the direction of exegetical work in the church to supporting the ministries that serve to nourish the Christian life of the people of God."<sup>74</sup> The original schema warned biblical interpretation in conflict with magisterial

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<sup>70</sup> Wicks, *Investigating Vatican II*, 237-238. It also received an intermediary title, *De Revelatione Divina*.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 241. Wicks notes that revelation itself was originally part of a different schema, *Guarding the Purity of the Deposit of Faith*. Ibid., 241n10.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 247.

teaching was invalid.<sup>75</sup> It also stressed that the primary aim of theological work was to show “the doctrinal continuity between origins in scripture and present-day church teaching.”<sup>76</sup> These warnings accorded to magisterial teaching but presented a restricted role for theology in relation to Scripture. *Dei Verbum*, however, articulated a broader role. Wicks summarizes theology’s role in *Dei Verbum* as “a mediatory role in bringing scripture to the people of the church as a many-sided enrichment.”<sup>77</sup> He also observes key differences in how the two texts addressed personal Scripture reading. The original schema praised the reading of Scripture, even among the laity, but attached several warnings. Collectively, the warnings served to remind the faithful that they must adhere to the teaching and authority of the magisterium while reading Scripture.<sup>78</sup> *Dei Verbum* excluded these warnings. Wicks observes that “worry and suspicion have faded away so as to leave no characteristic marks on the promulgated text on biblical reading in the church.”<sup>79</sup>

In addition to a more positive tone, *Dei Verbum*’s scope expanded well beyond the scope of the original schema. The interventions of periti contributed to this expansion. Wicks recognizes that these expert consultants “rendered a hidden but essential service to the commissions made up of council members.”<sup>80</sup> Joseph Ratzinger served as the peritus of Josef Cardinal Frings and helped craft a response regarding the Council’s original schemas. Ratzinger critiqued *De Fontibus Revelationis* on two points. First, he wanted topics of legitimate dispute to

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 248-249.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 252-253. Wicks lists six admonitions: “(1) The faithful must take care to approach the sacred texts attentively aware of Catholic teaching and in ready observance of norms inculcated by solid and suitable training. (2) This is especially relevant to reading the Old Testament, but also to the New Testament .... (3) Translations used by Catholics must be approved by the bishops .... (4) Translations must annotate the biblical text in a manner conformed to the mind of the church .... (5) In fact the true meaning of the divine words is not for individuals, however learned, to ascertain authoritatively, for the Magisterium is to determine this .... (6) Finally, any program of making scripture more widely present and explained among the Christian people has to be submitted for authoritative approval by the bishops.” Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 81.

not receive authoritative pronouncements.<sup>81</sup> Second, and more significant to the scope, Ratzinger argued that the text needed a chapter on revelation itself before discussion of its sources.<sup>82</sup> Wicks describes the letter Ratzinger wrote on behalf of the cardinal as “an early call for Vatican II to give to the church and to the world an updated account of Catholic teaching on God’s revelation.”<sup>83</sup> Another peritus, Pieter Smulders, prepared an intervention for the bishops of Indonesia that also critiqued *De Fontibus Revelationis*. The intervention argued that, in its current state, the schema added further hurdles to dialogue between Catholics and non-Catholic Christians and suggested disapproval of some Catholic theologians who were in good standing with the Church.<sup>84</sup> Later, Smulders worked on the revision process for the schema. His influence appeared in the final text’s emphasis on the salvific and Christological aspect of revelation.<sup>85</sup> Another peritus who contributed to the revision process was Jean Daniélou. Working for Archbishop Garrone, Daniélou drafted an introduction for the schema.<sup>86</sup> *Dei Verbum* retained many of his ideas. Wicks identifies seven concepts that Daniélou contributed, including “the Spirit’s role both in eliciting faith and in its development toward deeper grasp of God’s word.”<sup>87</sup>

In its final form, *Dei Verbum* included teachings on revelation already operative within the Assumptionist movement. Instead of simply repeating previous magisterial teachings, the Council affirmed truths about revelation that the Church had already perceived and was working to explain. Revelation is unchanging, but developments in human understanding are possible.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 96. The other six were “(1) the Christological concentration of revelation, (2) a statement of revelation’s content in its main foci, (3) the dual revelation of God and of the human reality, (4) revelation in words and deeds intimately interrelated, (5) revelation in Christ as unsurpassable, on intrinsic grounds of its content, (6) revelation both for attaining our supernatural end but also for the coherence of our temporal-earthly life.” Ibid.

Both biblical scholarship and spiritual contemplation assist in this process. Its positive presentation of revelation acknowledged all the faithful could obtain a deeper understanding of the word of God and contribute to doctrinal development. *Dei Verbum*'s teachings on these points conformed to what had already occurred in the life of the Church during the Assumptionist movement. Notably, the faithful had perceived the centrality of Mary's Assumption and its place in revelation through spiritual contemplation.

According to *Dei Verbum*, revelation reveals who God is and his will for human salvation.<sup>88</sup> Though God continuously revealed himself to humanity since creation, the height of revelation occurred in the Incarnation.<sup>89</sup> Christ "is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation."<sup>90</sup> The fullness of revelation Christ mediates guarantees no new public revelation will occur prior to his return.<sup>91</sup> The Church hands down this revelation through Scripture and tradition. These are not two different revelations, but together "form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church."<sup>92</sup> Scripture and tradition flow "from the same divine wellspring, [and] in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end."<sup>93</sup>

This description of revelation stressed its definitive and unchanging nature. The Church received the fullness of revelation and transmits it in its full purity.<sup>94</sup> Yet, *Dei Verbum* concurrently maintained the development in human understanding of this revelation.

Development is possible because the Holy Spirit helps "bring about an ever deeper

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<sup>88</sup> *DV*, sec. 2.

<sup>89</sup> *DV*, sec. 3-4.

<sup>90</sup> *DV*, sec. 2.

<sup>91</sup> *DV*, sec. 4.

<sup>92</sup> *DV*, sec. 10.

<sup>93</sup> *DV*, sec. 9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

understanding of revelation.”<sup>95</sup> *Dei Verbum* also described how development occurs from a human perspective in time:

This [growth in understanding] happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.<sup>96</sup>

Here again the Council upheld a real distinction in the Church while affirming all the faithful had a role in the development of doctrine. Believers grow in understanding through contemplation and study. In imitation of Mary, they “treasure these things in their hearts.”<sup>97</sup> Bishops, as believers, can do this as well. But by virtue of their Episcopal office they also contribute in a unique way through preaching. This corresponds to *Lumen Gentium*’s teaching on the participation of all the People of God in the prophetic office of Christ that simultaneously maintained a real distinction between the laity and those who hold the teaching office.<sup>98</sup>

*Dei Verbum* affirmed the distinctive role of the teaching office in the context of the Church’s unity. Even though the bishops possess a unique authority and responsibility, revelation belongs to the whole Church. The faithful unite themselves to their shepherds “so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort.”<sup>99</sup> The bishops possess a unique role in interpreting revelation: “The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been

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<sup>95</sup> *DV*, sec. 5.

<sup>96</sup> *DV*, sec. 8. Another peritus at the Council, Yves Congar, was responsible for drafting this section of *Dei Verbum*. Andrew Meszaros finds that Newman’s thought influenced its composition, principally through Congar’s reception of Newman. See, Andrew Meszaros, “‘Haec Traditio proficit’: Congar’s Reception of Newman in *Dei Verbum*, Section 8,” *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1038 (2011): 247-254.

<sup>97</sup> *DV*, sec. 8.

<sup>98</sup> *LG*, sec. 12.

<sup>99</sup> *DV*, sec. 10.

entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.”<sup>100</sup> The Council rooted this authority in service to the word of God.

The teaching office can only teach “what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>101</sup>

*Dei Verbum*’s teachings on the nature of revelation conforms to the reality of what occurred during the Assumptionist movement. The dogmatic definition in 1950 infallibly taught the Assumption was a truth revealed in the unchanging deposit of faith. Discernment of this truth was not immediate but took place in time. The Assumptionist movement represented the final phase of this developmental process. For nearly a hundred years, the faithful contributed to the Church’s growth in understanding of this doctrine. Some theologians working on the Assumption at the time recognized this reality more than others. Gérard Philips and Fulbert Cayré, for example, showed an acute awareness that this growth in understanding took place in time.<sup>102</sup> Even as consciousness of the Assumption’s inclusion in revelation grew throughout the Church, the faithful awaited the final judgment from the magisterium.

The final four chapters of *Dei Verbum* focused on Scripture. The topics relevant to Assumption biblical scholarship include inspiration, biblical interpretation, and the centrality of Scripture for theology. *Dei Verbum* taught that every part of every book in the Bible is “sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.”<sup>103</sup> The doctrine of inspiration, as

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Philips, “Autour de la définibilité d’un dogme,” 95, 110; Cayré, “L’Assomption aux quatre premiers siècles,” 126.

<sup>103</sup> *DV*, sec. 11.

opposed to a theory of divine dictation, meant God still employed human authors and “made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted.”<sup>104</sup> This joint authorship has two consequences. First, because the Holy Spirit was the author, the truth God wanted committed to writing is without error.<sup>105</sup> Second, because God employed humans in a way that made use of their powers and abilities, human tools of investigation can assist in determining the author’s intended meaning. *Dei Verbum* avoided the term ‘historical method’ but confirmed the need for exegetes to determine literary forms and other details regarding how people communicated in the author’s context.<sup>106</sup>

Biblical interpretation, however, required more than applying the tools and methods of scientific exegesis. Determining the meaning of Scripture included consideration of “the content and unity of the whole of Scripture,” the “living tradition of the whole Church,” and the “harmony which exists between elements of the faith.”<sup>107</sup> Exegetes offer a valued service to the Church when they join a proper theological method to a rigorous historical method in their work. As *Dei Verbum* explained, “It is the task of exegetes to work according to these rules toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture, so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature.”<sup>108</sup> Biblical scholarship possesses a distinguished role within the interaction between Scripture, tradition, and the magisterium. The exegete is the specialist who, making use of historical method and a theological method attentive to tradition, lays the groundwork for the judgment of the Church.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> *DV*, sec. 12.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.



In its final chapter, *Dei Verbum* upheld the centrality of Scripture for theology. It explained that “Sacred theology rests on the written word of God, together with sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation.”<sup>109</sup> Because Scripture is inspired, “the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology.”<sup>110</sup> Scripture gives life to theology, thus maintaining a connection is vital. The centrality of Scripture, however, extended beyond theology. Scripture communicates knowledge of Christ and *Dei Verbum* urged all the faithful “to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures.”<sup>111</sup>

Two decades prior to *Dei Verbum*, these principles of biblical interpretation were already operative in Assumption biblical scholarship. That scholarship sought the Assumption in the intended and expressed meaning of the author. This involved the occasional use of historical method, specifically recourse to original languages. Those scholars discovered the Assumption had a basis in Scripture, but its literal meaning did not contain the doctrine. Rather, discerning the Assumption’s inclusion in revelation required interpreting Scripture in light of tradition and the teachings of the magisterium. The deep concern of locating the Assumption in Scripture demonstrated the movement’s implicit recognition of the centrality of Scripture for theology.

### *Continuity and Coinciding Horizons*

This chapter has suggested points of continuity between the Assumptionist movement and Vatican II throughout its presentation of the latter’s teaching on the laity and revelation. This final section elaborates on these connections to demonstrate that the activity and theology of the Assumptionist movement presaged the Council’s teachings. This demonstration begins with the

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<sup>109</sup> *DV*, sec. 24.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *DV*, sec. 25.

role of the laity in the Church and then shifts to revelation. The laity's contributions to the doctrinal life of the Church forms a meaningful bridge between these two components. First, however, it is necessary to reassert the methodological significance of this demonstration.

Employing an adaptation of Jauss's reception theory, both theological events represented a reception or 'reading' of revelation. This is more explicit in the Council because it issued a series of formal teachings. But reception of revelation is not exclusive to the magisterium, only its authoritative interpretation. The Assumptionist movement's activity and theology, therefore, also serve as meaningful evidence of revelation's reception. Both receptions necessarily occurred within a horizon of expectation. These horizons impact the reception of the revelation and help explain the development of doctrine that occurs from a human perspective. Continuity in reception suggests continuity in horizon. If the Assumptionist movement's activity and theology does not contradict the Council's teachings and, in fact, shares a material continuity, continuity likewise exists in the two theological events' horizons of expectation. In this instance, the Assumptionist movement's horizon would at least coincide with the Council's horizon. This, I argue, is what occurred, and it strengthens the argument that the Council's reception of revelation stands in continuity with the broader Catholic tradition.

The Council's teaching on the Church avoided the language of a learning Church and a teaching Church. Instead, the Council prioritized the oneness of the Church as the People of God and allowed the distinctions in rank to form a real, but secondary distinction. Both the structure and the content of *Lumen Gentium* communicated this approach. *Lumen Gentium* first addressed the whole People of God and only then specified the unique roles within this one body.<sup>112</sup>

Everything the Council taught about the People of God was "intended for the laity, religious and

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<sup>112</sup> *Lumen Gentium* treated the People of God in chapter two and then subsequently treated the hierarchy, laity, and religious in the context of this one body.

clergy alike.”<sup>113</sup> All the People of God, through a common Baptism, participate in the one priesthood of Christ.<sup>114</sup> This meant the laity are “made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ,” and take part in “the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.”<sup>115</sup> The Council added an explicit rejection of a passive understanding of the laity. Its decree on the lay apostolate confirmed, “No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as life of the body: so, too, in the body of Christ, which is the Church.”<sup>116</sup> This activity does not take place in isolation from the hierarchy nor does an impenetrable barrier exist between the laity and hierarchy. Rather, while maintaining the real distinction, the laity could cooperate in the hierarchy’s work and even “have the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.”<sup>117</sup>

The laity’s full membership in the Church and in its mission included the right to be heard. As active participants, they are “permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church.”<sup>118</sup> More than expressing mere preferences, the laity contributed to the Church by voicing opinions based on their “knowledge, competence or outstanding ability.”<sup>119</sup> Because the laity shared in Christ’s prophetic office, the voice of the laity had a heightened role. It extended beyond secular matters and included testimony pertaining to doctrine. The Council confirmed the infallibility of the whole Church when all its members reached a consensus “in matters of faith and morals”.<sup>120</sup> The Church

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<sup>113</sup> *LG*, sec. 30.

<sup>114</sup> *LG*, sec. 9.

<sup>115</sup> *LG*, sec. 31.

<sup>116</sup> *AA*, sec. 2.

<sup>117</sup> *LG*, sec. 33.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *LG*, sec. 12.

predominantly consisted of the laity, thus, collectively, their testimony is an essential component for reaching certain knowledge of revelation.

During the Assumptionist movement the dominant ecclesiological model stressed the division between the learning and teaching Church.<sup>121</sup> However, the movement's activity corresponded more to the Council's later teaching on the laity's full participation in the life and mission of the Church. The Assumptionist movement involved the whole Church and the laity played a significant role in its success. The laity consistently made their desires known through petitionary efforts to the Holy See. Over nearly a century, eight million lay faithful had expressed a desire for a dogmatic definition.<sup>122</sup> The laity gave their opinion on a matter of doctrine in an era before the Church had clearly articulated this right. And they did this even in the face of dismissal of its value among certain theologians.<sup>123</sup> The laity's petitionary efforts, as well as other efforts such as spreading devotion, consistently occurred in union with members of the hierarchy.<sup>124</sup> The laity participated with their shepherds in pursuing a common mission. The imagined barrier between the teaching and learning Church, while a real distinction, did not prevent active cooperation. Contrary to those who thought only the opinion of the teaching Church mattered, the pope proceeded to a dogmatic definition based on the consensus among all

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<sup>121</sup> The English bishops' 1900 joint pastoral expressed this ecclesiological paradigm. The Cardinal Archbishop and the Bishops of the Province of Westminster, "The Church and Liberal Catholicism," 135. Likewise, even Chietini, who valued the laity's testimony, addressed the Church through this division. Chietini, "L'assunzione di Maria SS. nella fede della Chiesa," 562.

<sup>122</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1038-1039.

<sup>123</sup> Carol, "The Definability of Mary's Assumption," 166.

<sup>124</sup> Without fully recapping the first chapter, many petitions were sent from the laity and the hierarchy together. A good example of this is a 1900 petition from the archbishop of Lyon in which 100,000 lay faithful, and thirty-four other prelates, joined with the archbishop to form a harmonious voice. *Petitiones*, 2:1048. Beyond petitionary efforts, the laity and bishops worked together in devotional efforts. The laity prayed and spread devotion, and the bishops provided indulgences to encourage this devotion. A small, but meaningful cooperation since the bishops were endorsing the laity's prayers for the dogmatic definition. *Petitiones*, 2:624-625.

the faithful.<sup>125</sup> As the Council later confirmed, the laity's testimony had doctrinal significance; it aided in reaching certainty about revelation.<sup>126</sup>

The Council's teachings on revelation and the ability of all the faithful to participate in the development of doctrine further confirmed the authenticity of the Assumptionist movement. *Dei Verbum* taught revelation was complete and unchanging.<sup>127</sup> But it concurrently affirmed that development in the understanding of revelation took place in time.<sup>128</sup> The Holy Spirit helps "bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation," which occurs in conjunction with human efforts.<sup>129</sup> All the faithful have the ability to contribute to this growth in understanding through "contemplation and study."<sup>130</sup> The inclusion of contemplation meant the development of doctrine was more than a logical development and included some spiritual instinct or connatural way of knowing. All the faithful could also participate in doctrinal development through study. Collectively, the Council described development of doctrine as a process that involves the Holy Spirit, spiritual contemplation, and human research efforts. Scripture is a focal point of these efforts because it is "the soul of sacred theology."<sup>131</sup> *Dei Verbum* recognized the contribution exegetes make towards a better understanding of revelation and emphasized the necessity of proper method in biblical interpretation. This included application of historical method and recourse to the "living tradition of the whole Church."<sup>132</sup> These exegetical efforts served as a "preparatory study" through which "the judgment of the Church may mature."<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, 12.

<sup>126</sup> *LG*, sec. 12.

<sup>127</sup> *DV*, sec. 3-4.

<sup>128</sup> *DV*, sec. 8.

<sup>129</sup> *DV*, sec. 5, 8.

<sup>130</sup> *DV*, sec. 8.

<sup>131</sup> *DV*, sec. 24.

<sup>132</sup> *DV*, sec. 12.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

The teachings and theological principles articulated in *Dei Verbum* were already operative in the Church during the Assumptionist movement. The collective theological discourse and reflection at the height of the movement strived to explain the relationship between an unchanging revelation and an awareness that, from a human perspective, development of doctrine occurs. The theological arguments on the Assumption's definability as a dogma revealed the complexities of this process. Some theologians appealed to a strictly logical form of development. These stressed the sufficiency of syllogistic reasoning to determine the contents of revelation abstractly with no meaningful recognition of how new perceptions arise over time.<sup>134</sup> But others recognized the insufficiency of this logical understanding. As Gérard Philips noted, "Life always precedes speculation about life. It does not have to model itself on the rules established by the analysts."<sup>135</sup> Awareness of an implicitly revealed truth did not emerge primarily as the result of logical deduction, but "is worked out thanks to a more profound and more penetrating understanding of the ensemble of dogmatic truth."<sup>136</sup>

The Catholic biblical scholarship on the Assumption portrayed a greater awareness that development of doctrine occurs in time through a growth in understanding. In attempting to ground the Assumption in Scripture, Catholic biblical scholars interpreted Scripture in light of tradition. They recognized that some outside element was necessary for discerning the Assumption's inclusion in revelation. This outside element was not an abstract truth contained in a separate repository of axioms, but a deeper understanding of the faith that emerged over time. As it related to the Assumption, this deeper understanding included the intimate union of Christ

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<sup>134</sup> As explored in chapter 2, this was the approach of Garrigou-Lagrange and Carol. Garrigou-Lagrange, "La définibilité de l'Assomption," 81-86; Carol, "The Definability of Mary's Assumption," 161-177.

<sup>135</sup> Philips, "Autour de la définibilité d'un dogme," 95. French: "La vie precede toujours la speculation sur la vie. Elle n'a pas a se modeler sur les règles établies par les analystes."

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 110. French: "Elle ne s'obtient pas par une déduction mathématique ou strictement philosophique à partir d'un axiome quelconque; elle s'élabore grâce à une intelligence plus profonde et plus pénétrante de l'ensemble du donné dogmatique."

and Mary in redemption, and the full consequences of Mary's unique blessing.<sup>137</sup> Fulbert Cayré vividly compared this growth to the way a tree develops from a seed.<sup>138</sup> Not logic, but life brought the tree to fruition. Likewise, with doctrine, "between the state of pure seed where the doctrine first presents itself and that of the plant, there is a period of latent life which is essential and which is too often forgotten."<sup>139</sup> This recognition of development allowed Catholic biblical scholars to locate a foundation for the Assumption in Scripture, the "the soul of sacred theology."<sup>140</sup> The pope confirmed this conclusion in *Munificentissimus Deus*, declaring the doctrine of the Assumption is, in fact, "based on the Sacred Writings."<sup>141</sup>

Advocates of the Assumptionist movement had already recognized that the faithful could contribute to the development of doctrine prior to *Dei Verbum*'s confirmation. *Dei Verbum* taught that the faithful contribute through "contemplation" and "a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience."<sup>142</sup> Émile Neubert recognized this reality and explained it in terms of connaturality. Having received the Holy Spirit, all Christians could intuit supernatural truth through connaturality.<sup>143</sup> This allowed for a deeper understanding of the Christian mysteries that initially escaped theological science. Applied to Marian doctrine, he explained, "The notion of divine motherhood never made theologians discover the other privileges of the Virgin, it only provided them with the explanation once the Marian sense of the

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<sup>137</sup> For examples see, Bover, "La Asunción corporal de la Virgen María," 180-181; Malo, "La Bible et l'Assomption," 114; da Fonseca, "L'Assunzione di Maria nella Sacra Scrittura," 355-360.

<sup>138</sup> Cayré, "L'Assomption aux quatre premiers siècles," 126.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. French: "Entre l'état de pure semence où se présente d'abord la doctrine et celui de plante, il y a une période de vie latente qui est essentielle et que trop souvent on oublie."

<sup>140</sup> *DV*, sec. 24.

<sup>141</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, 41.

<sup>142</sup> *DV*, sec. 8.

<sup>143</sup> Neubert, *De la découverte progressive des Grandeurs de Marie*, 34.

faithful had discovered them.”<sup>144</sup> For Carlo Balić, the Christian sense was the basis for the faithful’s involvement in doctrinal development. The Christian sense was “a special supernatural motion, an illustration of the intellect, a supernatural instinct coming from faith and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>145</sup> He suggested that this meant all the faithful could have a role in discovering, sustaining, and developing doctrine.<sup>146</sup> Through contemplation, the faithful “discover the various privileges of Mary with a spontaneous intuition.”<sup>147</sup> The triumph of the Assumptionist movement, he claimed, was similarly “a triumph of the Christian sense.”<sup>148</sup>

The preceding analysis has established numerous points of material continuity between the Assumptionist movement and the Council’s formal teachings. During the Assumptionist movement, the laity were active and vocal. They regularly carried out their efforts towards obtaining a definition in union with the hierarchy. This lived reality corresponded to the Council’s teaching on the oneness of the Church and the laity’s active role in it. Theologically, Assumption scholarship was already wrestling with the complexities of doctrinal development. Though many treated developments as a purely logical process, other theologians recognized the historical nature of development. New dogmas did not fall from the sky but resulted from a long process of contemplation and study in the life of the Church. The Assumptionist movement itself was part of this historical process.

The material continuity between the two theological events suggests continuity between their respective horizons of expectation. Both events were receptions of revelation in the life of

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 60. French: “La notion de la maternité divine n’a jamais fait découvrir aux théologiens les autres privilèges de la Vierge, elle leur en a seulement fourni l’explication une fois que le sens marial des fidèles les avait découvertes.”

<sup>145</sup> Balić, “Il Senso Cristiano e il progresso del dogma,” 132. Italian: “una speciale mozione soprannaturale, una illustrazione dell’intelletto, un istinto soprannaturale proveniente dalla fede e dai doni dello Spirito Santo.”

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 120. Italian: “con un intuito spontaneo scopre i vari privilegi di Maria.”

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 131. Italian: “un trionfo del senso cristiano.”



the Church. That the formal teachings of Vatican II possess a material continuity with the actions and theology of the Assumptionist movement shows that the latter's horizon at least coincides with former's horizon. Since the Council occurred after the end of the Assumptionist movement, its horizon had likely expanded. But the demonstration of a coinciding horizon places the Council in a continuous relationship with a significant pre-conciliar theological event.

### *Conclusion*

In framing the Assumptionist movement and Vatican II as loci of reception, this chapter established points of doctrinal continuity between each one's reception of revelation. Some of these teachings already had a firm foundation in prior magisterial teaching. For example, the Council's teaching on biblical interpretation largely reiterated the teaching of *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. But on other topics, the Council's teachings went beyond a rearticulation of prior conciliar and magisterial documents. The Council "read" revelation anew and, operating out of its new horizon of expectation, found meaning that prior conciliar readings of revelation did not perceive. This is, perhaps, why Vatican II can appear disconnected from the broader Catholic tradition.

Humanly speaking, reception of revelation is an ongoing process. Development, then, is to be expected. But the continuity of that development becomes more recognizable when one acknowledges that the Church is *more* than the magisterium. Reception of revelation is not limited to ecumenical councils and papal pronouncements. Those can promulgate formal teachings that authentically interpret revelation, but the whole Church has access to revelation and continually receives it. If this is accepted, then research in the development of doctrine can, and should, look beyond the magisterium and into the life of the Church. This dissertation

investigated the Assumptionist movement as one such locus of reception that occurred in pre-conciliar Catholicism. This chapter demonstrated the many ways in which its reception corresponded to the teachings of Vatican II. What the Council solemnly taught was already present in the life and theology of the Assumptionist movement. In this way, the Assumptionist movement was, in fact, a precursor to Vatican II.

## CONCLUSION

The neglect of the Assumptionist movement in Catholic historical and theological scholarship has permitted the proliferation of a skewed perception of pre-conciliar Catholicism and its relationship with Vatican II. This dissertation is a first step in remedying the situation and makes three major contributions. Specifically, it recovers the history and theology of the Assumptionist movement, applies this new knowledge to demonstrate continuity with Vatican II, and provides a foundation for future research.

The first major contribution of this study is the recovery of the Assumptionist movement as a meaningful theological event in the life of the Church. This recovery employed an adaptation of Jauss's reception theory to frame the movement as a reception of revelation. According to Jauss, an audience experiences a text within a horizon of expectation which affects its reception and the meaning an audience assigns to it.<sup>1</sup> Applied to a theological context, the Church experiences revelation within a horizon of expectation, likewise affecting its reception and the meaning the Church perceives in it. This study considered the Assumptionist movement as a locus of reception in the life of the Church. The movement's history and theological activity served as evidence of how the Church, as the People of God, had received revelation.

The history of the Assumptionist movement revealed the efforts of the whole Church towards a dogmatic definition. When Pius XII defined the Assumption in 1950, he fulfilled his role as an infallible judge. This was but the culminating act of a near century-long effort. In 1863, a movement began that sought the new Marian dogma. Soon, Catholics from around the world petitioned the Holy See to proceed to a dogmatic definition, declaring Mary's Assumption

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<sup>1</sup> Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," 13.

a truth revealed by God. Through these petitions, the laity made their desires known on a matter of doctrine in the Church. They were not the judge, but they certainly had something to say. United to the requests of bishops, priests, and religious, a harmonious call for a definition emerged throughout the Church.<sup>2</sup> In addition to petitionary efforts, theologians wrestled with perceived theological hurdles to a definition. Marian congresses took place around the world with an increased focus on the Assumption. After Pius XII asked the bishops about a definition in 1946, theological scholarship on the Assumption reached its height. This scholarship sought to demonstrate what the Catholic faithful had already intuited about the Assumption and its place in revelation. Pius XII's definition confirmed the authenticity of this belief present throughout the Church. He spoke not only for the Church but *with* the Church.

Theological scholarship at the height of the Assumptionist movement revealed the diverse methods theologians used to explain the phenomenon of doctrinal development. All acknowledged revelation was unchanging and tried to explain, or explain away, the apparent growth that occurred from a human perspective. In seeking to demonstrate the definability of the Assumption as a dogma, the disparity between a strict logical understanding of development and an organic understanding of development appeared. The logical understanding had no need for time or life. Syllogistic reasoning sufficed to demonstrate the inclusion of a doctrine in the deposit of faith. The organic understanding of development acknowledged reason's contribution but argued increased knowledge of revelation occurred over time. Gérard Philips expressed this well when he observed, "Life always precedes speculation about life."<sup>3</sup>

Assumption biblical scholarship corroborated the organic understanding of development. Though these scholars often lacked a common terminology, their analysis of the Assumption in

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<sup>2</sup> *Petitiones*, 2:1038-1039.

<sup>3</sup> Philips, "Autour de la définibilité d'un dogme," 95. French: "La vie precede toujours la speculation sur la vie."

Scripture demonstrated a common understanding. The Assumption had a foundation in Scripture, but it was not, to borrow Adrien-Marie Malo's distinction, "biblically implicit."<sup>4</sup> Discerning the Assumption in revelation through Scripture required an outside element. This outside element was tradition. Throughout the life of the Church, a deeper understanding had emerged about the role of Mary in salvation, her intimate union with Christ, and the full consequences of her unique blessing. Interpreting Scripture in light of these insights demonstrated the Assumption's inclusion in revelation. Fulbert Cayré explicated the connection between Scripture interpreted through tradition and an organic understanding of development. He compared the Assumption's presence in Scripture to a tree's presence in a seed.<sup>5</sup> In both cases, the former appears only after "a period of latent life."<sup>6</sup>

While the Catholic theological milieu at the height of the Assumptionist movement rejected an active role for the laity in matters of doctrine, a few recognized the ability of all the faithful to contribute to the development of doctrine. On one level, their testimony was invaluable for proceeding to a dogmatic definition. In the definition of the Assumption, Pius XII reaffirmed what his predecessor, Pius IX, had affirmed when defining the Immaculate Conception. A dogmatic definition was possible because of the "outstanding agreement of the Catholic prelates and the faithful."<sup>7</sup> The lay faithful's testimony was a large and necessary component of this consensus. On another level, however, the faithful contributed through their ability to perceive the depths of the Christian mysteries. Émile Neubert likened this ability to connaturality. In their connection to God through the Holy Spirit, the faithful could know

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<sup>4</sup> Malo, "La Bible et l'Assomption," 108. French: "l'implicite biblique."

<sup>5</sup> Cayré, "L'Assomption aux quatre premiers siècles," 126.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. French: "une période de vie latente."

<sup>7</sup> Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, sec. 12.

through intuition what often escaped the efforts of theological science.<sup>8</sup> Carlo Balić, one of the central promoters of the Assumptionist cause in its final years, made a similar claim. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the faithful had a “Christian sense.”<sup>9</sup> The Christian sense made it possible for the faithful to “discover the various privileges of Mary with a spontaneous intuition.”<sup>10</sup> This meant the faithful had a role in the development of doctrine, and Balić even credited the success of the Assumptionist movement to the Christian sense.<sup>11</sup>

The preceding precis of the first part of this study highlights three significant findings. First, during the Assumptionist movement, the laity were active participants in doctrinal development. The presumed division between a learning and teaching Church did not prevent them from voicing their belief and desire on a doctrinal matter. Rather, in union with the whole Church, their testimony served as a necessary component of the consensus used for the definition. The Church acted as an organic whole and not a divided body. Second, theologians began to recognize the development of doctrine as more than a logical development. Theological arguments on definability showcased the diverse methods employed in the Church. But even those whose method denied an organic development of doctrine still argued for the Assumption’s inclusion in revelation based on understandings that had emerged over the life of the Church. This was most visible in the Assumption biblical scholarship. Discerning the Assumption in revelation through Scripture required interpreting Scripture in light of tradition. And the knowledge employed from tradition in these interpretations had, in fact, emerged over time in the Church. Third, theologians acknowledged the ability of the faithful to contribute to the development of doctrine in a direct way. The faithful did more than repeat what the magisterium

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<sup>8</sup> Neubert, *De la découverte progressive des Grandeurs de Marie*, 34, 60.

<sup>9</sup> Balić, “Il Senso Cristiano e il progresso del dogma,” 114. Italian: “senso cristiano.”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 120. Italian: “con un intuito spontaneo scopre i vari privilegi di Maria.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 131.

taught; they could also obtain a deeper understanding of revelation than official teaching communicated. Through an intuition made possible by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the faithful could obtain knowledge and insights that still eluded theologians. In this way, they could portent future developments and give guidance for future theological endeavors.

The second major contribution of this study is the application of this knowledge to demonstrate continuity between the Assumptionist movement and Vatican II. As the final chapter argued, several points of doctrinal continuity exist between the two theological events. In the Assumptionist movement, these were operative beliefs, discernable in the movement's activity and theological discourse. Evidence of the Council's reception of revelation is found in its formal authoritative teachings. Despite the different modes of expression, material continuity exists between the two receptions of revelation.

The Council emphasized the organic unity of the Church, explicitly teaching that all the People of God participate in the one priesthood of Christ.<sup>12</sup> This included a share in the prophetic office.<sup>13</sup> In its decree on the laity, the Council affirmed that no part of the Church is "merely passive" and all participate in the life of the Church.<sup>14</sup> As it relates to doctrine, the laity's testimony is an essential component for obtaining certain knowledge of revelation.<sup>15</sup> Though revelation is complete and unchanging, growth in the Church's understanding of revelation occurs throughout history.<sup>16</sup> The Holy Spirit aided all the faithful in contributing to this development through "contemplation and study."<sup>17</sup> This development was not the result of pure

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<sup>12</sup> *LG*, sec. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *LG*, sec. 31.

<sup>14</sup> *AA*, sec. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *LG*, sec. 12.

<sup>16</sup> *DV*, sec. 3-4, 8.

<sup>17</sup> *DV*, sec. 5, 8.

sylogistic reasoning, but took place in time through “a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities.”<sup>18</sup>

These and other points of continuity demonstrate the Assumptionist movement and the Council experienced or “read” revelation through coinciding horizons of expectation. What the Council taught in an authoritative and formal manner was already materially present in the life and theology of the Assumptionist movement. Therefore, the Assumptionist movement was a precursor to Vatican II. This challenges a narrative of rupture and strengthens the case for doctrinal continuity between the Council and pre-conciliar Catholicism. Rejection of Vatican II entails an implicit rejection of the Assumptionist movement. However, a recognition of the Assumptionist movement as a locus of reception in the life of the Church reveals continuity that is otherwise obscured if the reception of revelation is reduced to the magisterium alone.

The third major contribution of this study is that it provides a foundation for future research. I suggest three potential avenues. First, the Assumptionist movement itself requires further elucidation. As a movement of the whole Church, a wealth of theological publications and evidence of activity still require analysis so that a fuller understanding of the movement’s influence can emerge. This will contribute to the development of a more complete picture of pre-conciliar Catholicism. Second, it provides leads for tracing the influence of John Henry Newman. Throughout this study, several points of connection emerged between Newman’s thought and theological discourse at the height of the Assumptionist movement. His understanding of the laity, development of doctrine, and the illative sense resonate throughout the movement. It appears likely that his work indirectly impacted the Assumptionist movement through its influence on certain individuals. Third, the relationship between the Assumptionist

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<sup>18</sup> *DV*, sec. 8.



movement and Vatican II parallels the relationship between the efforts to obtain the Immaculate Conception dogma and Vatican I. In the Assumptionist movement, the laity played a prominent role and received formal theological treatment at Vatican II. The efforts to obtain the Immaculate Conception dogma was a more centralized Roman initiative and subsequently, papal authority received formal theological treatment at Vatican I. This suggests a connection between Marian and conciliar efforts that requires further investigation.

The Assumptionist movement was a meaningful theological event in the life of the Church and a precursor to Vatican II. My hope is that this study leads to increased recognition of its value and promotes future research. Most of all, I hope it helps to promote unity in the Church through a deeper knowledge of the Church's historical and ongoing reception of revelation.

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