



Fundamental Pillars

The Third Angel's Message – part 3



The first Ecumenical Council in the history of the Church took place in 325, in an era of epochal change. After some two hundred fifty years of persecution, the decision of the Emperor Constantine to legalize Christianity allowed Christians to worship in freedom throughout the Roman Empire.

But the freedom for the Church was not without controversy. In the early years of the fourth century, an Alexandrian priest, Arius, provoked a firestorm when he challenged the true divinity of Jesus Christ. For Arius, Jesus was not fully God, but merely a creature—albeit a creature exalted to a position next to God the Father and above all others—and “there was a time when He was not.”

The doctrinal controversy soon swept throughout Christianity, threatening to divide the Church. In response, Constantine called together a universal synod, inviting all the bishops throughout the world.

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They gathered in the city of Nicaea, not far from the new imperial capital of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul), to determine definitively the faith of the Church.

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The teachings of Arius were definitively rejected with the formula, “We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of one Being [Greek: homousious, ‘of the same substance’] with the Father.”

Today, the Council of Nicaea is recognized as authoritative by all Christian Churches and communities, and the Creed proclaimed by the Council, with later additions by the Council of Constantinople, is recited by Christians around the world. (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2025-11/council-nicaea-history-arianism-divinity-christ.html>)

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It was apparently Athanasius, who was a secretary to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria at the time, who came up with the phrase “eternally begotten,” to describe the co-eternal existence of Christ, the Son, with the Father. He was trying to defend the early Trinitarian theology of the time, that Jesus the Christ had to be completely and eternally equal to the Father. For Athanasius, Jesus could not be lesser than the Father in any way; Jesus had to be of the same substance and of the same eternity.

Thus, the addition of the word, “eternally” to “begotten.”
Yes, Jesus is the Son of God, but he has also always existed
with (and as) God. He is as eternal as the Father. His
relationship as the Son is “eternal,” which is to say the
relationship is “outside time.” God has always been Father,
and Jesus has always been Son.

The argument can seem tedious and tiny, but it was critical to sustaining what would become the doctrine of the Trinity, that God is truly, and always, and eternally, three; there is no hierarchy within the Trinity. (<https://www.cathedralatl.org/sermons/what-does-eternally-begotten-mean/>)

The doctrine [of Eternal Generation] is important also because it is the linchpin of the doctrine of the Trinity. The classical doctrine of the Trinity states that within the one, undivided nature of God, there are three persons — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The divine nature is not divided into three parts, nor are there three gods; rather, the divine nature is one, simple, and undivided.

(<https://www.equip.org/articles/begotten-father-ages/>)

Proverbs 8:22–25 (KJV) — 22 The LORD possessed me
in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 23 I
was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever
the earth was. 24 When there were no depths, I was
brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding
with water. 25 Before the mountains were settled, before
the hills was I brought forth:

Proverbs 8:25 (NASB95) — 25 “Before the mountains
were settled, Before the hills I was ¹brought forth;

1. Or born

Proverbs 8:25 (NIV) — 25 before the mountains were
settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth,

Proverbs 8:25 (NLT) — 25 Before the mountains were
formed, before the hills, I was born—

John 5:30 (KJV) — 30 I can of mine own self do nothing:
as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek
not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath
sent me.

John 8:28 (KJV) — 28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

John 14:28 (KJV) — 28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

Revelation 14:9 (KJV) Revelation 14:9 (KJV) — 9 And
the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, **If
any man worship the beast and his image**, and receive
his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S NEW DOGMA:

The Assumption of Mary

A famous novelist-convert discusses his understanding of the doctrine and "the savage war around the only figure of perfect human love"

By GRAHAM GREENE

THERE is one saint in the calendar of the Church who has never been associated with the idea of punishment: even justice is alien to her, compared with the ideas of mercy and love. She is the one whom Catholics know as Our Lady.

Yet it is around this figure that the bitterest conflict has always been waged. No statues in Puritan England were more certain to be destroyed than hers, and the same was true in Spain in the 1930s. Ministers in their pulpits may question the divinity of Christ and cause no stir outside a few country rectories—but when the doctrine of the Assumption, which has been established as a feast of the Church for more than 1,000 years, is defined as a dogma, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York claim that the division of Christendom has been widened. They believe in the Resurrection of the dead—but to suggest that an actual resurrection has already taken place seems to them blasphemous. No storm was raised when, a hundred years ago, Newman wrote: "Original sin had not been found in her, by the wear of her senses, and the waste of her frame and the decrepitude of years, propagating death. She died, but her death was a mere fact, not an effect, and, when it was over, it ceased to be." Temporally there were other issues: the Protestant churches were worried by the idea of evolution, even the age of the earth was a cause of scandal because it was believed to contradict Genesis. But the conflict of science and religion always passes sooner or later: what remains is this mysterious savage war around the only figure of perfect human love.

What is the explanation? One theologian has explained it for our generation, as a distrust of the concrete. We are so used to abstractions. Words like Democracy and Liberty can be used in quite opposite senses without arousing attention: they go in and out of our ears like air. So with religious belief. The Supreme Being, the Trinity, the Creator of all things: such phrases may once have excited thought, but they do so no longer. Even the concrete name Christ has become so diluted, into the Great Teacher, the First Communion, and the like, that only a small amount of opposition is raised by the idea that Christ is God—it is rather like saying Truth is God. But the statement that Mary is the Mother of God remains something shocking, paradoxical, physical.

But it is from the statement that all Christians spring. To quote Newman again: "When once we have mastered the idea that Mary bore, suckled, and nursed the Eternal in the form of a child, what can be impossible to the mind and heart of thoughts which such a doctrine inspires?" The flood of thoughts may sometimes have about them a certain force, but the Church is slow and careful: she will allow plenty of time to either of themselves, and there is hardly any sign of apprehension in the proclamation in 1854 of the Immaculate Conception, which was merely part of the accepted teaching of the Church, or the fact that the Virgin Mary is also, within the years of the death of Christ, the Assumption, which even amongst those who might object to an essential effect of the Immaculate



Since the Vatican announced that the Pope would this week proclaim the Assumption of the Mother of God to be a dogma of the Catholic Church, the Christian world's religious leaders have debated the proclamation with much earnestness and some frenzy. To expound the venerable belief that Mary, upon her death, was taken bodily into heaven, LIFE called upon the distinguished British Author, Graham Greene (left). A convert to Catholicism, Mr. Greene has most recently been noted for his movie scenarios for *The Third Man* and *The Fallen Idol*. But the most pertinent—and perhaps most enduring—of his novels is the trilogy (*Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter*) which, in a realistic projection of the worldly forces of good and evil, are woven around the central theme of personal salvation (and damnation). In this article Author-Convert Greene states his understanding of the newly proclaimed dogma of his Church.

Conception, the Church has waited longer still.

Our opponents sometimes claim that no belief should be held dogmatically which is not explicitly stated in scripture (ignoring that it is only on the authority of the Church we recognize certain Gospels and not others as true). But the Protestant churches have themselves accepted such dogmas as the Trinity for which there is no such precise authority in the Gospels. St. John wrote, "There is much else besides that Jesus did; if all of it were put in writing I do not think the world itself would contain the books which would have to be written"; and it is our claim that Tradition alone—founded on the Apostles' teaching, analyzed and reflected on through the ages

by the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit promised by Christ—illuminates the full and true meaning of the Scriptures.

From the Scriptures themselves we know very little of Our Lady beyond the first appalling facts of the Annunciation and the Virgin Birth. St. Luke's Gospel as sometimes known as Our Lady's, for St. Luke gives details of the Visitation and the Birth that could only have come from Mary's account of them. St. Matthew's Gospel complements his account with the Flight into Egypt. St. John, with whom, so tradition declares, she spent the remainder of her life after the Crucifixion, tells us how Christ performed for her his first miracle at the wedding feast of Cana, how she stood at the foot of the Cross and how Christ entrusted her to the disciple whom he loved. From the Acts we learn that she was present with the Apostles in the upper room at Pentecost, and afterwards there is complete silence—so far legends that is all. "Her departure made no noise in the world," Newman wrote. "The Church went about her common duties, preaching, converting, suffering; there were persecutions, there was fleeing from place to place, there were martyrs, there were triumphs, at length the name spread abroad that the Mother of God was no longer upon earth. Pilgrims went to and fro; they sought for her relics, but they found them not, did she die at Ephesus? or did she die at Jerusalem?" Reports varied, but her tomb could not be pointed out, or if it was found it was open.

The empty tomb

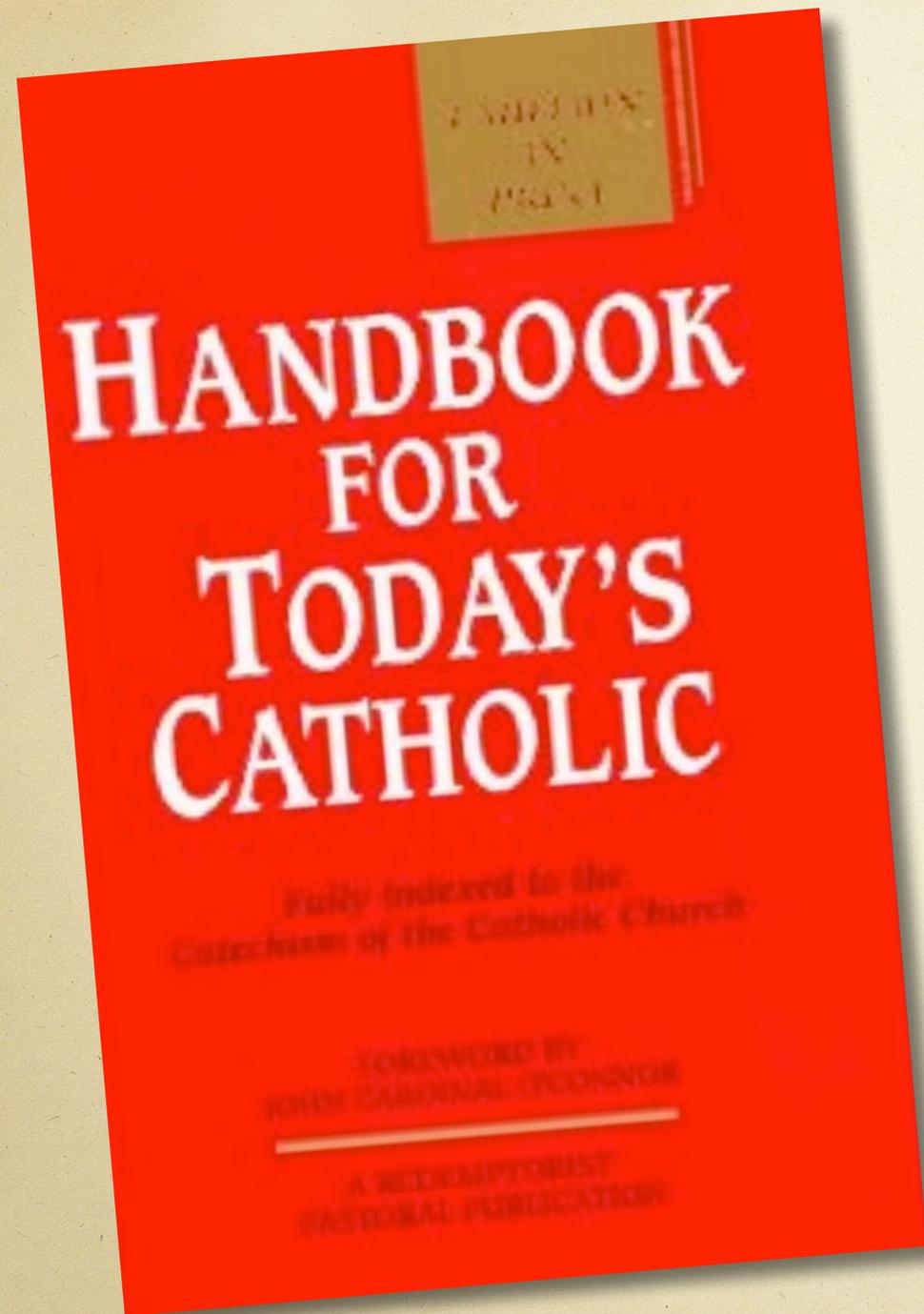
LEGEND tells how the Apostles were suddenly gathered together around her deathbed, how they looked her and on the third day found her tomb empty, but the dogma of the Assumption does not demand that we should believe these details of her end. We are not asked to believe what the Church, in historical moments, has always believed: that, just as at her case the want of original sin was never allowed to stand for "our sainted ancestor's sinless life" (St. Thomas writes), so the corruption of the body, which we believe in the effect of original sin, never occurred: she is not dead, purified, but whatever the cause of her death, she never died. Scripture, tradition, legend—all these contribute either to our knowledge of Mary, or to our knowledge of how men ought to be.

Illustration by [unreadable]

Our opponents [Protestants] sometimes claim that no belief should be held dogmatically which is not explicitly stated in scripture (ignoring that it is only on the authority of the Church we recognize certain Gospels and not others as true). But the Protestant churches have themselves accepted such dogmas as the Trinity for which there is no such precise authority in the Gospels. . . (Graham Green, "The Catholic Church's New Dogma: The Assumption Of Mary," *Life*, October 30, 1950)

While no single scriptural passage states formally the doctrine of the Trinity, it is assumed as a fact by Bible writers and mentioned several times.

Only by faith can we accept the existence of the Trinity.
(*Adventist Review*, vol. 158, no. 31, p. 4; undated, but published in July 1981)



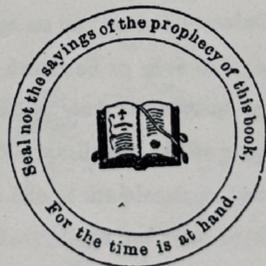
The Mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church. (*Handbook for Today's Catholic*, p. 16)

Revelation 3:14 (KJV) — 14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Thoughts,

CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL,
ON THE
BOOK OF REVELATION.

BY URIAH SMITH.



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BATTLE CREEK, MICH.
1865.

Moreover he is the “beginning of the creation of God.” Not the beginner, but the beginning, of the creation, the first created being, dating his existence back before any other created being or thing, next to the self-existent and eternal God. (Uriah Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation*, 1865 ed., p. 59)

Colossians 1:16 (KJV) — 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All other things have been created through him and for him. (JW New World Translation)

For by him were all things created,
by means of him all **other** things were created

3. 'Allah, the Independent and Besought of all. 4. 'He begets not, nor is He begotten; (112:3)

1 John 4:8-10 (AV) — 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

1 John 5:11-13 (KJV) — 11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

1 John 2:22–23 (KJV) — 22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

John 20:30–31 (KJV) — 30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Galatians 4:4–5 (KJV) — 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

