

In Continued Dialogue with the Czestochowa Commission

The following paper was presented by Dr. Mark Miravalle at the International Symposium on Marian coredemption entitled “Maria Mater Unitatis,” held at Downside Abbey, Stratton-on-the-Fosse, England, and delivered on August 24, 2002.

During the week of August 18-22, 1996, the Twelfth International Mariological-Marian Congress, hosted by the Pontifical International Marian Academy, was held in Czestochowa, Poland. The Mariological-Marian Congress, a combination of both scientific mariology and the presentation of more popular and pastoral marian topics (hence the title designation, “Mariological-Marian”), is held every four years at different international locations.

A typical component of the Mariological-Marian Congresses since the Second Vatican Council has been an ecumenical discussion group, consisting of members from different countries, with participation by several non-Catholic theologians with interest in mariology. The purpose of the ecumenical group is to provide the opportunity to discuss the dimensions of the congress theme or other relevant mariological issues from a specifically ecumenical perspective.

The ecumenical discussion group for the 1996 Czestochowa Congress consisted of 16 Catholic theologians from various countries, and 5 non-Catholic theologians: Canon Roger Greenacre, an Anglican theologian from England; Dr. Hans Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, a Lutheran theologian from Austria; Father Ghennadios Limouris, an Orthodox theologian from Constantinople; Father Jean Kawak, an Orthodox theologian from Syria; and Professor Constantin Charalampidis, an Orthodox theologian from Greece.

During the meeting of the Czestochowa ecumenical discussion group, and without any prior knowledge on the part of the members themselves (as some later indicated in response to questions from the press and colleagues as well) the issue of the opportuneness of the definition of the Marian doctrine of Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces and Advocate was brought before the group, with the request for an opinion by some authority from within the Holy See.

After one discussion period, estimated by group members to have lasted approximately thirty minutes and which essentially consisted of comments by a few theologians decidedly against the definition, a request was made for anyone who wished to speak in favor of the definition to comment. After a brief silence, the discussion was brought to a close and an unanimous 21 to 0 vote was recorded as its conclusion. According to the members themselves, no specific study was made, no working paper was presented to the committee, no opportunity for research was given, no draft of the conclusion was submitted to the ecumenical group for final approval, and no presentation of any position in favor of the definition was offered for examination.

Approximately ten months later, on June 4, 1997, *L'Osservatore Romano* published the conclusion of the Czestochowa ecumenical group, but under the new designation of a “commission established by the Holy See.” The Commission was

reportedly made up of members who were “chosen for their specific preparation in this area,” and a written document was released as a “Declaration of the Theological Commission of the Congress of Czestochowa.”¹ Once again to the surprise of the members, who report they were never informed that they were acting as a “commission established by the Holy See,” but only on the request by some authority within the Holy See to offer their opinion on the question of the definition, the results of the Czestochowa ecumenical ad hoc group and their negative conclusion concerning the proposed definition of Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate, was promulgated by the Catholic and secular press as a definitive magisterial rejection of the petitions of some six million faithful and over 500 cardinals and bishops for the proclamation of the proposed fifth Marian dogma, with headlines of “No New Marian Dogma” circulated worldwide.²

The release of the conclusion of the Czestochowa ecumenical group in *L'Osservatore Romano* under its new designation on June 4 (which presented a two-fold conclusion as to the inappropriateness of the definition), happened to coincide with the timing of the close of the international *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* Conference held at the *Domus Mariae* Convention Center in Rome. Over 70 bishops and over 100 theologians and lay leaders from the five continents, (representing six million – at that time – lay petitions from 140 countries for the Marian definition), ended their theological symposium and unified prayer with a petition to Pope John Paul II in filial request for the solemn definition of Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces and Advocate. The Holy Father was not in Rome during the time of the release of the Czestochowa statement, but was visiting his native land of Poland, and, ironically, on the day of June 4 was praying for the mediation of the Mother of God before the very image of Our Lady of Czestochowa.

A member of the Pontifical International Marian Academy, concerned about the questions surrounding the nature and process of the Czestochowa committee and its release, offered the following comments:

The first and most important fact to be kept in mind about these two documents [Commission statement and accompanying commentary] is that they are not official documents of the Holy See, even though they were published in the daily Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, as well as in the weekly English and other language editions of that paper. They do not represent a broad spectrum of the opinion of the members of the Pontifical International Marian Academy, of which I am also a member, nor, insofar as I am aware, was there an open, fair and honest consideration of the issues involved. The initial polling was taken without any representation by those who are in favor of the definition or any serious debate. Subsequent commentaries were written as propaganda with little concern for the facts of the issues at stake.³

¹ “Declaration of the Theological Commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy,” *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 1997.

² Cf. “No New Marian Dogma,” *Catholic News Service*, June 13, 1997.

³ Msgr. Arthur Calkins, “A Response to the Declaration of the Commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy,” *Contemporary Insights on a Fifth Marian Dogma: Theological Foundations III, Queenship*, 2000, p. 126; N.B. Msgr. Calkins is an official of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*.

Five years later, on June 4, 2002, *L'Osservatore Romano* published a mariological conference presented by Fr. Georges Cottier, O.P., Theologian of the Papal Household, which was delivered worldwide via the Congregation for the Clergy's Ninth International Video-conference Program. The presentation by the Papal Theologian was entitled, "The Coredemption," and in his conference, Fr. Cottier offered convincing responses and correctives to several of the principal theological objections raised by the Czestochowa statement, particularly in regards to the clear doctrinal basis of Marian Coredemption from the Second Vatican Council, as well as an explicit defense of the title, "Co-redemptrix."⁴

Three other commentaries accompanied the Czestochowa statement in *L'Osservatore*, and were either unsigned or not written by members of the Commission itself.⁵ Again, most objections added by the commentaries were convincingly answered by the positive doctrinal treatments on Mary Co-redemptrix which were published in the selfsame *L'Osservatore* as authored by theologians, Fr. Cottier and, previously, Fr. Jean Galot, S.J..⁶

Theological Objections from the Commission

Apart from the secondary questions surrounding the Czestochowa meeting, its procedure and promulgation, what constitutes the essential theological objections issued by the Committee against the question of opportuneness of the solemn definition of Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate? The following is the full statement published by *L'Osservatore Romano* as the "Declaration of the Theological Commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy:"

The Commission arrived at a two-fold conclusion:

- (1) The titles, as proposed, are ambiguous, as they can be understood in very different ways. Furthermore, the theological direction taken by the Second Vatican Council which did not wish to define any of these titles, should not be abandoned. The Second Vatican Council did not use the title "Coredemptrix" and uses "Mediatrix" and "Advocate" in a very moderate way (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 62). In fact, from the time of Pope Pius XII the term has not been used by the Papal Magisterium in its significant documents. There is evidence that Pope Pius XII himself intentionally avoided using it. With respect to the title "Mediatrix", the history of the question should not be forgotten: in the first decades of this century, the Holy See entrusted the study of the

⁴ Fr. Georges Cottier, O.P., "The Co-redemption," *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 2002, Italian edition.

⁵ Cf. "Comment on Marian Academy's Declaration," *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 25, 1997, English edition; Salvatore M. Perrella, O.S.M., "Present State of a Question," *L'Osservatore Romano*, July 2, 1997, English edition.

⁶ Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., "Maria Corredentrice," *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 15, 1997; Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., "Mary Co-redemptrix," *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 15, 1995; Fr. Georges Cottier, O.P., "The Co-redemption," *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 2002, Italian edition.

possibility of its definition to three different commissions, the result of which was that the Holy See decided to set the question aside.

- (2) Even if the titles were assigned a content which could be accepted as belonging to the deposit of faith, the definition of these titles, however, in the present situation would be lacking in theological clarity, as such titles and the doctrines inherent in them still require further study in a renewed Trinitarian, ecclesiological and anthropological perspective. Finally, the theologians, especially the non-Catholics, were sensitive to ecumenical difficulties which would be involved in such a definition.⁷

Four principal objections arise from the Czestochowa statement: 1. “the titles, as proposed, are ambiguous;” 2. a definition would go counter to the “direction of the Second Vatican Council;” 3. the “titles and doctrines inherent in them require further study in a renewed Trinitarian, ecclesiological, and anthropological perspective;” and 4. “ecumenical difficulties...would be involved in such a definition.” We will examine each objection individually.

“Titles are Ambiguous”

The first objection states: “The titles, as proposed, are ambiguous, as they can be understood in very different ways.”

With all appropriate respect to the Commission, and without in any way seeking to respond *ad hominem*, it appears that the objection itself as proposed, rather than the titles, is what is actually ambiguous. There is no explanation nor specific example cited to support the claim of ambiguity regarding the three Marian titles. Nor is it clear who is being referred to as “proposing” these titles in an “ambiguous” manner.

Perhaps it would be best to analyze how the Church uses the three titles and their inherent roles as manifested in papal and conciliar documents, and then to proceed in evaluating whether or not the Church’s uses of the titles lack the theological specificity appropriate for a solemn definition.

Mary Co-redemptrix

As used by the Magisterium, “Co-redemptrix,” refers to the unique cooperation of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in the work of redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ (cf. LG 57, 61). The title, Co-redemptrix, was first used in papal documents by Pius XI and providentially, Pius XI offered a theological rationale for the papal use of the title:

By the very nature of things, the Redeemer could not help but to associate [non poteva, per necessità di cose, non associare] his Mother in his work; and therefore we invoke her under the title of Co-redemptrix [Corredentrice]. She has given us the Saviour; she raised him for the work of Redemption unto the cross, sharing in the suffering and death by which

⁷ “Declaration of the Theological Commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy,” *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 1997.

Jesus accomplished the Redemption of all men. And it was upon the cross, in the last moments of his life, that the Redeemer proclaimed her our mother and mother to us all. “*Ecce filius tuus*,” he said to St. John, who represented all of us; and those other words, spoken to the Apostle were addressed to us too: “*Ecce Mater tua*.”⁸

John Paul’s six usages of the title, “Co-redemptrix”⁹ are well-known to this discussion. In these, the Holy Father specifically uses the title to designate Mary’s unique cooperation in the accomplishment of redemption. And although John Paul’s usage includes all of the Virgin Mother’s singular cooperation with the Redeemer throughout her earthly life and continuing into heaven (cf. LG 57, 61-62), it particularly emphasizes her unique participation with the Redeemer: A) with her free consent at the Annunciation (Lk. 1:38; LG 56); and B) with her suffering in union with her Son at Calvary (Jn. 19:26-27; LG 58).

Perhaps the best instance of John Paul’s usage of Co-redemptrix, which provides a clearly articulated theological framework and identifies Mary’s unique cooperation in the Redemption, occurs in a homily which he gave at the Marian shrine of Alborada in Ecuador in 1985:

The silent journey that begins with her Immaculate Conception and passes through the “yes” of Nazareth, which makes her the Mother of God, finds on Calvary a particularly important moment. There also, accepting and assisting at the sacrifice of her Son, Mary is the dawn of Redemption... Crucified spiritually with her crucified son (cf. Gal. 2:20), she contemplated with heroic love the death of her God, she “lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth” (*Lumen Gentium*, 58)....

In fact, at Calvary she united herself with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church; her maternal heart shared to the very depths the will of Christ “to gather into one all the dispersed children of God” (Jn. 11:52). Having suffered for the Church, Mary deserved to become the Mother of all the disciples of her Son, the Mother of their unity....

...As she was in a special way close to the Cross of her Son, she also had to have a privileged experience of his Resurrection. In fact, Mary’s role as Co-redemptrix did not cease with the glorification of her Son.¹⁰

⁸ Pius XI, “The Glories of Mary, Coredemptrix of the Human Race,” *Audience with Pilgrimage from Vicenza* (Nov. 30, 1933), *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 1, 1933.

⁹ John Paul II, *Greetings to the Sick Following General Audience* (Sept. 8, 1982); *Angelus Address* (Nov. 4, 1984), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 860: 1; *Palm Sunday Address at Alborada, Guayaquil, Ecuador* (Jan. 31, 1985), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 876: 7; *Palm Sunday and World Youth Day Address* (March 31, 1985), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 880: 12; *Address to Federated Alliance of Transportation of Sick to Lourdes* (March 24, 1990); *Address Commemorating Sixth Centenary of Canonization of St. Bridget of Sweden* (Oct. 6, 1991), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1211: 4.

¹⁰ *Palm Sunday Address at Alborada, Guayaquil, Ecuador* (Jan. 31, 1985), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 876: 7.

If then, following this papal teaching, we restrict the term of Co-redemptrix to designate that unique cooperation of the Virgin Mary in the Redemption accomplished by Christ, with the particular emphasis on her consent in giving the Redeemer his body at the Annunciation and Mary's union in suffering with Christ on Calvary, then the title of Co-redemptrix reflects a specific papal and conciliar doctrine.

One possible objection to the title, Co-redemptrix concerns an alleged ambiguity, namely that it does not properly distinguish Mary's cooperative role from Christ's absolute foundational role as Redeemer. In his 1994 *Civiltà Cattolica* article, Fr. Galot, S.J., responds to this objection in discussing the historical development of the title:

At first, Mary was considered above all as the woman who gave birth to the Redeemer; by virtue of this maternity, the origin of the work of salvation was recognized in her and she was called, "Mother of salvation", "Mother of the restoration of all things."¹¹ A more attentive doctrinal reflection had made it understood how Mary was not only the mother who had brought forth the Redeemer for mankind, but also she who had participated most especially in the sufferings of the Passion and in the offering of the sacrifice. The title of Co-redemptrix expresses this new perspective: the association of the mother in the redemptive work of the Son. One should note that this title does not challenge the absolute primacy of Christ, since it does not suggest at all an equality. Only Christ is called the Redeemer; he is not Co-redeemer, but simply Redeemer. In her role as Co-redemptrix, Mary offered her motherly collaboration in the work of her Son, a collaboration which implies dependence and submission, since only Christ is the absolute master of his own work.¹²

In using this title, it is further necessary to distinguish the unique aspect of Mary as Co-redemptrix from the general call of all Christians to participate in the work of redemption as "co-redeemers."¹³ Mary alone participates with a universal redemptive value in the act of redemption itself as mother and associate in his suffering, whereas the participation by all other Christians as "God's co-workers" (1 Cor. 3:9) takes place after the historical accomplishment of the Redemption, in the order of releasing and spreading the fruits of redemption. As summarized by John Paul II:

The collaboration of Christians in salvation takes place after the Calvary event, whose fruits they endeavor to spread through prayer and sacrifice. Mary instead cooperated during the event itself and in the role as mother; thus her cooperation embraces the whole of Christ's saving work. She

¹¹ Severinus of Gabala, *Or. 6 de mundi creatione*, 10 (PG 54, 4); Saint Anselm, *Or. 52, 7* (PL 158, 956 B).

¹² Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., "Maria Corredentrice. Controversie e problemi dottrinali," *Civiltà Cattolica*, 1994, III, pp. 213-225, English translation as published in *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, p. 7.

¹³ John Paul II, *Address to the Sick*, Hospital of the Brothers of St. John of God (Fatebenefratelli) on Rome's Tiber Island (April 5, 1981); *General Audience* (January 13, 1982).

alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of mankind.¹⁴

Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces

The second Marian title, “Mediatrix of all graces,” designates Mary’s unique role in distributing all the graces of redemption merited by Christ to fallen humanity. Following our liturgical principle of *lex orandi lex credendi*, we see the liturgical approbation of this title and role in the approval of the mass and office of *Mediatrix omnium gratiarum* by the Congregation of Rites in 1921.¹⁵

Even more evident is the consistent succession of papal teaching which not only authoritatively teaches the distribution of the graces of redemption by the Mother of Jesus to fallen humanity, but also repeatedly emphasizes its *omnium* component: that *all graces of redemption without exception*, are mediated through the intercession of Mary. It is worthy of our attention to acknowledge the clear and repeated teaching of the Ordinary Magisterium in the form of papal encyclicals on the doctrine of Mediatrix of all graces, especially within the proper context of religious assent called for in *Lumen Gentium* 25:

Bl. Pius IX: – “For God has committed to Mary the treasury of all good things, in order that everyone may know that through her are obtained every hope, every grace, and all salvation...” (*Ubi Primum*, 1849).

Leo XIII: – [Virgin Mary] “through whom [Christ] has chosen to be the dispenser of all heavenly graces” (*Jucunda Semper*, 1883); “It is right to say that nothing at all of the immense treasury of every grace which the Lord accumulated – for ‘grace and truth come from Jesus Christ’ (Jn 1:17) – nothing is imparted to us except through Mary...” (*Octobri Mense*, 1891).

St. Pius X: – [Mary is the] “dispensatrix of all the gifts acquired by the death of the Redeemer”; “...she became most worthily the ‘reparatrix of the lost world’ and dispensatrix of all the gifts that our Savior purchased for us by his death and his blood”; “For she is the neck of our Head by which He communicates to his Mystical Body all spiritual gifts” (*Ad Diem Illum*, 1904).

Benedict XV: – “With her suffering and dying son, Mary endured suffering and almost death.... One can truly affirm that together with Christ she has redeemed the human race... For this reason, every kind of grace we receive from the treasury of the redemption is ministered as it were through the hands of the same sorrowful Virgin...” (Apostolic Letter, *Inter Sodalicia*, 1918).

¹⁴ John Paul II, *General Audience* (April 9, 1997), *Insegnamenti* XX/1 (1997), 621-622, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 1487:7.

¹⁵ *Approval of the Mass and Office of Mediatrix of All Graces*, Rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Rites (Jan. 12, 1921).

Pius XI: – “The virgin who is treasurer of all graces with God...(*Cognitum Sane*); “...We know that all things are imparted to us from God, the greatest and best, through the hands of the Mother of God” (*Ingravescentibus Malis*, 1937).

Pius XII: – “It is the will of God that we obtain all favors through Mary, let everyone hasten to have recourse to Mary” (*Superiore Anno*, 1940); “She teaches us all virtues; she gives us her Son and with him all the help we need, for ‘God wished us to have everything through Mary’” (*Mediator Dei*, 1947).

The Council, while removing the “*omnium gratiarum*” designation due to ecumenical concerns,¹⁶ nonetheless clearly teaches that “taken up into heaven, she did not lay aside this saving office, but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation” (LG 62). This conciliar teaching of her mediation of grace is presented without any intrinsic or inferred limitation to the universality of the gifts of eternal salvation which come from the redemptive sacrifice to fallen humanity through the intercession of Mary.

Postconciliar mariology is also not lacking in its articulation of the doctrine of Mediatrix of all graces. As one recent example, Cardinal Schönborn bases his explanation of the doctrine of *omnium gratiarum* upon its classical incarnational foundations:

Mary, “Mediatrix of all graces”...Is this an exaggeration or can one proclaim this and understand it in a right manner? Isn’t Christ alone Mediator of all graces?...

Mary, as no other human being, makes visible that there is a true cooperation with the plan of God. But it is a cooperation completely subordinated to the working of God, not beside it on an equal level, but *under* the working of God. Exactly by looking at Mary do we see that God alone is the giver of grace. I am not able to give salvation to myself, yet I can cooperate. God alone causes salvation, but we are allowed to cooperate...

Is Mary then the Mediatrix of all graces? If I can be an instrument of grace for others as a priest, and each of us instruments of grace through the grace of baptism, then we are all cooperators of God. Why then should Mary not be Mediatrix of grace? We call Mary, “Mother of Grace” (*Gnadenmutter*). If it is true that Christ is the source and cause of all graces, if He is the only Mediator, then is not Mary, who gave birth to him the Mother of the Redeemer?

But is Mary Mediatrix of *all* graces? Can a creature have such a role?...Now in faith we can say that if she has given birth to the Redeemer, then she has not done so strictly for herself. She is the Mother

¹⁶ Cf. Fr. Michael O’Carroll, C.S.Sp., “Mediation” in *Theotokos, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Michael Glaser, 1982; cf. Msgr. Arthur Calkins, “A Response to the Declaration of the Commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy,” *Contemporary Insights on a Fifth Marian Dogma: Theological Foundations III*, Queenship, 2000, pp. 129-131.

of Jesus not only for herself, but for all those redeemed by Jesus... If we believe that no grace comes to us except through Jesus, that He is truly the source of all grace, and that He himself is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, then we can believe that Mary wants to mediate all of this to us.¹⁷

What of the objection of ambiguity regarding the title of Mediatrix of all graces? Proper distinctions remove ambiguities, and three distinctions assist in a precise understanding of this Church doctrine: 1. an appropriate limitation within the general genus of grace; 2. an understanding of the title in light of Mary's own Immaculate Conception; 3. the universality of her mediation of graces regardless of historical and temporal limitations.

In light of the multiform schools and categorizations of grace, from uncreated grace to the graces of creation, it is appropriate to limit the grace mediated by Mary to humanity to the category of the *graces of redemption*, merited by Christ the Redeemer at Calvary. This specification allows the beauty of diversity in respect to the different schools and classifications of grace, while at the same time expressing the universal nature of Mary's mediation of all the graces derived from Calvary for fallen humanity's salvation.

Past objection has been made regarding the *omnium* element of the title in light of the mediation of the grace of Mary's own Immaculate Conception. While it is true that Mary did not mediate to herself her first grace of the Immaculate Conception, this does not represent a true limitation of the title. For what is evident in papal texts is that her universal mediation of all graces of redemption refers to redemptive graces from Christ to *fallen* humanity. The graces of her Immaculate Conception are not inclusive of the graces of redemption distributed to fallen humanity, and therefore both doctrinal precision and a true revelation of the universality of Mary's mediation of graces to humanity are preserved in the title, *Mediatrix omnium gratiarum*.

In the participation by the Mother of Jesus in the historical accomplishment of the Redemption event, she cooperated in a mediatorial role in the acquiring of all the graces of redemption. In virtue of this role of participation in the acquisition of all the graces of redemption merited by Christ, as the New Eve with and under the New Adam, she is rightly seen as possessing a mediatorial role in respect to all graces of redemption. These redemptive graces are then released to humanity, regardless of historically when or how the graces of redemption are distributed.

Moreover, the Christian revelation of Jesus Christ as the Source and Author of all graces, and the further New Testament revelation that Mary mediated the Source and Author of all graces to humanity (Lk. 1:38) sustains the universality of her role as Mediatrix of all the graces of redemption in the person of Jesus Christ, regardless of its specific mode of historical distribution. In all cases, Mary had a true mediatorial role in regards to all the graces of redemption. This allows for the freedom of different schools of thought regarding questions such as, for example, the graces of the Old Testament or the immediacy of graces of the sacraments. What the popes teach and the faithful believe is that the Mother of the Redeemer is directly involved in the distribution of each and every grace of the Redemption.

¹⁷ Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, "Mediatrix of all graces," *Catechetics Presentation*, St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna, May, 1999.

Mary, Advocate

In fairness to the Commission, one can posit with probability that the principal concerns of ambiguity rested upon the first two titles as Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of all graces, and not in any fundamental way with the ancient patristic title of “Advocate,” used from the time of St. Irenaeus and St. Bernard,¹⁸ to the Council and John Paul, with scores of popes and saints in between.¹⁹ Most every Marian magisterial document has underscored the singular intercessory power and role of Mary, above all angels and saints, in bringing the needs of humanity to Christ.

As the Marian mediation of grace emphasizes her distribution of grace from Christ to humanity, Marian advocacy emphasizes her intercession on behalf of humanity back to Christ. Oftentimes modeled within a type of royalty, Mary as Advocate and Queen in the Kingdom of God efficaciously presents the prayers of humanity before the throne of her Son, Christ the King.²⁰ Any fundamental objection against the recognition of Mary as Advocate would be an undermining of an essential component of her universal spiritual motherhood and her pre-eminent intercessory role within the communion of saints, and as such would constitute a grave denial of Marian doctrine.

“Against the Direction of the Second Vatican Council”

The second objection is indeed a serious one, for it identifies the proposed Marian definition as running contrary to the direction of a council protected from error by the Spirit, and as such demands strong consideration. The specific objection contained in the Czestochowa statement reads: “Furthermore, the theological direction taken by the Second Vatican Council which did not wish to define any of these titles, should not be abandoned.”

For the sake of utmost clarity, let us return to the principal texts from *Lumen Gentium* that teach with council authority the Marian roles of Coredemption, Mediation, and Advocacy. We begin with Marian coredemption:

1. LG 56: Thus the daughter of Adam, Mary, consenting to the word of God, became the Mother of Jesus. Committing herself wholeheartedly and impeded by no sin to God’s saving will, she devoted

¹⁸ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* V, c. 19, 1; St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Aqueductu* 7, ed. J. Leclercq. V, 279.

¹⁹ Cf. LG, 62; Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, 40, 47, (March 25, 1987); cf. Fr. Michael O’Carroll, C.S.Sp., “Advocate,” *Theotokos, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Michael Glaser, 1982, p. 5-6.

²⁰ Pius XI, Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor* (May 8, 1928), *AAS* 20, p. 185; Pius XI, *Papal Allocution to French Pilgrims Present for Reading of “de tuto,” Canonization of Blessed Antida Thouret* (15 August 1933), *L’Osservatore Romano*, August 15, 1933; Pius XII, *Papal Allocution at the Canonization of Blessed Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort* (July 21, 1947), *AAS* 39, p. 408; *Radio Message to Fatima* (May 13, 1946), *AAS* 38, p. 268; cf. also Old Testament foreshadowings in *1 Kings 2:19; 2 Kings 11:3; 1 Kings 15:9-13; Jer. 13:18-20; Prov. 31:8-9; 2 Chr. 22:2-4*; New Testament foreshadowings in *Lk. 1:32; Lk. 1:44; Jn. 2:3; Jn. 19:26*.

herself totally, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, under and with him, serving the mystery of redemption, by the grace of Almighty God. Rightly therefore, the Fathers see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating in the work of man's salvation through faith and obedience. For as St. Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race (Adv. Haer. III, 22, 4)." Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert with him in their preaching: "the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound by her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith (St. Irenaeus, *ibid.*)." Comparing Mary with Eve, they called her "Mother of the Living," and frequently claim: "death through Eve, life through Mary (St. Jerome, Epist. 22, 21)."

2. LG 57: This work of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death...[followed by a scriptural summation of her cooperation in the work of redemption through the infancy narratives].
3. LG 58: Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to her disciple, with the words: "Woman, behold thy son" (Jn.19:26-27).
4. LG 61: In the designs of divine Providence she was the gracious mother of the divine Redeemer here on earth, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, shared her Son's sufferings as he died on the cross. Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.

This obvious and certain presence of the doctrine of Marian coredemption in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council sustains contemporary theologians like Papal Theologian Cottier in commenting:

The Council's text, which we have quoted, strongly emphasizes this: Beneath the cross, Mary suffers deeply with her only born Son, she joins in his sacrifice with maternal love; lovingly consenting to the immolation of the victim generated by her: what could these words

mean if not that Mary plays an active role in the mystery of the Passion and the work of redemption? The Council itself clarifies this...²¹

And also from Fr. Galot:

The Council did not at all reject the idea of a cooperation in the work of redemption. It underscored, in fact, the union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation, a union which is “made manifest from the time of Christ’s virginal conception up to his death” (LG 57... Without using the term, “Co-redemptrix,” the Council clearly enunciated the doctrine: a cooperation of a unique kind, a maternal cooperation in the life and the work of the Savior, which reaches its apex in the participation in the sacrifice of Calvary and which is oriented toward the supernatural restoration of souls.²²

A major error in seeking to comprehend Church teaching on Marian coredeemption is to *artificially separate the title, Co-redemptrix from the doctrine of Coredeemption* from which the title comes, and upon which the title doctrinally rests. While it is true that the Council chose not to use the title, Co-redemptrix, due to ecumenical reasons,²³ it must be understood that the doctrine of Marian coredeemption binds the minds and wills of all the faithful as conciliar teaching. The “*heart*” of the revealed truth is the doctrine of Marian coredeemption, authoritatively taught by the Council and the Papal Magisterium; *its name*, in a single word, is “*Co-redemptrix*.” The title should rightly be understood as the “word” reflecting the conciliar Marian doctrine from which it derives.

Moreover, it appears that the Council Fathers were to some degree restrained by a preparatory commission from directly using the term, Co-redemptrix, even though it is a title confirmed as having been used by popes and one of a series of magisterial terms “in themselves absolutely true,” but omitted by the theological preparatory commission due to the possible difficulty in understanding them by “separated brethren.” This pre-determination by the preparatory commission, is contained in the Prologue of the first draft document which eventually become *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter 8:

Certain expressions and words used by Supreme Pontiffs have been omitted, which, in themselves are absolutely true, but which may only be understood with difficulty by separated brethren (in this case Protestants). Among such words may be numbered the following: “Co-redemptrix of the human race”...[Pius X, Pius XII].²⁴

²¹ Fr. Georges Cottier, O.P., “The Co-redemption,” *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 4, 2002, Italian edition.

²² Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., “Mary Co-redemptrix: Controversies and Doctrinal Questions,” *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, pp. 8, 14.

²³ Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., *Ibid.*; Fr. Georges Cottier, O.P., *Ibid.*

²⁴ Cf. Msgr. Arthur Calkins, “A Response to the Declaration of the Commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy,” *Contemporary Insights on a Fifth Marian Dogma: Theological Foundations III*, Queenship, 2000, p. 129.

The prohibiting of the title of Co-redemptrix seems particularly inconsistent in light of the fact that the doctrine of coredemption was already such a foundational mariological teaching of the Council, and one which the non-Catholic observers, competent in soteriology, would certainly comprehend as reflecting a theology of cooperation not immediately compatible with many of their own respective *sola gratia* orientations.

Marian mediation is also a certain part of the Council's mariological teaching:

1. LG 60: In the words of the apostle there is but one mediator: "for there is but one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a redemption for all" (1 Tim. 2:5-6). But Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely upon it and draws all its power from it. It does not hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but on the contrary fosters it.

2. LG 61: ... For this reason, she is a mother to us in the order of grace.

3. LG 62: This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home. Therefore she is invoked under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix. This, however, is so understood that it neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator.

... The unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.

The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary, which it constantly experiences and recommends to the heartfelt attention of the faithful, so that encouraged by this maternal help they may the more closely adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer.

Beyond the previous references to Marian advocacy as contained in LG 62, the Council further affirms the entirely singular intercession of the Mother of Jesus in doctrine and in praxis:

LG 66: Mary has by grace been exalted above all angels and men to a place second only to her Son, as the most holy Mother of God who was involved in the mysteries of Christ: she is rightly honored by a special cult in the Church. From earliest times the Blessed Virgin is honored under the title of the Mother of God, whose protection the faithful take refuge together in prayer in all their perils and needs.

LG 69: The entire body of the faithful pours forth urgent supplications to the Mother of God and of men that she, who aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers, may now, exalted as she is above all the angels and saints, intercede before her Son in the fellowship of all the saints...

Upon this foundation of conciliar teaching on Marian coredemption, mediation, and advocacy, we can now maintain that the papal definition of these titles would not be contrary to the theological teaching and direction of the Council, and, quite the contrary, would embody a progressive response to the encouragement of the Vatican Fathers towards doctrinal development and clarification within mariology.

First of all, the Council was self-defined and self-determined as being a pastoral council, not a dogmatic council in the mode of Trent and Vatican I, and thereby rejected petitions for new dogmatic definitions. Their overall and *a priori* rejection of new definitions cannot be construed as some type of specific and perennial condemnation against a petition for a postconciliar definition of a fifth Marian dogma.

Secondly, a significant number of petitions from the Council Fathers were entered for the dogmatic definitions of Mary as both “Co-redemptrix of the human race (50 Fathers) and as Mediatrix of all graces (382 Fathers in pre-Council consultation).²⁵ This testifies to the legitimate desire for a Marian definition of coredemption and mediation of all graces from among a serious number of Council Fathers, despite the fundamental commitment against new definitions as predetermined by the Council.

Pope John Paul in his December 13, 1995 Audience refers to the numerous Council Fathers who wished to “enrich Marian doctrine with other statements on Mary’s role in the work of salvation,” but that the “particular context in which Vatican II’s Mariological debate took place did not allow these wishes.” The manifest desire by a large number of Council Fathers for extended treatment of Mary’s work in salvation and her mediating role is identified by the Holy Father, also a Council Father, as “substantial and widespread:”

During the Council sessions, many Fathers wished further to enrich Marian doctrine with other statements on Mary’s role in the work of salvation. The particular context in which Vatican II’s Mariological debate took place did not allow these wishes, although substantial and widespread, to be accepted, but the Council’s entire discussion of Mary

²⁵ Cf. Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., “Mary Co-redemptrix: Controversies and Doctrinal Questions,” *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, p. 8; cf. A. Perego, “Aperture conciliari per i titoli mariani di corredentrice e di mediatrice” in *Divus Thomas* 78, 1975, p. 364; Fr. Michael O’Carroll, C.S.Sp., “Mediation,” *Theotokos, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Michael Glaser, 1982, p. 242.

remains vigorous and balanced, and the topics themselves, although not fully defined, received significant attention in their overall treatment. Thus, the hesitation of some of the Fathers regarding the title of Mediatrix did not prevent the Council from using this title once, and from stating in other terms Mary's mediating role from her consent to the Angel's message to her motherhood in the order of grace (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 62). Furthermore, the Council asserts her co-operation "in a wholly singular way" in the work of restoring supernatural life to souls (*ibid.*, n.61).²⁶

Thirdly, the fact that an ecumenical council did not act on a petition for dogmatic definition at the time of the Council itself does not rule out its possibility after the Council. Nor does it infer that the "direction" of the Council was against the eventual definition, but that it was against the definition as an immediate fruit of that particular council. Recent conciliar history bears this out.

At the First Vatican Council, a petition for the definition of the Assumption was put forth by approximately 200 Fathers, but was not accepted as opportune as the immediate fruit of Vatican I, only later to be defined by Pius XII. Just as it would be theologically and historically inaccurate to see the Vatican I rejection of the Assumption petition as a perennial prohibition against the definition, so too one must not assert that a postconciliar definition of these three Marian titles and roles is against the "direction of Vatican II," simply because they did not see it opportune as an immediate conciliar fruit. Such would be an inappropriate insertion of intentionality into the Council Fathers' theological direction.

The Holy Father himself was no stranger to the mariological disputes during the Council. In September 1964, Bishop Karol Wojtyla entered a written petition requesting that Chapter II, rather than Chapter VIII, be dedicated to the treatment of the Blessed Virgin Mary.²⁷ The same petition was submitted by the general body of Polish bishops at approximately the same time during the Council.²⁸ Having the second chapter present the conciliar teaching on Mary would have added greater emphasis to the mariological dimension of the Council teaching. And yet it was not to be accepted by the combination of commission theologians and some Council Fathers.

Moreover, *Lumen Gentium* 54, with a legitimate spirit of openness and progression that marked so much of the Council, candidly admits that its presentation of Marian doctrine is not "complete." This in itself infers a recognition that later doctrinal progress would take place. "Those opinions therefore may be lawfully retained which are propounded in Catholic schools concerning her,"²⁹ a reference which must be understood to include one of the most highly studied mariological themes in the two decades leading

²⁶ John Paul II, *General Audience* (December 13, 1995).

²⁷ Cf. *Acta synodalia* III/2, September 1964, 178-179; also cited by Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Mariological Society of America Presentation* (May 22-29), New York.

²⁸ Cf. *AS* II/3, September 1964, 856-857.

²⁹ *LG*, 54.

up to the Council, that of Marian coredeemption and her subsequent mediation of grace.³⁰

Hence, to speak of the theological direction of the Council as a stagnant and permanent prohibition against future mariological doctrinal development, including mariological progress in the form of a potential definition, seems so alien to the driving and creative soul of the Council, which was then infused into the People of God, leading them towards a “New Pentecost” as envisaged and petitioned for by Bl. John XXIII.

The Commission goes on to cite previous study commissions “from the first decades of this [last] century,” which, over seventy years ago, examined the question of the opportuneness of defining Mary’s universal mediation of graces for that time of the Church. But their statement fails to record that two out of the three commissions established by Rome, the Spanish and the Belgian, not only concluded *positively* for the definition of Mediatrix of all graces (with the third Roman Commission failing to publish a conclusion), but also proposed draft formulas for the definition itself of universal Marian mediation, as, for example, the Spanish commission formula: “being truly and rightly the dispenser of all divine gifts and Mediatrix of all graces.”³¹

Furthermore, in 1942 the Sacred Congregation of Rites, under Pius XII, made the following statement which attests to the common theological consensus of the doctrine of Mary’s universal mediation: “Gathering together the tradition of the Fathers, the Doctor Mellifluus [St. Bernard] teaches that God wants us to have everything through Mary. This pious and salutary doctrine all theologians at the present hold in common accord.” We have here a sacred office of the Holy See testifying to the common consensus of theologians for the doctrine of Mediatrix of all graces.³²

In its recalling of the “history of the question” regarding the definability of Mediatrix of all graces, the Commission further failed to make reference to its own “mother conference” of the 1950 International Mariological Congress held in Rome on the theme of *Alma Socia Christi*.

At this international Roman Marian Congress, organized by the Franciscan Marian Commission founded by Fr. K. Balic, O.F.M., (and where the present Pontifical International Marian Academy finds its own historical roots), mariologists identified the theological foundations, proved the maturity of doctrine, and illustrated the ecclesial opportuneness for the solemn definition of Mary’s universal mediation of graces. All this constituted the basis of their formal petition to Pius XII for its immediate papal

³⁰ Cf. Juniper Carol, *De Corredemptione Beatae Virginis Mariae*, Civitas Vaticana, 1950, pp. 152, 608; J. Bittremieux, *De meditatione universali B. M. Virginis quoad gratias*, Brugis, 1926, p. 201; A. Robichaud, S.M., “Mary, Dispensatrix of All Graces,” *Mariology*, V. 2, p. 445; Fr. Michael O’Carroll, C.S.Sp., “Mediation,” *Theotokos, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Michael Glaser, 1982, p. 241; G. Roschini, S.M., *Maria Santissima Nella Storia Della Salvezza*, V. II, p. 224; cf. also during the 1940s-1950s: *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, Madrid; *Etudes Mariales, Bulletin de la Société française d’Etudes Mariales*, Paris; *Marian Studies*, Dayton, Ohio.

³¹ Cf. Fr. Michael O’Carroll, C.S.Sp., “The Fifth Marian Dogma and the Commission: Theological Gaps,” *Contemporary Insights on a Fifth Marian Dogma: Theological Foundations III*, Queenship, 2000, p. 143; cf. also Sacred Congregation of Rites under Pius XII, *Miracles for the Canonization of Louis M. Grignion de Montfort*, AAS 34, 1942, p. 44: “Gathering together the tradition of the Fathers, the Doctor Mellifluus [St. Bernard] teaches that God wants us to have everything through Mary. This pious and salutary doctrine all theologians at the present hold in common accord.”

³² Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Miracles for the Canonization of Louis M. Grignion de Montfort*, AAS 34, 1942, p. 44.

proclamation in December, 1950, just one month following the dogmatic definition of the Assumption.³³

The Czestochowa statement then comments that from the time of Pius XII, the term Co-redemptrix “has not been used by the Papal Magisterium in its significant documents.” Apart from their failure to mention the use and explanation of the term Co-redemptrix by the preceding pontiff, Pius XI, or the significance of the repeated papal usage of Co-redemptrix by John Paul II, there is also concern regarding the underlying principle put forth by their comment inferring “insignificant” documents of the Papal Magisterium.

While granting a legitimate hierarchy of expressions of the Papal Magisterium, if nonetheless the Commission seeks to infer that they do not regard papal addresses below the level of encyclicals or apostolic letters as “significant,” then they themselves seem to be straying from the Council, both in thought and in practice.

Not only does the Council call for a faithful incorporation of *Lumen Gentium* 25, but in precedence, the Council itself refers to papal addresses on numerous occasions for its own theological and doctrinal grounding in several conciliar documents and for critical conciliar conclusions.³⁴ In the same way, the numerous papal addresses, including the most contemporary expression of the manifest mind of John Paul II on the legitimate usage of Co-redemptrix and the theological foundations and context surrounding it, do possess a true magisterial significance worthy of doctrinal confirmation, with neither the doctrinal inflation that would infer a dogmatic completion, nor a doctrinal minimalism which would grant the Pope’s official addresses no authoritative nor doctrinal significance whatever.

“Further Study in Renewed Trinitarian, Ecclesiological, Anthropological, Perspective”

The third principal objection raised by the Committee states: “Even if the titles were assigned a content which could be accepted as belonging to the deposit of faith, the definition of these titles, however, in the present situation, would be lacking in theological clarity, as such titles and doctrines inherent in them still require further study in a renewed Trinitarian, ecclesiological and anthropological perspective.” The essence of this objection would prohibit a solemn definition (even if the ambiguity posed in the first objection could in fact be satisfied with proper distinctions and theological

³³ Cf. Fr. Michael O’Carroll, C.S.Sp., “Congresses”, “Mediation”, *Theotokos, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Michael Glaser, 1982, pp. 105, 242.

³⁴ Cf. Pius XII, Allocution *Vous nous avez* (September 22, 1956), *AAS* 48, 1956, p. 174, *LG*, Ch. II, footnote 3; Pius XII, Radio Message *Nell Alba* (December 24, 1941), *AAS* 34, 1942, p. 21, *LG*, Ch. II, footnote 15; John XXIII, Allocution *Jubilare Deo* (May 8, 1960), *AAS* 52, 1960, p. 466, *LG*, Ch. III, footnote 21; Paul VI, *Homily in Vatican* (October 20, 1963), *AAS* 55, 1963, p. 1014, *LG*, Ch. III, footnote 21; Pius IX, *Consist. Allocution* (March 15, 1875), *Denzinger* 3112-3117, only in new edition, *LG*, Ch. III, footnote 59; Pius XII, Allocution *Alla vostra filiale* (March 23, 1958), *AAS* 50, 1958, p. 220, *LG*, Ch. IV, footnote 5; Pius XII, Allocution *L’Importance de la Presse Catholique* (February 17, 1950), *AAS* 42, 1950, p. 256, *LG*, Ch. IV, footnote 7; Pius XII, *Radio Message to Fatima* (May 13, 1946), *AAS* 38, 1946, p. 268, *LG*, Ch. VIII, footnote 16; Pius XII, loc. cit., *Denzinger* 2294 (3829-2830), *EB* 557-562, *Dei Verbum*, Ch. III, footnote 8.

grounding) due to the impediment of a lack of further study in “renewed Trinitarian, ecclesiological, and anthropological perspective.”

Once again, some ambiguity appears present in the objection itself. No specific mariological elements within the expansive disciplines named are mentioned as lacking proper maturity of substance or expression for the definition. If, in fact, serious privations in “renewed” Trinitarian, ecclesiological, or anthropological elements of the Marian titles and roles in question were so significant as to directly prevent a formal papal definition, then: A) the Pope himself would not be using the Marian terms; and B) respectfully, the burden of proof would be upon the Commission to specify which elements were lacking, a delineation which could then assist in the process of proper doctrinal development (LG 54).

In the last ten years, over twelve volumes of mariological research treating the themes of Marian coredeemption and mediation have been published.³⁵ They examine the three Marian titles precisely within the particular disciplines of renewed conciliar Trinitarian theology, ecclesiology, and anthropology, both philosophically phenomenological and theologically personalist.³⁶

But even more significant has been the unquestionable contribution to the mariological development of coredeemption and “Maternal Mediation” as consistently promulgated over the last twenty years by the present Pontiff. As a true pope of the Council, there can be little question of his own “renewed” Trinitarian, ecclesiological, and, in particular, anthropological contribution to the study of mariology in general, and coredeemption and mediation in particular.³⁷

John Paul’s mariological development has been so consistent throughout his papacy because of the view of his overall pontificate, as well as the Church and the contemporary world situation in general, through the eyes and with the heart of one consecrated to the Immaculate Heart: he is the Totus Tuus pope.

This was again recently manifested during his August 19, 2002 pilgrimage to Poland where at the Sanctuary of Kalwaria he entrusted the country of Poland and his own pontificate, as the “Totus Tuus,” to the “Most Holy Mother, Our Lady of Calvary,” and also referred to the mysterious bond between the suffering Savior and “his co-suffering Mother:”

³⁵ Cf. *Mary Coredeempratrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations*, Queenship, 1995; *Mary Coredeempratrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations II*, Queenship, 1996; *Contemporary Insights on a Fifth Marian Dogma: Theological Foundations III*, Queenship, 2000; *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002; Brunero Gherardini, *La Corredentrice nel mistero di Cristo e della Chiesa*, Rome-Monopoli, 1998; *Maria Corredentrice. Storia e Teologia*, Vols. I-IV, Casa Editrice Mariana, 1998-2001; *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, Vols. I, II, New Bedford, 2000, 2002; *Immaculata Mediatrix*, Mariological Review, 6 issues, Castelpetroso, 2001-2002.

³⁶ Cf. Prof. Dr. Josef Seifert, “Mary Co-redemptrix: Philosophical and Personalist Foundations,” *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, p. 151.

³⁷ Cf. for example, *Redemptoris Mater*, III, “Maternal Mediation;” Msgr. Arthur Calkins, “Pope John Paul II’s Teaching on Marian Coredeemption,” *Mary Coredeempratrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations II*, Queenship, 1996, p. 113; Msgr. Arthur Calkins “The Mystery of Mary Co-redemptrix in the Papal Magisterium,” *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, p. 25; John Paul II, *General Audience* (October 25, 1995); John Paul II, *General Audience* (April 2, 1997); John Paul II, *General Audience* (April 9, 1997); John Paul II, *General Audience* (October 1, 1997).

How many times have I seen that the Mother of the Son of God turns her eyes of mercy upon the concerns of the afflicted, that she obtains for them the grace to resolve difficult problems, and that they, in their powerlessness, come to a fuller realization of the amazing power and wisdom of Divine Providence?... This place wondrously helps the heart and mind to gain deeper insight into the mystery of that bond which united the suffering Saviour and his co-suffering Mother. At the centre of this mystery of love everyone who comes here rediscovers himself, his life, his daily existence, his weakness and, at the same time, the power of faith and hope: that power which springs up from the assurance that the Mother does not abandon her children at times of trouble, but leads them to her Son and entrusts them to his mercy.

"Standing by the cross of Jesus were his Mother, and his Mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene" (Jn 19:25). She who was linked to the Son of God by bonds of blood and by maternal love, there, at the foot of the Cross, experienced this union in suffering. She alone, despite the pain of her mother's heart, knew that this suffering had meaning. She had trust – trust in spite of everything – that the ancient promise was being fulfilled: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel"* (Gn 3:15). And her trust was vindicated when her dying Son addressed her: "Woman"... Most Holy Mother, Our Lady of Calvary, obtain also for me strength in body and spirit, that I may carry out to the end the mission given me by the Risen Lord. To you I give back all the fruits of my life and my ministry; to you I entrust the future of the Church; to you I offer my nation; in you do I trust and once more to you I declare: *Totus Tuus, Maria! Totus Tuus. Amen.*³⁸

Within some mariological circles, there appears to be a marked appreciation for the mariology contained in *Marialis Cultus*, certainly profound in itself, but sometimes juxtaposed with a lack of full appreciation for the rich mariological development presented by the magisterium of John Paul II. John Paul's mariology has displayed a particular development of these specific marian titles and roles, including renewed christological and pneumatological perspectives; personalist and authentically feminist understandings; and ecclesologically typical as well as ecumenically contributory dimensions. Manifestations of these inspired mariological developments are particularly apparent in *Redemptoris Mater*, *Salvifici Doloris*, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, and the pregnant series of 70 mariological audiences presented by John Paul from 1995 to 1997.³⁹

As future theology will certainly appreciate the new mariological advances put forth by this pope, so should the present mariological community, especially in the area of Maternal coredemption and mediation. No mariological foundation is lacking in John Paul's theology of Marian coredemption, mediation, and advocacy, that in itself could constitute a clear impediment to a Marian definition.

³⁸ John Paul II, *Papal Homily for the 400th Anniversary of the Dedication of the Sanctuary of Kalwari, Zebrzydowska* (August 19, 2002).

³⁹ John Paul II, *General Audiences* (September 6, 1995 - November 12, 1997).

It must also be remembered that a Marian definition neither completely captures the mystery in question, nor brings to a close the progressive theological reflection on that mystery. One need only ponder the greater medieval insights into the *Theotokos* mystery from both East and West, centuries after the definition of Ephesus; or more recently the penetrating pneumatological and mariological insights of St. Maximilian Kolbe following the definition of the Immaculate Conception.⁴⁰

A definition brings clarity and light to the faithful⁴¹ in capturing the heart of the mystery in a dogmatic formula, without requiring all conceivable questions relative to the mystery solved. Nor does a definition infer its respective mystery is now exhausted by a theological canon. The same fair principles of examination should be applied to the question of opportuneness in defining the doctrine of Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate.

“Ecumenical Difficulties”

The fourth objection voiced by the Czestochowa Commission states: “Finally, the theologians, especially the non-Catholics, were sensitive to ecumenical difficulties which would be involved in such a definition.”

A comprehensive discussion of authentic Catholic ecumenism and its proper praxis within the Church is one far beyond the scope of this work. At the same time, two questions can assist in an “ecclesial examination of conscience” regarding a faithful Catholic ecumenical outlook and implementation.

On the one hand, is the ecumenical mandate of the Church met with a certain conservatism, which does not interiorly embrace the mission of Christian unity, but only superficially engages in ecumenical gestures at best, and, at worst, cares little for the fact that the Body of Christ is divided, as long as we remain members of the one true Church? Hosts of such a position, even when accompanied with otherwise doctrinal orthodoxy, do not in this dimension share in the Heart of Christ, for their hearts do not experience the pain of the Heart of the Lord, who daily suffers the mystical pains of division and disunity experienced by his own Body.

On the other hand, has the concern for the adverse opinions of other ecclesial bodies to the fullness of doctrine and life within the Catholic Church led some to habitually minimize elements specifically Catholic, particularly elements Marian and papal, to such degree that it can seriously effect the interior and organic life of the Church and her spiritual fruitfulness of doctrine and life? Such detriment to the spiritual fecundity of the Church as “Mother”⁴² can produce serious consequences, for spiritual children can be lost, both in the womb and out of the womb, due to an insufficiency of nourishment and nurturing which the Church continues to receive from Christ, but which the Church must faithfully pass on to her children.

⁴⁰ Cf. H. M. Manteau-Bonamy, O.P., *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, especially Ch. 2, trans. by Richard Arnandez, F.S.C., from the French original, *La Doctrine mariale du Pere Kolbe, Esprit-Saint et Conception Immaculee*, Franciscan Marytown Press, 1977.

⁴¹ Cf. Bl. Pius IX, Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* (Dec. 8, 1854).

⁴² *LG*, 63.

To the question of the proposed dogma and ecumenism, the voicing of sensitivities by the non-Catholic members to a Marian dogma would be logically consistent with their own non-papal ecclesiologies, rather than a *per se* objection to Marian coredemption. By definition, Orthodox Christianity, Anglicanism and Lutheranism do not accept the office and charisms of the papacy, and therefore could never logically encourage a solemn declaration issued from a papal office which they formally and *a priori* reject. In fact, if one holds to the position that until we receive positive approval from non-Catholic churches and ecclesial bodies for a papal infallible definition, who by their own expressed conviction reject the very office of papacy, then we have, practically speaking, eliminated the exercise of the charism of papal infallibility from the Church.

Beyond the logical and understandable difficulties of the non-Catholic members of the Commission, what of the Catholic members and their ecumenical concern in relation to the definition? Is papal infallibility in general and a Marian definition in specific a practical impropriety for our times due to ecumenical sensitivities?

As a concrete response to this question, John Paul is universally recognized and honored for his historic ecumenical advancements, and yet in his encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, he re-affirms the charism of papal infallibility, not as an obstacle to ecumenism, but precisely as a service to Christian unity because of its witness to unity's foundation, which is truth:

When circumstances require it, [the Pope] speaks in the name of all the Pastors in communion with him. He can also – under very specific conditions clearly laid down by the First Vatican Council – declare *ex cathedra* that a certain doctrine belongs to the deposit of faith (First Vatican Council, *Pastor Aeternus*, DS 3074). By thus bearing witness to the truth, he serves unity.⁴³

We also have the conciliar teaching of *Unitatis Redintegratio* which strongly condemns any action towards “false conciliatory” efforts under the guise of ecumenism:

It is of course essential that doctrine be clearly presented in its entirety. Nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false conciliatory approach which harms the purity of Catholic doctrine and obscures its assured genuine meaning.⁴⁴

Ut Unum Sint further confirms the necessity of full doctrinal truth and at the same time condemns all forms of ecumenical reductionalism:

Full communion of course will have to come about through the acceptance of the whole truth into which the Holy Spirit guides Christ's disciples. Hence all forms of reductionism or facile “agreement” must be absolutely avoided....⁴⁵

⁴³ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 94, (May 25, 1995).

⁴⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11, (Nov. 21, 1964).

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 36, (May 25, 1995).

The unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety. In matters of faith, compromise is in contradiction with God who is Truth. In the Body of Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), who could consider legitimate a reconciliation brought about at the expense of the truth?⁴⁶

But also relevant is the teaching of *Unitatis Redintegratio* which instructs that “the manner and order in which Catholic belief is expressed should in no way become an obstacle to dialogue with our brethren...Catholic belief must be explained more profoundly and precisely, in such a way and in such terms that our separated brethren can also really understand it” (UR, 11). The question therefore remains: Is there something intrinsic to the terms, Co-redemptrix or Mediatrix that are either lacking in precision, or are beyond understanding for our brother and sister Christians?

Anglican Oxford Professor John Macquarrie emphatically disagrees, as he explicitly rejects the objection that the titles Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix are inappropriate terms within ecumenical dialogue or are in themselves beyond Protestant understanding:

The matter [of Marian coredeemption and mediation] cannot be settled by pointing to the danger of exaggeration and abuse, or by appealing to isolated texts of scripture as the verse quoted above from 1 Timothy 2...or by the desire not to say anything the might offend one’s partner in ecumenical dialogue. Unthinking enthusiasts may have elevated Mary’s position to a virtual equality with Christ, but this aberration is not a *necessary* consequence of recognizing that there may be a truth striving for expression in words like *Mediatrix* and *Co-redemptrix*.

All responsible theologians would agree that Mary’s co-redemptive role is subordinate and auxiliary to the central role of Christ. But if she does have such a role, the more clearly we understand it, the better. And like other doctrines concerning Mary, it is not only saying something about her, but something more general about the Church as a whole, and even humanity as a whole.⁴⁷

Fr. Galot in *L'Osservatore Romano* also defends the legitimacy of the Co-redemptrix title in the face of objections often posed by non-Catholic authors who suggest the title infers equality with Christ:

The title [Co-redemptrix] is criticized because it would suggest an equality between Mary and Christ. The criticism has no foundation....Co-redemption implies a subordination to the redemptive work of Christ,

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 18, (May 25, 1995).

⁴⁷ John Macquarrie, “Mary Co-redemptrix and Disputes Over Justification and Grace: An Anglican View,” *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, p. 139.

because it is only a cooperation and not an independent or parallel work. Hence an equality with Christ is excluded.⁴⁸

It was moreover the opinion of the late John Cardinal O'Connor of New York that the proposed definition of Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate would offer a specifically ecumenical benefit in providing dogmatic clarity to the Catholic distinction between Christ and Mary in the work of Redemption:

Clearly, a formal definition would be articulated in such precise terminology that other Christians would lose their anxiety that we do not distinguish adequately between Mary's unique association with the Redemption and the redemptive power exercised by Christ alone.⁴⁹

As Marian coredemption, mediation, and advocacy already represent doctrinal conciliar and papal teaching, they cannot, in virtue of their doctrinal realities, be excused either from the content of Catholic doctrine nor from the forum of Christian dialogue for reasons of ecumenical sensitivities.

Nor can ecumenical sensitivity correctly be posed as a long-standing objection to the opportuneness of a definition, as if the non-acceptance by other Christian confessions of Mary's mediation or of the papacy should be a legitimate impediment to a Marian dogma. One could conceive of a situation where perhaps a fragile ecumenical concordat was proximately pending, or a particular ecumenically related event or season could prudentially legitimize a slight delay in the promulgation of a desired Marian definition. But this should not include a substantial delay of years, based on ecumenical sensitivities alone, if the heart of the Church, as discerned by its visible head, is ready.

The examination of opportuneness should maintain its focus on the quintessential questions: Are the three-fold aspects of the doctrine of the spiritual Mother of all peoples sufficiently clear in the teaching of the Church? Are there any specific aspects which lack sufficient clarity that would prevent its basic understanding by the faithful? Is there a manifest desire from the *sensus fidelium* for the definition, a petitioned desire that is universal and not limited to certain continents and cultures? Has there been substantial episcopal support for the petition since its inception over the course of the last eighty years?

And the ultimate question for the faithful Catholic: what is the discernment and desire of the Holy Father for this proposed fifth Marian dogma, who in his office is given by Christ that pneumatological charism for the discernment and guidance of the Church that none of the rest of us possess, be we laity, clergy, theologians, bishops, or supporting members of the Holy See?

At the culmination of the wisdom and experience of our present pontiff, fully ecumenical and fully marian, is it his desire to solemnly proclaim the Blessed Virgin Mary as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate? Has he been formally

⁴⁸ Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., "Maria Corredentrice," *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 15, 1997, daily Italian edition.

⁴⁹ John Cardinal O'Connor, *Letter of Endorsement for Papal Definition of Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, New York Chancery, Feb. 14, 1994.

asked to express his own opinion by the hierarchy, the mariological community, or the theological community at large regarding the proposed fifth Marian dogma?

These are the pertinent questions for Catholic theologians, bishops, and the members of the Holy See, in unity of mind and heart with Christ's Vicar, to examine honestly, intensely, and, perhaps best on our knees, regarding the solemn definition of Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate.

Conclusion

At certain historical times within the Church, particularly at moments of serious theological disagreement, it is the witness of sanctity,⁵⁰ with its constant companion of simplicity, that provides the only ultimate remedy for bringing light and clarity to an important theological dispute. With all proper respect to legitimate theological questions surrounding the issue of the definition of Mary as the Mother of all peoples, Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces and Advocate, I would like to conclude my dialogue with the Czestochowa Commission with these simple words from the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta:

Mary is our Co-redemptrix with Jesus. She gave Jesus his body and suffered with him at the foot of the Cross.

Mary is the Mediatrix of all grace. She gave Jesus to us, and as our Mother she obtains for us all his graces.

Mary is our Advocate who prays to Jesus for us. It is only through the Heart of Mary that we come to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

The papal definition of Mary as Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate will bring great graces to the Church.

All for Jesus through Mary.

God bless you,

M. Teresa, M.C.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Cf. Fr. Stefano Manelli, F.F.I., "Marian Coredeemption in the Hagiography of the 20th Century," *Mary Co-redemptrix: Doctrinal Issues Today*, Queenship, 2002, p. 191.

⁵¹ *Letter of Endorsement for the Papal Definition of Mary Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, August 14, 1993.