

## **A Response to *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ***

### ***Introduction***

The members of the Anglican Roman Catholic dialogue of Canada carefully studied the agreed statement of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*<sup>1</sup> (hereafter *MGH*), during its meetings from 2006 to 2008, considering the document in light of our diverse theological, liturgical, and devotional traditions. We welcome the approach of *MGH* as a significant re-reception of our common faith in the unique mediation of Christ and its affirmation of the normative role of the Scriptures for our theology, prayer, and spiritual practice as they relate to the role of Mary in God's saving plan. Further, we wish to express our appreciation for ARCIC's assessment of the Catholic dogmatic teaching concerning Mary, the mother of the Lord, as being "consonant with the teaching of the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions" (§60). In what follows, we wish to reaffirm the areas of convergence in our theology and practice, identify a number of ways to further build upon this agreement, and consider how it might be received in our context. It is our hope that these reflections will not only be taken into consideration by the authorities of our two communions, but that they might serve as a resource for Anglicans and Catholics in Canada as they study and learn from *MGH*.

### ***Mary According to the Scriptures***

ARCIC adopts a self-consciously typological approach to the reading of Scripture. This is a departure for ecumenical dialogue: generally speaking, historical criticism has been the method most widely used for coming to a common reading of the biblical text. Though by no means rejecting historical-critical insights, as is made clear in *MGH* §7, ARCIC proposes a creative retrieval of the ancient practice of figural reading which has a firm basis in our common tradition. This "ecclesial and ecumenical" approach can only be welcome.

Given its relative newness, ARCIC may wish to be even more explicit about the convictions and assumptions that underlie the typological approach, indicating that it unfolds within the church's Christological and Trinitarian rule of faith. Moreover, it is important to point out that a chastened figural reading was as important to the Reformers as it was to the early Church Fathers and medieval theologians. *MGH*'s brief comments on Reformation approaches to biblical interpretation (§7) might give the impression that the insistence on the "clarity and sufficiency" of Scripture comes at the detriment of reading Scripture as an ordered whole. In fact, the very opposite is the case. If the Church is to read the canon as a unity, the Christological center actually requires Old Testament types and figures for its full display, against the broad eschatological horizon of salvation

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<sup>1</sup> Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (Toronto: Novalis, 2005).

history. This is a broadly shared ecumenical conviction, even if it is sometimes obscured in our day.

We therefore welcome ARCIC's desire to situate Mary within a larger biblical trajectory of grace and hope, embracing both Old and New Testaments. This approach strikes a balance between Scripture as witness to God's grace (the special insistence of Reformation Christians) and the fruitful outworking of grace in the lives of those called together in faith, the church (a consistent concern of Catholics). Viewed in this light, Mary is both part of the biblical witness (*MGH* §6), and for just this reason, part of the church's life today.

### *Mary in the Christian Tradition*

We welcome ARCIC's presentation of the foundations of our common faith in relation to Mary's role in God's plan of salvation as it developed in the first millennium, and of the seeds of contemporary discussion in the debates among the Schoolmen of the Middle Ages. While recognizing that there were "widespread reactions" in the Reformation period against "exaggerated devotions" by many Reformers (*MGH* §44), it must be recalled that the theological understanding of Mary's place in the history of salvation and in the life of the church was not the motive for the breakdown of unity between the Church of England and the Church of Rome during the sixteenth century. Our churches' practice of prayer and devotion, and later their theology and teaching with regard to Mary, evolved in diverse ways over the centuries of our separation. They have, at times, been tainted by both anti-Catholic and Counter Reformation sentiment. Our own review of the historical evolution of our respective traditions in the period of ecclesial separation has enabled us to better appreciate the nature of our diverse theological expression and practice.

We affirm with *MGH* that the English Reformers "continued to receive the doctrine of the early church concerning Mary" (*MGH* §45). Although many Marian shrines and places of pilgrimage were destroyed in the English Reformation, and the place of Mary in the liturgical life of the Church of England somewhat attenuated, the *Book of Common Prayer* retained a number of significant Marian feasts, the *Magnificat* continued to hold a prominent place in the order of Evening Prayer, and many churches and chapels continued to bear her name.

During the reigns of Edward VI (1547-1553) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603) the question of the invocation of saints was identified as a scholastic novelty, or else as an aberration promoted by the Church of Rome. The practice was relegated to a group of rejected doctrines and practices considered as "fond things, vainly invented," that is, as fanciful and irrational matters not known to the earliest ages of Christianity, not warranted by Scripture and in fact "repugnant to the word of God" (Article XXII). Reforms of the Eucharistic prayer and the Liturgy of the Hours were motivated by a concern that the Scriptures serve as the norm for the prayer of the Church and that the practice of prayer not obscure the unparalleled mediation of Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). Though the Restoration

of this period sought a *via media* between the best of the Catholic tradition and the evangelically motivated concerns of the Reformers, it was not free of anti-Catholic polemic.

In the seventeenth century, the Caroline Divines displayed a more conciliatory approach. Many recognized a special role for Mary and the saints as “patrons” to specific societies and individuals. While some cautioned against the invocation of the saints and Mary, yet others considered such practice as benign. Though not warranted by the scripture, and thus, not a required practice, they considered such practice as permitted. The Divines frequently acknowledged that Mary, the “Mother of God,” is deserving of high honor, taking the Apostles’ Creed as their witness. From the seventeenth century onward there is evidence of non-devotional statues of Mary being erected in Anglican churches.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), called in response to the Protestant Reformation, did not treat the doctrine of Mary extensively. It encouraged the veneration of the saints and Mary, affirmed the virgin birth, and left the matter of the Immaculate Conception open to theological debate. We regret that, in its account of the evolution of the Catholic tradition from the Reformation to the present day, *MGH* passes all too quickly from the Council of Trent to the nineteenth and twentieth century definition of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption (§47).

ARCIC makes no mention of the fact that Catholic piety and theological reflection concerning Mary took a significant turn during the seventeenth century under the influence of the French school of spirituality.<sup>2</sup> The influence of the French school spread widely through the preaching of the religious congregations which they founded.<sup>3</sup> These and many other religious congregations inspired by the French school of spirituality have deeply marked the life of the Catholic Church in Canada through their apostolic works and seminary education. Today, more than eighty religious congregations in Canada trace their history back to this movement of Catholic Revival. It has been instructive for us to

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<sup>2</sup> *MGH* does note that Catholic theology and practice “while moderated by the reforming decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-63), also suffered the distorting influence of Protestant-Catholic polemics. *To be Roman Catholic came to be identified with devotion to Mary.*” (§47) (Emphasis added).

The primary representatives of the French School were Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), an important protagonist of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, two of his disciples, Jean Eudes (1601-1680) and Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657), and later Louis-Marie Grignion de Monfort (1673-1716). They were deeply influenced by the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola and their manner of engaging the imagination and the heart in contemplating the Scriptures, especially in the contemplation on the mysteries of the early life of Jesus. Their works also reflect the impact of a significant turn to the subject and a preoccupation with interiority that characterized the Renaissance movement in the European culture of their day. As a result, their reading of the Scriptures is focused largely on the psychological and interior attitudes of Jesus and Mary, on their corporal sufferings and the inner dispositions of their heart.

<sup>3</sup> Bérulle founded the French Oratory in 1611. Jean Eudes established the Society of Jesus and Mary (Eudists) in 1643, dedicated to the education of priests and to missionary work. He promoted devotional prayers to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, composing the prayers of the Mass for the Feasts of the Holy Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, introduced into the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar in 1648 and 1672 respectively. Olier, founded the Society of Saint-Sulpice dedicated to the education of priests. Grignion de Monfort, educated by the Suplicians, would compose a rule of life for the Company of Mary (Monfortists / Monfortains) and for the Daughters of Wisdom.

consider the importance of this movement in shaping the conscience of Canadian Catholics.

Early settlers in New France named their villages after Mary (Ville Marie, Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons), and dedicated many of their churches to Our Lady. Later, Catholic immigrants from Ireland and many other European countries, brought with them their devotional practices relating to Mary. Marian Shrines and places of pilgrimage were established following the declaration of the Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX (1854) and the apparitions of Mary at Lourdes (1858). A resurgence of popular Marian devotion marked the life of the Catholic Church in Canada in the period surrounding the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption by Pope Pius XII (1950) and was particularly influenced by the Marian Congress held at Ottawa in 1947. This Congress, which had an international impact, was a triumphant moment for the Catholic community and inspired fervent prayer for peace in the world reeling from the devastation of World War II.

The Church of England in Canada and elsewhere did not know a parallel development of Marian piety and theology. However, the French school of spirituality's focus on the Incarnation and a cultural turn to the subject may well have predisposed both Anglican and Catholic theology toward a renewed focus on the Incarnation during the nineteenth century. Devotional statues of Mary began to appear in Anglican churches with the second generation of Tractarians. The influence of Catholic devotional practice, including the recitation of the Angelus and the Rosary, is apparent in the Anglican Confraternity of Our Lady, founded in 1880, and the League of Our Lady, established in 1902. These two movements would merge into the Anglican Society of Mary in 1931. Today some Anglicans are given to Marian devotional practices and choose to recite the Rosary, asking Mary to "pray for us."

### ***Mary within the Pattern of Grace and Hope***

ARCIC clearly seeks to build on previous consensus identified between Anglican and Catholic theologies of grace. This desire is signaled early on: "God's grace calls for and enables human response" (§5, citing *Salvation in the Church* §9).<sup>4</sup> The grace-hope pattern that informs *MGH* is one in which God's grace is primary, the human response secondary. *MGH* presents Mary as a type of pattern of the Christian person more generally. The grace at work in her earliest beginnings is the grace of God's election, by which God knows his children even before they are in their mother's womb (Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:1-5; cited in §10). The conviction that she partakes of God's new creation even now points to the hope that awaits us all. This approach to Mary through an "eschatological anthropology" is highly creative and promising. While it may not resolve all disagreements, especially those surrounding the Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, it offers a framework that allows us to relate Mary to the

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<sup>4</sup> Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, *Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement*, London, Church House / Catholic Truth Society, 1989. Traduction française: "Le salut et l'Église," dans *Anglicans et catholiques. Approches de l'unité*, Paris : Cerf, 2000.

heart of the Gospel. Our historical studies of the Marian dogmas have confirmed that such an interpretation of the Catholic teaching on these questions has a firm basis in the context for the promulgation of these dogmas in 1854 and 1950 respectively.

Our common understanding of the work of God's saving grace rests upon our shared conviction concerning the unique and primary place of Christ in the plan of God: "there is one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5, 6; cited in *MGH* §68). A possible peril of an anthropological approach to understanding Mary as exemplar of the pattern of grace and hope is that it may have a "leveling" effect in the relationship between Mary and her son, the Incarnate Word: both Jesus and Mary might be viewed as the eschatological human on the way from grace to hope, although she is the penultimate and he the ultimate embodiment thereof.<sup>5</sup> While such an impression would not be consistent with ARCIC's distinction between Christ's unique Mediatorship and its diverse mediations in the ecclesial sphere, it might be further averted by a more consistent use of Romans 8 to frame the discussion. In addition, to avoid any such confusion we wonder whether it might be better to avoid the term "mediation" when speaking of Mary's intercession, reserving it as a strictly Christological category (e.g.: *MGH* §68).

ARCIC's use of Romans 8 to frame its theological reflection on Mary is one of its most striking contributions to the re-reception of our common faith. But for Pauline theology to do its work, it is not enough to say that the pattern of grace and hope achieves its climax in Christ. We must go beyond this to say that his death and resurrection provide the ontological ground, basis, and direction of the pattern as a whole. It is not that Jesus fills out the pre-existing categories of grace and hope, but that we can read the biblical story (and indeed the human story as a whole) in these terms only because of what God has done in him. *MGH* makes this point in its own way in §§52-53. The *hope* of humanity and of all creation, of which Mary is both sign and prophet (*MGH* §56; and §§2 and 76 respectively), is grounded in the gracious act of the God who "subjects it [creation] in hope" (Romans 8:20). Thus, we are happy to endorse *MGH*'s eschatological construal of God's activity in the new creation. We do think the document could state more clearly than it does that Christ is the concrete reality and foundation of that new creation.

### ***The Papal Definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption***

Rereading of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary within the framework of grace and hope (Romans 8:30) can be seen as a common appropriation of the insights that these teachings were intended to promote at the time of

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<sup>5</sup> See Timothy Bradshaw's perceptive remarks in his Commentary on *MGH*, noting the similarity between the document's Mariology and Donald Baillie's Christology in his classic *God was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (New York: Scribner's, 1948). Baillie's Christology is frequently criticized for its account of Jesus' person as, in effect, a super eminent instance of the grace-filled person: inspiration rather than Incarnation. It would perhaps be acceptable if our picture of Mary followed this model. It would be disastrous if that of Christ did.

their promulgation. It helps us to appreciate them as teachings about the pattern of salvation offered to us all in Christ and reveals Mary as the model of attaining the fullness of the human vocation, having faithfully placed her hope in God's saving help. We regard *MGH's* presentation of the trajectory of her life as an illustration of the universal pattern of salvation effected by grace as an important resource for a renewed and common catechesis concerning Mary.

Pius IX's teaching on the Immaculate Conception of Mary bears the anthropological concern that is developed in *MGH*. Catholic writers in the nineteenth century displayed a concern to redress an overly optimistic view of human nature that was evident in the rationalist currents of thought of the day.<sup>6</sup> This teaching sets Mary as a model for all Christians, an anthropological ideal to which we aspire and in the pattern of divine assistance which moves us towards our goal. In what is said about Mary and her relationship with God, the Christian view of the meaning of human life according to the message of the Gospel is presented. Thus the dogma of the Immaculate Conception teaches not just about Mary but also – and perhaps especially – that for every human person, grace – and not genetics, education, hard work, or any purely human attribute – is the main engine of human transformation.

A similar concern might be seen in the promulgation of the dogma of the Assumption in the wake of the World War II when optimism concerning the capacity of the human person for goodness had been sorely wounded.<sup>7</sup> It is striking to consider the motif of

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<sup>6</sup> William Ullathorne (1806-1889), Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, writing in 1855, just a year after the definition of the Immaculate Conception: "Which is their grand philosophical cry? The perfectibility of man: the pagan's confidence in human resources for human happiness. This is upsetting religion, and policy, wherever it comes. Perfection is to be reached, and even equality of perfection, not through God's grace, but by men's efforts – by combination of their energies; by working in the products of nature; by commerce in them; by new social arrangements to come out of the conflict of opinions or of weapons; by enlightenment, that is, by the rejection of traditional wisdom; by fitting religion to each man's natural tastes and so rejecting authority. (...) Now Mary is the highest example of human perfection and of created happiness. And this great fact strikes down a thousand theories. In every earthly sense of the word she is weak, as she is lowly, poor and humble; yet she is perfect as no one else ever was perfect. And her perfection is the work of a sublime grace, which puts her nature in order and sets her higher powers free in God. The Immaculate Conception is the mystery of God's strength in weakness, of His height in humility, of His glory in purity." *The Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God*. Revised by Canon Isles with an Introduction by the Bishop of Birmingham. (Westminster, UK: Art and Book Company, 1904 (1855)), pp. 210-211.

<sup>7</sup> One author from this period observed: "In addition to its specifically Marian content, the dogma teaches us about man generally. It projects and silhouettes man in his true dimensions, against his true horizon. The solemn definition of Our Lady's glorious Assumption stands forth as a timely–indeed, desperately needed–affirmation of Christian Humanism. Over against atheistic materialism and naturalism on the one hand, and exaggerated spiritualism and ultrasupernaturalism on the other hand, Christian Humanism declares man for what he really is, a creature composed of body and soul, and made to the image and likeness of God; Christian Humanism upholds the value and dignity of human beings in body and soul; Christian Humanism acknowledges the worth of life here on earth but, at the same time, warns that our destiny is not confined to this world; and, finally, as to that destiny–supernatural salvation, Christian Humanism insists that it is not purely spiritual but embraces the whole man, body as well as soul–in short, the human person." George Shea, "The Assumption," in *The Mystery of the Woman: Essays on the Mother of God Sponsored by the Department of Theology of Notre Dame University*. O'Connor, Edward D., ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), pp. 61-114 at 104-105.

Christian anthropology reflected in the Resolutions of the Lambeth Conference of Bishops, from this same period: “The Conference, believing that man's [sic] disorders and conflicts are primarily due to ignorance or rejection of the true understanding of his nature and destiny as revealed by God in Jesus Christ, affirms that man has a spiritual as well as a material nature, and that he can attain full stature only as he recognizes and yields to the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and to the influence of his Holy Spirit.”<sup>8</sup> The fact that the Assumption of Mary was proclaimed in the Feast of All Saints situates Mary in the communion of all the saints served to emphasize her solidarity with all believers, and indeed with all of humankind. Understanding the Marian dogmas as responses to important contemporary intellectual movements which challenge the Christian view of the human person helps to make their connection to the fundamentals of the Christian faith clearer and their relevance more obvious. This aspect of their significance was recognized, at least by some, at the time of their promulgation. To re-receive them in this sense, therefore, is not to alter their meaning but to recapture the fullness of their intended meaning.

Over twenty years ago ARCIC rightly pointed to a significant degree of consensus in faith, and pointed especially to the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption, in particular of their relationship to Scripture and the manner of their promulgation as requiring common study.<sup>9</sup> *MGH* makes a significant contribution towards a common understanding of these teachings in relation to the biblical revelation. We do not consider that it adequately addresses the difficulties raised by the status or doctrinal weight of these papal teachings, nor the matter of whether their acceptance would be required as a condition for ecclesial unity (*MGH* §63). This is, at bottom, not a matter of unity in faith, for ARCIC succeeds, in our view, in demonstrating a substantial unity in our deepest convictions regarding the Mother of our Lord. The fact of our unity in faith raises the need for greater clarity concerning authoritative nature of these teachings and the real conditions for ecclesial reconciliation.

### *Mary in the Life of the Contemporary Church*

We heartily welcome ARCIC's affirmation that since the Second Vatican Council there has been a significant re-reception of the place of Mary in the life of prayer in both the Anglican Communion and in the Catholic Church. This is most evident in the renewed liturgical rites and calendars of each.

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<sup>8</sup> Lambeth 1948, Resolution 1, at <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1948/1948-1.cfm>

<sup>9</sup> “We agree that there can be but one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, and reject any interpretation of the role of Mary which obscures this affirmation. We agree in recognizing that Christian understanding of Mary is inseparably linked with the doctrines of Christ and the Church. We agree in recognizing the grace and unique vocation of Mary, Mother of God Incarnate (*Theotokos*), in observing her festivals, and in according her honor in the communion of saints. We agree that she was prepared by divine grace to be the mother of the Redeemer, by whom she herself was redeemed and received into glory. We further agree in recognizing in Mary a model of holiness, obedience, and faith for all Christians. We accept that it is possible to regard her as a prophetic figure in the Church of God before as well as after the Incarnation” (§30). In Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, *Authority in the Church II* [1981], in *The Final Report* (London: Church House / Catholic Truth Society, 1982).

Anglicans expressed misgivings about Pius XII's promulgation of the dogma of the Assumption in the 1950s, expressing their concern that it might have the effect of placing her at a remove from the wider human community and obscuring the unique role of Christ in the plan of salvation.<sup>10</sup> Responding to these and other ecumenical concerns, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council presents Mary as figure of the church and a model of the faithful Christian disciple, placing her squarely within the context of the whole community of saints (*Lumen Gentium* chapter VIII). As *MGH* acknowledges, the Council affirmed that the honor and veneration accorded to Mary "in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His power" (LG 60; cited in *MGH* §67). Further, the council insisted upon "the subordinate role of Mary" in relation to the place of Christ in the saving plan of God (LG 62). While encouraging devotion to the Mother of the Lord, the conciliar teaching gives pride of place to the veneration of Mary in the liturgy (LG 67), insisting that the practice of prayer be guided always by the norm of Scripture. *MGH*'s discussion of Marian devotion, in particular of the practice of calling upon Mary to intercede for us, might be strengthened by greater attention to the liturgical center of Christian prayer, thus providing a foundation for diverse spiritual practice in the common features of our corporate prayer.

The place of Mary in the contemporary Catholic spirituality has been significantly influenced by the liturgical renewal set in motion by the Second Vatican Council. It is in the Eucharist where most Catholics come into contact with this renewal. If in the past, Marian devotion was often separate from the liturgy (being appended after the end of the official prayer of the Church) or in competition to the liturgy (saying the rosary during Mass), devotion to Mary today may be said to begin in the liturgy, flow from it and lead back to it. This approach takes seriously the warnings of both Vatican II and Pope Paul VI of two extreme positions to be avoided: a narrow-minded elimination of Marian devotion or an exaggerated or superlative devotion.<sup>11</sup> It is neither sentimental nor emotional, but rather encourages discipleship, that is, the gift of self to Christ within the Church and for the life of the world. The Catholic Church's commitment to this approach in presenting Mary liturgically has continued, as is evident in resources issued for the Marian Year (1987-1988)<sup>12</sup> and the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Henry Chadwick, "Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1951): 163f. Chadwick suggests an influence of Monophysite, one nature Christology behind the teaching, and perceived in it a devaluation of the humanity of Christ and of humanity in general. ARCIC's re-reception of this teaching unfolds the dogma's intent, on the contrary, to affirm Mary's solidarity with the whole human community.

<sup>11</sup> For example: "But it exhorts theologians and preachers of the divine word to abstain zealously both from all gross exaggerations as well as from petty narrow-mindedness in considering the singular dignity of the Mother of God." Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, §67. See also, Pope Paul VI: "the ecumenical aspect of Marian devotion is shown in the Catholic Church's desire that, without in any way detracting from the unique character of this devotion, every care should be taken to avoid any exaggeration which could mislead other Christian brethren about the true doctrine of the Catholic Church." *Apostolic Exhortation for the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Marialis Cultus)* (Daughters of Saint Paul, 1974), §32.

<sup>12</sup> In Canada, the National Liturgical Office for the Episcopal Commission for the Liturgy issued "Mary in the Liturgy" in 1987 as resource for the Marian Year. It is Number 3 in the *Canadian Series in the Liturgy*.

(1986).<sup>13</sup> More recently, the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (2002)<sup>14</sup> has given further principles and guidelines for the liturgical dimension of veneration of Mary.<sup>15</sup> As *MGH* has noted, the liturgical renewal has resulted in a new prominence of Mary in Anglican worship (§49). A significant effect of this renewal in both Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, shaped by a return to the sources of our common tradition, is a genuine rapprochement in our consciousness of faith. Its importance should not be underestimated.

Christian liturgy is primarily worship of God for what He has done and continues to do in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Commemoration is at the heart of praise: one remembers what God has done, and in remembering, enters anew into the experience of God's saving work. When the principal events of salvation are recalled in the Eucharistic prayer, at the central part of each celebration, a place is given to Mary. This is true of both contemporary Roman Catholic and Anglican Eucharistic prayers.<sup>16</sup>

In the revised Anglican and Roman Catholic calendars for the liturgical year, the prayer life of the Church highlights and orders the mystery of redemption. A place is given to Mary and all believers who are related to Christ in these mysteries. The liturgical year is dotted with obligatory appointments with Mary. There are striking parallels between the

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<sup>13</sup> The official text of this liturgical source appears in two volumes: *Congregatio pro cultu divino, Collectio missarum de beata Maria Virgine, editio typica altera* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987) and idem, *Lectioarium pro missis de beata Maria Virgine. Editio typica* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987). An English version of this source is the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Volume I, Sacramentary* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1992). These liturgies were developed largely in response to a need for texts at Marian shrines and places of pilgrimage. This resource does not modify or change the directives of the General Roman Calendar (1969), the Roman Missal (1975), or the Lectionary (1981), nor is its use obligatory. It is largely unknown in Canada, not having been formally approved for use by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

<sup>14</sup> Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> “[L]iturgical worship, notwithstanding its objective and irreplaceable importance, its exemplary efficacy and normative character, does not in fact exhaust all the expressive possibilities of the People of God for devotion to the Holy Mother of God” (§183), the liturgy, nevertheless, “must be...the source of inspiration, constant reference point and ultimate goal of Marian devotion” (§184). Citing the Congregation for Divine Worship’s Circular Letter, *Guidelines and Proposals for the Celebration of the Marian Year* (§8), the Directory gives two pointed cautions with regard to Mary and the liturgy for the Church. Marian devotion: “should give expression to the Trinitarian note which characterizes worship of the God revealed in the New Testament, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the Christological constituent, which makes evident the sole and necessary mediation of Christ; the pneumatological aspect, since every true form of piety comes from the Spirit and is exercised in the Spirit; the ecclesial character, in virtue of which the faithful are constituted as a holy people of God, gathered in prayer in the Lord’s name (cf *Mt*: 18, 20) in the vital Communion of Saints;” and, “have constant recourse to Sacred Scripture, as understood in Sacred Tradition; not to overlook the demands of the ecumenical movement in the Church’s profession of faith; consider the anthropological aspects of the cultic expressions so as to reflect a true concept of man and a valid response to his needs; highlight the eschatological tension which is essential to the Gospel message; make clear missionary responsibility and the duty of bearing witness, which are incumbent on the Lord’s disciples” (§186).

<sup>16</sup> See Eucharistic Prayers I, II, III, and IV in the *Roman Missal* which honor Mary in the communion of saints; Eucharistic Prayers 2, 3, 4, and 6 of the Anglican Church of Canada’s *Book of Alternative Services* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985) recall the Virgin Mary’s role on the Incarnation. The latter of these also includes a prayer recalling her place in the communion of all the saints.

principal Marian feasts in the liturgical calendars of the Roman Missal and the *Book of Alternative Services*<sup>17</sup> of the Anglican Church of Canada: we honor Mary together on the feasts of the Presentation of the Lord (February 2), the Annunciation of Our Lord (March 25), the Visitation (May 31), and the Birth or Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (September 8). The day when Catholics mark the “Immaculate” Conception of Mary, is appointed as the feast of the “Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary” in the Anglican calendar (December 8). Finally, when Catholics celebrate Solemnity of the Assumption (August 15), Anglicans mark the feast of “Saint Mary the Virgin.” Where the date in the Prayer Book is designated as a lesser commemoration, it assumes the status of a principal holy day in the *Book of Alternative Services*. The only feast day for which we have no parallel is the Catholic Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (January 1), a day on which Anglicans commemorate the naming of Jesus. In these celebrations we recall Mary’s association with the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord, and the fullness of the realization of salvation in the human person. The celebration of Marian Feasts is an occasion to praise God together for the great things He has accomplished in her. When she is honored in the liturgy, we recall what God has done for humanity in Christ.

In the prayer of the church Mary is always presented in relation to Christ and all the saints. Liturgy looks to the day when all will be in Christ and so has an eschatological dimension. If Mary and the saints continue to live in Christ and if the Church embraces those in heaven as well as those on earth in one community, then the saints pray with and for us in Christ, as *MGH* explains (§69). Notably, the liturgical prayers of both our traditions generally exclude any form of singular invocation to Mary in the context of the Eucharistic prayer. In the liturgy of the eucharist, the memory of Mary is always indirect and in a rather rigorous schema of prayer directed to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

### *A Need and Opportunity for Shared Catechesis in the Canadian Context*

In recent years, Catholics in Canada have encountered movements of exaggerated and unorthodox teaching and devotion to the figure of Mary. A case of particular concern is the so-called Army of Mary. This movement has been addressed directly by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and by local Catholic bishops.<sup>18</sup> The Army of Mary, no longer in communion with the Catholic Church, promotes views that go far beyond the biblical revelation concerning Mary, including her purported re-incarnation, her supposed qualities as “coeternal,” or as “coredemptrix” and the “feminine equivalent” of the one

<sup>17</sup> Cited above. Similar comparisons could be made of other contemporary Anglican prayer books.

<sup>18</sup> See, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Doctrinal Note, August 15, 2001,” <http://www.cccb.ca/MediaReleases.htm?CD=258&ID=1017> ; Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Archbishop of Quebec, “Message pastoral concernant l’armée de Marie: April 2004,” [http://www.diocesequebec.qc.ca/documents/pdf/05-04-04\\_armee\\_de\\_marie.pdf](http://www.diocesequebec.qc.ca/documents/pdf/05-04-04_armee_de_marie.pdf) ); Paul André Durocher, Bishop of the Diocese of Alexandria Cornwall, “Pastoral Letter regarding the Fils de Marie, May 25, 2005,” <http://www.alexandria-cornwall.ca/b-messages.php?id=132>). In 2007, after a series of unauthorized ordinations, the Archbishop of Quebec issued a decree indicating that the members of this group were no longer in communion with the Catholic Church: [http://www.diocesequebec.qc.ca/documents/pdf/20070326\\_declaration\\_armee\\_marie1.pdf](http://www.diocesequebec.qc.ca/documents/pdf/20070326_declaration_armee_marie1.pdf).

Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Canadian Catholic Bishops have rightly warned that the teaching and activity of this movement poses a grave danger to the faith of sincere Christians, and threatens the unity of the community of believers. Those who sympathize with this and similar distortions of the catholic faith regarding Mary would be aided by *MGH*'s insistence on the need for careful discernment in cases of apparitions and private revelation: "When it leads us away from [Christ], 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."<sup>19</sup>

The presence of such movements indicates an urgent need for a renewed catechesis in the Canadian context. Considerable vigilance is required by all those having pastoral responsibility for teaching, preaching and catechesis, so as to form Christians with a sound understanding of the place of Mary in the life of the Church and to ensure that devotion to her is harmony with our emerging ecumenical consensus. We therefore consider the publication and reception of *MGH* as a timely event and an important opportunity for a renewed catechesis.

### **In Summary:**

We affirm that *MGH* represents a significant advance in our consensus regarding Mary.

- By reconsidering Mary together against the biblical pattern of the economy of grace and hope, we can receive together our respective teachings in her regard as consonant with the Scriptures.
- Presenting Mary as an exemplar of the pattern of grace and hope or turning to her intercession must never detract from the unique mediation of Christ for the salvation of humankind (1 Timothy 2:5).
- Common study of the papal definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption help us to appreciate more fully their Christological and anthropological significance. They point to the power of God's grace in raising up the human person at every moment in life's trajectory.
- Consensus on the fundamental meaning of the Catholic teachings of 1854 and 1950 creates a new context and urgency for future dialogue to clarify their doctrinal weight in light of the hierarchy of truths, as well as the extent to which their acceptance might be required by Catholic authorities as a condition for ecclesial unity.
- Common study of the historical evolution of our respective traditions allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the biblical and Spirit-filled origins of our diverse devotional practice. Contemporary liturgical practice brings us closer together in our devotional practice and provides natural opportunities for common catechesis and celebration.

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<sup>19</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Theological Commentary on the Message of Fatima," June 26, 2000. Cited in *MGH* §73.

We urge the leaders of the Anglican and Catholic Churches of Canada to make use of this document as a resource for a shared catechesis of our common faith concerning Mary, Mother of the Lord, as witnessed by the Scriptures and handed down in the rich heritage of our traditions. It ought not to remain on the shelves of theologians. It is our hope that it might inform the life and practice of Anglicans and Catholics and inspire new initiatives for common prayer and devotion.

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