whom the Master promised the unfailing protection of the Holy Spirit. In God's name, let us be docile and obedient, and not fail in our exalted task of explaining in its integrity the faith which the Son of God committed to the care of His infallible Church.

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FIFTY YEARS AGO

In *The American Ecclesiastical Review* for November, 1900, the leading article, contributed by Fr. Alexander MacDonald, is entitled "The Sacrificial Idea in the Mass." His main contention is that the Mass is one and the same sacrifice with that of the Cross. "It is the immolation of Christ upon the Cross, together with the fact that the same Victim is really present upon the Altar offered by the same High Priest which makes the Mass the distinctive and never-failing sacrifice of the New Testament." . . . Fr. Anselm Kroll contributes an article on "The Support of Sick and Old Clergymen." He explain in detail the canonical provisions for the support of the clergy, and admits that it is very difficult to determine the best method of extending relief to deserving but needy ecclesiastics. He promises to discuss this problem in a future article. . . . Under the heading "Scholastic Methods, their Advantages and Disadvantages" Fr. J. R. Slattery makes some suggestions for improving the method of teaching theology in our seminaries. . . . A response in the Conference section asserts that the bridal couple may kneel within the sanctuary during the Nuptial Mass. . . . A form for the blessing of a couple on the occasion of their silver or golden jubilee of marriage is suggested. . . . Mention is made of a letter sent by the Holy See to the bishops of the United States commanding that in the event that a single Mass is celebrated on All Souls' Day for the deceased whose names are proposed by the parishioners (many offerings being given), a notice should be posted in the church making it clear that only one Mass is being offered.

F. J. C.

THE CONCEPT OF MARY AND THE CHURCH IN THE FATHERS

The past one hundred years of the Church's history have been marked by a phenomenal increase of Marian thought and devotion that is paralleled perhaps only by the great Marian vitality of the Middle Ages. Since the definition of the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception, popular devotion to the Mother of God, under the influence of such manifestly supernatural interventions as Lourdes and Fatima, has grown into a kind of world trust in her power of intercession. Mariology has blossomed as a field which is preoccupying theological thought as it has never before. The Sovereign Pontiffs since Pius IX have been consistently outspoken regarding the privileges of Mary, and have urged the members of Holy Church to turn with filial confidence to her to avert world disaster and to bring peace. Not least of these papal acts was the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by Pope Pius XII, October 31, 1942. The Holy Year of 1950, with its solemn proclamation of the dogma of Mary's Assumption, has crowned a century that began with the proclamation of her Immaculate Conception.

If one considers Mary's role in the Church history of the past century, and the fact that this role has had an intimate influence on the life and growth of the Church, the question may legitimately be asked: what relationship exists between Mary and the Church which gives significance to these Marian events? In seeking an answer to this question, we instinctively turn for enlightenment to Catholic tradition, to the works of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. An answer, at least in its seed-form, was offered by the early Church Fathers, and an examination of their statements on the subject may perhaps give a greater theological perspective to current Marian history.

In Patristic language Mary is identified, so to speak, with the Church; in many instances she is even *called* the Church. The Fathers use the same terms to exalt Mary and explain her prerogatives as they use for the Church, and apply interchangeably, as with equal fitness, the same figures, types and prophecies to Mary as to the Church. The two main bases on which the Fathers draw this parallel are the motherhood of the Church compared and iden-

tified with the motherhood of Mary; and the Church as the Virgin-bride of Christ compared with the similar role of Mary.

St. Ambrose in one passage speaks of the Church as the type of Mary, but the common practice among the Fathers was to consider Mary as personifying the Church. "The Virgin Mary is . . . the figure of the Church, which received the first fruits of the Gospel," wrote St. Ephrem.[1] "Let us call the Church by the name of Mary, for she is worthy of the double name." The Virgin Mary appears, then, as personifying most perfectly humanity, wed virginally to the Incarnate Word, the receiver of divine revelation and responding with perfect fidelity to the whisperings of the Divine Bridegroom. "Here [in the virginity of His mother] He chose for Himself a chaste bridal chamber wherein He might be united as the bridegroom with the bride."[2]

It is also in her motherhood of the historical Jesus that a parallel is drawn between Mary and the Church. Mary is the Mother of Jesus, the Church, the Mother of Christians. Thus, St. Methodius interprets the Woman in the Apocalypse as literally signifying Mary, and mystically signifying the Church.

Most often, however, motherhood and virginity, which are proper to both Mary and the Church, are considered in the one concept of a fruitful virginal or bridal-motherhood. St. Ambrose speaks of the Church's fecundity thus: "It is a virgin who has borne us in her womb, a virgin who has brought us forth, a virgin who has nourished us with her own milk."[3] Elsewhere he points to Mary as the type of this, the Church's virginal fruitfulness:

> It was fitting that Mary should be espoused and at the same time a Virgin; because she is the type of the Church, which is spotless, yet married. For virgin she [the Church] has conceived us of the Spirit, and virgin, without pangs she has given us birth.[4]

St. Augustine concurs with the Bishop of Milan:

> The Church . . . imitating Christ's Mother every day gives birth to

[1] *Sermo ad Nocturnum Dominicae Resurrectionis*, 2, 3, Lamy 1, 531-537. Quoted in Thomas Livius, C.SS.R., *The Blessed Virgin in the Fathers of the First Six Centuries* (London: Burns and Oates, Ltd.; N. Y.: Benziger, 1893), p. 268. Subsequent texts of the Fathers are as given in Livius.

[2] St. Augustine, *Enarrat. in Ps.* CXLVIII, n. 8. Livius, 276.

[3] *De Officiis Ministrorum*, Lib. I, cap. 5, 22. Livius, 270.

[4] *In Luc.* L. II, n. 7. Livius, 271.

His members and is a virgin.[5] Did not the holy Virgin Mary both bring forth and remain a Virgin? So, too, the Church brings forth and is a virgin. And if thou reflectest, she gives birth in Christ, because those who are baptised are his members. *You*, says the Apostle, *are the body of Christ, and members.* If, therefore, she gives birth to Christ's members, she is most like Mary.[6] See we not under the figure of Mary the type of the holy Church? For on her too, as you know, the Holy Ghost came down; her too the power of the Most High overshadowed, and from her goes forth Christ, mighty in power. The Church is an immaculate bride, fruitful in child-bearing, virgin in chastity. She conceived not from man, but by the Spirit. She gives birth not in sorrow, but in joy. She nurtures not with breast of body, but with milk of the Teacher. Hence is she the Spouse of Christ, and Mother of the nations, who marvels at seeing herself with child, and rejoices when she has brought forth.[7]

Two hundred years later, but still in the Patristic tradition, St. Isidore of Seville repeated: "Mary signifies the Church, which being espoused to Christ, as a virgin hath conceived us of the Holy Ghost, and as a virgin hath also given us birth."[8]

The Fathers in these passages seem to be satisfied with *comparing* the Church's fruitfulness with that of Mary, and do not explicitly declare, as is now often declared, that the Church's maternity is, in effect, Mary's spiritual Motherhood of men. The passages cited involve primarily an analogy between the Spiritual Maternity of the Church, and the natural maternity of Mary. Even when St. Augustine speaks of giving "birth to Christ's members," it is "the Church *imitating* Christ's Mother"—which would leave Mary's Spiritual Maternity at best only implied, not directly stated.

Nevertheless, some of the Fathers have gone so far as to apply the name of the Church itself to Mary.

"O mystic marvel!" wrote St. Clement of Alexandria. "One Father of all things and one Word of all things and the Holy Ghost, One and the same everywhere, and one only Mother Vir-

[5] *Enchirid. ad Laurentium*, cap. 34. Livius, 275.

[6] *Serm.* 213, cap. 7. Livius, 275.

[7] Serm. 121, *De Nat. Dom.* v. 5, Int. Opp. S. Augustini, Append. Livius, 276. This quotation, although of doubtful authenticity, is included as not being foreign to St. Augustine's thought, but rather as an elaboration of it.

[8] Allegoriae ex N. Test. Ap. Morales Lib. II, Tr. 6. Livius, 277.

gin. Dear to me it is *to call her the Church.*"[9] In a manuscript attributed to St. Methodius, these words occur in praise of Mary: "With hymns, O blessed Spouse of God, adorning the bridal bed, we now venerate thee, *pure virgin Church* of snowy body. . . ."[10] The heresiarch Manes' ironic use of the term "that most chaste Virgin and immaculate Church" refering to Mary seems to indicate that this was a phrase then commonly received and used.[11] St. Cyril of Alexandria closes one of his homilies thus: "Hymning with canticles the ever-Virgin Mary, *that is to say, the holy Church,* and her Son and spotless Spouse. . . . Amen."[12]

These passages are to be interpreted primarily in a metaphorical sense, for evidently Mary is not, in the words of the Baltimore Catechism, "the congregation of all baptized persons united in the same true faith, the same sacrifice, and the same sacraments, under the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff and the bishops in communion with him." But some of the Fathers wrote about a compenetration of the two ideas. In at least two respects the Patristic view presents a real "overlapping"—the first, in that Mary is *part* of the Church, is the most perfect member of the Mystical Body; the second, in that Mary's maternity has for its object and effect the bestowal of divine life upon the human race, which is likewise the object and effect of the Church's historical existence. Among the writings of St. Ambrose is to be found a commentary on the Apocalypse in which we find this thought expressed that by the Woman here we may understand the Blessed Virgin Mary, because she is the Mother of the Church, for she brought forth Him who is the Head of the Church, and is herself daughter of the Church, since she is the greatest member of the Church.[13]

The Fathers followed St. Paul closely in holding that the Church is the Bride of Christ. Not yet perfect because of her human members, she grows into an ever closer union with Him through submissive fidelity to His grace until the day of His coming. She desires to be His perfect complement, to "fill up" what is lacking to Him, and in this sense her way of acting may be called a real *seeking* of Christ. That Mary is the model of this seeking of

[9] *Paedagogus*, Lib. I, c. 6, *MPG*, VIII, 301. Livius, 264.
[10] *Orc. Virg.* or. I, c. 5, p. 45. Livius, 266.
[11] Cf. Livius, 265.
[12] *Hom.* IV ad fin. Livius, 277.
[13] Int. Opp. St. Ambrosi. Cf. *In Luc.* Lib. X, n. 134. Livius, 271.

Christ seems to be implied in a number of passages of the Fathers. In the Old Testament this striving for union with the Bridegroom was expressed and prefigured in the *Canticle of Canticles*. The Fathers in commenting upon this Book of the Old Law place the words of the Bride upon the lips of both Mary and the Church. "Mary is that beautiful spouse of the Canticles who put off the old garment, washed her feet, and received the immortal Bridegroom within her own bride-chamber."[14] Upon the text, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth," St. Ambrose remarks:

> Hereby is signified the grace of the Holy Spirit coming down from above, as the Angel said to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee."[15]
>
> The Church ceases not to kiss the feet of Christ; and hence in the Canticle of Canticles, she is not content with one but with many kisses. For like holy Mary, she is intent on all His utterances, and takes in all His words. When the Gospel or a Prophet is being read, she keeps all His sayings in her heart.[16]

The view that Mary in her vicarious representation of humanity-to-be-redeemed personifies the perfect way of acting toward the Divine Bridegroom, the perfection of the Church in its members, has been brought into prominence of late in Pope Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis:*

> Her sinless soul was filled with the divine Spirit of Jesus Christ more than all other created souls . . . she more than all the faithful "filled up those things that are wanting of the suffering of Christ . . . for His body which is the Church."

And the Pontiff is at pains to point out that her whole life exemplifies the perfect way of acting toward Christ. She seeks only His will at the Annunciation; with motherly tenderness she brings Him forth and nurtures His childhood; she is the mistress of His hidden life; in his public life she is His *alter ipse*, the only complete triumph of His apostolate; she surrenders her maternal rights over Him at His passion and death. . . . Finally, after His ascension, she is left for a time upon earth to mother the infant Church and to be the living exemplar of the great lesson Christ wished to teach His Church: that the living Christ is to be sought and found in

[14] S. Proclus, *Orat.* VI, 17. *De Deip. laudibus.* Livius, 98.
[15] S. Ambrose, *in Ps.* CXVIII. *Serm.* II, n. 16. Livius, 92.
[16] *Epist.* XLI, 18.

the living Church. "She continued to show for the Mystical Body of Christ, born from the pierced Heart of the Savior, the same Mother's care and ardent love with which she clasped the Infant Jesus to her warm and nourishing breast."

If the view be accepted that Mary personified perfect incorporation in Christ, then the Church's *ideal*, the purpose of its action, was realized perfectly *only* in her; and thus the Church's ultimate goal—her presentation to Christ "in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle" (*Eph.* 5, 27)—was foreshadowed from the very beginning. For nowhere in its history has the Church's perfect *way of acting* (its utterly perfect co-operating fidelity to grace) been embodied, save in Mary. The Saints have, in varying degrees of perfection, exemplified the Church's way of acting, but to Mary alone should be reserved the glory of being the prototype and spotless exemplar. The question at least deserves consideration and study.

The Church's maternity is, in fact, Mary's spiritual motherhood of all men. Of all the Fathers, it was St. Augustine who explained this most clearly. While stating that "Mary corporally gave birth to the Head of this (Mystical) body, the Church spiritually gives birth to the members of that Head,"[17] he shows that Mary is in very truth Mother likewise of all the members, and consequently, the Church's ministerial action is the application, throughout the time and space of history, of Mary's spiritual motherhood of all men. "She is clearly the spiritual Mother of His members, which we are; because she co-operated by her charity, that the faithful might be born into the Church; and these are the members of that same Head."[18] The predominant patristic concept of the New Adam and the New Eve as parents of the regenerated human race shows likewise Mary's role as Mother of the redeemed, not merely in being Mother of Jesus' natural body, but also by an active co-operation with the entire divine plan of redemption. "Death by Eve, life by Mary."[19] Modern terminology has sought to reduce the apparent complexity of Mary's double maternity (that of Jesus and that of mankind) in the one concept of her motherhood of the Whole Christ.

[17] *De Sanct. Virginit. cap.* II, *MPL*, XL. Livius, 275 f.
[18] *Ibid.*, cap. VI, Livius, 276.
[19] St. Jerome, *Ep. 22, ad Eustoch.* 21.

Today, when the Church is faced with one of its greatest crises, and when, on the other hand, she is throwing open her mystical treasures with an unprecedented effluence, it is not surprising to find that the Holy Father should close his masterly treatise on the Church as the Mystical Body thus:

"May she, then, most holy Mother of all Christ's members, to whose Immaculate Heart we have trustingly consecrated all men, her body and soul refulgent with the glory of heaven where she reigns with her Son—may she never cease to beg from Him that a continuous and copious flow of graces may pass from its glorious Head into all the members of the Mystical Body. May she throw about the Church today, as in times gone by, the mantle of her protection and obtain from God that now at last the Church and all mankind may enjoy more peaceful days."

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THE PRIEST'S TASK

It is the priest's task to clear away from men's minds the mass of prejudices and misunderstandings which hostile adversaries have piled up; the modern mind is eager for the truth, and the priest should be able to point it out with serene frankness; there are souls still hesitating distressed by doubts, and the priest should inspire courage and trust, and guide them with calm security to the safe port of faith, faith accepted by both head and heart; error makes its onslaughts, arrogant and persistent, and the priest should know how to meet them with a defense vigorous and active, yet solid and unruffled. . . .

Therefore, Venerable Brethren, it is necessary that the priest, even among the absorbing tasks of his charge, and ever with a view to it, should continue his theological studies with unremitting zeal. The knowledge acquired at the seminary is indeed a sufficient foundation with which to begin; but it must be grasped more thoroughly, and perfected by an ever-increasing knowledge and understanding of the sacred sciences. Herein is the source of effective preaching and of influence over the souls of others.

Pope Pius XI, *The Catholic Priesthood* (America Press), pp. 23 f.