

**Mary, Christ And The New Humanity**  
**Pattern of grace and hope – Church in glory**

**Introduction**

1 In honouring Mary as Mother of the Lord, all generations of Anglicans and  
 2 Roman Catholics have echoed the greeting of Elizabeth: ‘blessed are you  
 3 among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb’ (Luke 1:42). The  
 4 *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* now offers this Agreed  
 5 Statement on the place of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Church in the  
 6 hope that it expresses our common faith about the one who, of all believers,  
 7 is closest to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We do so at the request of our  
 8 two Communion, in response to questions set before us. A special  
 9 consultation of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops, meeting under the  
 10 leadership of Archbishop Carey of Canterbury and Cardinal Cassidy of the  
 11 Pontifical Council for Christian Unity at Mississauga, Canada in 2000,  
 12 specifically asked ARCIC for ‘a study of Mary in the life and doctrine of the  
 13 Church’. This request recalls the observation of the Malta Report (1968) that  
 14 ‘real or apparent differences between us come to the surface in such matters  
 15 as ... the Mariological definitions’ promulgated in 1854 and 1950. More  
 16 recently, in *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), John Paul II identified as one area in need  
 17 of fuller study by all Christian traditions before a true consensus of faith can  
 18 be achieved ‘the Virgin Mary, as Mother of God and Icon of the Church, the  
 19 spiritual Mother who intercedes for Christ’s disciples and for all humanity’  
 20 (para. 79).

2 ARCIC has addressed this topic once before. *Authority in the Church II*  
 (1981) already records a significant degree of agreement:

“We agree that there can be but one mediator between God and man,  
 Jesus Christ, and reject any interpretation of the role of Mary which  
 obscures this affirmation. We agree in recognising that Christian  
 understanding of Mary is inseparably linked with the doctrines of  
 Christ and the Church. We agree in recognising the grace and unique  
 vocation of Mary, Mother of God Incarnate (*Theotokos*), in observing  
 her festivals, and in according her honour in the communion of saints.  
 We agree that she was prepared by divine grace to be the mother of our  
 Redeemer, by whom she herself was redeemed and received into glory.  
 We further agree in recognising in Mary a model of holiness,  
 obedience and faith for all Christians. We accept that it is possible to

regard her as a prophetic figure of the Church of God before as well as after the Incarnation” (para. 30).

The same document, however, points out remaining differences:

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

These reservations in particular were noted in the official *Response of the Holy See to The Final Report* (1991, para. 13). Having taken these shared beliefs and these questions as the starting point for our reflection, we are now able to affirm further significant agreement on the place of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Church.

3 The present document proposes a fuller statement of our shared belief concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary and so provides the context for a common appreciation of the content of the Marian dogmas. We also take up differences of practice, including the explicit invocation of Mary. This new study of Mary has benefited from our previous study of reception in *The Gift of Authority* (1999). There we concluded that, when the Church receives and acknowledges what it recognises as a true expression of the Tradition once for all delivered to the Apostles, this reception is an act both of faithfulness and of freedom. *The freedom to respond in fresh ways in the face of new challenges is what enables the Church to be faithful to the Tradition which it carries forward. At other times, some element of the apostolic Tradition may be forgotten, neglected or abused. In such situations, fresh recourse to Tradition recalls God’s revelation in Christ: we call this process re-reception (cf Gift 24-25).* Progress in ecumenical dialogue and understanding suggests that we now have an opportunity to re-receive together the tradition of Mary’s place in God’s revelation.

4 Since its inception ARCIC has sought to get behind opposed or entrenched positions to discover and develop our common inheritance of faith.

Following *The Common Declaration* in 1966 of Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, we have continued our ‘serious dialogue ... founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions’. We have asked to what extent doctrine or devotion concerning Mary belongs to a legitimate ‘reception’ of the apostolic Tradition, in accordance with the Scriptures. This Tradition has at its core the proclamation of the trinitarian ‘economy of salvation’, grounding the life and faith of the Church in the divine communion of Father, Son and Spirit. We have sought to understand Mary’s person and role in the history of salvation and the life of the Church in the light of a theology of divine grace and hope. Such a theology is deeply rooted in the enduring experience of Christian worship and devotion.

5 God’s grace calls for and enables human response (cf *Salvation and the Church*, 9). This is seen in the Gospel account of the Annunciation, where the angel’s message evokes the response of Mary. The Incarnation and all that it entailed, including the passion, death and resurrection of Christ and the birth of the Church, **ensued from** her *fiat* – ‘let it be done to me according to your word’ (Luke 1:38). We recognise in the event of the Incarnation God’s gracious ‘Yes’ to humanity as a whole. This reminds us once more of the Apostle’s words in 2 Corinthians 1:18-20 (*Gift* 8ff): all God’s promises find their ‘Yes’ in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In this context, Mary’s *fiat* can be seen as the supreme instance of a believer’s ‘Amen’ in response to the ‘Yes’ of God. Christian disciples respond to the same ‘Yes’ with their own ‘Amen’. They thus know themselves to be children together of the one heavenly Father, born of the Spirit as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, drawn into the communion of love of the blessed Trinity. Mary epitomises such participation in the life of God. Her response was not made without profound questioning, and it issued in a life of joy intermingled with sorrow, taking her even to the foot of her son’s cross. When Christians join in Mary’s ‘Amen’ to the ‘Yes’ of God in Christ, they commit themselves to an obedient response to the Word of God, which leads to a life of prayer and service. Like Mary, they not only magnify the Lord with their lips: they commit themselves to serve God’s justice with their lives (cf Luke 1:46-55).

#### A Mary according to the Scriptures

6 We remain convinced that the holy Scriptures, as the Word of God written, bear normative witness to God’s plan of salvation, so it is to them that this statement first turns. Indeed, it is impossible to be faithful to Scripture and not to take Mary seriously. We recognise, however, that for some centuries

we have interpreted the Scriptures while divided from one another. In reflecting together on the Scriptures' testimony concerning Mary, we have discovered more than just a few tantalising glimpses into the life of a great saint. We find ourselves meditating with wonder and gratitude on the whole sweep of salvation history: creation, election, the Incarnation, passion, and resurrection of Christ, the gift of the Spirit in the Church, and the final vision of eternal life for all God's people in the new creation.

7 In the following paragraphs, our use of Scripture seeks to draw upon the whole tradition of the Church, in which rich and varied readings have been employed. In both the New Testament, the Old Testament is commonly interpreted typologically: events and images are taken up in a wider manner with reference to Christ. This approach is further developed by the Fathers and by medieval preachers and authors. The Reformers stressed the clarity and sufficiency of Scripture, and called for a return to the centrality of the Gospel message. Historical-critical approaches attempted to discern the meaning intended by the biblical authors, and to account for texts' origins. Each of these readings has its limitations, and may give rise to exaggerations or imbalances: typology can become extravagant, Reformation emphases reductionist, and critical methods overly historicist. More recent approaches point to the range of possible readings of a text, notably its narrative, rhetorical and sociological dimensions. In this statement, we seek to integrate what is valuable from each of these approaches, as both correcting and contributing to our use of Scripture. Further, we recognise that no reading of a text is neutral, but each is shaped by the context and interest of its readers. Our reading has taken place within the context of our dialogue in Christ, for the sake of that communion which is his will. It is thus an ecclesial and ecumenical reading, seeking to consider each passage about Mary in the context of the New Testament as a whole, against the background of the Old, and in the light of the Tradition.

*The witness of Scripture: a trajectory of grace and hope*

8 The Old Testament bears witness to God's creation of men and women in the divine image, and God's loving call to covenant relationship with himself. Even when they disobeyed, God did not abandon human beings to sin and the power of death. Again and again God offered a covenant of grace. After the flood, God made a covenant with Noah that never again would 'all flesh' be destroyed by the waters of a flood. The Lord made a covenant with Abraham that, through him, all the families of the earth might be blessed.

Through Moses he made a covenant with Israel that, obedient to his word, they might be a holy nation and a priestly people. Although God's chosen people repeatedly failed to be faithful, the hope remained of a 'new covenant' in which there would be perfect obedience and perfect self-giving: 'This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (Jeremiah 31:33). In the prophecy of Ezekiel, this hope is spoken of not only in terms of washing and cleansing, but also of the gift of the Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-28).

9 The covenant between the Lord and his people is several times described as a love affair between God and Israel, the virgin daughter of Zion, bride and mother: 'I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine' (Ezekiel 16:8). Even in punishing faithlessness, God remains forever faithful, promising to restore the covenant relationship and to draw together the scattered people (Hosea 1-2; Jeremiah 2:2; 31:3; Isaiah 62:4-5). Nuptial imagery is also used within the New Testament to describe the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:21-33; Revelation 21:9).

10 The Scriptures also speak of the calling by God of particular persons, such as David, Elijah, Jeremiah and Isaiah, so that within the people of God certain special tasks may be performed. They bear witness to the gift of the Spirit or the presence of God enabling them to accomplish God's will and purpose. There are also profound reflections on what it is to be known and called by God from the very beginning of one's existence (Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:1-5). This sense of wonder at the prevenient grace of God is similarly attested in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul, when he writes of those who are 'called according to God's purpose', affirming that those whom God 'foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ... And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified' (Romans 8:28-30; cf 2 Timothy 1:9). The preparation by God for a prophetic task is exemplified in the words spoken by the angel to Zechariah before the birth of John the Baptist: 'He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb' (Luke 1:15; cf Judges 13:3-5).

11 Following the New Testament writers themselves, Christians have read the Old Testament in the light of the work of God in Christ. Within this christological context, some passages have also been understood as a

prefiguration of the one who would be overshadowed by the Spirit and give birth to the Son of God. The New Testament speaks not only of God's preparation for the birth of the Son, but also of God's election, calling and sanctification of a Jewish woman in the line of those holy women, such as Sarah and Hannah, whose sons fulfilled the purposes of God for his people. Paul speaks of the Son of God being born 'in the fullness of time' and 'born of a woman, born under the Law' (Galatians 4:4). The birth of Mary's son is the fulfilment of God's will for Israel, and Mary's part in that fulfilment is that of free and unqualified consent in utter self-giving and trust: 'Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word' (Luke 1:38; cf Psalm 123:2).

*Mary in Matthew's birth narrative*

12 While various parts of the New Testament refer to the birth of Christ, only two Gospels, Matthew and Luke, each from its own perspective, narrate the story of his birth and refer specifically to Mary. Matthew entitles his book 'the Genesis of Jesus Christ' (1:1) echoing the first book of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 1:1). In the genealogy (1:1-18) he traces the genesis of Jesus back through the Exile to David and ultimately to Abraham. He notes the unlikely role played in the providential ordering of Israel's salvation history by four women, each of whom stretches the boundaries of the Covenant. This emphasis on continuity with the old is counter-balanced in the following account of Jesus' birth by an emphasis on the new (cf Matthew 13:52), a type of re-creation by the Holy Spirit, revealing new possibilities of salvation from sin (1:21) and of the presence of 'God with us' (1:23). Matthew stretches the boundaries further in holding together Jesus' Davidic descent through the legal fatherhood of Joseph and his birth of the Virgin according to Isaiah's prophecy.

13 In Matthew's account, Mary is mentioned in conjunction with her son in such phrases as 'Mary his mother' or 'the child and his mother' (2:11,13,20,21). Amid all the political intrigue, murder, and displacement of this tale, one quiet moment of reverence has captured the Christian imagination: the Magi, whose profession it is to know when the time has come, kneel in homage to the infant King with his royal mother (2:2,11). Matthew emphasises the continuity of Jesus Christ with Israel's messianic expectation and discontinuity in the newness that comes with the birth of the Saviour. Descent from David by whatever route and birth at the ancestral royal city disclose the first. The virginal conception discloses the second.

*Mary in Luke's birth narrative*

14 In Luke's infancy narrative, Mary is prominent from the beginning. She is the link between John the Baptist and Jesus, whose miraculous births are laid out in deliberate parallel. She receives the angel's message and responds in humble obedience (1:38). She travels independently from Galilee to Judaea to visit Elizabeth (1:40) and in her song proclaims the eschatological reversal which will be at the heart of her son's proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Mary is the one who in recollection looks beneath the surface of events (2:19,51) and represents the inwardness of faith and suffering (2:35). She speaks on Joseph's behalf in the scene at the Temple (2:48) and, although chided for her initial incomprehension (2:50), continues to grow in understanding (2:51).

15 Within the Lucan narrative, two particular scenes invite reflection on the place of Mary in the life of the Church: the annunciation and the visit to Elizabeth. These passages emphasise that Mary is in a unique way the recipient of God's election and grace. The annunciation story recapitulates several incidents in the Old Testament, notably the births of Ishmael (Genesis 16:10-11), Isaac (Genesis 18:10-14), Samson (Judges 13:2-5) and Samuel (1 Samuel 1:3-4). The angel's greeting also evokes the passages in Isaiah (66:7-11), Zechariah (9:9) and Zephaniah (3:14-17) that call on the 'Daughter of Zion', i.e. Israel awaiting with joy the arrival of her Lord. The choice of 'overshadow' (ἐφ' ἑστίασεν) to describe the action of the Holy Spirit in the virginal conception (Luke 1:35) echoes the presence of God overshadowing the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:35), and the brooding of the Spirit over the waters at the creation (Genesis 1:2). At the visitation, Mary's song (*Magnificat*) mirrors the song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10), broadening its scope so that Mary becomes the spokesperson for all the poor and oppressed who long for God's reign of justice to be established. Just as in Elizabeth's salutation the mother receives a blessing of her own, distinct from that of her child (1:42), so also in the *Magnificat* Mary predicts that 'all generations will call me blessed' (1:48). This text provides the basis for an appropriate devotion to Mary, though never in separation from her role as mother of the Messiah.

16 In the annunciation story, the angel calls Mary the Lord's 'favoured one' (Greek *kecaritwmevnh*, *perfect participle* - literally, 'the one who has been endowed with grace') in a way that implies a prior sanctification by divine grace with a view to her calling. The angel's announcement connects Jesus'

being 'holy' and 'Son of God' with his conception by the Holy Spirit (1:35). The virginal conception then points to the divine origin of the Saviour who will be born of Mary. The infant not yet born is described by Elizabeth as the Lord: 'And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' (1:43). The trinitarian pattern of divine action in these scenes is striking: the incarnation of the Son is initiated by the Father's election of the Blessed Virgin and is mediated by the Holy Spirit. Equally striking is Mary's *fiat*, her 'Amen' given in faith and freedom to God's powerful Word communicated by the angel.

17 In Luke's account of the birth of Jesus, the praise offered to God by the shepherds parallels the Magi's adoration of the infant in Matthew's account. Again, this is the scene that constitutes the still centre at the heart of the birth story: 'They found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger' (Luke 2:16). In accordance with the Law of Moses, the baby is presented in the Temple and circumcised. On this occasion, Simeon has a special word of prophecy for the mother of the Christ-child, that 'a sword will pierce your soul' (Luke 2:34-35). From this point on Mary's pilgrimage of faith leads to the foot of the cross.

#### *Virginal conception*

18 The divine initiative in human history is proclaimed in the good news of the virginal conception through the action of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20-23; Luke 1:34-35). This may appear in the first place as an absence, i.e. the absence of a human father. It is in reality, however, a hidden sign of the presence and work of the Spirit. Belief in the virginal conception is an early Christian tradition adopted and developed independently by Matthew and Luke. For Christian believers, it is an eloquent sign of the divine sonship of Christ and of new life through the Spirit. As, according to the Apostles' Creed, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, was 'conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary', so in baptism Christians are 'born again from above by water and the Spirit' (John 3:3-5), and 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man' (John 1:13).

#### *Mary and the true family of Jesus*

19 After these birth stories, it comes as something of a surprise to read the episode, narrated in all three Synoptic Gospels, which deals with the question of Jesus' true relatives. Mark tells us that Jesus' 'mother and his brothers'



(3:31) come and stand outside, wanting to speak to him.<sup>1</sup> Jesus in response distances himself from his natural family: he speaks instead of those gathered around him, his 'eschatological family', that is to say, 'whoever does the will of God' (3:35). For Mark, Jesus' natural family, including his own mother, seems at this stage to lack understanding of the true nature of his mission. But that will be the case also with his disciples (e.g. 8:33; 9:30-33). Mark indicates that growth in understanding is inevitably slow and painful, and that genuine faith in Christ is not reached until the encounter with the cross and the empty tomb (cf 8:34-35).

20 In Luke, the stark contrast between the attitude towards Jesus of his natural and eschatological family is avoided (Luke 8:19-21). In a later scene (11:27-8) the woman in the crowd who utters a blessing on his mother, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked', is corrected: 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it'. But that form of blessing, as Luke sees it, definitely includes Mary who, from the very beginning, was ready to let everything in her life happen according to God's word (1:38).

21 In his second book, the Acts of the Apostles, Luke notes that between the ascension of the Risen Lord and the feast of Pentecost the apostles were gathered in Jerusalem 'together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers' (Acts 1:14). Mary, who was receptive to the working of God's Spirit at the birth of the Messiah (Luke 1:35), is here part of the community of disciples waiting in prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit at the birth of the Church.

*John's gospel: Jesus and his mother at Cana*

22 At two important moments of Jesus' public life, the beginning (the wedding at Cana) and the end (the Cross), John mentions the presence of Jesus' mother. Each is an hour of need: the first on the surface rather trivial, but at a deeper level a symbolic anticipation of the second. John gives a prominent position in his Gospel to the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12), calling it the beginning (αρχή) of the signs of Jesus. The account emphasises the new wine which

<sup>1</sup> Although the word 'brother' usually denotes a blood brother, the Greek ἀδελφός, like the Hebrew 'ah, can have a broader meaning of kinsman, or relative (e.g. Gen 29:12 LXX) or step-brother (e.g. Mark 6:17f). Relatives who are not siblings could be included in this use of the term at Mark 3:31. Mary did have an extended family: her sister is referred to at John 19:25 and her kinswoman Elizabeth at Luke 1:36. Cf Origen, *In Mt* 10.17: 'The brethren of Jesus can be the sons of Joseph's first wedding, as some state who follow the Gospel of Peter and the Book of James'.

Jesus brings, symbolising the eschatological marriage feast of God with his people and the messianic banquet of the Kingdom. The story primarily conveys a christological message: Jesus reveals his messianic glory to his disciples and they believe in him (2:11).

23 The presence of the ‘mother of Jesus’ is mentioned at the beginning of the story. She seems to have been invited and be present in her own right, not with ‘Jesus and his disciples’ (John 2:1-2), but has a distinctive role in the unfolding of the narrative. Jesus is initially seen as present because he is part of Mary’s family. In the dialogue between them when the wine runs out, Jesus seems at first to refuse Mary’s implied request, but in the end accedes to it. This surface reading, however, leaves room for a deeper symbolic reading of the event. In saying ‘they have no wine,’ Mary expresses not so much the deficiency in the wedding arrangements, but the longing for salvation of the whole covenant people, who have water for purification but lack the joyful wine of the messianic kingdom. In his answer, Jesus begins by calling into question his former relationship with his mother (‘what is there between you and me?’), implying that a change has to take place. He does not address Mary as ‘mother’, but as ‘woman’ (cf John 19:26). Jesus no longer sees his relation to Mary as simply one of earthly kinship.

24 Mary’s response, to instruct the servants to ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (John 2:5), is surprising; she is not in charge of the feast (cf 2:8). Her initial role as the human mother of Jesus has radically changed. She herself is now seen as a believer within the messianic community. From now on, she commits herself totally to the Messiah and his word. A new relationship results, indicated by the change in the order of the main characters after the story: ‘After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples’ (2:12). The Cana narrative opens by placing Jesus within the family of Mary, his mother; from now on, Mary is part of the ‘company of Jesus’, his disciple. The passage reflects the Church’s understanding of the role of Mary: to help the disciples come to her son, Jesus Christ, and to ‘do whatever he tells you’.

#### *Jesus’ mother and the disciple at the cross*

25 John’s second mention of the presence of Mary occurs at the decisive hour of Jesus’ messianic mission, his crucifixion (19:25-27). Standing with other disciples at the cross, Mary shares the suffering of Jesus, who in his last moments addresses a special word to her, ‘Woman, behold your son’, and to

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the beloved disciple, 'Behold your mother'. We cannot but be touched that, even in his dying moments, Jesus is concerned for the welfare of his mother, showing his filial affection. This surface reading again invites a symbolic and theological exploration of John's rich narrative. For the evangelist, the reciprocal roles of the 'woman' and the 'disciple' are related to the identity of the Church. These last commands of Jesus before he dies therefore reveal an understanding beyond their primary reference to Mary and 'the beloved disciple' as individuals. Elsewhere in John, the beloved disciple is presented as the model disciple of Jesus, the one closest to him who never deserted him, the object of Jesus' love, and the ever-faithful witness (13:25, 19:25, 20:1-10, 21:20-25). Understood in terms of discipleship, Jesus' dying words give Mary a motherly role in the Church and encourage the community of disciples to embrace her as a spiritual mother.

26 Conversely, a corporate understanding of 'Woman' calls the Church constantly to behold Christ crucified, and calls each disciple to care for the Church as mother. Implicit here perhaps is a Mary-Eve typology: just as the first 'woman' was taken from Adam's side (Genesis 2:22) and became the mother of all the living (Genesis 3:20), so the 'woman' Mary is, on a spiritual plane, the mother of all who gain true life from the water and blood that flow from the side of Christ (John 19:34) and from the Spirit that is breathed out from his triumphant sacrifice (John 19:30, 20:22; cf 1 John 5:8). In such symbolic and collective readings images for the Church, Mary and discipleship come to interact with one another. Mary is seen as the personification of Israel, now giving birth to the Christian community (cf Isaiah 49:20-22; 54:1; 66:7-8), just as she had given birth earlier to the Messiah (cf Isaiah 7:14). When John's account of Mary at the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry is viewed in this light, it is difficult to speak of the Church without thinking of Mary, the Mother of the Lord, as its archetype and first realisation.

### *The woman in Revelation 12*

27 In highly symbolic language, full of biblical imagery, the seer of Revelation describes the vision of a sign in heaven, involving a woman, a dragon, and the woman's child. The symbolic narrative of Revelation 12 serves to assure the reader of the ultimate victory of God's faithful ones in times of persecution and eschatological struggle. In the course of history, the symbol of the woman has led to a variety of interpretations. Most scholars accept that the primary meaning of the woman is collective: the people of God, whether Israel, the Church, or both. Moreover, the narrative style of the author suggests that the

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‘full picture’ of the woman is attained only at the end of the book when Israel, the Church of Christ, becomes the triumphant New Jerusalem. The actual troubles of the author’s community are placed in the frame of history as a whole, which is the scene of the ongoing struggle between the faithful and their enemies, between good and evil, between God and Satan. The imagery of the offspring reminds us of the struggle in Genesis 3:15 between the serpent and the woman, between the serpent’s seed and the woman’s seed.<sup>2</sup>

28 Given this primary ecclesial interpretation of Revelation 12, is it still possible to find in it a secondary reference to Mary? The text does not explicitly identify the woman with Mary. It refers to the woman as the mother of the ‘male child who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron’, a citation from Psalm 2 elsewhere in the New Testament applied to the Messiah as well as the faithful people of God (cf Hebrews 1:15; 5:5; Acts 13:3 with Revelation 2:27). In view of this, early Christians came to think of the mother of Jesus when reading this chapter. Given the place of the book of Revelation within the canon of Scripture, in which the different biblical images intertwine, the possibility arose of a more explicit interpretation, both individual and corporate, of Revelation 12, illuminating the place of Mary and the Church in the eschatological victory of the Messiah.

### Scriptural reflection

30 The scriptural witness summons all believers in every generation to call Mary ‘blessed’, this Jewish woman of humble status, this daughter of Israel living in hope of justice for the poor, whom God has graced and chosen to become the virgin mother of his Son through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. We are to bless her as the ‘handmaid of the Lord’ who gave her unqualified assent to the fulfilment of God’s saving plan, as the mother who pondered all things in her heart, as the refugee seeking asylum in a foreign land, as the mother pierced by the innocent suffering of her own child, and as the woman to whom Jesus entrusted his friends. We are at one with her and the apostles, as they pray for the outpouring of the Spirit upon the nascent

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew text of Genesis 3:15 speaks about an enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between the offspring of both. The personal pronoun (*hu*) in the words addressed to the serpent, ‘He will strike at your head’, is masculine. In the Greek translation used by the early Church (LXX), however, the personal pronoun *ajutovc* (he) cannot refer to the offspring (neuter *toV spevrma*), but must refer to a masculine individual who could then be the Messiah, born of a woman. The Vulgate (mis) translates the clause as *ipsa conteret caput tuum* (‘she will strike at your head’). This feminine pronoun supported a reading of this passage as referring to Mary which has become traditional in the Latin Church. The Neo-Vulgate (1986) returns to the neuter *ipsum*, which refers to *semen illius*: ‘Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem et semen tuum et semen illius; ipsum conteret caput tuum, et tu conteres calcaneum eius’.

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Church, the eschatological family of Christ. And we may even glimpse her final destiny, and ours, when in the heart of God's people she shares in her son's victory over the powers of evil and death.

## **B Mary in the Christian Tradition**

### *Christ and Mary in the ancient common traditions*

31 In the early Church, reflection on Mary served to interpret and safeguard the apostolic Tradition centred on Jesus Christ. Patristic testimony to Mary as 'God-bearer' (Θεοτοκος) emerged from reflection on Scripture and the celebration of Christian feasts, but its development was due chiefly to the early christological controversies. In the crucible of these controversies of the first five centuries, reflection on Mary's role in the incarnation was integral to the articulation of orthodox faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

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32 At first, Jesus' birth from Mary was invoked in defence of his true humanity against Docetism. Jesus did not just 'appear' to be human; he did not descend from heaven in a 'heavenly body', nor when he was born did he simply 'pass through' his mother. Rather, Mary gave birth to her son from her own substance. For Ignatius of Antioch (+110) and Tertullian (+200), Jesus is fully human, because 'truly born' of Mary. In the words of the Niceo-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), 'he was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man'. The definition of Chalcedon (451), reaffirming this creed, attests that Christ is 'consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us according to his humanity'. The Athanasian Creed confesses yet more concretely that he is 'man, of the substance of his Mother'. This Anglicans and Roman Catholics together affirm.

33 Mary's virginal conception of Jesus Christ was then invoked in defence of his true divinity. According to the Fathers, his conception by the Holy Spirit testifies to Christ's divine origin and divine identity as God's Son. The 'Saviour' is a pure gift of the divine initiative. Eastern and Western Fathers such as Irenaeus (+c.202), Athanasius (+373), and Ambrose (+397) expounded this New Testament teaching in relationship with Genesis 3 (Mary is the antitype of 'virgin Eve') and Isaiah 7:14 (she fulfils the prophet's vision and gives birth to 'God with us'). They testified to the virginal conception to defend both the Lord's divinity and Mary's honour. As

the Apostles' Creed confesses: Jesus Christ was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.' This Anglicans and Roman Catholics together affirm.

34 Mary's title *Theotokos* — 'God-bearer' — was formally invoked to safeguard the orthodox doctrine of the unity of Christ's person. This title had been in use in churches under the influence of Alexandria at least from the time of the Arian controversy. Since Jesus Christ is 'true God from true God', as the Council of Nicaea (325) declared, these churches concluded that his mother, Mary, can rightly be called the 'God-bearer'. Churches under the influence of Antioch, however, conscious of the threat Apollinarianism posed to belief in the full humanity of Christ, did not immediately adopt this title. The debate between Cyril of Alexandria (+444) and Nestorius (+455), patriarch of Constantinople, who was formed in the Antiochene school, revealed that the real issue in the question of Mary's title was the unity of Christ's person. The ensuing Council of Ephesus (431) used *Theotokos* (literally 'God-bearer') to mean that Mary is the Mother of God the Word incarnate.<sup>3</sup> The rule of faith on this matter takes more precise expression in the definition of Chalcedon: 'One and the same Son ... was begotten from the Father before the ages as to the divinity and in the latter days for us and our salvation was born as to his humanity from Mary the Virgin *Theotokos*.' In receiving the Council of Ephesus and the definition of Chalcedon, Anglicans and Roman Catholics together confess Mary as *Theotokos*.

#### *The celebration of Mary in the ancient common traditions*

35 In the early centuries communion in Christ included a strong sense of the living presence of Mary and the saints as an integral part of the spiritual experience of the churches. Attention to Mary was not limited to dogmatic formulations of christological orthodoxy. Themes developed from Scripture and in devotional reflection reveal a deep awareness in Christian worship of her typological representation of the full redemption of humanity. Such themes include Mary's role as Eve's counterpart and as a type of the Church, her being acknowledged as 'ever virgin', and her 'all-holiness'. The response of Christian people, reflecting on these themes, found devotional expression in both private and public prayer. From the beginning, the Fathers delighted

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<sup>3</sup> The Council (431) solemnly approved the content of the Second Letter of Cyril to Nestorius: 'It was not that an ordinary man was born first of the holy Virgin, on whom afterwards the Word descended; what we say is that: being united with the flesh from the womb, the Word has undergone birth in the flesh. . . therefore the Holy Fathers had the courage to call the Holy Virgin *Theotokos*.' (DS 251)

in contemplating the significance of both Mary and the Church by means of feminine images.

36 An Eve / New Eve antithesis was added to that of Adam / New Adam, the fruit of reflection on such texts as Genesis 3, Luke 1:26-38 and Romans 5:12-21. Mary is regarded as Eve's typological opposite: just as Eve is associated with Adam in bringing about our defeat, so Mary is associated with her Son in the conquest of the ancient enemy (cf Genesis 3:15). 'Virgin' Eve's disobedience results in death; the virgin Mary's obedience opens the way to salvation. The New Eve shares in the New Adam's victory over sin and death. Just as Eve is 'mother of all the living', so Mary is understood as mother of all who are truly alive in Christ (cf Genesis 3:20 and John 19:27). Attributes of the Church were subsequently interwoven with those of Mary, virgin and mother. Mary, Mother of the Lord, thus comes to be portrayed as the bride 'holy and without blemish'.

37 The Fathers developed the theme of Mary as 'ever virgin' in presenting her as a model of holiness for consecrated virgins. Virginity, in this context, was understood as an interior disposition of openness, obedience, and single-hearted fidelity to Christ which gives rise to spiritual fruitfulness. Mary was held up by the early Church as a model of consecration to virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of God. When some Fathers praise her as 'Ever-Virgin'<sup>4</sup> they refer not only to her physical integrity in bearing Christ, but also to her realisation of an ascetical ideal of Christian discipleship.

38 Given this understanding of virginity, it is clear that Mary's being 'Ever-Virgin' was closely related to being 'All-holy' (*Παναγία*). Although some early writers find evidence that Mary was guilty of sin,<sup>5</sup> during the fourth century Ephrem the Syrian (+373) praises the Lord saying: 'there is no stain in you, and no sin in your mother' (*Carmina Nisibena* 27,8; cf Song of Songs 4:7). When the Western Fathers Ambrose (+397), Jerome (+419) and

<sup>4</sup> The Tome of Leo to Flavian, which was decisive for the outcome of the Council of Chalcedon (451), states that Christ 'was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mother, who gave him birth without losing her virginity, as she conceived him without losing her virginity' (ACO 2,2,1,25). The first conciliar use of *semper virgo* was in the Second Council of Constantinople (553) Canon 2 (DS 422), a designation explicated in the classical Western formulation of Mary's *virginitas* as *ante partum, in partu, post partum*. This tradition appears consistently in the western Church from Ambrose onward. As Augustine wrote, 'she conceived him as a virgin, she gave birth as a virgin, she remained a virgin' (*Sermo* 51.11,18; cf. *Sermo* 196.1).

<sup>5</sup> Thus Irenaeus criticises her for 'excessive haste' at Cana, 'seeking to push her son into performing a miracle before his hour had come' (*Adv. Haer.* III.16.7); Origen speaks of her wavering in faith at the cross, 'so she too would have some sin for which Christ died' (*Hom. in Lc.* 17,6). Suggestions like these are found in the writings of Tertullian, Ambrose and John Chrysostom (+407).

Augustine (+430) present Mary as a model for Christian virgins, they agree that she was not personally guilty of sin. Augustine begins to grapple with the question of how to relate his conviction that Mary was free from personal sin to the universal reality of original sin:

‘We must except the holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sin, out of honour to the Lord; for from him we know what abundance of grace for overcoming sin in every particular was conferred on her who had the merit to conceive and bear him who undoubtedly had no sin’ (*De natura et gratia* 36.42).

Other Fathers from West and East support the view that Mary was filled with grace from her origin in anticipation of her unique vocation as Mother of the Lord, appealing to the angelic salutation (Luke 1:28) and Mary’s response (Luke 1:38). They hail Mary as a new creation: blameless, spotless, ‘holy in body and soul’ (Theodotus of Ancyra, *Homily* 6,11: +before 446).

39 Appeal to Mary’s protection dates from at least the fourth century.<sup>6</sup> Following the christological debates at the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), devotion to Mary flourished. When the Patriarch of Antioch refused Mary the title of *Theotokos*, Emperor Leo I (457-474) commanded the insertion of this title in the eucharistic liturgy of the East. By the sixth century, commemoration of Mary as ‘God-bearer’ had become universal in the eucharistic prayers of East and West (with the exception of the Assyrian Church of the East). Texts and images celebrating Mary’s holiness were multiplied in liturgical poetry and songs, such as the *Akathist* hymn, probably written soon after Chalcedon (451). A tradition of praying with, praising and invoking Mary was thus gradually established.

40 During this same era, feasts of Mary began to be celebrated on particular dates determined by the dedication of churches in her honour. Such feasts, prompted by popular piety, were gradually adopted by other local churches. These feasts - of Mary’s conception (December 8/9), birth (September 8),

<sup>6</sup> Witness the invocation of Mary in the early text known traditionally as *Sub tuum praesidium*: ‘Upov thVn shVn eujspagnivan katafeuvgomen, Qeotovke : taV" hJmw\_n ilkesiva" mhV parivdh/" ejn peristavsei, ajll\* ejk kinduvnou rJu8sai hJma\_", movnh ajgnhv, movnh eujloghmevnh. This text (with two changes) is used to this day in the Greek liturgical tradition; versions of this prayer also occur in the Ambrosian, Roman, Byzantine and Coptic liturgies. A familiar English version is: ‘We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities but deliver us from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin.’



presentation (November 21), and dormition (August 15) - mirrored the liturgical commemorations of the Lord. They drew both on the canonical Scriptures and also on apocryphal accounts of Mary's early life and her 'falling asleep'. Reflection on her all-holiness prepared the way theologically for the feast of her conception, which also mirrored the feast of the conception of John the Baptist. The feast of the conception of Mary dates from the end of the seventh century, but the second-century *Protoevangelium of James* bears witness to much earlier popular devotion. The feast of Mary's Dormition (or Assumption) dates from the end of the sixth century, but was influenced by the legendary narratives of the *Transitus Mariae* (fifth century, with more ancient elements). Despite popular fascination with the details of the end of Mary's life, reflection on the promise of the resurrection of the dead, coupled with recognition of Mary's dignity as *Theotokos* and 'Ever Virgin', her all-holiness, and her association with her Son's victory over death, led to the conviction that she was fittingly rewarded with incorruptibility and entry into heavenly glory. This was the theological ground for the doctrine of her Assumption.

#### *Mary in medieval tradition*

41 The spread of these feasts of Mary gave rise to homilies in which preachers delved ever more deeply into the Scriptures, searching for types and motifs to illuminate the Virgin's place in the economy of salvation. During the High Middle Ages a growing emphasis on the humanity of Christ was matched by attention to the exemplary virtues of Mary. Bernard, for example, articulates this emphasis in his homilies. Meditation on the lives of both Christ and Mary became increasingly popular, and gave rise to the development of such devotional practices as the rosary. The paintings, sculptures and stained glass of the High and Late Middle Ages lent to this devotion immediacy and colour.

42 During these centuries there were some major shifts of emphasis in theological reflection about Mary. Theologians of the High Middle Ages developed patristic reflection on Mary as a 'type' of the Church, and as the New Eve, in a way that associated her ever more closely with Christ in the continuing work of redemption. The attention of believers shifted from Mary as representing the faithful Church, and so also redeemed humanity, to Mary as dispensing Christ's graces to the faithful. Scholastic theologians in the West developed an increasingly elaborate body of doctrine about Mary in her own right. Much of this doctrine grew out of speculation about the holiness

**Commented [SB6]:** I see that this may be needed and will work on a formulation. Revised para. 51 addresses some of this.

and sanctification of Mary. Questions about this were influenced not only by the scholastic theology of grace, but also by philosophical presuppositions concerning the relation between soul and body. For example, if she were sanctified in the womb of her mother, more perfectly even than John the Baptist and Jeremiah, the precise moment of her sanctification had to be determined according to the current understanding of when the 'rational soul' was infused into the body. Theological developments in the Western doctrine of grace and sin raised other questions: how could Mary be free of all sin, including original sin, without jeopardising the role of Christ as universal Saviour? Speculative reflection led to intense discussions about how Christ's redeeming grace may have preserved Mary from original sin. The measured theology of Mary's sanctification found in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, and the subtle reasoning of Duns Scotus about Mary, were deployed in extended controversy: was Mary immaculate from the first or second moment of her conception?

43 In the Late Middle Ages, spirituality and theology increasingly diverged. No longer rooted in scriptural exegesis, speculative theology relied on logical probability, and among nominalists stressed the absolute power and will of God. Spirituality, no longer in creative tension with theology, emphasised affectivity and personal experience. In popular religion, Mary came widely to be viewed as an intermediary between Christ and humanity, and as a worker of miracles with powers that verged on the divine. This popular piety in due course influenced the theological opinions of the men who had grown up with it, and who subsequently elaborated a theological rationale for the florid Marian devotion of the Late Middle Ages.

*From Reformation to contemporary re-receptions*

44 One powerful impulse for Reformation in the early sixteenth century was a widespread reaction against devotional practices which approached Mary as a mediatrix alongside, or sometimes even in the place of, Christ. Such exaggerated devotions, in part inspired by presentations of Christ as inaccessible Judge as well as Redeemer, were sharply criticised by Erasmus and Thomas More and violently rejected by all the Reformers. Together with a radical re-reception of Scripture as the fundamental touchstone of divine revelation, there was a re-reception by the Reformers of the belief that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity. This entailed a rejection of abuses surrounding devotion to Mary, yet the neglect of some positive aspects of such devotion, such as an awareness of her place within

the communion of saints, can also be traced to the side-effects of this re-reception.

45 In this context, the English Reformers continued to receive the doctrine of the ancient church concerning Mary. Their positive teaching about Mary concentrated on her role in the Incarnation: it is summed up in their acceptance of her as the *Theotokos*, because this was seen to be both scriptural and in accord with ancient common Tradition. The English Reformers were concerned to emphasise the unique sinlessness of Christ, yet, following Augustine, most showed a reluctance to affirm that Mary was a sinner. They all stressed Mary's need for a Saviour (cf Luke 1:47), while continuing to affirm the agency of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Jesus. As Latimer responded when pressed as to his views about Mary and sin, 'I go not about to make Mary a sinner, but to have Christ her Saviour' (*Sermons and Remains*, vol. 2, p.117). Following Luther, Cranmer affirmed that Mary is 'Ever Virgin' (*Works*, Vol. 2:88).

46 From 1561, the calendar of the Church of England contained five feasts associated with Mary: Conception of Mary, Nativity of Mary, Annunciation, Visitation, and Purification / Presentation. There was, however, no longer a feast of the Assumption (August 15): not only was it understood to lack scriptural warrant, but was also seen as exalting Mary at the expense of Christ. For example, in many churches and chapels of that period Mary was depicted on the same level as Christ. Anglican liturgy, as expressed in the successive *Books of Common Prayer*, when it mentions Mary, gives prominence to her role as the 'pure Virgin' from whose 'substance' the Son took human nature. Anglican teaching on Mary is summed up Article II, which affirms that the Son 'took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance, so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say the Godhead and the Manhood, were joined together in one Person'. Reverence for the place of Mary was assured by continued use of the *Magnificat* in Evening Prayer, and the unchanged dedication of ancient churches and Lady Chapels in her honour. In the seventeenth century writers such as Lancelot Andrewes, Jeremy Taylor and Thomas Ken re-appropriated from patristic tradition a fuller appreciation of the place of Mary in the prayers of the believer and of the Church. This re-appropriation can be traced into the next century, and into the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century.

47 In the Roman Catholic Church, Marian doctrine and devotion grew under the  
 48 distorting influence of Protestant-Catholic polemics. To be Roman Catholic  
 came to be identified by an emphasis on devotion to Mary. A pervasive  
 emphasis on Marian spirituality in some quarters in the nineteenth and early  
 twentieth centuries began to give rise to criticism both within and beyond the  
 Roman Catholic Church and initiated a process of re-reception. This re-  
 reception was evident in the Second Vatican Council which, consonant with  
 the contemporary biblical, patristic, and liturgical renewals, and with concern  
 for ecumenical sensitivities, chose not to draft a separate document on Mary,  
 but to integrate doctrine about her into the Constitution on the Church,  
*Lumen Gentium* (1964) - more specifically, into its final section describing  
 the eschatological pilgrimage of the Church (Chapter VIII). The Council  
 intended 'to explain carefully both the role of the Blessed Virgin in the  
 mystery of the Word Incarnate and of the Mystical Body, as well as the  
 duties of the redeemed human race towards the God-bearer, mother of Christ  
 and mother of humanity, especially of the faithful' (art. 54). *Lumen Gentium*  
 concludes by calling Mary a sign of hope and comfort for God's pilgrim  
 people (art. 68-69). The Fathers of the Council consciously sought to resist  
 exaggerations by returning to patristic emphases and placing Marian doctrine  
 and devotion in its proper christological and ecclesial context.

48 Soon after the Council, faced by an unanticipated decline in devotion to  
 Mary, Pope Paul VI published an Apostolic Exhortation, *Marialis Cultus*  
 (1974), to remove doubts about the Council's intentions and to foster  
 appropriate Marian devotion. His review of the place of Mary in the revised  
 Roman rite shows that she has not been 'demoted' by the liturgical renewal,  
 but that devotion to her is properly located within the christological focus of  
 the Church's public prayer. He reflects on Mary as 'a model of the spiritual  
 attitudes with which the Church celebrates and lives the divine mysteries'  
 (art. 16). She is the model for the whole Church, but also a 'teacher of the  
 spiritual life for individual Christians' (art. 21). According to Paul VI, the  
 authentic renewal of Marian devotion must be integrated with the doctrines  
 of God, Christ, and the Church. Devotion to Mary must be in accordance  
 with the Scriptures and the liturgy of the Church; it must be sensitive to the  
 concerns of other Christians and it must affirm the full dignity of women in  
 public and private life. The Pope also issues cautions to those who err either  
 by exaggeration or neglect. Finally, he commends the recitation of the  
*Angelus* and the Rosary as traditional devotions which are compatible with  
 these norms. In 2002, Pope John Paul II reinforced the christological focus of  
 the Rosary by proposing five 'mysteries of Light' from the Gospels' account

of Christ's public ministry between his Baptism and Passion. 'The Rosary', he states, 'though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer' (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 1).

49 Mary has a new prominence in Anglican worship through the liturgical renewals of the twentieth century. In most Anglican prayer books, Mary is now mentioned by name in the Eucharistic prayers. Further, August 15th has come to be widely celebrated as 'Mary, Mother of the Lord', a Principal Feast with Scripture readings, collect and proper preface. Other feasts associated with Mary have also been renewed, and liturgical resources offered for use on these festivals. Given the definitive role of authorised liturgical texts and practices in Anglican formularies, such developments are highly significant.

50 The above developments show that in recent decades a re-reception of the place of Mary in corporate worship has been taking place across the Anglican Communion. At the same time, *Lumen Gentium* VIII and the Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* make it clear that the Roman Catholic Church has once again set devotion to Mary within the context of the teaching of Scripture and the ancient common traditions. This constitutes, for the Roman Catholic Church, a re-reception of teaching about Mary. Revision of the calendars and lectionaries used in our Communions, especially the liturgical provision associated with feasts of Mary, gives evidence of a shared process of re-receiving the scriptural testimony to her place in the faith and life of the Church. Growing ecumenical exchange has contributed to the process of re-reception in both Communions.

## C Mary within the Pattern of Hope and Grace

51 We now move to a consideration of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary, and their definition as dogmas in 1854 and 1950 respectively. In accordance with the ARCIC method followed thus far, we seek to reconsider, in the light of Scripture and our common inheritance of faith, these two dogmas which have been a matter of dispute between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The dogmas have two aspects – the doctrinal content, and the authority which defines them. The content of the dogmas is the primary focus of our discussion here: the question of the authority by which they were defined is taken up later. We note that these doctrines cannot be understood without an appreciation of the powerful liturgical traditions from which they arose. The doctrines associated with the

feasts of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary were defined not to rebut heresy, but rather to recognise a flowering of devotion which had deep roots in the worship of the Church. Such devotion is not a recent nor exclusively Roman Catholic matter. For example, the feast of the Conception of Mary had its roots in the Eastern Church, was introduced to the West in pre-Norman England, and (along with the Birth of Mary) was retained in the calendar of the Church of England after the Reformation. Keeping in mind this doxological context, we wish to affirm together the place of Mary as a sign of Christian hope and of the pattern of grace which we discover together in the Scriptures.

*The glory of God, the hope of the Church*

52 The Gospel hope is that of participation in the glory of God, through the mediation of the Son, in the power of the Spirit (cf 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4-6). This is a hope and destiny in which the Church already shares through the Holy Spirit, the 'pledge' or 'anticipation' of our inheritance in Christ (Ephesians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 5:5). For Paul especially, what it means to be fully human can rightly be understood only when viewed in the light of what we are to become in Christ, the 'eschatological Adam', the 'new humanity' (1 Corinthians 15:42-49). What it means to be human is described in the New Testament more in terms of what we are to become in Christ than what we have become in Adam (cf 1 John 3:2). This eschatological perspective sees Christian life in terms of the vision of the exalted Christ inspiring believers to cast off sins that entangle (Hebrews 12:1-2) and seek his purity and love, made available through his atoning sacrifice (1 John 3:3; 4:10). Taking an eschatological perspective, we trace the economy of grace from its fulfilment in Christ 'back' into history, rather than 'forward' from its beginning in fallen creation towards the future in Christ. We believe that such a perspective offers fresh light in which to approach questions concerning Mary's place in the life of the Church.

53 The hope of the Church is based upon the testimony it has received about the present glory of Christ. The Church proclaims that Christ was not only raised from the tomb, but was exalted to the right hand of the Father, to share in the Father's glory (1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:21). Insofar as believers share in Christ's sufferings, they participate through the Spirit in his glory, and are raised up with him in anticipation of its full revelation (cf Romans 8:17; Ephesians 2:6; 2 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Peter 4:13). It is the destiny of the Church and of its members, the 'saints' chosen in Christ 'before the

foundation of the world,' to be 'holy and blameless' and to share in the glory of Christ (Ephesians 1:3-5; 5:27). Paul speaks retrospectively, as it were from the future, when he says, 'Those whom God predestined he also called; those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified' (Romans 8:30). In the succeeding chapters of Romans, Paul explicates this many-faceted drama of God's election in Christ, keeping in view its end – the inclusion of the Gentiles, so that 'all Israel shall be saved' (Romans 11:26).

**Commented [SB7]:** Perhaps this theme will stand out better if it occupies its own paragraph?

55 Within this biblical framework we can consider afresh the distinctive place of the Virgin Mary in the economy of grace, as the one who bore Christ, the elect of God. The word of God through Gabriel addresses her as already 'graced', inviting her to respond in faith and freedom to God's call (Luke 1:28,38,45). The Spirit is operative within her in the conception of the Saviour, and this 'blessed among women' is inspired to sing 'all generations will call me blessed' (Luke 1:42,48). Viewed eschatologically, Mary thus epitomises in her person the 'elect Israel' of whom Paul speaks – glorified, justified, called, predestined. This is the pattern of hope and grace which we see at work in the life of Mary, who holds a unique place in the common destiny of the Church as the one who bore in her own flesh 'the Lord of glory'.

#### *Mary in the glory of Christ*

56 This pattern of grace and hope will be fulfilled in the new creation in Christ when all the redeemed will participate in the full glory of God (cf 2 Corinthians 3:18). Christian experience of communion with God in this present life is a sign and foretaste of divine grace and glory, an experience shared with the whole of creation (Romans 8:18-23). This is not only the hope of the individual believer, but the destiny of the Church, the glorified body of Christ, the new Jerusalem (cf Revelation 21:22-25). Viewed from such an eschatological perspective, Mary may be seen both as a type of the Church, and also as a believer with a unique place in the economy of salvation. When Christians from East and West through the generations have pondered on the bringing to completion of God's work in Mary, they have reached the conviction that she is already, in Christ, a new creature in whom 'the old has passed away and the new has come' (2 Corinthians 5:17).

1 57 Mary, a pure virgin, bore God incarnate in her womb. Her bodily intimacy  
 2 with her Son was all of a piece with her faithful following of him, and her  
 3 unique participation in the pattern of his victorious self-giving. All this is  
 4 clearly testified in Scripture, as we have seen. Scripture offers no narrative of  
 5 the end of Mary's life. Read from this eschatological perspective, however,  
 6 certain passages of Scripture may be seen as suggestive. Of Enoch it is  
 7 written, 'he was attested as having pleased God' as a man of faith, and was  
 8 therefore 'taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found  
 9 because God had taken him' (Hebrews 11:5; cf Genesis 5:24). The Psalmist  
 10 praises God because 'you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your  
 11 holy one see corruption' (Psalm 16:10). This text is taken up by Peter as a  
 12 testimony to the work of God in Jesus (Acts 2:27), but the Psalm speaks  
 13 more widely. Given such scriptural witness, read within the consistent  
 14 biblical pattern of grace and hope, we can see afresh why it was  
 15 inconceivable to the Christian imagination that the risen Lord should not  
 16 gather to himself the full personal life of his blessed mother, when her  
 17 earthly pilgrimage was ended. Seen within this pattern, Mary is a sign of  
 18 hope for all humanity: she is both historically and now one with Christ. In  
 19 her, what Paul calls the 'perishable' has already put on the 'imperishable',  
 20 the 'mortal' has put on 'immortality'; 'death' is swallowed up in victory (1  
 21 Corinthians 15:54-57; cf Genesis 3:15).

23 58 The definition of Pope Pius XII of 1950 states, 'We pronounce, declare and  
 24 define it to be a divinely revealed dogma that the Immaculate Mother of God,  
 25 the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was  
 26 assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.' Given the understanding we  
 27 have reached concerning the place of Mary in the economy of grace, we can  
 28 together affirm that what this definition teaches about Mary is not contrary to  
 29 the teaching of Scripture, but receives support from it. It follows that the  
 30 dogma can only be correctly understood in the light of Scripture. Although  
 31 the content of this teaching is not recorded in canonical Scripture, it can still  
 32 be seen as a development of biblical truth which is significant for the faith of  
 33 the Church. It is important to note that the dogma does not adopt a particular  
 34 position as to how Mary's life ended, nor does it use about her the language  
 35 of death and resurrection, but celebrates the action of God in her.

37 59 In sum, we find that we can together affirm that God took the Blessed Virgin  
 38 Mary, in the fullness of her personal being, into his glory. Mary may thus be  
 39 seen as sign and foretaste of the full salvation of our glorified humanity. This  
 40 is the calling and destiny of all believers – our glorification in Christ. Yet



Mary holds a unique position within the communion of saints, as the one who embodies the future destiny of the Church.

*Mary in the grace of the Spirit*

58 Mary is marked out from the beginning as the one chosen, called and graced by God through the Holy Spirit for the task that lay ahead of her. The Scriptures tell us of barren women who were gifted by God with children (Rachel, Manoah's wife, Hannah: Genesis 30:1-24; Judges 13; 1 Samuel 1) and of those past childbearing – Sarah (Genesis 18:9-15; 21:1-7), and most notably Mary's cousin, Elizabeth (Luke 1:24). The experience of these women serves to highlight the unique situation of Mary, a fruitful virgin, in whose womb the Spirit brings about the conception of Jesus. With the early Church, we see in Mary's acceptance of the divine will the fruit of her prior preparation from the very beginning of her existence, signified in Gabriel's affirmation of her as 'graced' (Luke 1:28 – see 16 above). The Scriptures speak of the action of God's grace preceding the specific calling of particular persons, even from their very conception and before (cf Jeremiah 1:4; Luke 1:15; Galatians 1:15). We thus can together affirm that God was at work in Mary from her mother's womb, preparing her for the unique vocation of bearing in her own flesh the 'new Adam', 'in whom all things in heaven and earth hold together' (Colossians 1:17). Of Mary we can say, she is 'God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand' that she should walk in them (cf Ephesians 2:10).

60 The definition of Pope Pius IX of 1854 states,

'We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which holds that the most blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin, is revealed by God and, therefore, firmly and constantly to be believed by the faithful.'

Given the understanding we have reached concerning the place of Mary in the economy of grace, we can again affirm that what this definition teaches about Mary is not contrary to the teaching of Scripture, and receives support from it, but some further explication of this claim is necessary. It is important to note that the dogma settled a long controversy about the conception of Mary and its timing in relation to theories about the quickening

of body and soul, but it also allowed such anthropological categories to be transcended in theological work.

61 First, we note that Mary's preservation 'from all stain of original sin' is affirmed 'in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of the human race'. Mary, like all other human beings, has need of Christ as her Saviour and Redeemer (as *Lumen Gentium* 53 and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 491 make clear). The tradition which together we receive from the Scriptures that hers was a unique calling points to the efficacy of Christ's atoning sacrifice even for those who preceded him in time (cf 1 Peter 3:19; 1 John 2:2). Further, we note that in the New Testament, being 'graced' has the connotation of being freed from sin through Christ's blood (Ephesians 1:6-7). Here again the 'eschatological perspective' illuminates our understanding of Mary's person and role. We find that we can together affirm that, in view of her vocation to be the mother of the Holy One (Luke 1:35), Christ's redeeming work reached 'back' in Mary to the depths of her being (cf 'preserved from all stain of original sin') and to her earliest beginnings (cf 'from the first moment of her conception').

62 Secondly, we have noted the lack of unanimity among early Christian writers and much later, of some English Reformers as to whether Mary could be called 'a sinner' (see 38, 45 above).<sup>7</sup> Alongside such thinking, a growing emphasis on her being 'ever virgin' emerged, which held it unseemly to find in the biblical stories evidence in Mary of sinfulness, a tradition which Augustine, who developed the notion of 'original sin', affirmed. Focussing the discussion around the negative notion of 'sinlessness', however, runs the risk of obscuring the fullness of Christ's saving work. In eschatological terms, it is not so much that Mary lacks something which other human beings 'have', namely sin, but that the glorious grace of God, seen from time to time in earthly life (cf Mark 9:2-8; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18) has broken into her life from eternity. The purity which is our end in Christ (1 John 3:2) was seen, by unmerited grace, in Mary, the prototype and promise of the hope of grace for humankind as a whole. We therefore agree that speaking of Mary as 'all-holy' (*Panavgia* – 'holy through and through') offers a positive way of reflecting upon the perfect mediation to her of the grace of Christ.

Commented [SB8]: I'm not clear on the purpose for distinguishing these titles.

<sup>7</sup> Roman Catholics may wish to ask questions of Anglicans with respect to Article XV, 'Of Christ alone without sin', since this makes no exception for Mary. Anglicans do not see this (or Article IX) as directed to the question of Mary's sinlessness but rather to the universal need for a saviour and the unique sacrificial mediation of salvation by Christ. On the question of the universality of Original Sin, a number of Reformers make explicit reference to Augustine's opinions exempting Mary from actual sin.

1 *Mary: questions which may remain*

2  
3 63 We have agreed together that the teaching about Mary in the two definitions  
4 of 1854 and 1950, understood within the biblical pattern of the economy of  
5 hope and grace outlined here, is consonant with the teaching of the Scriptures  
6 and the ancient common traditions. In this respect, we have reached  
7 substantial agreement concerning the content of these doctrines. *Questions*  
8 *arise, however, as to whether this agreement is in itself sufficient.*  
9

10 64 The particular circumstances and precise formulations of the Definition of  
11 the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Dogma of the Bodily Assumption  
12 (1950) of Mary have created problems not only for Anglicans but also for  
13 other Christians. *The formulations of these doctrines and some objections to*  
14 *them are situated within the thought-forms of their time.* For example, the  
15 phrase ‘revealed by God’ must be understood in its historical context:  
16 following the Decree *Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council, other  
17 terms could be employed today to describe the theological basis for the  
18 definition. In *The Gift of Authority* the Commission sought to explicate a  
19 method by which such authoritative teaching could arise, the key point being  
20 that it needs to be in conformity with Scripture, which constitutes a primary  
21 concern of Anglicans.  
22

23 65 Anglicans have questioned the appropriateness of the Bishop of Rome  
24 defining these doctrines ‘independent of a Council’ (cf. *Authority II.30*). In  
25 response, Roman Catholics have pointed to the *sensus fidelium*, the liturgical  
26 tradition throughout the local churches, and the active support of the college  
27 of bishops (cf. *The Gift of Authority* 29-30): these were the elements through  
28 which these doctrines were recognised as belonging to the faith of the  
29 Church, and therefore able to be defined (cf. *The Gift of Authority* 47).  
30 Anglicans who see this as a development still to be received by the whole  
31 Church also ask whether it would be a condition of the future restoration of  
32 full communion that they should accept these definitions. In addressing this  
33 question, we have been mindful that ‘one consequence of our separation has  
34 been a tendency for Anglicans and Roman Catholics alike to exaggerate the  
35 importance of the Marian dogmas in themselves at the expense of the other  
36 truths more closely related to the foundation of the Christian faith’ (*Authority*  
37 *II. 30*). While Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree that the doctrines of  
38 the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception of Mary must be understood  
39 in the light of the more central truth of her identity as *Theotókos*, which itself  
40 depends on faith in the Incarnation, a more careful attention to the

eschatological perspective can deepen this agreement, so that the doctrinal core of these definitions becomes more readily accessible to Anglicans and other Christians as well as to Roman Catholics. Our hope therefore is that the Roman Catholic Church would recognise its faith in the agreement concerning the Church's teaching about Mary which we here offer, together with similar recognition on the part of the Anglican Communion, would mean that any remaining differences of emphasis in Marian teaching and devotion within or between our respective communities would not constitute a barrier to full ecclesial communion. (footnote re-instated)

## D Mary in the life of the Church

66 'All the promises of God find their "Yes" in Christ: that is why we offer the "Amen" through him, to the glory of God' (2 Corinthians 1:20). God's 'Yes' in Christ takes a distinctive and demanding form as it is addressed to Mary. The profound mystery of 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Colossians 1:27) has a unique meaning for her, enabling her to speak the 'Amen' in which, through the Spirit's overshadowing, God's 'Yes' of new creation is inaugurated. This *fiat* ('let it be') of Mary was distinctive, both in its openness to God's Word, and in the path to the cross and beyond on which the Spirit led her. As we have seen, the Scriptures portray Mary as growing in her relationship with Christ: his sharing of her natural family (John 2:1) was transcended in her sharing of his eschatological family, those upon whom the Spirit is poured out (Acts 1:14, 2:1-4). *Mary's 'Amen' to God's 'Yes' in Christ to her is thus both unique and a model for every disciple and for the life of the Church.*

67 One outcome of our study has been awareness of differences in the ways by which we follow Mary's example of living out the grace of God. While both traditions have recognised her special place in the communion of saints, different emphases have marked the way they have experienced her ministry. Giving predominant attention to her role in the event of the incarnation, *Anglicans have tended to see her ministry as primarily historic, basically located in the past. Roman Catholics more readily see Mary's ministry in the economy of grace as ongoing:* Mary, the consoling mother, points people to Christ, commending them to him and sharing his life with them. We together agree that in understanding Mary as the fullest human example of the life of grace, we are called to join with her as one indeed not dead, but truly alive in Christ. In doing so we walk together as pilgrims in communion with Mary,

**Deleted:** 65 Anglicans have questioned the appropriateness of the Bishop of Rome defining these doctrines 'independent of a Council' (cf *Authority II.30*). In response, Roman Catholics have pointed to the *sensus fidelium*, the liturgical tradition throughout the local churches, and the active support of the college of bishops (cf *The Gift of Authority* 29-30): these were the elements through which these doctrines were recognised as belonging to the faith of the Church, and therefore able to be defined (cf *The Gift of Authority* 47). Anglicans who see this as a development still to be received by the whole Church also ask whether it would be a condition of the future restoration of communion that they should accept these definitions. In addressing this question, we have been mindful that 'one consequence of our separation has been a tendency for Anglicans and Roman Catholics alike to exaggerate the importance of the Marian dogmas in themselves at the expense of the other truths more closely related to the foundation of the Christian faith' (*Authority II. 30*). While Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree that the doctrines of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception of Mary must be understood in the light of the more central truth of her identity as *Theotokos*, which itself depends on faith in the Incarnation, a more careful attention to the eschatological perspective can deepen this agreement, so that the doctrinal core of these definitions becomes more readily accessible to Anglicans and other Christians as well as to Roman Catholics. Our hope is therefore that the Roman Catholic Church would recognise the substance of its faith in the agreement concerning the Church's teaching about Mary in this area which we here offer, and that similar recognition on the part of Anglicans, together with a commitment not to attack the definitions, and with a common declaration on these issues, would be sufficient for the reconciliation of our two communions.\*

Christ's first disciple, and all those whose participation in the new creation encourages us to be faithful to our calling (cf Philippians 3:10-16).

68 Aware of the distinctive place of Mary in the history of salvation and in the communion of saints, *Christians have given her a unique place in their worship and prayer*, praising God for what he has done in and through her. In singing the *Magnificat*, they praise God with her; in the Eucharist, they pray with her as they do with all God's people, thus integrating their prayers in the great communion of saints. They recognise Mary's place in 'the prayer of all the saints' that is being uttered before the throne of God in the heavenly liturgy (cf Revelation 8:3-4). All these ways of including Mary in praise and prayer belong to our common heritage, as does our acknowledgement of her unique status as *Theotókos*, the Mother of the Lord, which gives her a distinctive place within the communion of saints.

*The tradition of invocation and mediation in the communion of saints*

69 *The practice of believers asking Mary to intercede for them with her son* grew rapidly following her being declared *Theotókos* at the Council of Ephesus (431). The most common form of such intercession is the 'Hail Mary'. This form collates the greetings of Gabriel and Elizabeth to her (Luke 1:28, 42). It was widely used from the fifth century, without the closing phrase, 'pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death', which was first added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and included in the Roman Breviary by Pius V in 1568. The English Reformers criticised this and similar forms of prayer, because they believed that it threatened the unique mediation of Jesus Christ. Confronted with exaggerated devotion, stemming from excessive exaltation of Mary's role and powers alongside Christ's, they rejected the 'Romish doctrine of ... the Invocation of Saints' as 'grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God' (Article XXII). The Council of Trent affirmed that seeking the saints' assistance to obtain favours from God is 'good and useful': such requests are made 'through his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our sole redeemer and saviour' (Session 25, 3-4 December 1563). The Second Vatican Council endorsed the continued practice of believers asking Mary to pray for them, emphasising that 'Mary's maternal role towards the human race in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power ... in no way does it hinder the direct union of believers with Christ, but rather fosters it' (*Lumen Gentium*, art. 60, 1964). Therefore the Roman Catholic Church continues to promote devotion to Mary, while reproofing those who either exaggerate or

minimise Mary's role (*Marialis Cultus*, art.31, 1974). With this background in mind, we seek a theologically grounded way to draw more closely together in the life of prayer in communion with Christ and his saints.

70 The Scriptures teach that 'there is one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all' (1 Timothy 2:5). As noted earlier, on the basis of this teaching 'we reject any interpretation of the role of Mary which obscures this affirmation' (*Authority II*, 30). It is also true, however, that all ministries of the Church, especially those of Word and sacrament, mediate the grace of God through human beings. These ministries do not compete with the unique mediation of Christ, but rather serve it and have their source within it. In particular, the prayer of the Church does not stand alongside or in place of Christ, our Advocate and Mediator (cf 1 John 2:1). It finds both its possibility and practice in and through the Holy Spirit, the Advocate sent according to Christ's promise (cf John 14:16-17). *Hence asking our brothers and sisters, on earth and in heaven, to pray for us, does not contest the unique mediatory work of Christ, but is rather a means by which, in and through the Spirit, its power may be displayed.*<sup>9</sup>

71 In our praying as Christians we address our petitions to God our heavenly Father, in and through Jesus Christ, our brother and advocate, as the Holy Spirit moves and enables us. All such invocation takes place within the communion which is God's being and gift. In the life of prayer we invoke the name of Christ in solidarity with the whole Church, assisted by the prayers of brothers and sisters of every time and place. As ARCIC has expressed it previously, 'The believer's pilgrimage of faith is lived out with the mutual support of all the people of God. In Christ all the faithful, both living and departed, are bound together in a communion of prayer' (*Salvation and the Church*, 22, 1986). *In the experience of this communion of prayer believers are aware of their continued fellowship with their sisters and brothers who have 'fallen asleep', the 'great cloud of witnesses' who surround us as we run the race of faith (Hebrews 12.2).* For some, this intuition means sensing their friends' presence; for some it may mean pondering the issues of life with those who have gone before them in faith. Such intuitive experience

<sup>9</sup> The Second Vatican Council teaches that, 'Therefore the blessed Virgin is invoked in the church under the titles of advocate, helper, benefactress and mediatrix. This, however, is understood in such a way that it neither takes away anything from, nor adds anything to, the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator' (*Lumen Gentium*, 62). The rejection by the *Theological Commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy Council* (1997) of the request to have Mary defined as 'mediatrix, co-redemptrix and advocate' reaffirms this stance.

affirms our solidarity in Christ with Christians of every time and place, not least with the woman through whom he became 'like us in all things except sin'.

72 The Scriptures invite Christians to ask their brothers and sisters to pray for them, in and through Christ (cf James 5:13-15). Those who are now 'with Christ', untrammelled by sin, share the unceasing prayer and praise which characterises the life of heaven (e.g. Revelation 5:9-14; 7:9-12; 8:3-4). In the light of these testimonies, many Christians have found that requests for assistance in prayer can rightly and effectively be made to those members of the communion of saints distinguished by their holy living (cf James 5:16-18). *In this sense we affirm that the invocation of the saints is not to be excluded as unscriptural, though it is not directly taught by the scriptures to be a required element of life in Christ.* Further, we agree that the way such assistance is sought must not obscure believers' direct access to God our heavenly Father, who delights to give good gifts to his children (Luke 11:13). When, in the Spirit and through Christ, they address their prayers to God, they are assisted by those who are truly alive in Christ, freed from sin. We note that liturgical forms of prayer are addressed to God: they do not address prayer 'to' the saints, but rather ask them to 'pray for us'. However, in this and other instances, any concept of invocation which blurs the trinitarian economy of hope and grace is to be rejected, as not consonant with the Scriptures or the ancient common traditions.

#### *The distinctive place of Mary*

73 Among all the saints, Mary takes a distinctive place, given her continuing identity as *Theotókos*, 'God-bearer'. Alive in Christ, she abides with the one she bore, still 'highly favoured' in the communion of hope and grace, the exemplar of redeemed humanity. *Consequently she exercises a unique ministry of assisting believers through her active prayer.* Many Christians reading the Cana account continue to hear Mary instruct them, 'Do whatever he tells you,' and are confident that she draws the attention of her son to their needs: 'they have no wine' (John 2:1-12). Many experience a sense of empathy and solidarity with Mary, especially at key points when the account of her life echoes theirs, for example the acceptance of vocation, the scandal of her pregnancy, the improvised surroundings of her labour, giving birth, and fleeing as a refugee. Portrayals of Mary standing at the foot of the cross, and the traditional portrayal of her receiving the crucified body of Jesus (the Pietà), evoke the particular suffering of a mother at the death of her child.

Anglicans and Roman Catholics alike are drawn to the mother of Christ, as a motherly icon of divine tenderness and compassion.

74 The motherly role of Mary, first affirmed in the gospel accounts of her relationship to Jesus, has been developed in a variety of ways. Christian believers acknowledge Mary to be the mother of God incarnate. As they ponder our Saviour's dying word to the beloved disciple, 'behold your mother' (John 19:27) many hear an invitation to hold Mary dear as 'mother of the faithful': she will care for them as she cared for her son in his hour of need. Hearing Eve called 'mother of the living' (Genesis 3:20), many come to see Mary as 'mother of the new humanity', active in her ministry of pointing all people to Christ, seeking the welfare of all God's creation. *We are agreed that, while care is needed in the use of such imagery, it is fitting to apply it to Mary, as a way of honouring her distinctive relationship to her Son, and the efficacy in her of his redeeming work.*

75 Many Christians find that giving devotional expression to their appreciation for this ministry of Mary enriches their worship of God. Authentic popular devotion to Mary, which by its nature displays a wide variety of individual, regional and cultural diversity, is to be respected. The crowds gathering at some places where Mary is believed to have appeared, suggest that such apparitions are an important part of such devotion. There is need for careful discernment in assessing the spiritual value of any alleged apparition, a judgement which belongs to the pastors of the Church. "Private revelation ... can be a genuine help in understanding the Gospel and living it better at a particular moment in time; therefore it should not be disregarded. It is a help which is offered, but which one is not obliged to use ... The criterion for the truth and value of a private revelation is therefore its orientation to Christ himself. When it leads us away from him, when it becomes independent of him or even presents itself as another and better plan of salvation, more important than the Gospel, then it certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit" (*Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, 'Theological Commentary on the Message of Fatima', 26<sup>th</sup> June 2000). We are agreed that, within the constraints set down in this teaching to ensure that the honour paid to Christ remains pre-eminent, such private devotion is acceptable, though not required of believers.

76 When Mary was first acknowledged as mother of the Lord by Elizabeth, she responded by praising God and proclaiming his justice for the poor in her *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55). In Mary's response we can see an attitude of

**Commented [SB9]:** The revelation is private, but it can find expression in public devotions, e.g., to Our Lady of Guadalupe.



poverty towards God that reflects the divine commitment and preference for the poor. In her powerlessness she is exalted by God's favour. Although the witness of her obedience and acceptance of God's will has sometimes been used to encourage passivity and impose servitude on women, it is truly seen as a radical commitment to God who has mercy on his servant, lifts up the lowly and brings down the mighty. Issues of justice for women and the empowerment of the oppressed have arisen from daily reflection on Mary's remarkable song. Inspired by her words, communities of women and men in different cultures have committed themselves to work with the poor and the excluded. Only when joy is joined with justice and peace do we rightly share in the economy of grace which Mary proclaims and embodies.

*Differences reconciled in the freedom of grace*

77 *In our reflection on the place of Mary in the life of the Church, we have found that when her distinctive vocation, character and ministry are understood in the way outlined above, our inherited differences of doctrine and devotion need no longer constitute barriers to full communion. Affirming together unambiguously Christ's unique mediation, which bears fruit in the life of the Church, we do not consider the practice of invoking Mary and the saints in prayer as communion dividing. Further, since obstacles of the past have been removed by clarification of doctrine, by liturgical reform and practical norms in keeping with it, we believe that there is no continuing theological reason for ecclesial division on these matters.*

**D Conclusion DRAFT by NS**

78 We have studied together the witness of the Scriptures to the work of the Spirit in Mary, the one who was 'filled with grace' and willingly gave of her flesh that the Word might become incarnate. We have studied the witness of the ancient common traditions to the honour that has been accorded the virgin mother of the Lord in the worship of all the churches. We have seen how the expression of this honour developed, how divisions eventually came over exaggerated forms of devotion to Mary and, eventually, over doctrine about Mary. The breach in communion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics has seemed yet more intractable since the definition of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary. However, in seeking a way of reconciliation and mutual understanding about the place of Mary in the life of our two communions, we have noted a marked ecumenical convergence that has taken place during recent years. We now offer this

statement to our respective authorities in the hope that it will contribute to a further process of ecumenical re-reception.

79 Anglicans have not been alone in expressing the criticism that the definitions of the Marian dogmas are insufficiently supported in Scripture. Bearing this criticism in mind, we have re-read Scripture together, first to study the place of Mary in Scripture as a whole, and, second, to see how Mary's 'Amen' to God's call at the Annunciation and her subsequent pilgrimage of faith may be viewed within a wider understanding of God's prevenient grace. We have considered how Mary was 'chosen ... called ... justified ... glorified' (cf. Rom 8:30).

80 Our conclusion is that a careful re-reading of Scripture, in the light of the ancient common traditions, so illuminates the substance of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary that Anglicans need no longer maintain these doctrines are insufficiently supported by Scripture. We have noted the way in which concerns among Anglicans that these doctrinal definitions were made by the Pope outside the context of a Council have been addressed by Roman Catholics, who point to the prior consultations which took place within the Roman Catholic Church and the unanimity of the bishops in supporting these doctrines. In the light of these clarifications, we agree that Anglicans may now be able to recognise that the two definitions are properly binding on the Roman Catholic faithful: the Roman Catholic faithful are not wrong to receive them. We have also noted the concern of Anglicans, amongst whom there is a variety of ways of reading Scripture, and amongst whom personal devotion to Mary is by no means universal, for continued diversity, within clear norms, of doctrine and devotion, concerning Mary. Anglicans continue to seek a way in which our two communions may be reconciled on the basis of the doctrine about Mary that was authoritatively defined at the time of our separation.

81 As to doctrine about Mary, in addition to the points of agreement mentioned in *Authority in the Church II* para. 30, quoted above, we have reached agreement that it is not contrary to Scripture or the ancient common traditions to accept:

That through the prevenient grace of God and from the very beginning of her existence, Mary was prepared in a unique way for the task she was to undertake, whilst yet remaining a virgin, in giving of her own body that the Word might take flesh;

That, at the end of Mary's earthly life she was taken up, body and soul, into the glory of Christ;

That Mary now has the pre-eminent place within the communion of saints;

That Mary is to be understood as *panhagia* (all holy); as a type of the Church, the spotless bride of Christ; and as the spiritual mother of all those who belong to the Body of Christ;

That Mary has a continuing ministry, which serves the ministry of Christ, the one mediator between God and humanity: she, together with all the saints, has a continuing ministry of intercession for the Church and for all humanity.

82 We have re-iterated our fundamental agreement that doctrines and devotions which are contrary to Scripture cannot be said to be 'revealed by God' or to be consonant with the teaching of the Christian churches. We agree that doctrine and devotion which focuses on Mary, including claims to 'private revelations', must be moderated by carefully expressed norms which ensure the unique and central place of Jesus Christ in the life of the Church, and that Christ alone, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is to be worshiped in the Church.

83 We believe that the agreement we have here outlined is itself the product of a re-reception by Anglicans and Roman Catholics of doctrine about Mary and that it points to the possibility of further reconciliation, in which issues concerning doctrine and devotion to Mary need no longer be seen as communion-dividing. For such a reconciliation to be possible:

Anglicans would need to recognise that Roman Catholic teaching about the continuing ministry of Mary within the communion of saints, and as defined in the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary, is not contrary to Scripture and the ancient common tradition of the Church;

Roman Catholics would need to recognise that the specific reading of the Scriptures and the ancient common tradition presupposed by the formulation of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary need not be required of Anglicans as a condition of ecclesial communion.

**Deleted:** Roman Catholics would need to recognise that the specific reading of the Scriptures and the ancient common tradition defined by the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary need not be required of Anglicans as a condition of eucharistic communion.¶

84 As we offer this agreed statement to our respective authorities, our hope is that it will in itself prove a valuable study of the teaching of the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions about Mary, the mother of God Incarnate. We hope that it will contribute to a recognition by our respective authorities that the agreement between our two communions on doctrine and devotion with respect to Mary is such that the diversity of belief and practice within and between our communions which currently exists need no longer be regarded as communion-dividing.

*Previous notes towards a conclusion*

6 Our statement has not sought to clear away all possible problems, but to deepen our common understanding to the point where remaining diversities of devotional practice may be received as the varied work of the Spirit amongst all the people of God. We now believe that it is possible that a common re-reception will bring us to the point where any remaining differences on teaching about Mary are no longer regarded as dividing Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Our hope is that, as we share in the one Spirit by which Mary was prepared and sanctified for her unique vocation, we may together participate with her and all the saints in the unending praise of God (cf Revelation 7:9ff; 19:6ff.).

**Commented [SB10]:** I add this to respond to John Muddiman's request that we give notice early on of our theme.

85 As we have reflected together in our study of the place of Mary in the life of the Church, we have been drawn closer together in prayer. As her calling in life was to bear God in human flesh, and point others to him, so we have found that our common study has pointed us more insistently to Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. We have also come to recognise that we share together a substantial common heritage concerning Mary, for example, our common use of her song at evening prayers, and the naming of churches in her honour. Nevertheless, when it comes to devotional practice, significant differences exist both within and between the two communions. Yet these have narrowed markedly in recent times, and both Anglicans and Roman Catholics have had their devotion to Christ and Mary refreshed by an imaginative use of Eastern icons, hymnody ancient and contemporary, and diverse forms of artistic expression. Through these means the experience of truth has been enlarged by the experience of love and beauty, and by the more affective styles of shared spirituality which have grown gradually among us.

*Left over from the Vienna draft, possibly to be used in the conclusion as way of responding more particularly to the request of Pope John-Paul II in Ut Unum Sint:*

Not only is Mary an exemplar of the working of grace in the human being, but she is also an icon of the Church which in this life is transfigured by grace and afterwards received into glory.

O God, you have taken to yourself the blessed Virgin Mary,  
mother of your incarnate Son;

Grant that we, who have been redeemed by his blood,  
May share with her the glory of your eternal kingdom;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*(Book of Common Prayer, ECUSA)*

Loving God,  
who chose the blessed virgin Mary  
to be the mother of your incarnate Son:  
grant that we, who are redeemed by his blood,  
may share with her in the glory of your eternal kingdom;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*(A Prayer Book for Australia, Anglican Church of Australia)*