

MARY AS CO-REDEMPTRIX: A HOMOGENEOUS OR TRANSFORMISTIC EVOLUTION?

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As early as the start of the 20th century, initiatives were already being organized, invoking the solemn definition of Mary's Maternal Mediation. It started with Desire Joseph Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, Belgium. He started a campaign to proclaim the title of Our Lady as Mediatrix of All Graces a dogma of the faith. In his Pastoral Letter issued on September 8, 1918, he said they endeavored, "to see proclaimed as dogma the traditional and general belief of the Christian people in the universal intercessory mediation of Mary with the one Mediator of justice, Christ Jesus."¹ This "formal request of the Belgian Church was the decisive impulse launching the worldwide movement for a dogmatic definition of Mary's Universal mediation of grace."² Although no proclamation took place in relation to the petitioned dogma, this initiative bore fruit when Pope Benedict XV institutionalized the liturgical feast of Mary Mediatrix of All Graces on January 12, 1921.³

Advancing further some years after, in 1993, an initiative was started in the United States, seeking the Supreme Pontiff's approval to define a new Marian dogma for the Church. This initiative spread rapidly worldwide to the point of reaching

¹ Manfred Hauke, Mary, "*Mediatress of Grace:*" *Mary's Universal Mediation of Grace in the Theological and Pastoral Works of Cardinal Mercier* (Massachusetts: Academy of the Immaculate, 2004), 3.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, 2. The petition for a Mass and Office in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatress of All Graces was made by the Belgian Church to Pope Benedict XV to include a popularized doctrine during that time. Permission is necessary to use the text for the Mass and Office in other dioceses outside of the Belgian country. What was institutionalized for the Belgian Church was the feast, not the petition being asked as spearheaded by Cardinal Mercier.

millions of signatures in support of the cause. The initiative was called *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* ("Voice of the People for Mary Mediatrix") and was spearheaded by Theology and Mariology lay professor at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Dr. Mark I. Miraville.⁴ Along with him were Cardinals, theologians, and laypeople in calling for the definition of the doctrine on **Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Grace, and Advocate of the People of God**. The spotlight was even focused on the said initiative when it was featured in *Newsweek Magazine* in 1997.⁵

The rationale behind the proposed dogma is to define the whole truth about the Mother of the Redeemer in her relationship with we, the Church, and her participation in the work of redemption at the Church's service. The doctrines proposed state that Mary participated in the redemption achieved by her Son and all the graces that flow from the suffering and death of Jesus Christ are granted only through Mary's intercession with her Son; that all prayers and petitions from the faithful on earth must likewise flow through Mary who brings them to Jesus.

This paper traces the doctrinal development of the theological conclusion on Mary's role as Co-Redemptrix and why it is considered heterogeneous teaching, that is, a discontinuation with the essential properties of the teaching of the Church on Mary. In unfolding the above, the following parts are discussed: first, understanding the concept of doctrinal development by explaining its significance in Theology in relation to the doctrines proclaimed by the Church; second, explaining the fundamental Marian principle by discussing the Dogma of the *Theotokos* (literally "God-Bearer" to describe Mary as the "Mother of God") through which all other truths

⁴ Donal Flanagan, "A New Marian Dogma?" *The Furrow* 49, no. 1 (1998): 15-21.

⁵ Kenneth Woodward, "Hail, Mary" *Newsweek* (24 August 1997), accessed 18 March 2021, available at <https://www.newsweek.com/hail-mary-172216>.

on the Blessed Virgin Mary flow unto; and third, looking into the doctrinal development of the title Mary as Co-Redemptrix to assess whether it is in accordance with the fundamental Marian principle.

Understanding of the Concept of Doctrinal Development

God has made Himself be known by man. Through His Revelation, man can respond to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be with Him. The divine plan of Revelation was realized through the words and deeds of God. Revelation is formal and explicit when it is clearly defined and expressed. God communicates Himself to man in a gradual way. Sacred Scripture has recorded the unfolding of God's Revelation to man. The Old Testament and its "constant re-interpretation and re-reading,"⁶ reached its fulfillment in the New Testament through the mystery of the Incarnation wherein the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man and dwelt among us - Jesus Christ. He is the fullness of God's Revelation. God has spoken His final, definitive, complete, inexhaustive Word. The teachings of Christ, which were entrusted to the apostles, are called *Paradosis* ("Hand-on" or "Tradition"). These adhere to the "teachings based on tradition" transmitted by the Church to its faithful, which are universally valid and unchanging in substance. The apostles have the "special privilege of having received through infused light an explicit understanding of divine revelation greater than that which all the theologians or even the Church as a whole, possess or will possess up to the end of time."⁷ As *Dei Verbum* ("Word of God" - the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation) would further express: "thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the apostles, and their disciples have passed on the Gospel in their preaching, by their example, by the institutions they founded; under

⁶ International Theological Commission, *The Interpretation of Dogma (ID)* (October 1989), B, I, 1.

⁷ Francisco Marin-Sola, OP, *The Homogeneous Evolution of Catholic Dogma* (Manila: Santo Tomas University Press, 1988), 135.

the inspiration of the same Spirit, they have committed it to written documents."⁸ This treasured faith is called *depositum fidei* ("deposit of faith").

Sacred Scripture and the Sacred Tradition form one sacred deposit of the word of God that is contained in the Church, and the task to authentically interpret it has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church, which the Holy Spirit guides to ensure that all her teaching is in adherence to the teachings of Christ. This truth revealed by God, made possible through the gift of faith bestowed upon them by the Holy Spirit, penetrates deeply into man. "To this end, it searches into the sacred tradition and doctrine of the Church - the treasury out of which the Church continually brings forth new things that are in harmony with the things that are old."⁹ Throughout the centuries, Fr. Francisco Marin-Sola observes that:

Even in its strictly dogmatic part, Catholic teaching has grown or developed, on a large scale, from the days of the apostles to our own times. To become aware of this, one need only compare, on any given doctrinal point, the plain biblical statements with the complex definitions of the last ecumenical councils; compare the primitive Creed of the Apostles with the so-called Creed of St. Athanasius or with the profession of faith of Pius IV; compare any document of the early popes with the syllabus of Pius IX or with Pius X's Encyclical Pascendi, or compare any catechesis or any number of catechesis of the Fathers of the Church with one of today's catechisms.¹⁰

⁸ Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum (DV)*(18 November 1965), no. 7.

⁹ Vatican II. *Declaration on Religious Freedom Dignitatis Humane (DH)* (December 7, 1965), no. 1.

¹⁰ Marin-Sola, *Homogeneous Evolution*, 135.

The document issued by the International Theological Commission which is entitled *Interpretation of Dogma* in 1989 laid down three principles in grasping and interpreting the doctrines of the Church in light of faith. Dogmas are to be interpreted: first, as a *verbum rememorativeum* (“memory-laden recall”) that recalls God’s mighty acts. For this reason, it must be grounded in the Sacred Scripture and Tradition and be interpreted within the parameters of the Old and New Testaments according to the analogy of faith. Second, as *verbum demonstrativeum* (“salvation in the here and now”), the teaching is salvific and presented in a living, attractive and stimulating fashion to every era’s people. Third, as *verbum prognosticum* (“anticipatory statement about the end of all”), an anticipation for the last things in man’s final destiny leads to the hymn of praise to God.¹¹

The growth or development of a dogma as mentioned by Fr. Marin-Sola earlier can happen in two ways “growth in matter with no change in specific nature or Homogeneous Evolution and the other is growth in the matter, together with a change of specific nature or Transformistic [or Heterogenous] Evolution.”¹² In the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, the difference between the two is that the addition is twofold: “either by adding that which is contrary or diverse, and this is erroneous [Transformistic or Heterogenous Evolution], or by adding that which is implicitly contained by way of exposition, and this is praiseworthy [Homogeneous Evolution].”¹³

To ensure the faithfulness of the doctrine to the truths revealed by God, the term development of doctrine has taken its roots from the teaching of St. Vincent of Lerins, one of the Fathers of the Church who lived during the 4th to the mid-5th century in the Southeastern Mediterranean coastline of France.

¹¹ *ID*, B, III, 2

¹² Marin-Sola, *Homogeneous Evolution*, 145.

¹³ *Ibid*, 147.

His famous work is *Commonitorium*¹⁴ (“Commonitory” or “Reminder”), which is “destined to help the author’s memory and thus guide him in his belief according to the traditions of the Fathers”¹⁵ against the profane novelties of all heresies. From there, his famous slogan, which became the guiding principle for the development of the teachings of the Church (also known today as the Vincentian Canon) was taken: “*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est* (“what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all”).”¹⁶ Through this threefold test of “ecumenicity, antiquity, and consent,”¹⁷ the Church is to differentiate genuine and false from the said traditions. In the Encyclical *Humanis Generis* (“Of the Human Race”), Pope Pius XII called the wrong notion of the development of doctrine as dogmatic relativism.¹⁸ This relativism neglects, rejects or devalues the rich resources that have been conceived, expressed, and perfected by the age-old work of men, to instead be replaced by unstable new tenets of philosophy that like the “the flowers of the field, are in existence today and die tomorrow; this is supreme imprudence and something that would make dogma itself a reed shaken by the wind.”¹⁹ Dogmatic relativism represents deviations from the truths revealed by God.

The four basic guidelines in the development of doctrine are: first, the objective development of doctrine means that it

¹⁴ Vincent of Lerins, “Commonitory,” *New Advent*, accessed last 22 March 2021, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3506.htm>.

¹⁵ Joseph De Ghellinck, “St. Vincent of Lérins,” *New Advent*, accessed last 21 March 2021, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15439b.htm>.

¹⁶ Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB, “St. Vincent of Lerin Resources,” *St. John’s Seminary*, accessed last 21 March 2021, available at http://ldysinger.stjohnsem.edu/@texts/0444_vinc-lerins/00a_start.htm.

¹⁷ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2006, 3d ed., s.v. “Vincentian Canon,” 1712.

¹⁸ Pius XII, Encyclical Concerning Some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine the Foundations of Catholic Doctrine *Humanis Generis* (HG) (12 August 1950), no. 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 17.

does not expand or contract in the absolute and ultimate sense. Still, it is contained in God's Revelation. Second, subjectively which means that Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are made more explicit. The third is hermeneutical, through which things are received in ways by which the receiver is formed, trained, educated, and prepared to receive them. And the fourth one is growth in our Catholic doctrine. Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman said that doctrinal development is the "germination and maturation of some truth or apparent truth on a large mental field."²⁰ The aim of all dogmatic interpretation is that in the:

Church and for every believer that in their spirit and life may be born from the words of the dogmas. In the present constantly made new, hope should spring from the memory of the Church's tradition; in the diversity of the human condition, cultural, political, economic, in the plurality of peoples, the unity and catholicity of the faith must be strengthened and promoted as a sign of and an agent of unity and peace on earth. What is at stake is that men should have eternal life in knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ, his Son (Jn 17:3).²¹

Saint John Henry Newman gives the following analogy in the development of doctrine: "An acorn that somehow changed into a walnut would be a mutation. But an acorn that never developed into an oak would be lifeless."²²

²⁰ Stuart Squires, "Theology 101: Newman's Concept of Doctrinal Development," *Daily Theology*, created 15 September 2016, accessed last 19 March 2021, available at <https://dailytheology.org/2016/09/15/theology-101-newmans-concept-of-doctrinal-development/>.

²¹ *ID*, C. III, 6.

²² Murphy Brendan, "The Development of Doctrine," *Simply Catholic*, accessed last 25 March 2021, available at <https://www.simplycatholic.com/the-development-of-doctrine/>.

The Fundamental Marian Principle

The divine mystery of salvation was revealed: “when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption (Gal 4:4-5).” St. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, was the first to mention in the Sacred Scripture about the unfolding of God’s promise that was revealed since the Old Testament about the coming of the Messiah. The Gospels of Luke²³ and Matthew²⁴ have recorded the fulfillment of the promise through what we call the Infancy Narratives. Luke’s account of the Annunciation tells us that the angel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth to a virgin named Mary, announcing that she was chosen to become the Mother of God. It is through this reason that the Blessed Virgin Mary “is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer.”²⁵ Reflecting on the work of God in Mary, “devoutly meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word made man, the Church reverently penetrates more deeply into the great mystery of the Incarnation.”²⁶ Through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit in her, she conceived in her womb the Son of God.

Looking into the doctrinal development of the first Marian Dogma on the Divine Motherhood before the Council of Ephesus in the 5th century, Juan Luis Bastero quoting Michael Schmaus has noted that Sacred Scripture does nowhere formally and explicitly say that Mary is the Mother of God.²⁷ However, in those same writings, it does say that Jesus is the Son of God. From this, it can be inferred that the Church as early

²³ See Luke 1:26-38.

²⁴ See Matthew 1:18-25.

²⁵ Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (LG) (21 November 1964), no. 53.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 65.

²⁷ Juan Luis Bastero, *Mary Mother of the Redeemer* (Ireland: Four Courts Press, 2006), 25-26, quoting Michael Schmaus, *Theologica Dogmatica* vol. 8: *La Virgen Maria* (Madrid, 1961), 91.

as the second century truly and properly venerated Mary as the *Theotokos*.²⁸ Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman, in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, "has said that there was in the first ages no public and ecclesiastical recognition of the place which St. Mary holds in the Economy of grace; this was reserved for the fifth century."²⁹ On December 23, 428, a controversy took place when during a homily delivered by Proclus of Constantinople, he mentioned Mary was the Mother of God or the *Theotokos*. On the said occasion, one of the people who happened to be at the Divine Liturgy was Nestorius. He did not accept the title *Theotokos*, for he was trained in the Antiochene school that believed Mary is the mother of man or *Anthropotokos* ("Man-bearer") and not the Mother of God. This gave rise to the convocation of the Council of Ephesus in 431 to clarify the arising issue. The issue on the *Theotokos* was more than a Mariological issue; it was a Christological one. The title of Mary as Mother of God expresses the unity of divinity and humanity in Christ. It talks about the "hypostatic union," in God's Word, who united our nature to Himself and made it His own. A real unification of Godhead and manhood. The oneness of Christ by declaring His Divine and incarnate natures without confusion or separation of natures. One of the twelve anathemas proposed by Cyril of Jerusalem, and was accepted by the Sacred Council was that "if anyone does not confess that Emmanuel is God in truth, and therefore that the holy virgin is the mother of God for she bore in a fleshly way the Word of God become flesh, let him be anathema."³⁰

Recalling the incident that took place at the Council of Ephesus it is said that "when the Church makes new

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ John Henry Newman, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Image Books, 1960), 68.

³⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, "Second Letter of Cyril to Nestorius," *Papal Encyclicals Online*, accessed last 1 April 2021, available at <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum03.htm>.

pronouncements, she intends to confirm or clarify what is in some way contained in Sacred Scripture or in previous expressions of Tradition; but at the same time she usually has the intention of solving certain questions or removing certain errors. All these things have to be taken into account in order that these pronouncements may be properly interpreted. Finally, even though the truths which the Church intends to teach through her dogmatic formulas are distinct from the changeable conceptions of a given epoch and can be expressed without them, nevertheless it can sometimes happen that these truths may be enunciated by the Sacred Magisterium in terms that bear traces of such conceptions."³¹

Further, in the Encyclical *Lux Veritatis* ("The Light of Truth") on the Council of Ephesus by Pius XI, he said that "From this dogma of the divine maternity, as from the outpouring of a hidden spring, flow forth the singular grace of Mary and her dignity, which is the highest after God."³² From this **Fundamental Marian Principle of the Divine Motherhood**, other truths on the Blessed Virgin Mary flow with.³³ This is not "simply from its biological aspect but also taken in its moral and transcendental dimension."³⁴ The Church following what was revealed in Sacred Scripture on Mary as the Mother of God, declared that Mary was ever-virgin (Dogma on the Perpetual Virginity of Mary). It is from the same root that "slowly grows the certitude of Mary's sinlessness as the expression of her special election as the Immaculate Conception"³⁵ (Dogma of the Immaculate Conception). This is affirmed by Pius XII in his

³¹ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church Against Certain Errors of the Present Day* (24 June 1973), no. 5

³² Pius XI, Encyclical on the Council of Ephesus *Lux Veritatis* (LV) (25 December 1931), no. 42.

³³ See Bastero, *Mary Mother*, 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

³⁵ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 36-37.

encyclical *Fulgens Corona* ("Radiant Crown" - Proclaiming a Marian Year to Commemorate the Centenary of the Definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception) that "from this sublime office of the Mother of God seem to flow, as it were from a most limpid hidden source, all the privileges and graces with which her soul and life were adorned in such extraordinary manner and measure."³⁶ This confession of "Mary's sinlessness engenders, in turn, the conviction of her participation in the destiny of her Son, the resurrection, and in his conquest of death"³⁷ (Dogma of the Assumption into Heaven). The Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* ("Most Bountiful God" - defining the Dogma of the Assumption) of Pope Pius XII fortifies its connection with the Divine Motherhood stating that

as the first element of these demonstrations, they insist upon the fact that, out of filial love for his mother, Jesus Christ has willed that she be assumed into heaven. They base the strength of their proofs on the incomparable dignity of her divine motherhood and of all those prerogatives which follow from it. These include her exalted holiness, entirely surpassing the sanctity of all men and of the angels, the intimate union of Mary with her Son, and the affection of preeminent love which the Son has for his most worthy Mother.³⁸

Ultimately though, Mary's motherhood, and all that stems from it, is about Christ her Son. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "What the Catholic faith believes

³⁶ Pius XII, Encyclical Proclaiming a Marian Year to Commemorate the Centenary of the Definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception *Fulgens Corona* (FC) (8 September 1953), no. 11.

³⁷ Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 36-37.

³⁸ Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution Defining the Dogma of the Assumption *Munificentissimus Deus* (MD) (1 November 1950), no. 25.

about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines, in turn, its faith in Christ."³⁹

Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Grace and Advocate of the People of God

On two occasions,⁴⁰ Pope Francis has been firm in his position on Mary as the *Theotokos* or Mother of God rather than the title Co-Redemptrix.⁴¹ On the titles used in proposing the fifth Marian Dogma as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate of the People of God, the title Co-Redemptrix is the controversial one. This has been the talk of the town for several decades, with many proposing it to become a Dogma of the Church.

We go first to our discussion of the title, Mediatrix of All Grace. The term mediator is defined as someone who stands between⁴² two persons or groups either to facilitate an exchange of favors or more often to reconcile parties at variance. In relation with Mary, the title Mediatrix dates way back to the 6th century in the East, and 9th century in the West. The said title of Mary would mean that "as worthy Mother of God and Full of Grace she occupies a middle position between God and

³⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – Interdicasterial Commission for the Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) (11 October 1992), no. 487.

⁴⁰ Ines Martin, "Pope calls idea of declaring Mary co-redemptrix 'foolishness,'" *Crux*, created 12 December 2019, accessed last 20 April 2021, available at <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2019/12/pope-calls-idea-of-declaring-mary-co-redemptrix-foolishness/>. Ines Martin, "Once again, Pope Francis says Mary is not the 'co-redemptrix,'" *Angelus*, created 24 March 2021, accessed last 20 April 2021, available at <https://angelusnews.com/faith/once-again-pope-francis-says-mary-is-not-the-co-redemptrix/>.

⁴¹ Javier Romero, "Pope Francis explains why he does not consider Our Lady co-redemptrix" *Rome Reports*, created 24 March 2021, accessed 31 May 2024, available at <https://www.romereports.com/en/2021/03/24/pope-francis-explains-why-he-does-not-consider-our-lady-co-redemptrix/>.

⁴² See Peggy Frye, "Mary the Mediatrix of All Graces," *Catholic Answers* (CA), accessed 1 June 2024, available at <https://www.catholic.com/qa/isnt-calling-mary-the-mediatrix-of-all-graces-contrary-to-the-doctrine-that-jesus-is-the-sole>.

humanity; together with Christ and under Him, she cooperated in the reconciliation of God and of the world while still here on earth; and because she distributes the graces that God bestows on His children."⁴³ One thing that should be instilled in our minds is that Mary's mediation must always be seen and understood as something secondary and dependent on Christ's primary and self-sufficient mediatorial role. In *Lumen Gentium* ("Light of the Nations" – the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Mary's title as Mediatrix⁴⁴ was mentioned but without the addendum "of all grace." Pope John Paul II explained that care was given so as not to associate it with any particular theology of mediation and stated that "Mary's mediation is essentially defined by her divine motherhood. Recognition of her role as mediatrix is moreover implicit in the expression "our Mother," which presents the doctrine of Marian mediation by putting the accent on her motherhood. Lastly, the title 'Mother in the order of grace' explains that the Blessed Virgin co-operates with Christ in humanity's spiritual rebirth."⁴⁵ This tells us of her role which is specifically motherly intercession. "It is not necessary that we explicitly implore her intercession in our prayers, but whether we mention her or not, it is through her that we receive whatever we receive."⁴⁶ Mary is our loving and spiritual mother who knows our needs and wishes to help us in all of them.

Regarding the title of Mary as Advocate of the People of God, Mary's intercession is reduced to transmitting our prayers and petitions. This is realized through supplication addressed to Christ for us to obtain graces. In the Old Testament, the king's mother, the *Gebirah*, holds an important position in the

⁴³ *Dictionary of Mary*, 1997, s.v. "Mediatrix," 319.

⁴⁴ *LG*, no. 62.

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *General Audience* (1 October 1997), accessed last 11 June 2024, available at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_01101997.html.

⁴⁶ *Dictionary of Mary*, 1997, s.v. "Mediatrix," 320.

royal court in which she serves as an advocate for the people to her son, the king. For instance, when Bathsheba mentions her request to King Solomon, the king responds, "Make your request, my mother, for I will not refuse you (1 Kgs 2:20)." Relating this to the Blessed Virgin Mary, she is the queen mother who brings our petitions to his Son, Jesus Christ. Looking into the passages of the New Testament, this idea of the queen mother is portrayed during the adoration of the Magi wherein when they "saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him (Mt 2:11)."

We now look at the term Co-Redemptrix, which would come in two varieties: the "minimalist" and "maximalist" views. The minimalist view, which is non-controversial, leaves the dispute on the term-Co-Redemptrix by locating Mary's contribution to the redemption as merely willingly giving birth to the Redeemer through her response to Gabriel at the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-28).⁴⁷ The other view is the maximalist, which is the "trickier one"⁴⁸ for in reference to Mary, it states that she "also contributed to the Redemption itself - Together with Christ (though in total subordination to Him and in virtue of His power), Mary atoned or satisfied our sins, merited every grace necessary for salvation, and joined the Savior's sacrifice on Calvary to appease the wrath of God (John 19:25-27)."⁴⁹ It is from this maximalist view where the confusion and debate on the said doctrine lies.

Dr. Mark Miraville in his book *With Jesus, The Story of Mary Co-Redemptrix*, explains the etymology of the title Co-Redemptrix. The prefix "co" comes from the Latin term "cum" which means "with."⁵⁰ The etymological meaning of Co-Redemptrix means

⁴⁷ Aidan Nichols, OP, *There is No Rose - The Mariology of the Catholic Church* (Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2015), 67.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *Dictionary of Mary*, 1997, s.v. "Co-Redemptrix," 78-79.

⁵⁰ Mark Miraville, *With Jesus: The Story of Mary Co-Redemptrix* (California: Queenship Publishing, 2003), 9.

“woman with the Redeemer.” Looking deeper into the origin of the word, “we can determine that red-emere means “to buy back.” Hence a “co-redemptrix” is a “woman who buys back [people from slavery with the Redeemer].”⁵¹

As mentioned earlier, the maximalist view presents Mary as having a strong redemptive role in salvation history. This claim is in consonance with the one proposed by the *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* of Dr. Mark Miraville.⁵² This claim is a transformistic or heterogeneous concept, and a deviation from Church teaching as *Lumen Gentium* states: “There is but one Mediator as we know from the words of the apostle, ‘for there is one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all [1 Tim 2:5].’”⁵³ Based on the Fundamental Marian Principle, all dogma on the Blessed Virgin Mary should always be congruent with the *Theotokos*. The title Co-Redemptrix however, would give the impression that she is on equal footing with her Son. As *Redemptoris Mater* (“Mother of the Redeemer” - On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church) declares: “Mary’s mediation is intimately linked with her motherhood.”⁵⁴ Her mediation would always be only through the merits of Jesus Christ, her Son.

Pope John Paul II asked the Theological Commission of the Pontifical International Marian Academy during their Twelfth International Congress held at Czestochowa, Poland in 1996 on their position for the petition on the definition of Mary as Co-

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Vox Populi, “The Fifth Marian Dogma,” EWTN, accessed 11 June 2024, available at <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/fifth-marian-dogma-5671>.

⁵³ LG, no. 60.

⁵⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Church *Redemptoris Mater* (RM) (25 March 1987), no. 38.

Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate. The commission arrived at a twofold conclusion:⁵⁵

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 (see *Lumen Gentium*, 62). In fact, from the time of Pope Pius XII, the term “Coredemptrix” 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 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 the 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 the ecumenical difficulties which would be involved in such a definition.

⁵⁵ “Mediatrix, Coredemptrix, and Advocate Declaration,” *University of Dayton (UD)*, accessed last 12 April 2021, available at <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/m/mediatrix-coredeptrix-and-advocate-declaration.php>.

Drawing from the position of the Pontifical Marian International Academy, the title of Mary as Co-Redemptrix is ambiguous and misleading. It may also create confusion among the people, especially when raising up the Blessed Virgin Mary as another redeemer. Recalling Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* ("Marian Devotion" - For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary), he has outlined four guidelines for correctly understanding and developing devotion to the Mother of God. It includes looking into the biblical, liturgical, anthropological, and ecumenical aspects.

Using the guidelines mentioned and relating them to the proposed dogma on Co-Redemptrix, some aspects are unclear and would need further studies. For the biblical aspect, Sacred Scripture clearly states the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is subordinate to her Son, Jesus Christ. The Co-Redemptrix would then be a contradiction: "For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human (1 Tim 2:5)." Regarding the liturgical aspect, it was only in 1921 that a feast and liturgical text was approved upon the request of the Belgian Bishops headed by Cardinal Mercier to Pope Benedict XV for the Feast of Mary Mediatrix of All Graces, but not for Co-Redemptrix. For anthropology, the term being used creates confusion. As mentioned in the earlier paragraphs, the term Co-Redemptrix parses with Jesus Christ as the redeemer, possibly detracting from His role as the sole Redeemer of humanity. The last aspect is Ecumenical. The objection here is that the title is also a deviation against the Spirit of Vatican II. In an article written by Jimmy Akin entitled "Does the Church Teach Mary as Co-Redemptrix," Akin argues that when the Church stops using a term, and when the popes distance themselves from it, it indicates that term is falling into desuetude, which means

disuse.⁵⁶ Akin explains that in legal terms, a never-enforced law falls into desuetude and ceases to be a law.⁵⁷ Applying this concept to Co-Redemptrix, the Czestochowa document mentions that the disuse of this term can be seen “from the time of Pope Pius XII himself intentionally avoided using it.”⁵⁸ Further, Akin suggests that the title is no longer treated by the Magisterium as an authoritative expression of Catholic doctrine. While the truth that Mary uniquely cooperated with the Redeemer remains, “Co-Redemptrix” as a privileged and authoritative expression of Catholic teaching appears to have fallen into desuetude.⁵⁹ This is the reason why the term Co-Redemptrix is not mentioned in the Magisterial texts to date. As synthesized by Pope Benedict XVI “The formula ‘Co-redemptrix’ departs to too great an extent from the language of Scripture and of the Fathers and therefore gives rise to misunderstandings. Everything comes from Christ, as the Letter to the Ephesians and the Letter to the Colossians, in particular, tell us; Mary, too, is everything she is through Him. The word ‘Co-redemptrix’ would obscure this origin. A correct intention being expressed in the wrong way.”⁶⁰

Conclusion

The start of the 20th century opened its door to the proposal of the Fifth Marian Dogma on the Universal Mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Along with the proposal is the controversy that comes along with it, and one of the strongly debated points is the title, Co-Redemptrix.

⁵⁶ Jimmy Akin, “Does the Church Teach Mary as Co-Redemptrix?” *Catholic Answers* (CA), created 1 May 2021, accessed 10 June 2024, available at <https://www.catholic.com/video/does-the-church-teach-mary-is-co-redemptrix>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *UD, Mediatrix*.

⁵⁹ CA, Does the Church, May 1.

⁶⁰ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 306.

The doctrinal development of the teachings of the Church follows a principle that guides all her doctrines, and that is that congruency and faithfulness to the early teachings of the Church must always be present. The term Co-Redemptrix only emerged in the 19th-20th century.

In the interpretation of dogma, it is important that it is a homogeneous evolution of doctrine. There should be no change in the specific nature of the matter and there should be the avoidance of adding that which is contrary or diverse from the original teaching. As a guide, St. Vincent of Lerins provides a reminder in the development of teachings known as the Vincentian Canon, which says "what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all."⁶¹ Applying the said principle in terms of the teachings on the Blessed Virgin Mary, the fundamental Marian principle is the *Theotokos*, through which all other teachings on Mary flow. Following this principle and applying it to the proposed dogma on Co-Redemptrix, it departs from the role of Mary as Mother to make her another redeemer. This is due to the lexicon difficulty of the prefix "co," which means with the Redeemer. The idea violates the fundamental Marian principle. Examining the proposed Fifth Marian Dogma, especially the title "Co-Redemptrix," a deviation is present from the said title of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which creates confusion and misunderstanding on the part of the faithful, especially on the sole mediatorship of Jesus Christ. The title Co-Redemptrix would somehow detract from the idea of Jesus as the only Redeemer of humanity.

⁶¹ *St. John's Seminary, Vincent of Lerin.*