MOTHER CHURCH AS METAPHOR IN KEY EARLY PATRISTIC WRITERS AND VATICAN II

by

Cristina Nava Lledo Gomez

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Arts, School of Theology, Charles Sturt University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Theology

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Sydney, Australia
February 2015
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The Church as Mother: 
The Maternal Ecclesial Metaphor in the 
Vatican II Documents

Cristina Nava Lledo Gomez 
Doctor of Philosophy in Theology 
Charles Sturt University, February 2015

ABSTRACT

The maternal ecclesial metaphor has been a part of Christian ecclesial language from the early first centuries to the council of Vatican II. The beginnings of its usage are undetermined, and in biblical tradition, the Church was never explicitly named a mother. The first explicit evidence of mother as an image for the Christian community is found in the writings of Irenaeus (c.125-200 CE) who was writing out of the Church of Lyons. By then the maternal metaphor was already in common usage. But, whilst Irenaeus imaged the Church community as a mother, it was Tertullian (160-220 CE) who was the first to use the appellation more specifically, as an entity separate from the sum of the Church’s membership. Cyprian (200-258 CE) further develops the tradition of naming the Church a mother. By the time Ambrose (339-397 CE) utilizes this metaphor, the Church’s maternity was no longer the primary focus of description for the Church. Instead it becomes highly associated with virginity. The figure of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, was used by Ambrose to then support the image of the Church as both virgin and mother. It was he who first named Mary as ecclesiatype in the Latin West. In a similar way, Augustine (354-430) also named Mary as ecclesiatype. The first section of the thesis not only explores the context of the uses of the maternal ecclesial metaphor but also the maternal images projected. It asks if this maternal image aligned with surrounding cultural ideas of motherhood and womanhood and
therefore whether the maternal ecclesial metaphor worked as a live metaphor for its audiences.

Both Ambrose and Augustine are referenced in Vatican II Council’s *Lumen Gentium*, in the naming of Mary as ecclesiastype at LG 64. The richness of their contexts are not indicated in the documents and more often the references are rather used as proof texts. After considering the imaging of the ecclesial mother in the first section of the thesis (the five early Fathers in five chapters), the second section of the thesis explores the imaging of the ecclesial mother in Vatican II Council’s 16 main documents. Whilst in the early Fathers, the place of the ecclesial mother finds some justification, in the Vatican II documents, her place is questioned especially in a globalized culture where it cannot be said there is one common understanding of motherhood and womanhood. The second part of the thesis similar to the first part explores the image of the ecclesial mother that is projected and questions what purpose it serves as a metaphorical device.

The metaphorical theory underlying the thesis derives from Janet Martin Soskice. The thesis derives three criteria from Soskice’s metaphor theories to test whether the use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor is used as a living metaphor by the early Patristics and Vatican II council alike. Overall, the aim of the thesis is to open up the possibility of recovering the maternal ecclesial metaphor as a rhetorical tool for future ecclesial use.
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

## SERIES & GENERAL REFERENCES

<table>
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<td>ACW</td>
<td>Ancient Christian Writers</td>
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<td>ANCL</td>
<td>Ante Nicene Christian Library</td>
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<td>ANF</td>
<td>Ante Nicene Fathers Series</td>
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<td>CCSL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</td>
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<td>FC</td>
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<td>NCP</td>
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<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies: Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge falsely-so-called)</td>
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<td>Epid</td>
<td>Epideixis (Proof or Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching)</td>
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<td>EpVL</td>
<td>Epistola Ecclesiariwm Viennensis et Lugdunensis</td>
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<td>(The Letter of the Churches from Vienne and Lyons to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia)</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Eusebius Caesariensis Historia Ecclesiastica</td>
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<td>Ad Mart</td>
<td>Ad Martyras (To the Martyrs)</td>
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<td>Adv Marc</td>
<td>Adversus Marcionem (Against Marcion)</td>
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<td>Adv Iud</td>
<td>Adversus Iudaeos (Against the Jews)</td>
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<td>Apolog</td>
<td>Apologeticum (The Apology)</td>
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<td>De Bapt</td>
<td>De Baptismo (On Baptism)</td>
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<td>De Carne</td>
<td>De Carne Christi (On the Flesh of Christ)</td>
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De Cul Fem  De Cultu Feminarum (On Female Fashion)
De Fuga   De Fuga in Persecutione (The Flight into Persecution)
De Monog  De Monogamia (On Monogamy)
De Orat   De Oratione (On Prayer)
De Praes  De Praescriptione Haereticorum
          (On the Prescription of Heretics)
De Pud    De Pudicitia (On Modesty)
De Spec   De Spectaculis (On the Games)
De Virg Vel De Virginibus Velandis (On the Veiling of Virgins)

CYPRIAN
De Hab    De Habitu Virginis (On the Dress of Virgins)
De Lap    De Lapsis (On the Lapsed)
De Unit   De Unitate Ecclesiae (On the Unity of the Catholic Church)
          Ep Epistolae (Letters)

AMBROSE
De Incarn  De Incarnationis Dominicae sacramento
          (Of the Incarnation of Our Lord)
De Mys    De Mysterium (On the Mysteries)
De Poen   De Poenitentia (On Repentance)
De Sat    De Excessu Fratris Sui Satyri
          (On the Death of His Brother Satyrus)
De Vid    De Vidius (Concerning Widows)
De Virg   De Virginibus (Concerning Virgins)
          Ep Epistolae (Letters)
ExpLk2Bk2 Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam Book 2
          (Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke, Book 2)
Ps47     Ennarationes in psalmos 47 (Commentary on Psalm 47)
Ps118Serm5 Expositio in Psalmum CXVII Sermon 5
          (Commentary on Psalm 118, Sermon 5)

AUGUSTINE
AOO      Sancti Aurelii Augustini, Hipponensis Episcopi, Opera Omnia
          (St Augustus Aurelius, Bishop of Hippo, Complete Works)
Conf     Confessiones (Confessions)
Contr Cres Contra Cresconium Grammaticum Partis Donati
          (Against Cresconius, a Donatist Grammarian)
Contr Faus Contra Faustum Manichaeum
          (Against Faustus the Manichaeans)
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<td>Contra Mendacium ad Consentium</td>
<td>(To Consentius, Against Lying)</td>
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<td>De Baptismo (On Baptism)</td>
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<td>De Bono Conjugali (The Excellence of Marriage)</td>
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<td>De Catechizandis Rudibus</td>
<td>(On Teaching or Catechizing the Uninstructed)</td>
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<td>De Civ</td>
<td>De Civitate Dei (The City of God)</td>
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<td>De Doctrina Christiana (On Christian Doctrine)</td>
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<td>De Trinitate (On the Trinity)</td>
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<td>Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity)</td>
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<td>Christus Dominus</td>
<td>(Decree on the Bishop’s Pastoral Office in the Church)</td>
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<td>Dignitatis Humanae (Declaration on Religious Freedom)</td>
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<td>Inter Mirifica (Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication)</td>
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<td>Optatam Totius (Decree on Priestly Formation)</td>
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<td>Perfectae Caritatis</td>
<td>(Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life)</td>
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<td>PO</td>
<td>Presbyterorum Ordinis (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests)</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)</td>
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<td>UR</td>
<td>Unitatis Redintegratio (Decree on Ecumenism)</td>
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For Inang, Susana, Gertrudes, Esperanza, Lily, Eleonore
and Gliceria
My maternal ancestors
Models of strength, resistance, persistence, beauty, and wisdom
Models of vulnerability, angers, failures, and regrets

I miss you
You are my strength
From heaven you cheer me on
INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Throughout the Vatican II Documents, the Church is imaged as a mother, sometimes implicitly, at others explicitly as Mother Church (Mater Ecclesia). Councils previous to Vatican II also image the Church as such, all the way back to the First Council of Constantinople, c.381 CE. Before this, early Patristic writers referred to the Church as a mother, beginning with Irenaeus, c.130-202 CE. Some even argue that the biblical texts Galatians 4:26, 2 John 1, and Revelations 12 form the foundations for this maternal ecclesial imaging. The maternal metaphor’s long history is evidence of its adaptability and ability to express the nature of the Church through the ages. But can the metaphor continue to have relevance today and assist in understanding the Church’s nature, given that contemporary understandings of “motherhood” resist any singular and culturally specific notions, especially from the dominant Western paradigm? Or has it become a dead metaphor, a cliché stripped of the web of associations that were originally evoked? If the metaphor’s utility remains a possibility, what understanding of the Church would it communicate? Our focus within this broader questioning is its meaning and purpose within the documents of Vatican II.

To begin investigation of the metaphor’s relevancy, this thesis first turns to the initial ways that key early Patristic writers developed it as an image of the Church community. Recognising their rhetorical genius and the power of metaphors when first utilized, the thesis explores the maternal ecclesial metaphor’s imaging and purpose in their writings. References which allude to the Christian community as a mother exist as far back as the
Apostolic era (evidenced by the biblical references above) but it is in Irenaeus that a clear connection is first made between the community and its imaging as a mother.

After exploring Irenaeus’ use, the thesis then turns to two other key early Patristic writers, namely Tertullian and Cyprian, who formed the foundations for early North African ecclesiology using this maternal metaphor. Next Ambrose and Augustine become the focus. Both use Tertullian and Cyprian as a basis from which to expand ecclesiological understanding, utilising the maternal metaphor alongside other metaphors such as the Church as the body of Christ (*corpus Christi*). It is these last two authors (amongst later Patristic writers) whom are cited within the Vatican II documents when the Council calls the Church a mother, particularly in *Lumen Gentium*, the Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

This investigation into the beginnings of the metaphor provides a basis from which the thesis begins the project of questioning the metaphor’s relevance. If in the Fathers it was utilized for particular purposes and spoke to particular audiences, then at Vatican II, for what purpose and which audience is the metaphor speaking to? Further, if a contemporary audience found this mother image acceptable, then the question arises: Is this because the projected image agreed with the audiences’ own concepts or imaging of the Church as a “mother”? To investigate this idea, the thesis explores culturally specific understandings of the mother in the age of the early Patristic writers and in the era of Vatican II. In addition, the writers’ own images of motherhood are also examined. The formation of a relevant maternal metaphor for the contemporary Church is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it does begin the process of laying the foundations for this
larger exploration of the relevancy and questioning the power of ecclesial metaphors for the contemporary Church. That is, not only its rhetorical power but also its political power. For who benefits most from the use of this metaphor?

From a broader perspective, this thesis seeks to contribute to the larger task of feminist theologians to reclaim female ecclesial imaging and symbolizing. Even from the days of the early Latin Patristic writers living in the ancient Roman Empire, ‘Mother Church’ was already imaged as a particular type of woman whose significance was often reduced to her biological functions of birthing, feeding, and nurturing, as will be shown in Chapters II and III. The maternal ecclesial metaphor’s beginnings and purpose, as a response to various intra-ecclesial issues, have been researched in the past. However, there is a significant gap in research in the area of the questioning as to what extent the images portrayed of Mother Church, in terms of the kind of woman being projected, align with their contextual cultural ideas and with the reality of motherhood.

The reclamation of this image is not only important for feminist theology but also the contemporary Christian community. It highlights the issue of language used in the Church: the purpose of the language, the people who benefit from its usage, and the danger of its use when meaning becomes obscured, because a text/word/metaphor has remained part of the Church’s lexicon for centuries despite changes in context and meaning, or worse, it becomes a disempowering tool for the community and sustains unhelpful limiting elements within the Church.
**Brief History of Use of the Maternal Ecclesial Metaphor**

Recent research shows that whilst other images for the Church have a biblical basis, there is no direct reference to Mother Church or *Mater Ecclesia* in the Jewish or Christian Scriptures.\(^1\) However, Joseph Plumpe and Will Cohen argue that the origins of the maternal ecclesial image derive from the concept of Jerusalem as mother found in Galatians 4:26.\(^2\) Sebastian Trompe points to the Lady of 2 John 1 as a source.\(^3\) David Rankin points out that the author of 2 John 1 referred to the Church congregation as ‘eklektein kurias kai teinois aute’ (the elect lady and her children), “thus representing the church as a ‘mother’.”\(^4\) *Lumen Gentium* 6 agrees in part with Plumpe and Cohen, by indicating that not only Galatians 4:26 is a basis for the image, but also Revelations 12:17.\(^5\) Further, it seems the image of Mother Church was preceded by the image of Mother Faith (*Mater Pistis*) evidenced in the works of Polycarp in his *Letter to the Philippians* (c.110 CE), in the Shepherd of Hermas’ visions of the matron whom he thought to be Sibyl (c.95-100 CE), and in the reply of Hierax to Rusticus in the *Acts of Justin and His Companions* (c.165 CE).\(^6\) Amidst these claims, for Peper, the

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5. The Church, further, "that Jerusalem which is above" is also called "our mother" (Gal. 4:26; cf. Rev. 12:1).
first solid evidence of use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor only appears in late second century Patristic literature, explicitly in the writings of Irenaeus to the Church of Lyons.\(^7\)

According to Peper, the original purpose of the metaphor was as a way of delineating ecclesial membership in the early North African contexts.\(^8\) This sense is especially captured in Cyprian’s (c.200-258 CE) saying: “\textit{Habere iam non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem}” (You cannot have God as Father unless you have the Church as mother) in \textit{De Ecclesia Catholicae Unitate}. Following along this line, Peper says that not just Cyprian but all the early Patristic writers understood the maternity of the Church in terms of God’s fatherhood, and thus at stake was one’s own salvation.\(^9\)

For Plumpe, the image of Mother Church both historically and today continues to be of a mother with “understanding and feeling”–its purpose being to preserve “unity among the various rites of the Church” and a call for “dissident groups to return to their former home”.\(^10\) This is how Pius XII uses the image in \textit{Castii Connubii} (Dec. 31, 1930).\(^11\) Again the implication is the soteriological consequence of not returning to the “Mother Church.” Here, the purpose of the image is singular and applies for all ages and circumstances.

Rankin argues for a distinction in the use of the metaphor prior and subsequent to Tertullian. He states that previous early Patristic writers had

\(^7\) Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 18-19.
\(^8\) ibid., 14.
\(^9\) ibid.
\(^11\) Plumpe also notes the timeliness of Pius’ use of the metaphor, at a time when “motherhood” seemed to be degraded. ibid.
utilized the metaphor as a comforting and nourishing image, relegating the
roles of mother Church to simply teaching and nurturing. With Tertullian,
Rankin claims the metaphorical use is nuanced, creating a ‘high
ecclesiology’, such that Father God becomes associated with Mother
Church for the first time and provides the implication that without
association with the Church, there is no association with Father God.
Rankin also recognises that Tertullian deploys the language of his
opponents against them, thus his use of the metaphor is also an attempt at its
reclamation from Marcion.12

All three authors provide reasons for the use of the metaphor–either
from sociological, ecclesiological, and/or political perspectives. Peper takes
the extra step of pointing out that even within the writings of one author, the
use of the image of the ecclesial mother is non-singular but dependent upon
changing contexts or differing audiences. To this body of research this
thesis adds an exploration of the surrounding culturally determined images
of the mother; I argue that these cultural images are reflected in the
differing images of the Church as mother amongst different Patristic
authors.

Looking forward to the 20th century, one finds the use of the
maternal ecclesial metaphor within papal and conciliar documents, in
almost a singular, non-contextual, static, platonic sense: as imaging either a
pre-existent esoteric Church imaged in Revelations 12, or the Jerusalem
mother from above of Galatians 4, or the Lady elect of 2 John 1, or Mary
the Mother of Jesus herself (but the exalted Mary Queen of Heaven rather
than the living Miriam of the Davidic line). Rather than a metaphor

12 Rankin, Tertullian and the Church, 80-81.
grounded in the concrete experience of a community being “mothered”, the image of Mother Church is used as a cliché, not reliant upon its predication in contemporary experience. The works of Joseph Plumpe, Henri De Lubac, Hans urs Von Balthasar, Hugo Rahner, and the Vatican II documents point to this rather singular and idealised imaging of Mother Church. The question that arises here is whether the maternal ecclesial metaphor has become a dead metaphor, no longer evoking the network of associations or extending the horizons of ecclesiology as it once did?

**Literature Review**

Peper’s thesis summarizes the research on the maternal ecclesial metaphor in the last 100 years. He says although the term “Mother Church” has endured for centuries, besides a handful of studies on the use of the mother as metaphor for the Church, there remains a great gap in the research. He claims that any studies exploring gender usage in the early Patristic years concentrate more on the development of Mariology or on theological anthropology in Patristic theory and practice rather than on the use of the metaphor itself. Further, he states that other studies have explored the maternal metaphor only in a superficial sense.

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14 Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia".

15 ibid., 1.

16 ibid., footnote 8, p.4.

17 ibid., 12.
The first significant study on the maternal ecclesial metaphor was undertaken by Sebastian Tromp in “Ecclesia, Sponsa, Virgo, Mater” published in 1937. Here the motherhood of the Church lay in her conceiving, birthing, nourishing and abortive capabilities. Peper points out that whilst the categories may be somewhat helpful, the study ignores the contexts from which the images arose and the differences in portrayal of the maternal image by the various Patristic fathers. Interestingly, Tromp was the Dutch Jesuit professor from the Gregorian University in Rome who was the ghostwriter for Pius XII’s Mystici Corporis and was also the secretary of the Preparatory Theological Commission closely associated with the objecting minority at Vatican II, particularly Cardinal Ottaviani. The Council would in fact reject the draft, De Ecclesia, initially prepared by the Theological Commission. It would take the draft out of the hands of Ottaviani and his Commission and place the re-drafting into the hands of a “special seven-member subcommission of the Doctrinal Commission”. Five bishops from this new gathering relied upon the theologians Gérard Philips, Karl Rahner, Jean Daniélou, and eventually Yves Congar. When the first two chapters of the revised text were presented at the Doctrinal Commission, Ottaviani and Tromp criticized the text not only for going beyond the mandate of not adding anything new to the old draft but also for being “dangerous and relativistic”. Chapter 1 would now describe the Church as Mystery, Chapter 2 would prioritise the faithful as the People of

18 Tromp, "Ecclesia Sponsa Virgo Mater".
21 ibid., 163.
22 ibid., 16.
23 ibid., 164.
God, and only then in Chapter 3 would the Church be described as a Hierarchy. O’Malley says “conservative bishops of the council relied on theologians to formulate and help back up their positions.”

One of those key theologians was Tromp. This scenario poses the question of how Tromp’s maternal ecclesial imaging is employed, especially when his ecclesiology prioritises the hierarchy’s authority? His promotion of the maternal ecclesial metaphor would, in part at least, seek to serve this agenda. Further, Peper points out that Tromp addresses the themes of the Church as mother, spouse, and Virgin in a later “voluminous work” called Corpus Christi, quod est Ecclesia (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1946), “as part of his attempt to construct a stronger Marian ecclesiology”. Lumen Gentium also presents a strong Marian ecclesiology as will be demonstrated in Chapters VI and VII of this thesis. Tromp would have certainly been one of the key proponents of this imagery within Lumen Gentium.

The next key research on the use of the maternal metaphor is Joseph Plumpe’s “Ecclesia Mater” first published in 1939, later published as the more extensive and seminal study Mater Ecclesia: An Inquiry into the Concept of Church as Mother in 1943. It is considered to be the earliest comprehensive research into the area. Even the criticisms concerning his disregard for the influence of the pervading mother goddess, Magna Mater, on the early Western Churches do not detract from its comprehensiveness. It is a study that is seen as foundational when exploring this topic and is

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24 ibid., 112.
25 ibid., 113.
26 ibid.
28 Plumpe, "Ecclesia Mater"; Plumpe, Mater Ecclesia.
referenced in most subsequent research in this area. His focus was on the historical context from which the mother metaphor arose in the Western Churches of Cyprian and Tertullian in Carthage and the Eastern Churches of Clement and Origen in Alexandria and St Methodius of Philippi. For Plumpe, differences between the early Patristic writers’ views on the Church’s maternity became divided into two camps—views lying either from an Eastern or a Western perspective. For Peper, again the study does not capture the developing difference in nuanced imaging of the maternal Church amongst the early Patristic writers.\(^{29}\) Plumpe claims to present an eternal Mother Church image that was and remains unchanging. With the correction of the dates presented in Plumpe’s work, Peper in fact shows that Plumpe’s own scholarship presents a changing maternal ecclesiology as the situations of the early Patristic writers changed.\(^{30}\) Of interest is Plumpe’s denial of the Roman imperial mother and the Magna Mater’s influences on the maternal imaging of the Church.\(^{31}\) Three reviewers agree that had Plumpe taken seriously the influence of these cultural icons, his research would have been less weak, especially in the second chapter, “Christian Anticipations of the Μητέρ Ἐκκλησία” where he makes such denials.\(^{32}\)

Whilst Peper’s comprehensive research, alongside the early North African research of J. Patout Burns and François Decret, forms the

\(^{29}\) Plumpe, "Ecclesia Mater"; Plumpe, Mater Ecclesia.

\(^{30}\) Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia".

\(^{31}\) cf. Plumpe, Mater Ecclesia, 29-32.

foundation for the early Church Fathers section of this thesis.\textsuperscript{33} Peper’s paper does not show any studies on the topic post early Patristic period to the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. My own research has not uncovered any studies that directly explore the topic of “mother” as metaphor for the Church in the Middle Ages, which do not also associate the term with Mary and the high Mariology of the time. The devotion to Mary was usually equated with complete devotion to the Church as mother also. Certainly by the time Mary was given the title “\textit{Mater Ecclesiae}”, Mother of the Church, in 1964 by Pope Paul VI, at the Third Session of Vatican II Council, a blurring of lines between Church as mother and Mary had been achieved.\textsuperscript{34}

There is renewed interest in the topic of Church as mother from the period of Vatican II onwards. The \textit{ressourcement} movement created new interest in Patristic ecclesiology and thus led to investigations of the maternal image for the Church. The works of significant mention are: Karl Delahaye’s \textit{Ecclesia Mater chez les pères des trois premiers siècles} published in 1964, Henri De Lubac’s \textit{The Motherhood of the Church followed by Particular Churches in the Universal Church} published in 1971, and Hans Urs von Balthasar’s \textit{The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church} published in 1974.\textsuperscript{35}


\textsuperscript{35} Karl Delahaye, \textit{Ecclesia Mater chez les pères des trois premiers siècles; pour un renouvellement de la pastorale d’aujourd’hui}, Unam Sanctam (Paris,: Éditions du Cerf, 1964); De Lubac, \textit{The Motherhood of the Church}, Englund; Balthasar, \textit{The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church}.
Delahaye largely repeats the findings of Plumpe’s study by dichotomizing the image into the Latin or Greek image of the mother whilst De Lubac takes up a more generalized argument that the mother from Hellenism and paganism is what forms the image of the Church as mother. De Lubac’s aim was to highlight the importance of relationships within the Church and to discourage the tendency to divide the clergy from the laity. Of interest is De Lubac’s insistence that the maternal image of the Church is unlike human motherhood. For De Lubac, growth in adult faith in the Church only creates a stronger bond between the Church and its members rather than a separation as in the case of human motherhood and its growing child.

There are other recent works which have explored the maternal imaging of the Church such as David Rankin’s *Tertullian and the Church* published in 1995, F. Ledegang’s *Mysterium Ecclesiae: Images of the Church and Its Members in Origen* published in 2001, and Robin M. Jensen’s “*Mater Ecclesia* and *Fons Aeterna*: The Church and her Womb in Ancient Christian Tradition” published in 2008. These works concentrate on particular areas of study relating to the maternal ecclesial metaphor rather than attempting to create a wide-ranging exploration such as Plumpe’s and Peper’s.

More comprehensive works focused in this area are: Hugo Rahner’s *Our Lady and the Church* first published in 1961, Sally Cunneen’s *Mother*

Hugo Rahner is just one of numerous authors who follow the later development in the Patristic writers of equating the Church’s motherhood with the divine motherhood of Mary. Taking this line of study complicates the exploration of the Church as mother, as the research veers into more of a Mariological study wherein the maternal metaphor for the Church becomes collapsed into the figure of Mary. It was Rahner who rediscovered the description of *Mater Ecclesia* (“Mother of the Church”) as applied to Mary in the writings of Ambrose. In fact, in a blurb on the English edition of Rahner’s *Our Lady and the Church* (printed 2005), Cardinal Ratzinger is quoted as saying “Hugo Rahner's great achievement was his rediscovery, in the Fathers, of the indivisibility of Mary and the Church.” However, I argue that this high Mariological ecclesiology is a later development that is erroneously being read back into the early Patristic writings that I will be examining. Thus this thesis rejects the indivisibility of Mary and the Church and aims to take seriously the study of the metaphor as text in itself, and hence the function of the “mother” in Mother Church will be explored separately from Mary. There is merit in exploring Mary as the ecclesiatype for the Church and this concept is briefly investigated where relevant. In particular, this exploration becomes unavoidable once Ambrose and

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Augustine introduce Mary as a type for the Church. However, this will not be the focus nor take up a large section of the thesis given that the aim of this work is to explore the rhetorical function of the maternal metaphor.

Cuneen exemplifies the feminist attempt at expanding the image by taking seriously the reality of everyday motherhood, hoping in turn to change the way that the Church “mothers” her members and suggesting even how members can mother each other.  

This thesis agrees that the current image of the Church as Mother in official Catholic documents needs to be expanded. Yet by concentrating on one medium of revelation (daily experience), Cuneen’s arguments show no way in which the Church can move from its current modus operandi, formed over centuries by biblical tradition, the thought of early Patristic writers, and various councils, to what she logically suggests from an anthropological point of view.

Braaten, a Lutheran and proponent of the ecumenical movement, analyses the current problems of the Protestant Churches (especially from the Lutheran point of view) and the Catholic Church. He poses the question of the ending of denominations and their return to the one universal mother Church. The move is not in the sense of simplistic fashion but rather a leaning inwards from both sides—the Protestant Churches working as leaven for the Catholic Church moving it to reform away from an authoritarian Tridentine mode of thinking and the Catholic Church giving back to the Protestant Churches things Braaten sees as lacking such as sacramentality and authoritative structure. Braaten’s use of the ‘mother’ exemplifies the assumption made on the term “Mother Church” in the 20th-21st century, that it is taken to mean as the universal Church, the original

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40 Cunneen, Mother Church.
41 Braaten, Mother Church.
Church of the apostles, pre-Reformation. For him the main focus for study on the image of Mother Church is its potential contribution to the ecumenical movement, not the questioning of its function as a metaphor.

Cohen takes up the issue of the use of the Mother Church as assumed to be the universal, pre-Reformation Church in the bigger exploration of the use of the “sister” metaphor to describe the relationship between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.  

The study is of considerable pertinence to this thesis because it questions the Vatican use of the term “sister Churches” in terms of the Mother Church, in a document written by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Note on the Expression ‘Sister Churches’* in 2000. Cohen argues that the early Church did not have the one sense or constant image of Mother Church.

From the perspective of studies in metaphor, the maternal ecclesial image is overlooked in preference for exploring metaphors for God-naming as seen in Janet Martin Soskice’s *Metaphor and Religious Language* and Sallie McFague’s *Metaphorical Theology*. McFague also studies the biblical parable as a metaphor in *Speaking in Parables*. But it is ecclesial metaphors rather than metaphors for God which are of greater concern in this thesis. Herwi Rikhof’s *The Concept of Church: A Methodological Inquiry into the Use of Metaphors in Ecclesiology* delves into ecclesial metaphors such as “People of God” and “Body of Christ” and yet does not

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42 Cohen, "The Concept of 'Sister Churches' in Catholic-Orthodox Relations since Vatican II".
explore the maternal metaphor. Recently, Jeannine Hill Fletcher published *Motherhood as Metaphor: Engendering Interreligious Dialogue* and like Cunneen, she focuses on the realities of women as a starting point for theologizing but her focus is on interreligious dialogue.  

In terms of feminist and/or maternal theory critiques on the Church as a mother or even simply the concept of the ‘mother’ in the Christian setting, the critiques have in the past more often focused on Mary as mother, on God as mother, or the entangled image of womanhood with motherhood: critiques of the Church as feminine-maternal become corollary only to the main focus of contextualising Mary in her proper ecclesial setting. In addition, as shown in the literature review above, the concept of ‘Mother Church’ has been predominantly the domain of male theologians whose least concern, if any at all, is a feminist-maternal critique. 

In saying this, there have been a few works that have paved the way for this feminist engagement with the maternal Church. Those works are: Sally Cunneen’s *Mother Church* as already mentioned; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklēsia-logy of Liberation* published in 1994; Tina Beattie’s *God’s Mother, Eve’s Advocate* 

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Cunneen’s contribution has already been discussed. Schüssler Fiorenza’s Discipleship of Equals focuses on the recovery of women’s place in the Church and their reclamation of that place. Imperatori-Lee’s thesis shows the ecclesial contextualization of Mary at Vatican II. She then explores Balthasar’s gendered ecclesiology which is reflected at Vatican II, expressing itself as a feminine-Marian Church against a masculine-clerical image. Imperatori-Lee uses Elizabeth Johnson and Latino mariological perspectives to reappropriate Mariology and Ecclesiology for the contemporary American Christian setting. Tina Beattie’s God’s Mother, Eve’s Advocate, engages with a range of traditional sources for the Church (texts from Genesis, Augustine, early Church doctrine on Mary and writings on Eve) alongside secular texts (such as the feminist-maternal philosophy of Luce Irigaray, René Girard’s perspectives on violence, and contemporary reflections of Catholic women) to reconceptualise Mary, Eve, and the Priesthood for the contemporary Church. In New Catholic Feminism she dedicates a small section on the exploration of the very concept of the maternal Church. She uses contemporary authors Irigaray, De Lubac, and Monica Miller alongside early Patristic writers Ambrose and Augustine to undertake this exploration. Like Beattie this thesis seeks to engage with the

traditional source of Early Patristic writing (Chapters 1 to V) alongside contemporary feminist-maternal theory (in Chapter IX of this thesis) to critique the use of ‘Mother Church’ in the Vatican II documents. It is noted here that the contemporary feminist critique is very limited because the greater priority is the exploration of Mother Church in its early conception and at Vatican II. But having done this groundwork, I anticipate that the greater engagement with feminist-maternal theory will be undertaken in a publication subsequent to this thesis.

**Methodology**

This thesis takes a *ressourcement*-type theological approach, where the origins and early developmental use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor are explored. In particular, articles 63 and 64 of *Lumen Gentium* (LG) are the key passages in which the Church is described as a Mother as Mary as the entire community and it is in these articles that the early Patristics, Ambrose and Augustine are utilised to justify such a description for the Church. By returning to these Patristic sources, the thesis seeks to recover the essential dimensions of their uses of “Mother Church” and can then investigate whether or not the application of “Mother Church” in LG 64 and 65, expresses those essential dimensions. LG 64 and 65 alongside LG 65 call the entire community to become like Mother Church like Mary by engaging in the Church’s apostolic work—but what did Ambrose and Augustine have to say on this image of the Church as mother as Mary as the community?

The thesis utilises Soskice’s metaphorical theory for the analysis of the maternal ecclesial metaphor. Her theories are chosen above others including those of Paul Ricoeur’s, Sallie McFague’s, and George Lakoff
and George Johnson’s. The common weakness to be found in these theories is the reduction of the metaphor to a two-point theory—that it expresses a falseness and truthfulness about an object or concept.49 Yet Soskice argues that there can only be a truthfulness communicated by the metaphor otherwise it is nonsensical.50 McFague, Lakoff and Johnson51 reduce the “metaphor” to the meaning of the “word”. Meanwhile, Ricoeur expands the horizon by stating that the metaphor’s meaning is found in the sentence. To this Soskice argues that “we need not, however, replace the hegemony of the word with an hegemony of the sentence.”52 For her, the meaning of the metaphor is not found in the lexeme, or even in the sentence, but in the entire utterance of a speaker who speaks from a particular context. This concept is explored further in the methodology section below.

The renewed interest into the exploration of the feminine gender or terms for the Church as metaphorically significant has shown itself in the topics of three theses presented in the last 5 years. Two have already been referenced–Peper’s exploration of the Mater Ecclesia in early North African ecclesiology in 2011 and Cohen’s exploration of the “sisterhood” of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in 2010. Lora Walsh’s doctoral thesis on “When the Church’s Gender Mattered: Ecclesia in Trans-Reformation


50 Cf. “Are all metaphors false?” In Soskice, Metaphor and Religious Language, 90-93.

51 Soskice also criticizes Lakoff and Johnson’s “metaphor-as myth thesis” wherein human thought falls victim to language, particularly metaphorical language since their view is “metaphor forms the implicit and unrecognized structure of most human life”. Soskice says “Carried to an extreme, it is in danger of falling into the fallacy…of confusing word derivation with word meaning.” In ibid., 81.

52 ibid., 21.
England”, presented in 2010, adds to this line of renewed interest in the topic.\textsuperscript{53} Walsh proposes in her study that the gender of the Church was intentionally utilized for the purposes of appropriation in trans-Reformation England rather than a term merely called upon as part of a tradition dating back to the early Patristic writers. Additionally, Pope Francis himself has utilized the metaphor a number of times, creating headlines all over the world communicating the following ideas: “Mother Church is not a babysitter”, “Be a Mother, Not an Old Maid” and “Church is a Mother not an NGO.”\textsuperscript{54} For him, among all ecclesial metaphors he states that this is his favourite:

Today I am returning to the image of the Church as mother. I am extremely fond of this image of the Church as mother. For this reason I wish to return to it, because I feel that this image not only tells us what the Church is like but also what face the Church—this Mother Church of ours—should increasingly have.\textsuperscript{55}

\textit{Soskice on the Metaphor}

1) Preliminary Definition of Metaphor

For Soskice, in broad terms, a metaphor is recognized as:

“the minimal unit in which a metaphor is established is semantic rather than syntactic; a metaphor is established as soon as it is clear that one thing is being spoken in terms that are suggestive of another and can be extended, that is, until the length of our speaking ‘of one thing in terms suggestive of another’ makes us forget the ‘thing’ of which we speak.”\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} Lora Walsh, “When the Church's Gender Mattered: Ecclesia in Trans-Reformation England” (Northwestern University, 2010).


\textsuperscript{55} Pope Francis, "General Audience, St Peter’s Square, Wednesday 18 September, 2013” \url{https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130918_udienza-generale.html} (accessed January 5, 2015).

\textsuperscript{56} Soskice, \textit{Metaphor and Religious Language}, 23.
The meaning of this broad definition makes sense in considering the characteristics of the metaphor, the dynamics of metaphorical use, and its contrast with the dead metaphor. These concepts are explored below.

2) Characteristics of the Metaphor

By discussing what a metaphor is not (a *via negativa* approach), Soskice suggests these characteristics of the metaphor: (1) it is linguistic, (2) it has no set structure, (3) it is cognitive, and (4) its meaning is found from within a speaker’s whole utterance, wherein the speaker belongs to a particular community. First, it is linguistic because it is a “figure of speech” rather than “an ‘act’, ‘fusion’, or ‘perception’. Were this not the case we should not know where to look for metaphor at all.”57 Further it is not an object as objects are not linguistic.58 Second, it has no set structure or syntactic form. “Yet it is a most pervasive opinion that there is such an external structure to metaphor and that it is one which involves two terms which are contrasted and compared”.59 As highlighted already, Soskice contrasts well known theorists on the metaphor such as Max Black, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Sallie McFague, and Paul Ricoeur, by arguing that metaphor cannot be reduced to lexemes, with meanings of themselves without context, as argued by Black, Lakoff and Johnson, or even the sentence, as argued by Ricoeur. Third, the metaphor is cognitive. Soskice says “an indication of a good metaphor” is “if it is unnecessary to spell out its implications for the readers”.60 Unlike a number of tropes such as simile,

57 ibid., 16.
58 ibid., 17.
59 ibid., 20.
60 ibid., 23.
synecdoche, and metonomy, metaphor increases understanding\textsuperscript{61} rather than concealing or acting as mere ornamental rhetorical tool, which has “affective impact but no increment to meaning”. \textsuperscript{62} Fourth, as also highlighted already, meaning is found in the speaker’s whole utterance rather than in a lexeme or even a sentence. Just as terms do not have meaning per se on their own except in the context of the speaker’s referring, the speaker does not speak in a vacuum but rather from within a community. This is the only way in which one is to make sense of the speaker’s entire utterance. For Soskice, a community will be steeped in a tradition of use of metaphors and other language—and the source of their language is found in part through their texts.\textsuperscript{63}

3) The Dynamics of Metaphorical Use

Further insight into Soskice’s metaphor theory is found in investigating the elements of the dynamics of metaphorical use. These elements are the associative network, the model in religious language, referencing by a speaker, meaning and reference in an utterance versus sense and denotation of a word, and metaphor as creating new vision.

a) The Associative Network

While we deny that metaphors have two subjects, we agree that each metaphor involves at least two different networks of associations.\textsuperscript{64}

Returning to the misleading view of metaphor as represented in the structure “A is like B”, Soskice says metaphor is not found in two words or two concepts within a sentence that have meaning in themselves, which are

\textsuperscript{61} ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{62} ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{63} Cf. Soskice on the “Old Testament” as the source for the Christian community’s descriptive language, especially metaphors in ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{64} ibid., 49.
then compared and contrasted with each other. Rather, metaphor is found in the whole utterance where at least two subjects are being spoken of and bring up a whole set of associations for its audience. This is the associative network with which Soskice speaks of.

b) Model and Metaphor

Our suggestion is that model and metaphor are closely linked; when we use a model, we regard one thing or state of affairs in terms of another, and when we use a metaphor, we speak of one thing or state of affairs in language suggestive of another. This close association of model and metaphor is important not only for explaining how metaphors work but for explaining why metaphors can be so useful.65

Soskice defines the model as:

An object or state of affairs is a model when it is viewed in terms of its resemblance, real or hypothetical, to some other object or state of affairs; a miniature train is a model of the full-scale one, a jam jar full of cigarette ends is seen as a model for the lungs of a smoker, the behavior of water is seen as a model for the action of electricity.66

In contrast to Max Black, whom Soskice critiques as conflating the metaphor and model, Soskice distinguishes between the two by pointing to metaphor as a figure of speech, “a speaking about one thing or state of affairs in terms suggestive of another” whilst the model “need not be linguistic at all, as with a model train.”67 Yet their close relation remains as Soskice says:

Metaphors arise when we speak on the basis of models; so if we are using the computer as a model for the brain and consequently speak of ‘neural programming’, ‘input’, and ‘feedback’, we are speaking metaphorically on the basis of the computer model; the intelligibility of these terms depends, initially at least, on their being related to this particular model of the brain.68

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65 ibid., 50-51.
66 ibid., 101.
67 ibid.
68 ibid., 101-102.
In science, there are two types of models—the ‘homeomorph’ and the ‘paramorph’. In the homeomorphic model, the subject of the model is also the source. Philip Pettit uses the example of a doll and baby. Here the doll is considered a model of a baby but also the doll is modeled on the baby. Apropos the paramorphic model, the subject and source differ. Soskice says with religious language, it is more likely that paramorphic models are utilized since they deal with “the whole realm of abstract theorising” in science and thus for religious language, they are used as “attempts to speak about the ‘mysterious overplus’”. Further, the model has the ability to “evoke an emotional, moral, or spiritual response”. Even then it also has a “cognitive” and/or “explanatory function”. Indeed, Soskice claims “the model can only be affective because it is taken as explanatory.”

For the Christian community their models derive from a tradition of use and re-use of particular models over time, not because they are taken to “to be elegant and compelling…but because they believe them in some way to depict states and relations of a transcendent kind.” Further the Christian community believes those models to be the most adequate available to them at the time. Just as a good metaphor opens up possibilities for greater understanding or clarification, a good model also “suggests possibilities.” As well, those models are “embedded in Scripture and tradition, and the subject of innumerable glosses and reinterpretations” by the Christian

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70 Soskice, Metaphor and Religious Language, 103.
71 ibid., 109.
72 ibid., 112.
73 ibid., 115.
74 ibid., 114.
For Soskice then, the longevity of a model derives not only from its applicability for a particular community time and time again but also because it has a history of application and thus the model is “freighted with meaning”.  

…to say that God is a fountain of living water, or a vine-keeper, or a rock, or fortress, or king requires an account not merely of fountains, rocks, vines, and kings but of a whole tradition of experiences and of the literary tradition which records and interprets them.

c) The Speaker, Hearer, Referencing, and Referent

In a metaphorical utterance, a speaker speaks to a hearer from within the context of a community and makes reference to a referent only in this way. Using Keith Donellan’s ‘Reference and Definite Descriptions’ and John Lyons’ Semantics, Soskice defines ‘reference’ as “…something that a speaker makes on a particular occasion of making an utterance, and not something made by individual vocabulary terms (lexemes) in isolation.” The reference is successful in as much as “the referring expression will correctly identify for the hearer the individual in question: the referent.”

Though it is not the speaker from within a community who determines reference alone. Rather “reference is determined by speakers in contexts of use, and not simply by individual speakers but by communities of speakers whose language provides access to the states and relations which are of interest to them.”

75 ibid., 115-116.
76 ibid., 158.
77 ibid.
78 Lyons in ibid., 52.
79 ibid., 132.
Another way of recognising the metaphor is contrasting meaning and reference derived from the metaphor with sense and denotation derived from the lexeme. Soskice explains meaning and reference:

the meaning of the metaphor should not be thought of as the meaning of some words that in an utterance are ‘used metaphorically’ or have peculiar ‘metaphorical meanings’, but rather as the meaning of the complete utterance as construed in its context of uttering. Similarly we argue that the reference which the metaphor makes is not, as some suggest, a split reference determined by the individual terms used in a metaphor (like ‘man’ and ‘wolf’); it is rather the reference effected by the speaker’s employment of the whole utterance in its context. In some cases, the speaker may fix the reference by ostension or by some means independent of the terms of the utterance.\(^{80}\)

In terms of sense and denotation, ‘sense’ is the dictionary definition of the lexeme and ‘denotation’ is the relation between the lexeme and the persons, things, or states of affairs.\(^{81}\)

In determining meaning and reference, experience and community are essential. This does not mean that the speaker or hearer must personally experience that which they speak or hear of, but rather he or she relies on the collective experience of his or her community, particularly from those seen as having authority and having legitimate experiences expressed then in the languages of their communities.\(^{82}\) Soskice actually refers to both the pointed experience of the individual and the diffuse experiences of the community as the pool from which reference may be grounded in.\(^{83}\) What is important to remember here is that with such a lexical heritage including its applications from within a particular community over time, the community

\(^{80}\) ibid., 53.  
\(^{81}\) ibid.  
\(^{82}\) Cf. Soskice’s referencing to Putnam’s “division of linguistic labour” in ibid., 149. Also on sharing the pointed and diffuse experience of the Christian community in ibid., 152.  
\(^{83}\) ibid., 150.
is thus bound not just by its “descriptive vocabulary” but also its “shared assumptions, interest, and traditions of interpretation…” In the final analysis, the real test of a living metaphor for a community is its necessity and explanatory function for the community. As Soskice says the commonality between the great poet and the great religious teacher is that “both use metaphor to say that which can be said in no other way but which, once said, can be recognized by many.”

*e) Creating New Vision*

What distinguishes the metaphor from other tropes, figurative language, or figures of speech is, for Soskice, its “added capacity to expand our lexicon, and in so doing, it expands the conceptual apparatus with which we work.” In comparison other tropes either: render a statement oblique (allegory); are simply ornamental ways of naming (metonomy and synecdoche); do not jolt the imagination (that is it initially seems inappropriate) but rather teach “an old word new tricks—of applying an old label in a new way” (analogy); and further, are non-linguistic (symbol, analogy, image). Soskice describes the metaphor’s ability to expand our lexicon:

The purpose of [the] metaphor is both to cast up and organize a network of associations. A good metaphor may not simply be an oblique reference to a predetermined subject but a new vision, the birth of a new understanding, a new referential access. A strong metaphor compels new possibilities of vision.

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84 ibid.
85 ibid., 153.
86 ibid., 62.
87 ibid., 55.
88 ibid., 57.
89 ibid., 64.
90 ibid., 55.
91 ibid., 57-58.
The metaphor not only expands a community’s lexicon, but also becomes an interpretative lens, which consequently determines ways in which the community and its individuals relate and operate in relation to the subject in question, otherwise known as the referent. Soskice provides the example of viewing a political unit as a ‘body politic’ versus as a ‘ship of state’:

…if the nation is a body and the monarch its head, if one cuts off the head the body will die, whereas on a ship of state mutiny against an incompetent captain is not only possible but obligatory.92

The great significance or impact of the metaphor is thus explained:

…metaphor is not a neutral or ornamental aspect of speech. Rather, in almost all areas of abstract thought…the very frames within which we work are given by metaphors which function in structuring not only what sort of answers we get, but what kind of questions we ask.93

4) The Dead Metaphor

The meaning of ‘metaphor’ is further clarified when it is contrasted with what Soskice terms a ‘dead metaphor’. In order to understand this concept, metaphorical language must be distinguished from literal language, since dead metaphors fall under the literal language category. Soskice points out that metaphors are often contrasted with literal language. For her it is better to state that the opposite of literal language is non-literal language rather than metaphors. Non-literal language encompasses most tropes such as simile, metonomy, and metaphors for the most part (except dead metaphors) and also ‘prose forms’ such as irony, satire and allegory.94

Literal language in contrast, is language that a community has become accustomed to, and the category in which dead metaphors fall under.

92 ibid., 62.
93 ibid., 63-64.
94 ibid., 69.
Simply put, dead metaphors are ordinary and technical language that had origins as metaphorical language.\(^\text{95}\) The three characteristics of the dead metaphor outlined as follows show how dead metaphors contrast with real or living metaphors:

a)…one recognizes a dissonance or tension in a living metaphor whereby the terms of the utterance used seem not strictly appropriate to the topic at hand: do winds really howl, do poplars sigh?...A hackneyed or dead metaphor generates no tension because we are accustomed to its juxtaposition of terms, although it may still be a non-standard juxtaposition.

b) …relative ease of paraphrase. The more dead a metaphor the more readily it lends itself to direct and full paraphrase; ‘the heart of the matter’ is easily redescribed as ‘the centre of the issue’...

c) …relationship of metaphor to model. An originally vital metaphor calls to mind, directly or indirectly, a model or models...As the metaphor becomes commonplace, its initial web of implications becomes, if not entirely lost, then difficult to recall.\(^\text{96}\)

5) \textbf{Definitive Definition}

Having investigated the characteristics of the metaphor, the dynamics of metaphorical use, and finally the characteristics of the dead metaphor, Soskice’s definition of metaphor becomes clear:

[M]etaphor is a form of language use with a unity of subject-matter and which yet draws upon two (or more) sets of associations, and does so, characteristically, by involving the consideration of a model or models.\(^\text{97}\)

In this thesis I will examine whether Soskice’s definition of metaphor applies to the use of the Mother Church image in the early Patristic writers and Second Vatican Council. The three characteristics of metaphor will be applied to determine whether ‘Mother Church’ is used as a live metaphor or whether it has become a technical term with a single basic referent, the hierarchical Church. I will argue that the dissonant, irreplaceable and

\(^{95}\) ibid., 71.

\(^{96}\) ibid., 73.

\(^{97}\) ibid., 49.
meaningful Mother Church metaphor developed by the early Patristic writers has by the time of Vatican II become clichéd, easily replaced (or even omitted in translation), and has lost the original network of associations that made it so rich and fruitful.

**The Mother Church as Metaphor**

This section now turns in a preliminary way to the concept of “Mother Church” and asks whether it may be a metaphor and if so how it would qualify as such. This is preliminary as the main examination of this will be in the investigation of how it was used by the Patristic writers and Vatican II which will need to examine the networks of associations embedded in the different contents in which it is employed. First, in considering the characteristics of the living metaphor, “Mother Church” qualifies in so far as it is seen as linguistic rather than a perception or an object; that it is found in a whole utterance rather than simply in an A is like B structure; that it is cognitive, increasing understanding and its implications do not need spelling out for its readers; that is understood not only from within a speaker’s whole utterance but also in the understanding that the speaker speaks from a particular community.

But, considering the dynamics of metaphorical use, the main question that arises is whether “Church as mother” is not really a metaphor but a model or an analogy or a metonymic rhetorical device and other tropes as mentioned above. In the texts explored within this thesis, from the writings of the early Patristic writers to the Vatican II documents, Mother Church is used as part of a linguistic utterance and is therefore not an object as is with models. To clarify further, a mother may be considered a model for the Church. More specifically, it is a non-homeomorphic or paramorphic
model since a mother can be a model for the Church but a mother is not modeled on the Church. In “Mother Church”, the mother is the model since it is used as basis for speaking metaphorically of the Church as maternal. In the early Patristic writers in particular, its use “evoke[d] an emotional, moral, or spiritual response” precisely because it had a “cognitive” or “explanatory function”. This model will have origins of usage in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, will be used and reused over time, and thus is “freighted with meaning.” In contrast, the origins of explicit use of the Church as mother metaphor was not in the Christian and Jewish scriptures, as will be shown later.

As metaphor then, what is to be considered in this thesis concerning the Mother Church presents as a list: the whole utterance in which “Mother Church” is used and that meaning and reference is found in this way rather than in the lexemes “mother” or “church”; the communities, their diffuse and pointed experiences, their history of usage of the metaphor as well as their assumptions about the metaphor; the speaker’s ability to refer to Mother Church and the community’s ability to recognize the speaker’s referring without difficulty; that the metaphor opens up a network of associations, possibilities and envisioning; that speaking of the Church as a mother in fact makes the hearer forget about the mother (as reality) and primarily focus on the Church; and ultimately that the metaphor expands the lexicon of the community creating “new possibilities of vision” rather than rendering an oblique statement, nor is it replaceable in an ornamental sense, but instead jolts the imagination. Further, what needs to be questioned is how the metaphor of Mother Church creates a framework within which
Church communities and their members relate and operate, as well as how use of the metaphor expresses the concern/s of the speaker and his audience.

This thesis proposes that “Mother Church” was developed as a live metaphor by early Patristic writers but that Vatican II’s later appropriation of the metaphor is actually utilizing the title as an analogy or a dead metaphor. According to Soskice, an appellation’s use acts simply as an analogy if “from its inception it seems appropriate. We feel no jolt or strain.” I ask if its use is an exercise in “teaching an old word new tricks—of applying an old label in a new way”?98 Does it actually expand the lexicon and/or vision of the Church and its nature? This is my primary question when considering the metaphor’s use in the early Patristic writers and the Vatican II documents. Connected to this is the examination of whether “Mother Church” has become literal language—having origins in metaphorical usage but over time has simply become the language in which a community has become accustomed. This can only be determined by questioning whether the metaphor creates a dissonance or tension in its use, the ease in which it may be paraphrased or not, and most significantly that the metaphor “calls to mind, directly or indirectly” the model of “mother” or if it is accustomed language “its initial web of implications becomes, if not entirely lost, then difficult to recall.”99

**Thesis Structure**

The thesis is divided into two sections: Part 1 is an exploration of the maternal ecclesial metaphor as it is developed by key early Patristic writers; Part 2 explores its use in Vatican II Council’s sixteen documents. In

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98 ibid., 64.
99 ibid., 73.
both sections both the explicit and implicit use of maternal ecclesial images (e.g. “Mater Ecclesia”, “Mater”, “births” and “breastfeeds”) are explored from a Soskicean metaphorical perspective. Thus the full utterance of the speaker, his background and experience, his own context as well as the context of his audience are all taken into consideration in identifying and analysing the speaker’s use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor.

Part 1 begins with an exploration of the development of the image of Church as mother: from when it was first used by Irenaeus to refer to the Church community, through subsequent elaborations by Tertullian, Cyprian and Ambrose, up to the writings of Augustine in which Mother Church is personified as well being represented as the New Eve and modeled on Mary, the mother of Jesus. Irenaeus (Chapter I), who identifies the Christian community as acting as a mother, lays the foundations for the use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor. Tertullian (Chapter II), the first to explicitly use the phrase “Mater Ecclesia”, refers to Mother Church as a distinct entity that is paired with Father God and is thus necessary for salvation. I shall argue that Tertullian’s image of Mother Church draws upon the associative network of the materfamilia of the Roman Empire. Cyprian (Chapter III), a disciple of Tertullian, makes that famous statement “Habere iam non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem” (“You cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother”). I assert that Cyprian, consciously or unconsciously, bases his understanding of motherhood on the Roman image of the matrona as propagated by the Emperor Augustine using his wife Livia as a model. Ambrose (Chapter IV)

uses his allegorical reading of scripture to develop a range of female images that he associates with the Church: bride, virgin, sister, daughter, widow and queen. However, his central concern is to demonstrate how the Church can be both virgin and mother simultaneously. For Ambrose, establishing the fruitfulness of Virgin-Mother Church is important to support his arguments for celibacy and the spiritual motherhood of the ecclesial virgins. He thus introduces Mary as model of the Church as an example of how a virgin can give birth. Augustine (Chapter V) has the personified Mother Church speak for the first time as she pleads for the return of her schismatic children. He builds on the imagery of his predecessors, associating Mother Church with the sister, bride, virgin and queen of Song of Songs, but particularly emphasises her spousal role. It is argued that the web of associations that he uses includes not just scripture, but his own mother, Monica, as well as the culturally familiar Roman *materfamilia* and *matrona*. Augustine sees Mother Church as a “New Eve” and further develops Mary as a model for Mother Church.

Having explored the beginnings and development of the use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor in these early Patristic writers, the second section of the thesis then explores its use within the sixteen documents of Vatican II Council (11 October 1962 to 8 December 1965). Chapter VI presents and briefly explores some principles to be considered when reading the texts of Vatican II. Some of these principles are the purposes, methodological approaches, and historical background leading to the Council and redrafting of its texts. Then in Chapters VII and VIII, the presences of the maternal metaphor within the documents are observed in detail. Finally, in Chapter IX, these presences of “Mother Church” as
metaphor are analysed using the Soskicean based criteria for live metaphors and using recent research from maternal theorists and feminist psychoanalysts alike, in the use and representation of the maternal in texts.

**A Note on Thesis Length, Scripture References and Gendered Language**

For completion, this thesis contains long passages of translations and original texts. This has resulted in an increased word count on the thesis.

Scriptural passages within the thesis are from the *New Revised Standard Version*, Catholic Edition, Anglicized Text (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2007). Patristic, Vatican II texts and their 20th century male commentators quoted within this thesis often refer only to the male gender but in fact intend to refer to both male and female. For example, “sons of God” actually mean “sons and daughters of God” or more precisely, “children of God”, as translated from the Latin (*filii Dei*). As well, God is referred to as “Him” when in fact God can and has been represented in the masculine and feminine sense, as shown in Scripture. I hope that this is kept in mind and that the gender-biased language of the Early Patristic, Vatican II writers and commentators do not cause too much distraction from the main arguments of the thesis.
PART 1 - MOTHER CHURCH IN KEY EARLY PATRISTIC WRITERS

CHAPTER I: IRENAEUS
FIRST ALLUSIONS TO MOTHER CHURCH AS ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY

The first clear appearance of the maternal ecclesial image is in late second century Patristic literature, in the writings of Irenaeus (c.125-200 CE)\(^1\) to the Church of Lyons.\(^2\) There is no definitive answer pinpointing the exact origins of the appellation “Mother Church”. Peper posits that it began usage in Asia Minor and was taken up by the Lyons community, itself having roots in Asia Minor, though he can not say for certain the exact beginnings of the image’s employment.\(^3\) He observes that it seemed quite natural for the Lyons community to call their Church a mother since they used the appellation liberally without explanation or background.\(^4\)

Rankin argues that whilst Irenaeus refers to the Church community as a mother and Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE) often referred to the ‘mother’ who comforted her children, who calls them to her and nurses them with the Word, Tertullian (160-220 CE) was the first to use the term more conclusively as an entity separate from the sum of her membership.\(^5\) Plumpe similarly initially claimed Tertullian’s *Ad Martyras* (c.197 CE) as

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\(^2\) Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”.
\(^3\) François Decret points to the beginnings of the North African Church with the Scillitan Martyrs who were pure Africans as opposed to their martyr brothers and sisters in Lyon, Gaul, who came from Asia and Phrygia. But he says there are no allusions to a Mother Church in *The Passion of the Scillitan Martyrs*. Decret, *Early Christianity in North Africa*, Smither, 9-10.
\(^4\) Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”.
\(^5\) Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 79-80.
the first evidence of the term being used frequently. He later realises in a subsequent research that “Mater” was originally used to describe the Church in the East, and as a concept was then taken to the West. There the term would first appear in Lyons, seen in the letters of the confessors, *Epistola Ecclesiarum Viennensis et Lugdunensis (EpVL)* (*Letters of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia*) in 177. Whilst according to all three authors “Mater Ecclesia” was first explicitly used by Tertullian, their research points to Irenaeus as a foundation to begin a study such as this.

**Background & Significance**

Irenaeus was most likely the Bishop of Vienne when Pothinus, Bishop of Lugdunum (modern Lyon, France) died in 177 CE. As the two Gallican Churches were nearby, Irenaeus assumed the Bishopric of the two Churches. It was that year in which the persecution of Christians in the Church of Lyons began. Lugdunum was the capital of the Roman Province *Gallia Lugdunensis*. It “was the centre, indeed the ‘recapitulation’

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6 Plume, *Mater Ecclesia*.
7 *ibid.*, 37.
8 Peper states that he was the Bishop of Lyons instead of Vienne. Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 21. Evidence shows Gallican confessors wrote a letter to Eleutherus, Bishop of Rome, commending Irenaeus as “presbyter of the Church” at that time. Denis Minns says early Christian communities commonly interchanged the titles “presbyter” and “bishop” and suggests that Irenaeus may not have seen much difference between the two himself. He says Irenaeus never claimed the title of bishop for himself in his writings. Minns also says it is most probable he was more a bishop than presbyter as he is described in Eusebius. (Denis Minns, *Irenaeus: An Introduction* (London/ New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 2. Robert Grant similarly claims Irenaeus saw the two roles as identical and suggests that he was a presbyter who may have seen himself as “the local equivalent of bishops found elsewhere.” Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, The Early Church Fathers (London/ New York: Routledge, 1997), 6.
where all Gaul came together: All the thread of Roman public service”\textsuperscript{11} Lyons and Vienne had close ties with Rome as well as Asia Minor\textsuperscript{12} The Christian communities were thriving, proud of their members that endured torments from the Roman Imperial State, even if some of their members had weakened\textsuperscript{13} The Church of Lyons was originally a Greek community with Greek speaking members but also included Romans\textsuperscript{14} The Church of Lyons contained members of all social ranks\textsuperscript{15} and there was little distinction between the laity and clergy even though the Christians of Lyons were aware of their status compared to Rome and that the “broader Church was undergoing changes that would lead to a more stratified, hierarchical organization.”\textsuperscript{16}

Irenaeus could be seen as “[t]he most important Christian controversialist and theologian between the apostles and the third century genius, Origen” for his work in combining the “traditions of predecessors from Asia Minor, Syria, and Rome” to “refute the Gnostics who were subverting the Gospel.”\textsuperscript{17} He was the first to fuse together the different

\textsuperscript{11} Osborn, \textit{Irenaeus}, 3.
\textsuperscript{12} ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{13} Minns, \textit{Irenaeus: An Introduction}, 3.
\textsuperscript{14} Osborn, \textit{Irenaeus}, 2. Minns says both Churches of Lyons and Vienne were Greek speaking and derived from the Eastern part of the empire. Minns, \textit{Irenaeus: An Introduction}, 3.
\textsuperscript{15} Osborn, \textit{Irenaeus}, 2.
\textsuperscript{16} Minns, \textit{Irenaeus: An Introduction}, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{17} Grant, \textit{Irenaeus}, 1. Minns says some may claim that his greatness was in laying foundations for a developing Catholic tradition which stretches to the Vatican II Council documents. At the same time others have argued his interpretation of Scripture as a perversion and described unfavourably as “an advocate of patriarchal forms of church government.” Preface, p.x. in Minns, \textit{Irenaeus: An Introduction}.
strands of Christian thinking and Tertullian and Augustine would later take up “his themes and images” including the image of “Mater Ecclesia”.

**Irenaeus’ Rhetorical Method**

Irenaeus possibly pursued a career in rhetoric in Rome, before moving to Gaul. His education in rhetoric, Greek philosophy and myth, helped him to recognize the methodologies of his Gnostic opponents, reveal their inconsistencies and falsity, and in so doing strategically inclined the ear of his Greco-Roman audience towards him:

Then, again, collecting a set of expressions and names scattered here and there [in Scripture], they twist them, as we have already said, from a natural to a non-natural sense. In so doing, they act like those who bring forward any kind of hypothesis they fancy, and then endeavour to support them out of the poems of Homer, so that the ignorant imagine that Homer actually composed the verses bearing upon that hypothesis, which has, in fact, been but newly constructed; and many others are led so far by the regularly-formed sequence of the verses, as to doubt whether Homer may not have composed them.

Grant confirms this methodology belonging to Irenaeus in his writings of *Adversus Haereses (AH) (Against Heresies)* and *Epideixis (Epid) (Proof or Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching)* as: “… to know Gnostic doctrine is to apprehend its falsity.” According to Oliver O’Donovan and Joan O’Donovan, the audience for Irenaeus’ anti-gnostic writings were the Christian community rather than a defence of the faith to the pagans.

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23 O’Donovan and O’Donovan say that *AH* was “a work of a different literary genre from that of the apologists, and expects a different kind of readership, that is, a Christian one.” “Irenaeus of Lyons”, in Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan,
Dennis Minns’ perspective would agree with O’Donovan-O’Donovan’s, specifying Irenaeus’ particular audience as the contemporary Christians whose theological views separated them from the community of believers. Minns argues that Irenaeus’ own theology cannot be divorced from his polemical context. One could not fully understand what he meant at any point unless one knew what he was arguing against—and usually it was false teaching.24

Whilst in \textit{AH} the audience was the Christian community and its aim was to convince Christians of Gnosticism’s falsities, \textit{Epid}’s audience had no obvious target audience. Iain Mackenzie believed “[t]he tone of the \textit{Demonstration} is one of persuasion and the setting out positively of basic orthodox tenets. Dismissal of heresy is incidental, and for this reason no obvious target was chosen”.25

There has been an ongoing debate concerning the coherence of Irenaeus’ writings.26 Some dismiss any coherence whilst others state that it somewhat exists. Osborn argues that Irenaeus is confusing because he has no concepts but rather only “images, visions, impressions, and moods”: as soon as one has captured his concept on a particular point, the concept can be overturned on another point.27 Such a view could deter a study of Irenaeus’ use of the image of the Church as mother since one would not be able to create a coherent and conclusive picture. However, Osborn and

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27 ibid., 20.
Minns maintain that Irenaeus does show coherence by following the general principle of order, fittingness, or what is most appropriate.\textsuperscript{28}

Whilst Osborn states that Irenaeus follows a general principle of ‘order’ in his writings he lays out “five centrifugal factors” with which one can see the diffusion of Irenaeus’ thought. These factors are “diversity of adversary, tradition, scripture, imagery, and aphorism”.\textsuperscript{29} First, the diversity of Gnosticism led Irenaeus to “wander into different paths”.\textsuperscript{30} This is the most apparent reason why his writings seem unsystematic. Second, he did not wish to say anything new, as tradition was present in the scriptures already. Third, scripture is the definitive authority in terms of “apostolic and prophetic tradition”. Fourth, images are not ornamental but the source of ideas itself. Fifth, that he has “the gift of striking utterance. His aphorisms are famous…but their meaning is never obvious”.\textsuperscript{31} I would argue against Osborn on his fifth point that the meaning of Irenaeus’ aphorisms are not always obvious for in this employment of the maternal ecclesial image, the images of motherhood via the “womb” and “breastfeeding” images seem very clear as will be shown later.

These factors assist in understanding Irenaeus’ use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor. They help to conclude that his use of the maternal image was not something newly contrived. It was an image derived from tradition as present in the scriptures. But there are no explicit images of the Church as mother in the Bible. Rather one finds passages such as Jesus describing himself as a mother hen brooding over her chicks (Mt 23:37, Lk

\textsuperscript{28} Minns, \textit{Irenaeus: An Introduction}, 10; Osborn, \textit{Irenaeus}, 12.
\textsuperscript{29} Osborn, \textit{Irenaeus}, 12.
\textsuperscript{30} ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{31} ibid.
13:34) or Paul alluding to himself as a mother to members of the Church (1 Thess 2:7, Gal 4:19, 1 Cor 3:2)\textsuperscript{32}. *Demonstration* 94 shows Paul’s contrasting between the two mothers of Galatians 4:26-27. Peper describes Irenaeus’ use of this Galatians passage:

> Irenaeus here identifies the church with Israel and focuses on the transition from barrenness to fruitfulness. This, however, is the only time he mentions the barrenness of the church prior to Christ; he always focuses on the church’s maternity as it relates to nutrition and apostolic succession.\textsuperscript{33}

It will be shown later that the mother images taken from the Bible have their particular and deliberate roles.\textsuperscript{34}

Furthermore, the image of the mother is not merely an ornamental appellation placed onto the Church by Irenaeus. It is a multivalent image that enables other ideas or images to be developed. For example, if the Church is a mother, then a meaningful extension of this metaphor is the image of a mother breastfeeding a dependent infant. This can be used to symbolise the true Church that gives real nourishment/salvation through its orthodox teachings as opposed to the heresy promoted by schismatic movements. Thus whilst this image can be one of nurture, it can simultaneously be one of stinging critique of those who have led others astray with false teachings.

Osborn further assists in making sense of Irenaeus by proposing a three-step method around the content, contour and conflict within his

\textsuperscript{32} Raymond F. Collins, *The Power of Images in Paul* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008), 85. Collins does state that Paul never explicitly says the word “mother” (*méter*).

\textsuperscript{33} Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 34-35.

\textsuperscript{34} Peper conjectures that Irenaeus may have turned to 2 Maccabees 7:20ff, 1 Corinthians 15:8, and John 3:1-10 for his reference to mother Church in the *EpVL*. But Peper also points out that Irenaeus does not make any explicit references to these passages for the portrayal of Mother Church. ibid., 34.
writings. First, one should investigate the actual content. Second, one must understand that the content should present a unified argument under Irenaeus’ view of the rule of faith and in the “sequence of his own ideas”.

For Irenaeus, the rule of faith is unity in matters of faith which holds together a diversity of traditional local practice and that his central idea is recapitulation in Christ. Osborn used the image of an hourglass turned horizontally to show the flow of Irenaeus’ ideas: its fulcrum was Christ, the place of recapitulation. One side of the hourglass was the message of the old prophets and the other the message of the new prophets, Jesus and the apostles. There is only continuity rather than a separation of message. Osborn also says that Irenaeus sees Christ, the apostles and prophets as replacing the platonic forms that was the common philosophic thought of his day.” Third, since various authors conflict in the interpretation means one must allow for the “interpretation of opposite directions”.

Irenaeus’ rhetorical method can also be seen as the borrowing of tools from his studies and applying them to his writings: through the detection and refutation of false teachings, the replacement of the hypothesis of false gnostic teaching with Christian teaching, the presentation of oikonomia in Jesus, and related to this last one, the presentation of the “anakepalaiôsis, the summary or recapitulation of a narrative”.

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36 ibid., 12.
37 ibid., 15.
38 ibid., 16.
an unwavering conviction of the goodness of God and the goodness of the world he has made, in which and through which he acts in revelation and redemption. The whole history of humankind, from Adam and Eve onward, is a single coherent story that finds its focal point in Christ and that will find its culmination when he comes again.40

A more direct and succinct description comes from Sara Parvis: For Irenaeus, “Humanity is one, God is one, Christ is one, the church is one, salvation is one.”41

Irenaeus used certain criteria for determining the orthodoxy of the Church: (1) the *canon veritatis* (“canon of truth”) and (2) the *regula fidei* (“rule of faith”). Both concepts lacked in gnostic faiths.42 The *regula fidei* was dependent upon “the message of Scripture, the baptismal faith, and the confession of faith in fellowship with the church of Rome.”43 Mary Ann Donovan states that the relationship between Scripture and the *regula fidei* was so closely tied that the *rule* was the very interpretive principle for the reading of scriptures for Irenaeus.44 For Paul Parvis, the *rule* was “a sort of summary or condensation of what is taught in Scripture.”45 For Peper, the distinguishing marks of Irenaeus’ Church were its unity and martyrdom:

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44 Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 11.

they guaranteed the Church’s possession of the Holy Spirit and its orthodoxy.\footnote{Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 25.}

This thesis now investigates the different images of mother Church presented by Irenaeus, keeping in mind the understanding then that Irenaeus’ utilisation of any image is grounded in tradition, the *regula fidei*, scripture, the unity of ecclesiology and Christian story, recapitulation in Christ, but also in the idea of ‘order’ or appropriateness and that he borrowed tools from rhetoric and had the particular Christian Lyons community which had roots in Asia as his audience.

*Mother Church Texts and Contexts*

Irenaeus’ maternal ecclesial metaphor is found in *The Letter of the Churches from Vienne and Lyons to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia* (*EpVL* c.177 CE). As leader of these communities, it is most likely that Irenaeus was the author of this Letter.\footnote{Peper suggests that Irenaeus influenced the writers of *EpVL* or had written the letter himself. Ibid., 33-34. Minns references Eusebius in stating that Irenaeus was considered the bearer of the Letter, and the presbyter of the Church, and that he “wrote on behalf of the brothers in Gaul, of whom he was leader.” In Minns, *Irenaeus: An Introduction*, 2. Constance De Young Groh states that Irenaeus had very much similar views to the author of *EpVL*. In Constance DeYoung Groh, “Agents of Victory: Mary and the Martyrs in the Writings of Irenaeus of Lyons” (Northwestern University, 2000), 250. He also shows some slight differences. In ibid., 251-252.} The maternal metaphor is also found in two of his works—*Proof* (or *Demonstration*) of the Apostolic Preaching (*Epid*, c.178 CE) and *Against Heresies: Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge falsely-so-called* (*AH*, c.180 CE). In all texts, the appellation “*Mater Ecclesia*” is never explicitly used but only made reference to by a maternal concept or associative word. Such terms were “children” (“*filiis*” in *Epid* 94 or “*παίδων*” in *HE* 5.1.55), “breasts” (“*mamillis Matris*” in *AH* 3.24.1) and their educative role (“*et in ejus sinu*
educari” in AH 5.20.2), and even “mother” herself (“μήτηρ” in HE 5.1.55 or “μητρικὰ” in HE 5.2.6-7). In Epid, a document aimed at catechumens in preparation for baptism, the image of Mother Church occurs only twice, at 94 and 98. Peper says that for Irenaeus, the maternal ecclesial image is only “figuratively conveyed” as “one who nurtures and guarantees the salvation of her children”.48

Who is the Mother?

a) The Community as the Intercessor, Martyr, and Virgin

EpVL describes in part the horrific persecutions experienced by confessors in the Christian community of Lyons.49 The persecutions began with the ban of Christians from participation in public activities, which turned into a ban from public places. Christians were accused of atheism because of their refusal to honor the local gods.50 The persecutions were initially enforced by local mobs and became heightened in martyrdom at the public amphitheatre.51

Christine Trevett explains the general significance of martyrdom for early Christians:

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50 Peper outlines the context of this persecution saying that it may have been stimulated both by their recent arrival to Lyon (highlighting attention to themselves and creating suspicion as foreigners) and their refusal to participate in the worship of local gods. Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 21-23. Hubertus R. Drobner describes the progress of the persecution as outlined in the Letter from a “general prohibition…for the Christian community to assemble (1.4-5)...Then follows the badgering by the tumultuous mob, the interrogation by the magistrate in the forum, the martyr’s confession, and their being threatened with instruments of torture (1.7-10). The accused are then imprisoned and await the arrival of the governor to commence the trial. The accusation refers to atheism and failure to venerate the gods. Some thereupon fall away, and some pagan slaves of Christian masters even bear false witness to the popular suspicions against Christians, namely Oedipal marriages and Thyestean feasts. (1.11-15).” In Drobner, The Fathers of the Church, Schatzmann, 100.
51 Drobner, The Fathers of the Church, Schatzmann, 100.
Martyrdom was a second baptism. Like the first it effaced sin...Satan was defeated in martyrdom...In Christian ranks martyrs were honoured. Traditions of the apostolic age and beyond described them in heaven already, rather than awaiting a general resurrection. Martyrs would judge and the reviled would be vindicated...Martyrdom brought the keys to paradise itself and readiness for it brought spiritual gifts and privileges.52

Martyrdom had been part of the Christian culture of the Gallic communities but also the heretical Montanist movement (also called the ‘New Prophecy’) that had gained popularity since its origins in Phrygia.53 The New Prophecy encouraged martyrdoms 54 but the Catholic Christians were keen to distinguish themselves from the “Phrygian so-called martyrs’” not because of the fanatical desire for death which is often to be assumed to be central to the Prophecy, but because of “the spirit in Montanus and the women.”55

During one episode, an interruption occurred due to the discovery that among the confessors, a person named Attalus was found to be a Roman citizen. Attalus was returned to prison by command of the emperor


53 Plumpe, Mater Ecclesiae, 40-41.


55 Trevett, Montanism, 123. Cf. HE 5.16.22 in Eusebius, "Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History," Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, Massachusetts/ London, England: Harvard University Press, 1926), English trans. p.483. Greek trans. p.482. Trans. K. Lake. Montanus’ visions seemed to claim incarnation of the Christian God through Montanus: “I am the Lord God, the Almighty dwelling in man.” In Epiphanius, Panarion 48.11 in Heine, The Montanist Oracles and Testamonia, 3. As well the conduct with which both male and female prophets received their visions was seen questionable—they received them in an ecstatic manner and in hindsight was probably the practice of glossolalia. Trevett explains the movement: “The New Prophecy believed in the outpouring of the Spirit and the appearance of a new, authoritative prophecy which brought fresh disciplinary demands to the churches. Women were prominent as leaders and the Prophets clashed with catholic representatives on matters such as the nature of prophecy, the exercise of authority, the interpretation of Christian writings and the significance of the phenomenon for salvation history.” Trevett, Montanism, 3.
and given the chance to recant his Christianity and return to Roman pagan worship. Meanwhile, the experience of other confessors was described:

But the intervening time was not idle or fruitless for them but through their endurance was manifested the immeasurable mercy of Christ, for through the living the dead were being quickened and martyrs gave grace to those who had denied. And there was great joy to the Virgin Mother [παρθένῳ μητρὶ] who had miscarried with them as though dead, and was receiving them back alive. For through them the majority of those who had denied were again brought to birth and again conceived and quickened again, and learned to confess, and now alive and vigorous, made happy by God who wills not the death of the sinner, but is kind towards repentance…

The intercessorial and maternal acts of the confessors turned martyrs are even made clearer in the following passage:

…after other details they say: ‘For their greatest contest, through the genuineness of their love, was this, that the beast should be choked into throwing up alive those whom he had at first thought to have swallowed down. For they did not boast over the fallen, but from their own abundance supplied with a mother’s love [μητρικά σπλάγχνα] those that needed, and shedding many tears for them to the Father, they prayed for life, and he gave it to them, and they divided it among their neighbours, and then departed to God…with peace they departed to God; for their mother [μητρὶ] they left behind no sorrow

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56 Kirsopp Lake states that the original Greek equivalent ἀνεμετροῦντο is meaningless and instead uses Schwartz’s ἄνεμασσοῦντο which he translates as “brought to birth” but does not see this as a great translation. Drobner, The Fathers of the Church, Schatzmann, footnote 1, p.429.


58 The “beast” was interpreted as the “Devil” and those whom he swallowed were the “recanters” of the faith. The confessors hoped their martyrdom would rescue them from the Devil. In ibid., footnote 1, p.440.

59 “A mother’s love” seems a weak translation for “μητρικὰ σπλάγχνα” since “σπλάγχνα” can translate to “from the very bowels, a deep pity, compassion, the very seat of one’s feelings.” The Mother here is not just simply loving, she is beside herself with emotion.
[πόνον], and for the brethren no strife and war, but glory, peace, concord and love. In both passages, one sees that the maternal role is unlike the role of human motherhood. Christians are spiritually birthed but do not begin the normal human process of separation from the mother creating a separate identity for themselves. The above experience of the martyrs presents the children of the Church as constituting by their own community their own mother; the feelings and actions of both martyrs and recanters alike are directly expressed as the feelings and acts of what will later be termed ‘Mother Church’. Peper observes that for Irenaeus’ communities calling the Church a ‘Mother’ was a given. This ‘Mother’ was clearly the community—there were no distinctions between them. After being birthed, her children have but two choices before them: death (by recanting their faith described here as the Mother’s “abortion”) or life (continuing to live the new life from their spiritual birth or being reconceived within the Mother’s womb, described here as her “quickening”, through the martyrdom of others in the community).

Interestingly, at this stage of imaging the Church as Mother through the martyrs, the “Mother” is also called a “virgin”. For Irenaeus, the term

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60 Or “pain”.


Greek: “καὶ αὖθις φασὶ μεθ’ ἑτέρα: “οὖν χῶρα καὶ μέγεςτος αὐτοῖς πρὸς αὐτῶν ὁ πόλεμος ἐγένετο διὰ τὸ γνήσιον τῆς ἀγάπης, ἵνα ἀποστηθήσεται ὁ θήρ οὗς πρὸτερον ὡς καταπεποκέναι, Ἰωνίας ἐξεμένη, τὸν γὰρ εἶλεθον καύχημα κατὰ τὸν πεπτωκότον, ἀλλ’ ἐν οἷς ἐπλεῦσαν αὐτοὶ, τοῦτο τοῖς ἐνδεκαπέτῳ ἐπήρχουσιν μητρικὰ σπλάγχνα ἔχοντες, καὶ πολλὰ περὶ αὐτῶν ἡκέσοντες δάκρυα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ζωὴν ἤτθησαν, καὶ δοκεῖν αὐτοῖς ἢ καὶ συνεγερεῖσθαι τοῖς πλησίον, κατὰ πάντα νικηφόροι πρὸς θεοῦ ἀπελθόντες, εἰρήνην ἀγαπήσαντες ἀεὶ καὶ εἰρήνην ἡμῖν παρέγεισαντες, μετ’ εἰρήνης ἐχώρισαν πρὸς θεοῦ, μὴ καταληφότας πάνοι τῇ μητρὶ μὴ δέ στάειν καὶ πόλεμον τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἀλλὰ χαρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην καὶ ὁμόνοιαν καὶ ἀγάπην.”

62 Plumpe similarly comments as Peper that ‘mother’ was a familiar title to the Christians of Lyons and Vienne Plumpe, Mater Ecclesia, 38.

“virgin” has been applied to Mary, the earth, and the Church. Towards Mary, “virgin” meant that Mary had no sexual relations with a human father in conceiving Jesus. Her virginity thus guaranteed Jesus’ divine paternity. Mary, as woman, also represented what was considered at the time the (feminine) ‘flesh’. Constance De Young Groh even goes so far as to state that for Irenaeus, Mary was purely human. Her ‘Yes’ to the Father (the divine represented in the masculine) was seen as the (feminine) ‘flesh’ responding to the “promptings” of the (masculine) ‘spirit’. Mary’s body in turn became analogical for Irenaeus to the “virgin soil from which Adam was formed.” As the virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, so did Irenaeus see the virgin earth as giving birth to Adam, thus appearing as a “type of the one to come.” In terms of the “earth which formed Adam”, “virgin” then meant “the fresh untouched soil” “when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb in the field had yet sprung up.” It can be seen then that Irenaeus applied the fleshly experience of the martyrs, onto the Church, so that it can be called a “Virgin Mother”. The purity of the fleshly sufferings of the martyrs would intercede for the “aborted” Christians (those who denied their faith) and thus enabled their spiritual rebirth.

The Christian slave Blandina was particularly portrayed as the suffering and yet triumphant maternal martyr-intercessor,

...But the blessed Blandina, last of all, like a noble mother (μητήρ εὐγενῆς) who had encouraged her children and sent them forth triumphant to the king, having herself endured all the tortures of the children,

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64 DeYoung Groh, "Agents of Victory", 203-204.
65 ibid., 221.
66 ibid., 213.
67 ibid. Cf. AH 3.18.7.
68 ibid., 214.
69 ibid.
hastened to them, rejoicing and glad at her departure as though invited to a marriage feast rather than cast to the beasts.  

Trevett says the Lyons and Vienne document present in the crucified female (Blandina) and male martyrs the Church as “Virgin Mother who bore the crucified Christ to the world.” This account parallels the experience of the mother of 2 Maccabees 7:20-23:

The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honorable memory. Although she saw her seven sons perish within a single day, she bore it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord. She encouraged each of them in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced her woman’s reasoning with a man’s courage, and said to them, “I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.

Pepper also connects this maternal martyrdom experience of Blandina with the Virgin Mother Church and claims that 2 Maccabees thus acts as a scriptural precedent for Irenaeus’ maternal ecclesial imagery:

Given the fact that maternal imagery is applied to both the church and martyrs, this would suggest that the martyrs were equated with the church itself and its motherhood, and that 2 Maccabees functioned as the scriptural precedent for understanding the church as a mother; this connection becomes more explicit in later patristic writers, such as Cyprian. This is also an instance where the maternal qualities of the church are coordinated with the maternal activities of its members suggesting there was originally little distinction understood between the community itself as a mother and

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71 Trevett, Montanism, 193.
the motherly activities of individual members within that community.\textsuperscript{72}

As the Mother image of the Church was incorporated into Irenaeus’ writings, so the Christian Church’s tradition of martyrdom is integrated with it. It seemed natural to add onto her abilities this image of the martyr seeing as it was part of the origins and culture of the Gallic people of Lyons. Mother Church, in the acts of her martyrs, gains powers of intercession and the expression of the crucified Christ to the world.

\textit{b) A Virginal Bride}

Whilst Plumpe observed the familiarity with which the Lyons and Vienne communities named the Church a Mother\textsuperscript{73}, he points to what he considers a greater observation—that the Church is a Bride especially in light of the Montanist controversy that had arisen in the Gallic communities’ home origin of Phrygia.\textsuperscript{74} Plumpe says “they were seriously involved in the controversy” and “were extremely conscious of the Church-heresy antithesis, of contamination imperilling the spotless Bride of Christ”.\textsuperscript{75} He does not further explain the connection between the Montanist Controversy and the specific employ of “Bride” for the Church.\textsuperscript{76}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{72} Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 29.
  \item \textsuperscript{73} Plumpe, \textit{Mater Ecclesia}, 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{74} ibid., 40-41.
  \item \textsuperscript{75} ibid., 40. Cf. \textit{HE} 5.3.4 in Heine, \textit{The Montanist Oracles and Testamonia}, 13. Here Eusebius speaks of the Gallic Christians writing letters to communities in Asia, Phrygia, and Rome, desiring peace from the disputes occurring among the prophets/leaders of Montanism (Montanus, Alcibiades, Theodotus).
  \item \textsuperscript{76} It is possible that the Church is named a “Bride” because one vision (Quintillian’s) suggests that “in Montanist circles Christ might be experienced and described in female form.” Trevett, \textit{Montanism}, 193. As an ecclesial bride, Jesus’ maleness could be kept intact. But Trevett has misgivings on interpretations of Montanism as heavily female and Christ as female as being central to the new movement. (ibid., 38.) In Plumpe’s statement it seems the Church was called a bride simply to express its inviolable relationship with the Christian God as opposed to imitators such as the New Prophecy and other Gnostics. As a contrast, Karl Shuve provides a convincing perspective on the utilisation of nuptial imagery for the Church which is shown in the next paragraph.
\end{itemize}
Karl Shuve comments that Irenaeus was reluctant to use the bridal imagery for the Church simply because his gnostic opponents also utilised it. Shuve provides a sample of one such gnostic teaching:

According to the Valentinians...when Achamoth ends her exile in the intermediate realm, she espouses the Saviour and transforms the Pleroma into a ‘nuptial chamber’ [nymphonem], into which the ‘spiritual seed’ [spiritales], who have ‘taken off their souls’ [exspoliatos animas] and become ‘intelligent spirits’ [spiritus intellectuals], may now enter.77

Shuve explains that the nuptial image was used by the Valentinians to project a future where the material realm disappeared and the soul is incorporated into the cosmos. More problematic for Irenaeus was their utilisation of Paul to justify their teaching. Shuve says Irenaeus does not attempt to contrast his nuptial theology with theirs but does present “a positive valuation of the created world and to demonstrate the continuity between the gospel of Christ and the revelation of the Creator.”78 For example in A.H.5.9.4 Irenaeus used the bridal image to counter the idea of creation as not saved by God as could be interpreted by the Pauline phrase “flesh and blood are not able to inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50)”. Shuve interprets the use of the imagery as secondary only to the main purpose of presenting a positive anthropology and soteriology. Further he points to other appearances of the imagery in A.H.4.20.12 where Irenaeus references Hosea’s marriage to a prostitute and Moses’ marriage to an Ethiopian woman. “In both instances, the men serve as types of Christ and the women, outsiders of ill-repute, signify the Gentiles.”79 On Hosea’s

78 ibid.
79 ibid., 85.
marriage, Irenaeus plays on the word κοινωνία [communicatio] in describing the relationship between Hosea and the prostitute. κοινωνία “has the general meaning of union, fellowship, or association, but it can carry both the more specific meanings of marriage to someone and, in Christian writing from the New Testament, of the believer’s participation in Christ, which Irenaeus here juxtaposes.” For Irenaeus, the underlying dynamic is that “the faithless wife” [“infidelem mulierem”] is sanctified by her faithful husband [“viro fidelī”] (A.H.4.20.12), in turn sanctifying the women through the faith of their husbands. Shuve claims a similar dynamic between Moses and the Ethiopian woman. From these examples, Shuve concludes that human marriage is utilised as a “profound symbol of redemption and communion with the divine.”

Similarly, Irenaeus points to the marriage of Moses to the Ethiopian as a prefiguration of the Word’s marriage to the Church as Bride: “It was in Egypt, which like Ethiopia had always been Gentile, that the persecuted Christ found safety, and there made holy the children from whom he formed his Church.” As faithlessness of the community is symbolised through the outsider and the contaminated (the Ethiopian and prostitute), its opposite symbols would represent sanctification and salvation (the Spotless Bride of Christ—that is virginity and spousehood combined with the Motherhood of the Church). Already at this early stage where the Church as community is imaged as a Mother, she is already explicitly called Virgin and alluded to as a Bride by Irenaeus (in the collective experience of the confessors of H.E.)

80 ibid.
81 ibid., 86.
82 ibid.
5.1.45-46 but also the individual experience of Blandina in *H.E.*5.1.55 where her martyrdom is described as an act of motherhood anticipating attendance at a bridal feast). But such titles or images are not simply generically applied to the Church—as Shuve explains, they had the power to represent redemption and communion of the community with the divine.

c) *It Breastfeeds–It Teaches*

The main concerns for the Lyons and Vienne Churches were the threat of persecution, torture, and death by the governing Roman Empire as well as the threat of gnostic teachings, which closely imitated Christianity such that they created great confusion for the communities. The threat of Gnostic or unorthodox teachings is evidenced in *AH* where they competed for the attention of Christians. 84 Whilst placed under the umbrella of Gnosticism, they varied in their teachings, resembled Christianity in their use of proof texts (from OT and NT) and interpreted them for their own purposes. 85 Gnosticisms also mimicked Christian rituals 86 and images. 87

Minns states for Irenaeus, “all of the ‘heresies’ he confronted were newly minted religions, and to a sophisticated observer, quite simply ridiculous.” 88 Thus, “there was no reason why they should have bothered him anymore than any of the other, older options available in the Roman

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84 Irenaeus sets out the doctrines of the following competing Gnostic cults and philosophies in *AH*: Valentinus (*AH* 1.1), Marcus (*AH* 1.16), Simon Magus and Menander (*AH* 1.23), Saturninus and Basilides (*AH* 1.24), Carpocrates (*AH* 1.25) Cerinthus, the Ebionites, and Nicolaitanes (*AH* 1.26), Cerdo and Marcion (*AH* 1.27), Tatian, the Encratites, and others (*AH* 1.28), other Gnostic sects especially the Barbeliotes or Borborians (*AH* 1.29), Ophites and Sethians (*AH* 1.30), Cainites (*AH* 1.31). In Irenaeus, "The Writings of Irenaeus (ANCL)." Irenaeus Vol 1, ANCL Vol V.

85 Cf. *AH* 1.3.6.


world’s oversupplied marketplace of religions and philosophies.”

Irenaeus though was concerned by the newly minted religions—“because they claimed to be the authentic form of religion to which he himself adhered.” Their falsity needed to be exposed and “overthrown.”

Robert Grant would explain that “what appealed to Gnostic converts was the theological synthesis of diverse scriptural passages, along with a secret pattern to hold them together.”

Added to this, the diversity of opinion was part of the Christian tradition from its very beginnings. Irenaeus himself was influenced by a diverse number of Patristic writers from the Roman west (Clement, Hermas and Justin) to the Asian east (John, Polycarp and Papias). Though seen by Irenaeus as all being consistent with his ecclesial thinking, their opinions on a number of topics were diverse.

Hubertus Drobner explains that the Church responded to the threat from gnosticisms by expelling from the Christian community any believers of this doctrine and developing “a true Christian gnosis”, integrating “rational and philosophical progression of knowledge of faith into the biblical and traditional theology of the Church.” 

_AH_ presents mother Church as that one true giver of orthodox Christian teaching leading to the real salvation:

> For where the church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the church, and every

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89 ibid.

90 ibid., 16.

91 Grant, _Irenaeus_, 25.

92 It was only because of the crisis brought on by the Gnostics in the second century that the Church was forced to form an “orthodox consensus”, create a “majority view”, and present itself as an “articulated system” Minns, _Irenaeus: An Introduction_, 17.

93 Grant, _Irenaeus_, 7.

94 Drobner, _The Fathers of the Church_, Schatzmann, 112.
kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth. Those, therefore, who do not partake of Him, are neither nourished into life from the mother's breasts [neque a mammillis matris nutriuntur in vitam], nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ; but they dig for themselves broken cisterns out of earthly trenches, and drink putrid water out of the mire, fleeing from the faith of the Church lest they be convicted; and rejecting the Spirit, that they may not be instructed.95

Similarly AH 5.20.2 contrasts the food of the Church’s ‘bosom’ from the injurious doctrines of others eaten “with an uplifted mind” and are suspected of “heretical discord”:

It behoves us, therefore, to avoid their doctrines, and to take careful heed lest we suffer any injury from them; but to flee to the Church, and be brought up in her bosom [et in ejus sinu educari], and be nourished with the Lord's Scriptures.96

Both examples show the maternity of the Church in the image of the mother as feeding bosom—that which provided the life-giving and even life-saving nutrition especially towards the infant who either fed only from this source from the mother or from a wet nurse (if the family could afford such a luxury). The necessary food of life, a mother’s milk, is paralleled with the necessary food of the spiritual life, the orthodox truth handed down from the apostles. Such a maternal analogy would certainly have made sense to the Lyons community because of its universal understanding. But also it was understood in ancient Greek culture that a mother’s character was passed onto the child through her milk.97 As the ancient Greek mother passed on elements of herself—her knowledge, demeanour, good character


through her milk, so would the mother Church, herself the holder of orthodox truth, her “high-born” status would be passed onto the faithful.

It is possible too that the Lyons community, as a Roman city, would have been exposed to the mythological image of Romulus (founder of the city of Rome) and his twin Remus, being suckled by a she-wolf: abandoned by their mother Rhea, the twins were saved by this she-wolf and were consequently brought up by a shepherd (Faustulus). The image of the twins suckling on the breasts of the she-wolf was used as the very symbol of the growing power of Rome. This image was also often portrayed alongside Aeneas who embodied the central virtues of Rome, most especially the virtue of ‘pietas’. The wide dissemination of the image showed its importance for the Roman Empire and it communicated that the very foundations of the Empire was portrayed through the picture of a mother suckling two infants. In a similar fashion to the she-wolf, Irenaeus’ Mother Church saved her children through the act of breastfeeding.

Peper provides the scriptural basis for this nutritive ecclesial image.

For Irenaeus:

\[\text{the church is a location of nourishment in the divine economy of salvation. Unlike the forbidden fruit eaten by Adam and Eve, the church for Irenaeus provides an individual with true knowledge through its teaching; it is the necessary lifesource for salvation.}\]

\[98\] It is said that Romulus was the first king of Rome. He founded the city in April 21, 753BC when he built it on the Palatine Hill known as Roma Quadrata. Cf. ‘Rome’ s.v. “The New Century classical handbook.”


\[100\] This virtue and the other ancient Roman virtues are discussed in the next two chapters in the investigation of Tertullian and Cyprian’s Mother Church.

Whilst Osborn would argue that Irenaeus does not invent any new images, rather he takes them from tradition via scripture, he also says that the application of the image of mother to Church would not have been ornamental but deliberate. Also he says that for Irenaeus, the rule of faith is unity in matters of faith, which holds together a diversity of traditional local practice. From this we can say that Irenaeus takes his ideas of the Church as mother from scripture. But also it can be said that he takes up the image in response to the Gnostic use of “Mother Church”, an image on which the very foundations of their Gnostic arguments are built upon:

> For they explain the wandering sheep to mean their mother by whom they represent the church as having been sown. Bu t also it can be said that he takes up the image in response to the Gnostic use of “Mother Church”, an image on which the very foundations of their Gnostic arguments are built upon:

> The father and son thus both had intercourse with the woman (whom they also call the mother of the living). When, however, she could not bear nor receive into herself the greatness of the lights, they declare that she was filled to repletion, and became ebullient on the left side; and that thus their only son Christ, as belonging to the right side, and ever tending to what was higher, was immediately caught up with his mother to form an incorruptible Aeon. This constitutes the true and holy Church, which has become the appellation, the meeting together, and the union of the father of all, of the first man, of the son, of the second man, of Christ their son, and of the woman who has been mentioned.

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102 For Osborn scripture is the definitive authority in terms of “apostolic and prophetic tradition”. Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 13.

103 ibid., 13.

104 ibid., 15.


Peper presents this possible deliberate application by Irenaeus: “It is highly probable that Irenaeus has the church as mother in mind when he suggests that Gnostics should separate from their mother in order to be begotten in the church of God” \(^{107}\) as seen in \(AH\) 3.25.7:

> We do indeed pray that these men may not remain in the pit which they themselves have dug, but separate themselves from a Mother of this nature \([\text{sed segregari ab hujusmodi Matre}]^{108}\), and depart from Bythus, and stand away from the void, and relinquish the shadow; and that they, being converted to the Church of God, may be lawfully begotten, and that Christ may be formed in them, and that they may know the Framer and Maker of this universe, the only true God and Lord of all. We pray for these things on their behalf, loving them better than they seem to love themselves. For our love, inasmuch as it is true, is salutary to them, if they will but receive it. \(^{109}\)

In Irenaeus’ view, the Gnostic-Valentinians called their mother the Church but also various names, some mimicking significant Christian terms: “This mother they also call Ogdoad, Sophia; Terra, Jerusalem, Holy Spirit, and, with a masculine reference, Lord” \((AH\ 1.5.3)\). \(^{110}\) It was not only that Gnosticism mimicked Christian terms, it also created a confusing ecclesiology. Like the Mother of Galatians 4:26 (“the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother”), whom Christianity associated with Sarah who represented the New Covenant of the Gentile Church, the Gnostic Mother Church also “dwells above” (“Enthymesin illius superioris Sophiae” \(AH\ 1.4.1)\) \(^{111}\) and herself is explicitly called “ecclesia” (“Quod

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\(^{107}\) Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 35.


\(^{109}\) ibid.


\(^{111}\) Latin trans. in PG 7:478,480. Greek in PG 7:477,479.
etiam ipsum Ecclesiam esse dicunt” AH 1.5.6\textsuperscript{112} and “Ovem enim errantem, matrem suam referunt dici, ex qua eam, quae sit hic, volunt esse seminatam Ecclesiam” AH 1.8.4).\textsuperscript{113} The clarity of Gnostic-Valentinian ecclesiology stopped here at the definitions: the confusion begins when the Church’s relationship with its children or members and to Christ were explained. The Gnostic-Valentinian Mother-Ecclesia created confusion for the orthodox Christian since she or he is told the Ecclesia was not the assembly of men and women but rather the offspring of an inspiration who himself is ignorant of his own creation:

But they further affirm that the Demiurge himself was ignorant of that offspring of his mother Achamoth, which she brought forth as a consequence of her contemplation of those angels who waited on the Saviour, and which was, like herself, of a spiritual nature...Thus it came to pass, then, according to them, that, without any knowledge on the part of the Demiurge, the man formed by his inspiration was at the same time, through an unspeakable providence, rendered a spiritual man by the simultaneous inspiration received from Sophia. For, as he was ignorant of his mother, so neither did he recognise her offspring. This [offspring] they also declare to be the Ecclesia [Quod etiam ipsum Ecclesiam esse dicunt], an emblem of the Ecclesia which is above. This, then, is the kind of man whom they conceive of: he has his animal soul from the Demiurge, his body from the earth, his fleshy part from matter, and his spiritual man from the mother Achamoth.\textsuperscript{114}

By presenting a mother Church that imparted true knowledge, it is possible that Irenaeus was leading his audience away from the Gnostics’ own mother to be led to the “true” Mother, the Catholic Church as Irenaeus himself says:

\textsuperscript{112} Latin trans. in PG 7:502-503. Greek in PG 7:501,504.
\textsuperscript{113} Latin trans. in PG 7:530. Greek in PG 7:529.
We do not misrepresent [their opinions on] these points; but they do themselves confirm, they do
themselves teach, they do glory in them, they imagine
a lofty [mystery] about their Mother, whom they
represent as having been begotten without a father,
that is, without God, a female from a female, that is,
corruption from error.\textsuperscript{115}

\textit{d) A Background of Anatolian Worship}

Peper proposes that a pagan maternal deity may have had more
influence in Irenaeus’ utilisation of the metaphor than previously
acknowledged. He says “…it is most likely that the imagery did arise first in
Asia Minor, given its early robust usage by the Church of Lyon and the
predominance of the Great Mother cult in Asia Minor.”\textsuperscript{116} He continues on
to say that the origins of the use of Mother Church cannot be pinpointed but
can only be conjectured as originating with Irenaeus, basing his theory from
a reading of Nautin’s \textit{Lettres et écrivains chrétiens}.\textsuperscript{117}

Susan Elliott similarly suggests the high influence of the Great
Mother cult of Asia Minor for Paul’s Galatian audience in Galatians 4:21-
5:1.\textsuperscript{118} For this reason, when Paul creates the comparison between the
enslaved Hagar and the mother who is free, he is helping his audience to see
the emptiness of worship of the Anatolian Mother Goddess who is also
enslaved and to choose a mother who is “free” and “from above”. Elliott
also argues that Paul was also trying to prevent a return to the Jewish way
of living through the covenant law. Paul’s reference to Hagar was both a

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{AH} 3.25.6 in \textit{ibid.}, 373. Irenaeus Vol 1, ANCL Vol V. Trans. Roberts & Rambaut.
Latin: “Haec non nos diffamamus, sed ipsi confirmant, ipsi docent, gloriantur in ipsis
altum sentient de Matre, quam sine patre dicunt genitam, hoc est sine Deo, feminam a
femina, quod est ex errantia corruptelam.” Latin trans in PG 7:970. No Greek trans in
PG.

\textsuperscript{116} Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 33.

\textsuperscript{117} ibid., 33-34; cf. footnote 53, p.34.

\textsuperscript{118} Susan M. Elliott, "Choose Your Mother, Choose Your Master: Galatians 4:21-5:1 in
the Shadow of the Anatolian Mother of the Gods.," \textit{Journal of Biblical Literature} 118,
no. 4 (1999).
reference to the Anatolian Mother-Goddess and her local expressions as well as the Jewish covenant law.\textsuperscript{119}

It is possible to surmise that the Christian community of Lyons was highly influenced by the cult worship of the Anatolian Mother Goddess. This community not only had members with a background of Anatolian worship but also because the community was reminded of this background of worship of the Mountain Mother through the geography of Lyons itself with its two hills or mountains (\textit{Fourvière} and \textit{Croix Rousse}) bordering on the north and west of this peninsular city. It is possible that when proposing the image of the Church as Mother in his writings, Irenaeus was not only competing with the Gnostic mother but also with the traditional local pagan mother goddess.

This hypothesis of the influence of the Anatolian Mother Goddess image on the Lyon community can be supported by Plumpe’s own investigations into the beginnings of \textit{mater ecclesia}. In his exploration of \textit{Mater Pístis} who precedes \textit{Mater Ecclesia}, Plumpe recognised an unusual coincidence in the use of \textit{mater} by both pagan-Gnosticism and Christianity early before the second century by which time it became common. He says:

\begin{quote}

the concurrence of pagan-Gnostic and Christian personification of the same or analogous religious elements is significant. For one thing, it is plain that in the territory nearest the cradle of Christianity, in the Orient, particularly the Near East — personification of the Christian faith was especially favored; there it appeared first and became popular. There the emergence of the Church itself becoming more and more a visible reality, as \textit{Μητηρ Ἐκκλησία}—if it had not taken place already—was imminent, at least by the second century. And though
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{119} Elliott shows that the law becomes a “manifestation of the Mother of the Gods, the one associated with the city of Jerusalem.” A relationship with the law (this Mother) is formed through circumcision. Just as the Galli (priests of the Anatolian Mother Goddess) castrate themselves in devotion to her, Elliott says Paul creates an association of similar enslavement when the Galatians wished to return to the Sinaic law. Ibid.

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in the surviving documents she first appeared as such in the West—at Lyons, as we shall see—she actually had been introduced there from the East.\textsuperscript{120}

Mother may have been an acceptable ecclesial image to the Gallic community of Lyons not simply because it had been part of their Christian tradition but also because either they had previously participated in the worship of a maternal entity larger than themselves or in the least their background and geography reminded them of this inescapable aspect of their culture.

2. Mary as Mother Church?

In the use of a mother metaphor for the Church, Irenaeus presented an image rather than explicitly naming the Church as such. Similarly, Irenaeus refused to explicitly call Mary a mother.\textsuperscript{121} This rhetorical ploy is explained by Irenaeus himself:

For whether the Saviour or their Mother (to use their own expressions, proving them false by means of the very terms they themselves employ) used this Being, as they maintain, to make an image of those things which are within the Pleroma…\textsuperscript{122}

A number of theologians argue that despite the lack of direct connections made between Mother Church and Mary, the early Patristic writers such as Irenaeus had intuited this link as seen in his description of Church as mother, spouse, and virgin and Mary as mother and

\textsuperscript{120} Plumpe, \textit{Mater Ecclesia}, 21.

\textsuperscript{121} In \textit{AH} Mary is called “the virgin with a son” or “virgin”. The Church is simply called “Church” (example in \textit{AH} 4.19.1, 4.20.12) or “Church of God” (example in \textit{AH} 3.25.7), and her motherhood implied when Irenaeus attributes “children” to her (\textit{Proof} 94) and describes her as nourishing from her “bosom” (\textit{AH} 3.24.1, 5.20.2) explicitly named when she is called “virgin mother” (\textit{Proof} 97). But ‘mother’ and ‘church’ are never placed alongside each other as written text.

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{AH} 2.30.3 in Irenaeus, "The Writings of Irenaeus (ANCL)," 233. Irenaeus Vol 1, ANCL Vol V, Trans Roberts and Rambaut. No Greek trans. in PG. Latin from PG 7:816-817. Latin: “Sive enim Salvator, sive Mater ipsorum (ut Propria ipsorum dicamus, per sua ipsorum Propria mendaces eos argentum) usa est hoc, ut dicunt ad faciendam imaginem eorum, quae intra Pleroma sunt.”
This is doubtful as there appears something deliberate about the use of the images of “breasts” (AH 3.24.1) and “womb” (AH 5.1.45-46) for Church in the Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne only, and none at all in Adversus Haereses) but only “womb” for Mary and in a different sense to the use of “womb” when Irenaeus spoke of the Church as mother. The collapse of the two figures, Mary and the Church would also collapse the particular arguments Irenaeus made when he utilised each one.

In AH Irenaeus associated the words “fruit of the belly” (“de fructu ventris”, AH 3.21.5), “inheritance of the flesh” (“carnis haereditatem”, AH 3.22.1) with womb images connected to Mary whilst for the Church, the womb image was only found once in Letter (HE 5.1.45-46) and not at all in AH. Meanwhile the image of the bosom is associated with the maternal Church but not for Mary (“neque a mammillis matris nutriuntur in vitam” AH 3.24.1).

It is apparent that Mary’s motherhood was utilized to confirm Christ’s humanity when Irenaeus writes “Those, therefore, who allege that He took nothing from the Virgin do greatly err, [since,] in order that they may cast away the inheritance of the flesh, they also reject the analogy

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123 Juan L. Bastero, Mary, Mother of the Redeemer: A Mariology Textbook (Dublin ; Portland, Or.: Four Courts Press, 2006), 34; Brendan Leahy, The Marian Profile in the Ecclesiology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar (New York/ London/ Manila: New City Press, 2000), 20; Joseph Ratzinger, "On the Position of Mariology and Marian Spirituality within the Totality of Faith and Theology," in The Church and Women: A Compendium, ed. Helmut Moll(San Fransisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 74. Juan Luis Bastero says Irenaeus is due credit for the first to discover “the analogy of that (which) exists between Mary and the Church.” Brendan Leahy, reflecting on the Marian Profile in the ecclesiology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar claims that “From the time of Justin and Irenaeus, in fact, the concepts ‘virgin-mother-Church’ and ‘virgin-mother-Mary’ are so intertwined that in a sense, they cannot be separated”. Joseph Ratzinger says; “we find in the ecclesiology of the period of the Fathers a preliminary adumbration of the whole of mariology, albeit without naming the name of the Mother of the Lord: the Virgo Ecclesia, the Mater Ecclesia, the Ecclesia immaculate, the Ecclesia assumpta—everything that will one day be mariology is present here as ecclesiology.”
[between Him and Adam] (“Errant igitur qui dicunt, eum nihil ex Virgine accepisse; ut abjiciant carnis haereditatem abjiciant autem et similitudinem.”) Irenaeus sought to refute the Gnostic claim that Christ was the proper son of their “Demiurge” and merely “passed through Mary just as water flows through a tube” (“qui per Mariam transierit, quemadmodum aqua per tubum transit...”).

This idea of Mary as mother as mere container to Jesus, would not have been uncommon in the ancient Greek world. Garland explains how in *Eumenides of Aeschylus*, Apollo perceives the mother as mere “nurse of the newly-implanted seed” and in which the father is the true parent. The Gnostics believed that Jesus was fully divine and only appeared human (see AH book 1, chapter 7). So it was quite outrageous as well as challenging for the Church to claim that Jesus did take on the flesh of Mary since this opposed the cultural understanding of the role and physiology of a mother. In this way Mary’s purpose as mother differed in purpose to Irenaeus’ naming of the Church as a mother, which was mainly utilised in AH to contrast with Gnostic claims to privileged knowledge of the Christian faith as already shown above. By collapsing Mary into the image of Mother Church and or vice versa, it would not be recognising Irenaeus’s purposes of challenging two separate claims by the gnostics—Christ’s solely divine nature and their privileged claims to knowledge and truth.

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125 *AH* 1.7.2. Latin and Greek trans from PG 7:513-514. English trans. from ibid., 29.
126 Garland, "Mother and Child in the Greek World": 40.
Chapter Conclusion

By the time Irenaeus applies the image of ‘mother’ to the Church, it was already a commonly accepted ecclesial image in the Lyons and Vienne Christian communities. Irenaeus developed this familiar image to present the Church as the intercessor-martyr (who seeks the salvation of her children), as bride and virgin (the true partner of God representing redemption and communion of the Church), as the breastfeeding mother (source of orthodox truth in contrast to Gnostic truth). He shows mother Church as the guaranteed place of orthodox truth because it has the Spirit of God (AH 3.2.4.1). It is only through the Catholic Church (AH 3.4.1) with its guarantee of true teaching through apostolic succession 127 which incorporates both the NT and OT (AH 4.8.1; 128 4:9)129 that one learns of such things such as the true origin of the world (AH 2.2.1), oneself (AH 4.14.1-2), God, and Christ. In having this true knowledge, the Catholic Church, in contrast to the Gnostic churches, is thus the only place where one finds salvation.130 Irenaeus’ images were not conflated, allowing each image to present a particular aspect of the Church.

Irenaeus does not create a new maternal image of the Church but takes his source for maternal images from established custom and from scripture, and centres his ideas on recapitulation in Christ and order or

127 “...since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth”. In AH 3.4.1 Irenaeus, “The Writings of Irenaeus (ANCL).” 264. Irenaeus Vol 1, ANCL Vol V. Trans. Roberts and Rambaut. No Greek trans. in PG. Latin trans. from PG 7:855.

128 “Vain, too, is [the effort of] Marcion and his followers when they [seek to] exclude Abraham from the inheritance, to whom the Spirit through many men, and now by Paul, bears witness, that he believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.” In AH 4.8.1 in ibid., 396. No Greek trans. in PG. Latin trans. from PG 7:993.

129 “There is but one author, and one end to both covenants” ibid., 399. No Greek trans. in PG. Latin trans. from PG 7:996.

130 “For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers” (AH 3.4.1) ibid., 264. No Greek trans. in PG. Latin trans. from PG 7:855.
fittingness. The associations of the ecclesial mother presented by Irenaeus are basic, where her womb and breasts are essentially her defining characteristics—for birthing new members and breastfeeding them with her teachings. The image of a breastfeeding mother is centred on refuting the Gnostics’ claim to have exclusive and improved truths to Christianity. For Irenaeus, it is the knowledge from Christ that is the real truth, and this is transmitted only through the nurturing breast milk of the Church.

It was shown that Irenaeus’ image of the Church having a womb has a distinct purpose from his reference to the womb of Mary. The womb image was applied to the Church as mother once, in *Letter* and not in *AH*. But this pointed to the formation of the Christian by the Word of God in the Church. The reference to Mary’s womb was making the point that Jesus took flesh within her, to counter Gnostic claims that Mary was mere container for her son. Irenaeus had a clear distinction between his understanding of Church as mother and Mary, and the later association between the two should not be read back into his thoughts.

It is highly possible that Irenaeus takes into account that the Gnostics have their own version of Mother Church and thus he uses the image to lead his audience away from the Gnostic mother and back towards their Catholic mother. It is also probable that Irenaeus is trying to compete with any remaining traces of worship of the Anatolian mother goddess especially when the geography of Lyons would readily lend to the worship of this female divinity associated with hills.

Osborn’s methodologies of reading Irenaeus especially its content, contour, and conflicts provide a way of summarising Irenaeus’ uses of the Church as Mother as metaphorical image: First it reinforces the idea that
Irenaeus could speak of the Church as Mother who gives true knowledge as opposed to the Gnostic Mother and at the same time also use the Mother of God to emphasise Christ’s humanity without intending to conflate their meanings into the one “Mother”, so that Mother Church is not necessarily prefigured or figured allusively or unconsciously in Mary, the mother of Jesus. Second, that Irenaeus’ images are not ornamental and that he has used “Mother” for the image of the Church says something particular about the nature of the Church which no other metaphor could express as well. Third, that the Church’s motherhood is to be interpreted in terms of recapitulation in Christ means that its employment negates emphasis on the “mother” image on its own (whatever image that may conjure anywhere beyond Irenaeus’ reading of Scripture, such as from culture), but is Irenaeus’ perception of salvific history—that Sarah, the barren mother and her children, (the Christian Church) inherit the promise that Hebraic law says solely belongs to the fertile mother, Hagar and her children (the Jewish Synagogue), because of Christ (Gal 4:27).

This metaphorical analysis indicates that Irenaeus’ development of the maternal ecclesial image meets the three criteria for what Soskice terms a “living metaphor.” First, for a living metaphor “one recognizes a dissonance or tension in a living metaphor whereby the terms of the utterance used seem not strictly appropriate to the topic at hand.” 131 Irenaeus uses this image in striking and somewhat dissonant ways: Can Christian martyrdom be an act of motherhood? Can the Church really quicken, miscarry and conceive? Is it like the she-wolf who breastfeeds her children to life? For Irenaeus the Church as mother lived precisely in the

131 Soskice, Metaphor and Religious Language, 103.
death of its martyrs. Second, according to Soskice, “[t]he more dead a metaphor the more readily it lends itself to direct and full paraphrase.” This particular metaphor of Church as birthing and breastfeeding carries much greater affective weight and meaning than rewordings such as ‘initiating’ and ‘teaching’. As such it was necessary and exceptional in the fight against the Gnostic-Valentinians who also utilized their own maternal ecclesial metaphor to claim they were the true Christians. Third, “[a]n originally vital metaphor calls to mind, directly or indirectly, a model or models.” Irenaeus’ maternal imagery taps directly into his community’s web of associations regarding the mother: from the she-wolf of mythology, to the Anatolian mother, to women in the scripture, to their own cultural and personal understandings of motherhood. Thus Irenaeus’ development of the maternal ecclesial imagery clearly falls into Soskice’s category of “live metaphor” and thus provides an expanded understanding of the Church.
CHAPTER II: TERTULLIAN
FIRST EXPLICIT AND CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF MATER ECCLESIA

Whilst Irenaeus is the first to align the concept of ‘mother’ with the Christian community, according to Peper, it is Tertullian who first explicitly calls the Church “Mater Ecclesia”.\(^1\) Tertullian goes beyond Irenaeus, as he personifies the Church for the first time as an entity distinct from its members. He also develops this metaphor in a new way when he pairs Mother Church with Father God. I shall argue that such a pairing is a reflection of the culture of his context, in which the Roman *materfamilia* was seen by the side of her spouse, the *paterfamilia*. However, this chapter will also argue that Tertullian is not uncritical in his use of contemporary culture; he applies a method of rejection-reappropriation in his imaging of Mother Church, rejecting the imagery of the Roman *matrona* whilst reappropriating the *materfamilia* image. Tertullian’s development of the maternal ecclesial metaphor was carried out in a hostile environment. Carthage’s Roman cultural tolerance for multi-religiosity was at odds with Christian exclusivist claims. On the other hand, the universal claims of the Imperial cult and its associated compulsory worship led to persecution of Christians. Schismatic movements such as Gnosticism and Marcionism also challenged the unity and stability of the Christian community. This chapter will explore how Tertullian develops his image of Mother Church in order to address these issues.

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\(^{1}\) Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 37.
First to explicitly utilize the maternal ecclesial metaphor

Throughout his career, Tertullian consistently uses the maternal metaphor to present the Church and explain its function.² Plumpe similarly states that “[t]he earliest evidence for the use of the term ‘mother’ by attribution as a title or by predication as an office or function of the Church, is found almost at the beginning of Christian Latinity, in the writings of Tertullian.”³ He interprets Tertullian’s Mother Church as referring to the physical home into which the children of the Church welcome her newborn:⁴ That is, the building in which the catechumens are received after having been initiated into the Church in the adjacent building which was the baptistery containing the baptismal font: for Plumpe interprets Tertullian’s ‘apud Matrem’ (De Bap. 20.5) to mean ‘in domo matris’.⁵ Peper argues against this theory, stating there is no evidence Tertullian links baptism with the font or a secure and particular place especially since he allows for baptisms with any body of water.⁶ Moreover, for Tertullian, the “parturient qualities of the baptismal font” are never connected to the Motherhood of the Church.⁷ Rankin points as far back as 2John1 in which he describes the

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² ibid.
³ Plumpe, Mater Ecclesia, 45.
⁴ ibid., 54.
⁵ ibid., 53-55.
⁷ ibid. But Plumpe points out too that for Tertullian Mother Church also meant the Church as providing spiritual nourishment in Plumpe, Mater Ecclesia, 48.
author as addressing the “church congregation” as mother—“eukleti kuriai kai tois teknois autes” (the elect lady and her children) to conclude that Tertullian was not the first to apply the maternal metaphor onto an ecclesial community. ⁸ He credits Tertullian instead with a shift in ecclesiological thinking to a more ‘high’ view of Church. Previous to Tertullian, Rankin claims the Patristic writers such as Irenaeus (130-202 CE) and Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE) had merely given Mother Church a comforting and teaching role.⁹ In Tertullian, baptism becomes the prerequisite for a believer’s right to call the Church a mother and God a father.¹⁰ As well, for the first-time, the Church gains a separate existence such that “[s]he becomes more than the sum of her membership.”¹¹ In view of the picture of Irenaeus’ Mother Church from the previous chapter, I would agree that in Tertullian, for the first time Mother Church gains a distinct existence. As well, Peper states too that in Tertullian, for the first time, the pairing of Father God with Mother Church becomes linked with the necessity of baptism.¹²

Yet, for the same reason Peper critiques Plumpe’s observations of Tertullian’s Mother Church,¹³ Peper also critiques Rankin. In Peper’s view, both Rankin and Plumpe do not take into consideration the ecclesiological context from which Tertullian utilizes a maternal metaphor for the Church. Thus, Peper concludes that in the two authors one finds two divergent theories: In Plumpe, Tertullian refers to Mother Church in a locative sense

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⁸ Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 80.
⁹ ibid., 80-81.
¹⁰ ibid., 81.
¹¹ ibid., 80.
¹² Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 54.
¹³ ibid., 53.
that is connected to baptism, pointing to a low ecclesiology. Whilst in Rankin, Mother Church’s first time pairing with Father God creates a shift toward a high ecclesiology.\textsuperscript{14} In contrast, by considering Tertullian’s ecclesiological context, one could observe that the metaphor was applied as a tool of demarcation, between insiders and outsiders of the Church and its promise of salvation. For Peper, this is the defining character of Tertullian’s Mother Church and is the line of thought taken up in this chapter.\textsuperscript{15}

To this picture, I would add the idea of the Ecclesial Mother as the Roman \textit{materfamilia}. The \textit{materfamilia} was the mother by the side of her spouse, the \textit{paterfamilia}, her purpose fulfilled in birthing, nourishing and supporting her children. Tertullian’s Roman-Carthaginian audience would have been exposed to this kind of maternal propaganda and thus when presented as model for Mother Church, its reception would have been a given. But Tertullian also presented an ecclesial mother who superceded the Jewish Synagogue. In this he sought to address concerns arising from the theories of Marcion but also to grapple with the ecclesial reality of a Judaic faith distinctly separating itself from the Christian community. These ideas will be explored in more detail after the preliminary explorations of Tertullian’s background, significance and rhetorical method.

\textsuperscript{14} ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{15} ibid.
Background & Significance

It is commonly believed that Septimius Tertullianus was born in Carthage to pagan parents around 155-160 CE. David Wright says that his birth and death details are actually unknown and that Jerome simply mentions Tertullian “lived to a decrepit old age”. Further, Geoffrey Dunn questions other details of Tertullian’s early life:

…the ideas that Tertullian’s father was a centurion, that Tertullian was a presbyter, that he was a jurist and that he lived a long life. Some scholars, possessed of the same revisionist spirit, have also questioned his legal background, and even whether his Montanism meant that he became a schismatic.

All that can be said of Tertullian’s background was that he grew up as a pagan, converted to Christianity in 193 CE, was married to a Christian (Ad Uxorem, To My Wife 1.1.1), was referred to as “the Master” by Cyprian who read his work daily, remained in Carthage the whole of his life, had a rhetorician’s education, served his community as a teacher rather than a presbyter, and became a Montanist from 213-220 CE.

There is unanimous agreement among early Patristic scholars that Tertullian is the first to write Christian literature in Latin, laying the foundations for reflections by later Patristic writers. Peper quotes Rankin in observing that first and second century Patristic writers took the existence of the Church for granted, applying biblically imagery onto it in an

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18 ibid. Location 144, Kindle.
19 Wright, "Tertullian," 1027.
eisegetical manner.\textsuperscript{21} The late second and early third centuries saw the Church’s identity becoming defined in response to a multitude of heresies.\textsuperscript{22} Tertullian of this second period, laid the ecclesiological groundwork for which he set out “the nature and authentic membership of the Church more frequently than any previous Western Christian.”\textsuperscript{23}

**Tertullian’s Rhetorical Method**

As a Christian writer, Tertullian spent vast energies on demarcating between pagans, Jews, heretics and Christians. Wright says Tertullian encouraged listeners to detest the surrounding pagan culture.\textsuperscript{24} This is consistent with Peper’s general theory that “\textit{Mater Ecclesia}” was used as a tool of demarcation by early North African Fathers—and in Tertullian’s case, as a tool of demarcation between those who have a true relationship with the Church, and therefore have access to God and salvation, and those who did not, the pagan world.\textsuperscript{25} This demarcation was not just applied to the maternal ecclesial metaphor but was Tertullian’s general approach: that there was to be no doubt in deciding for or against the Christian religion.\textsuperscript{26} In this he mirrored an ‘us and them’ mentality of the rhetoricians of his day.\textsuperscript{27} But, he differed with the rhetoricians in their primary aims to delight and impress: for Tertullian the main purpose of Christian rhetoric was to persuade audiences.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{21} Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 36.

\textsuperscript{22} ibid.

\textsuperscript{23} ibid.

\textsuperscript{24} Wright, ”Tertullian,” 1028.

\textsuperscript{25} Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 51-52.

\textsuperscript{26} Dunn, ”Tertullian”. Location 268, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{27} ibid. Location 264, Kindle.

Whilst he was keen to discard his pagan background and wished to source only from Christian tradition, commentaries on Tertullian’s rhetorical method show the contrary. Rankin claims that whilst no one could seriously state that Tertullian’s surrounding culture remained dominant in his thoughts, they played a significant part in his writings—whether in condemnation of the culture or in appreciation of it.\(^{29}\) He says: “[Tertullian] often employs the surrounding culture as background to the images he employs.”\(^{30}\) In addition, he applied his knowledge of classical culture to his writings. Dunn says Tertullian “had a debt to classical culture; it influenced his thinking and writing, it provided him with a language and a methodology and it furnished him with the material against which he could react and develop his own position.”\(^{31}\) Wright would add that Tertullian also learnt philosophical themes from classical culture and would apply this to his theological writings.\(^{32}\) Annemieke D. Ter Brugge provides a more specific method on how Tertullian employs images from society. She calls it a rejection-reappropriation approach and suggests that his reappropriation of culture for theology could be deliberate at times and indeliberate at others. She perceives him to be a complex social identity where sometimes he spoke as a Roman, sometimes a Carthaginian, and other times a Christian.\(^{33}\) She provides evidence that ‘Christian’ in antiquity is understood


\(^{30}\) ibid., 57.

\(^{31}\) Dunn, “Tertullian”, Location 610, Kindle.

\(^{32}\) In Wright, “Tertullian,” 1032. Wright gives an example where Tertullian reappropriates legal Roman terms to explain the Trinity. Cf. also Dunn, “Tertullian”. Location 610, Kindle, where Dunn provides an example of Tertullian reappropriating terms from everyday speech into his theological arguments.

today as a mix of ethnic, political and religious identities wholly interconnected.\textsuperscript{34}

Rankin, Dunn, and Ter Brugge’s theories provide the possibility that Tertullian’s sources for imaging Mother Church did not solely derive from Christian tradition but also from his surrounding culture—either by deliberate or indeliberate reappropriation, reaction to or application of ideas. Whilst referring to maternal scriptural figures to describe Mother Church, it is possible Tertullian also had in mind pervading cultural ideas of ‘mother’ in his ancient Roman city of Carthage.

Is there evidence Tertullian reappropriated ideas of the ‘mother’ from his surrounding culture? Explicitly, he places no value in the Roman mother-goddess and popular worship of her in her many forms (as the Great Mother, or Ceres, or Flora): For he sought to condemn what he saw as idolatry and instead he praised the Christian renunciation of anything pagan:

You have festivals bearing the name of the great Mother and Apollo, of Ceres too, and Neptune, and Jupiter Latiairis, and Flora, all celebrated for a common end...But in the matter of idolatry, it makes no difference with us under what name or title it is practised...there is the same idolatry; there is on our part the same solemn renunciation against all idolatry.\textsuperscript{35}

In addition, Tertullian had criticism for other cultures’ relations with their mothers, accusing the Persians and Macedonians of incest, lust, and adultery: “Then who are more given to the crime of incest than those who

\textsuperscript{34} See ibid., 3-4, 7, and footnote 4 for citations to Denise K. Buell and Maykel Verkuyten on complex social identities. Ter Brugge says that “despite the social identity complexity and the shifts in rhetorical strategies, Tertullian’s overall concept of the world is consistent” and she does this by showing Tertullian’s rejection-reappropriation approach which is commonly utilized by minority movements—in this case the Christian movement is the minority pre-Constantinian era.

have enjoyed the instruction of Jupiter himself? Ctesias tells us that the Persians have illicit intercourse with their mothers. The Macedonians, too, are suspected on this point”. In criticising other cultures’ relations with their mothers, Tertullian inadvertently commends the Christian choice for chastity: “A persevering and steadfast chastity has protected us from anything like this: keeping as we do from adulteries and all post-matrimonial unfaithfulness, we are not exposed to incestuous mishaps”.37

Livy records similar immoral practices by the Bacchanalia cult brought into Roman culture, “the number of adherents” itself “amounting to a second nation.” The cult was suppressed immediately when it was brought to knowledge in the Roman senate in 186 BCE. For “[t]he senators were seized with great alarm, both for the public, in case these conspiracies and assemblies might be harbouring some secret treachery or danger, and privately for each himself, in case any connection of their family might be involved in the evil…”39

Dionysius of Halicarnassus too records other undignified religious practices imported by “Barbarian” and “Greek” religions into Roman culture, which he contrasted with the decorous nature of Roman religious practice:

No festival is observed by the Romans…any instances of divine possession, Corybantic frenzies, religious begging rituals, Bacchic rites and secret mysteries, all-night vigils


of men and women together in temples or any other trickery of this kind, but there is a reverence in all their words and actions in respect of the gods, which is not seen among either Greeks or barbarians and the thing that I have marvelled at most of all is that, although the city has attracted tens of thousands of peoples who are compelled to worship their native gods according to the customs of their homelands, it has never publicly adopted any of these foreign practices...The [Roman] city is extremely cautious with respect to religious customs which are not native to Rome and regards as inauspicious all pomp and ceremony which lacks decorous behavior.\textsuperscript{40}

It is without surprise then that the Roman-minded Tertullian accuses those within his Roman audience of not acting within the boundaries of Roman decorum:

\begin{quote}
You are always praising antiquity, and yet every day you have novelties in your way of living. From your having failed to maintain what you should, you make it clear, that, while you abandon the good ways of your fathers, you retain and guard the things you ought not.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

Rankin, Peper and Plumpe do not indicate any reappropriation of the mother of the surrounding Roman-African culture and state that Tertullian’s sources derive only from early Patristic writers and scripture, even if Tertullian had not explicitly sourced them. For Rankin, Tertullian’s sources are Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and the ‘Lady Elect’ of 2 John 1.\textsuperscript{42} For Plumpe, it is the Christian community as ‘Lady Elect’ in 2 John 1 and 5.\textsuperscript{43} Peper questions these Johannine sources as this ‘Lady Elect’ seemed to image a “cosmically pre-existent revelatory” rather than a Christian community.\textsuperscript{44} He distinguishes between the singular \textit{Mater Pistis} in the

\textsuperscript{40} Dionysius of Halicarnassus, \textit{Roman Antiquities} 2.19.2-5, in ibid., 162.


\textsuperscript{42} Rankin, \textit{Tertullian and the Church}, 80.

\textsuperscript{43} Plumpe, \textit{Mater Ecclesia}, 48.

\textsuperscript{44} Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 60.
Shepherd of Hermas’ visions and the plural *Mater Ecclesia* first recorded in Irenaeus’ Churches of martyrs in Lyons and Vienne. For Peper, Irenaeus and Galatians 4:21-31 would have been Tertullian’s main sources for the image even if Plumpe argues that Tertullian only mentions Galatians to reclaim Marcion’s misinterpretation of the passage. They also note that the maternal image was in common usage by the time Tertullian explicitly names the Church as such, implying that the metaphor was utilized because it was an accepted concept. This chapter proposes that whilst the maternal metaphor was in common usage and therefore simply accepted, the maternal picture presented was culturally familiar, and therefore added to her acceptability for Tertullian’s audience.

**Mother Church Texts and Contexts**


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45 ibid., 18.
46 ibid., 61.
47 Dates are from Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 55. Rankin also follows T.D. Barnes’ dating for Tertullian’s texts. Rankin lists these texts in order from the period between middle of the first decade of the third century (as per Barnes’ dating). In Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, xvii.
48 As per Barnes’ dating (cf. previous footnote), these texts (from *De Anima to De Pudicitia*) are written in the period beyond 207. In Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, xvii.
His utilization of the maternal ecclesial metaphor arose from what Peper saw as an environment that became hostile to Christianity. He claims the growth in number of Christians “in the Roman provinces of Proconsular Africa, Numidia, and Mauretania” and “in almost all professions and social strata” created hostility from the broader society.⁴⁹ In the years 180, 197-8, 203, 211 CE Christians were placed on trial and executed. Peper believes the very foundations of North African Christianity were set in opposition to the broader society.⁵⁰ This was probably due to the African intolerance towards Christianity’s exclusivist claims in an environment which generally welcomed a variety of religions from “Rome, Greece, Egypt, Asia and the East”.⁵¹ Christianity’s exclusivity also had implications for Roman juridical practice: Whilst encouraged to give to Caesar what belongs to him and to God what is God’s, the refusal to participate in the Imperial cult’s offerings to the gods would have perceived Christians as breaking the law and encouraging others to follow suit.⁵² On Idolatry was written for this purpose to convince Christians to distinguish themselves from secular culture even if they were encouraged to participate in it, in as far as they did not commit idolatry.⁵³

Idolatry is condemned, not on account of the persons which are set up for worship, but on account of those its observances, which pertain to demons. ‘The things which are Caesar’s are to be rendered to Caesar’. It is enough that He set in apposition thereto, ‘and to God the things which are God’s.’⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 41-42.
⁵⁰ ibid., 42.
⁵² Dunn, “Tertullian”. Location 799, Kindle.
⁵³ ibid. Location 805, Kindle.
Tertullian’s Mother Church will seem to be a continuation of Irenaeus’ image of Mother Church that spiritually births new Christians and (breast)feeds them with spiritual teaching (De Bapt. 20.5 and Ad Mart. 1.1). In addition to providing spiritual food, Tertullian’s Mother Church will also provide for her children’s material needs (Ad Mart. 1.1). But in contrast to Irenaeus, Tertullian’s Mother Church can be distinguished separately from the community: “She becomes more than the sum of her membership.”

Rather than interceding on her children’s behalf, this Mother is the only point from which one can make contact with God the Father and plead for oneself. As Eric Osborn says: “The church as mother goes beyond the source of nourishment to represent a more exalted figure alongside God as father.”

Whilst it can now be distinguished from the community, Tertullian’s Mother Church generally does not appear in isolation—she is either paired with Father God as his spouse (De Bapt. 20.5, De Monog. 7.8-9.0) or associated with the family altogether (father and son—De Orat. 2.3-7, father and brothers—De Bapt. 20.5, De Carne. 7.13). Mother Church is also associated with family values such as inheritance (De Bapt. 20.5, De Monog. 16.4) and belonging (De Praes., De Monog. 16.4, De Orat. 2.3-7, De Carne. 7.13). Even when she is contrasted with the Jewish mother (The Covenant Law), just as Sarah is contrasted with Hagar in Gal. 4.26 (De Carne. 7.13), her children appear as inheritors of a new freedom from the law tied to Jewish practice. Tertullian’s Mother Church appears to be less

Reddenda sunt Caesari quae sunt Caesaris, Bene quod apposuit: et quae sunt dei deo. CCSL 2.1115.20-29.

55 Rankin, Tertullian and the Church, 80.
about the Mother image in her own right, in contrast to what will later be shown of Cyprian’s Church, and more about her place and role in what is the more dominant underlying image of the ancient Roman family (familia).57

Where Rankin claims that Tertullian is the first to pair Mother Church with Father God and Peper claims a demarcating purpose, this thesis finds that both theories support its claim that Tertullian pictured the materfamilias when proposing an image of Mother Church: For the pairing enabled Tertullian to tap into the highly valued concept of family. By emphasizing the importance of a relationship with this family through the Mother Church, Tertullian created an insider-outsider ecclesial rhetoric that was already associated with the values of ‘belonging’ and ‘inheritance’ arising from being part of a family.

1. Who is the Mother?

a) Birther, nourisher, martyr

As in Irenaeus’ Mother Church, the birthing Mother is also found in Tertullian:

Therefore, blessed [friends], whom the grace of God awaits, when you ascend from that most sacred font of your new birth [“cum de illo sanctissimo lauacro noui natalis ascenditis”], and spread your hands for the first time in the house of your mother, together with your brethren [“et primas manus apud matrem cum fratribus aperitis”], ask

57 The ancient Roman familia normally included not only the parents and their unmarried children but also slaves. See Suzanne Dixon, The Roman Mother (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 14. But in the exploration of Tertullian, the familia he seemed to refer to was just the father and children. Note however, it seems the more common family unit was simply the mother and her children especially in the upper classes where young women married older men which then later produced young widows. Ibid., 17. See also Ann Ellis Hanson, “Widows Too Young in their Widowhood,” in I Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society, ed. Diana E. E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson(Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 149-165.
from the Lord, that His own specialties of grace [and] distributions of gifts may be supplied you.\textsuperscript{58}

Tertullian noted that other pagan religions practised a similar initiation rite through a washing with water but described their water as ‘widowed’ or having no connection to God:

Well, but the nations, who are strangers to all understanding of spiritual powers, ascribe to their idols the imbuing of waters with the self-same efficacy.” [So they do], but they cheat themselves with waters which are widowed [\textit{Sed uiduis aquis sibi mentiuntur}]...if the mere nature of water, in that it is the appropriate material for washing away, leads men to flatter themselves with a belief in omens of purification, how much more truly will waters render that service through the authority of God, by whom all their nature is constituted!\textsuperscript{59}

He also contrasted Christian baptism (washing in waters only once) to Jewish daily washing “because [the Jew] is daily being defiled.”\textsuperscript{60} Here we can see Tertullian’s rejection-reappropriation method at work. By claiming the ritual for Christianity and contrasting Jewish and pagan similar practice, Tertullian enables his audience to make sense of and choose Christian baptism over Judaism or pagan religion. It seems too that Tertullian similarly reappropriates the ancient practice of feeding milk and honey as shown below.

After baptism and the saying of first prayers (\textit{primas manus}), the Church as mother metaphor who births spiritual infants is reinforced, with the act of feeding the neophytes with milk and honey:


\footnote{\textit{De Bapt.} 5.1-2, in ibid., 236. Latin: “\textit{Sed ne omni intellectu spiritualium potestatem eadem efficacia idolis suis subministrant. Sed uiduis aquis sibi mentiuntur...Igitur si idolo natura aquae quod propria [materia] sit adlegendi, [in] auspici emundationis blandiuntur, quanto id uerius aquae praestabunt per dei auctoritatem a quo omnis natura earum constituta est!” CCSL 1:280.35-36,10-11.}

Hereupon we are thrice immersed, making a somewhat ampler pledge than the Lord has appointed in the Gospel. Then, when we are taken up [as new-born children], we taste first of all a mixture of milk and honey…

Isaiah 7:14-15 shows this feeding of milk and honey not towards the infant, but rather towards a young child:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

It seems the feeding of milk and honey to infants was common practice in ancient times. Soranus, the ancient medical theorist argued against a fellow theorist, Damastes, against the feeding of milk to the infant in its first few days, evidencing this common infant feeding practice. Soranus rather recommended giving only “honey moderately boiled” and when it was time to give milk to the infant, that anyone but the mother should provide this since her milk was too thick and unsuitable for the digestive system of the child. Moreover, a nurse with an unquestionable moral character was to provide this nourishment since her character would pass onto the child.

The Epistle of Barnabas too showed this ancient practice towards the infant, in its attempt to explain to “some [Christian] community in which Alexandrian ideas prevailed”, the significance of milk and honey:

What then is the milk and the honey? Because a child is first nourished with honey, and afterwards with milk. Thus

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61 *De Corona* 3.3, in ibid., 336. Latin: “Dehinc ter mergitamur amplius aliquid respondentes quam dominus in euangelio determinauit. Inde suscepti lactis et mellis concordiam praegustamus…”


therefore we also, being nourished on the faith of the promise and by the word, shall live and possess the earth.\textsuperscript{64}

Like Irenaeus’ Mother Church, Tertullian’s Mother also breastfed with the aim of providing spiritual sustenance as found in Ad Mart. 1.1:

Blessed Martyrs Designate,—Along with the provision which our lady mother the church from her bountiful breasts, and each brother out of his private means, makes for your bodily wants in the prison, accept also from me some contribution to your spiritual sustenance. For it is not good that the flesh be feasted and the spirit starve: nay, if that which is weak is carefully looked to, it is but right that that which is still weaker should not be neglected.\textsuperscript{65}

Maternal breastfeeding was so highly regarded in Ancient Roman culture that Aulus Gellius described a mother who refused her breasts to her child as like one whom aborts her own foetus.\textsuperscript{66} Whilst in reality it was more common that a wet nurse fed a baby (even in lower class families)\textsuperscript{67} it was believed that breastfeeding by a wet nurse rather than the natural mother was suspect because she would not only pass on poorer quality of milk and therefore less nutrition, but also pass on from her milk her “extraneous moral traits”\textsuperscript{68} and her poor grasp of the Latin language.\textsuperscript{69}

Tertullian himself provides his idealized picture of the mother and child

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{64} The Epistle of Barnabas 6.17. Trans., K. Lake. In ibid., 363. Greek: “τί οὖν τὸ γάλα καί τὸ μέλι; ὅτι πρῶτον τὸ παιδίον μέλιτι, ἐτέ γάλακτι ζωοποιέται· οὕτως οὖν καί ἡμεῖς τῇ πίστει τῆς ἐπαγγελίας καί τῷ λόγῳ ζωοποιούμενοι ζήσομεν κατακυρεύοντες τῆς γῆς.” In ibid., 362.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Tertullian, "The Writings of Tertullian (ANCL)." Vol I, ANCL Vol XI, p.1. Latin: “Inter carnis alimenta, benedicti martyres designati, quae uobis et domina mater ecclesia de uberibus suis, et singuli fratres de opibus suis propriis in carcerem subministrant, capite aliquid et a nobis quod faciat ad spiritum quoque educandum. Carnem enim saginari, et spiritum esurire non prodest. Immo, si quod infirmius est curatur; aequo, quod infirmius est, negligi non debet.” CCSL 1.3.1-8.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Aulus Gellius, Noctes Atticae 12.1.8.9, in Dixon, The Roman Mother, 94. Needless to say, this at least was a representation of the ancient male’s strong view on the matter.
\item \textsuperscript{67} ibid., 3, 108.
\item \textsuperscript{68} ibid., 119.
\item \textsuperscript{69} ibid., 120.
\end{itemize}
bond through the breastfeeding eventhough it was often the wet nurse who provided milk rather than the mother herself:

...from the very moment of birth [the soul] has to be regarded as embued with prescience, much more with intelligence. Accordingly by this intuition the babe knows his mother, discerns the nurse, and even recognises the waiting-maid; refusing the breast of another woman, and the cradle that is not his own, and longing only for the arms to which he is accustomed.\textsuperscript{70}

In \textit{Ad Mart.1.1} above, Tertullian encourages Christians in prison awaiting trial and execution, intending to give “food for their spirits”\textsuperscript{71} by stating that they were more free in prison than those living in the world “with its blindness and impurities.”\textsuperscript{72} Tertullian was motivated to write this text by a fear that those in prison “would backslide” and this was Tertullian’s general fear for Christians in the world.\textsuperscript{73} Dunn attributes Tertullian’s emphasis on martyrdom in \textit{Ad. Mart.} as a reaction to the Gnostic Christians, especially the Valentinians, “who questioned the relevance of martyrdom.”\textsuperscript{74} He says the whole work was a plea to accept martyrdom as the will of God and that resistance to arrest was going against this will.\textsuperscript{75} Dom. G. D. Schlegel comments that one finds in \textit{Ad Martyras} “a depth of feeling” lacking in Tertullian’s later works, in his attempt to “fortify the spirit against betrayal by the flesh.”\textsuperscript{76} In addition to attending to


\textsuperscript{71} Dunn, “Tertullian”. Location 809, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{72} ibid. Location 811, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{73} ibid. Location 827, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{74} In ibid. Location 828, Kindle. See Tertullian, \textit{Scorpiace} (Antidote for the Scorpion’s Sting) 1.5-9.

\textsuperscript{75} ibid. Location 835, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{76} Dom G.D. Schlegel, "The Ad Martyras of Tertullian and the Circumstances of its Composition," \textit{The Downside Review} 61, (1943): 125.
the spiritual needs of the confessors, Tertullian was also attendant to their bodily needs. One would presume spiritual food was sufficient to sustain the confessor throughout his or her torture. But it seems there was a common practice amongst Carthiginian Christians of the time in ensuring their confessors were well fed and prepared for their bodily tortures which lay ahead of them.77

Martyrdom was the very mark of North African Christianity.78 It was its central experience for the first 500 years.79 The earliest evidence of Christian activity in North Africa itself was of martyrdom found in the Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs, c. July 180 CE.80 Dunn claims that North African Christians were eager for it, and that martyrs were the “role models” for responding to persecution.81 Peper explains that martyrs were “accorded special privilege in the North African Church”,82 seen as having special access to heaven. With their elevated status, they were perceived to have the power to forgive sins, including that of idolatry.83 As seen too in the previous chapter, in Irenaeus’ ecclesial context, martyrdom had a special place. Along with unity, it was the very mark of a Church guaranteed possession of the Holy Spirit, in turn creating a distinction between the true Church from the false.84 Not only did Tertullian inherit a Church marked by

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78 Rankin, Tertullian and the Church, 10; Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 43.
79 Rankin, Tertullian and the Church, 10.
80 Dunn, “Tertullian”. Location 293, Kindle; Decret, Early Christianity in North Africa, Smither, 10; Rankin, Tertullian and the Church, 10.
81 Dunn, “Tertullian”. Location 348, Kindle.
82 Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 43.
83 ibid.
84 ibid., 25. Rankin suggests that the persecutions in the Lyons and Vienne Churches (177 CE) may have had some connection with the martyrdom of the twelve in
the elevated status of martyrdom but also his view of membership in the Church was extreme—either one was prepared to endure persecution or he or she was to be expelled (\textit{De Praes.} 3.6).\textsuperscript{85}

Wright posits that the acceptable practice of martyrdom in Carthage as defense of the Christian faith showed “residual influence of the grim child-sacrificing Punic religion of pre-Roman Carthage”.\textsuperscript{86} In particular, he says it is from “[t]he daring blood imagery of the \textit{Passion of Perpetua and Felicity}” that Tertullian surmises “God covets human blood.”\textsuperscript{87} For it was Tertullian who famously said “the blood of Christians is seed” (\textit{Apol.} 50.13).\textsuperscript{88} Barbara Tinsley explains that blood was no mere metaphor but truly considered seed for spiritual growth of the individual in the empire at the time. The Dionysian rites show blood letting and blood drinking as the necessary rites “for the survival of communicants and cult”.\textsuperscript{89}

The martyrdom of Christians by the Romans marked the conflict between Church and state. But the conflict was not only from outside the Church, it also occurred from within—the various interpretations fuelled by Gnosticism and Marcionism compelled Tertullian to write a number of books [for example, \textit{De Praes.}, \textit{Adv Marc.}, \textit{De Resurrectione Carnis} (The Resurrection of the Flesh, c.206/7), and \textit{De Anima}].\textsuperscript{90} But they were also

\textsuperscript{85} Osborn, \textit{Tertullian}, 179.

\textsuperscript{86} Wright, "Tertullian," 1029.

\textsuperscript{87} ibid.


\textsuperscript{89} Barbara Sher Tinsley, \textit{Reconstructing Western Civilization: Irreverent Essays on Antiquity} (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 293.

\textsuperscript{90} Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 44.
written against Montanism which sought to pull the reins in on discipline in the Church (cf. *De Pud*.). Because of the constant tensions within and without in what Peper claimed as the characteristic of the North African Christian experience (until the Islamic invasions), the Church was forced "to continually define and redefine" its nature and membership.91

Such were the circumstances in which Tertullian utilized ‘*Mater Ecclesia*’: an environment fueled by an ‘us and them’ mentality, exacerbated by the persecution of Christians for their non-participation in their Imperial cultic duty of worship of Roman gods and goddeses, inheriting a blood-thirsty religious past translated into the elevation of martyrdom (the extremism of loyalty to faith even to one’s death), and confusion over the exact teachings of the Church and requirements of Church membership. For Peper, ‘*Mater Ecclesia*’ was employed to help define the nature of the Church in such an environment. For Dunn, defining the Church against the secular world helped clarify for the Christian that one lived in the world but is not of it, and as required, to die for the faith.92

For Osborn, it was a Church that inherited a martyrdom tradition through Pepetua but was also “comfortable and prosperous” and had many members of the congregation “ready to compromise” (*medicitas nostras*).93

b) Spouse of God, the Materfamilia

As discussed above Tertullian’s Mother Church often appeared paired with Father God or is associated with the family and family values such as inheritance and belonging. It seems Tertullian presented Mother Church less as the exalted *matrona*, the Roman imperial mother celebrated

91 ibid., 45.

92 Cf. Dunn, "Tertullian". Location 799, Kindle.

93 Osborn, *Tertullian*, 175.
in ancient Roman culture for her beauty, fertility, and moral virtue,\(^94\) and more as the *materfamilias*, the mother who exists not in or for herself but for her children\(^95\) and husband.\(^96\)

For Tertullian had low regard for the *matrona*\(^97\) and saw the woman’s place as to be lorded by the man (“In pains and in anxieties dost thou bear [children], woman; and toward thine husband [is] thy inclination, and he lords it over thee.” *De Cultu Feminarum*, On Female Dress 1.1.).\(^98\)

In Tertullian’s view, the low character of the *matrona* was reflected in her preoccupations with jewelry, cosmetics and clothing as the wearer of these

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\(^{95}\) “Once married, a woman was expected to bear children and to educate them by instilling Roman moral values…The Roman mother’s aim was to advance her children economically, socially, and professionally.” In Diana E. E. and Susan B. Matheson Kleiner, ""Her Parents Gave Her the Name Claudia"," in *I Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society*, ed. Diana E. E. and Susan B. Matheson Kleiner(Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 7-8.

\(^{96}\) A woman was legally in the power of either her husband or her father. In Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 44. But also, a woman was only recognised in relation to her father or husband just as Livia received her recognition because of her relation to her husband. She was the *princeps femina*, wife of the *princeps*, first empress of Rome. In Kleiner, “Imperial Women as Patrons of the Arts;” 30.

In fact the Roman *matrona* was also a *materfamilia* so this argument may seem redundant. However, not all *materfamiliae* were recognized as having the esteemed qualities of a *matrona*. The distinction made between the two in this chapter highlights that in Tertullian, the mother image used is mother of the family or in relation to them, rather than the mother who stands in her own right celebrated for her beauty and virtues. This argument will become clearer once the reader has compared this maternal ecclesial figure to that in Cyprian in the next chapter.

Note also that in *A Latin Dictionary* by Lewis and Short, *mātrōna* is a reference to a married woman “whether she was in *manu* or not; consequently more general in its application than *materfamilia*, which always denoted one who was in *manu*”. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, "A Latin Dictionary" http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3Dmatriona1 (accessed July 17, 2014).

*In manu* refers to the state of the woman under “the hand” or control of her father, husband, male relative, master, or tutor.


items. In bearing them the matrona showed conduciveness to anything but “integrity” (integritas), “chastity” (castitas), and “the fear of God” (timor dei) (De Cul. Fem. 1.2.2). Clark explains Tertullian’s perspective on the matronae: “In their sumptuous living, these errant Christians appear to ‘glory’ in the wrong things”. Only glory in the lacerated flesh, the martyred flesh, is to be upheld rather than glory in the adorned body—and not even in the body that has died in the process of giving birth (“seek not to die on bridal beds, nor in miscarriages, nor in soft fevers, but to die the martyr’s death, that He may be glorified who has suffered for you.” De Fuga in Persecutione 9.4). To him, marriage was not motivated by love but simply something women “fall into” as Clark describes. As a married woman then, the only appropriate behaviour and comportment for her is to be found in the model of the Church as bride: “if the church as the ‘Bride of Christ’ is characterized by submissiveness, humility, obedience and discipline, how much more should human brides express these characteristics?”

99 Clark, “Status Feminae,” 143-144.
100 Integritas can mean any of the following: completeness, soundness, purity, correctness, blamelessness, innocence, and chastity. In Charlton Thomas Lewis, An Elementary Latin Dictionary (Oxford [England]: Clarendon Press, 1891).
101 Castitatis is purity or chastity in ibid.
102 In Tertullian, "The Writings of Tertullian (ANCL)". Tertullian Vol I, ANCL Vol XI, p.306. “What is the quality of these things may be declared meantime, even at this point, from the quality of their teachers; in that sinners could never have either shown or supplied anything conducive to integrity, unlawful lovers anything conducive to chastity, renegade spirits anything conducive to the fear of God.” Latin: “Haec qualia sunt, interim iam ex doctorum suorum qualitate et conditione pronuntiari potest, quod nihil ad integritatem peccatores, nihil ad castitatem adamatores, nihil ad timorem dei desertores spiritus aut monstrare potuerunt aut praestare.” CCSL 1:345.14-18.
103 Clark, "Status Feminae," 144-145.
105 Clark, “Status Feminae,” 142. See De Virg Vel 17.1 (CCSL 2.1225).
106 ibid., 144.
Tertullian utilises the image of Eve as spouse of Adam to parallel the image of Church as spouse to Christ:

But, presenting to your weakness the gift of the example of His own flesh, the more perfect Adam—that is Christ, more perfect on this account as well [as on others]. that He was more entirely pure—stands before you, if you are willing [to copy Him], as a voluntary celibate in the flesh. If, however, you are unequal [to that perfection], He stands before you a monogamist in spirit, having one church as His spouse, according to the figure of Adam and Eve, which [figure] the apostle interprets of that great sacrament of Christ and the church, [teaching that], through the spiritual, it was analogous to the carnal monogamy.¹⁰⁷

Taking the analogy further, Tertullian described that as Eve was born from the side of Adam (his rib), so the Church was born from the side of Christ’s wound on His side:

For as Adam was a figure of Christ, Adam’s sleep shadowed out the death of Christ, who was to sleep a mortal slumber, that from the wound inflicted on His side might, in like manner [as Eve was formed], be typified the church, the true mother of the living.¹⁰⁸

Tertullian also imaged the Church as a virgin, true, modest, and holy (“free from all stain”¹⁰⁹):

But it is in THE CHURCH that this [edict] is read, and in the church that it is pronounced; and [THE CHURCH] is a virgin! [et virgo est] Far, far from Christ’s betrothed [sponsa Christi] be such a proclamation! She, the true [quae vera], the modest [quae pudica], the saintly [quae sancta], shall be free from stain even of her ears. She has none to whom to make such a promise; and if she have had, she does not make it; since even the earthly temple of God sooner have been


¹⁰⁹ Dunn, "Tertullian”. Location 713, Kindle.
called by the Lord a ‘den of robbers,’ than of adulterers and fornicators.\textsuperscript{110}

The purpose of this text was to assert the Church’s submission and obedience to Christ and in this, the exclusion of sinners, the disobedient and faithless, was necessary.\textsuperscript{111} Rankin comments that even with the list of Patristic precedents who have named the Church a virgin, Tertullian would have invented the image simply to emphasise that she was completely holy.\textsuperscript{112} In contrast, heretics, those who threatened the unity of the Church, were characterised by “their lack of godly fear, gravity, diligent care, ordered appointment and due discipline.”\textsuperscript{113}

Rankin notes that apart from Adv. Marc. 5.4.8, where Tertullian calls the Mother Church ‘holy’ in reclaiming Marcion’s reflection of Galatians 4:26, “Tertullian does not appear explicitly to link the ‘motherhood’ of the church to her holiness.”\textsuperscript{114} Neither does he connect the Church’s motherhood with her virginity.\textsuperscript{115} This chapter argues that the Mother Church as \textit{materfamilia}, spouse to the \textit{paterfamilia} and mother to his children is the image that seems to be more apparent concerning the Church’s motherhood. This is without surprise seeing as ‘family’ had much significance and impact on the lives of the ancient Roman society.


\textsuperscript{111} cf. Rankin, \textit{Tertullian and the Church}, 83-84.

\textsuperscript{112} ibid., 85.

\textsuperscript{113} Osborn, \textit{Tertullian}, 180.

\textsuperscript{114} Rankin, \textit{Tertullian and the Church}, 82.

\textsuperscript{115} ibid.
Michele George explains the significance of family in the ancient Roman empire:

A critical element in the formation of Roman identity and citizenship, the family, provided protection, economic and emotional support, and was the institution through which wealth and property was protected and transmitted. In Roman thought, the strength of the family reflected the stability of the state, making membership in the polity of Rome itself writ small. Belonging to society was especially important for freedmen, who as slaves had been considered property and less than human, and who were eager to display their new status as Roman citizens.\textsuperscript{116}

George acknowledges that whilst this Roman family was idealized, it remained sought-after because of the multi-faceted advantages it provided the Roman free citizen, including the power to bring legal and social legitimacy to an individual who would otherwise have few ways to make a distinction in society.\textsuperscript{117} It was also the exemplar of moral standard for Roman society where roles were distinct and characters idealized.\textsuperscript{118}

She points out that some funerary monuments present groupings of siblings who were childless or unrelated individuals as a family and reasons that this enables “individuals from the same (or even different) familia [a] claim for themselves the associated normative values of social respectability while commemorating relationships which fell outside the nuclear family model.” As well it guaranteed proper burial rites that were standard in a conventional family.\textsuperscript{119}


\textsuperscript{117} ibid., 40.

\textsuperscript{118} ibid., 41-42.

\textsuperscript{119} ibid., 51-52. In fact there was such a thing as “burial clubs” in Ancient Roman society. They would meet regularly on a social basis, celebrate birthdays of the deceased, and perform kin-like obsequies. Dixon notes the importance of such groups for those who could not call on ties through kinship or patronage. In Dixon, \textit{The Roman Mother}, 20.
Laura Betzig discusses the *lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* (18 BCE) and *lex Papia Poppaea* (9 CE) as giving reasons why ‘family’ have such strong connotations and associations for the Roman citizen. The laws formed Augustus’ moral reforms for the Roman State, punishing bachelors ‘politically, socially, and economically’ whilst rewarding fathers.\(^{120}\) Not only bachelors, but anyone childless was punished. The more children you had, the more financial and status benefits you received from the State.\(^{121}\) Roman emperors were so keen to apply the moral reforms that spies (*delatores*) on evaders were rewarded.\(^{122}\) Even illegitimate children were kept off birth registers according to the *lex Papia Poppaea*.\(^{123}\) Betzig theorised that the ancient Romans minimized the number of their heirs so that they may have as many illegitimate children as they pleased. That is, in Betzig’s view, people “married monogamously so they could mate polygonously.”\(^{124}\) Augustus’ moral reforms may have succeeded in promoting the family but it seems they not only failed to address the large number of illegitimate children within the ancient Roman society but also inadvertently encouraged their growth in number in the promotion of monogamy.

Tertullian himself acknowledges the pervasive idea of ‘family’, as promoted by the Julian laws:

> What if a man thinks on posterity, with thoughts like the eyes of Lot’s wife; so that a man is to make the fact that from his former marriage he has had no children a reason

\(^{120}\) Laura Betzig, "Roman Monogamy," *Ethology and Sociobiology* 13, no. 5 (1992): 352.

\(^{121}\) Cf. Betzig and Dixon on details of benefits for the married with children and punishment for the unmarried and childless in ibid., 356; Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 72.

\(^{122}\) Betzig, "Roman Monogamy": 356.

\(^{123}\) *Digest 27 1 2 2-3, 50 5 2 5*, in ibid., 352.

\(^{124}\) ibid.
for repeating marriage? A Christian, forsooth, will seek heirs, disinherited as he is from the entire world! He has ‘brethren;’ he has the church as his mother. The case is different if men believe that, at the bar of Christ as well [as of Rome], action is taken on the principle of the Julian laws; and imagine that the unmarried and childless cannot receive their portion in full, in accordance with the testament of God.  

We see here that by naming the Church a mother, Tertullian gives the Christian a family group and consequently recognition and status. Just as childless individuals and those without family are inserted into family or family-like groups and gained advantages otherwise cut off from them, so does the Christian who doubts whether his membership in a Church is worth the loss of inheritance, status, freedom, and advantages provided by the State.

Tertullian’s *De Orat* 2.6 is an example of the ‘Mother’ necessarily paired with the family and its members:

Nor is even our mother the Church passed by, if, that is, in the Father and the Son is recognised the mother, from whom arises the name both of Father and of Son. In one general term, then, or word, we both honour God, together with His own, and are mindful of the precept, and set a mark on such as have forgotten their Father.

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126 George, "Family Imagery and Family Values," 51-52. Cf. also footnote 119 above on “burial clubs”.

The ancient Roman mother was idealized as the disciplinarian and custodian of traditional culture, morality and virtue for the Roman Empire; it is because of virtuous mothers that the Roman Empire has virtuous sons and daughters. Literature of the time evidenced praise for virtuous mothers preventing the empire’s famous sons from taking disastrous courses of actions:

Atia supervised the young Octavian’s social life (Nicolaus 6, 10) and Agricola’s mother (Tac. Agric. 4), like Nero’s (Suet. Nero 52), kept her son from an excessive interest in philosophy.

A Roman mother was also expected to support the political aspirations of her son and in turn the son showed his appreciation. Indeed, it was possible she sought ambitions through him rather than her husband and she could even be accused of excessive maternal ambition. But even without the son’s intentions towards the public life, he kept a close connection with his mother and father--either by living with them or in the case of a widowed, remarried or divorced mother visited her regularly since she was entitled to it. A child’s connection to the mother is so highly recognized that when a woman engages in a union not recognised by Roman law, the children generally take their status from their mother.

The paterfamilia, the father, was idealized as having the one spouse at his side; the materfamilia, promoted especially by Emperor Augustus, in

128 Dixon, The Roman Mother, 131.
129 ibid., 2, 121.
130 ibid., 2.
131 ibid., 175.
132 As Cicero suggested: “…that he should live with his own family, especially with his father—for in my own judgement family feeling is the basis of all the virtues…” Latin: “…ut vivat cum suis, primum cum parente—nam meo iudicio pietas fundamentum est omnium virtutum…” In ibid., 169.
133 ibid.
134 ibid., 18.
the figure of the *univira*—faithfully married to one man only, even in death.  

To be a mother was to be a wife and vice versa. Rachel Meyers says that women were not honoured apart from “being someone’s wife, mother or daughter.” She states that such family cohesion was sometimes expressed to the extent where female portraiture took on some of the physiognomy of her husband. For example, Faustina the Younger is portrayed with Emperor Marcus Aurelius’ “prominent brow” and “pronounced almond-shaped eyes.”

When Tertullian says “in the Son and the Father the Mother is recognized, since upon her the terms, ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ depend for their meaning” (*De Orat.* 2.6), it is possible Tertullian tapped into the understood familial associations arising from the naming of either mother, son, or father: the mother as one who stands behind the virtuous son or closely connected with him (particularly in adulthood) and the *univira*-wife who stands behind the *paterfamilia*-spouse. An example of this is seen in *De Bap* 20.5 where the family image is presented. The mother does not appear on her own but with the father, brothers, and newborn, the newly baptized. It is a legitimate family with a legitimate mother alongside the father, where legitimate children are born and have a right to an inheritance (*peculium*).

For an explanation of the *univira*, see Dixon in ibid., 22. Whilst she was the ideal promoted by Augustus, the reality occasionally showed otherwise. Rhiannon Ash points out that the emperor’s own daughter Julia usurps her own father’s laws without also breaking it. From Macrobius it is recorded that Julia’s unnamed friend is surprised that Julia’s children look like their father, Agrippa, when she is notorious for her adultery (*Saturnalia* 2.5.9). Julia “wittily” replies to this friend that she ‘never takes on board a passenger unless the ship is full’, meaning she only had affairs when she was pregnant. Rhiannon Ash, "Women in Imperial Roman Literature " in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, ed. Sharon L. James(Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 451.


ibid.
Betzig explains that although it was common in ancient Rome to beget as many children as one would like, “only legitimate children borne to a legitimate wife could come into [a man’s] estate.” Betzig summarises well the significance of marriage and the difference between a birth mother (births illegitimate children) and a matron (births legitimate children): “In the Roman empire, as in other empires, mating made children, marriage made heirs.” Similarly, Mother Church is accompanied by ‘brethren’, her children, in Ad Mart. 1.1.

De Praes 42.9-10 shows how ‘mother’ is associated with ‘belonging’ and its antitheses, an existence in exile:

Again, all heresies that have been thoroughly investigated are discovered to be of differing opinions in many things even among their own leaders. For the most part, they do not have churches—outcasts without a mother, home, or faith—exiles roving like hissing serpents.

The juxtaposition of ‘without mother’ (sine matre), ‘without home’ (sine sede), ‘faithless’ (orbi fide = having the faith of the world), and an ‘exile’ (extorres), aligns with the picture of one repudiated—as an individual without family is looked down upon (according to Augustus’ Julian laws). As discussed above, to be outside of a family is to not only lose inheritance but also to have no status or moral respectability, to be ultimately exiled by society.

Peper provides an explanation for this inside-outside rhetoric. He states that for Tertullian, unity of the Church was paramount and this was

139 Betzig, "Roman Monogamy": 364.
140 ibid.
ensured through two elements: 1) intellectual discipline—“doctrinal consensus through the *regula fidei*”, where true belief is distinguished from false and 2) a practical discipline “a shared discipline preserving holiness in the Church”\textsuperscript{142} and baptism was that key ritual which preserved holiness in the Church since it also required rejection of the world and the devil which in Tertullian’s view led only to idolatry and death.\textsuperscript{143} For Tertullian, if a person engaged in heresy, it is because he or she explored the faith outside of the *regula fidei*.\textsuperscript{144} As well, those who engaged in “murder, idolatry, fraud, apostasy, blasphemy…adultery and fornication”\textsuperscript{145} committed unforgivable sins (“*quae ueniam non capiant*”)\textsuperscript{146} and were to be excluded. As Tertullian said “Dogs, sorcerers, fornicators, murderers, out!”\textsuperscript{147} Thus, for Tertullian, heretics are “motherless, houseless, and creedless” (“*sine matre, sine sede, orbi fide*”).\textsuperscript{148} This perspective is supported by the cultural reality that to have no mother was to belong to no family, no household, and therefore to have no chance of inheritance, no moral standing, no support from society.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{142} ibid., 46.
\item \textsuperscript{143} ibid., 50.
\item \textsuperscript{144} ibid., 146-147. Cf. also “The rule of faith” in, Osborn, *Tertullian*, 37-39.
\item \textsuperscript{146} *De Pud.* 19.25 in CCSLII.1323.113.
\item \textsuperscript{148} *De Praes Haer* 42.10 in ibid. Tertullian Vol II, ANCL Vol XV, p.51. Latin from CCSL 1:222.22-23.
\item \textsuperscript{149} There was the patron-client system or more correctly the patron-protégé and advocate-client relationships in Ancient Roman society, which without one’s involvement would have made it very difficult for him or her to engage in the public life and move forward in one’s career. The patron served as a general mentor to the protégé, helping the protégé advance in his career financially and as advocate. The protégé would enhance the patron’s status and promise to protect his patron’s family and reputation after the patron’s death. Similarly, the advocate engaged in a relationship of mutual benefit with his client. Rather than charge a fee for his services, the *patronus* would depend on his
\end{itemize}
c) One Who Supercedes All Other Mothers

In *De Carne* 7.13 and *De Monog* 7.8-9, there is evidence of a bias towards the Christian family over the Jewish family:

*De Carne* 7.13: “...In the abjured mother there is a figure of the synagogue, as well as of the Jews in the unbelieving brethren. In their person Israel remained outside, whilst the new disciples who kept close to to Christ within, hearing and believing, represented the Church, which He called mother in a preferable sense and a worthier brotherhood, with the repudiation of the carnal relationship. It was just in the same sense, indeed, that He also replied to that exclamation [of a certain woman], not denying His mother’s ‘womb and paps,’ but designating those as more ‘blessed who hear the word of God.’”

*De Monog* 7.8-9: “For the reason why He recalls that young man who was hastening to his father’s obsequies, is that He may show that we are called priests by Him; [priests] whom the Law used to forbid to be present at the sepulture of parents: ‘Over every dead soul,’ it says, ‘the priest shall not enter, and over his own father and over his own mother he shall not be contaminated.’ ‘Does it follow that we too are bound to observe this prohibition?’ No, of course. For our one Father, God, lives, and our mother, the Church; and neither are we dead who live to God, nor do we bury our dead, in as much as they too are living in Christ. At all events, priests we are called by Christ; debtors to monogamy, in accordance with the pristine Law of God.”

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In *De Carne* 7.13, the Church is the preferable mother (*quam potiorem matrem*) with the worthier children (*digniorem fraternitatem*), aligning the image of the ‘abjured mother’ with the ‘Synagogue’ (*synagogae in matre abiuncta*). Similarly, *De Monog* 7.8-9 speaks of the dead mother to be buried (*mortuos sepelimus*) according to Jewish law who is compared to the Living Mother, the Church (*mater ecclesia et neque mortui sumus*). This living Mother is again recalled in *De Anima* 43.10 where Eve is named figure of the Church rather than Mary. Yet Mary will usurp Eve and other biblical mothers by the time of Ambrose as will be discussed in Chapter IV.

But it is at *Ad Marc* 5.4.8 in which Tertullian discusses in greater length the contrast between the children of the Jewish Mother, the Synagogue, and the Christian Mother, the Holy Church:

But as, in the case of thieves, something of the stolen goods is apt to drop by the way, as a clue to their detection; so, as it seems to me, it has happened to Marcion: the last mention of Abraham’s name he has left untouched [in the epistle], although no passage required his erasure more than this, even in his partial alteration of the text. ‘For [it is written] that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman; but he who was of the bond maid was born after the flesh, but he of the free woman was by promise: which things are allegorized’ (that is to say, they presaged something besides [the literal history]); ‘for these are the two covenants,’ or the two exhibitions [of the divine plans], as we have found the word interpreted, ‘the one from the Mount Sinai,’ in relation to the synagogue of the Jews, according to the law, ‘which gendereth to bondage’—‘the other gendereth’ [to liberty, being raised] above all principality, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come, ‘which is the mother of us all,’ in which we have the promise of [Christ’s] holy church; by reason of which he adds in conclusion: ‘So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond woman, but of the free.’ In this passage he has undoubtedly shown that Christianity had a noble birth, being sprung, as the mystery of the allegory indicates, from that son of Abraham who was born of

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the free woman; whereas from the son of the bond maid came the legal bondage of Judaism.\textsuperscript{153}

Here Tertullian, takes from tradition the contrast between the free children of the Church and the children of the bond woman. As Litfin says: “[His] interpretation of Galatians 4 stands within a well-established Christian tradition which understands the text to describe the investiture of the hopes of Israel into the Church.”\textsuperscript{154} Litfin suggests the tradition goes back to early second century in the “so-called” second epistle of Clement where the author thusly interprets Isaiah 54:1 (which Paul quotes in Gal 4) and moreover, that Tertullian’s predecessors concentrated on the Isaian passage rather than the contrast between Hagar and Sarah.\textsuperscript{155} They highlighted that “the end of the Law’s reign came about within God’s sovereign plan.”\textsuperscript{156} Tertullian affirmed this but also for the first time explicitly aligned the image of Hagar with the synagogue (that which had no future) and Sarah with the Church (“one who carried forward the promises of God”).\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{153} “Tertullianus Against Marcion”, in ibid. ANCL Vol VII, pp.386-87. Latin: “Sed ut furibus solet aliquid excidere de praeda in indicium, ita credoet Marcionem nouissimam Abrahae mentionem dereliquisse, nulla magis auferenda, etsi ex parte convertit. Si enim Abraham duos liberos habuit, unum ex ancilla et alium ex libera, sed qui ex ancilla carnaliter natus est, qui uero ex libera per repromissionem, —quae sunt allegorica (id est aliud portendentia); haec sunt enim duo testamenta (siue ‘duae ostensiones’, sicut inuenimus interpretatum): unum a monte Sina in synagogam Judaearum secundum legem generans in seruititem , alium super omnem principatum generans uim dominationem et omne nomen quod nominatur, non tantum in hoc aeuo sed et in futuro, in quam repromisimus sanctam ecclesiam, quae est mater nostra—ideoque adicit: propter quod, fratres, nonsumus ancillae filii, sed liberae, utique manifestauit et Christianismi generositatem in filio Abrahae ex libera nato allegoriae habere sacramentum, sicut et Judaismi seuittitem legalem in filio ancillae, atque ita eius dei esse utramque dispositionem, apud quem inuenimus utriusque dispositionis deliniationem.” CCSL 1:673.10-29.

\textsuperscript{154} Bryan Mark Litfin, “Tertullian's Adversus Marcionem: A Case Study in "Regular Hermeneutics"” (University of Virginia, 2002), 156.

\textsuperscript{155} ibid., 156-158.

\textsuperscript{156} ibid., 158.

\textsuperscript{157} ibid., 156-160.
Tertullian was, in Dunn’s opinion, surprised that Marcion had utilised the Galatian passage with its two covenants since Marcion had rejected the Hebrew Scriptures. For Marcion, there were two gods: a “bad creator” tied to the Old Testament and the “good creator” tied to the New. He took the extreme interpretation of “the Pauline notion of new law” by rejecting the Old Testament altogether. In response, Tertullian understood his task as necessarily validating the Hebrew Scriptures but not Judaism. For Tertullian, the Galatians passage utilised by Marcion not only mentions the two covenants but also “demonstrated that it was one and the same God who created both peoples.” This contrasted Marcion’s two deities theory and his rejection of the Hebrew Scriptures.

In the passage above, Tertullian reclaims the Galatians passage from Marcion, overthrows his two-deities theory, and affirms the Hebrew scriptures’ link to the New Testament but at the same time invalidates Judaism. Why the need to invalidate the Jewish faith? Dunn states that Paul wrote as a “Christianized Jew” whilst Tertullian, as a “converted pagan”. Many of the first generation Christians were preoccupied with the question of the practice of the “Jews within Christianity or Christianity within Judaism”: for example should Gentiles who wished to follow Jesus need be circumcised to be considered also a Jew? (Acts 15:1-29). Paul replied that there were no distinctions between Jews or Gentiles (Acts 15:9).  

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159 ibid., 88. In book three of Ad. Marc. he showed the link between the Old and New Testaments by seeking to present the Christ of the New Testament as the one expected through prophecy in the Old. In ibid., 89.
160 ibid., 90.
161 ibid., 80. That is why Dunn also says Tertullian uses Pauline passages without consideration of their historical context. Ibid.
162 ibid., 79.
Meanwhile, in Carthage, during the Severan dynasty (end of second century/ beginning third century), as Judaism became more distinct from Christianity over time, the place of Jews in God’s plan of salvation remained but the question turned to the possibility of two religions co-existing, generally resulting in a denial of an “ongoing legitimacy” of Judaism;\(^{163}\) for the early Church question of the co-existence of two faiths (born a Jew but wanting to become a Christian) is no longer an issue for North African Christians. Therefore, the Jews clearly demarcated themselves from the Christians. It is to this question of co-existence of the two religions that Tertullian frequented and utilised Paul’s writings, such as the letters to the Galatians, to produce a large number of literary output.\(^{164}\) The contrasting of the maternal images of the Church and Synagogue served to legitimate the Old Testament but also invalidate Judaism. The preferable mother birthed Christianity. She is “free” from “the legal bondage of Judaism”.

Furthermore, on the invalidation of Judaism, Tertullian dedicates a whole document, *Adversus Iudaeos*, and within it claims that the Gentiles are now admitted into God’s favour whilst the Jews are excluded.\(^{165}\) For Tertullian, it was the Jews’ infidelity that brought their own exclusion from God.\(^{166}\) Dunn states that this was an advantageous claim for Tertullian as Christianity could be seen to be an ancient religion, respectable in the eyes of Romans, and therefore requiring greater pagan tolerance.\(^{167}\) For this very

\(^{163}\) ibid., 80.

\(^{164}\) ibid.


\(^{166}\) Dunn, ”Tertullian”. Location 921, Kindle.

\(^{167}\) ibid.
reason, Tertullian rejects Marcion’s disregard of the Judaic origins of Christianity.\(^{168}\)

Such a claim would certainly align with Peper’s thesis that hostility towards the Christians resulted from their growth in numbers\(^ {169}\) and therefore provides an explanation as to why Tertullian sought to portray Christianity’s supercession over Judaism. Christianity was not only an ancient religion commanding respect but also one that could not be accused of non-participation in the Roman requirement of the worshipping of gods even if it was only one God.

There are many other schools of thought regarding the purpose of Tertullian’s anti-Jewish polemic.\(^ {170}\) The first school theorises there was a competition between the two religions, especially for converts, such that the writing was directed at Jews. The second school suggests that Tertullian created them as a symbolic construct from scripture to assist the self-definition of Christianity. The third combine the two schools, stating that the reality of the Jew competing with the Christian for converts in the Roman empire and the symbolic Jew in Scripture were equivalent images for Tertullian.\(^ {171}\)

Whether Tertullian was dealing with the Jews of Carthage or the symbolic abjured Jews of scripture, it is intriguing to find that he uses the image of Mother-Church superceding over Mother-Synagogue. He could have used ‘ark’ or ‘body’ to represent the Church, as Rankin shows

\(^{168}\) ibid.

\(^{169}\) Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 41-42.

\(^{170}\) Dunn, through Efroymson, points out that Tertullian utilizes ‘Jewishness’ to symbolize anything that was wrong. Dunn, “Tertullian”. Location 924, Kindle.

\(^{171}\) ibid. Location 943, Kindle.
Tertullian does use other ecclesiological images. But the metaphor works as part of a system of associated familial and maternal metaphors used in his writings: mother-birth-baptism (De Bapt 5.20), mother-breastfeeding-spiritual nourishment (Ad Mart 1.1), mother-father-son (De Orat 2.6), or just mother-father (De Monog 7.8-9.0). Moreover, Tertullian and his scripture references utilized women-mothers to represent Gentile and Jewish communities. I would suggest that added to these advantages is the importance of establishing matrilineality and therefore establishing where one belongs, what creed he or she professes (“Motherless, houseless, creedless, outcasts, they wander about in their own essential worthlessness.” Adv Haer 42.10), and what inheritance is available (“A Christian, forsooth, will seek heirs, disinherited as he is from the entire world! He has ‘brethren;’ he has the church as his mother.” De Monog 16.4). This importance is not only present in the Roman culture but also in the sense of Jewish matrilineality where Jewishness is passed on through the mother. The metaphor at work at many levels (inheritance through the mother as a value in Roman and Jewish culture) seeks to guarantee reception of Tertullian’s message for the Roman-Carthaginian.

172 Rankin, Tertullian and the Church, 65-90.
175 The Mishnah (Kiddushin 3:12) says that to be a Jew one must either be a child of a Jewish mother or a convert to Judaism. This law originated in the Talmud (Kiddushin 68b).
Chapter Conclusion

In Tertullian, one finds the first explicit use of Mother Church as metaphor. In contrast to Irenaeus’ use of maternal ecclesial imagery to refer to the members of the Church, Tertullian for the first time personifies the Church as an entity distinct from its children. He also is the first to pair Mother Church with Father God, paralleling the image of the ancient Roman materfamilia by the side of her spouse, the paterfamilia. With this familial image, Tertullian attached to the Church highly regarded familial values such as inheritance and belonging (eg. De Monog 16.4 and De Praes Haer 42.9-10). These concepts communicated a person’s ability to engage in public life and move forward in one’s career. Their importance extended even to one’s death where belonging ensured appropriate obsequies were exercised.

This chapter has argued that whilst the Mother Church image had been part of the North African Catholic tradition, and its image grounded in the scriptural text of Galatians 4:26, Tertullian applies a form of rejection-reappropriation method in the imaging of the ecclesial mother. Tertullian rejects (in fact, detests) the Roman matrona (De Cul. Fem. 1.2.2) but upholds a Roman materfamilia (De Bapt. 20.5, Ad Mart 1.1) role for the Church, enabling his Roman-Cartheginian audience to accept and relate with such an ecclesial mother. Tertullian names the Church a spouse (De Monog 5.6-7), virgin (De Pud. 1.8-9), and holy (Adv Marc 5.4.8) but does not connect these characteristics or titles with the motherhood of the Church (except the link he makes between holiness and motherhood in Adv Marc 5.4.8 to reclaim Gal 4: 26 from Marcion).
Tertullian’s maternal ecclesial metaphor was utilized in an environment of hostility; Christianity’s exclusivity was incongruous with Carthage’s Roman cultural tolerance for multi-religiosity. As well, Christianity’s refusal to engage in pagan practice was anti-juridic-like and thus a threat to Roman order. Such a context for Mother Church led it to be presented as uncompromising (*De Praes Haer* 42.9-10). Further, the metaphor was also utilized at a time when the early Church question of the co-existence of two faiths (born a Jew but wanting to become a Christian) is no longer an issue for North African Christians as by the Severan dynasty period the Jews clearly demarcated themselves from the Christians. Tertullian has a negative attitude towards Mother Synagogue, which he presents as having been superseded by Mother Church (the free woman of Galatians 4:26). This “us and them” ecclesiological mentality was further exacerbated by conflict experienced within the Church. Heresies such as Gnosticisms and Marcionism threatened ecclesial unity. It also did not help that Tertullian’s congregation was found wanting by their willingness to compromise their faith. For Tertullian, Church unity was paramount and anyone who explored outside the intellectual and practical disciplines of the Church were simply deemed heretics, outsiders, and unforgivable.

Tertullian’s development of the maternal ecclesial metaphor creates a new vision of what the Church is and its relationship with God and it’s members. According to Soskice’s definition, “a metaphor is established as soon as it is clear that one thing is being spoken in terms that are suggestive of another and can be extended, that is, until the length of our speaking ‘of one thing in terms suggestive of another’ makes us forget the ‘thing’ of
which we speak.”\textsuperscript{176} Whilst Tertullian continued the tradition of imaging the Church as birthing and breastfeeding, he re-envisioned and clarified its role and essence through such developments as his personification of Mother Church as a distinct entity from its members as well as his association of Mother Church with Father God. This was not a case of simply presenting “an old word new tricks—of applying an old label in a new way.”\textsuperscript{177} In fact, it was Tertullian who finally crystallised the pre-existing imagery to first come up with the actual term “\textit{Mater Ecclesia}” that would become a standard image for the Church to the extent that it would become a title (and even a cliché) as “holy Mother Church” in which the meaning is so focused on the referent that the maternal imagery is almost completely ignored.

Tertullian’s Mother Church is clearly a living metaphor according to Soskice’s three criterions. First, there would have been a great tension in the first juxtaposition of Mother Church with Father God—this is a very high and exalted vision of Church that would have shocked and challenged those who first heard it. In fact, this metaphor was taken to its logical conclusion by Tertullian’s successor Cyprian who would say that without the Church as Mother you cannot have God as Father. Rather than a community of disciples, sharing faith and supporting one another, the Church now becomes an entity in its own right. Second, there is no other phrase that could have had the same associations and same impact as Mother Church; it could not be easily replaced. What else could be partnered in such an intimate way with Father God? Tertullian’s maternal Church did not merely birth new members; it essentially communicated that the only way of salvation was through baptism in the Catholic Church as the Mother Church.

\textsuperscript{176} Soskice, \textit{Metaphor and Religious Language}, 23.

\textsuperscript{177} ibid., 64.
(the *materfamilia*) which was inseperably bound to Father God (*paterfamilia*). Tertulian’s maternal metaphor created a new ecclesial vision and that which could not be achieved by the use of another metaphor. The power of this image can be seen in how it incorporates aspects of the surrounding culture as well as can be further extended by them. One example already mentioned is Tertullian’s presentation of Mother Church as the Roman *materfamilia*. Another example is Tertullian’s adaptation for baptism of the ancient Roman practice of feeding milk and honey to infants. This leads to the third criteria, the relationship to models that bring up a web of implications. By this imaging, the network of associations and implications tied to the idea of the Roman family made the maternal ecclesial metaphor very much alive for Tertullian’s audience. Indeed, Tertullian’s striking claims that there could be no life without the mother would have been taken seriously by his contemporaries due to the ancient Roman understanding of the crucial importance of belonging to a family. Because of the community’s collective experience of being mothered by the Church (through baptism and post-baptism), because of the close relation of Tertullian’s maternal metaphor to the Roman *materfamilia* model, and because no other metaphor could express the necessity of Mother Church, Tertullian’s maternal ecclesial metaphor was not only explanatory but also very much alive for the Roman-Carthaginian community.
CHAPTER III: CYPRIAN
FROM THE MATERFAMILIA TO THE MATRONA

Cyprian’s utilisation of Mater Ecclesia or just Mater, ¹ is characterised by his emphasis on the demarcation between those inside and outside the Church, in continuation of the tradition set by his predecessor, Tertullian, but seemingly more intensively as he deals with a community beset with persecution initially under the Decian decree (250 CE).² The idea of the maternal ecclesial metaphor as tool for demarcation between outsiders and insiders is supported by Cyprian’s dictum: “Habere iam non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem” (“You cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother”), where those who have turned their back from the Church are described as “alienus est, profanus est, hostis est” (“an alien, a worldling, an enemy”).³ This chapter will go on to examine Cyprian’s further development and usage of the Mother Church metaphor and argue that his imagery was influenced by the contextual Roman culture and in particular the Imperial propaganda that was using the image of the fecund and faithful matrona to promote peace and stability within the unsettled Empire. It will be argued that rather than simply rejecting this pagan influence, Cyprian appropriates the culturally resonant image of the Mother in order to make a similar plea for Christian unity in his context of persecution and divisive heresy.

¹ Plumpe says by this time Mother Church was sometimes simply referred to as the “Mother”. In Plumpe, Mater Ecclesia, 81.
² Peper says Cyprian engages the maternal ecclesial phrase in a more exclusionary role. In Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 63.
³ De Unit 6 in Cyprian, ”The Lapsed (ACW)”, Bevenot, 48-49. Full text of De Unit 6 in Latin in CCSL 3:253.143-254.162.
Marcel Poorthuis’ theory that the mother metaphor was also applied to attend to Cyprian’s Christian-Jewish audience will also be explored, taking into account what resonances and implications appear in the naming of the Church community as a Mother. What begins to emerge here then is the development of more complex images of Mother Church. She will no longer be simply just a mother but will be described by Cyprian as “mother-sister-bride” or “mother-bride”. Despite the introduction of these more complicated images, this chapter will argue that the formidable maternal figure represented by the ancient Roman matrona will be the more dominant image projected of the Mother Church. The chapter begins with Cyprian’s background, significance and rhetorical methods before exploring the Mother Church texts and contexts.

Background & Significance

Caecilius Cyprianus Thascius (200-258 CE), also known as St Cyprian, became bishop of Carthage in 248 or 249 CE, despite his young age, and against the opinion of five prominent Carthaginian leaders, one of who was Fortunatus, later to be condemned by the council of 251 CE as part of Felicissimus’ schismatic laxist group.4 From 250 to 251 CE, during persecutions under the Decian religious decree to promote imperial unity, Cyprian escaped to the hills, writing letters to his community but leaving them vulnerable to chaos without the physical presence of their leader.5 On his return, when the persecutions ceased, he faced the clergy and confessors

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4 Frend, A New Eusebius, 99; Allen Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage (Cambridge/ New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12.

5 J. Patout Burns, Cyprian the Bishop, Routledge Early Church Monographs (London/ New York: Routledge, 2002), 2. For evidence of Cyprian’s withdrawal from Carthage, see Eps.7.1, 14.1.2-2.1, and 43.4.2. In Ep.7.1 Cyprian gives reason for his withdrawal, believing that his retreat was the best way to create peace in the community. Further, he extends the definition of martyrdom to include flight and exile as one of its forms (Ep.58.4.2), providing justification for his own flight from Carthage.
who undertook actions that would cause them and others to acts of apostasy and schism from the Church.

The Christian Carthaginian community, pre-Decian period, voluntarily separated itself in religious practice from the surrounding culture, for example, avoiding pagan religious oaths during business transactions, and would present as “a fairly tight bonded group.” Yet they continued to engage in “routine interactions” with the dominant culture, relying on the Roman economy for their livelihood, and applied the Roman class system of distinguishing between the honestiores and humiliores (the honoured versus the lowly) to what should have been a community of equals, posing various points of conflict for the community. These and other internal ecclesial disputes left the community vulnerable by the time of Decian’s decree, which by then forced the Christians to choose between two societies, ecclesial or Roman, and consequently their two behaviour patterns and reward systems.

Cyprian would utilize the maternal ecclesial metaphor to remove any doubt in the mind of the Carthaginian Christians what their belief and practice should be. Part of that utilization was not only about calling Carthaginian Christians to unite within the Church, their Mother, but also to embody that mothering in himself. Plumpe would describe Cyprian’s engagement with his community as:

animated with the extremely active and warm-hearted concern of a great pastor among a flock identified by the Christianorum novum nomen, people who were not at all certain, as it proved, whether they should live by abjuring that name or die by the sword professing it; and when the arm of bloody persecution was momentarily stayed, these

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6 ibid., 13.
7 Plumpe, Mater Ecclesia, 81; ibid.
people looked to him for his best spiritual antitoxins against the virus of pestilence and schism.  

Plumpe would even go so far as to describe Cyprian’s approach as representing the fatherhood of God and motherhood of the Church through his actions and writing, a move he claims is unsurpassed by any other Patristic writer. Cyprian was certainly known for his tireless dedication to his community even if at times exercised from afar (that is, whilst in hiding during the Decian persecution and whilst banished awaiting execution during the Valerian persecution). G.W. Clarke describes Cyprian as “a man, who, whatever else, cared, whilst upholding that supremely Roman virtue of pietas, a familial loyalty towards God, his Father and his Mother, the Church, as well as towards the sons entrusted to his tutelage.” Thus Cyprian’s devotion was directed not just to his diocesan community but also to his Father God and Mother Church.

Peper shows that Cyprian’s location of the Mother Church evolved from being situated in the entire community, to focusing on himself as the bishop, and finally to within the college of bishops, representing their communities, united in belief and practice. This theory explained the need to use ‘mother’ as metaphor for unity and demarcation but not why the particular image ‘mother’ was adopted, except for the reason that it was a given that the Church was called a mother. Peper’s theory that at some stage Cyprian saw the Mother Church located in the seat of the bishop, supports

8 ibid.
9 ibid.
Plumpe’s suggestion that Cyprian as bishop even spoke as Mother Church herself. Cyprian utilized this as one of his central ecclesial metaphors to communicate his understanding of Church in the thirty plus times he applied the phrase over his years as bishop.13

Cyprian was criticised on two opposite fronts: by the laxists on one side, for his harshness in demanding public penance for the lapsi—the lapsed, those who had given up their faith by claiming to sacrifice to the gods of the Roman state whether they physically did so or not; and by the rigorists on the other, for allowing the lapsi to return to communion with the Church at all. Criticism of him would also come from the Bishop of Rome, Stephen (254-257 CE), successor to Cornelius (251-253). Cyprian faced many challenges throughout his bishopric. His community experienced intermittent persecutions under the Emperors Decian, Valerian and Gallienus. He was exiled to Curubis in August 257 CE. His end came during the Valerian persecutions, where he was beheaded near Carthage, on September 14, 258 CE.

Cyprian’s Rhetorical Method

Allen Brent sees Cyprian’s Roman pagan upbringing as highly influential in his role as bishop.14 In his view, whilst Cyprian adamantly detested his pagan past, he was inevitably influenced by it and expressed it in his ordering of Church structure. Similarly Vincent Hunink says that whilst Cyprian wished to leave the world, he was very much a “man of the

13 ibid., 64.
14 Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 23-25. Moreover, Brent presents Cyprian as applying Roman jurisprudence onto the Church, destroying the basis for the Church of Martyrs for the benefit of gaining absolute episcopal control and a hoped for but failed unity in the Church. In ibid., 250-289.
Brent points out that “[o]ur human consciousness is inevitably bound and conditioned by our existence in historical space and time”, using Wittgenstein to reiterate his point: “a moral rebel arises within a ‘form of life’”. Brent’s proposal that Cyprian’s Roman cultural formation was applied in his ordering of the Carthaginian Church supports the thought of many authors (Rankin, Peper, Evers, and Hunink) who propose that Cyprian’s ecclesiological outlook was not left unaffected by his Roman cultural surroundings despite his rejection of it.

In contrast, Peter Hinchliff states that Roman culture had no appeal to Cyprian and he did not utilize any part of it in his rhetoric. However, the evidence from Hinchliff’s own work indicates otherwise. He states that Cyprian had a pagan-Roman mindset. He also says that “Cyprian hankered after a dignified, moral Roman past and that he became a Christian, at least in part, in revulsion against the degradation of Roman society. He longed for the kind of world that there had once been.”

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16 Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 26.


18 At the same time, Brent falls short of explaining Cyprian’s particular use of mater ecclesia for the Church when he investigates the prevalence of mother-goddess images in the Roman city of Carthage. Brent alludes only to its Roman pagan origins on a wall panel of the Ara Pacis and the altar of the Gens Augusta but does not continue the discussion. In Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 31-40.

19 Hinchliff, Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church, 27.

20 ibid., 33. Clarke similarly points to Cyprian as a product of his time and environment, as “a Christian who lives in the third century, an age of increasing superstition generally and of growing fondness for the occult…Despite his skill and drive as a practical administrator, Cyprian appears to act, strangely, but on the testimony of his own words, not infrequently at the behest and monition of visions, divine signs, and
Typical of the African mindset at the time, Cyprian sees religion as “hard, sacrificial, and costly”. But with the same rhetorical approach as Tertullian (whom Cyprian called ‘the master’), Cyprian does not present any middle ground when he sought to convince Christians to stay within the boundaries of Mother Church. He presents only a clear-cut and mutually exclusive choice. Where the Mother Church is utilized in his writings, she is often someone to be forsaken/abandoned (“deserere” in Ep.44.3.2), rejected/refused (“recusavit” in Ep.45.1.2), denied (“negauererunt” in De Lap 9) and separated from as children (“a matre filios segregate” in De Unit.19), OR whom one returns to (“reuertamini” in Ep.46.1.3; “reuertantur” in Ep.47.1.1; “redeant” in Ep.71.2.2; “reuertentes” in De Lap 2), remains with (“remanerent” in Ep.41.2.1), cleave to (“tenerent” in Ep.48.3.1), make peace with (“pacem” in Eps.15.2.2; 16.3.2; 43.6.2) or be gathered, in her bosom (“in sinum matris recollegi” in Ep.16.4.2; “matris sinum atque conplexum” in Ep.45.1.2).

Cyprian does not make these exhortations to come to the Mother or remain with her as authoritarian commands. Rather, he wishes to affectionately persuade his audience using both reason and emotional appeals:

For my part I hope, dearest brethren, and I urge and press it upon you, that, if possible, not one of the brethren should perish, but that our Mother should have the happiness of clasping to her bosom all our people in one like-minded body…Nothing that is separated from the source\textsuperscript{22} [\textit{quicquid dreams…”} In “Introduction”, Trans. and annotated by G. W. Clarke, Cyprian, "Letters (ACW)”, Clarke, 20.

\textsuperscript{21} Hinchliff, \textit{Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church}, 41.

\textsuperscript{22} ACW translates \textit{matrice} as “parent stock” but I have replaced it with the more appropriate word “source” (especially in regard to this study).
a matrice discesserit] can ever live or breathe apart; all hope of its salvation is lost.\(^{23}\)

In speaking to ecclesiastical virgins, he demonstrates again a desire to convince them with caring arguments:

To these I speak these I exhort with affection rather than with power; not that I would claim, last and least, and very conscious of my lowliness as I am, any right to censure, but because, being unceasingly careful even to sollicitude, I fear more from the onset of Satan.\(^{24}\)

Rankin says Juvenal described Africa as “the nurse of pleaders [that is advocates], as a place, unlike Rome, where one could still make a living through oratory.”\(^{25}\) Moreover, in the epistles in which ‘Mother Church’ is utilised, Clarke often describes the tone as measured and even anxious, keen to win its audience and not offend, but at the same time intent on clarifying Cyprian’s position as bishop.\(^{26}\) Burns explains the significance of this measured rhetorical approach:

…to achieve the success that they did, Cyprian’s exhortations had to reflect the actual conditions in the community. Fabrications, blatant lies or outrageous interpretations of events would have discredited Cyprian and failed to win the support of the clergy and laity who were in danger.\(^{27}\)


One wonders if Cyprian sought a kind of word play in his use of “matrice” – possibly helping his audience’s disassociation or separation with the “Mother” (Church) as unthinkable.


\(^{25}\) Rankin, From Clement to Origen, 56.


\(^{27}\) Burns, Cyprian the Bishop, 12.
The appeals are not only present in the epistles, Rankin shows Cyprian’s rhetorical method in *De Unitate*: In chapter 1, Cyrian uses the classic *exordium* where “Cyprian seeks the goodwill of his readers”.²⁸ In chapters 2-3 he uses a *narratio*²⁹; In 4, a *praemunitio*³⁰ and chapters 5 to 20, a *probatio*³¹; From chapters 21 to 24, a *peroratio*³² is used where Cyprian “makes a series of emotional pleas to the ‘virgins’ to hold fast to the unity of the church.”³³ The Mother Church passages observed in this section, *De Unitate* 5 and 6, fall within the context of a *probatio* that utilizes *pathos*, rational argument used alongside an emotional appeal. Similarly Rankin says *De Lapsis* evidences the use of emotional appeal on its audience within the *narratio* of chapter 4 and the *peroratio* of chapters 32 to 36. The first three chapters present an *exordium*, and chapters 5 to 26, a *probatio*. The Mother Church texts in *De Lapsis*, chapters 2 and 9, fall within the category of a *probatio*, a proof or demonstration.

**Mother Church Texts and Contexts**

Within Cyprian’s extensive written corpus, including over 81 epistles, only 3 books and 15 letters utilise the “Mother Church” metaphor or image and sometimes simply the “Mother”: *De Habitu Virginis* (*De Hab, ²⁸ Rankin, *From Clement to Origen*, 74.
³⁰ “…of an orator, who prepares the minds of his hearers for what he has further to say, a preparation”, in ibid.
³¹ In rhetoric, “the third part of a discourse, also called confirmatio or fides orationis, in which the orator enumerates his arguments”. In ibid.
For Cicero, *probatio* is the presentation of rational proof used alongside *pathos* (which is an appeal to the emotions) and *ethos* (the presentation of a character to win credibility and goodwill). In “Cicero’s Rhetoric”, from the *Classical Resource Centre* web net, [http://www.angelfire.com/art/architecture/rhetoric.htm#p](http://www.angelfire.com/art/architecture/rhetoric.htm#p). Accessed July 17, 2014.
³² “the finishing part, the close or winding up of a speech, the peroration”. In ibid.
³³ Rankin, *From Clement to Origen*, 74.
On the Dress of Virgins, c.248), De Lapsis (De Lap, On the Lapsed, c.251), De Unitate Ecclesiae (De Unit, On the Unity of the Catholic Church, c.251), and Epistolae (Ep., Letters 10, 15, 16, 4134, 4335, c.250; Ep. 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, c.251; Ep. 59, c.252; Ep. 6936, 71, c.255; and Ep. 73, 74, c.256).37

1. Who is the Mother?

Like Tertullian’s Mother Church, Cyprian’s also births new Christians through baptism:

Now the birth of Christians is in baptism; and the generation and sanctification of baptism are with the one bride of Christ [sponsam Christi]. She alone is capable of spiritually bearing and giving birth to sons to God. This being so, where and of what mother and to whom is he born who is not a son of the Church? If a man is to have God for Father, he must first have the Church for mother. [Vt habere quis possit deum patrem, habeat ante ecclesiam matrem].38

Seen here, Cyprian keeps Tertullian’s pairing of Mother Church with Father God (see also De Lap 9, De Unit 6). However, along with Father God as progenitor of Mother Church’s offspring, Cyprian now goes beyond Tertullian in also adding Christ as her bridegroom. Such a mixing of metaphors will become increasingly common in language used regarding...

35 Clarke dates Ep.43 as early to mid-March, 251 CE. In Notes on “Letter 43”, in ibid., 211. Cyprian Vol 2, ACW 44.
38 Ep.74.7.2, in Cyprian Vol 4, ACW 47, p.74. Latin: “Cum autem natuiritas christianorum in baptismo sit, baptismi autem generatio et sanctificatio apud solam sponsam Christi sit, quae parere spiritualiter et generare filios deo possit, ubi et ex qua et cui natus est qui filius ecclesiae non est? Vt habere quis possit deum patrem, habeat ante ecclesiam matrem.” CCSL3B:572.129-141. See also Eps.74.6.1, 74.7.1; De Hab 3, De Unit 4, 5.
Mother Church, as the image gains traction. Mother Church is now both bride of Christ and spouse of the Father.

Unlike Tertullian, Cyprian places less emphasis on the teaching function of Mother Church. Rather, he utilizes the ecclesial maternal metaphor to project an image of the Church as the source of the (spiritual) life (“radices” Eps.45.1.2, 48.3.1, 69.2.1; De Unit 4, 5), the location of truth (“ueritatem” Ep.71.2.2) and the only one who can spiritually bear and give birth to sons and daughters of God (“parere spiritualiter et generare filios deo” Eps.74.6.1, 74.7.2; De Lap 9; De Unit 6). Mother Church gathers children at her bosom or embrace (“matris sinum atque conplexum” Eps.16.4.2, 45.1.2, 45.3.2, 59.13.2), rejoices at their return to her (Ep.46.1.3, De Lap 2, De Unit 23) or in the increase in number of her virgin children (“quantoque plus copiosa virgintas numero suo addit, tanto plus gaudium matris augescit” De Hab 3), and bewails the loss of them all (“lacrimas matris ecclesiae quae plangit ruinas et funera plurimorum” Ep.10.4.4).

These uses of the maternal ecclesial metaphor all point toward a dominant purpose of highlighting the location of faith, truth, and salvation. This location is given a persona with emotions (“lacrimas matris....” Ep.10.4.4; cf. also Eps.46.1.3, De Hab 3, De Lap 2, De Unit 23), a crucial familial role as intermediary between God and God’s children (eg. “Ante est ut a domino pacem mater prior sumat, tunc secundum uestra desideria de filiorum pace tractetur” Ep.15.2.2), and is discerned as the Catholic Church (“scimus nos hortatos eos esse urt ecclesiae catholicae radicem et matricem agnoscerent ac tenerent”, Ep.48.3.1). Meanwhile, Cyprian calls the Church of the heretics the “stepmother” (“matris nouerca”) who “impedes [the
children of mother Church] from reaching their true mother’s healing embrace” ("salutaris sinus matris nouerca intercedente cluditur" Ep.59.13.2). Only the true mother, the true Christian Church can spiritually birth if she is not just the bride of God Father but also the bride of Christ:

Now if rebirth is in this washing, that is to say, in baptism, how can heresy, which is not the bride of Christ, give birth to sons, and through Christ, to God? It is the Church alone, being joined and united to Christ, who spiritually gives birth to sons, as the same Apostle once again says: Christ loved the Church and He gave Himself up for her, so that he might sanctify her, washing and cleansing her by water. And so, if she is His beloved, the bride who alone is sanctified by Christ and alone is cleansed by His washing, then obviously heresy, being no bride of Christ and incapable of being cleansed or sanctified by His washing, is also incapable of giving birth to sons to God.

2. The Introduction of Complex Images

As mentioned above the maternal ecclesial metaphor was often associated with words that present a stark choice to the Christian Carthiginian audience--remain or return to the Church OR reject or forsake the Mater Ecclesia. The earlier letters Eps.15, 16, and 41 urge their audiences to make peace with the “mother” (Eps.15.2.2, 16.3.2, 43.6.2) and be gathered within her bosom or embrace (Eps.16.4.2; 45.1.2; 59.13.2). But by Ep.69, whilst continuing to refer to the “mother”, a singular image,

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40 Ep.74.6.2, in ibid., 73-74. Cyprian Vol 4, ACW 47. Latin: “Si autem in alauacro id est in baptismo est regeneratio, quomodo generare filios deo haeresis per Christum potest quae Christi sponsa non est? Ecclesia est enim sola quae Christo conjuncta et adunata spiritualiter filios generat eodem apostolo rursus dicente: Christus dilexit ecclesiam et se ipsum tradiditpro ea ut eam santificaret, purgans eam lauacro aquae. Si igiturhaec et dilecta et sponsa quae sola a Christo sanctificatur et lauacro eius sola purgatur, manifestum est haeresim, quae sponsa Christi non sit nec purgari nec sanctificari lauacro eius possit, filios deo generare non posse.” CCSL3B:571.115-124. See also Ep.74.7.2 and De Unit 6.
Cyprian introduces the more complex images of “mother-sister-bride” to point his audience to the true source of life ("una est matri suae... hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa, fons signatus, puteus aquae uiuae", Ep.69.2.1 c.253-255? CE – Clarke, 255 CE - Benson) and “mother-bride” to emphasise the Church as the only place of baptism ("Ecclesia est enim sola quae Christo coniuncta et adunata spiritualiter filios generat" Ep.74.6.2, c.256 CE).

Cyprian’s complex imaging of Mother Church was present by 248 CE (as mother and virgin, De Hab 3) and 251 CE (as mother and daughter, De Unit 4). But these were isolated instances: in De Hab 3, Cyprian sought to singularly address ecclesial virgins and in De Unit 4, Cyprian first denounced Novatian. The oneness of the Church would be highlighted at 251 CE, after the first condemnation of Novatian by Cyprian, a warning to Cyprian’s audience not to join Novation’s faction. It will be at least two years later, in 253 CE, when the urgency of emphasizing the purity of the Church would become the greater concern. For it was at this time that those who wished to return to Mother Church but were baptized under Novatian will be criticized by Cyprian. In this criticism Cyprian would emphasize Mother Church as the one and only bride in Epistle 69. In this letter he would employ Song of Song 6:8 to project the mother-sister-bride image:

That the Church is one is declared by the Holy Spirit in the Song of Songs, speaking in the person of Christ: My dove, my perfect one, is but one: she is the only one of her mother, the favourite of her who bore her. And the Spirit again says of her: An enclosed garden is my sister, my bride, a sealed fountain, a well of living water. Now if the bride of Christ (that is to say, the Church) is an enclosed garden, then it is just not possible that something which is closed up should lie

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41 Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 12.
42 Dates of events and corresponding treatises and letters from Benson, Cyprian: His Life, His Times, His Work, xxii-xxiii.
wide open to outsiders and aliens. And if it is a sealed fountain, then it is just not possible for a man to drink from it or to be sealed at it if, being placed on the outside, he is without access to that fountain. And if it is the one and only well of living water and it, too, is found on the inside, then it is just not possible for a man who is placed on the outside to be given life and sanctification through that water: they and they alone who are on the inside are granted permission to drink of it or to make use of it in anyway.\textsuperscript{43}

Clarke states that epistle 69 was the first evidence of the Novationist baptismal dispute that had been going on for some time.\textsuperscript{44} In the letter Cyprian utilized heavily on his arguments from \textit{De Unitate}. Clarke describes the dispute as not yet becoming bitter but Cyprian’s views were “carefully couched as personal reactions only” since the debate had neither gone public nor escalated into a complex stage. The letter addressed a group (via Magnus) that had been following the tradition of rebaptising “converts from heresy” but “now wish to make an exception of Novationists.” The tradition contradicted the local African practice, which was, not to recognize heretical baptisms. Cyprian was disturbed by the whole affair as his position on fundamental questions on the Church, trinity, grace, ministry and sacraments were seen to be under attack. Clarke says Cyprian’s agitation did not derive from an “egocentric concern” but rather a concern that the Church was being polluted by the admittance of the unclean, those who have actually been washed by inauthentic baptismal waters.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{43} Ep.69.2.1, in Cyprian, "Letters (ACW)", Clarke., Cyprian Vol 4, ACW 47, pp.33-34. Latin: “Quod autem ecclesia una sit declarat in cantico canticorum spiritus sanctus ex persona Christi dicens:una est columba mea, perfecta mea, una est matri suae, electa generiatrici suae. De qua item denuo dicit: hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa, fons signatus, puteus aquae uiuae. Si autem hortus conclusus est sponsa Christi quae est ecclesia, patere res clausaalienis et profanis nonpotest. Et si fons signatus est, nequebibere inde neque consignari potest cui foris posito accessus ad fontem non est. Puteus quoque aquae uiuae si unus est, idem qui intus est, iuificari et sanctificari foris positus ex illa aqua non potest, ex qua solis eis qui intus sunt usus omnis et potusconcessus est.” CCSSL3C:471.36-47

\textsuperscript{44} Notes on “Letter 69”, in ibid., 173. Cyprian Vol 4, ACW 47.

Burns describes letter 69 as distinct from his earlier arguments where Cyprian simply argued for the unity of the Church and set out the Church’s baptismal structure. Here, he “attack[s] the attempted usurpation of the episcopate” and the tone and argument of the letter “belong to the intense conflict which arose in the summer of 256, a conflict clearly focused on the Novationist schism.”

Cyprian utilized the scriptural text from Song of Songs 6:8 as he did in De Unit 4 to communicate an urgency concerning the protection of the Church’s holiness in terms of the Novationist debate. Thus one finds in this letter the introduction of the more complex image of the Church as mother-bride-sister.

Only at Ep.69.2.1 does the Church become this incongruous image of mother, bride, and sister, all at the same time, to Christ. There will be other incongruous images introduced too. As mentioned above, another image is found at De Unit 4 where the Church is a mother and a daughter to itself:

Indeed this oneness of the Church is figured in the Canticle of Canticles when the Holy Spirit, speaking in Our Lord’s name, says: ‘One is my dove, my perfect one: to her mother she is the only one, the darling of her womb.’ If a man does not hold fast to this oneness of the Church, does he imagine that he still holds the faith?

De Hab 3 shows another incongruous image, that of the mother-virgin Church:

My address is now to virgins, whose glory, as it is more eminent, excites the greater interest. This is the flower of the ecclesiastical seed, the grace and ornament of spiritual endowment, a joyous disposition, the wholesome and

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46 Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 117-118.
47 De Unit 4 in Cyprian, ”The Lapsed (ACW)”. Bevenot. 47. Latin: “Quam unam ecclesiam etiam in Cantico Canticorum Spiritus sanctus ex persona Domini designat, et dicit: ‘Vna est columba mea, perfecta mea, una est matri suae, electa genetrici suae.’ Hanc ecclesiae unitatem qui non tenet, tenere se fidem credit?” CCSL3:252.98-107 (column 2). The concept of the Church as “dove” will later be explored through Poorthuis’ theory of the “dove’s” relevance for Cyprian’s Jewish-Christian audience.
uncorrupted work of praise and honour, God’s image answering to the holiness of the Lord, the more illustrious portion of Christ’s flock. The glorious fruitfulness of Mother church rejoices by their means, and in them abundantly flourishes; and in proportion as copious virginity is added to her number, so much the more it increases the joy of the Mother.\(^{48}\)

Whilst Tertullian also named the Church as ‘virgin’, he did not image it as ‘mother’ at the same time (\textit{On Modesty, De Pudicitia} 1.8-9).\(^{49}\) Paradoxically for Cyprian, the increase in the Church’s fecundity becomes dependent on the increase of its virginity through the number of virgins being added to its membership. Cyprian’s introduction of compound-incongruous maternal ecclesial metaphors can be clearly seen through these developments that will be taken up and expanded upon by Ambrose and Augustine.

\section*{3. Mother Church as Mater-Sponsa}

Even with the introduction of more complex and incongruous images, the mother-spouse image, like that of Tertullian’s Mother Church as \textit{materfamilia}, remained as found in Ep 74.6.2.\(^{50}\) This letter especially utilises the image of Church as mother-bride without explicit use of the word “\textit{mater}” and its corollaries. Instead the letter implies its image by describing her function as “birthing” (“\textit{nascitur}” in 74.7.1, “\textit{natiuitas}”

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item[49] Ariel Laughton notes that “Tertullian was the first identifiable Latin author to term virgins ‘brides of Christ’” in \textit{De Resurrectione Carnis} 61.6 [PL 2, 884] and \textit{De Virginibus Velandis} 7 [PL 2, 898-899] in footnote 83 of Ariel Bybee Laughton, “Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan” (Duke University, 2010), 42.
\item[50] For the quote, cf. p.90 above.
\end{thebibliography}
74.7.2). One finds this birthing function also in *De Hab* 3 ("in illis largiter floret Ecclesiae matris gloriosa foecunditas") and in *De Unit* 5 ("et una mater fecunditatis successibus copiosa: illius fetu nascimur"). Along with the mother-bride image, *Ep.74* also utilizes the pairing of Father-God and Mother-Church concept. Of all the letters, it is only within this epistle that this pairing is highly evident and in which one finds an adaptation of Cyprian’s dictum from *De Unit* 6, “Habere iam non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem,” into “Vt habere quius possit deum patrem, habeat ante ecclesiam matre.” (*Ep.74.7.2*). It is as if Cyprian sought to employ as much imagery and proof as he could (Mother-Bride and Father God-Mother Church) to put forward his argument of the Church’s clear boundaries against heretic baptizers who would pollute the Church.53

The exclusive and exclusionary image of Mother Church as the one and only bride is initially presented in *De Unit* 6:

The spouse of Christ cannot be defiled, she is inviolate and chaste; she knows one home alone, in all modesty she keeps faithfully to one only couch. It is she who rescues us for God, she who seals for the kingdom the sons whom she has borne. Whoever breaks with the Church and enters on an adulterous union, cuts himself off from the promises made to the Church; and he who has turned his back on the Church and enters on an adulterous union, cuts himself off from the promises made to the Church; and he who has turned his back on the Church of Christ shall not come to the rewards of Christ: he is an alien, a worldling, an enemy. You cannot

51 “You cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother.” *De Unit 6* in Cyprian, "The Lapsed (ACW)", Bevenot, 48. Latin from CCSL 3:253.143ff.

52 “If a man is to have God for Father, he must first have the Church for mother.” *Ep.74.7.2*, in Cyprian, "Saint Cyprian: Letters (1-81)," The Fathers of the Church, (New York: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 74. Cyprian Vol 4, ACW 47. Full Latin text from CCSL3B:572.129-141.

53 For a concise summary of the issues surrounding epistle 74, see Notes on “Letter 74”, in Cyprian, "Letters (ACW)", Clarke, 233-234. Cyprian Vol 4, ACW 47.
have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother.\textsuperscript{54}

As the chaste and virtuous bride or spouse of Christ, Mother Church here parallels the celebrated image of the univira, the Roman ideal of the woman who has known only one husband, even after his death. She has stayed true to him and in this, in part, promoted the Augustan moral legislations on marriage (\textit{lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus}, 18 BCE) and adultery (\textit{lex Julia de adulteriis coercendis}, 17 BCE). Like these leges Julia, which stated that unions created outside of marriage and concubinage would result in banishment,\textsuperscript{55} so did Cyprian’s statement above implied that unions other than with Mother Church herself would result in the banishment of the child of the Church.\textsuperscript{56}

4. Mother Church’s Remaining Simple Maternal Image

Despite Cyprian’s multifaceted uses of the image, the representation of the Church simply as a birthing and nurturing mother remains his most common use of the metaphor (20 out of 27\textsuperscript{57} instances of its appearances in Cyprian’s texts). Cyprian presents Mother Church as a mother to infants (“of her womb are we born, of her milk are we fed, of her Spirit our souls draw their life-breath” \textit{De Unit 5}\textsuperscript{58}), one who gathers her children to her lap.

\textsuperscript{54} For other texts emphasising the inseparability of Mother Church from Father God, see \textit{Eps. 74.6.1, 74.6.2, 74.7.2, De Unit 4} and \textit{De Lap 9}.


\textsuperscript{56} In addition, the convicted adulterous woman lost half her dowry and one-third of her property. The convicted adulterous man lost half his property and banished to various islands. Convicted men of lower status were relegated to mines and hard labour. In \textit{ibid.}, 128.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Eps. 10.1.1, 10.4.4, 15.2.2, 16.3.2, 16.4.2, 41.2.1, 43.6.2, 44.3.2, 45.1.2, 45.3.2, 46.1.3, 47.1.1, 48.3.1, 59.13.2, 71.2.2, 74.6.1}; \textit{De Lap 2, De Unit 5}, 19, 23. The remaining Mother Church texts present a more complex image either as mother-sister-bride, mother-bride/spouse, mother-virgin, or mother-virgin: \textit{Eps. 69.2.1, 73.19.2, 74.7.2}; \textit{De Hab 3}; \textit{De Lap 9}; \textit{De Unit 4}, 6.

or bosom ("in sinum matris” Eps.16.4.2, 45.1.2, “salutaris sinus” Ep.59.13.2, “sinu excipit mater ecclesiae” De Lap 2, “et consentientis populi corpus unum gremio suo gaudens mater includat” De Unit 23).\textsuperscript{59}

This was also the common picture of the Mother projected in art and literature in ancient Roman society, as was seen in the figure of Livia (58 BCE–29 CE) especially as she was portrayed in the \textit{Ara Pacis Augustae} Monument.\textsuperscript{60} The next section will show how Livia, the wife of the Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar, was used to portray this particular message to the Roman Empire—a message that the Emperor believed Roman citizens needed in a time of uncertainty and instability for the Empire. This chapter will then point to the possibility that Cyprian utilizes a similar propaganda when portraying the Mother Church.

5. Propaganda and the ancient Roman Matrona

Livia, the wife of the Emperor Augustus and mother to his heir, Tiberius, was used by her husband to promote his vision of the archetypal \textit{matrona}. She became a symbol of ideal Roman womanhood: “the one whose virtuous behavior and fertility exemplified the tenets of Augustus’ moral and marriage legislation.”\textsuperscript{61} She was made sacrosanct by Augustus (35 BCE) when he was alive, and elevated further at his death/divinization where she became his principal priestess and was henceforth named Julia Augusta (14 CE).\textsuperscript{62} Augustan propaganda constructed her as an archetype of

\textsuperscript{59} Cf. \textit{De Unit} 4 as quoted in p.93 above.

\textsuperscript{60} Barbara Spaeth, "The Goddess Ceres in the \textit{Ara Pacis Augustae} and the Carthage Relief,” \textit{American Journal of Archaeology} 98, no. 1 (1994); Kleiner, ""Her Parents Gave Her the Name Claudia”,” 9-12.

\textsuperscript{61} Kleiner, "Imperial Women as Patrons of the Arts,” 28, 37.

\textsuperscript{62} Giroire and Roger say that Livia herself was deified in 42 CE in Rome, in Collection n.15 “Portrait of Livia as Ceres”, in Cécile Giroire et al., \textit{Roman Art from the Louvre}
what it meant to be a Roman woman; Livia represented beauty, fidelity, and
fertility and through her marriage with Augustus, harmony and thus
continuity. Marriage itself was promoted by the Augustan moral reforms
involving marriage and procreation--the *leges Julia* (18-17 BCE) and the *lex
Papia Poppae* (9 CE). It was valued as a high Roman ideal exemplified by
the existence of couples holding hands in numerous Roman funerary art, the
dextrarum iunctio. The presence of ideals such as fidelity and fertility
ensured the consequent presence of two of among the highest of Roman
ideals--*pax* and *concordia*, as they were portrayed on the *Ara Pacis
Augustae*.

The *Ara Pacis Augustae* or Altar of Peace was a monument built and
dedicated to Augustus in Rome in 9 BCE, in celebration of his
pacification of the Roman Empire and his safe return from “a long tour of
the provinces” Paul Zanker described the altar as depicting on its various
wall panels “the blessings of a peaceful reign using poetic and bucolic
imagery.” Kleiner summarised the propaganda the altar sought to
communicate as: “Peace and its consequences for Italy and the world, for
the Roman aristocracy and high-ranking provincials…” Moreover, Kleiner
suggested that this message of peace implicated “growth and rebirth” for the
Roman Empire as exhibited by the presence of flourishing plants, the

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63 See Kleiner, “”Her Parents Gave Her the Name Claudia”,” 9.
64 Diana E. E. Kleiner et al., *I, Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome* (New Haven, Conn./
Austin, Tex.: Yale University Art Gallery; Distributed by University of Texas Press,
1996), 128.
University Press, 1992), 90.
67 ibid.
presence of an abundance of fruits, and animals portrayed which symbolised a golden age.\textsuperscript{69} Nancy Ramage and Andrew Ramage note that the fruits suspended from the garlands sculpted into the altar represented all four seasons of the year, “so magical that they all bloomed at once”, reminding the viewer that “Augustus’ peace spanned the entire course of the year.”\textsuperscript{70}

Of special interest is the portrayal of a youthful and beautiful \textit{matrona} “with two small children sitting on a kind of rock-hewn throne” found on an external panel of the altar.\textsuperscript{71} Ramage and Ramage state that “the programmatic message of peace and prosperity [was] enhanced by mythological and allegorical imagery”, as exhibited by this matron with two infants.\textsuperscript{72} Various theories exist seeking to identify this \textit{matrona}, but the evidence points to her as an image of Augustus’ empress-wife, Livia.\textsuperscript{73} Whoever she was, the message communicated by the wall panel was “the paradisiacal state of the world brought about by the \textit{Pax Augusta}”,\textsuperscript{74} one filled with fertility, serenity, and abundance.\textsuperscript{75} Further, Zanker described the panel as follows: “It is an image of a golden age, the \textit{aurea aetas}, which had been lauded by the poets and solemnly inaugurated by Augustus at the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{69} ibid., 92.
  \item \textsuperscript{70} “Reliefs-Ara Pacis Augustae”, in Nancy H Ramage and Andrew Ramage, \textit{The Cambridge Illustrated History of Roman Art} (Cambridge/ New York/ Port Chester: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 91.
  \item \textsuperscript{71} Kleiner, \textit{Roman Sculpture}, 96; Spaeth, "The Goddess Ceres in the Ara Pacis": 65.
  \item \textsuperscript{72} Ramage and Ramage, \textit{The Cambridge Illustrated History of Roman Art}, 91.
  \item \textsuperscript{73} ibid., 92-93; Kleiner, \textit{Roman Sculpture}, 96.
  \item \textsuperscript{74} Zanker, \textit{Roman Art}, 88.
  \item \textsuperscript{75} Kleiner describes the implications of the scene: “Peace brings prosperity and time for planting and harvesting and the security to raise children and plan for the future through the peace brought to Italy by Augustus.” “The Ara Pacis Augustae” in Kleiner, \textit{Roman Sculpture}, 96.
\end{itemize}
Secular Games (*Ludi Latini saeculares*).” 76 Brent theorised that there was an intended ambiguity about the maternal figure and Kleiner would support this idea for she believed that the figure was meant to be a culmination of “personifications and divinities.” 77 Spaeth theorised that the figure of the woman with the two infants on the Eastern panel was actually of Livia portrayed as Ceres. 78 Diana Kleiner would observe that “Livia, the emperor’s female counterpart, was the foundation of the imperial family and the *concordia* of that family is one of the other significant themes of the Ara Pacis.” 79

Fig 1: Livia as Ceres on a panel of the *Ara Pacis Augustae* Monument

At the same time, on the southeast and northeast sides of the *Ara Pacis* the imperial women Livia, Julia, and Octavia occupy pride of place as wives and mothers amongst the men and children of significant social standing. Both Livia as Ceres and *Roma* appear as the main characters on


78 For the basis of her argument see Spaeth, "The Goddess Ceres in the Ara Pacis": 93.

the eastern external section of the monument, seated rather than in their usual standing position. Kleiner says of this uncommon seated position that it:

…serves to underscore the nurturing function of the women who were not the political movers and shakers but rather contributed to the Augustan peace through their marital fidelity and fecundity. The themes stressed in this side of the Ara Pacis are correct female behavior that included the inclination and ability to bear children through youthful fecundity, the joys of motherhood, the unbreakable bonds of family life, hereditary succession, and the general abundance brought to Rome and the empire by the Augustan peace.\(^{80}\)

Kleiner and Matheson argue that imperial mothers were projected as goddesses just as goddesses were projected as the imperial mothers to reinforce the Augustan program of peace as well as to portray ancient Roman societal values such as *justitia* (“justice, equity, righteousness, uprightness”)\(^{81}\), *concordia* (“an agreeing together, union, harmony, concord”\(^{82}\)), and *pietas* (“piety” with respect to the gods, “duty, dutifulness, affection, love, loyalty, patriotism, gratitude” with respect to one’s “parents, children, relatives, country, benefactors”).\(^{83}\)

The purpose of such imperial art was neither simply ornamental nor whimsical but had its specific purpose of communicating:

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\(^{80}\) “The Ara Pacis Augustae” in ibid., 98.

\(^{81}\) In Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary (1879 Print)*.

\(^{82}\) In Lewis, *An Elementary Latin Dictionary*.

\(^{83}\) In Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary (1879 Print)*.


a feeling of security and trust in the permanence of the Empire. That is, in the domestic stability and order that the emperor guaranteed, and in this way it attempted to banish fear and uncertainty. The impact of the images was achieved through the reiteration of the same visual formulae in various media, the authority they derived from the gods and the myths, and, last but not least, the idealized beauty of the Greek forms employed. A crucial role was played by the fact that all citizens could participate in the process, since it allowed them to reaffirm their identity by associating themselves with the emperor’s might. 84

6. Carthage’s Own Ara Pacis Augustae

Carthage would exhibit an adapted version of the Ara Pacis relief of the seated matron with the two infants and also would build its own temple to the gens Iulia: 85

There are a few differences between the Roman and the Carthaginian panel but both contain three central figures—a seated matron with two infants and

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84 Zanker, Roman Art, 115.

85 Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 24. For scholarship on the Ara Pacis as the original version of the Carthaginian relief, see Spaeth, "The Goddess Ceres in the Ara Pacis", footnotes 238 and 242 on p.95. The Carthage relief previous to 1960 was interpreted as a Hellenistic original possibly from Alexandria.
fruit on her lap (also with a bull and pig at her feet) and a figure on each of her sides. Amongst various interpretations of the figures on the Carthaginian panel, one of which was that it was the matron Isis and her sons Hathos and Osiris on her lap, Spaeth argues that the matron is also Ceres but a Carthaginian version—Tanit, the local primary goddess associated with the primary god of Carthage, Baal Hammon. To verify Tanit’s identity, Spaeth points out that the child seated on her left offers the mother a lotus instead of a fruit as found in the original version. The lotus was known locally in Carthage as the symbol for Tanit.

Both panels from the *Ara Pacis* of Rome and of Carthage signify abundance, blessedness, and fruitfulness which in turn communicate an assurance of peace for the Roman Empire and its inhabitants, something that was continually pursued by the Empire in the form of the Roman *pax deorum*. The inverse perception was also true, the peace signified by the entire *Ara Pacis* and its various wall panels would communicate abundance and blessings for the people of the Roman Empire, as well as fecundity and continuity of generations.86

7. *The Roman Matrona and Cyprian’s Mother Church*

Cyprian’s Mother Church as a mother to infants (*De Unit* 5), gathering her children to her lap (*Eps.*16.4.2, 45.1.2, 59.13.2, *De Lap* 2, *De Unit* 23), a picture of perfection (*De Unit* 4) strongly resembles the idyllic, reassuring, and unifying picture of the Roman mother presented in the *Ara Pacis* Panel. Cyprian repeatedly called members of the Church to return to the “bosom” or “lap” (“*sīnus*”) of Mother Church or remain in her embrace.

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This recurring reference not only echoes the commonly known picture of the Roman mother in her seated position, as portrayed above, but also the “persistent references to children being reared in gremio matris or in sinu matris” (in the lap or bosom of the mother) in the ancient Roman Empire as observed by Dixon.\(^87\) She says these persistent references suggested “a typical intimacy and affection between the mother and the young child”\(^88\) and such intimacy was all the more highlighted in children’s funerary reliefs by “the greater grief characteristically displayed by mothers” at the death of their child.\(^89\)

On this characteristic grief of mothers, Dixon says it was assumed fathers and mothers had equal affection for their children. But she also says mourning over one’s child was the particular role belonging only to the mother: “to mourn at all was *mulieribus* (womanly); to mourn with abandon was particularly the lot of the bereft mother”.\(^90\)

In a similar fashion, one finds Cyprian’s Mother Church “bewailing” the death and ruin of her children who have left the Church:

I pray that as our Mother the Church bewails the downfall and the death of very many, by your joy you may dry her tears, [“*ut lacrimas matris ecclesiae quae plangit ruinas et funera plurimorum*”] and by the challenge of your example you may confirm the resolution of the rest who yet remain standing.\(^91\)

Cyprian’s constant call to remain or return to Mother Church was reinforced by his contention that the alternative, a separation or disassociation with the

\(^87\) Dixon provides examples from Tacitus’ *Agric.* 4, *Dialogus* 28, Cicero’s *Brutus* 211. See p.130 and endnote 38 in Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 138.

\(^88\) ibid., 130.

\(^89\) ibid.


\(^91\) Ep. 10.4.4 in Cyprian, "Letters (ACW)", Clarke, 74., Cyprian Vol I, ACW 43. CCSL3B:53.90-91.
mother was unthinkable—even arguing that abandoning the Mother Church was an act of *impietas* (“*inpietatem esse sciant matrem deserere*” *Ep.*44.3.2). Dixon describes *pietas* as “a combination of duty and affection toward family members.”92 In Roman law, “*reverentia* (reverence) and *obsequiem* (obedience) were owed by children not only to their father but also to their mother, who in turn had a duty to look after the interests of her children.93 If a Roman abused with insults either his mother or father, the urban prefect was to treat it as a public offence (Ulpian, *Digest*, 37.15.1.2).”94 Cyprian thus cleverly implies in *Ep.*44.3.2 that to abandon the Church was not only an act of heartlessness but also irresponsibility of the Roman-Carthaginian citizen and Christian.

Cyprian also brings in the notorious image of the ancient Roman “stepmother”, which he employs to represent the laxist schismatic movement, and contrasts her with the healing embrace of Mother Church portrayed similarly to the Roman mother, in epistle 59 (252 CE). The negative Roman attitude towards stepmothers stemmed from the understanding that stepmothers would live in the same household as their stepchildren, have the same status as the biological but absent mother, and yet would only serve to advance the interests of her own natural children.95

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92 Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 274. Similarly, Lewis and Short define *pietas* as “*dutiful conduct* towards the gods, one’s parents, relatives, benefactors, country, etc., *sense of duty.*” Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (1879 Print).

The idea of *pietas* is exemplified in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, where Aeneas, “legendary founder of the Roman race and the national hero of Rome” is said to have carried the household gods, the *Penates*, and his father Anchises on his back whilst holding his son Ascanius by the hand, saving them from the burning city of Troy. In ‘Aeneas and the Destiny of Rome’, in Jenny March, *The Penguin Book of Classical Myths* (London: Penguin, 2009), 478-497, at 478 and 480.


95 Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 156.
Dixon notes that evil stepmothers pervaded Latin literature. For example, “Tacitus refers routinely to *novercalia odia* (‘stepmotherly-hatred’) as a self-explanatory term for Livia’s alleged antipathy to Agrippa Postumus.”96 Even when the stepmother acted ‘motherly’, the prejudice remained dominant.97

Cyprian employed this imagery in the context of the confusion and disunity in the Carthaginian Church with the presence of three rival claimants, including Cyprian himself, vying for the episcopal leadership of the community in 253 CE. Clarke describes Cyprian’s predicament as rival bishop:

The laxist group, in the face of condemnation of its leaders by the Council of 251, has now hardened into a formally schismatic church with its own bishop, having (apparently) fused forces with the heretic Privatus, another bishop of Privatus’ creation, and three excommunicated lapsed bishops… Two years later their movement is still stirring up irksome opposition against Cyprian. But there is now not only a laxist *pseudoepiscopus*: there is a rigorist, Novationist *pseudoepiscopus* as well in Carthage. The presence of three rival bishops within the one city could give us no more powerful indication of the depths now reached in the cleavages over the penitential issue…98

For Cyprian, these schismatic movements ruptured the relationship between Mother Church and her natural children:

By their deception and lies they thus ruin any repentance which these poor wretches might do, and ensure that they do not appease the wrath of God…True reconciliation they destroy by their false and fallacious reconciliation; the stepmother impedes them from reaching their true mother’s healing embrace, anxious to prevent her from hearing any

96 ibid., 157.

97 ibid. Further, the lower status of the stepmother to the true mother is seen in emperor Marcus’ comparison of visits to the stepmother as obligatory which he contrasts with visit’s to one’s own mother as “provoked by genuine feeling *(Med.6.12).*” In ibid., 170.

sobbing and weeping coming from the hearts and lips of those who have fallen.\textsuperscript{99}

Mother Church is the true Church that brings salvation to its members; the schismatic laxists and rigorists are false movements that obstruct the children from their true Mother. Cyprian thus integrates the dominant cultural image of the evil stepmother into his use of the Mother Church metaphor, and by providing this contrast he brings to the fore even more strongly the powerful cultural understanding of the nurturing love of a mother for her natural children.

Another concept, the intermediary or intercessory role of Mother Church, is expressed in Cyprian’s famed dictum, “If a man is to have God for Father, he must first have the Church for mother” (\textit{Ep} 74.7.2). Such an intercessorial role given to Mother Church likened her to respected Roman imperial mothers who were praised in Roman literature for intervening on behalf of their children and thus providing the successes of their futures. For example, imperial mother Livia was celebrated for her persistence in interceding on behalf of her biological son from a former marriage, Tiberius, who initially exiled himself to Rhode Island as he was not favoured by his stepfather Emperor Augustus. Augustus had “hoped to be succeeded by a gifted young man.”\textsuperscript{100} But Tiberius depended upon his mother to intercede on his behalf for Augustus to “grant him honors and titles and to recall him from his self-imposed exile.”\textsuperscript{101} Livia was seen here as not only having maternal devotion but also ambition, envisioning herself


\textsuperscript{100} Kleiner, "Family Ties," 43.

\textsuperscript{101} ibid.
as future co-emperor of Rome. Suetonius reports that it was through Livia’s persistent intercession that Tiberius was finally summoned back to Rome.\footnote{102}

The Roman mother who interceded on behalf of her children, securing a future for them, could also be seen particularly as the Roman imperial mother who lived vicariously through her son or sons, as seen above in Livia’s intercession motivated in part by maternal ambition. The source of her rejoicing (“\textit{gaudium matres}”) was often found in the directing of her son’s successful education and career resulting not only in his exalted status but also her own.\footnote{103}

In a similar way, one finds in \textit{De Hab 3}, Cyprian’s Mother Church dependent upon the actions of her children, the virgins, to increase her status and joy—the more virgins in the Church, the greater Mother Church’s virginity and fecundity, and therefore also the increase of her status and joy.\footnote{104} In one instance, Cyprian applied a particular emphatic tone with reference to the \textit{“mater”}. In \textit{Ep.47.1.1}, Clarke notes that Cyprian’s call to the faithful to return (\textit{“reuertamini”}) to their mother applies an “unusual emphatic tone” in his use of \textit{“suam matrem”}:

My dearest brother, I have judged it to be an obligation upon me and my religious duty towards you all to write a brief letter to the confessors over there in Rome who have forsaken the Church, seduced through the viciousness and perversity of Novatian and Novatus. My purpose is to induce them out of fraternal affection to return to their own true

\footnote{102} Tiberius took up the throne of the Roman Empire after the death of Augustus but the relationship of mother and son diminished from then on. Tiberius accused Livia of meddling in his political affairs and moreover, Tiberius was most offended by the recognition given to him as the Son of Livia (\textit{Liviae filius}) and the Son of Augustus (\textit{Augusti filius}). In the end “Tiberius did not attend Livia’s funeral, refused to have her deified, and annulled her will.” In ibid., 43-44.

\footnote{103} As the previous footnote shows, Livia was honoured in the granting of her son, Tiberius, the titles of \textit{Liviae filius} alongside \textit{Augusti filius}. Also at the death of Augustus, Livia was given the title of \textit{Augusta}. In this, she was considered an integral part of the \textit{domus Augusta} and especially as mother of the \textit{princeps}. In ibid., 45.

\footnote{104} For quote, see pp. 93-94 above.
that is, to the Catholic Church ["ad matrem suam id est ecclesiam catholicam"]).

Ep.47 is a letter from Cyprian to Cornelius, informing Cornelius that he has written a letter to the confessors in Rome. Cornelius was to decide whether the letter was “to be forwarded onto them or not.” Clarke notes that Cyprian treads cautiously in this letter, given that he has already offended Cornelius by sending Caldonius and Fortunatus to Rome to heal the conflict arising from the factions created in the Church there, which not only resulted in the worsening of the situation but also was seen as breaking “established custom”. Clark also notes the tone of the letter is deliberately personal, where one colleague is writing to another. Cyprian’s application then of “suam matrem” is understandably personal but also one of pleading rather than commanding.

In Ep.48.3.1 Cyprian employs “matricem” to associate “mother” with the very source of their faith:

To all who were sailing away we explained to them the situation individually so that they should not be scandalized on their travels, exhorting them to discern the womb and root ["matricem et radicem"] of the Catholic Church and to cleave to it.

By Ep.48, Cyprian has written to Rome acknowledging Cornelius as its rightful bishop. The purpose of the letter is to reassure Cornelius of

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105 Ep.47.1.1 Cyprian, "Letters (ACW)", Clarke, 74. Cyprian Vol 2, ACW 44. Latin: “Et religiosum uobis et necessarium existimaui, frater carissime, ad confessores qui illic sunt et Novatiani ac Novati obstinatione et prauitate seducti de ecclesia recesserunt litteras breues facere, quibus eos pro adfectione mutua convenirem ut ad matrem suam id est ecclesiam catholicam reuertantur.” CCSL3B:226.3-7.


Cyprian’s support despite a period when “Cornelius’ claims had not been fully recognized” by the Council of Bishops. The letter stresses a “future of harmonious Church government” rather than a condemnation of the opposition, Novatian. Cyprian’s presentation of the Catholic Church as the “womb and root” is part of his establishing this future harmonious Church.

What is most noticeable about the images projected of Mother Church was that this maternal image was at the forefront in her own right. It was her maternal emotions (bewailing or rejoicing), her actions (birthing, embracing, intercessorial) and the actions of the children of the Church in relation to her (returning to or rejecting her) that were emphasized by Cyprian. Such an emphasis on simply the mother figure alone must have had its purpose. It is highly possible that in the context of disunity in the Church, Cyprian’s projection of this formidable maternal figure onto the Church sought to provide a familiar image of reassurance and unity. Just as Zanker described the propagation of imperial art images as promoting domestic stability and order, creating “a feeling of security and trust in the permanence of the Empire” (especially since the Roman Empire at the time experienced disorder and disunity as will be discussed below), so would the projection of the Church as Roman matrona promote stability and order in the Church.

112 Zanker, Roman Art, 115. Mother Church in De Lapsis 2 is also presented as a container personified as a woman protecting the city and its inhabitants who themselves are presented as sentries. See “Envisioning the City as a Woman”, in Like a Bride Adorned, where Lynn R. Huber points out that it has been a long tradition especially in the East to personify cities as women. She says “(t)his tradition began as a way for artists and poets to describe intimate patronage relationships between cities and their deities.” She says: “Goddesses, pictured as women, came to embody the cities they protected and served.” This tradition then later became popular in ancient Roman
8. Representing a Desired Unity in the Church and Empire

Peper hypothesizes that the maternal ecclesial metaphor was used to create an inside-outside rhetoric or a form of demarcation to facilitate the unity of the Church.\(^{113}\) Burns similarly explains that Cyprian’s need for unity and demarcation was for the purpose of creating a boundary between those who remained faithful to the Church (in varying degrees) and “the schismatic gathering which had raised itself in opposition”\(^{114}\) to him and also the Church of Rome. By the creation of that boundary, they felt their ability to forgive the sin of idolatry had its limits (that sin would have to be judged fully before Christ) but the Church did feel it could enforce exclusion of an individual from salvation.\(^ {115}\)

Whilst Peper and Burns explore disunity only within the Church, Brent explores disunity throughout the Roman Empire and connects the Carthaginian Church’s issue with this experience of the Empire.\(^ {116}\) It is then, because of this general state of disunity both within and without the Church, that it was all the more imperative that Cyprian needed to establish unity in the Church. Brent believed that Cyprian and his contemporaries (Christian and pagan alike) saw the third century as a point of “crisis and times.\(^{116}\)

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\(^{113}\) Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 64-118.

\(^{114}\) Burns, Cyprian the Bishop, 40. See Ep.57.3.1.2.

\(^{115}\) ibid.

\(^{116}\) Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage. See also, Allen Brent, A Political History of Early Christianity (London/ New York: T & T Clark International, 2009), 253; Rankin, From Clement to Origen, 74-75.
decline in the world.\textsuperscript{117} There was the instability brought on by a constant change of Roman emperors, continual occurrences of “natural disasters such as plagues or famines,”\textsuperscript{118} “a combination of wars, frontier threats…manpower shortages, a sense of moral decline.”\textsuperscript{119} Brent explained that the foundation of Carthago Nova itself was built on the curse of Scipio.\textsuperscript{120} The curse was seen as only overcome by Augustus’ performance of a ritual, the augurium salutis, or augury of peace (previously performed by republican magistrates with no success).\textsuperscript{121}

Whilst the Christians saw the times as a sign of Christ’s second coming, and their response was to counter the disintegration by the sacrifice of the Eucharist and trust in the order created by ecclesiastical structure, the pagan response was to seek to appease the gods recognized by the Roman imperial state so that the pax deorum (‘peace of the gods’), the highest value for the Roman Empire, may be brought about.\textsuperscript{122} In 250 CE, Roman Emperor Decian, as pontificus maximus (highest priest of the Roman Empire) in charge of ensuring pax deorum in the Empire, issued a religious order wherein Roman citizens were required to sacrifice to the gods at their altars in their central shrines and consequently receive certification (a

\textsuperscript{117} Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 5.
\textsuperscript{118} ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Rankin, From Clement to Origen, 74.
\textsuperscript{120} Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 24.
\textsuperscript{121} The curse of Scipio is explained as such: Legions seeking to raise a new Carthage failed to do so and instead were swept away by winds. They were seen as a sacrifice for the creation of a new city. Ibid., 30. For an explanation of the effect of this curse on the city of Carthage see ibid., 30-31.
\textsuperscript{122} ibid., 5. Whilst Brent suggests Cyprian’s anxiety over the crisis of the third century, Rankin declares that Cyprian saw the decline as part of the natural order of things, according to his Stoic background and that Christianity provided a means of restoring an order that the Roman emperors failed to exercise. Rankin, From Clement to Origen, 75.
libellus) that they had fulfilled this requirement. According to Burns, this did not require abandonment of one’s current religious practice or allegiance, including Christian ritual and belief, but did require each person “to appear before a locally established commission, to testify to having been always a worshipper of the gods protecting Rome and to demonstrate that piety in its presence by pouring a libation, offering incense and eating the sacrificial meats.” Despite putting their trust in the Eucharist and the structure created by the Church, many Christians were still keen to make the sacrifice and receive their libelli because according to Brent:

> The deeply held metaphysical viewpoint of the third-century crisis in nature as well as in society, rooted in their cultural background, led them desperately to seek relief from their fear and anxiety through the pagan means that they had learned from their forefathers: the supplication was their desperate remedy.

The Carthaginian Christian community had not completely cut themselves off from the world and continued to engage in Roman requirements despite being sworn into the Christian community which had sought to cut itself off from the world. In a similar vein, François Decret suggests that Carthaginians could reconcile belief in a variety of gods and goddesses alongside belief in the Christian God without feeling they had betrayed loyalties to any particular divinity. He quotes Bishop Saturninus saying at a Church council presided by Cyprian: “Even as they worship idols, the pagans recognize and worship a sovereign God who is both Father and Creator.”

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123 The purpose of the decree is discussed in Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 6-7; Rankin, *From Clement to Origen*, 72; Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 1.
124 Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 1.
125 Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 7. Burns says many Christians readily complied as soon as the imperial commission was established.
There were some Christians who simply sacrificed (*sacrificati*), some who used a “legal subterfuge”, or bribed “an official to obtain the certificate which attested to their having performed the rituals” (*libellatici*).\(^{127}\) There were also those who were “unwilling to participate in animal sacrifices but had simply been allowed to burn incense instead” (*thurificati*).\(^{128}\) Then there were some who initially refused but under torture and persecution, gave in to the requirement of the Empire.\(^{129}\) There was also a minority who refused to submit and died as the first martyrs of the Decian persecution.\(^{130}\) There were also those who initially sacrificed but saw its error and sought the help of confessors to intercede for them to Christ when the confessors became martyrs.\(^{131}\) This intercession was seen to be so powerful that it overpowered anything on earth including the requirements and authority of the Church as delivered through the bishops. In the tradition of the martyrs of the Church their sacrifice equaled the power of Eucharistic sacrifice (*ordinatio per confessionem*) exercised by those who received the imposition of hands (bishops and presbyters). The *lapsi* asked for certificates of commendation from these confessors, hoping to return to the Church immediately and with little or no penance. It is the *lapsi* who sacrificed (the *sacrificati*) or appeared to sacrifice (certificati) under the Decian rule and its resulting consequences, including the complications created by the confessors and those acting on their behalf, whom Cyprian

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\(^{127}\) Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 2. See also Brent on “Degrees of Apostasy” in Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 8-9.

\(^{128}\) Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 8.

\(^{129}\) Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 2.

\(^{130}\) ibid.

\(^{131}\) ibid.
addressed when utilising the metaphor of Church as Mother. In Cyprian’s view, it was their actions defying his commands as bishop to wait until the end of the persecution to reenter the Church and live a life of penance which created disunity in the Church. This led Cyprian to write De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate and many Epistolae, urging unity and requesting apostates to return to their Mother the Church.

The Carthaginian Christians most likely embraced ancient Roman culture because it was part of the Empire and it could live synchronously with African and Roman ideas. But, in addition to this, Brent argues that Carthage itself “embodied the Augustan religious project” because of Augustus’ augury and its effect on lifting the curse of Scipio. Thus he theorises that when the Christians undertook the necessary Imperial cultic sacrifice to obtain their libelli, it was not just undertaken out of fear of Roman law but also because it was the Carthaginian culture to believe in the power of the Augustan augury.

As the lapsi apostatised in varying degrees, Cyprian determined that the ecclesial hierarchy needed to respond accordingly: the level of penance required needed to suit the seriousness of the offence. But this kind of

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132 Cf Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 9-10, 257-261; Burns, Cyprian the Bishop, 25-27.

133 Cf. Burns on the “History of Cyprian’s Controversies”, in Burns, Cyprian the Bishop, 1-11. Also Brent on “Controversies within the Church over the Lapsed in Persecution” for an overview, in Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 8-14.

134 Brent, Cyprian and Roman Carthage, 30.

135 George Kennedy theorises that Augustus executed his own form of rhetoric, which consequent Roman emperors would imitate, “though none with his subtlety”. Trained in rhetoric with Apollodorus, and his style described as sympathising only with the simple, detesting anything which detracted from clarity, and associated with the neo-Atticist movement, Augustus created a new technique of “verbal and visual persuasion which took over some of the functions and adapted some of the methods of traditional oratory”. Imperial sculpture and iconography through coins, monuments and buildings would act as the orator and rhetorical employ in Augustan rhetoric. Repetition of key ideas and imitation of the moral heroes of the past through the sculpture and iconography were just some of the specific employs of this new Augustan rhetoric. See George A. Kennedy, The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman world, 300 B.C.-A.D. 300 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 378-384, at 381-383.
penance he wished only to be applied after the council of bishops had gathered which was only likely to occur after the persecutions had ended. The *confessores* Lucianus and Celerinus (contemporaries of Cyprian) readily provided forgiveness to the lapsed. This was the laxist position represented by the party of Felicissimus but was seen in the same light as Novatian’s rigorist position (the offering of forgiveness only at one’s deathbed).

Brent explains that the Carthaginian *Ara Pacis* “would have stood on the straight, major road that ran from the NW to the SE of the city”, projecting the implications of peace brought about by Augustus, his divine father Julius, and his successors, through various imagery including the *matrona*-goddess. Brent explains that the Carthaginian *Ara Pacis* was evidently in view at the altar in which Carthaginian Roman citizens were asked to make sacrifice to the gods and goddesses. Roman pagan formation would have instilled in the minds of these citizens, the high value of *pax and concordia* (especially seen in a time of disunity and disintegration) and the achievement of this was by following the orders of the *pontifex maximus* Augustus (the Roman Emperor as high priest of the gods and goddesses of the Roman Empire), of making sacrifice. George Kennedy not only theorized that Augustus executed his own form of rhetoric, a “verbal and visual persuasion”, but specifically also named the *Ara Pacis Augustae* as the best example of this new Augustan rhetoric. Kennedy described it as “not oratory, but a manifestation of epideictic rhetoric, an eloquent

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136 Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 34.
137 See footnote 138, p.115 above of this thesis.
139 Epideictic Oratory is one of the three forms of Roman oratory (the other two are judicial and deliberative). It is also called “ceremonial discourse” as it is usually
encomium of Rome and Augustus with its own invention, arrangement, style, and delivery." 140 Augustus employed a group of writers who were able to give expression to the pax Augusta: they were able to channel “communications in both directions: not only the Emperor’s wishes, but the objections and suggestions of the poets” such as Virgil and Horace. 141

Cyprian would have been competing with the promise of peace and unity exemplified by the matrona in the Ara Pacis as he argued for the unity existing in the one Church through the one Mother (rather than the many mother goddesses and matrons upheld by the Roman state) in saying:

…the Church forms a unity, however far she spreads and multiplies by the progeny of her fecundity…Our Lord’s Church is radiant with light and pours her rays over the whole world; but it is one and the same light which is spread everywhere, and the unity of her body suffers no division. She spreads her branches in generous growth over all the earth, she extends her abundant streams ever further; yet one is the head-spring, one the source, one the mother who is prolific in her offspring, generation after generation: of her womb are we born, of her milk are we fed, of her Spirit our souls draw their life-breath. 142.

Not only would Carthiginians be constantly exposed to this unifying maternal imagery but also the virtuous matrona-goddess in coinage, executed during a ceremony such as a funeral. “Its primary object is to praise or censure someone, not to persuade others to do or not to do something.” Its special topics would be “(1) virtues and vices and (2) personal assets and achievements. In praising someone, we stress the person’s good qualities and notable accomplishments; in censuring someone, we stress his or her bad qualities and the absence of significant accomplishments.” In Edward P. J. Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (New York/ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 139-140.


141 Kennedy, The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman world, 384.

142 De Unit 5, in Cyprian, ”The Lapsed (ACW)”, Bevenot, 47-48. Latin: “…Ecclesia una est quae in multitudinem latius incremento fecunditatis extenditur…Sic et ecclesia, Domini luce perfusa, per orbem totum radios suos porrigit, unum tamen lumen est quadruplo diffunditur nec unitas corporis separatur; ramos suos in uniusam terram copia ubertatis extendit; profluentes larviter riuos latius spandit, unum tamen caput est et origo una, et una mater fecunditatis successibus copiosa: Illius fetu nascimur, illius lacte nutrimur, spiritu eius animamur. CCSL3:253.128-142.
funerary monuments, and portraiture of imperial mothers.\textsuperscript{143} Kleiner and Matheson show that this occurred especially in the projection of Livia as ideal \textit{matrona}. Women copied her hair and dress as a way of putting on her characteristics (beauty, fertility, fidelity) and in turn creating positive moral consequences for their society.\textsuperscript{144} Another example of \textit{matrona}-goddesses utilized for Roman propaganda is seen in the cuirass on one of the many statues of Augustus to be found. The detail showed a figure of \textit{Tellus} “holding a cornucopia and surrounded by infants.” This detail communicated that “Thanks to the Emperor’s victories, happiness and opulence reign throughout the Empire.”\textsuperscript{145} Again, it is through the figure of the woman that a sense of peace and security was communicated as an assurance for the ancient Roman minded viewer.

Whilst Tertullian had low regard for the \textit{matrona}, Cyprian showed high regard for her and the purity and ideals she represented:

Theatre scenes...should cause you distress and shame...You learn to commit adultery while you are looking at it...the matron [\textit{matrona}], who perhaps had gone to the play chaste [\textit{pudica}], returns from the play unchaste (\textit{Ad Donatum} 8.141-50).\textsuperscript{146}

As representative of the peace and unity sought by the Empire, the Roman \textit{matrona} encapsulated the same values that Cyprian sought to project in his imaging of Mother Church: fecund, loyal to one spouse, morally upright, a stabilizing image of unity in the midst of Empiric and ecclesial disunity (for


\textsuperscript{144} See Kleiner, ""Her Parents Gave Her the Name Claudia"," 9. On the practice of women copying Livia’s coiffure, see Winkes, "Livia," 29-39. Livia is portrayed not only on the Augustan \textit{Ara Pacis} but also on the \textit{Ara Pietatis} which Kleiner argued was one of the two most significant monuments in Augustan and Julio-Claudian Rome, in ibid., 37; Kleiner, "Family Ties," 46.

\textsuperscript{145} See fig.58b commentary in Zanker, \textit{Roman Art}, 91.

\textsuperscript{146} Brent, \textit{Cyprian and Roman Carthage}, 52-53.
example, *Eps. 74.6.2; 74.7.2; De Unit 5*). It is interesting to observe that whilst Cyprian rejected the notion of sacrifice at the pagan altar, he pursues the ideas of unity and stability projected by a pagan altar, the Augustan *Ara Pacis*.

9. A Jewish basis for use of the mother metaphor

Marcel Poorthuis provides another justification for Cyprian’s utilization of the maternal metaphor claiming that it is in congruence with the Jewish Talmud. First he highlights Cyprian’s desire to designate ‘Father’ to God.\(^{147}\) This was to contrast with Tertullian’s old nemesis, the Marcionites, who claimed baptism in the name of Christ without the necessity of acknowledging other persons of the Trinity—the God of Abraham and the Holy Spirit.\(^ {148}\) Poorthuis claims, “Cyprian adduces the precept to honour one’s father and mother to drive home his point” (from Matthew 15:4): of God as paternal figure and its significance.\(^ {149}\) To complete the picture of parental coupling and allegiance to this couple, the Church is designated the image of ‘mother’. Poorthuis says this not only critiques the Marcionite stance but also adds a doctrinal and communal aspect to the acknowledgement of God the Father. He states the motherhood of the Church is doctrinal because it would be heretical to dishonor or reject the ‘father’ and ‘mother’; only the waters of baptism could wash away such serious sin. It is communal because Cyprian could apply his inside-outside

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\(^ {148}\) Poorthuis says this is why Cyprian was highly Trinitarian in his baptismal formula. Ibid., 260.

\(^ {149}\) Ibid., 261.
rhetoric on arguing against schism.\textsuperscript{150} For it is only the Church as Mother who baptizes (\textit{Ep.} 73.7) and not anyone beyond herself (such as the Marcionites). As well, whilst Valentinian Gnosis might emphasise individual spiritual faith, the Church as a community would counteract this. Even those who undertake martyrdom but deny God the Father are not saved. By coupling God the Father with the Church as Mother, Cyprian is able to create the context within which to delineate between the true faith (Trinitarian, Baptismal, Communal) and the false (the Marcionic overtly Christological emphasis, Baptism outside Mother Church, Gnostic individualistic faith).

Poorthuis shows that Cyprian presents the Matthean command to honour mother and father. But in this we also find the call to observe the high Roman ideal of \textit{pietas}. Yet, for Poorthuis the Mother-Father pairing is no equal partnership. He says Jewish tradition suppressed the idea of heavenly coupling as it was in opposition to Israel’s monotheistic faith. Poorthuis argues that by giving the Mother image to the human community, Cyprian keeps the divine image for the Father (and hence the monotheistic character of the faith) without abandoning the mother-father polemic. Poorthuis says that in a sense Cyprian avoids the idea of a divine couple.\textsuperscript{151}

He then points further to the Jewish Talmud for evidence of interpreting God as Father and the Church as Mother. It says:

\begin{quote}
Whoever enjoys something without saying a blessing, robs God. Father means God, and mother means the community of Israel, as it is said: My son, hear the instruction of your Father and forsake not the teaching of your Mother.\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{150} Poorthuis points to Cyprian’s famous statement in Epistle 74: “one cannot have God for a Father without the Church for his mother” to explicate on this point.

\textsuperscript{151} Poorthuis, “Cyprian and the Tolerance of our Mother the Church,” 261.

\textsuperscript{152} Prov 1:8; \textit{Bab. Talmud}, Berakhot 35b, in footnote 67, in ibid., 263.
Moreover, he claims that in Jewish exegesis, the dove is traditionally interpreted as symbol of the community of Israel.\textsuperscript{153} As mentioned already, i Cyprian used Song of Songs 6:8-9 in Ep 69 to image the ‘loved one’ as mother, daughter, and dove all at once. Similarly, he used

\begin{quote}
Tis declared by speaking:\textit{perfect one but the favourite of her who bore her.} his Song of Songs passage forms the inspiration for \textit{De Unitate} 4 emphasizing the unity and oneness of the Church.
\end{quote}

he existence of the maternal image for the Church can be seen as not only critiquing Marcionic overtly Christological claims but also delineating between outsiders and insiders of the Christian faith, and detracting from an individualistic faith. It conjures the traditional Jewish image of the community as dove and mother. It supports the Matthean command to honour father and mother but also the Roman value of \textit{pietas}.\textsuperscript{154} For Poorthuis, the purpose of the Cyprianic maternal ecclesial image is seen in the image of the insiders being fed from the mother’s breasts. He argues along with Delahaye and Plumpe that it is a pastoral image for Cyprian, showing the intimacy, “abundance, fruitfulness, and blessing” promised to the insider from the Mother, if he or she chooses to stay inside the Church, his or her Mother.\textsuperscript{155}

Poorthuis deals with what Brent, Peper, and Burns do not: he presents a Jewish basis for using ‘Mother’ for the Church and also shows that its employment is in response to particular heresies and has scriptural basis. Poorthuis’ strong argument for the maternal metaphor’s Jewish basis may have some connection with Rankin’s observation that there were a

\textsuperscript{153} Footnote 1 in ibid., 243.
\textsuperscript{154} Though Poorthuis claims that the coupling of God the Father with the Church as Mother is rare in Patristic literature but that the image of the Church as female and maternal are more abundant. This may be true but he only provides one reference as his evidence--the Shepherd of Hermas’ Vision. Ibid., 263.
\textsuperscript{155} ibid., 264.
significant number of Jews in Carthage as evidenced by the 200-tomb cemetery and presence of a synagogue. But it may also acknowledge that the early Christians’ Jewish roots remained a foundational platform for Christian teaching and practice, particularly against the Marcionites. These reasons indicate that the maternal ecclesial metaphor was employed not simply out of observing the tradition of naming the Church as such; Cyprian’s audience was also of the Jewish and New Testament minded, culturally conditioned as both Roman and African, tempted by Marcionite and gnostic Valentinian thinking. Cypian developed the Mother Church metaphor in new and powerful ways in order to counter the challenges to the Christian faith that had been brought up by his complex Carthaginian content.

From Brent, Peper, Burns and Poorthuis we can conclude that Cyprian’s imaging of Mother Church had various sources: the image as being traditional, as a reaction to heresies, from Jewish imaging of community paired with Father-God, from scripture (Song of Songs and Matthew) and from Roman culture in Cyprian’s specific use of pietas in association with Mother Church. To this list this thesis adds the imperial Roman imaging of ‘mother’ as representing peace, unity and continuity in a time of chaos. Brent briefly discussed how ancient Roman mothers portrayed as goddesses on the ara pacis monument communicated this Roman desire for peace but never goes to the extent of connecting this to Cyprian’s use of the Church as Mother metaphor. From what has been observed of Cyprian’s dominant uses of the maternal ecclesial metaphor, the

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156 Rankin, From Clement to Origen, 56.
picture that has emerged resembles that of the idealized Roman *matrona* exemplified by the Empress Livia.

**Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that whilst Cyprian introduces more complex images of Mother Church where she is mother-bride-sister in *Ep.69.2.1* or mother-daughter at *De Unit 4* or mother-virgin at *De Hab 3*, for the most part, his Mother Church concentrates on a singular maternal image that significantly parallels the celebrated though idealised ancient Roman *matrona*. Like Tertullian’s Mother Church she births. In contrast, Cyprian does not emphasize her teaching function. Similarly, she is imaged as a spouse to Father-God but also an exclusive spouse to Christ, in order to deeply emphasize that only the Church, which acknowledged Father and Son, alongside the Holy Spirit, could claim to provide true baptism to its members.

Cyprian’s Mother Church is a mother to infants (*De Unit 5*), gathering its children to the *sinum matris* (*Eps.16.4.2, 45.1.2, 59.13.2, De Lap 2, De Unit 23*), and in short is presented as a picture of the idyllic (*De Unit 4*), resembling the seated mother with her two infants from a panel on the famous *Ara Pacis Augustae* monument. A similar panel was present in Carthage and was very much in view when Roman-Carthiginian citizens were asked to sacrifice under the Decian decree. This panel with the mother and two infants sought to communicate abundance, blessedness, and fruitfulness, which in turn communicated an assured peace (*pax deorum*, *concordia*, stability and continuity for the Roman Empire and its inhabitants. Cyprian’s call to unity and order, repeatedly requesting the faithful to remain or return to the Mother, echoes the general Roman
imperial desire of the third century for unity and order in an era of crisis, represented through the projection of these desires onto the idealised mothers portrayed on the *Ara Pacis* monument, most especially the seated mother with two infants. The significance of the mothers of the *Ara Pacis* monument lies not in their political clout but rather in their nurturing function, which contributed to the Augustan ideal of peace through their marital fidelity and fecundity. Such imagery of the ‘mother’ was not only present in the Augustan monument but throughout the Roman Empire via the mediums of coinage, portraiture, dress and coiffure, literature, and funerary art. This in itself was part of the Augustan propaganda that was not only rhetorical but also employed visual persuasion. The Carthaginian Christian community would have been immersed in such imagery of the romanticized Roman mother and the associations given to her—“a feeling of security and trust in the permanence of the Empire” through her fecundity and fidelity. By presenting the Church similarly as this fecund and faithful idealized mother, Cyprian’s call to unity under Mother Church echoed the Roman imperial desire for unity under the seated mother of the *Ara Pacis* panel.

Cyprian’s Mother Church is more than a general image of a mother who births and nurtures infants. It resembles the more concrete cultural image, ideals and values as given form and substance by the idealized ancient Roman mother and her relationship with her children. This Mother Church possessed the Roman mother’s characteristic grief ("lacrimas matris ecclesiae," Ep. 10.4.4). Cyprian described the abandoning of the Church as an act of *impietas* towards one’s mother (Ep.44.3.2). Like the imperial

Roman *matrona*, it had an intercessorial role, expressing maternal devotion (*Ep. 15.2.2*) but also maternal ambition where the mother depended upon her children to increase her own status (*De Hab 3*). Its exclusive spousal status paralleled the Roman mother as *univira*, one who also promoted the Augustan moral reforms (*leges Julia and Poppae*) which was part of the Augustan programme for peace in the Empire. In all, Cyprian’s call to unity under the Mother Church was an imaging of the faithful as children in relationship with this Mother who Cyprian projected as the sole source and mediation of Christian truth, faith, and salvation.

Poorthuis shows that Cyprian’s utilization of the maternal ecclesial metaphor is a reaction to the Marcionite rejection of other persons of the Trinity besides Christ—and connected this to Cyprian’s desire to acknowledge God as Father and in turn the Church as Mother. This adds a doctrinal and communal dimension not just to his response to the Marcionites but also to the Valentinian Gnostics and others who claimed to be within the Catholic Church but have actually been baptized outside of it. The Mother as community and Father as God aligns with Jewish tradition and symbolism in the Talmud and adduces the Matthean command to honour mother and father, which also aligns with the Roman value of the observance of *pietas*. But like Peper, Burns, Rankin, Delahaye and Plumpe, Poorthuis does not address the Roman Carthaginian mindset—how they may have imaged the mother and why the metaphor was acceptable in the way Cyprian presented it predominantly as the ancient Roman *matrona*.

Cyprian’s development of the maternal ecclesial image in dialogue with the Roman *matrona* provides a new and expanded understanding of the Church, making it fall into Soskice’s category of “living metaphor”. In his
discussion on the Song of Songs, Cyprian experiments with different feminine-maternal imagery (mother-daughter, mother-virgin, mother-sister-bride, mother-bride) and he often utilizes these dissonant images to communicate different points about the Church. There is a vitality and tension to the Mother Church metaphor as its referent changes over time—initially it was the community, then the Bishop himself, and finally the college of Bishops in dialogue with the entire community. Mother Church as the formidable Roman *matrona* tapped into the collective experience of disunity and anxiety of Roman citizens and their need for unity and harmony. Even if Cyprian had not consciously intended to image the Church as the ancient Roman *matrona*, the parallels were present since this esteemed image permeated his culture. Cyprian’s use of this metaphor thus brings the associative network of the Carthaginian Christian tradition of Tertullian into dialogue with that of the Roman matron as well as the Jewish scriptural tradition.
CHAPTER IV: AMBROSE

THE CHURCH IS EVERY FEMALE
BRIDE, VIRGIN, MOTHER, SISTER, DAUGHTER,

WIDOW AND QUEEN

For Ambrose, it was a given that the Church was a mother. His greater concern was convincing his audience that the Church was necessarily a virgin if it was to be a mother.¹ Patristic scholars such as Hunter, Laughton and Clark do not focus on Ambrose’s combination of the two contradictory images into the one.² Rather their concern is about how this paradoxical image, the Mother-Virgin, previously attributed solely to the Church, became transposed onto the order of ecclesial virgins. In Ambrose “[t]he ‘virgin bride,’ traditionally used as a figure of the church, became the celibate Christian, particularly the virgin female, and ultimately the preeminent virgin, Mary.”³ Thus, rather than Mary initially being a type of the Church, this imagery would only subsequently be applied to her. Up until this stage, when Mary was called a ‘virgin’ in Patristic writings it was in terms of Christology (making that point that Jesus is truly the Son of God) and not related to ecclesiology. From now on, she is increasingly used


² ibid.

³ Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church," 283.
as a type of the Church to exemplify its mother-virgin characteristics and as a model of fruitful virginity for its members to emulate.

In this chapter I will argue that Ambrose was the first to impose the motherhood-virginity of the Church as an ideal state of life for its individual members. Once he established the concept of the Mother-Virgin Church, Ambrose could argue for the value of ecclesial virginity and even the value of celibacy over marriage in the wider Christian community. This chapter will then explore Ambrose’s development of Mary as typus of the Mother-Virgin Church, which he utilized to reinforce this image and thus bolster his arguments against his Valentinian and Arian opponents. It will also explore other feminine imagery of the Church, supported by Ambrose’s utilization of texts from Song of Songs, including daughter, sister, bride. It was interesting to discover that among the texts explored for this chapter, all but one reference to the Church as virgin identifies the metaphor as inseparable from the image of Church as bride/spouse. It is without surprise then that one finds Ambrose arguing for the Mother-Virgin-Spouse as the Church, expressed collectively as a community but also particularly in the individual members.

4 Chapter I discussed how Irenaeus pointed to the martyrs as being like a mother, reflecting the motherhood of the Church as a community but he does not identify Christian individuals as virgin or mother, only in a collective sense. Cyprian and Tertullian described the Church as virgin or mother but in separate passages that do not link these two metaphors together.

5 Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church": 286.

6 De Fide; De Spiritu sancto; De Incarnationis Dominicae sacramento; De Mysteriis; Libri duo De Poenitentia; Hexaëmeron; De Paradiso; De Cain et Abel; De Noe et Arca; De Patriarchis; De fuga saeculi; De Elia et je junio; De Tobia; De Nabuthe Jezraelita; De interpretatione Job et David; Apologia prophetae David ad Theodosium Augustum; Ennarationes in xii. Psalmos Davidicos; Commentaries on Psalms 1, 35-40, 43, 45, 47, 48, 61; Expositio Psalmi cviii (98); Expositio Evangelii Secundam Lucam; De Officiis; De Virginibus; De Virginitate; De Vidius; De Institutione virginis; De Exhortatione virginitatis; Contra Aulsi oderat; De Excessu fratris Satyri; De obitu Valentiniani Consolatio; De obitu Theodisi oratio; and Epistles 1-91.

7 DeVid 16; Eps63.36, 63.37; DeVirg 1.31; ExVir1.28; ExpLuc2§§7,57; Ps118Serm1§4. Only Ep31.3 did not use another female ecclesial image alongside the Church as virgin image.
**Background & Significance**

Aurelius Ambrosius was born at Trier around 339 CE but brought up in Rome.\(^8\) He grew up in a Roman palace where clergy often visited and his sister Marcellina was a consecrated virgin for the Church.\(^9\) He was the Governor of Northern Italy, based in Milan that supplanted “Rome as the centre of the western Empire south of the Alps.”\(^10\) He became bishop of Milan in 374 CE, the first to be attributed this merit of having high office in both the secular and ecclesiastical worlds. Ivor Davidson describes him as not coming “from the top drawer of senatorial society” even if “he did hail from a privileged background.”\(^11\) Ambrose’s father was a praetorian prefect of the Gauls in the court of Constantine II but this did not earn him or his heirs an “automatic entrée into patrician society.”\(^12\) Ambrose and his brother Uranius Satyrus had to earn their place by attending to all the required “social mores” such as receiving the appropriate education in the liberal arts (“classical literature, rhetoric, and the law”) which would prepare them for imperial service.\(^13\) This would explain why Peter Brown would comment that Ambrose was not “simply a Roman grandee”, coming from a senatorial family, “[h]e belonged to the more insecure and

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\(^10\) Lenox-Conyngham, “The Church in St Ambrose of Milan”: 212.


\(^12\) ibid.

\(^13\) ibid.
interesting class of young nobles who sought Imperial service because they needed power, and relished it.”

This background of insecurity and desire for power explains in part Ambrose’s high concern for the establishment of his authority as bishop as well as a need to form a stable identity and the authority of the Church amidst surrounding heresies (as will be discussed in the section below on his rhetorical method). Craig Satterlee says that Ambrose’s congregation best remembers him “not through dramatic events like facing down the court as it attempted to seize a basilica or compelling the emperor to do public penance, but as a liturgical presence, preaching and presiding at the celebration of the Eucharist.” However, he points out: “history remembers Ambrose for defending the Church against Arianism and paganism and for defining the relationship between Church and state.” Andrew Lenox-Conyngham presents a contrasting picture: where Ambrose was expected to take interest in “the Church as an institutional and juridical organization…he was in fact overwhelmingly interested in its spiritual aspect”, seeing it as “the City of God and as the Kingdom of God into which believers are received.”

Whether Ambrose sought the Church’s political power or to develop its spiritual aspect, or indeed both, his writings show an obsession with virginity, which to him represents seeking purity from the bodily and sinful taint of sexual intercourse. Brown states that this obsession with purity is

16 Ibid.
17 Lenox-Conyngham, “The Church in St Ambrose of Milan”: 211.
18 Joyce Salisbury shows Ambrose’s praise of and obsession with virginity over sexual relations even in marriage. Despite this, Ambrose did acknowledge that it was the
transferred over to the Church in Ambrose’s preoccupation of asserting the Catholic Church as “an inviolably holy body, possessed of unchallengeable, because divine, authority” over the Roman society. This ecclesial image was constantly presented as Ambrose negotiated the precarious situation of the Nicene-Homoian debates of his time whilst seeking to establish his authority in the Church. Ambrose was bishop of Milan for twenty-three years (373-397 CE) until his death on Easter Eve in April 4, 397 CE.

Ambrose’s Rhetorical Method

According to Brown, Ambrose read the Greek philosophers such as Philo, Origen, Plotinus as well as his Cappadocian contemporaries. However, rather than nourishing a contemplative theology, his Greek training developed his singular and unrelenting dualistic approach expressed in the view of a Church against the world and the heavenly against the unholy body. Brown argues that for Ambrose, to be a Catholic Christian entailed no blurring of boundaries between two perceived opposites such as soul and body, Church and saeculum, “Bible truth and ‘worldly’ guesswork” and to do so would invite the “ancient shame of the Roman male”--to “become soft or effeminated.”


20 Satterlee, Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching, 84.
22 ibid., 346-347, 349.
23 Peter Brown, The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 347. Salisbury provides an extension to this argument—as the body and spirit, earthly and heavenly were dichotomised, so did Ambrose along with contemporaries such as Jerome and
Despite his dualistic, hard-line approach, Ambrose was famed for his preaching—to the extent that Augustine, himself an outstanding preacher, “refers only to Ambrose’s attractive style” and credits him with his conversion because of his preaching.\(^\text{24}\) Augustine says both the believer and skeptic “hung keenly on his lips” because of both the content and style of his preaching.\(^\text{25}\) Augustine had delayed his conversion to Christianity because of the inconsistencies he found in scripture.\(^\text{26}\) Ambrose’s mystagogical interpretation and preaching of the scriptures helped Augustine to reconcile those inconsistencies as he said himself:

I delighted to hear Ambrose, often asserting in his sermons to the people, as a principle on which he must insist emphatically, *The letter is death-dealing, but the spirit gives life*. This he would tell them as he drew aside the veil of mystery and opened to them the spiritual meaning of passages which, taken literally, would seem to mislead. He said nothing which offended me, even though I still did not know whether what he said was true.\(^\text{27}\)

His style of preaching was attractive because he readily appropriated pagan concepts, presenting an array of philosophers and their sayings only to demolish their arguments.\(^\text{28}\) He would also present “extensive adaptations from other authors…Hebrew etymologies, and quotations in Greek…to

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\(^{24}\) Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan’s Method of Mystagogical Preaching*, 89.


\(^{28}\) ibid.
suggest the range and depth of possible meanings [of passages of Scripture] rather than to explain them systematically."

Satterlee argues that Ambrose “spoke the Bible” and “sounded like the Bible”, believing its mode of expression was “for pastoral speech”. He accomplished this biblical mode of expression by:

…assimilating in one homogenous speech the wealth of hundreds of scriptural memories through multiple and thin fragments, sometimes reducing a biblical reminiscence to a single suggestive word that explodes with meaning in the ears of his hearers.

This explains why scriptural passages such as from the Song of Songs, utilized in Ambrose’s use of the Church as mother, bride, sister, and daughter, were often adopted and eased right into his texts as if he had spoken their very words himself. The repeated use of certain passages especially Song 4:12 (“A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed.”), also had the effect of normalizing various female images for the Church, imprinting into the mind of the hearer that the Church imaged was not necessarily a single ultra-female individual. For together mother-daughter-sister-bride-virgin would form an incongruous image. Ambrose’s Mother Church would thus be presented in a multi-feminine perspective as shown:

And we ought to wonder at the greatness of the commendation of it which the Prophet, or rather Christ in the person of the Prophet, has expressed in one short verse. A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a

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29 ibid., 91-92.
30 ibid., 92.
31 ibid. Further, Satterlee comments that Ambrose juxtaposes scriptural texts of “disparate styles” into the one “allusive speech”, showing that Ambrose was not intent on proper exegetical approaches but on an eisegetical approach to support his allusive speeches.
32 Texts that image the Church as female and used Song of Song passages were: DeMys39,40,57,58; DeSat2.118-119; DeFide3.74, 4.19; Eps41.18,63.36; DeInstVir 1.5,1.6; Ps118Serm2§§10,11.
fountain sealed. Christ says to this Church, whom He would have a virgin without spot or wrinkle. Virginity is a fertile garden, which bears many fruits of a good odour; a garden inclosed because it is surrounded on all sides with the wall of chastity; a fountain sealed, in that virginity is the fountain and source of modesty…  

**Mother Church Texts and Contexts**

Of the 129 plus extant literary works of Ambrose including 91 epistles, at least 20 references from 14 works refer to the Church as a mother implicitly (by reference to her children or her birthing) or explicitly as shown below:

**Implicit references:**
- “Commentary on Psalm 47 §10”, in “Commentary on Twelve Psalms” Ennarationes in psalmos duodecim (Ps47§10)
- “Commentary on Psalm 118”, Sermon 5 §18, Expositio in Psalmum CXVII (Ps118Serm5§18)
- “Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Luke”, Book2§7 and §57 Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam (ExpLk2Bk2 §§7,57)
- Letters 21.36 (Sermo Contra Auxentium), 41.20 and 70.16, Epistolae (Eps21.36(Sermo Aux)41.20,70.16)
- “On the Mysteries” n.58, De Mysterium (DeMys58)
- “On Repentance” Book 2 n. 25, 72, De Poenitentia (DePoen2.25,2.72)

**Explicit references:**
- “Concerning Virgins” 1.31 and 1.49, De Virginibus (DeVirg1.31,1.49)
- “Concerning Widows” n.58, De Vidius (DeVid58)

DePoen 2.92
Eps.22.7 and 62.3

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“Of the Incarnation of Our Lord” n.13,  
*De Incarnationis Dominicae sacramento (DeIncarn13)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Image of Church as Mother</strong></th>
<th><strong>Church as Mother as Text</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Ps47§10** | painful childbirth  
*(in Ecclesia... magni sunt dolores,  
sicut parturientes, donec formetur  
Christus in nobis)*[^34] |
| **Ps118Serm5§18** | offering her children for  
Christ  
*(ut pro Christo filios suos offerat)*[^35] |
| **ExpLk2Bk2§7** | childbirth  
*(Concepit nos uirgo de spiritu,  
parit nos uirgo sine gemitu)*[^36] |
| **ExpLk2Bk2§57** | childbirth  
*(eo quod solus sanctae  
ecclesiae uirginis ad generandos  
populos dei immaculatae  
fecunditatis aperiret genital  
secretum)*[^37] |
| **ExpLk2Bk10§28** | abused pregnant mother  
*(quibus ecclesia parturiens totius  
corporis conculcatione uexatur)*[^38] |
| **Ep21.36(Sermo Contra Aux)** | Emperor as son of the Church  
*(imperator Ecclesiae filius esse  
dicatur)*[^39] |
| **Ep22.7** | Church of Milan as  
mother  
*(Ecclesiam  
Mediolanensem,  
jam plurimorum matrem  
filiorum)*[^40] |

[^34]: PL14: 1150.  
[^35]: PL15: 1257.  
[^36]: CCSL14.33: 105-106.  
[^38]: CCSL14.354:  
[^39]: PL16: 1018.  
[^40]: PL16: 1021.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ep41.20</th>
<th>mother who heals with oil (Ecclesia autem habet oleum, quo suorum vulnera foveit)⁴¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ep62.3</td>
<td>mother of your piety (ad matrem pietatis tuae Ecclesiam)⁴²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ep70.16</td>
<td>childbirth (sicut adventit Ecclesiae, quae peperit plures, quam quae filios habebat)⁴³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeVirg1.31</td>
<td>childbirth (fecunda partu)⁴⁴ mother in offspring (mater est prole)⁴⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeVirg1.49</td>
<td>anxious for the prosperity of her children (…Ecclesia, quae tenerae prolis sollicitia succesu)⁴⁶ maternal protection (maternae praesidio)⁴⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExVir1.81</td>
<td>daughters of the Church (filiae Ecclesiae)⁴⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeMys58</td>
<td>exhorting her children (Unde et Ecclesia…hortatur filios suos)⁴⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DePoen2.25</td>
<td>children of the Church (fillii Ecclesiae)⁵⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DePoen2.61</td>
<td>children of the Church (Ecclesia filios)⁵¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DePoen2.72</td>
<td>children in bosom of Church (in Ecclesia nutritus sinu)⁵²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DePoen2.92</td>
<td>weeping mother Church (Fleat pro te, mater Ecclesia)⁵³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴¹ PL16: 1118.
⁴² PL16: 1188.
⁴³ PL16: 1238.
⁴⁴ PL16: 197.
⁴⁵ PL16: 197.
⁴⁸ PL16: 360.
⁴⁹ PL16: 408.
⁵⁰ PL16: 503.
⁵¹ PL16: 512.
⁵² PL16: 514.
⁵³ PL16: 519.
For Ambrose, the Church as Mother is generally used as an implicit image: in the indication that “she” ("Ecclesia") has “children” ("filios"), or in the imaging of fecundity ("fecunditas") or parturition ("parturientes"). Ambrose takes for granted that his audience already images the Church as a “mother” since he often does not name it a “mother” but goes on to name its maternal actions which are birthing ("parturientes", Ps47§10; ExpLk2Bk2§§7,57; DeVirg1.31, Ep70.16), weeping ("fleat", DePoen2.92), exhorting ("hortatur", DeMys58), healing ("suorum vulnera fovet", Ep41.20), offering its children for Christ ("ut pro Christo filios suos offerat", Ps118 Serm5§18), bringing them up in its ‘bosom’ ("a secreto matris Ecclesiae", DeIncarn13), experiencing anxiety for their success ("Ecclesia, quae tenerae prolis sollicita succesu", DeVirg1.49), or simply by assuming the Church has children ("filios", ExVir1.81; DePoen2.25,2.61; Ep21.36).

Whilst Ambrose’s Mother Church is personified in her weeping, exhorting and so forth, its main maternal functions lie in the initial stages of motherhood. They are: first, to birth the faithful (Ps47§10; ExpLk2Bk2§§7,57; Eps 62.3,70.16; De Virg1.31); and second, to encourage the growth of Christ within each individual faithful (“there are keen and severe sufferings in the Church...These are the sharp pangs of child-birth

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54 PL16: 252.
55 PL16: 821.
until Christ is formed in us”, *Ps47§10*).

The maternal role thus does not remain with the Church corporate. Rather Ambrose allows for its transfer onto each member. Including then the individual as representing Mother Church, birthing Christ within the soul, the number of references to ‘Mother Church’ increases to at least 24 references (including now *Ps47§11, ExpLk2Bk2§26, ExpLk2Bk10§§24-25*):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image of Church as Mother</th>
<th>Individual as Mother to Spirit of salvation (in utero suae mentus accepit spiritum salutis)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ps47§11</em></td>
<td>Individual as Mother to the Word, to Christ (Sunt enim quae abortiuum excludant uerbum, antequam partiant, sunt quae in utero Christum habeant, sed nondum formauerint)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ExpLk2Bk2§26</em></td>
<td>Pregnant Individual to Christ (omnis enim anima accipit dei uerbum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ExpLk2Bk10§24</em></td>
<td>Individual as Mother to the Word, to Christ (qua parturit uerbum Christum parturit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ExpLk2Bk10§25</em></td>
<td>Individual as Mother to the Word, to Christ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each Church member, the maternal ecclesial task is not to birth another member of the Church. Instead, it is to birth Christ within one’s soul (“Ipse est et puer quem parturit, qui in utero suae mentus accepit spiritum salutis”).

The pre-condition to ecclesial motherhood is the reception of “the Spirit of salvation” (*Is 26:18*). Even after receiving the Spirit, there is no guarantee that Christ will be born in the individual soul:

But not all bring forth children, not all are perfect; not all can say: ‘We have brought forth the spirit of salvation on earth’ (*Is 26:18*). Not all are Mary, who conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit, and gave birth to the Word. There are those who

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57 *Ps47§10.* PL14:1150.
abort the Word before its birth; there are those who carry Christ in their womb, but as yet He is not formed.  

The Spirit conceives Christ in the womb of the mind or soul but it is the individual who gives birth to Christ in the mind. Ambrose makes a distinction between the conception and birth of Christ by stating that conception is the planting of the Word of God within the chaste soul (“For every soul receives the Word of God—on condition that it keeps its chastity and that free from vice it preserves its purity immaculate”) but birthing is dependent upon the individual’s response to the “Father’s will”:

Do the Father’s will (Fac uoluntatem patris) and you will be Christ’s mother (ut Christi mater sis). Many have conceived Christ but have never brought Him into the light of day. She who brings forth justice, brings forth Christ: she who brings forth wisdom, brings forth Christ. She who bears the Word, carries Christ.

Then again sometimes the two concepts are combined or are intermingled:

For every soul that believes conceives and brings forth the Word of God and recognizes His works.

Notably it is these particular stages of motherhood--conception and birthing that Ambrose is most intent in utilizing and exploring for his maternal ecclesiology. This ecclesial fecundity will be dependent upon the

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Church being a “virgin” (ExpLucX§57) or both “virgin” and “spouse” (DeVirg1.31; ExpLucII§7):

So the holy Church, ignorant of wedlock, but fertile in bearing, is in chastity a virgin, yet a mother in offspring. She, a virgin, bears us her children, not by a human father, but by the Spirit. She bears us not with pain, but with the rejoicings of the angels. She, a virgin, feeds us, not with the milk of the body, but with that of the Apostle, wherewith he fed the tender age of the people who were still children. For what bride has more children than holy Church, who is a virgin in her sacraments and a mother to her people, whose fertility even holy Scripture attests, saying “For many more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath a husband”? (Isa 54.1; Gal 4.27) (Quoniam plures filii desertae magis quam ejus quae habet virum?) She has not an husband, but has a Bridegroom (Nostra virum non habet, sed habet sponsum), inasmuch as she, whether as the Church amongst nations, or as the soul in individuals, without any loss of modesty, she weds the Word of God as her eternal Spouse, free from all injury, full of reason.⁶²

Ambrose aligns Mary with the image of Church as wife, virgin, and mother, to provide some insight into the Church’s functions in these roles:

It is good that Mary is both a wife and a virgin, for she is a figure of the Church who is without stain, and yet a spouse. As a virgin she has conceived us by the Spirit; as a virgin she brings us forth without the pangs of labour. There may, too, be another reason why Holy Mary became fruitful by One who was not her husband, for the individual churches—made fruitful by the Holy Spirit and by grace—are visibly united to a mortal bishop.⁶³

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As the Church as spouse, virgin, and mother conceives and gives birth, it is reflected in Mary a wife, mother and virgin who also conceives and gives birth:

A married lady gives Him birth, but a Virgin conceived Him. A wife conceived but a Virgin brought Him forth.⁶⁴

…she was a wife, and she was a virgin. Virgin means that she never had any sexual intercourse with man; while the status of wife preserves her from the stigma of being thought to have lost her virginity once her pregnancy became apparent. The Lord preferred that some should doubt His divine origins rather than that they should cast suspicion on the purity of His Mother.⁶⁵

In a similar manner, just as the Holy Spirit caused the conception of Christ within Mary’s womb, (“No human semen ever entered the sanctuary of the Virgin’s womb, but a stainless seed was placed there by the Holy Spirit”)⁶⁶, so does the Holy Spirit penetrate the Church, which must necessarily be “virginal”, to conceive Christ in the souls of the faithful:

…every soul that believes conceives and brings forth the Word of God and recognizes His works. May Mary’s soul reside in each one of us to rejoice in God. According to the flesh there is only one Mother of Christ, but by faith Christ becomes the fruit of each one. For every soul receives the Word of God—on condition that it keeps chastity and that free from vice it preserves its purity immaculate.⁶⁷

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Excepting Ambrose’s sermons on Psalm 118, the metaphor of Church as spouse appears 19 times in Ambrose’s works, almost as many as his use of Church as mother: in *De Fide* 2.11, 3.71-74; *DeVid* 16, 89; *DeMys* 39, 55-57; *DeSatyri* 2.118-119; *Eps* 31.7, 41.18, 63.36-37; *DeVirg* 1.3; *ExpLk2Bk2§7*. However, in his sermons on psalm 118, it occurs an extra 19 times (*ExpPs118Serm1§§4-5,16; Serm2§§10-11; Serm4§18; Serm5§10,12,13; Serm6§5-6,18,20,24; Serm7§35; Serm13§25; Serm19§26; Serm22§37,39*), making this metaphor the most commonly used of all female ecclesial images within Ambrose’s works.

Ambrose also uses the figures of Church as a sister (*De Fide* 4.19; *Ep*63.36; *DeMys*40; *DeMys*55-58; *DeSat2.118-119; *Ps118Serm1§16; *Ps118Serm5§9*), daughter (*DeMys*40; *Ps118Serm3§9*), and widow (*DeVid*16; *Ep*26.5) but not in conjunction with the image of the ecclesial mother (except in *DeMys*58 where it is imaged as mother-sister). It is more often that when the Church is imaged as a mother, it is less likely to be imaged alongside other female figures except in *DeVirg*1.31 and *ExpLk2Bk2§7* (where it is imaged as mother, virgin and bride at the same time) and in *DeMys*58 and *ExpLk2Bk2§57* (where it is imaged as mother-sister and mother-virgin respectively). Yet the more dominant image of the female Church in a singular female role is as bride or spouse.68

To support the image of the Church as the spouse, bride or betrothed, Ambrose noticeably refers often to passages from the Song of Songs or Canticles (in *De Fide* 3.74; *De Mys* 39, 55-57; *De Satyri* 2.118-119; *Eps*. 41.18, 63.36; *Exp Ps 118 Serm1 §16; Serm2 §§10-11; Serm4 §18;

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68 *De fide* 3.74; *De Mysterium* 39-41, 57, 58; *On the Death of Satyrius* 2.118-119; *Letter* 41.8, 63.36 and *De virginitate*) and sister image (*De Fide* 4.19; *De Mysterium* 40, 55-58; *On the Death of Satyrius* 2.118-119, *Letter* 63.36 and *De virginitate*). Mother Church is given other scriptural justification from Deuteronomy, Corinthians, and Matthew except in *De Mysterium* where *Song of Songs* is used.
Serm5 §§10, 12, 13; Serm6 §§5-6, 18, 20, 24; Serm7 §35; Serm13 §25; Serm19 §26; Serm22 §§37, 39). But Ambrose also utilized Song texts to present every reference to the Church as sister (De Fide 4.19; De Mys 40, 55-58; De Satyri 118-119; Ep. 63.36; Exp Ps 118 Serm 1 §16; Serm 5 §9), as daughter (De Mys 40; Exp Ps 118, Serm3, §9), and in some references to the Church as virgin (Ep 63.36) and mother (De Mys 58; Exp Ps 118 Serm5 §18). Ambrose’s image of the Church as widow (De Vid 16; Ep 26.5) is the only female or feminized ecclesial image that does not utilize the Song texts.

The Song references often speak of a conjugal relationship, which Ambrose utilizes to present the intimate relationship between the Church and Christ as bride and bridegroom–especially in his sermons on psalm 118. An example is shown below:

And the Church answers Him, ‘Who will give Thee to me, my Brother, that didst suck the breasts of my mother? If I find Thee without, I will kiss Thee, and indeed they will not despise me. I will take Thee, and bring Thee into the house of my mother; and into the secret chamber of her that conceived me. Thou shalt teach me.’ (Song 8:1,2)69

And this intimate relationship is not just between the Church collectively and Christ but also between the individual soul and Christ. Here the Church as sister is represented in the individual, in an intimate relationship with Christ:

For Christ standeth at the door of thy soul. Hear Him speaking, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man open to Me, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him,

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and he with Me.’ And the Church saith, speaking of Him:
‘The voice of my brother soundeth at the door.’ (Song 5:2).\footnote{DeFide4.19, in ibid., 264. Latin: “Stat enim Christus ad juanam mentis tuae, audi cum
dicentem: Ecce sto ad januam, et pulso; si quis mihi aperuerit, ingrediar ad illum; et
coenabo cum eo, et ipse mecum (Apoc. III, 20). Et Ecclesia de eo dicit: Vox fratris mei
pulsat ad januam (Cant.V, 2).” PL16:620. Note: It is paragraph 18 rather than 19 in
PL.}

There are remnants of the Roman \textit{matrona} or \textit{materfamilia}\footnote{See previous chapters on Tertullian’s and Cyprian’s Mother Church which outline
extensively the portraits of the \textit{materfamilia} and \textit{matrona}.} in this
Mother Church such as the weeping mother (\textit{DePoen}2.92) and one who
breastfeeds good teachings (“She…feeds us, not with the milk of the body,
but that of the Apostle”, \textit{DeVirg}1.31), and to whom one observes \textit{pietas} (“I
send my son, the deacon Felix…a memorial on behalf of those who have
fled to the Church, the Mother of your Piety”, \textit{Ep}62.3). But for the larger
part it is the image of the Church as bride or spouse that is
emphasised (even if in reality the images are incongruous--for example mother-virgin in
\textit{DeVirg}1.31 and widow-bride in \textit{DeVid}16).
1. The Mother-Virgin-Bride Context

Ambrose’s naming of the Church as virgin, bride, sister, daughter, mother and widow had significant theological, pastoral and apologetic motivations. For him, it was necessary to establish the Church’s virginity as integrally linked with its motherhood. Yet on its own, the argument for the mother-virgin image was problematic. The linking of the bridal metaphor to the mother-virgin rhetoric helped to address issues of cultural sensitivity and ongoing ecclesial struggles. In all of this, the Church as mother remained in Ambrose’s works even if only implicitly indicated and other female ecclesial images were either introduced or more emphasized (bride, virgin, sister, daughter or widow). The prevailing image of Ambrose’s Mother Church was as one who birthed Christians through baptism, a mother to infant. But the precondition for this ecclesial maternity was virginity. These ideas are now explained below.

a) Mother Church is a Virgin

In his writings on the virginity of Mother Church, Ambrose can be credited with successfully promoting the ascetic value of virginity/celibacy in the Church in a way that continues to have a significant impact on the tradition, particularly in Catholic theology and practice. It is no exaggeration to say that Ambrose had an extremely negative view of human sexuality, as can be seen in his arguments that celibacy is superior to marriage. In describing Mary’s holiness as a mother, Ambrose described her virginity by saying: “No human semen ever entered the sacred sanctuary of the Virgin’s womb”.72 For Ambrose, virginity not only countered the human

tendency to sexual immorality (“human flesh is inclined by sexual urges to sin. Our minds and souls are weak, and inextricably attached to vice.”)\(^\text{73}\) but also avoided its consequence—“earthly corruption” (“\textit{terrenae contagia corruptelae}” ).\(^\text{74}\)

In \textit{ExpLk2Bk2}§§7,57, and \textit{DeVirg}1.31, Ambrose presents the Church’s motherhood as inseparably paired with its virginity. Hunter explains this incongruent pairing as the “paradoxical quality of spiritual fertility” of the Church.\(^\text{75}\) As the Church’s virginity is necessary for its maternity, its motherhood is a necessary consequence of its perpetual virginal state, a quality which Ambrose says primarily belongs to Christ and therefore makes the Church properly his bride (\textit{DeVirg}1.31):

And so holy Church, who is free from the stain of intercourse (\textit{immaculata coitu}) and fruitful in childbirth (\textit{fecunda partu}), is a virgin by her chastity (\textit{virgo est castitate}), a mother by her offspring (\textit{mater est prole}). As a virgin she conceived us, full of the Spirit, not of a man; as a virgin she gave birth to us, not with bodily pain, but with the joys of angels. She nourished us, not with bodily milk, but with the milk of the apostle, who nursed the tender infancy of a people that was still growing (cf. 1 Cor 3:2). What married woman\(^\text{76}\) has as many children as does the church, who is a virgin in her sacraments and a mother in her peoples? Her fecundity is given testimony in the words of scripture: ‘For the children of the deserted woman will be greater in number than the children of her who has a husband (Isa. 54:1)’\(^\text{77}\).
Here the Church is a mother ("fruitful in childbirth") but necessarily a virgin ("free from the stain of intercourse") because it is "full of the Spirit". This necessity for the Church to be "full of the Spirit" echoes the ecclesiological debates of Irenaeus, Cyprian and Tertullian where the true Mother Church was the one who could claim the Spirit dwelling in its community\textsuperscript{78} but also that Roman notion of men and women ordered to the spiritual,\textsuperscript{79} and asceticism as a guarantee they became undistracted from that order.\textsuperscript{80} If the Church were not a virgin, it would not be pure\textsuperscript{81} and could not guarantee it possessed the Holy Spirit. Therefore it could not claim to birth true Christians. In addition, Mother Church births without bodily pain since it rebirths persons spiritually, not earthly children. It also nourishes Christians with teachings ("milk of the apostle"—which taps into ancient cultural notions of breastfeeding as passing not only knowledge but also character) to its children who are infants "still growing".

Was it necessary to interlink the Church’s motherhood with its virginity? Laughton observes that from ordination to his death, Ambrose was committed to the cause of promoting virginity especially in women as exemplified in \textit{De Virginibus} (377 CE), \textit{De Virginitate} (378 CE), \textit{De Institutione Virginis} (392 CE), \textit{Exhortatio Virginitatis} (394 CE), and various letters “infused with this ascetic agenda”, especially \textit{Epistles} 72-73.

\textsuperscript{78} See previous chapters of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{79} Salisbury, "The Latin Doctors of the Church on Sexuality": 280.
\textsuperscript{80} Ambrose said himself that it was the natural state of man to engage in sexual intercourse in marriage. At the same time, the natural urge must be avoided if one wished to engage in the spiritual life and moreover the natural ordered state of man. Ibid., 280, 282.
\textsuperscript{81} Ambrose’s view of purity may have derived from the Graeco-Roman notion that sexual intercourse with a woman did not only make a man “sink into a suspect state of emotional dependence on a woman” but also “physiologically, (his) progressive loss of heat threatened to make (him) ‘womanish’” Brown, \textit{The Body and Society}, 19. Cf. also Salisbury, "The Latin Doctors of the Church on Sexuality": 281-282.
which “outspokenly” asserts “the Christian virgin’s superiority to all pagan practitioners of virginity.”

Growing up with a widowed Christian mother and an older sister, Marcellina, a consecrated virgin, Laughton theorised that Ambrose’s cause was personal.

The practice of asceticism through virginity was no new concept in the Roman-influenced city of Milan. Since the time of Augustus’ moral reforms, legislated in the leges Julia (18-17 BCE) and lex Papia Poppaea (9 CE), Dixon says there was an emphasis on female chastity because of questions concerning paternity and inheritance. Adultery and fornication was rampant in the Roman Empire until Augustus introduced laws imposing penalties for ‘sexual transgressions.’ But even before Augustus, Brown takes note that virginity belonged to that “timeless religious landscape”, in the Roman and Greek worlds, where virgin priestesses and prophetesses were seen as vital for the thriving of a community.

Vestal Virginity was one such example. Certain young women were thrust into this service without choice, chosen by their communities, but only for a certain period of their lives. Later they were freed from this service and many went on to marry and have children. Brown contrasted vestal virginity with ecclesial virginity by stating that Vestal Virginity was not “a long lost perfection” to be “recaptured” by both men and women. Rather it presented as an anomaly or suspension of the “normal” process where “a girl moved with little interruption from puberty to child-

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82 Laughton, "Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan", 2-3.
83 ibid., 3.
84 Dixon, The Roman Mother, 72.
85 Brown, The Body and Society, 8.
bearing.”

For it served to highlight woman’s ultimate vocation as mother and wife rather than a statement about sexual abstinence as human perfection. As Brown says: “The presence in some cities of a handful of young girls, chosen by others to forgo marriage, heightened awareness of contemporaries that marriage and childbirth were the unquestioned destiny of all other women.”

From the Roman pagan perspective, the virginal state of a few women (for a small period of their lives) pointed to the ultimate destiny of all women—motherhood for life. In this way motherhood and virginity worked hand-in-hand. But the way Ambrose presents the Mother-Virgin Church is that the two states of motherhood and virginity occur simultaneously.

It is likely that Ambrose received the idea of fruitfulness in virginity from the Vestal Virgin cult. According to Laughton, virginity as represented by the Vestal Virgin cult of imperial Rome imbued purity and holiness. This purity and holiness facilitated a form of “fruitful fertility”: the sacrifice of the individual’s fertility enabled the fertility of the state, its constant regeneration and assurance of continued living (in peace and harmony) for generations to come. As Laughton describes it, “The Vestal fire [which the Vestal Virgins kept lit constantly was] symbolic of both sexual purity and procreative power” and it “was an inherent part of the

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86 ibid., 8.
88 Laughton, “Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan”, 225.
89 ibid., 226.
ideology surrounding Vestal Virginity”. Ambrose himself believed in the power imbued by the Vestal Virgin. He complained that Milan had such a small population compared to other Roman cities and blamed it on the lack of virgins in the city. Here we have the beginnings of the concept of motherhood combined with virginity.

Not only did the virgin-mother represent the hoped fruitfulness of the community, her very sacrifice of her sexuality resulted in their salvation. Just as the sacrifice of the pagan virgin redeemed her parents, it can be similarly understood that the sacrifice of Ambrose’s Christian virgin had redemptive qualities for the Christian community. This sacrifice would fall into the same tradition as the Christian martyr (compare Symmachus’ relatio 3.11 with De Virg 1.7.32). In fact, Laughton argued that Ambrose aligned the sacrifice of the martyr with the sacrifice of the virgin but replaced the martyrology unfamiliar to the Milanese audience with scripture (to “domesticate some of the more unsettling aspects of female virginity” and also display his theological power and authority) and with concepts of marriage and children, for they were more culturally familiar. Later Ambrose utilized Mary in De Institutione to exemplify the sacrifice of the mother-virgin during the crucifixion narrative. Ambrose attributed so much power to virgin-motherhood that he believed it prevented wars and murders whilst the married could be accused of bringing such calamities in

90 ibid.
92 ibid., 93-96.
93 ibid., 12.
94 ibid., 37.
95 ibid., 12.
96 ibid., 160. But Laughton does note that Ambrose does not mention Mary’s sacrifice in his previous works, De Virginibus or De Virginitate.
past civilizations as exemplified by smaller populations in those civilizations. "Where chastity dwells, such griefs [wars and murders] disappear because there religion will flourish and fidelity be safeguarded." There are other reasons why Ambrose was intent on writing about the Church’s virginity. ‘Virginity’ as a topic for his early writings proved to be useful in the delicate context of his early career as bishop. In 355, Constantius II “had deposed the Nicene bishop of Milan and installed Auxentius, a pro-Homoian.” The Homoians were an Arian group that taught that Christ was similar to the Father but rejected the use of the categories of substance and essence employed by Nicaea. Many Milanese would have converted to Christianity under Auxentius and became pro-Homoian themselves. But also Liebeschuetz says many Christian Milanese remained pro-Nicene, that is, Homoousians—as opposed to Homoians.

When Auxentius died in 374, Ambrose entered the picture as provincial governor to mediate between the pro-Homoians and pro-Niceneans who were deadlocked in debate on Auxentius’s successor. Ambrose was seen as neutrally aligned because of his mediating role so he was voted in as bishop. He was in fact pro-Nicene. Here was where Ambrose’s choice to speak on virginity became an advantage in his precarious situation. Laughton observed that Ambrose “stumbles” onto asceticism as a topic for his first writing, De Virginibus, since the theme struck a chord with his Milanese audience and he was pressed for a topic other than a direct engagement with the pressing Nicene-Homoian

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97 ibid., 228.
debates.\textsuperscript{100} When Ambrose faced opposition from pro-Homoians early in his career, he discovered that “the language and imagery of virginity provided him with a vehicle to express his pro-Nicene sentiments without openly challenging Homoian listeners.”\textsuperscript{101} In this “Ambrose’s career begins with an act of pure diversion and his discovery of virginity as a useful subject for the establishment of his personal power and authority.”\textsuperscript{102}

Although it was beneficial on many fronts to discuss the virginity of the Church to his Milanese audience, Ambrose also employed the ecclesial metaphor ‘mother’, most likely for its association with the high values of family and procreation in the Roman-Milanese society. The pairing of these two acceptable concepts encouraged his audience to accept his version of ecclesial virginity–motherhood in virginity: that a virgin, although celibate for life, would herself be fruitful as a mother in the spiritual sense.\textsuperscript{103} Reinforcing this pro-family argument Ambrose would also speak of the Church as a spouse. The utilization of spouse as ecclesial metaphor would

\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{100} Laughton, “Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan”, 86.
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\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{101} ibid., 237.
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\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{102} ibid., 86. There will be further challenges to Ambrose’s context of Homoian-Nicene tensions. One of them would be the entry into Milan in 379 of boy emperor Valentinian II and his dominant mother Justina from the Arian (Homoian) sect. The tension is only temporarily eased when Gratian, a pro-Nicene, moves from Trier to Milan in 383. But with his death in 385, the challenges from Justina and Valentinian II increase with a request to Ambrose for a return (or loan, Liebeschuetz says this was not clear) of one of the Milanese basilicas to the pro-Homoians. Cf. Liebeschuetz, \textit{Ambrose & John Chrysostom}, 59-60, 85-91.
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\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{103} Though Laughton says “at Milan there was considerable resistance to Ambrose’s efforts to foster the practice of ascetic renunciation.” Ambrose had to bring in virgins from other cities since the Milanese showed reluctance to the veiling of virgins. For Ambrose’s ecclesial virginity challenged “established hierarchies of power and gender” (the \textit{pater potestas} and the emperor as \textit{paterfamilias} figure), and was rejected for “their strong anti-marital messages.” The quick readjustment of his ascetic ideology is found in his consequent work, \textit{De Virginitate}, where the tone of his exhortations move from a “humble” approach to virginity to a “defense” of it. Laughton, “Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan”, 158-159. Liebeschuetz interprets this incident from another perspective: that the bringing in of outsiders was Ambrose’s attempt to make an impression in Milan, for he says “from the remotest parts of Mauretania and beyond virgins are drawn here to be consecrated, and although their families are in chains, still chastity knows no chains.” Ambrose, \textit{De Virginibus} 1.10.59 in Liebeschuetz, \textit{Ambrose & John Chrysostom}, 69.
\end{center}
also enable Ambrose to argue for the Church and Christ’s nature as shown below.

b) Mother-Virgin Church is a Spouse

(Whilst) our mother the church does not have a human husband (virum),…she does have an eternal spouse (sponsum); she is wedded to the eternal Word of God without loss of purity, both as the whole church and as the individual human soul.\textsuperscript{104}

Before Ambrose no one had ever referred to the Church as simultaneously spouse, mother and virgin. Hunter claims that Ambrose exploits the revered idea of marriage in Roman society to put forward arguments for the ascetic life. He says “the use of marital imagery is central to Ambrose’s apologetic argument on behalf of asceticism. Early in the work he first appeals to the virginity of the Church who, as the bride of Christ, embodies the paradoxical quality of spiritual fertility.”\textsuperscript{105}

After establishing the Church’s virginity as the basis “for the value of ascetic renunciation”, Hunter says Ambrose then applies the argument to the Christian virgin\textsuperscript{106} who “functioned as a bride of Christ in a manner that was simply not open to other Christians, not even to other celibate Christians.”\textsuperscript{107} For this claim, Ambrose uses Psalm 45 and Song of Songs 4:7-8 as justification: Through the ascetic marriage between the Church and Christ, the Christian virgin is made spiritually beautiful, pure and a royalty, like a queen as in Psalm 45: “Hear, O daughter…” which Ambrose utilizes. As Hunter says:

\textsuperscript{104} Translated from Ambrose by Hunter, in Hunter, “The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church”: 286.
\textsuperscript{105} ibid., 286-287.
\textsuperscript{106} ibid., 286.
\textsuperscript{107} ibid., 288. Other celibate Christians were widows and Christian virgins who dedicated themselves to the Church from their homes but did not take part in a veiling ceremony.
...by characterizing the consecrated virgin as the ‘bride of Christ,’ Ambrose is able to ascribe to the individual Christian virgin all of the purity and spiritual stature that he had previously attributed to the church.\textsuperscript{108}

Hunter says the psalm names two distinct sets of characters—daughters of kings (\textit{filiae regum}) and a queen (\textit{regina}), but Ambrose blurs the distinction between the two to uphold the daughter-queen-virgin-bridal figure. In addition he utilizes Song of Songs 4:7-8 (“You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. Come with me from Lebanon…”) to conclude “the perfect and faultless beauty of the virginal soul.”\textsuperscript{109}

Ambrose’s choice to espouse the Mother-Virgin Church to Christ had cultural considerations. Elizabeth Clark says a virgin who rejects earthly nuptials to become no-one’s wife was too shocking for the ancient Roman mind and could have deterred a woman from choosing virginity over marriage.\textsuperscript{110} To overcome the incomprehensibility of this concept, Clark argues that the image of Christ as the celibate bridegroom of Christian virgin brides was introduced.\textsuperscript{111} The concept enabled the ecclesiastical virgin to be respected—as she became the wife of somebody, even if that somebody belonged to the ethereal world. At the same time, by making Christ and the virgins celibate, any notions of eroticism between them suggestive of their union could be abolished.\textsuperscript{112} Marriage could continue to be upheld alongside the ideal of the life of celibacy. Clark also says the image of Christ as Bridegroom/Husband would have been more acceptable to the early Christians than the image of King/ Master for its more pastoral

\textsuperscript{108} ibid., 286-287.
\textsuperscript{109} ibid., 287.
\textsuperscript{110} Clark, "The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides": 2.
\textsuperscript{111} ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} ibid., 8.
bent.\textsuperscript{113} Besides, Ambrose’s concept of virginity would have challenged the long-held Roman pagan conceptions of virginity and womanhood where a choice for permanent virginity was a permanent rejection of the ultimate destiny of woman as mother and wife. Plus, the loss of mothers for society had an impact on its future. Brown says “[t]he noble woman still carried with her the pride of the fertile womb” whereby “the power of Rome grows.”\textsuperscript{114} In becoming a virgin of the Church, families were denied that Roman pride.\textsuperscript{115} Espousing the Mother-Virgin Church to Christ enabled Ambrose to align culturally accepted notions with his push for ascetic Christianity.

Ambrose’s enthusiasm for ascetic Christianity had political advantages. Brown says that up to the end of the fourth century, Italy was “under-Christianized”, highly pagan in its practice, and “intensely conservative”.\textsuperscript{116} The upper-class Christian with a public career was assaulted at the senses by pagan worship permeating throughout the region. Sons kept the pagan religions of their fathers in public even after their mothers and wives had converted to Christianity. Many noblemen were happy to remain catechumens but left baptism to their deathbeds because of the fear of its requirements, which could entail loss of their public life and loss of property.\textsuperscript{117} Many of the young girls who wished to present themselves as virgins for the Church were daughters of widows and at a time when male control over women including their possessions and

\textsuperscript{113} ibid., 1.

\textsuperscript{114} Brown, \textit{The Body and Society}, 343.

\textsuperscript{115} ibid.

\textsuperscript{116} ibid.

\textsuperscript{117} ibid., 343.
finances were diminishing.\(^{118}\) By encouraging virgins for the Church, Brown says Ambrose was establishing the Catholic Church as political power in the Empire.\(^{119}\) For the wealth of the ecclesial consecrated virgins and widows were not only passed onto the Church (increasing its wealth and power) but also their celibacy “brought into the Christian household and the Christian basilicas a breath of immortality”\(^{120}\)—their presence promoted the Church as an image of pure divine power and authority.

But the power of the Roman Empire, based on its dependency on Roman *matronae* to increase the growth of the Empire through birthing sons and handing out their wealth to the society would have undermined this trend of consecrated virginity encouraged by Ambrose and his clergy. I would add to this that as long as the *matronae* provided sons to the Empire, the Empire continued to have an image of immortality.\(^{121}\) By promoting virgins for the Church (fecund, powerful and immortal in their virginity) Ambrose steals such powers attributed to the Roman *matrona* and replaces her with Mother-Virgin as the primal image of fecundity for the Milanese Christians.

Hunter provides another political advantage for the pairing of the virgin with Christ. Ambrose is credited with the role of promoting the ceremony of formally consecrating virgins in the Church (*velatio* or veiling of virgins).\(^{122}\) His ritual paralleled the Roman wedding with the virgin wedding Christ through the Church. This ceremony also drew from the

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\(^{118}\) ibid.

\(^{119}\) ibid., 343, 345.

\(^{120}\) ibid., 343.

\(^{121}\) As shown in the highly charged image of the *matrona* in the previous section on Cyprian’s Mother Church.

veiling of Roman vestal virgins.\textsuperscript{123} As representative of Christ but also the Church, the Bishop acted as the mediator of this relationship and presided over the ceremony. As presider, Hunter argues that the bishop takes on a quasi-\textit{paterfamilia} role as seen in Ambrose’s own words: “she whom I offer in my role as priest, whom I commend [to Christ] with fatherly affection.”\textsuperscript{124}

The \textit{paterfamilia} role continued after the ceremony in which the Bishop became the carer of both the virgin’s spiritual and material needs. Just as the \textit{paterfamilia} had authority over his family and those within his household, the \textit{pontifex maximus} had authority over Vestal Virgins who left their families and the care of their \textit{paterfamilia}. This ceremony communicated an image of ecclesial authority that Ambrose pursued as he had little clerical experience himself,\textsuperscript{125} given that he underwent all ecclesiastical offices from porter to lector, exorcist, acolyte sub-deacon, deacon, priest and finally to bishop in just under a week.\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[123] Cf. Hunter, \textit{Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity}, 224-228.
\item[124] Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church": 289. Also, Hunter, \textit{Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity}, 229.
\item[125] Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church": 288-290.
\item[126] Davidson shows Paulinus providing a humorous account of Ambrose’s constant running away from the call to his Office: Ambrose tries to deceive his supporters into thinking his moral incapacity for the job by ordering the execution of persons under investigation by his office. When that failed to shake his moral standing in his supporters’ eyes, he invited prostitutes into his house to again make them question his moral capacity. The people were not fooled and saw through his attempts. Their simple reply to him was “Your sin be upon us!” But Davidson comments that Paulinus’ account is not hagiographical. Rather Ambrose recognizes the “importance of public gestures” and turns the difficult situation to his advantage: “He turned it into a series of steps which ensured that he established his shaky credentials on the best footing possible.” (Ivor Davidson, “Ambrose”, in \textit{Early Christian World} Vol 2. (Routledge, \url{http://site.ebrary.com/id/10062770?pg1202}, Accessed 31/3/2013), pp.1175-1204 at pp. 1179-1180).
\end{footnotes}
2. Mary as Mother Church

a) Utilising Mary for Ambrose’s Ecclesial Ascetic Argument

According to Frances Young, for Ambrose, “…the perpetual virginity of the truly human Mary was important as a model of permanent virginity, which came to be regarded as a bridge between humanity’s fallen state and its eschatological transformation.”\(^{127}\) Mary could encompass and exemplify those ideas, which were placed firstly onto the Church and then onto ecclesial virgins—their fecundity in their virginity. As a person of history she exemplified the idea that a human being could be transformed and saved.

Just as Young points to Mary as a bridge to salvation, Brown provides the significance of Mary’s virginity in the allowance for the sacred to exist in the \textit{saeculum}, where previously the Church’s history was to demarcate between the two worlds (for Mary’s womb “had not suffered the intrusion and admixture of male seed”).\(^{128}\)

\begin{quote}
Mary’s womb stood for all that was unbroken and sacred in the world…(Ambrose) found an apposite \textit{Te Deum} with which to celebrate twenty years of tense concern for boundaries, for the dangers of admixture, and for the absolute and perpetual nature of the antithesis between the Catholic Church and the formless, disruptive confusion of the \textit{saeculum}.\(^{129}\)
\end{quote}

Ambrose’s need for demarcation between the formless \textit{saeculum} and the Church may be due to tensions between pagans and Christians at the time and ultimately an identity crisis amongst Romans and Christians alike. Hunter observes that the end of the fourth century was a time of turmoil,


\(^{129}\) ibid., 354-355.
change and tension between pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{130}

He describes some of the tensions as resulting from: the Emperors Gratian and Theodosius’ suppression of traditional religious practice in the 380-90’s;\textsuperscript{131} pagan senators at Rome seeking to reinstate old religious practices as exemplified by Symmachus’ desire to rebuild the statue of Victory in the Senate (cf. Relationnes 3); and the rise of asceticism and monasticism which required a radical rejection of one’s surrounding culture. For Hunter, the tensions were symptomatic of an identity crisis amongst Romans and particularly Christians.\textsuperscript{132}

Ambrose’s utilization of Mary’s perpetual virginity had many purposes, one of which was to present a person of history as an exemplar of perpetual virginity (\textit{aula pudoris}): for it encouraged perpetual virgins for the Church, especially among the rich, who would have to hand over a portion of their riches.\textsuperscript{133} When Ambrose said “A virgin is a royal palace hall, subject to no man, but to God alone”,\textsuperscript{134} he expressed her potential as wealth for the Church as well as her symbol as container, a ‘hall’, free from the taint of mixture and the unsacred. It challenged the Roman society’s idea of virginity as politically beneficial for the family only if the daughter was kept a virgin until marriage. By changing the idea of virginity as fruitful and beneficial for the family even in its perpetuality, Ambrose had

\textsuperscript{130} Hunter, \textit{Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity}, 51.

\textsuperscript{131} ibid. Lenox-Conyngham provides more detail of Theodosius’ and Gratian’s suppression of traditional Roman religions by stating that in 380, Theodosius issued an edict for the acceptance of the Catholic faith by all peoples (the \textit{Cunctos populos}) whilst two years later, Gratian withheld state subsidies for the practice of the cults. In Lenox-Conyngham, “The Church in St Ambrose of Milan”: 213. Gratian is also attributed with removing the Altar of Victory from the Senate.

\textsuperscript{132} Hunter, \textit{Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity}, 51.

\textsuperscript{133} Brown, \textit{The Body and Society}, 344-345.

\textsuperscript{134} Ambrose, \textit{Inst. Virg.} 12.79, in ibid., 356.
sought to introduce something new to the society. Thus to question Mary’s perpetual virginity was to question the authority of Ambrose and the value of permanent ecclesial virginity.

But there are other reasons for Ambrose’s promotion of the imagery of Mary as virgin and mother. Laughton points out that the utilization of Mary particularly as virgin, mother, daughter, and spouse to God enabled Ambrose to support a Nicene theology explicating the nature of Christ. She says, in De Virginibus the Virgin “reflects a Christ that is all at once a father, a son, and a husband.” Laughton quotes Virginia Burrus in noting that Mary in fact engages in a promiscuous act with three ‘persons’ but not at the same time and “miraculously gives birth to the Triune God of the Nicene faith.” In addition, the Virgin plays a part in Ambrose’s later works where she not only symbolizes the Church but also acts as a “foil for an ‘Arian’ threat” which Ambrose created to divert attention away from local concerns in his Church.

b) Presenting Mary against the Jovinianist Controversy

The utilization of Mary as personification of Mother-Virgin Church did not only support Nicene theology and encourage virgins for the Church where she was the perfect model to be emulated, the argument for her perpetual virginity was important in combatting popular opinions opposing

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135 ibid., 355-356.
136 Laughton, “Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan”, 36.
137 ibid.
138 ibid.
139 Laughton says in order to establish his theological, intellectual, and political import, Ambrose created the Arian threat as a common enemy for the Catholic Church. Ibid., 50.
140 ibid., 37.
the superiority of virginity over the married life and the particular privilege of the ascetic in this life and the next. Jovinian, who was condemned as a heretic in the synods in Rome and Milan (c.390 CE), Helvidius, and Bonosus, all questioned the virginity of Mary. Jovinian’s controversy posed the greatest threat for its popularity and longevity even long after it was condemned. In 396 CE Ambrose wrote a long letter, Epistle 14, to the Vercelli Church “urging them to resist the efforts of some followers of Jovinian”. In this letter, he uses the Church as bride to argue for the superiority of virginity over marriage.

Hunter explains the Jovinian controversy lasted in the West nearly a decade by the time Ambrose’s contemporary, Jerome, wrote a letter to Principia, “a virgin and lifelong companion to widow Marcella”, in 397 CE. He explains the Jovinianist controversy thus:

Jovinian’s efforts to resist the formation of an ascetic elite in the church and his views on the essential equality of married and celibate Christians had met with ecclesiastical censure at Rome under Pope Siricius and at Milan under Ambrose in the early 390’s. Nevertheless, Jovinian’s ideas had continued to spread and to influence Western Christians.

Indeed, Jovinian’s ideas continued to spread so that in 400 CE, Augustine wrote on the matter in two treatises on marriage and virginity--De Bon

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141 Bonosus was Bishop of Sardica or Naissus. Laughton infers from Epistula de Causa and a corresponding passage in De Institutione that Bonosus suggested Mary had regular marital relations with Joseph after Jesus’ birth. Ibid., 64. Helvidius more specifically stated that Mary and Joseph had marital relations and had children other than Jesus. Ibid., 65.

142 Ibid., 62.

143 Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church": 295.

144 ibid. Jovinian had opposed neither celibacy nor monasticism for he himself was a celibate monk. Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity, 52.
Conjugali and De Sancta Virginitate “which he says were necessary because of the continued spread of Jovinian’s ideas.”

Notably Hunter says Ambrose had a particular view of Jovinian’s argument on the virginity of Mary after Jesus’ birth (virginitas in partu) which differed from Jovinian’s other opponents, Siricius and Jerome, and who did not argue so vigorously as Ambrose.

Ambrose’s insistence on Mary’s perpetual virginity was about birthing Christ without the “mingling or mixture” from sexual intercourse (“commixtione corporeae consuetudinis”). Laughton explains that in this “Ambrose invokes a vocabulary with some perceivable anti-Homoian connotations to tie those who reject Mary’s perpetual virginity with earlier Trinitarian heresy.”

Though Hunter points out that whilst Ambrose criticizes Jovinian for being a Manichaen by questioning Mary’s virginitas in partu, it is actually Jovinian who earlier accused Ambrose of Manichaeism because “the genuinely physical character of Jesus’ birth meant that the Virgin Mary must have lost her physical integrity in the process of giving birth.” But by not accusing Jovinian of Manichaeism in return, Ambrose’s orthodox teachings especially virginitas in partu and Christ’s nature would be in question.

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145 Hunter, “The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church”: 295. Augustine’s response to Jovinian using the Mother Church metaphor/image will be covered in the next chapter.

146 Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity, 22.

147 Laughton, “Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan”, 74.

148 ibid.


150 ibid., 459.
Of interest is the idea that *virginitas in partu* was first given to the Church before it was ultimately expressed in Mary.\textsuperscript{151} As stated before, *De Virginibus* 1.31 exemplified this mother-virginal status in what Hunter named as the paradoxical status of the Church in her fruitfulness and virginity. So by the time Ambrose responds to Jovinian, Hunter says it is no longer simply about defending Ambrose’s personal thoughts on Mary but about an ecclesiological statement on the Church’s “supernatural character”.\textsuperscript{152}

*Expositio in Lucam* states that Mary’s motherhood and perpetual and ‘unblemished’ virginity models the Church’s own purity and ability to birth Christians through baptism—making Mary’s motherhood and virginity an essential statement concerning the mystery of salvation.\textsuperscript{153} What made Mary unblemished and pure as a virgin was her ability to receive the Holy Spirit. Laughton explains Ambrose’s view of the virgin as such: “it is the girl who does not marry that may ‘receive in her womb that of the Holy Spirit, and pregnant by God may give birth to the spirit of salvation.’”\textsuperscript{154}

The context with which *Expositio* was created and circulated provides some insight into Ambrose’s statement on the motherhood and virginity of the Church and Mary. This document was circulated following the ‘Cathedral Controversy’ of 385 CE, during which Ambrose prevented the Homoians’ use of any of the Milanese basilicas, thus bringing him into

\textsuperscript{151} ibid., 460.
\textsuperscript{152} ibid., 461.
\textsuperscript{153} Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*, 201-204; Laughton, "Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan", 144.
\textsuperscript{154} Ambrose, *De Mysteriis* 3.13, 9.59 in Laughton, "Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan", 144.
conflict with the Emperor Valentinian. Maria Doerfler argues that Ambrose utilizes the Jews (as portrayed in scripture, since evidence indicates that he was not in contact or concerned with Jews himself) as a metaphor for anything heretical in *Expositio* to show that heresies, new, old, or forthcoming were really old challenges to the Church “as old as the scriptures themselves”. In it he contrasts the Jews and heretics with Christianity: whilst Jews and heretics lived literally in luxury and faithlessness, producing no fruit even when they had the chance, the Christians were known for their simplicity, fruitfulness and Nicene faith. When Ambrose paralleled Mary’s motherhood and virginity with the Church’s own in *Expositio*, he was distinguishing the Church from heretics and the scriptural Jews.

Adding all the arguments together, Ambrose’s *virginitas in partu* teaching was so important and vigorously defended as it involves an intricately woven argument involving Christological, ecclesiological, and soteriological statements that would fall apart if the motherhood in virginity of the Church as modeled in Mary is doubted. They are arguments responding to the threat of surrounding heresies by the Arians, Jovinians and Manichaens.

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155 Siding with the Homoians, Emperor Valentinian argues against Ambrose on the Homoians’ behalf at a court in Milan. Ambrose manages to neutralize the situation simply because the Western emperor Maximus “a zealous pro-Nicene, [presented himself] for the Valentinian court.” Eventually Maximus attacks Northern Italy and takes over Milan in 378. Valentinian then appeals to the Eastern emperor Theodosius for assistance to retake Milan. Theodosius assists, with the condition that Valentinian become pro-Nicene and that Theodosius be permitted to marry Valentinian’s younger sister. A decade later Theodosius marches into Italy defeating Maximus putting the newly pro-Nicene Valentinian back on the throne. Even in the pro-Nicene environment, the Arians continued to publish and circulate their writings into the fifth century. Meanwhile in 389, Ambrose receives Siricius’ letter on Jovinian. In Maria Doerfler, “Ambrose's Jews: The Creation of Judaism and Heterodox Christianity in Ambrose of Milan's Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam,” *Church History* 80, no. 4 (2011): 755.

156 ibid., 760.
Chapter Conclusion

The image of the Church as Mother was used by early Patristic writers as part of their inside-outside rhetoric in the face of heresy and schism. While for Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian this was their dominant ecclesial metaphor, for Ambrose it comes second to the image of spouse/bride and is followed by the image of virgin. This rhetorical development signals a change in the contexts and concerns of these theologians: from focusing solely on the demarcation of Christian identity by the determination of the true Mother (the orthodox Church who nurtures and births her children) to the apologetic defence of the Virgin Church (made fruitful by the Holy Spirit and thus free from heresy) and the Bride of Christ (through whom alone is found salvation). The concern is no longer a mere presentation of the ‘better Mother’ (as in Irenaeus’ case). Neither is it a simple alignment of the Church as Mother with the culturally familiar Roman materfamilia (as it is for Tertullian) nor matrona (in Cyprian’s case). For Ambrose, this complex image of Church as Mother-Virgin-Bride is used to fruitfully address the controversies and ecclesial issues raised by the Arian and Jovinian movements that were a direct challenge to his episcopal authority in Milan.

Mother-Virgin Church is not just a mother who births and teaches, it is also virgin and bride in response to the Jovinianist controversy and the Nicene-Homoian debates. This is the basis on which Ambrose promotes asceticism in the Church and by which he fosters his own authority as well as the power of the Church in Milan. The Church’s virginity, motherhood and spousal status are inseparably linked to enable Ambrose to sell his agenda to the Roman-conditioned Milanese Christians.
To the Milanese, their society’s highest values were of marriage and family and even their view of virginity pointed to these values. Ambrose’s alignment of the sacrifice of the martyrs with the sacrifice of the virgins did not provide enough validation for the value of virginity and so he employed Psalm 45 and Song of Songs to further support his cause. With the utilization of these scripture passages, the Virgin-Bride-Mother image gains the additional images of Queen and Daughter. Even if these images were each used to make a particular point, their accumulation means that the singular image of the Church as mother is no longer dominant in Ambrose.

In addition, since the Church’s motherhood is dependent on its virginity, in which it is the spouse of Christ, the virgin-bride image becomes more dominant than the mother-wife image. The mix of female images of daughter, queen, virgin, bride, sometimes standing alone, sometimes connected to ‘mother’, make the maternal ecclesial metaphor increasingly complex and it is tempting, but ultimately misleading, to image Ambrose’s Church as a single ultra-woman figure. Neither the images of *matrona* nor the *materfamilia* can adequately capture this multifaceted imagery. In a sense, for Ambrose the Church, feminine in nature, is every woman and can take on the qualities of womanhood as appropriate to the specific situation.

Ambrose, however, recognizes that the Mother-Virgin-Spouse image can be consolidated and exemplified in the biblical figure of Mary, mother of Jesus. His teachings supporting Mary’s perpetual virginity (“virginitas in partu”) defend not only the nature of the Church and of Christ but also Ambrose’s own authority and orthodoxy as bishop. It can be argued that in Ambrose’s idealized Mary, the Church as Mother is no longer based on a real mother, but even in the figures of the *matrona* and
materfamilia, the image was not necessarily reflective of reality as these were constructed figures that promoted particular political agendas. I believe that Ambrose has utilized the figure of Mary to communicate and advance his own political agenda for the Church. But even in such propagandizing, as imagery and myth had been a part of the Roman-Greco-Anatolian mindset, Ambrose’s Christian-Milanese and Irenaeus’, Tertullian’s and Cyprian’s audiences would have been largely unperturbed by the gap between the projected image of ‘mother’ placed upon the Church and the true nature of motherhood in reality.

Ambrose uses a range of feminine metaphors in order to open up possibilities for greater understanding of the Church. In his writings there are 41 references to Church as bride, 24 as mother, 8 as virgin, 7 as bride-virgin, and 2 key instances as mother-virgin-bride. Could Ambrose be accused of simply reiterating a metaphor that by the fourth century had become a technical text, just another term within the Christian lexicon? Recalling that Soskice said:

The purpose of metaphor is both to cast up and organize a network of associations. A good metaphor may not simply be an oblique reference to a predetermined subject but a new vision, the birth of a new understanding, a new referential access. A strong metaphor compels new possibilities of vision.  

157 In intertwining the traditional image of Church as mother with these other images drawn from an allegorical reading of scripture, Ambrose is creating new perspectives on the Church that allow him to address the challenges of his context.

Does Ambrose’s uses of the maternal ecclesial image meet the three criterion for which Soskice terms a “living metaphor”? First, Ambrose

157 Soskice, Metaphor and Religious Language, 57-58.
needed to provide an explanation for the incongruous nature of the maternal-virginal Church. This indicated that the metaphor initially seemed inappropriate and therefore was a sign of a living metaphor. Second, the maternal-virginal Church may be paraphrased along the lines of “a Christian community that generates, initiates, nurtures and teaches members and also has the qualities of purity that reflects the presence of the Holy Spirit who is a guarantee of both its orthodoxy and fecundity.” This lengthy description still fails to capture the full range of meanings and does not evoke the imagination or affect as much as the shorter description of ‘the Church is mother and virgin’. Thus paraphrasing the description is not so readily possible, another characteristic of a live metaphor. Third, there existed an initial difficulty in relating the metaphor of Mother Church with that of a Virgin Church. But with the use of Mary as an example of the co-existence of motherhood and virginity, as well as in Ambrose’s use of vestal virginity as fruit-bearing in the virginal state, the Milanese Christian community were able to make the connection between the metaphors, and from there make the web of associations deriving from this combination (such as the soteriological significance of motherhood in virginity and virginity in motherhood). Thus as Ambrose’s reference to Mother Church is successful, necessary, and explanatory, it was developed as a live metaphor that had particular relevance within his own context but has also continued to resonate meaningfully through the centuries.
CHAPTER V: AUGUSTINE

THE WOMAN FROM ‘ABOVE’ AND ‘BELOW’

This chapter will show how Augustine engaged the Mother Church metaphor in response to controversies of his time. He did not merely regurgitate ideas from his North African predecessors. He adjusted the maternal ecclesial concept to engage his audience. He utilized other female ecclesial metaphors alongside the maternal metaphor, not necessarily to form a single ultra-female ecclesial figure but to provide different aspects on the Church’s nature or address certain groups of women within the Church. In particular, Augustine viewed Mother Church as the New Eve who superceded the original Eve and encouraged the spiritual growth of her children. It will be shown that for Augustine, Mary becomes a model for Mother Church but this was not an easy transposition. Even with the figuring of the Church in Mary, the characteristics of Augustine’s Mother Church also paralleled many characteristics of Monica his mother, the ancient Roman mother, and even Mother Jerusalem from scripture. The chapter will first provide Augustine’s background and significance, then his rhetorical method before exploring the Mother Church texts, contexts, and the imaging and parallels with Mother Jerusalem, Monica, the Roman mother, and Mary.
Background & Significance

Augustine was born in 354 CE, at a large seaport in Hippo Regius which Carol Harrison describes as “the heart of the Roman empire” and where Augustine would spend half of his life as a bishop.\(^1\) He was brought up to have a career in rhetoric ultimately landing a central post in Milan.\(^2\) He led a cosmopolitan lifestyle in Rome and Milan, where the Catholic Church was engaging with the surrounding culture in order to transform it, in contrast to the African experience when the Church saw itself in opposition to a hostile world.\(^3\) Augustine was a Manichaen for nine years\(^4\) and was also a Platonist before becoming a Christian. His mother Monica, a devout and pious Christian, is said to have wept many tears and offered many prayers for his conversion. After his dialogues with Faustus, a Manichaen bishop, Augustine lost confidence in Manichaeism and became a sceptic or “one who doubted everything”.\(^5\) He had a concubine for many years with whom he had a son (Adeodatus), then a partner for a short period of time before parting with her and entering into Christianity.

Augustine was slow to convert to Christianity as he was disappointed with the Christian scriptures—their inconsistencies and poor language were a pale comparison to the complex and subtle beauties of philosophical texts read by the educated elite.\(^6\) Listening to the sermons of

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\(^4\) Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 124.


\(^6\) ibid., 49.
Ambrose and his emphasis on the analogical understanding of scripture helped Augustine to reconcile the difficulties he found in Christianity. He was finally converted in Milan, to the great joy of his mother Monica, who had followed him there. Augustine then returned to North Africa where, after years of avoiding being ordained to a vacant see, he was suddenly made Bishop of the soon to be vacant see of Hippo. His episcopacy was marked by various controversies but was the platform for the clarification of his theologies—leaving a legacy to be emulated by the Christian world for centuries. It is his (and Ambrose’s) Mariology and ecclesiology that is called upon in Lumen Gentium to justify the naming of the Church as a mother (especially LG 64). Augustine died from illness in 430 in Hippo, during a siege by the Vandals.

**Augustine’s Rhetorical Method**

Harrison says “Augustine is generally prepared to plunder pagan culture of everything that is of value, on the understanding it rightfully belongs to Christianity, and to reject anything that is alien to it.” His criterion for selection was based on whether something was of use in understanding and interpreting the scriptures. If it was, it might legitimately be taken over, studied, taught, and used by the Christian. But, although useful in interpretation, pagan wisdom paled into insignificance when compared with the Bible itself, which contained all knowledge (De Doc 2.42.63).

In De Doctrina Christiana (On Christian Doctrine) Augustine shows a method of successful communication through his theory on signs.

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7 ibid., 61.
8 ibid., 61-62.
Harrison explains that Augustine perceived that societies were founded upon convention: upon a common understanding as to what certain signs and rituals signified. 9 This agreement enabled societies to identify themselves, to validate the signs they use, and to use them within generally agreed parameters. As Augustine said:

So (by way of example) the single letter which is written like a cross means one thing to Greeks and another to Latin-speakers, and has meaning not by nature but by agreement and convention…And the word *beta*, consisting of the same sounds in both languages, is the name of a letter in Greek, but a vegetable in Latin…All these meanings, then, derive their effect on the mind from each individual’s agreement with a particular convention. As this agreement varies, so does their effect. People did not agree to use them because they were already meaningful; rather they became meaningful because people agreed to use them…10

Understanding therefore varied according to the society one identified with and upon acceptance of its conventions and practices. Rituals and signs, conversely, were only valid if they were agreed upon: “signs are not valid among men except by common consent”.11

In *De Catechizandis Rudibus* (*On Teaching the Uninstructed*), Augustine provided instructions for the preacher to strive to teach faith at the level of his hearers and uses Christ’s “descent to man in love”12 as an example. As Augustine said:

…if understanding delights us in its inmost and most unsullied chambers, it should delight us also to understand how it is that love, the more it descends towards what is lowliest, returns the more resolutely to what is inmost,

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9 ibid., 63.
12 ibid., 67.
through the blessed consciousness that it seeks nothing from
those to whom it descends, except their eternal salvation.\textsuperscript{13}

From Augustine we learn that love “ought to be the true motive of the
preacher’s efforts: the more inspired by love his discourse is, the more
irresistibly it finds its way into the heart of the hearer.”\textsuperscript{14} As chief rhetor of
Milan, Augustine saw the value of eloquence over substance and would be
liberal in taking scripture passages out of context as long as it supported the
ideas he wished to communicate.\textsuperscript{15}

In her analysis of the audience of \textit{Confessions 3}, Annemaré Kotzé
argues that despite the anti-Manichaean tone, the text was addressed to both
what she called the marginal Christian, one who wavered towards
Manichaeism and doubted his or her Christian stance, and the marginal
Manichaen, one who doubted the teachings of Mani but needed good reason
to switch allegiance to Christianity. Augustine did this by presenting
himself as travelling along the same journey as the doubter, experiencing
Manichaeism and Christianity, struggling between the two choices, and
finally making the hard decision of committing.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Confessions 3.6.10} is an example of Augustine applying metaphor to
convey vivid images for his readers, thereby capturing their attention and
imagination. In this passage Augustine presented a “sustained culinary
metaphor”, in which the individual’s sense of emptiness and hunger for God

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{De Catech} 10.15, trans. E. Phillips Barker, in Augustine, "A Treatise of Saint Aurelius
Augustine Bishop of Hippo on The Catechizing of the Uninstructed (De Catechizandis
\textsuperscript{14} Harrison, \textit{Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity}, 67.
\textsuperscript{15} ibid., 68-69.
\textsuperscript{16} Annemaré Kotzé, "The "Anti-Manichaean" Passage in "Confessions 3" and its
is conduced by the “intermingling and juxtaposing of words expressing desire or hunger with words depicting emptiness or lack of substance.”

At the same time Augustine prioritized the content of the message over his style of delivery. He believed that the beauty of truth in his content would win over his audience. While Cicero defined the first and ultimate aim in rhetoric was to move (movere or flectere) or persuade the hearer, over the aims of to delight (delectare or conciliare) and to teach (docere or probare), Augustine believed the inverse. Harrison describes Augustine’s approach:

the first and determining aim, the ultimate goal of the Christian preacher, is to teach. Delight might indeed be useful in this context to persuade the listener of the truth and move him to act upon it… but Augustine can see that, in fact, this need not always be the case. Sometimes the bald unadorned statement of the truth is sufficient to move the listener to act upon it, precisely because it is the truth.

This has implications for the exploration of Augustine’s use of ‘Mother Church’. It implies that eloquence was not simply the reason for its utilization. Rather, it was its ability to convey the ‘beautiful truth’ about the Church’s nature. Whether it was an accepted image amidst the surrounding culture or not, it is possible that Augustine applied the maternal image as something to be accepted or rejected by his audience. In addition, from Kotzé’s explanation of Augustine’s accommodation of the ‘marginal’ Manichee and Christian, it is possible that the particular maternal ecclesial image was adapted to be something acceptable for Augustine’s audiences. Harrison’s and Kotzé’s perspectives align with Soskice’s theory on metaphoric utterance. The metaphoric utterance is not limited to the word ‘mother’ but in how the word was used, which took into account context

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17 ibid., 194.
18 De Doc 4.12.28 in Harrison, Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity, 73.
and reference: that the image would be acceptable to Augustine’s audiences and that it would also convey something of the true nature of the Church. As well, like Augustine’s belief in the validity of signs only by common agreement, Soskice argues the live metaphor is determined by the shared lexicon and its meaning by a particular community. We now explore the different ways Augustine applied the maternal ecclesial metaphor.

Mother Church Texts and Contexts

1. A Significant Metaphor among Other Ecclesial Metaphors

Peper states that in “over eighty polemical and pastoral works” Augustine explicitly utilized Mother Church as metaphor. Along with the Church as Body of Christ, it acted as the “central metaphor in Augustine’s portrayal of the role and character of the Church.” An examination of a handful of texts reveal that ‘Mother Church’, Church as ‘Mother’ or ‘Catholic Mother’ was used often, both explicitly and implicitly by Augustine. Carl Springer who specifically researched Augustine’s use of Mother Church in Psalmus Contra Partem Donati shows its strong presence at the end of the document, so strong that for the first time in Patristic

19 Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 121. Peper used Cornelius P. Mayer (ed.), Corpus Augustinianum Gissense (CAG 2), (Basel: Schwabe, 2004) to find the presence of ‘Mother Church’ in Augustine’s large corpus of work.

20 ibid., 122.

21 De Civitate Dei (The City of God), Confessiones (Confessions), De Trinitate (On the Trinity), Enchiridion (Manual on Faith, Hope, and Love), De Doctrina (On Christian Doctrine), Sermo de Symbolo ad Catechumenos (A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed), De Catechizandis Rudibus (On Teaching or Catechizing the Uninstructed), Contra Faustum (Against Faustus), De Virginitate (On Virginity), Contra Mendacium (Against Lying), various other Sermones (Sermons) and Epistolae (Letters). Because of the large corpus of Augustine’s works, these works which were more readily available have been chosen for examination in this paper.

22 De Doc 4.21.47; Conf 1.11.17; Ench 39; De Virg 2, 5, 6, 7, 11; Ep 23.4, 34.3, 48.2, 58, 69.1, 84.1, 89.6, 98.3, 98.5, 100.1, 151.6; De Catech 1.2; De Serm ad Cat 1; Contr Faus. 14.9.

23 De Civ 1.35, 17.4, 17.16; De Doc 1.18; Conf 3.12.21, 4.16.31, 6.3.4, 7.1.1, 12.27; De Trin 4.4.7, Ep 58, 133.3; Contr Faus 15.3.
history, Mother Church spoke for herself utilizing the rhetorical tool ‘prosopopoeia’, giving voice to what otherwise would be a silent object.\(^{24}\)

Other female ecclesial metaphors that Augustine utilized were Church as virgin (\textit{De Virg} 2, 6, 11, \textit{De Doc} 4.21.47), bride (\textit{De Doc} 3.31.44, \textit{Contr Faus} 15.3) or spouse (\textit{De Doc} 1.16.15), and wife or spouse, queen, and daughter (\textit{De Civ} 17.16). The Church is both a mother and virgin in \textit{De Virg} 7, \textit{Serm} 188, 190-191. Some passages describing Church as Body of Christ also call her spouse or bride (\textit{De Doc} 1.16.15 and 3.31.44).\(^{25}\) In \textit{De Doc} 4.21, the Church is one whom the virgins emulate in her virginity and fecundity. In \textit{De Virg} 2 and 6, it is the Virgin Mary in her motherhood and virginity whom the Church emulates. The Virgin Mary as type for Mother Church in her fecundity and virginity appear in the Christmas homilies \textit{Serm} 188, 191, 192, 195 and in \textit{Ench} 34, \textit{De Trin} 4.4.7, and \textit{De Virg} 2 and 6. But Hannah is also presented as a type for Mother Church (\textit{De Civ} 17.4).\(^{26}\)

The Church is also seen as: a midwife (through her members) (\textit{Ep} 48.2), Charity (cf. \textit{Conf} 13.6.7 and \textit{Ep} 89.6), Mother Wisdom (\textit{Conf} 12.12), Mother Hen (\textit{Contr Faus} 14.9), and every pious soul doing the will of God (\textit{De Virg} 5). For the most part, the female metaphors for Church, especially ‘Mother Church’, seem to be ever present in Augustine’s writings. As with Ambrose, the images of Augustine’s Mother Church as mother, virgin, midwife, spouse, bride, and queen did not all combine to present a single


\(^{25}\) The ‘Church as body’ makes an appearance in \textit{De Trin} 1.12, 15.26; \textit{De Doc} 1.16.15, 3.31.44, 3.35; \textit{Conf} 6.4.5.

\(^{26}\) Mary as type for Mother Church is discussed in more detail in a separate section later in this chapter.
ultra-female ecclesial figure but were distinct metaphors applied in different contexts.

a) Parallels between Mother Church, Mother Jerusalem, and Monica

There appear to be close parallels between Augustine’s Mother Church, Jerusalem as mother, and Monica. The three have been associated with maternal nurturing or comforting:

**Mother Church**

…the nest of thy Church they might securely plume themselves, and nourish the wings of charity, by the food of solid faith.27 *(Conf 4.16.31)*

**Jerusalem**

As one whom his mother comforteth, so shall I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.28 *(De Civ 20.21)*

**Monica**

The comfort therefore of a woman’s milk did then entertain me: yet did neither my mother nor nurses fill their own breast29 *(Conf 1.6.7)*

Whereupon the mother of my flesh being much perplexed, (for that in a chaste heart, and faith in thee, she most lovingly even travailed in birth of my eternal salvation,) did hasten with great care to procure me to be initiated and washed with thy wholesome Sacraments30 *(Conf 1.11.17)*

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30 In ibid., 33. Latin: Et conturbata mater carnis meae quoniam et sempiternam salute meam carius parturiebat corde casto in fide tua, iam curare festinabunda, ut sacramentis salutaribus initiarer et abluer…” CCSL 27:10.9-12.
They have all been called “mother of us all”, an allusion to divine motherhood:

**Mother Church**

...thy Church the mother of us all

(“*matris omnium nostrum, ecclesiae tuae*”, *Conf* 1.11.17)\(^{31}\)

**Jerusalem**

...that Jerusalem on high, our Mother the city of God

(“*Ita superna Hierusalem mater nostra*”, *Ench* 9.29)\(^{32}\)

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all (”*Quae autem sursum est Hierusalem, libera est, quae est mater nostra*”, *De Civ* 15.2)\(^{33}\)

**Monica**

as if she had been the mother to us all (“*quasi omnes genuisset*”, *Conf*9.9.22)\(^{34}\)

Mother Church, Jerusalem and Monica have all also been imaged as earthly mothers. Monica presented as an earthly mother in the following: “the mother of my flesh” (”*mater carnis meae*” *Conf* 1.11.17)\(^{35}\); the one who fed Augustine with God’s milk from her breasts (Cf. *Conf* 1.6.7 \(^{36}\) and *Conf*2.3.6 \(^{37}\)), and one who shed tears on his behalf to God for his waywardness (*Conf* 3.11.19\(^{38}\), 5.7.13, 5.8.15, 6.1.1).

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\(^{31}\) ibid.


\(^{33}\) In Augustine, ”*The City of God (WAA)*”, 51. 2 vols, Vol 2. Latin from CCSL 48:454.15-16.

\(^{34}\) In Augustine and Watts, ”*Confessions*”, 47. 2 vols, Vol 2. Latin from CCSL 27:147.62.

\(^{35}\) Cf. footnote 31 above.

\(^{36}\) Cf. footnote 30 above.

\(^{37}\) “But thou hadst already begun thy temple in my mother’s breast, and laid the foundations of thine own holy habitation.” In Augustine and Watts, ”Confessions”, 73. Latin: ”*Sed matris in pectore iam inchoaueras templum tuum et exordium sanctae habitacionis tuae*” In CCSL 27:20.27-28

\(^{38}\) As an example: “whenas my mother thy faithful one wept to thee for me, more bitterly than mothers use to do for the bodily deaths of their children.” In ibid., 137. Latin: ”*cum pro me fleret ad te mea mater, fidelis tua, amplius quam flent matres corporea funera.*” In CCSL 27:37.2-3.
For Mother Jerusalem, often references pointed to her as the heavenly mother of Gal 4:26, but there was one instance in which she appeared as earthly mother: “…the earthly Jerusalem that is in slavery with her children” (“ipsam Jerusalem terrenam, quae servit cum filiiis suis”, ContrMend33). In the same paragraph, this earthly Mother was contrasted with a divine version of herself:

…we are not inquiring about the man who still belongs to Egypt or to Jericho or to Babylon or even to the earthly Jerusalem that is in slavery with her children, but about the citizen of that City above, which is free, our eternal mother in heaven.\(^40\)

For Augustine, the children of the earthly city “by nature vitiated sin” and were therefore “vessels of wrath,” whilst the children of the heavenly city by grace were freed from sin and were thus called “vessels of mercy” (DeCiv15.2). The children of the heavenly city were children of promise, children of grace, “citizens of the free city, who dwell together in everlasting peace, in which self-love and self-will have no place” (DeCiv15.3).\(^42\)

On Mother Church as earthly mother, Augustine borrowed terminology from the earthly mother describing the acquiring of new

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40 Latin: “non de homine quaerimus adhuc ad AEgyptum, vel ad Jerichum, vel ad Babyloniam pertinentem, vel ad ipsam Jerusalem terrenam, quae servit cum filiiis suis; sed de cive illius civitatis quae sursum est libera mater nostra aesterna in coelis.” Augustine, “Contra Mendacium (AOO)”, 508.

41 Latin: “Parit autem ciues terrenae ciuitatis peccato uitiata natura, caelestis uero ciuitatis ciues parit a peccato naturam liberans gratia; unde illa uocantur uasa irae, ista uasa misericordiae.” CCSL48:455.41-44.

42 ibid., 53. Latin: “Recte igitur significant Isaac, per repromissionem natus, filios gratiae, ciues ciuitatis liberae, socios pacis aesternae, ubi sit non amor propriae ac priuatae quodam modo uoluntatis” CCSL48:456.20-23.
members as ‘birthing’. But Mother Church’s children were not of the earth.

Rather they were the children of God through baptism:

His mother is the whole Church, because through God’s grace she certainly gives birth to his members (De Virg 5)\(^{43}\)

In fact, it was the saints (living and in heaven)\(^{44}\) who formed Augustine’s Mother Church:

…the Church as a whole, in the saints destined to possess God’s kingdom, is Christ’s mother spiritually… (De Virg 6)\(^{45}\)

For him, the “whole Mother Church” is “in the saints” because “the whole Church is the parent of all the saints, and the whole Church is the parent of each one of them” (Ep98.5).\(^{46}\)

Interestingly, spiritual regeneration occurs from Mother Church’s ‘bosom’ rather than her ‘womb’:

If, then, it be indeed the case that, under the promptings of a devout and pious mind, you abstain from dispensing a second baptism, and rather accept the baptism of the Catholic Church as the act of the one true Mother, who to all nations both offers a welcome to her bosom, that they may be regenerated, and gives a mother’s nourishment to them when they are regenerated, and as the token of admission into Christ’s one possession, which reaches to the ends of the earth; (Ep23.4)\(^{47}\)

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\(^{44}\) This concept will be discussed later in the chapter in greater detail in Augustine’s encounter with the Donatists.

\(^{45}\) Augustine, "Holy Virginity (NCP),” 71. Latin: “Ecclesia vero in sanctis regnum Dei possessuris, spiritu quidem tota mater Christi est…” Augustine, "De Sancta Virginitate (AOO)”, 287.


\(^{47}\) ibid., 60. 2 vols, vol 1. Latin: “Quod ergo tam pio et tam religioso animo facis, si tamen facis, ut ecclesiae catholicae baptismum non iteres, sed approbes potius tamquam unius urissimae matris, quae omnibus gentibus et regenerandis praebet sinum et regeneratis ubera infundit, tamquam unius possessionis Christi sese usque ad terrae terminus porrigitentis” CCSL 31:63.81-86.
He therefore made it sufficiently manifest that he did not fear to cause cruel pain to that Mother whose intervention he feared, namely, to the holy Church, among whose faithful children, baptized in her bosom, we knew that he himself was reckoned. \( (Ep151.6)\)

For Augustine it is in the “bosom” where “faith is wholesomely built up” (\textit{“salubriter aedificatur fides” Conf12.27.37}).

The same ‘bosom’, which birthed new members, is also the place where members are nourished:

\[\text{…under the promptings of a devout and pious mind, you abstain from dispensing a second baptism, and rather accept the baptism of the Catholic Church as the act of the one true Mother, who to all nations both offers a welcome to her bosom, that they may be regenerated, and gives a mother’s nourishment to them when they are regenerated, and as the token of admission into Christ’s one possession, which reaches to the ends of the earth} (Ep23.4).\]

Whilst Augustine acknowledged breastfeeding as an earthly maternal act he pointed to God as its underlying source:

\[\text{The comfort therefore of a woman’s milk did then entertain me: yet did neither my mother nor nurses fill their own breasts; but thou, O Lord, didst by them afford a nourishment fit for my infancy} (Conf 1.6.7).\]

Mother Church, the Mother Jerusalem from above, and Monica have all been presented as spiritual mothers. The motherhood of the flesh contrasts with spiritual motherhood from the ‘bosom’ or ‘heart’. In \textit{Conf} 48


50 In Augustine, "Letters (WAA)", Cunningham, 60. Latin: “Quod ergo tam pio et tm religioso animo facis, si tamen facis, ut ecclesiae catholicae baptismum non iteres, sed approbes potius tamquam unius uerissimae matris, quae omnibus gentibus et regenerandis praebet sinum et regeneratis ubera infundit, tamquam possessionis Christi sese usque ad terrae terminus porrigenitis” CCSL31:63.81-86.

9.8.17 referring to Monica as handmaid of God and earthly mother, Augustine described her as his mother of the ‘flesh’ ("de illa famula tua, quae me parturivit, et carne"). Then, alluding to her spiritual motherhood, Augustine described her as birthing from the ‘heart’:

…that handmaid of yours, which brought forth me: both in her flesh (carne), that I might be born (nascerer) to this temporal light (temporalem), and in her heart (corde) too, that I might be born again to the eternal light (aeternam lucem).52

Several authors note close parallels between Mother Church and Monica. Springer claims the Mother Church in Psalmus was modeled on Monica.53 In Conf 9.9, just as Augustine called Monica a peacemaker (pacifica), so was Mother Church towards the Donatists and Catholics in Psalmus. As Monica seeks to win over her son to Catholicism through many tears, so did Mother Church in Psalmus, seek to win over the Donatists to the Catholic Church, also through many tears. Augustine’s resistance to conversion is paralleled with the Donatists’ insistence on maintaining their version of Christianity.54

Clarissa Atkinson also parallels the role of Monica with the role of Mother Church in her exploration of Confessions:

[Like Monica, the church sought out and corrected the recalcitrant, nourished the feeble, and educated the immature. Long after their complex relationship was resolved by his conversion and Monica’s death, the ecclesiology and theology of Saint Augustine were haunted by that powerful, pursuing maternal figure…55

52 In ibid., 35. 2 vols, vol 2. Latin from CCSL27:143.10-12.

53 Springer, "The Prosopopoeia of Church as Mother": 59.

54 ibid., 60.

Atkinson provides no specific references, but a search through Augustine’s writings indicate such maternal characteristics did exist for Monica and Mother Church: Monica (Conf1.6.7, 2.3.6) was a mother who sought and corrected her child (as Mother Church does in Ep89.6); Mother Church (Conf4.16.31) and Monica (Conf3.4.7) breastfed; the sorrowful Monica (Conf3.11.19, 4.4, 5.7.13, 5.8.15, 6.1) cried tears of intercession for her son or mourned his spiritual death (Conf3.11.19, 4.4, 5.7.13, 5.8.15, 6.1) while Mother Church displays despairing emotion in Psalmus:

\[
O\ filii\ mei, / quid\ queremini\ de\ matre? \\
Quare\ me\ deseuistis, / iam\ volo\ a\ vobis\ audire. \\
[O\ my\ sons,\ what\ do\ you\ find\ wrong\ with\ your\ mother? \\
I\ want\ to\ hear\ why\ you\ have\ deserted\ me.]
\]  

Here Mother Church asked what she had done to offend the Donatists:

\[
Sed\ ego\ quid\ vobis\ feci/\ mater\ vestra\ in\ toto\ orbe? \\
[What\ have\ I\ done\ to\ you,\ your\ mother\ in\ all\ the\ world?]
\]  

Her final appeal “to her truant children’s filial sensibilities” was presented as a crucifying pain at their death, their leaving, her the Church:

\[
Vos\ me\ quare\ dimisistis/\ et\ crucior\ de\ vestra\ morte? \\
[Why\ have\ you\ left\ me?\ I\ am\ tormented\ by\ your\ death.]
\]  

Similarly, we find a despairing, pained Mother Church anxious over her wayward children in Eps 34.3 and 89.6:

…when the Church, his spiritual mother, interferes, she too is wounded in those sacraments by which, to the same ungrateful son, she ministered life and nourishment…let the Church herself be wounded by such blows as she can suffer.  


57 Trans., author. Latin from ibid., 54.

58 Trans., author. Latin from ibid.

What remedies, then, must the Church apply when seeking with a mother’s anxiety the salvation of them all…?\(^{60}\)

\(b\) Also a Roman Mother

I would argue, based on the evidence and contextual analysis presented in the chapters on Cyprian and Tertullian, that Augustine also drew on the ancient Roman mother as he imaged Mother Church. As demonstrated previously, the Roman mother could be represented as the *univira* (faithful wife of one husband), a *materfamilia* (the female head of the family, who births, nourishes, intercedes and mourns for her children) and/or a *matrona* (an esteemed matron who embodies the virtues of *concordia, pietas* and *justitia*.) These qualities could be seen as being embodied in Augustine’s own mother, Monica. But Augustine also utilised female ecclesial metaphors used by earlier Patristic writers that are not so applicable to Monica (for example, queen, daughter, and virgin). Such uses were not just a continuation of tradition but have been shown by Peper as purposefully employed in order to respond to various controversies of Augustine’s time.\(^{61}\) The next section explores the controversies of the Manichaens, Donatists, and Jovinianists, and how they contributed to Augustine’s imaging of the Church as mother—showing how Augustine utilized the Mother Church as metaphor to engage his different audiences.

\(^{60}\) In ibid., 379. *Latin*: “Quid igitur hic faciat ecclesiae medicina, salutem omnium materna caritate conquirens” CCSL31A:151.122-123.

\(^{61}\) Peper summarises the various recent research into Augustine’s use of the metaphor and presents his contribution as a remedy to the unsystematic and even conflicting views between each research due to their disregard of the context with which the metaphor was used and that which he thus undertakes himself in his thesis. Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 9-13, 122, and 123-137.
2. A Metaphor to Oppose Controversies

a) Manichaeism

Manichaeism originated in the latter half of the third century, founded by Mani, a Persian, but ‘irrefutably’ from a Jewish Christian background.\(^\text{62}\) It was the main rival to Christianity in replacement of classical paganism. Its central figure was Christ and it imitated many Christian elements. Peper states that its attraction was its use of syncretism (of various religions and philosophies) combined with reason and asceticism.\(^\text{63}\) He explains its similarities and differences:

Like Christianity, Manichaeism attempted to answer the fundamental questions concerning existence and the presence of evil in the created order. Unlike Christianity, however, Manichaeism held a notion of primordial dualism between light/good/God and dark/bad/matter; when the Kingdom of Darkness attacked the Kingdom of Light, it resulted in the commingling of the two and the creation of the physical world, which subsequently was then comprised of both good and evil. Manichaen soteriology centered on separating this unnatural mixture through the acquisition of esoteric knowledge and participating in various ascetical practices.\(^\text{64}\)

Other differences and similarities lay in their view of the Christian scriptures, their hierarchical system, and liturgical ritual. Manichaeism’s dualism distinguished the Old Testament from the New and not only rejected the entire Old Testament but also elements of the New Testament that did not agree with their theology.\(^\text{65}\) Their hierarchy consisted of an \textit{archēgos/princeps/imam} at the top, 12 apostles or teachers, 72 bishops and 360 presbyters, the ascetical ‘elect’, and the rest of the community, the


\(^\text{63}\) Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 123.

\(^\text{64}\) ibid.

\(^\text{65}\) Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church": 296.
‘hearers’, at the bottom. Even with their rejection of matter and therefore rejection of the Christian sacramental system, they still practiced liturgical rituals. As mentioned above, Augustine spent nine years of his early life within this sect until his disillusionment with it after meeting their most ‘learned’ bishop, Faustus. Augustine came to see Manichaeism as a Christian heresy of a dangerous type.

Augustine initially showed little interest in the use of bridal ecclesial language. But when the Manichees claimed to be the pure bride of Christ, Augustine showed greater interest and utilized Psalm 45 to justify his reclamation of the metaphor. Similarly, when the Donatists utilized Song of Song texts to justify their claim to the true Mother Church, Augustine sought to reclaim the Song texts and bridal imagery. He read the Song texts also in terms of Psalm 45 which contained a female figure that was a daughter, bride, virgin, and queen.

Unlike his contemporaries, Jerome and Ambrose, Augustine applied the bridal imagery of Song of Songs and Psalm 45 onto the Church rather than the individual Christian ascetic. For Hunter, Augustine’s engagement with Psalm 45 “helped to confirm in his mind the idea that the virgin bride of Psalm 45 is first and foremost the Catholic Church.” The Manichaean claim that their Church is the true bride of Christ loses traction in their rejection of the Old Testament and therefore Psalm 45. Their rejection of

69 Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church," 283.
70 Augustine’s conflict with the Donatists are explored further in the next section.
71 Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church": 298.
72 ibid., 296.
73 ibid.
the Old Testament, also rejects the prophesied figure of the Church.

Augustine said of the Manichaens:

It is amazingly bold in the impious and impure sect of the Manichaens to boast of being the chaste bride of Christ. All the effect of such a boast on the really chaste members of the holy Church is to remind them of the apostle’s warning against deceivers: ‘I have joined you to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest, as the serpent deceived Eve by his guile, so your minds also should be corrupted from the purity which is in Christ.’ …As an unworthy son and servant of the Catholic Church, the true bride of the true Christ, I too, as appointed to give out food to my fellow-servants, would speak to her a word of counsel. Continue ever to shun the profane errors of the Manichaens, which have been tried by the experience of thine own children, and condemned by their recovery…Be not misled by the name of truth. The truth is in thine own milk, and in thine own bread. They have the name only, and not the thing. Thy full-grown children, indeed, are secure; but I speak to thy babes, my brothers, and sons, and masters, whom thou, the virgin mother, fertile as pure, dost cherish into life under thine anxious wings, or dost nourish with the milk of infancy…

The Mother Church, who has “full-grown children” (“tuis quidem grandibus”) and a “son” in Augustine himself, is named virgin and bride.

Whilst Augustine seeks to reclaim the “virgin-bride” title from the Manichaens, the Church’s motherhood plays a significant role in this recovery. On the one hand, the milk (teaching) Mother Church provides is the only truth (“Noli decipi nomine veritatis: hanc sola tu habes, et in lacte

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tuo”). On the other hand, the Manichaens with their impious vanity (“Manichaeorum impiam vanitatem”) and astonishing shamelessness (“mirabilis impudentia”) are sacrilegious and impure (“Manichaeorum sacrilega et immunda societas”). Therefore the true Mother Church’s children need to keep their minds uncorrupted by the heretics’ impurity (“sic et vestrae mentes corrumpantur a castitate”). Mother Church’s full-grown children are in no danger of taking in their errors (“Et in tuis quidem grandibus secura es”). But the babes of Mother Church, the spiritual infants, need Augustine’s ‘food’ (“servus tuus positus in te dispensare cibaria conservis meis”) and his counsel against the Manichaens (“cave semper, ut caves, Manichaeorum impiam vanitatem”). In this feeding, Augustine as bishop acts like Mother Church but remains distinct from her too.

b) Donatism

The Donatist movement had its roots around 312 CE, when Felix of Abtugni ordained Caecilian, successor to Mensurius. All three, Felix, Caecilian and Mensurius were considered traditores to the Catholic Church. Caecilian’s opponents, the Numidian bishops elected a rival bishop, Maiorinus, who died shortly after. Donatus of Casae Nigrae became his successor and the “party of Maiorinus” became simply known as the “Donatists.”

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75 Among 2 other bishops who ordained him.

From the moment of Augustine’s ordination (395 CE), he was preoccupied with them. In 401 CE and 403 CE, the sixth and eighth councils of Carthage were called to invite the Donatists to return to Catholicism. By 404 CE, the ninth council of Carthage “called for firm action against the Donatists” after negative responses from the Donatists from previous councils, including violent responses from several members, In 405 CE, Emperors Arcadius, Honorius, and Theodosius, concerned with the preservation of the Catholic Church in Africa, called for unity between the Catholics and Donatists and produced the edict of ecclesiastical unity as well as other edicts “outlawing practices of rebaptism”. In this edict the Donatists were identified as a schismatic group that had grown into heresy and thus were subject to Roman anti-heretical law. But Honorius then issued a law of tolerance. The 410 CE Council of Carthage rejected Honorius’ “tolerant politics”. A Council was held in Carthage in 411 CE where 285 Donatist Bishops and 286 Catholic bishops met, resulting in the creation of anti-schismatic legislation against the Donatists and in which Augustine was proven to be “the champion of Catholics”.

Like the rigorists from Cyprian’s time, the Donatists saw the administration of sacraments by traditores as invalid, but unlike the rigorists and beyond the laxists, the Donatists allowed for the rebaptism of the lapsi from the Diocletian persecution of 303 CE. The Donatists were no

77 Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 149.
78 Evers, “Augustine on the Church,” 377.
79 ibid., 378.
80 ibid. Cf. also Harrison, *Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, 150.
81 Evers, “Augustine on the Church,” 378.
82 ibid., 375.
arrogant Christian schismatic group wanting to set up their own version of Christianity. Rather they wished to stay true to the North African ecclesial tradition set by Tertullian and Cyprian. On the one hand Tertullian established the idea that as long as certain baptismal oaths were undertaken, the validity of a baptism would surely be guaranteed in the one and only true Church which had the presence of the Holy Spirit. These oaths entailed: (1) a rejection of Roman and Punic practices which were seen as idolatrous by Christians, and (2) a complete acceptance of and commitment to Christ by practicing the Church’s ritual, moral, and ascetical practices. Burns explains that whilst Tertullian allowed for:

…concessions to human weakness, Tertullian refused to assign responsibility for the holiness of the Church to one or another class of its membership. All Christians were priests, all were called to the ideals which were actually realized in the lives of some: active confrontation of idolatry was achieved by the martyrs, sexual continence was practiced by the widows and virgins, single marriage was required of the clergy, rigorous fasts were embraced by the devotees of the New Prophecy. Imperfection and weakness could be tolerated but all should aspire to the perfection attained by at least some. 83

On the other hand, as seen in Chapter II, Cyprian had established the non-adulterous, non-sinful pure mother-virgin-bride Church through the unity of and with the bishops (De Unitate 6). Cyprian’s Church was a Church that contrasted with the world it left behind, the contrast exacerbated by the persecution it experienced by the Roman State. As such those outside of the Church were like her enemy who persecuted her, and those who did not conform to membership requirements were truly alien to her. But for Cyprian the enemy was not just from outside the Church, but also from those within who saw as attacking the Church’s unity by the

83 Burns, "The Holiness of the Church": 85-86.
formation of factions (Ep45.3.2). Regarding those who could not be reconciled to Mother Church, those who acted sinfully, Cyprian instructs:

Separate yourselves, [the Lord] said, from the tents of those hardened and evil sinners, and touch nothing of the things that are theirs lest you perish along with them in their sin (Num16.26). And that is why the faithful who are obedient to the Lord’s commandments and stand in fear of God must separate themselves off from their bishop if he is a sinner; they must have no part in the sacrifices of a priest who is sacrilegious, especially as they have in their own hands the power both to select bishops who are worthy and to reject those who are unworthy.84

Whilst the bishops and faithful are able to represent Mother Church, here it is clear that they could also misrepresent her.

As in De Unitate 6, Cyprian used the image of the Church as virgin-mother-wife to contrast her with polluting heretical members and enemies of the Church who threatened to persecute her members and destroy her unity. But Cyprian also liked to use the images of sister-bride for the Church, alongside the image of a sealed fountain, quoting the Song of Songs to demarcate between the pure Church and those outside of her, as shown in Chapter II of this thesis.85

For the Donatists then, in following the African ecclesial heritage, the purity of the Church depended on the Tertullianic baptismal oaths and the Cyprianic sense of unity of the Church—the good pure Church, contained as a sealed fountain or enclosed garden, against the hostile impure world. Anyone considered impure, a sinner, was to be cast out. Some ministers though who considered themselves following the African tradition did not consider moral purity to be part of the Tertullianic-Cyprianic


85 Cf pp.91-92 above.
requirements. Consequently, the presence of immoral ministers and *tradiores* amongst those who stayed true and pure within the Catholic community led Donatists to question the guarantee of purity in the Church. Naturally the Donatists began to claim that only a Church, which rid itself of immoral and unworthy ministers and members, could have the guarantee of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit within their Church and the validity of their sacraments.

Augustine refutes the Donatists by stating that one could not really know and guarantee the holiness and worthiness of a Church minister or recipient of the sacrament. Further, Andreicut points out the logistic nightmare--Church numbers had grown so large that their moral and spiritual maturity could not be readily verified. The holiness of the Church had to depend on something beyond the merits of individual Church members. In addition, if sinners were cast out from the Church of saints, Augustine feared their chance at salvation would be lost.

Augustine found his solution to the Donatist arguments through the theology of Tyconius, a great Donatist theologian himself, but excommunicated by his own community for his rejection of their ‘pure’ form of Catholicity. Tyconius “recognised that in the Church the few saints rubbed shoulders with a majority of the unrighteous; and rebaptism, as a

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87 Cf. Augustine’s *De Bapt* 4.10.17 on the unnecessary worthiness of a minister and recipient in terms of the effectiveness of baptism as sacrament. According to Augustine, water and the baptismal invocation were the necessary elements for a valid baptism. (*De Bapt* 3.10.15)

88 Andreicut, "The Church's Unity and Authority", 271.

89 ibid., 270.
consequence, went by the board.” 90 Tyconius also saw the Church as the “Body of Christ” with “‘two parts’, or the one Body, which could be seen simultaneously as holy and as wicked.” 91 Using Tyconius’ ecclesiology, Augustine proposed mixed membership upon the Church on earth, saints with sinners, and was adamant that only at the final judgement were Church members separated into sinners and saints. 92 Augustine also introduced the concept of Christ as head of the Church, and along with his body made up the whole Christ (totus Christus), pointing to the true source of holiness—Christ, not the Church member, as enabling the validity of the exercise of sacraments. The closeness in relationship between Christ the head and his body the Church is explained:

There is such an intimate unity between Christ and the Church for Augustine that one cannot be separated from the other as seen in his perception of Christ’s sufferings as also the sufferings of the Church and vice versa. 93

Aaron Canty says this unity derives from the cross of Christ 94 and Augustine uses nuptial imagery to enable his audience to contemplate such unity 95: Christ as bridegroom, king, and saviour whilst the Church is “his


91 ibid., 116.

92 Andreicut, ”The Church’s Unity and Authority”, 271. Markus says that in fact it was already the Church’s practice to have sinners amongst its saints including amongst the Donatists and that it was only the Donatist claims to purity of their ministry that jarred with orthodox Catholicism on this matter. Markus, Saeculum, 117.


94 ibid., 228.

95 ibid., 230.
bride, his redeemed people”\textsuperscript{96}, and as head Christ must have a body so he assumes flesh in “the bridal chamber which is the Virgin’s womb”.\textsuperscript{97}

With the Church on earth consisting of sinners and saints and Christ as its head, the sinful minister could administer the sacraments without diminishing the effect of the sacrament (\textit{ex opere operato}) and the purity and truth of Mother Church could remain intact. The clear demarcation between the Church and the world “each excluding the other”\textsuperscript{98} as promoted by the Cyprianic-Tertullianic tradition, was ecclesiologically too narrow for Augustine especially “[s]ince the Church was no longer a sect in the world but rather now a socially and legally sanctioned body that began to assimilate the world.”\textsuperscript{99} Andreicut explains Augustine’s view in which sinners and saints remained in the one Church, which retained its holiness, despite such mixture:

… both the good and the bad should live peacefully together in the Church. While to the Church belongs all the faithful people, the Church is not at present holy insofar as, according to the Lord’s prayer, Christians should ask for forgiveness of their sins. Consequently, the Church is not holy by virtue of the holiness of its members. Against the Donatist ideas that the Church is a community of saints on earth as in heaven, a tiny remnant separated from the unworthy people, Augustine argues that the Church contains good and bad fish and that they are not to be separated until the final judgment.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{96} ibid.

\textsuperscript{97} ibid., 230-231. There is a play on the image of the Virgin here since the Virgin could mean either Mary or the Church or both. Augustine’s use of Mary as type for the Church will be discussed later in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{98} Evers, “Augustine on the Church,” 383.

\textsuperscript{99} Andreicut, "The Church’s Unity and Authority", 271. In addition, Augustine’s cosmopolitan experience in Rome and Milan prevented him from the Donatist narrow thinking on Church membership. Markus, \textit{Saeculum}, 113. Markus says Augustine experienced “a Church that sought to engage and transform a cosmopolitan society. This was in contrast to the African ecclesial experience where the Church was seen as very much in opposition to its surrounding culture, following on from the African Patristic tradition that the Church was the place of salvation and outside of the Church was impure, hostile, and untransformable.” Ibid., 104-105.

\textsuperscript{100} Andreicut, "The Church’s Unity and Authority", 271.
Since the reality of the Church entailed sinners mixed with saints, Augustine shifted the image of absolute purity of the Church from completely existing in the temporal earthly (as per early North African tradition) to existing in its full completeness in the eternal eschatological realm. The understanding of the early Church changes from a pure Church against the impure world, a world that had intermittently persecuted the Church, to a Church that is supported by this world through Roman imperial favour of it against schismatics.

However it does not necessarily follow that the Church on earth, inclusive of sinners, was not pure. In the Augustinian terminology of the ‘two cities’ it is not as if Rome equates with the Church on earth whilst Jerusalem equates with the Church of eternal heaven. Rather,

(while the empirical or visible Church is a mixed community and contains both good and evil people, the elect and the wicked, the inner church, which exists within the empirical Church, is the church of the elect or the saints, the church of those who live by charity and love.\textsuperscript{101}

Alexnder Evers provides further explanation: “[t]he ideal purity of the church had…to be reconciled with its real condition, and this could only be done by distinguishing clearly between two states or temporalities: that of the church as it was now and that of the church as it would one day be.”\textsuperscript{102}

The Church of now, the historical present (\textit{ecclesia quae nunc est}) images the Church it would one day be, in the eschatological future (\textit{ecclesia qualis futura est}) in its members who seek the will of God in faith and charity.\textsuperscript{103} It is even claimed that Augustine named the Church on earth that ‘reconciled part’ of the world:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[101] ibid., 295.
\item[102] Evers, “Augustine on the Church,” 383.
\end{footnotes}
The human world is tainted by sin. This results in separation and dysfunction in the world. Christ came into the world to heal, reconcile and join what has been separated by sin. The Church is that place that Augustine sees as the ‘reconciled world’. 104

Interestingly, Augustine pursues purity more vigorously than the Donatists, distinguishing between Christians “who are part of the Church and take part in its sacraments, without being spiritually part of the Church” and the “spiritual people” who are “faithful and united [to] one another in love”. 105

But even with these two distinctions, there remains only the one Church, an argument put forward against Donatist accusations that the Catholics had created two Churches. 106 Peper explains the Church in heaven and the Church on earth as phases of the Church—the temporal/physical phase and the eschatological/spiritual phase (“comprised only of the perfected communion of saints”). 107 But with such a description it is tempting to relegate the ‘spiritual phase’ simply to the eschatological Church.

With these distinctions, Augustine’s picture of the Church of saints as “a lily in the midst of thorns,” as his “beloved in the midst of daughters” (Song 2:2) has context: on the one hand, the lily represented the few good people of the Church, on the other hand the thorns represented the multitude of sinners within the Church (as opposed to the world outside). 108 Mother Church in the temporal earthly realm is no longer the monolithic figure presented by Cyprian and Tertullian. Rather, she consists of a diversity of members including sinners and saints. In Augustine’s allegorical reading of

104  Markus, Saeculum, 105.
105  Andreicut, "The Church’s Unity and Authority”, 296.
106  Evers, "Augustine on the Church,” 384.
107  Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 132.
108  Andreicut, "The Church’s Unity and Authority”, 296.
this verse the beloved represents “those who live the good and charitable life”, whilst the daughters, “the bad people”.\textsuperscript{109}

Augustine also used the images of the spiritual mother and midwife to represent the saints who make up the Christian community. For Augustine, a spiritual mother was: “…every devout soul that does the will of his Father by the fertile power of charity is Christ’s mother in those to whom it gives birth, until Christ himself is formed in them.”\textsuperscript{110} But also, Augustine imaged Church members as midwives:

Do not prefer your own ease to the claims of the Church; for if no good men were willing to minister to her in her bringing forth of her spiritual children, the beginning of your own spiritual life would have been impossible.\textsuperscript{111}

With members described as daughter, beloved, mother, or midwife, the appellation ‘Mother Church’ no longer simply conjured associations of remaining within the Church or returning to her, it was also now about members making a choice within the Church: to be spiritual mothers or midwives themselves, thus assisting Mother Church; or to be daughters who are part of the Church but do not engage in its work of birthing Christ and new Christians.

Augustine also changed the traditional way ‘Mother Church’ had been utilized in the refutation of schismatics--from merely speaking about

\textsuperscript{109} For Augustine, the ‘daughters’ and schismatics together made up the sinners of the Church. In ibid. In comparison, Yves Congar used the following distinction between the Church of saints and Church of saints and sinners: the community of saints and the community of sacraments. In ibid., 299.


her to allowing the Church to speak for herself (*prosopopoeia*). 112

Augustine initially used this personified Mother Church to appeal to her children (the Donatists) to return to her as shown in *Psalmus Contra Donati* (270-294):

> O my sons, what do you find wrong with your mother? Now I wish to hear from you, why have you deserted me? You have blamed your brothers, and I am wounded deeply... You say that you are with me, but you see that is untrue. I am consecrated Catholic, and you are from the party of Donatus. The apostle Paul prescribed me to pray for the rulers of the world; you look unfavorably [at me] that rulers are now in the Christian faith. If you are my children, why are you resentful? Is it because they hear my prayers? ...What have I, your mother [spread throughout] the whole world, done against you? I drive out the sinners whom I am able; those whom I am not able, I bring them together [in the Church] to support them. I support them while they are healed or until they are separated in the end of times. Why have you detached yourselves from me? I am crucified by your death. If you detest sinners so much, look at how many you have. And if you are going to tolerate sinners, why not do so in the unity [of the Church], where no one rebaptizes and altar is not against altar? You tolerate so many sinners, but not with any merit because what you owe to Christ you wish to offer to Donatus.113

This passage provides much information about Augustine’s battle with the Donatists and his utilization of the maternal ecclesial metaphor to refute them. Andreicut says of Augustine’s initial approach to the Donatists: “[he] originally believed that no one should be forced to the unity of Christ, but

112 Springer, "The Prosopopoeia of Church as Mother".

that the Church should act with words, fight with arguments, and conquer by reason.”

As the Mother Church of the Cyprianic-Tertullianic tradition was persecuted, so did this Catholic Mother present herself persecuted by the Donatists, wounded or torn (laceror) and crucified or deeply suffering (crucior) by their desertion of her (deseruistis).

Mother Church seems to side with the Roman State (“vos invidetis quod reges jam sunt in christiana fide”). This only gives Donatists further evidence that the Catholics have not kept sealed the fountain of Mother Church. But Augustine’s Mother Church was concerned with keeping pure (“expello malos quos possum”). At the same time they were not readily identifiable so sinners and saints were held together in a maternal sense, until their separation at judgment day (“quos non possum cogor ferre: Fero illos donec sanentur, aut separentur in fine”). Rebaptism then was unnecessary since both Donatists and Catholics belonged to the one Church even if the Donatists had been sinning (“Si et vos toleratis malos, quare non in unitate, Ubi nemo rebaptizat, nec altare contra altare?”). Augustine points out that in the stubbornness of the Donatists they pledge allegiance to their founder and his cause rather than Christ himself (“Quia quod debetis pro Christo, pro Donato vultis ferre”).

The appeal to the minds and hearts of the Donatists through the use of prosopopoeia was of no avail as the Donatists remained in opposition to

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114 Andreicut, "The Church's Unity and Authority", 244.
115 But also because some Donatists simply responded violently to the Catholic Church’s requests to return to her.
116 Andreicut explains how the early Church saw the dynamic between itself and the surrounding world—on one righteous and at times persecuted, the other unrighteous and at times persecuting. When the Church gained “favor with the empire” and the empire identified itself “more and more like Christianity” the demarcation between the pure Church and the impure world became less necessary and the divisions became internal, between good and evil members. Andreicut, "The Church's Unity and Authority", 267.
Catholic requests to return to Mother Church. Lamirande, Brown, Willis, Markus, Bonner, and Frend say the year 405 CE was a turning point for Augustine in his dealings with them. It was then that Augustine and his colleagues “openly asked the state to help them against the Donatists, an action which generated other actions that finally secured in 411 the official condemnation of Donatists”. The Donatists reasoned that the resulting persecutions likened them to the persecuted Mother Church of the Cyprianic-Tertullianic tradition. This only served to give further proof that they were the true Mother Church. Augustine challenges their maternal image with a new one of his own. Having failed to persuade them using the persecuted maternal image, one who pleads for her children’s return (Psalms), he utilizes a disciplinarian mother image to justify the Church’s use of force on the Donatists. This mother disciplines her wayward children for the sake of their salvation:

Whatever therefore the true and rightful Mother does, even when something severe and bitter is felt by her children at her hands, she is not rendering evil for evil, but is applying the benefit of discipline to counteract the evil of sin, not with the hatred which seeks to harm, but with the love which seeks to heal.

Augustine further justifies the use of force by claiming that God enforces righteousness on both the good and bad:

He afflicts with famine even the pious and devout patriarchs, disquiets a rebellious people by more severe chastisements, and refuses, through thrice besought, to take away the thorn

117 In ibid., 234-235.
118 ibid.
in the flesh of the apostle, that He may make His strength perfect in weakness.\textsuperscript{120}

As the Donatists used Song to claim hold of the true Mother Church, describing her the sealed fountain in the Cyprianic tradition, despite his general reluctance to adopt Song\textsuperscript{121} and preference for other texts to describe the union between the Church and Christ (such as Psalm 44 or Ephesians 5.23-32\textsuperscript{122}), Augustine seeks to reclaim the Song texts:

The number, therefore, of the just persons, who are the called according to His purpose, (Romans 8:28) of whom it is said, The Lord knoweth them that are His, (2 Timothy 2:19) is itself the garden enclosed, the fountain sealed, the orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits.\textsuperscript{123}

As introduced above, the sealed fountain did not refer to the entire Church as argued by the Donatists but only those called by God, the just, amongst the sinners and saints.\textsuperscript{124} Augustine employed other metaphors from Song to reclaim Mother Church and refute the different arguments by the Donatists.

\textsuperscript{120} Augustine, Ep\textsuperscript{93.4}, trans. Cunningham, in ibid., 398-399. Latin: “…excercet fame patriarchas etiam pios et religiosos, populum contumacem poenis grauioribus agitat, non aucter ab apostolo stimulum carnis tertio rogatus, ut uirtutem in infirmitate perficiat.” CCSL31A:169.95-98.


\textsuperscript{122} Asiedu, "The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul": 312-313; Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church": 296-302. Hunter refers to psalm 44 as psalm 45 as it appears in the vulgate.


\textsuperscript{124} cf. Clark, ed. \textit{Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith}, 408. Augustine even made the distinction between sinners and saints by taking the images of garden and fountain from Song and stating that the garden signified those outwardly baptized whilst the fountain represented “citizens of the angelic commonwealth”. (\textit{ContrCres}2.15, 18) in ibid.
But he did not use ‘Mother’ with these other metaphors. Rather, the Church was simply female and applied alongside other metaphors which the Donatists attempted to use for themselves: for example, the “one dove” (Song6:9) in *De Baptismo* and “pastures” (Song1:7) in *De Unitate*.

c) Jovinianism

As noted in the previous chapter, the Jovinianist controversy posed a threat to Christianity even after the founder had been exiled to the distant island of Boa. Jovinian taught that: first, virgins, widows and married women were of the same merit because of baptism; second, those who had been born again in baptism with full faith could not be overthrown by the devil; and third, there was no difference between abstinence from food and receiving it with thanksgiving. Jovinianism itself attracted condemnation from Rome under Pope Siricius, and as shown in the previous chapter, from Milan under Ambrose in the early 390’s CE. Hunter says after 10 years of Jovinian’s exile, counter-arguments highlighting the value of marriage were still needed after authors such as Jerome praised virginity over marriage, to the point of presenting marriage as an evil.

Of Jovinian’ three theses, the first was especially controversial as it questioned the choice of those who lived the celibate religious life, including Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine. Augustine was compelled to respond in *The Excellence of Marriage* and *Holy Virginity* (composed in c.401 CE). Whilst Jovinian argued for the equality of marriage and virginity, Jerome argued for the superiority of viriginity by disparaging

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125 Augustine, "Marriage and Virginity (NCP)", Kearney, 15.
126 ibid.
127 Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church": 295.
128 Augustine, "Marriage and Virginity (NCP)", Kearney, 15.
marriage. Augustine took a middle path. On the one hand Augustine kept the notion of celibacy as preferable over the married life:

So too marriage is good, because it is good to bear children and be the mother of a family; but not marrying is better because to have no need of this task is better even for human society (DeBono). On the other hand, he affirmed that there were three goods of marriage: (1) procreation, (2) the exercise of charity towards one’s partner who could not control sexual desires and so helped prevent illicit unions with others (marriage as a secundum veniam--by way of pardon or a concession to human weakness), and (3) that it was a sacrament which was meant to reflect the Church’s marriage to Christ. His attempt to uphold both marriage and virginity is seen in DeVirg where he explained that both married women and female virgins were able to spiritually birth Christ if they followed the will of God:

Both married women of faith and virgins consecrated to God are Christ’s mothers spiritually, because with holy practices and with love they do the will of the Father, with a pure heart and good conscience and sincere faith (1Tim1:5). Those, however, who give birth physically in the married state do not give birth to Christ but to Adam, and therefore, because they know what they have given birth to, they hasten to have their children made members of Christ by being bathed in the sacraments.

129 ibid., 16.


131 Augustine, "Marriage and Virginity (NCP)", Kearney, 12.

Augustine distinguished between married women of faith who birthed Christ and married women who simply birthed “children after the flesh”, indicating at the same time his preference for celibacy:

No kind of physical motherhood, therefore, is comparable with holy virginity, even considering only physical virginity...although conjugal chastity is observed in the flesh, it is not attributed to the flesh but to the mind, as it is under its control and guidance that the flesh itself has union only with its own spouse. If this is so, with how much greater justification, and with how much more honor, must celibacy be counted among the spiritual goods, when bodily integrity is vowed and consecrated to the very Creator of soul and body, and preserved for him! (DeVirg8)\textsuperscript{133}

Augustine’s view of celibacy as preferable over marriage may have derived in part from an internalizing of the Roman mythic meaning of Vestal virginity.\textsuperscript{134} But Asiedu believes it was Augustine’s relationship with the mother of Adeodatus, his son, which had an impact on Augustine’s view. Augustine had hoped to marry the mother of Adeodatus but because she was of lower class his mother would not allow the marriage. Instead, Augustine’s mother chose another bride for him, to set him on the right path of good citizenship. Broken hearted, the mother of Adeodatus chose celibacy for life. As Adeodatus’ mother took up the secular celibate life, so does Augustine, but in the Christian sense, taking up the life he had postponed for so long. For, he had equated conversion to Christianity as taking up a life of continence.\textsuperscript{135} This was partly driven by the Ambrosian

\textsuperscript{133}“Holy Virginity” n.8, in Augustine, "Marriage and Virginity (NCP)", Kearney, 72. Latin: “Nulla ergo carnis foecunditas sanctae virginitati etiam carnis comparari potest... Porro autem si pudicitia conjugalis, quamvis custodiatur in carne, animo tamen, non carni tribuitur, quo praeside atque rectore, nulli praeter proprium conjugium caro ipsa miscetur: quanto magis quantoque honoratus in animi bonis illa continentia numeranda est, qua integritas carnis ipsi Creatori animae et carnis vovetur, consecratur, servatur.” Augustine, "De Sancta Virginitate (AOO)", 288-289.


\textsuperscript{135}Asiedu, "The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul": 288.
view: “Continence is the pedestal on which right worship rests.” 136

Marriage for Augustine would have been a personally self-indulgent choice. 137

Nonetheless, Augustine affirms the status of marriage by utilizing the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, communicating that: firstly humans are social and marriage is a social bond; secondly that the unity of the relationship between man and woman is shown by Eve’s birth from Adam’s side; and thirdly that such relationships are characterized by one being in charge and the other being compliant. 138 Hunter says that by promoting the marital chastity of a couple (fides), Augustine was tapping into the Roman value of marriage as entailing fidelity (the commitment to having sexual relations only with the one spouse). 139 The previous chapters explored the views regarding the fidelity of the matrona in Cyprian’s and Tertullian’s time; for instance, the Roman widows who remained true even to their dead husband became the esteemed univira (one husband only) of society. 140

As then earthly marriage reflects the marriage of the Church to Christ so does the procreative purpose of marriage reflect the procreative

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136 ibid., 292.

137 Further, Asiedu described Augustine’s early influences: Hearing the stories told by Ponticianus--the stories of Victorinus and Antony of Egypt who according to Asiedu had very much similar journeys as Augustine but not quite as deep the psychological and spiritual anguish, pushed Augustine’s resolve to a life of continence. Like Augustine, the two men had courtiers who chose a life of virginity for God and at the time of the launch of their careers towards power and prestige, they also took up a manner of life in the same way as their previous lovers. In ibid.

138 Augustine, "Marriage and Virginity (NCP)", Kearney, 16.

139 ibid., 17.

140 But Hunter points out a different side to this value of fides in marriage, using Sussan Treggiari’s idea that the patron-client relationship was important in the Roman empire where one’s very life as a client depended on the daily kindness of the generosity of city patrons. In Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity, 17. This uneven picture of relationship between the man and woman would be unnatural in today’s age but was taken to be a given, at least by those in power and who could enforce this idea. Consequently, the Church as bride and mother would naturally fit into this conjugal-domestic image if it was understood that God is the Roman Father, the patron, or the paterfamilias.
element of the Church—thus we have the Church as bride/wife and mother. As a bride the Church “conveys something of her loveliness and beauty which she has received from her Bridegroom”. As a wife she shows “her intimate union with Christ”. As a mother the Church “brings forth sons who take the place of their fathers” which Aaron Canty explains as Augustine’s explanation for apostolic succession: “the apostles beget the Church through preaching (Psalm 44.10) and that the Church bears sons who take the place of the Apostles.”

But such a holy marriage involving procreation could not for Augustine have erotic associations. The Church is understood as both mother and virgin to counteract this. As seen above in Augustine’s encounter with the Donatists, he is reluctant to use Song of Songs because of its erotically charged language, expressing the Church as bride to Christ. Further, naming the Church a virgin also expresses for him very important theological notions. Virginity was not just a sign of conversion and total dedication to God, it was also a sign of God’s grace in the Church. As God enabled Augustine to live a life of continence (for Augustine says it is a pure gift from God and therefore graces him as an individual), so God graces the Church, enabling it to exist and live a holy life.

This view of one’s complete dependence on God is what James Dittes argues is not only a monolithic view, but a “mom-istic” view, arguing

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141 Canty explains that the Church is also a daughter since she is begotten (not birthed as birthing is tied to the mother whilst begetting is tied to the father): “the Church is a daughter of the king and of the kings he appoints” ibid.

142 As shown in Clark, “The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides”: 8. But it is also discussed in the previous chapter on Ambrose’s use of Mother Church as metaphor.

143 ibid.

144 Augustine described the battle with his will as similar to Paul’s—a battle between the spirit and flesh (Gal5, Rom 7-8). Asiedu, ”The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul”: 286.
that Augustine’s mother’s complete dominance over his life, even when for a time he detested her attention and control, had implications for his ecclesiological view. Dittes says that Augustine’s Church seems to be more of a place of safe haven and comfort rather than “a banner or a call to action ...[for s]truggle he did—even dominate—once he found ways to do this on behalf of his mother and the Church, but both in his thought and in his life, the final stable resolution required that the effort be in the context of passive yielding and submission.”

This was not necessarily Augustine’s complete view of the Church since, as seen above in Augustine’s engagement with the Donatists, he also called for Church members to become midwives or mothers themselves, and with the Manichaens he understood there were members of the Church who did not depend on the spiritual food of Mother Church as the spiritual infant members did. These imply that Augustine also encouraged an active response in relation to the Church. Though taking Asiedu’s and Dittes views into account, the virginity of Augustine’s Mother Church could be seen as not only a total dedication to God, but also a sign of complete dependence on God, but not necessarily a dependence that calls for passive or eternal childlike-dependant membership in the Church.

The following passage presents Augustine’s combination of the Church as mother, virgin and wife as a response to Jovinianists:

This is what we have set out to do in the present treatise. May Christ help us, the son of the Virgin and the spouse of virgins, born in the flesh from a virgin womb and married spiritually in a virginal matrimony. Since, therefore, as the apostle says, the whole Church is a virgin betrothed to the one man Christ (2Cor11:2), what great honor is due to those of its members who preserve even in their bodies what the whole Church preserves by faith, in imitation of the mother of its spouse and Lord! For the Church too is both virgin and mother. If she is not a virgin, why are we concerned for her

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145 Dittes, "Continuities Between the Life and Thought of Augustine": 140.
integrity? If she is not a mother, why do we address ourselves to her children? Mary gave birth physically to the head of this body; the Church gives birth spiritually to that head’s members. In both, virginity is no obstacle to fertility; in both, fertility does not extinguish virginity. The Church as a whole is holy both physically and spiritually, but she is not physically a virgin as a whole, though she is spiritually. How much greater is her holiness, therefore, in those of her members in whom she is a virgin both physically and spiritually? (DeVirg2)\textsuperscript{146}

Noticeably, the Church’s virginity is emphasised over her motherhood and spousal status. “Virgin” is used at almost every possible place in the text alongside positively esteemed concepts such as the “Son” or “marriage” and thus through repetition and association, serve to convince its audience to gain a high regard for virginity. The dual concepts of Mary as virgin and mother are especially utilized to promote the concepts of Church as virgin and mother.\textsuperscript{147} As well, whilst vestal virginity suspended motherhood for a limited period of time in a woman’s life, Augustine here seeks to reassure his audience that the Church’s perpetual virginity was able to exist alongside her motherhood.

Augustine responds to the Jovinianists by upholding both marriage and virginity but at the same time shows preference for the latter. For Augustine, virginity is a sign of complete conversion to God and dependence upon God’s grace, echoing his own faith journey and personal

\textsuperscript{146} “Holy Virginity”, n.2, in Augustine, “Marriage and Virginity (NCP)”, Kearney, 68-69. 

\textsuperscript{147} Cf. also DeVirg 6. Mary as model and type for the Church’s motherhood and virginity is explored as a separate topic later in this chapter.
lifestyle choice. Augustine translates his ideas on marriage and virginity onto the Church as he describes her as mother, bride, and most of all a virgin. His preference for a life of virginity for the female Church member is explained thus: that she can be a virgin and still be a mother since one can spiritually birth Christ. At the same time, as a virgin, she would be married to Christ and still keep her virginity intact. In contrast, mothers “of the flesh” not only must be preoccupied with the conversion of her own children to Christ but also by the distractions of family life, making it difficult to match the virgin’s life of total dedication to God and dependence on God’s grace. To strengthen his argument, Augustine pairs Mary’s motherhood and virginity with the Church’s.

3. Mother Church as the New Eve and as Mary

In the early Church, Mater Ecclesia had been likened to women figures from the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures. The early theologians (for example, Irenaeus, Cyprian and Tertullian) reflected on the Church as a figure of the New Eve and of other great Scriptural matriarchs such as Rebecca, Sarah and Susannah rather than simply as Mary. In addition, it has been shown in the previous chapters that Mother Church was a figure in her own right, utilized for particular purposes rather than simply reduced to a reflection of Mary. In fact, if Mother Church reflected anyone, she shared very similar characteristics with the idealised ancient Roman matrona and, in Augustine’s case, his own mother. This section explores the ‘New Eve’ and Mary as two key figures derived from scriptural matriarchs whom Augustine likens to Mother Church. These are not simple comparisons or transpositions. Ecclesiological complexities are present, especially in the
relationship of Mary to Mother Church which Augustine ultimately leaves unresolved.

a) The New Eve

As Eve brought death through sin, so Mother Church, the ‘New Eve’, counteracts this inheritance and brings new life through baptism. Augustine interprets Eve as “Mother of the Living”, mother to those brought into the world in a state of mortal sin, whilst the Church is the new Eve, “Mother of the Spiritually Living”:

Because two parents got us unto death, two parents have gotten us unto life. The parents who got us unto death are Adam and Eve. The parents who have gotten us unto life are Christ and the Church. My own father who begot me was Adam for me, and my own mother was Eve for me…brothers, in what way were we born? Certainly, to die…But father God and mother Church do not engender for this end. They engender for eternal life, because they themselves are eternal. And we have eternal life as the inheritance promised us by Christ…we are members of Christ, we must be hoping for this inheritance.148

In this, whilst Eve’s motherhood is extended to all humanity, the Church’s motherhood is discussed only in light of the members of Christ.

Augustine encourages members of the Church to choose whom to emulate between the two mothers: Mother Church, by growing spiritually and bringing others to baptism, or Eve, by being led astray in her mind and therefore not keeping chaste and stunting her own spiritual growth:149


Let the one who has mentioned the virgin tell us…*I have betrothed you to one husband to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ, but I am afraid, he says, that as the serpent led Eve astray with its cunning, so too your minds, he says, may be corrupted from the chastity which is in Christ* (2 Cor 11:2-3).

Preserve that virginity in your minds; virginity of the mind is the integrity of Catholic faith. In the same way as Eve was corrupted by the serpent’s talk, so must the Church remain a virgin…just as Mary gave birth in her womb as a virgin to Christ, so let the members of Christ give birth in their minds, and in this way you will be mothers of Christ…You became children, become mothers too. You were the mother’s children when you were baptized, then you were born as members of Christ. Bring whomever you can along to the bath of baptism, so that just as you became children when you were born, you may likewise be able, by bringing others to be born, to become mothers of Christ as well.150

Augustine’s utilization of Mother Church as the New Eve was especially helpful in his refutation of the Manichaens who wished to disregard the Old from the New Testament and relegate Adam and Eve as “by-products of the war between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Dark, creations of demonic parents for the purpose of confining the particles of light through sexual reproduction.”151 Peper explains that rather than pinpointing evil as a “created thing” threatening the “omnibenevolence and omnipotence of the divine”, it was the consequence of Adam and Eve’s moral failing.152

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152 ibid.
Mother Church as the New Eve also helped to refute the Gnostic denial of any feminine role in salvation. As Monica Miller points out, Augustine sees salvation as brought about by a pair, the male Christ and the female Church, who themselves are prefigured in the first couple Adam and Eve:153

When Adam sleeps, Eve is formed from his side; when Christ is dead, the spear pierces His side, that the mysteries may flow forth whereby the Church is formed. Is it not evident to every man that in those things then done, things to come were foreshadowed, since the apostle says that Adam was the figure of Him that was to come?154

If pain and groaning is the inheritance of Eve’s children, then Mother Church’s children have only to look forward to its passing away—for Mother Church “groans for them” and “travails for them”:

As if you should ask again, who are the beloved? “Lo, children, the reward of the fruit of the womb, are an heritage of the Lord.” Since he says, “fruit of the womb,” these children have been born in travail. There is a certain woman, in whom what was said unto Eve, “in sorrow shall you bring forth children,” is shown after a spiritual manner. The Church bears children, the Bride of Christ; and if she bears them, she travails of them. In figure of her, Eve was called also “the Mother of all living.” (Gen3:16,20) He who said, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you,” (Gal 4:19) was among the members of her who travails. But she travailed not in vain, nor brought forth in vain: there will be a holy seed at the resurrection of the dead: the righteous who are at present scattered over the whole world shall abound. The Church groans for them, the Church travails of them; but in that resurrection of the dead, the offspring of the Church shall appear, pain and groaning shall pass away....155


Here the Church is not only Mother, she is also a Bride of Christ. As Eve is mother and spouse so the Church is a mother and spouse. Both figures are named “Mothers of all living”.

However, Mother Church was not always figured as the New Eve in the history of the Christian Church. For example, Irenaeus had utilized Mary instead of the Church as the New Eve to argue for Christ’s nature, whilst Mother Church was utilized for a different argument as discussed in Chapter II. In contrast, Tertullian and Cyprian utilized ‘genetrix’ (mother/ancestress) for the Church alone and did not apply it to Mary (to whom was applied ‘mater’ in reference only to her relationship with Jesus). Augustine, in the footsteps of his predecessor Ambrose who first stated that Mary was the type and model of the Church, also takes up the idea of the Church as Mary, a concept that will now be explored.

b) Mary

Augustine first utilizes Mary as model of the Church in response to Jovinianists saying: “Only Mary… is mother and virgin both spiritually and physically, both Christ’s mother and Christ’s virgin (DeVirg6).” No Christian individual—virgin, ascetic nor mother—could claim to be above


156 Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 142.
such a figure. In the same passage, Augustine highlights that the Church is also a mother and virgin in relation to Christ, but only in the spiritual sense: “On the other hand, the Church as a whole, in the saints destined to possess God’s kingdom, is Christ’s mother spiritually and also Christ’s virgin spiritually, but as a whole she is not these things physically (DeVirg6).”

It should be noted at the outset, that in using Mary as a model Augustine does not identify her metaphorically as Mother Church (‘Mary is Mother Church’), but rather she is paralleled to the Church as a simile (Mother Church “…bears the likeness of Mary” [Serm192.2]). Soskice states that parallels and similes are weaker rhetorical devices than metaphors as they have an “affective impact but no increment to meaning”. However, Soskice does point out that a model has the ability to “evoke an emotional, moral, or spiritual response” as well as having a “cognitive” and/ or “explanatory function”. Thus Augustine’s use of Mary as model, but not metaphor, of Mother Church is a rhetorical device to support his arguments about the Church, but does not add anything new to the understanding of Church.

Mary becomes Mother Church’s model and type by being a virgin and giving birth to Christ.:

Let your heart accomplish in the law of Christ what Mary's womb wrought in the flesh of Christ. How are you not included in the child-bearing of the Virgin since you are the members of Christ? Mary brought forth your Head; the Church, you His members. For the Church, too, is both mother and virgin: mother by the bowels of charity, virgin by the integrity of faith and piety. She brings forth diverse peoples, but they are members of Him whose body and

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159 Soskice, Metaphor and Religious Language, 31.

160 Ibid., 109.
spouse she is, and even in this respect she bears the likeness of the Virgin because in the midst of many she is the mother of unity (Serm192.2).  

As highlighted previously, by upholding Mary’s and the Church’s virginity and fecundity, Augustine upholds both the dignity of marriage and the ascetic life, a middle way between Jovinian and Jerome. At the same time, Augustine holds that virginity is superior to marriage:

No one should think, therefore, that actual motherhood can make up for the loss of virginity even for women who look for nothing in marriage other than to have children to dedicate to the service of Christ.  

Just as the creation of new Christians does not make marriage equal to virginity (DeVirg9), the creation of virgins in marriage also does not make it equal (DeVirg10). As Augustine says:

They should not compare their own worth to that of those who practice celibacy, even on the grounds that they give birth to virgins. This is not something good about marriage, but about nature.  

Serm192.2 above evidenced no simple parallel between the Church and Mary. Peper believed Augustine had difficulty in making Mary the type and model of the Church. For, Mary was mother both physically and spiritually as Augustine states in the sermon. Therefore Mary not only birthed Christ spiritually, or in her “mind” [cf. Serm72A.8] as Augustine


would say, but also bodily. But by birthing the Head of the Church herself, it could be argued that Mary becomes above the Church.\textsuperscript{164}

Augustine sees this difficulty and seeks to emphasise that the greater maternal act was Mary’s obedience to the will of God rather than her birthing of Christ in the flesh, relegating Mary to membership within the Church rather than above it and at best an exemplar among members of the Church:

\ldots it means more for Mary to have been a disciple of Christ than to have been the mother of Christ. It means more for her, an altogether greater blessing, to have been Christ's disciple than to have been Christ's mother. That’s why Mary was blessed, because even before she gave him birth, she bore her teacher in her womb…Christ is truth, Christ is flesh; Christ as truth was in Mary’s mind, Christ as flesh in Mary’s womb; that which is in the mind is greater than what is carried in the womb.

Mary is holy, Mary is blessed, but the Church is something better than the Virgin Mary. Why? Because Mary is part of the Church, a holy member, a quite exceptional member, the supremely wonderful member, but still a member of the whole body. That being so, it follows that the body is something greater than the member. The Lord is the head, and the whole Christ is head and body. How shall I put it? We have a divine head, we have God as our head.\textsuperscript{165}

But the difficulty remains: whilst the greater maternal role of Mary was birthing Christ spiritually it was undeniable that she too had birthed Christ physically. Peper says Augustine never resolved this tension and described

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{164} Peper, "The Development of Mater Ecclesia", 143-144.
\end{itemize}
Augustine’s attempts as “tortuous.” Peper explained that the tension is not resolved since Augustine seeks to combine two ecclesiologies: a maternal/associative ecclesiology and a virginal/ascetical ecclesiology. The maternal/associative followed the North African tradition whilst the virginal/ascetical followed the late fourth century growth in interest in Mary and her virginity.

Another perspective on this tension is seen in Augustine’s two dominating metaphors for the Church—the Church as Virgin Mother and the Church as *totus Christus/corpus Christi*. The Church as fecund in her virginity, one who births, gathers, and teaches Christians, as a singular figure; versus the Church as the body with its members and Christ at its head, a corporate image. The use of Mary as figure for the Virgin Mother Church challenged the Church’s detractors (Jovinianists and Manichaeans) since Mary exemplifies the roles of mother and virgin in both the spiritual and physical senses. But these very same qualities of Mary prevent her from being just a part of the *totus Christus* who births Christ spiritually, since she has also birthed Christ physically. As both physical and spiritual mother of Christ, Mary also becomes mother of the body of Christ, the Church. However, Augustine does not accept the idea that Mary is the Mother of the Church, as this elevates her over it. Rather, Augustine prefers to locate Mary as a member of the Body of Christ, the first disciple of her son. It can be seen here how the argument for Mary as model and type for the Church has become ‘tortuous’ for Augustine.

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166 Peper, “The Development of Mater Ecclesia”, 144.

167 ibid. Peper explains ‘associative’ as Mother Church as “the totality of the community” in p. 53.

Whilst highlighting that Mary’s greater maternal act is of the spiritual kind, Augustine utilizes her physical birthing as a refutation against questions of Jesus’ humanity. For Dunn, Mary as human mother paired with the divine Father, provides a rhetorical antithesis with which Augustine is able to present various Christological points within his Christmas sermons.\textsuperscript{169} That is, Mary’s physical birthing of Jesus functions less as a theological point in some of his Christmas homilies and more as a rhetorical tool.\textsuperscript{170} As Jesus’ human mother, Mary’s true motherhood in these sermons “guaranteed (Jesus’) humanity and the goodness of flesh, which in turn supported the goodness of all creation.”\textsuperscript{171} This is an argument especially relevant for the refutation of the Manichees.

Even though Augustine sees Mary as mother and virgin as a model of the Church, there are times when this Marian image was employed as more relevant for a particular group within the Church, the virgins. Dunn says the main addressees of sermons 191 and 192 are the female virgins of the Church who need reassurance of their spousal, virginal, and maternal statuses. In Sermon 191, Augustine addresses mostly virgins, particularly the females, who are not only virgin in spirit just as the whole Church was called to be, but also in their bodies:\textsuperscript{172}

The Church, therefore, imitating the Mother of her Lord in mind, though not in body, is both mother and virgin...She in whose footsteps you are following had no human intercourse when she conceived; she remained a virgin when she brought forth her child. Imitate her as far as you can, not in her fecundity, because this is not in your power, but in the preservation of your virginity...the fact that Christ is the Son


\textsuperscript{170} ibid., 437.

\textsuperscript{171} ibid., 438.

\textsuperscript{172} ibid., 441.
of only one virgin does not preclude any relation between you and Him. Indeed you have gained as the spouse of your heart Him whom you could not bring forth as your child in the flesh...Do not consider yourselves sterile because you remain virgins, for that holy integrity of the flesh conduces to fertility of the soul.\textsuperscript{173}

Whilst the virgins can not physically be Christ’s mother, they can be his spouse or bride. But as Christ’s spouse, their virginity is kept intact just as Mary’s was kept intact.\textsuperscript{174} As they cannot imitate Mary in bodily fruitfulness, they are to imitate her in fruitfulness in the mind.\textsuperscript{175} Yet Augustine believes that both virgins and the entire “Church” imitate the “Mother of her Lord.” Thus he ends \textit{Sermones} 191 with a call to the entire congregation to become spiritual virgins and mothers:

Finally, I address all here present; I speak to all; I include in my exhortations the whole Church, that chaste virgin whom the Apostle speaks of as espoused to Christ. Do, in the inner chambers of your soul, what you view in amazement in the flesh of Mary. He who believes in in his heart unto justice conceives Christ; he who with his mouth makes profession of faith unto salvation brings forth Christ. Thus, in your souls, let fertility abound and virginity be preserved.\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Sermon} 191.2-3, trans. Muldowney, in Augustine, "Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons (FC)", Muldowney, 30-31. Latin: “Ecclesia ergo imitans Domini sui matrem, quoniam corpore non potuit, mente tamen et mater est et virgo...Illa igitur cujus vestigia sectaminii, et ut conciperet, cum viro non mansit; et cum pareret, virgo permanit. Imitamini eam quantum potestis; non fecunditate, quia hoc non potestis, salva virginitate... Nec tamen ideo non est vobis aliud Christus, quia unius est virginis fetus. Ipsum quippe vos, quem filium edere non potuistis carne, sponsum invenistis in corde...Nec propteram vos steriles deputetis, quia virgines permanetis. Nam et ipsa pia integritas carnis, ad fecunditatem pertinet mentis.” PL38:1010,1011.

\textsuperscript{174} In ancient Roman culture, a woman was kept a virgin for her husband until marriage. But as Christ’s virgin bride, a woman could keep her virginity even as Christ’s spouse. Christ’s virgin bride receives the highest of statuses amongst all other women for she would be at the same time mother, virgin, and bride given she only has spiritual children.

\textsuperscript{175} Dunn, “The Functions of Mary in the Christmas Homilies”: 441.

Sermones 192 also addresses Christian virgins concerned over their inability to ever become physical mothers: 177

Rejoice, virgins of Christ, for the Mother of Christ is your associate. You could not have borne the Christ-Child, but for the love of Christ you have not desired to bear any child. He who was not born of you was born for you. However, if you remember His words, as you should, you know that you are His mothers because you do the will of His Father. 178

For Dunn, Sermones 192 (along with Sermones 196 and 370) provides a “more developed presentation of Mary as role model” for the Church. 179

Again Mary is presented more as a model to virgins than to the rest of the community (“in Maria Christum pia virginitas peperit”). In the meantime, Anna is put forward as a model for the widows (“in Anna Christum viduitas parvum grandaeva cognovit”) and Elizabeth for the married women (“in Elisabeth Christo conjugalis castitas et anilis fecunditas militavit”). 180

Dunn disagrees with Maureen Tilley that Mary alone is put forward as a model for all these groups of women. 181

Does the Church as spouse of Christ model itself on Mary? If Mary is the model of the Church, is she also the spouse of her son Jesus? This incestuous relationship is suggested in Serm191.1: “...as an infant He came forth, a spouse from His bride-chamber, that is, from the virginal womb, leaving His Mother's integrity inviolate.” 182 But the texts reveal the role of

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177 Cf. Dunn, "The Functions of Mary in the Christmas Homilies": 441-442.
179 Dunn, "The Functions of Mary in the Christmas Homilies": 441.
180 PL38:1012.
181 Cf. footnote 54 in Dunn, "The Functions of Mary in the Christmas Homilies": 441.
spouse explicitly only for the Church, whilst motherhood and virginity are the shared roles for Mary and the Church.\(^{183}\)

He, the Son of holy Mary and the Spouse of holy Church, has made the Church like to His Mother, since He made it a mother for us and He kept it a virgin for Himself. To the same Church the Apostle says: For I have betrothed you to one spouse, that I might present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (Serm195).\(^{184}\)

In *Sermones* 187, 188, and 192, where the Church is called to imitate Mary, the bridal chamber image appears but is undeveloped and no associations with this bridal image are made with Mary: for as Dunn says, the emphasis is on the marriage of the divine Word with human flesh rather than on Mary as bride or bridal chamber.\(^{185}\) Similarly, as seen above, *Sermones* 195 calls the Church to imitate Mary’s fecundity and virginity whilst seeking to be Christ’s spouse. But, as Dunn says, there is no attempt in this sermon to parallel the Church’s spousal role with Mary.\(^{186}\) This clearly indicates that the identification of Mary with the Church is not all-inclusive. Augustine recognizes the limits of his use of this image and deliberately excludes the unacceptable incestual parallel of the Bride of Christ.

**Chapter Conclusion**

Augustine’s utilization of the Mother Church metaphor is based on certain principles that aim to engage his audience, communicate ecclesiological truths, and refute his opponents. The Mother Church Augustine presents parallels his mother Monica’s maternal acts (nurturing,

\(^{183}\) The same concepts can be found in *Sermones 188* and *Sermones Denis 25.*


\(^{185}\) Dunn, "The Functions of Mary in the Christmas Homilies": 439.

\(^{186}\) ibid., 444.
intervening, despairing, and breastfeeding) as well as titles (handmaid, ‘mother of us all’, peacemaker). Other times Mother Church imaged the Mother Jerusalem from above of Galatians 4, or the female figures of Psalm 45, or the sister, bride, virgin and queen of Song of Songs. As the one spouse (univira) of Christ, breastfeeding her children, interceding on their behalf, and mourning over them, Mother Church also clearly images the ancient Roman materfamilia. In embodying the Roman virtues of concordia, pietas and justitia the Church images too the esteemed matrona.

Augustine engages the maternal ecclesial metaphor in response to the controversies of his time. Sometimes he employs the image of Mother Church in order to reclaim it from the schismatic Manichaens and Donatists who used it to assert their own orthodoxy. Other times he used the image to correct a way of life in the Church, as against the Jovinians who downplayed the importance of celibacy and Ambrose who criticized marriage. Augustine gives Mother Church her own voice for the first time, for instance as a disciplinarian mother commanding her wayward children, the Donatists, to return home. Ultimately it was in dealing with these controversies that spurred Augustine’s growth in clarity on the Church’s nature, including an expansion of Mother Church’s location from the temporal sphere to the heavenly and eschatological realms as well as in the recognition of the membership of both saints and sinners.

Augustine also addressed other female metaphors from scripture (such as daughter, sister, bride and queen from the Song of Songs) that were used by earlier Patristic writers such as Cyprian as well as by schismatic groups. He consolidates these into his overarching Mother Church rhetoric: not to form a single ultra-female image of the Church but rather to present
different aspects of the Church’s nature. As an example, in his commentary on the Song of Songs, Augustine speaks of the Church as “daughters” to represent the sinners (who were still members of the Church) as opposed to the “beloved bride” who represents the faithful.

Augustine also presents Mother Church as the New Eve who desires that her children grow spiritually and encourage others to baptism. Mother Church is also a Virgin who calls for Church members to a complete conversion and dependence on God. Mother Church understands that members of the Church should not remain infants and she hopes one day that the spiritual infants will become spiritual mothers and midwives themselves.

Mother Church is a metaphor Augustine uses liberally, appearing in over eighty polemical texts. Along with the Body of Christ, it serves as his central ecclesial metaphor. These two metaphors sometimes lead to conflicts in the imaging of the Church in regards to Mary: if the Church is Body of Christ, and Mary is the mother Christ, then Mary is the mother of the Church, thus placing her above the Church; if the Church is the Bride of Christ, and Mary the image of the Church, then Mary is the bride of her own son. Augustine accepts neither of these propositions, thus exposing the limitations of using Marian ecclesial imagery. Augustine seeks to clarify Ambrose’s idea of Mary as type and model for the Church, especially in his engagement with the Jovinianists. Mary as ultimate virgin and mother may have silenced the Church’s detractors, modeling simultaneously the Church’s fecundity and virginity, but these same characteristics in Mary had implications for her relation with the Church and her son, which for Augustine were left unresolved. Mary was able to model the Church’s
motherhood and virginity but not its spousal role. For Augustine it was the womb of Mary that was united to the Divine word. Mary herself he regarded as the first disciple of her son and a member of his body.

Augustine grounds the reference of his use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor in both his personal experience as well as the traditions of his community. Whilst he aligns his Mother Church with Mother Jerusalem from scriptures, it is clear too that his model of motherhood is based on his own mother, Monica. When Augustine speaks of the breastfeeding Mother Church and the truth of her milk versus Manichaen heresy, he speaks as one who has experienced breastfeeding himself. When he presents Mother Church as applying guilt and then disciplinary force onto the Donatists, he himself has experienced Monica’s application of guilt and discipline to influence him to return to the Catholic Church. Thus when he says that the Church is acting motherly towards its members, even in the use of coercive force with the Donatists, he is drawing on personal experience. Further, his use of prosopopoeia for the Church, reflecting his own mother in the process, helps to portray the Church as truly motherly even in the different ways it responds to different groups of people (such as being in despair over, and admonishing, the Donatists).

Does Augustine’s employment of Mother Church meet Soskice’s three criterion to be a living metaphor? First, Augustine’s description of members birthed from Mother Church’s bosom rather than her womb shows an appropriate inappropriateness of the metaphor as a living metaphor. The paradox of fruitful virginity also subverts the recipient’s expectations. Additionally on this point, whilst the breastfeeding, weeping and admonishing mother, was not something new to the Mother Church image,
with his original employment of *prosopopoeia* Augustine introduces a new tension into this image with Mother Church expressing emotion in her own voice. In this personification, for the first time Mother Church is represented as an agent who speaks on her own behalf.

Second, could another metaphor or text replace the use of Augustine’s Mother Church metaphor? Again, it does not seem possible, particularly with his use of *prosopopoeia*, presented in such a striking way where the Church is represented as a concerned (rather shrill) mother. The sheer multivalence of Augustine’s use of this image prohibits any straightforward lexical substitution.

Third, the maternal metaphor calls upon a range of models that are grounded in the experiences and tradition of the audience: from Monica, his own real mother, whose story and personality would have been known to many in his community; to Mary, a well-known scriptural character; to the socio-culturally promoted Roman images of *materfamilias* and *matrona*; as well as to more universally recognized images of women – virgin, sister, bride, spouse, midwife, queen. At the time of Augustine, each of these images had a tangible web of implications that would have been commonly understood by his contemporary audience. However, over time much of this resonance has been lost, so that for our contemporary audience many of these associations have been lost, weakening the power of Augustine’s use of the metaphor for us today. Despite Mother Church’s origins as metaphorical language, over time it has become a clichéd and technical term that now generally is used as literal language, simply meaning “the Church”, and is thus a dead metaphor.
Augustine also imaged Mother Church in relation to other feminine images including: Hannah from scripture, Mother Wisdom, the New Eve, a mother hen and Mother Charity. The sheer creativity and diversity of Mother Church’s representations ensures that this image acts as a live metaphor, not limited as an analogy, but effectively communicating with its audience various maternal images that could resonate within their personal frames of reference. That Augustine admits to the difficulties of some parallels between Mother Church and Mary, ensures that the maternal image remains as a metaphor rather than a one-to-one exclusive representation between the Church and Mary. The multifaceted network of associations (Mother Church as midwife, as spouse, as bride, as daughter, as infant becoming a mother, and as Mary) both demonstrates the creative power of this metaphor, while at the same time prevents it from being trapped into a simple analogical exchange between the two figures of the Church and Mary.
PART 2: MOTHER CHURCH IN THE VATICAN II DOCUMENTS

CHAPTER VI: PRINCIPLES FOR EXPLORING THE MATERNAL ECCLESIAL METAPHOR IN VATICAN II

This section will outline several points for consideration in the exploration of the maternal ecclesial metaphor in the Vatican II Documents. They are: (1) Vatican II Council’s primary pastoral intent and how the employment of the maternal metaphor sought to engage in this; (2) the insertion of the Marian schema within a Church schema which gives a clue to Lumen Gentium’s heavily Marian ecclesial image; (3) the understood meaning of Mary as ‘ecclesia-type’; (4) other ecclesial images utilized in the Vatican II documents especially the Church as the ‘People of God’ found in Lumen Gentium’s second chapter; (5) maternal imaging within the Western social contexts leading to the time of the Council (1930’s to 50’s); (6) foundational papal texts pointing to the maternal imaging of the Church; and (7) the four Vatican II Constitutions as “interpretative keys” for reading the other documents.

1) A Pastoral Focus for Vatican II

Pope John XXIII’s opening address at Vatican II, Gaudet Mater Ecclesia (“Rejoice Mother Church”–October 11, 1962), expressed the primarily pastoral intent of the Council—a contrast from previous councils gathered in order to address ‘specific errors’.¹ This Council met to assist the

faithful in ‘the spiritual appropriation of God’s salvation and revelation’.

As John XXIII said:

The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken in to great consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character.

For Richard Lennan, “Vatican II enabled Catholic ecclesiology to expand beyond the portrayal of the Church as societas perfecta, which had been the characteristic emphasis since the Council of Trent.”

At the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the formula employed in the 130 doctrinal canons was “If anyone should deny this…let him be anathema.” In these Tridentine canons, the appellation “Mother Church” appears only once, expressing the Council’s self-perception as a “legislative-judicial body”.

The council further decrees, in order to control those of unbalanced character, that no one, relying on his personal judgement in matters of faith and customs which are linked to the establishment of Christian doctrine, shall dare to interpret the sacred scriptures either by twisting its text to his individual meaning in opposition to that which has been and is held by the holy mother church, whose function is to pass judgement on the true meaning and interpretation of the sacred scriptures; or by giving it meanings contrary to this

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decision is to be publicly named by religious superiors and punished by the penalties prescribed by law.\textsuperscript{7}

In the First Vatican Council (1869-70) the use of “Mother Church” is greatly expanded. Mother Church plays a similarly legislative-judicial role as found in the phrase “holy mother church holds and teaches”. For instance, the \textit{Profession of Faith} (1870) says: “…I accept sacred scripture according to that sense which holy mother church held and holds, since it is her right to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy scriptures…”\textsuperscript{8} The \textit{Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith} (1870) states: “With this impiety spreading in every direction, it has come about, alas, that many even among the children of the Catholic Church have strayed from the path of genuine piety… they are found to distort the genuine sense of the dogmas which holy mother church holds and teaches…”\textsuperscript{9} Yet “Mother Church” also appears in Vatican I documents as a pastoral figure, in the admonition and correction of her children:

\begin{quote}
At the sight of all this, how can the inmost being of the church not suffer anguish? ... so the church, appointed by God to be mother and mistress of nations, recognises her obligations to all and is always ready and anxious to raise the fallen, to steady those who stumble, to embrace those who return, and to strengthen the good and urge them on to what is better.\textsuperscript{10}
\end{quote}

The legislative-judicial role remains in Mother Church’s ability to discipline its members. But the pastoral role emerges as the maternal image is given human feelings (anguish and anxiety) and parent-like roles ( “to raise the fallen, steady those who stumble, to embrace those who return…”).

\textsuperscript{7} In Tanner, ed. \textit{Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils}, 664. The equivalent Latin text is on the corresponding page, 663. Emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{8} ‘SESSION 2: 6 January 1870, Profession of faith’, in ibid., 803. Latin text on the corresponding page, 802.
\textsuperscript{9} ‘SESSION 3: 24 April 1870, Dogmatic constitution on the catholic faith’, in ibid., 805. Latin text on the corresponding page, 804.
\textsuperscript{10} ibid.
Vatican II further expands the use of “Mother Church” which also is portrayed with both a legislative-judicial and pastoral role. One example of the legislative-judicial role can be seen in *Dei Verbum* (1965):

Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held and continues to hold, that the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven. (see Acts 1:1-2).11

An example of a more pastoral use of the Mother Church image can be seen in *Lumen Gentium* (1964):

Catechumens who, moved by the Holy Spirit, seek with explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church are by that very intention joined to her. With love and solicitude Mother Church already embraces them as her own.12

While both Vatican I and II apply a legislative-judicial and pastoral role for the maternal ecclesial image, they differ in that Vatican II utilizes Mary as an ecclesia-type figure for the Church but Vatican I does not. Vatican II concretizes the maternal image in a figure of history—Mary, the mother of God.

Schemas on the Church, distributed at Vatican II show a pastoral priority. The first schema, *Aeternus Unigeniti Pater et Immensae bonitatis Creator Commissionis praeparatoriae* (more commonly known as *De Ecclesia*), a draft coming from the Preparatory Commission (26 November, 1960 to 10 March, 1962), imaged the nature of the Church as militant, entitling the first chapter “*De ecclesia militantis natura*”. This schema of eleven chapters was distributed on November 23, 1962. The first version of a second schema, *Concilium duce Spiritu*, written by Belgian theologian Gérard Philips in October 1962 and circulated from November 22, 1962,

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12 *Lumen Gentium* 14, in ibid., 33.
revised this image of the Church as militant (apologetic and judicial). In line with the Council’s pastoral priority its first chapter was renamed *De mysterio ecclesiae*. Herwi Rikhof describes this significant move as a more “pastoral and open attitude” than “a defensive and apologetic stance”. As he points out, the introduction of Philips’ schema stated the constitution’s aim “to be that of enabling the church to announce the gospel in a better way, not just to the believers, but to all men [sic] living in the modern world.”

*Gaudium et Spes* (GS), Vatican II’s “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World”, a document described as the application of *Lumen Gentium*, begins with this very notion of a Church opening itself up pastorally to the entire world:

> The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [sic] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ (GS1).  

The notion is even more evident in the next paragraph:

> Hence this Second Vatican Council, having probed more profoundly into the mystery of the Church, now addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons [sic] of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity. For the Council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today (GS2).

There are many other examples evidencing the Council’s new pastoral intent. John O’Malley points to the change in conciliar language: from a condemnatory-doctrinal style to a panegyric or epideictic language

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15 ibid., 200.
(“a rhetoric of praise and congratulation”).\textsuperscript{16} For Gerard Kelly, this new language shapes a new identity for the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{17} Instead of taking a defensive-apologetic stance, the Church becomes more open to the world, looking for commonalities with others and seeking a common goal in which they could all work together on bearing witness to the Gospel.\textsuperscript{18} The Church’s new pastoral stance showed a readjustment of the Church’s self-understanding in its relation with both its members and the rest of the world. The Mother Church of Trent who “held and upholds” the Church’s teachings and exclusively addresses its members, changes at Vatican II. It remains bearer of Catholic teachings but extends its address beyond Church members, showing less a desire to condemn and more to “embrace” all persons.

\textbf{2) Inserting the Marian Schema within the Church Schema}

The incorporation of Marian cultic belief and practice into the “Constitution on the Church” can be seen as supporting the primary pastoral intent of Vatican II. The Church’s motherhood is represented in Mary, who is called ecclesia-type (LG64) and its exemplar member (LG53), and is described as one who “cares for the brethren of her Son” (LG62). Given the strongly Marian character of Catholic faith at the time,\textsuperscript{19} the utilization of Mary as ecclesia-type assisted the faithful in understanding the Church’s nature. The insertion of the Marian schema into the Church schema resulted from a long debate between two factions in the Council. The divide between

\textsuperscript{16} John W. O’Malley, \textit{Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?} (New York/ London: Continuum, 2007), 75-76.

\textsuperscript{17} Kelly, “The Impact of the Second Vatican Council”: 153-154.

\textsuperscript{18} ibid., 153.

\textsuperscript{19} Lawrence S. Cunningham, "The Virgin Mary,” in \textit{From Trent to Vatican II}, ed. Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parella(New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 185.
them was quite evident, since the vote for insertion of the Marian schema was won by a margin of forty votes (1,114 in favour, 1,074 against).

Elizabeth Johnson describes these two factions with their background and loyalties, as causing what Johnson called “the wildest, most emotional fight of the whole council.”\(^{20}\) She explained that one group “wished to go on making new conquests for Mary with more titles, privileges, and dogmatic definitions” (the “maximalist”, “second millennium Marian movement”).\(^{21}\) This group was labeled “christotypical”, since they wished to uphold Mary’s special position, and her privileges were seen to parallel “those of Christ”.\(^{22}\) The contrasting group wished to ground Marian theology and devotion in terms of original sources.\(^{23}\) This group was influenced by the biblical, liturgical, and ecumenical renewal movements.\(^{24}\) The biblical movement highlights the importance of reading scripture in “the integrity of their genre rather than proof-texting”, also highlighting God’s grace in salvation history.\(^{25}\) The liturgical movement emphasizes the Eucharist as the centre of the Church’s life, and places Mary and the saints within the context of a “praying community.”\(^{26}\) This helped to open ecumenical dialogue with other Christians. According to Johnson, each movement (biblical, liturgical, and ecumenical) “positioned Mary back into the community of believers.”\(^{27}\) This second group took the “minimalist” position, “marked by [a] return to the first millennium in the


\(^{21}\) ibid., 125.

\(^{22}\) ibid.

\(^{23}\) ibid., 123.

\(^{24}\) ibid.

\(^{25}\) ibid., 123-124.

\(^{26}\) ibid., 124.

\(^{27}\) ibid.
biblical, liturgical, and ecumenical movements coupled with the patristic renewal.”\textsuperscript{28} It was labeled “ecclesiotypical” for its perspective on Mary as herself, simply a “recipient of grace” and “special member” of the Church community.\textsuperscript{29} This turning to original sources was also known as the \textit{ressourcement} method. It placed Mary within the context of salvation history and counteracted a “deductive type of mariology that was centred in Mary and her privileges”, where there was “a tendency to foster marian titles and dogmas, and was closed to dialogue with our brothers of the Reform tradition.”\textsuperscript{30}

In Joseph Ratzinger’s view, Mary was utilized to extend the temporal dimension of the Church to one that also contained an eschatological and spiritual level. As Ratzinger said: “the idea of the Church now encompasses the heavenly Church.”\textsuperscript{31} The inclusion of Mary in LG enabled some enlightenment on the “mystery”\textsuperscript{32} of the Church: as “humble servant exalted in her humility by God. She exemplifies the paradox of grace that touches those who cannot accomplish anything by themselves.”\textsuperscript{33} Her figure also embodied the Church as “root of Israel”, carrying the “hope

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} ibid., 125.
\item \textsuperscript{29} ibid.
\item Joseph Ratzinger, \textit{Theological Highlights of Vatican II} (Mahwah, New Jersey/ New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 94-95.
\item The “mystery” of the Church becomes centred in Christ who is described by the council as “light to the nations” (\textit{Lumen Gentium cum sit Christus}). This would be the very first sentence of the first chapter on schemas on the Church and their revisions from February 1963 onwards. This contrasts with an ecclesiology centred simply on a juridical Church, with the pope and hierarchy as the Church’s executors. For a view of the changes see Appendix B ‘Conspectus Schematum’ p. XXVII and ‘LG: cap. 1 De ecclesiae mysterio [1,1-45]’, in Alberigo and Magistretti, \textit{Synopsis Historica}, 3.
\item Ratzinger, \textit{Theological Highlights of Vatican II}, 95.
\end{itemize}
of the world...during the strenuous journey through history.” Moreover, Mary’s inclusion “was without doubt an explicitly ecumenical decision”, for she becomes “a member of the Church who does not, like Christ, stand before us, but rather has her place with us and among us before the Lord, as a representative faithful Christian in the world” [the ecclesiotypical view].

Bishop Helmsing of Kansas, USA, another participant in the Council, also perceives Mary’s inclusion in LG as enabling insight into the Church’s “mystery”. But he also sees the purpose of her inclusion as nourishing Marian piety (the “christotypical” view). Yet this piety was to be newly grounded in divine revelation as found in scripture as well as the writings of Patristic writers. Such grounding counteracted one of the fundamental ecclesial issues at the time of Vatican II, as expressed by Lawrence Cunningham: “had Mariology become so independent that it had detached itself from the very fundamental roots it should have in the absolute centrality of Christ? ...Was it positive that Mariology had developed into a separate track in the traditional curriculum of scholastic theology?”

34 ibid., 96.
35 ibid., 140-141.
37 Cunningham, "The Virgin Mary," 184-185. During the pontificate of Pius XII (1939-1958), Marian devotion had reached “a type of zenith or peak.” Several factors contributed to this peak including papal promotion of Marian doctrine and devotion, the vitality of schools run by religious congregations at the time which had dedicated themselves to Mary, the message of Fatima in connection with the danger of Communism, and the proliferation of Marian-centred publications including manuals and devotions. See Thomas A. Thompson, "Vatican II and Beyond," in *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, ed. Hilda Graef (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press Inc, 2009), 401. See pp. 401-406 for more detail on the Vatican II background in which Marian devotion and doctrine characterized Catholic practice and belief. See also summary of Mary’s place in the Catholic faith from the Council of Trent to Vatican II in Cunningham, "The Virgin Mary," 179-185.
The schema *De beata Maria Virgine mater ecclesiae* (April 1963) included a large section, titled *De singularibus privilegiis Dei hominumque Matris* citing papal bulls, encyclicals, and other various writings by Patristic writers, to list and justify Mary’s various privileges. Schemas on the Church and their revisions from Schema 3 onwards (from November 1963) delete this extensive section. The Marian passages here sought to engage with the Council’s adopted *ressourcement* method, with the minimalists insisting on a more ecclesiotypical presentation of Mary. The resulting paragraph of LG65 evidences a compromise in LG where the christotypical and ecclesiotypical views are juxtaposed and create a somewhat disjointed text:

In the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph 5:27) [ecclesiotypical]. Yet the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin. And so they raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues [christotypical]. Devotedly meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word made man [christotypical], the Church with reverence enters more intimately into the supreme mystery of the Incarnation and becomes ever increasingly like her Spouse [ecclesiotypical].

For Mary figured profoundly in the history of salvation and in a certain way unites and mirrors within herself the central truths of the faith the greatest teachings of the faith. Hence when she is being preached and venerated, she summons the faithful to her Son and His sacrifice, and to love for the Father [christotypical]. Seeking after the glory of Christ, the Church becomes more like her exalted model [ecclesiotypical], and continually progresses in faith, hope and charity, searching out and doing the will of God in all things. Hence the Church in her apostolic work also rightly looks to her who brought forth Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin, so that through the Church Christ may be born and grow in the hearts of the faithful also [ecclesiotypical]. The Virgin Mary in her own life lived an example of that maternal love by which all should be fittingly animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church on behalf of the rebirth of men [sic] [ecclesiotypical].

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For Johnson, the struggle between the two schools of thought at LG Chapter 8 is seen in the “nevertheless” structure present in many paragraphs:  

For example, the document states that Mary’s unique role in salvation as mother of the incarnate Redeemer gives her a special relationship to the triune God (christotypical). ‘At the same time, however, because she belongs to the offspring of Adam, she is one with all human beings in their need for salvation’ (ecclesiotypical §53).  

This evidences a compromise often present within documents of the Council. For Massimo Faggioli, the compromise was between Council Fathers and conciliar committees, “in order to achieve as much consensus as possible (at least a moral consensus)”. For Ormond Rush, passages intentionally left open-ended and the juxtaposing of “traditional and innovative formulations” allowed for a consensus between bishops of theological differences. The bishops of the Council did not intend to “present systematic treatises”. Rather they hoped that after the Council, theologians would create “a new synthesis” from the “open-ended formulations and juxtapositions.”

The insertion of the Marian schema within the Church schema was a point of great contention between two different schools of thought. The resulting document *Lumen Gentium* evidenced a compromise between christotypical and ecclesiotypical Marian theologies, creating a text that was not meant to be a systematic treatise on the Church but open to future

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40 Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 129.
41 ibid.
43 Rush, "Toward a Comprehensive Interpretation of the Council and Its Documents": 551.
44 ibid.
interpretation and synthesis of traditional and innovative concepts by theologians after the Council.\footnote{ibid.} Further, Rush explains that texts of Vatican II constitute an unfinished aspect in their “finishedness”: “a surplus of meanings that future generations might legitimately discover in the texts, meanings…that might very well go beyond what the bishops explicitly intended.”\footnote{ibid., 550.} The insertion was also aimed at nourishing Marian piety and extending the vision of Church beyond the temporal into the eschatological and spiritual. Mary, although a person of history, represents the eschatological promise to the Church.

3) Mary as ‘Type’ of the Church and Her ‘Antitype’

LG utilises ‘type’ to describe Mary’s connection to the Church (LG 53, 63 and 65). In his seminal work Maria Und Die Kirche, Hugo Rahner explains Mary as “type”: “In Patristic thought Mary is the *typos* of the Church: symbol, central idea, and as it were summary of all that is meant by the Church in her nature and vocation.”\footnote{Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church*, Bullough, 7-8.} As Mary is virgin and mother (conceiving Christ by the Holy Spirit), so is the Church also a mother and virgin—“mother of all…whose life is in Christ” and “virgin in her inviolate faith.”\footnote{ibid., 7.} LG63 reiterates these ideas with more detail:

For in the mystery of the Church, herself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar of both virginity and motherhood.*

For, believing and obeying, Mary brought forth on Earth the Father’s Son. This she did, knowing not man but overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. She was the new Eve, who put her absolute trust not in the ancient serpent but in God’s messenger. The Son whom she brought forth is He whom
God placed as the first among many brethren (cf. Rom. 8:29), namely the faithful. In their birth and development she cooperates with a maternal love.


On ‘antitype’, Otto Semmelroth’s commentary on LG65 says that the faithful are antitype to Mary by their engagement in the apostolic work of the Church. Yet, Rahner describes the faithful as antitype to the Church. He says it is Mary who gives birth to Christ and this same Christ is given to the faithful, the Church. Further he says: “The symbol begins with Mary and is fulfilled in the Church.” This thesis understands type and antitype in synthesis, derived from Rahner’s and Semmelroth’s views: Mary is ecclesia-type in her complete ability to reflect the Church as mother and virgin. The faithful are antitype in their incomplete ability but ongoing pursuit to fully represent its motherhood and virginity. They, in their participation in the Church’s motherhood and virginity through faithfulness and engagement with its apostolic work, nonetheless represent Mother Church. These understandings serve as working definitions for this thesis.

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Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church*, Bullough, 11.

ibid.

The use of motherhood, virginity and Mary for the Church’s rhetorical purposes is problematic for many reasons such as its disconnect with reality, that Church ‘Fathers’ have claimed such terms belonging to mothers and used it for their purposes, and also because the imaging of Church as mother and/or virgin and/or Mary can simply be limiting. By presenting these working definitions of type and antitype, I am not condoning limited imaging of Church, of Mary or the concept of motherhood. The larger work to be derived from this thesis is the expansion of the maternal ecclesial metaphor to something beyond birthing and lactating and even a dissociation with the incongruent term paired with it—virginity.
4) Ecclesial Images in LG and in the other documents

As a type of the Church, Mary provides insight into the Church’s nature and vocation. However other ecclesial images are provided throughout LG and the other documents, giving further perspectives on the Church’s nature and vocation. “People of God” (LG9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 28-33, 39, 41, 44, 45, 50, 66, 68-69) and “Body of Christ” (LG8, 11, 23, 28, 32, 33, 43)54 are two dominant metaphors in LG, which according to Rikhof compete with each other.55 Whilst Rikhof sees the move from “Church militant” to “Church as mystery” as an example of the Council’s more pastoral approach, the Church as “mystical Body of Christ” battled with Church as “People of God” for its place as the central ecclesial metaphor: The first metaphor reflected a “defensive” and “narrow focus” on the “power of pope and hierarchy,” whilst the second reflected a more “open approach.”56

After Vatican II, a number of prominent theologians who had acted as advisers to the bishops created the international journal Concilium for the purposes of building on ideas from the Council. José Comblin says it was “no accident” that the journal’s first article was written by Yves Congar on the Church as the People of God as it was the very issue that Congar struggled most to introduce “into the council framework.”57 In Congar’s view, the insertion of a chapter called the “People of God” (De Populo Dei in genere) between the first chapter of LG, “On the Mystery of the Church”,

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54 This Scriptural model derives from the Pauline writings (particularly 1 Corinthians 12-13) and emerges most strongly in LG 7 & 8.
55 In Rikhof, The Concept of the Church, 2-3.
56 In ibid.
and the third chapter, “On the Hierarchy and especially the Bishops”, had three purposes:

1. to show this Church also in the process of constructing itself in human history;
2. to show this Church expanding and reaching various categories of men [sic] who are unequally situated in relation to the fullness of life that is in Christ and of which the Church is the sacrament;
3. to explain what all the members of the People of God hold in common on the plane of dignity of Christian existence, prior to any distinctions among them based on office or state.58

Use of the ‘People of God’ concept situated the Church within human history in its ‘unfinishedness’. A pilgrim Church and a repenting Church would flow from this concept, not to mention an ecumenical Church. For the concept is not only familiar to Protestant theologians59 but also contrasts with a Church that simply states its position with the dictum “extra ecclesiam nulla salus” (for example in Boniface VIII’s Unam Sanctam of 1302). LG retains the Catholic Church’s privileged position in terms of God’s revelation (LG14) but opens up the possibility of revelation at work beyond the Church (LG16). In addition, the ‘People of God’ highlights the equality of all the baptized before any distinctions of office or state are made. For Congar this privileges “the quality of the disciple, the dignity attached to Christian existence as such or the reality of grace,” before perceiving the Church in its “hierarchical structure or social organization.”60 Further Congar says the use of the ‘People of God’ shows continuity with the People of Israel and with such associated ideas as election, call, covenant, consecration to God, and eschatological promise.61

59 Rikhof, The Concept of the Church, 41.
60 Congar, "The Church": 8.
61 ibid., 10.
These biblical concepts provide an avenue for ecumenical dialogue. But for Congar, the term has its limitation. It derives from the idea of the ‘twelve tribes of Israel’. Yet the Church is more than Israel elect—it is the Body of Christ that confesses Christ as the Messiah and gives the Holy Spirit to the Church. For Congar then, the ‘Body of Christ’ completes the term ‘People of God’.

Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak comment that when the document on the Church was being developed by the subcommission *De Ecclesia*, the Theological Commission’s efforts to promote other images such as the Church as the ‘People of God’ over the Church as ‘Mystical Body’ were “largely unsuccessful”. At the same time, another subcommission within the Secretariat for Christian Unity “that originally planned to prepare vota on the hierarchical structure of the Church” set out as its first votum, the inner reality of the Church as a mystery (LG chapter 1 and specifically LG 3, 5, 8, 52). “[T]he Christological structure of the Church [is] both visible and invisible.” The Theological Commission recognized that the text from the Secretariat for Christian Unity was advantageous, in that it “overcame the tendency to separate the visible Church from the invisible Church.” Whilst highlighting the vision of Church as the People of God over hierarchical distinctions, placing the ‘Church as Mystery’ before the People of God chapter, overcomes any

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62 ibid., 13.
63 ibid., 14-16.
65 ibid.
66 ibid.
67 ibid.
tendencies to image the Church simply in the temporal order, which is easy to imagine with the concept ‘People of God’.

Revisions of LG6 concerned with the images of the Church reveal that the initial draft, *Aeternus Unigeniti Pater*, did not have a section on different images of the Church. This is understandable. The dominating image of a Church was determined by the title of the first chapter of the first draft of *De Ecclesia*–the ‘Church militant’. Subsequent schematas on the Church and their revisions reveal a movement from a singular image for the Church with an emphasis on its vertical and invisible dimensions, the heavenly Church as Spouse of Christ (*De sponsa Christi et ecclesia coeliesti*, in the schema of Philips, 1st version), to the Church as Spouse of Christ alongside other images (*De sponsa Christi, aliiisque ecclesiae figuris*, in the schema Philips, 2nd version), and onto images incorporating the Church’s visible and invisible, horizontal and vertical dimensions–various Church images or *De variis ecclesiae imaginibus* (in the schema after emendations by the Fathers, November 1963 to 1964) and its consequent revisions.68 The final version of LG6 did not seem to privilege any image over another: the Church as spouse, mother and virgin were among other images presented.

According to Aloys Grillmeier, the list of ecclesial images in LG6 from sheepfold, through to cultivated land, to building of God, and finally to the Jerusalem from above who is mother and spouse had a hierarchical order: from those of simpler form to that which contained richer content. The Church imaged as bride in the context of a family was “the most

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68 Again, a view of the changes is found in Appendix B ‘Conspectus Schematum’ p. XXVII and ‘LG: cap. 1 De ecclesiae mysterio [1.1-45]’, in Alberigo and Magistretti, *Synopsis Historica*, 3.
expressive of which derive from the highest forms of human fellowship and society: the Church as the family of God, the Church as the bride of Christ."\textsuperscript{69} For Grillmeier, article 6 of LG had an important function for the Constitution on the Church as a whole. Its original version, as article 5, following the exposition on the economy of salvation (now article 5 in the final LG), discussed the Church as mystical body of Christ, to explain the Church as mystery. But this was only one biblical image amongst many found in the Old Testament. The call for a complete biblical approach to the Church resulted in the utilization of various images from the Old Testament and re-explained in terms of Christ, who is “the new creation of the New Testament and...the real fullness and fulfillment of the imagery.” The ecclesial images of LG 6 indicate various aspects of the Church, which is ultimately an “inexpressible fullness of a divine mystery.” In addition, the images suggest an Old Testament concept of God dwelling among God’s people and God’s shekina upon them, receiving its fulfillment in the Incarnation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them. The Church as institution is also acknowledged.\textsuperscript{70}

There are other ecclesial images that appear in LG which are applied in other conciliar documents: such as Sacrament of Salvation (LG 1, 9, 48) and Pilgrim People of God (LG chapter 7 and LG 21, 48, 50). For example, the Church as Sacrament of Salvation appears at Gaudium et Spes (GS43, 45, 58, 76, 82), where it first accepts “the news of salvation meant for every man [sic]” (GS1), acknowledges its role (the Church is ‘the universal sacrament of salvation’ GS45) and then calls the world to salvation.


\textsuperscript{70} In ibid.
(“Behold, now is the acceptable time for a change of heart; behold! now is the day of salvation” [GS82]). In Dei Verbum (DV), salvation history is often introduced (DV1-4,6,7,10,11,14,15,17,19). The Church as sacrament of salvation is particularly highlighted at DV10:

> It is clear, therefore, that sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God’s most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.\(^71\)

In Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), the term ‘salvation’ also occurs often at SC 5,6,9,16,35,2,53,83,104,108,111. Other instances of the image of Church as Sacrament of Salvation are found in Inter Mirifica 3, Unitatis Redintegratio 3, Orientalium Ecclesiarum 21, Ad Gentes 5, Apostolicam Actuositatem 6, and Gravissimum Educationis 3.

Apropos of the Pilgrim Church, GS recognizes a Church on pilgrimage on earth (GS45) but towards the heavenly city (GS57). Similarly, at SC8, liturgy on earth is practiced by the Church as pilgrims, in their hope of practicing worship in the heavenly city: ‘In the earthly liturgy, by way of foretaste, we share in that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims…’\(^72\) Notably GS45 combines into the one concept the Church as a People on pilgrimage and the Sacrament of Salvation. Unitatis Redintegratio 2 and 3, and Diginitatis Humanae 12 describe the Church as a People of God on pilgrimage. DV7 presents the Church on pilgrimage onto God “until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face (cf. 1 Jn 3:2).” Other

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\(^{71}\) In Abbott, ed. The Documents of Vatican II Gallagher, 118.

\(^{72}\) In ibid., 141.
references to the Church on pilgrimage are in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4 and *Ad Gentes* 2.

5) Western Maternal Imaging in the 1930’s to 50’s

A history of political, economic and social unrest contributed to the creation of the idealized image of woman from the 1930’s to 50’s, the period before Vatican II Council.\(^7\) The creation of her image was just one way of addressing the experience of post-war instability and insecurity after that acute period of unrest and turmoil from 1914 to the mid 1940’s. In order of occurrence, some of the significant events were: World War I (28 Jul 1914 - 11 Nov 1918), Russia’s fall to Communist rule led by Lenin by 1918, Mussolini’s march into Rome by invitation from Italian King Victor Emmanuel III in 1922 and his consequent Fascist rule of Italy, the Great Depression (from 1930 to late 1930’s or mid 1940’s in most countries) creating worldwide economic and social unrest, Hitler’s rise to fascist power in Germany from 1930, and consequently World War II (1939-1945).

One way the Western World sought to create stability was to turn to the domestic sphere and re-emphasise the role of woman as mother and wife. During the war, women were called out of their domestic lives into the public sphere to help advance their country’s war efforts. Re-emphasis on the woman as dedicated wife and mother post-war created some sense of peace, stability, and security at least on the home front. Miller, Moen, and Dempster-McClain state that during the postwar period, women were encouraged to bear and raise children, be good wives and leave full time

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jobs to war veterans.74 They saw the era as being family-focused and yet many women showed dissatisfaction with domestic work as being the sole focus of their lives. Social scientists as well as the media at the time also observed the growing “seeds of discontent” in the postwar era.75

Jessamyn Neuhaus observes this discontent from the perspective of cookbooks published in the 1950’s. Those cookbooks sought to create an ideology of cooking as a completely fulfilling activity for the woman. They communicated that ultimately the home was the woman’s place. Added to this, domestic life gained such standards that it forced the woman to make the home her centre of existence as Neuhaus explains:

Increasingly high standards operated for both housework and cookery, turning them into full-time occupations, despite all the labour-saving gadgets which filled the postwar home.76

Further Neuhaus points to the implications of the assumptions made within the cookbooks about women’s ultimate vocation as being in the home:

By stating assumptions about women’s lives, cookbooks left room for those “assumptions” to be questioned. Cookbooks in their efforts to seal up the growing cracks in gender ideology, actually left traces and clues about just where the cracks had begun to show. The dominant discourse that positioned cooking and food preparation as a natural deeply fulfilling activity for all women spoke to the possibility that perhaps it was not. These texts articulated what must not be articulated but assumed, in order to maintain “traditional” gender roles. These books were instruction manuals in attitudes and desires that should have been “natural” to men and women, thus they actually denaturalized those attitudes and desires.77

The Christian world too engaged in this rhetoric of the woman and her ultimate vocation within the home. Mark Toulouse believes that during

74 Miller et al., "Motherhood, Multiple Roles, and Maternal Wellbeing": 565-582 at 566.
75 ibid.
76 Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart": 529-555, at 543.
77 ibid., 547.
the 40’s and 50’s “mainline Christian editors remained reluctant to support
women’s working outside the home” for fear of women taking over jobs
which were meant for ethnic minorities in America and because “women
outside the home would likely have an adverse effect upon the family life of
America”.

He points to Betty Friedan’s 1963 book “The Feminine
Mystique” which stated that in the post World War II era there existed a
‘feminine mystique’, which saw a woman’s ultimate role and fulfillment
was through motherhood and being a wife. Further, Helmut Thielicke’s
“The Ethics of Sex” (1964) typified the ideology at the time stating that a
woman’s ultimate vocation was “to be lover, companion and mother.”

For Thielicke, this essentialism also applies to the unmarried woman:

And even the unmarried woman fulfills her calling in accord
with the essential image of herself only when these fundamental characteristics, which are designed for wifehood
and motherhood, undergo a sublimating transformation but
still remain discernible, that is to say when love and
motherliness are the sustaining forces in her vocation.

For Hannah Bonsey Suthers, Christian women faced the greater
challenge of what she named as the ‘Christian mystique’ where women
were seen as “mysteriously different”: that their Church work was to be
limited to housekeeping, teaching and calling functions and they were to be
prevented from “policy making, executive, and liturgical functions.”

On the Catholic front, the Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Christian
Marriage, Castii Conubii, was published on December 31, 1930. The
document reaffirmed the teachings of Arcanum divinae sapientiae (also

78 Toulouse, "Feminist Gains": 1341-1343 at 1341.
80 Toulouse, "Feminist Gains": 1341.
82 In Toulouse, "Feminist Gains": 1341.
known as the *Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Christian Marriage*, promulgated on February 10, 1880); *Arcanum*’s purpose was to address errors that had risen due to the progress of society at the time. “Divorce, polygamy and the treatment of women in marriage” were the main errors *Arcanum* wished to address.\footnote{Ivy A. Helman, *Women and the Vatican: An Exploration of Official Documents* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012), 14 & 16.} Ivy Helman observes that “[b]efore much is even said in *Castii Conubii*, Pope Pius XI takes the time to confirm *Arcanum divinae sapientiae* to be as true and valid in 1930 as it was when Pope Leo XIII promulgated it.”\footnote{ibid., 16.} *Castii Conubii*’s view of women was that they were created for domesticity, which includes birthing and educating children, and were subject to their husbands. As well, “society should not interfere with their duties as wives and mothers.”\footnote{ibid.} Any support for women’s emancipation movements would in fact be crimes against God, women, and the Christian family\footnote{ibid., 13-14.} as articles 74 and 75 of the document states:

74. The same false teachers who try to dim the luster of conjugal faith and purity do not scruple to do away with the honorable and trusting obedience which the woman owes to the man. Many of them even go further and assert that such a subjection of one party to the other is unworthy of human dignity, that the rights of husband and wife are equal; wherefore, they boldly proclaim the emancipation of women has been or ought to be effected. This emancipation in their ideas must be threefold, in the ruling of the domestic society, in the administration of family affairs and in the rearing of the children. It must be social, economic, physiological: - physiological, that is to say, the woman is to be freed at her own good pleasure from the burdensome duties properly belonging to a wife as companion and mother (We have already said that this is not an emancipation but a crime); social, inasmuch as the wife being freed from the cares of children and family, should, to the neglect of these, be able to

\footnote{ibid., 16.}
follow her own bent and devote herself to business and even public affairs; finally economic, whereby the woman even without the knowledge and against the wish of her husband may be at liberty to conduct and administer her own affairs, giving her attention chiefly to these rather than to children, husband and family.

75. This, however, is not the true emancipation of woman, nor that rational and exalted liberty which belongs to the noble office of a Christian woman and wife; it is rather the debasing of the womanly character and the dignity of motherhood, and indeed of the whole family, as a result of which the husband suffers the loss of his wife, the children of their mother, and the home and the whole family of an ever watchful guardian. More than this, this false liberty and unnatural equality with the husband is to the detriment of the woman herself, for if the woman descends from her truly regal throne to which she has been raised within the walls of the home by means of the Gospel, she will soon be reduced to the old state of slavery (if not in appearance, certainly in reality) and become as amongst the pagans the mere instrument of man.87

Ivy Helman does indicate that the Catholic Church evidences some changes in its view of women in the 1960’s. This is evidenced in Pope John XXIII’s Encyclicals Mater et Magistra (May 15, 1961) and Pacem in Terris (April 11, 1963).88 In Mater et Magistra, women were considered part of the working class, but were also considered part of the weaker members of society that had to be protected (article 20). In Pacem in Terris, women are given support in their choice to work outside the home (article 15) and acknowledgement is given to the feminist movement (articles 41-43).89 Their role as mothers and wives were upheld (article 19) but also the document recognized their natural dignity and increasing role in the public sphere (article 41). This is quite a contrast from the condemnation of such


88 Helman, Women and the Vatican, 21-23.

89 ibid., 22-23.
concepts found in *Castii Conubii* (December 31, 1930) and *Arcanum divinae sapientiae* (February 10, 1880).

Overall we have various sources pointing to the domestication of the woman following the world wars and pre-Vatican II (that is before the 1960’s). Her positioning in the home as mother, wife, teacher and primary carer of children, signaled a need for stability and security, demarcation of roles, especially after the trauma of various wars and the great depression. But even with the presence of propaganda encouraging women to stay at home (through commentary, papal documents, and even cookbooks) women began to enter the workforce. As an example, in Australia in 1954, seven percent of the labour force were married women.\(^{90}\) Most women worked until they married and became full time mothers and wives. The only occupations deemed suitable for women at the time were as nurses, secretaries, teachers, and domestic workers.\(^{91}\) By 1970, women made up 38.6 percent of the workforce.\(^{92}\) Pope John XXIII’s *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* showed acknowledgement of this movement and thus presented a change in ecclesial tone from condemnation to support of women who chose to work outside the home. At the same time the concept of the woman at home was upheld. 

With these perceptions in mind, Vatican II’s imaging of the Church as mother is explored. I propose here that whilst the encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* evidence an expansion of the vision of woman as mother, the image of mother as teacher and primary carer for an infant child remains. Several influential texts for Vatican II Council point to


\(^{92}\) ibid., 121.
such imaging of the Ecclesial Mother and this is the subject of the next exploration.

6) Foundational Papal Texts Pointing to the Church’s Maternity at the Council

There are several documents, considered formative for the mindset of the Second Vatican Council, which also point to its assumed maternal imaging for the Church. First, Pope John XXIII’s opening speech for the Council “Gaudet Mater Ecclesia” (October 11, 1962) evidently points to this assumption. In article 17, the Maternal Church “raises the torch of religious truth in this Ecumenical Council” and “wishes to show herself to be the most loving mother of all, kind, patient, and moved by mercy and goodness towards her separated children.” As well,

She opens the sources of her plentiful doctrine, by which people illumined by the light of Christ can thoroughly understand what they themselves really are, what dignity distinguishes them, what goal they must pursue. Finally, through her children she expands everywhere the spaces of Christian charity, than which nothing is more fit to uproot the seeds of error and nothing more effective to promote concord, a just peace, and fraternal unity among all.

Article 17 thus presents Mother Church as holder and teacher of religious truth but one who desires to reach out and teach beyond her own members. This maternal Church even acknowledges faith in those whom are not her members. But she depends upon her members to represent her presence to the world, correcting error and promoting unity and peace. This work

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94 Ibid.
towards unity is seen as her “duty to work actively to fulfil this mystery of that unity for which Christ Jesus ardently prayed the heavenly Father on the eve of his sacrifice” (article 19). Interestingly, in his continual expression of a desire for peace and unity under Christ, John XXIII quotes Cyprian’s *The Unity of the Catholic Church*, article 5:

> The Lord’s Church, surrounded by light, sheds her rays over the whole earth. One, however, is the light which is spread everywhere, nor is the unity of the body shattered. She spreads her branches all over the world by her great abundance; she sends ever farther her flowing rivers. But one is the head, and one the origin, one the mother ever and again fruitful. Of her are we born; by her milk are we nourished, by her spirit do we live.

In this translation, there is no sign of John XXIII making any reference to Cyprian’s dictum “extra ecclesiam nulla salus”. Yet Cyprian writes his *De Unitate* text alongside this exclusionary text in mind. What seems to be more apparent here in John XXIII’s use of *De Unitate* 5 is his image of Mother Church as desiring unity and harmony of peoples under her guidance, correction and teaching, rather than one who wished a return of all peoples to the Catholic Church as Mother which for Cyprian was the purpose of the text of *De Unitate* 5.

Vatican II’s maternal ecclesial concern for the realities of daily life of the human person, in all areas of human living, before expressing any of

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid. The original text reads:

“…the Church forms a unity, however far she spreads and multiplies by the progeny of her fecundity…Our Lord’s Church is radiant with light and pours her rays over the whole world; but it is one and the same light which is spread everywhere, and the unity of her body suffers no division. She spreads her branches in generous growth over all the earth, she extends her abundant streams ever further; yet one is the head-spring, one the source, one the mother who is prolific in her offspring, generation after generation: of her womb are we born, of her milk are we fed, of her Spirit our souls draw their life-breath.” In Cyprian, “The Lapsed (ACW)”, Bevenot, 47-48. Latin text can be found at CCSL3:253.128-142.

97 Cf. Cyprian chapter in this thesis.
the Church’s teachings, finds its earliest expression in John XXIII’s opening speech:

Although she has no directly earthly ends, she cannot in her journey be disinterested in the problems and worries of here below. She knows how beneficial to the good of the soul are those means which render more human the life of those individual men who are to be saved. She knows that by giving life to the temporal order by the light of Christ, she is also revealing men to themselves, leading them, that is, to discover in themselves their own nature, their own dignity, their own purpose. This is why the living presence of the Church today extends by right and by fact to international organizations; this is why she elaborates her social teaching on the family, the school, work, civil society, and all the related problems, so that her teaching office has been raised to the highest level as the most authoritative voice, the interpreter and champion of the moral order, the defender of the rights and duties of all human beings and of all political communities.98

A second influential document for Vatican II, also pointing to the Church’s maternity, is Pope John XXIII’s Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress entitled *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961). In its very first paragraph, the Church is clearly imaged as mother and teacher, not just to its members but “to all nations”:

Mother and Teacher of all nations—such is the Catholic Church in the mind of her Founder, Jesus Christ; to hold the world in an embrace of love, that men, in every age, should find in her their own completeness in a higher order of living, and their ultimate salvation. She is "the pillar and ground of the truth." (1) To her was entrusted by her holy Founder the twofold task of giving life to her children and of teaching them and guiding them—both as individuals and as nations—with maternal care. Great is their dignity, a dignity which she has always guarded most zealously and held in the highest esteem.99

98 Pope John XXIII, *Opening Speech to the Council*.


Latin text may also be found in the Vatican web archives at [http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater_lt.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater_lt.html)
Like *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, *Mater et Magistra*’s Mother Church views herself as holder of truth, teacher, and mother to all, desiring to reach out beyond her own members and embrace them in love. Moreover here, she expresses a hope that people may find completeness and salvation in her. It seems here that motherhood is associated with “giving life” to one’s children. What this means exactly is not specified and therefore is assumed to be known by the audience.

Third, Pope John XXIII’s Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis* (February 2, 1962), convoking the Second Vatican Council calls upon the Church as *Mater et Magistra*:

> But this supernatural order must also reflect its effectiveness onto the other, the temporal, order, which ultimately is the only one that occupies and preoccupies man [sic]. In this field also the Church has shown that she wishes to be *Mater et magistra*, to use the expression of our distant and glorious predecessor, Innocent III, spoken at the Fourth Lateran Council.\(^{100}\)

While drawing upon tradition, this document emphasizes the need to bring the Church into dialogue with the contemporary world, and in so doing sets a trajectory of what the Council aims to do. Thus this image of “Mother and teacher” is a link to the past but also indicates what the Church has to offer in the present.

Fourth, Pope Pius XI’s Encyclical on Christian Marriage *Castii Connubii* (December 31, 1930), which has already been discussed, viewed woman’s ultimate vocation as mother and wife. Whilst the document is not directly connected to Vatican II, it does present a background to the imaging of woman as mother by the Catholic Church. In fact, Helman

considers the Encyclical the best source on the view of women by the Catholic Church before the 1960’s.\textsuperscript{101} At the same time Helman also states a change in the view of women by the Church in the 1960’s as evidenced in Pope John XXIII’s Encyclicals \textit{Mater et Magistra} (May 15, 1961) and \textit{Pacem in Terris} (April 11, 1963) where support was given for women who did undertake work outside the domestic sphere.

Interestingly, Pope Paul VI’s Closing Speech for the Vatican II Council (December 8, 1965) made no reference to the motherhood of the Church. Rather, maternity is referred to in only three ways: an address to wives as “mothers of families”, an address to all women including mothers, and in the official announcement of Mary as Mother of the Church. Apropos to the address to wives as mothers, Paul VI called them “the first educators of the human race in the intimacy of the family circle”. He said to them:

…pass on to your sons and your daughters the traditions of your fathers at the same time that you prepare them for an unsearchable future. Always remember that by her children a mother belongs to that future which perhaps she will not see.\textsuperscript{102}

Here a mother is one who educates her children, passed on tradition, and prepared her children for the future. As well, it images a mother as living on through her children.

On the address to all women including mothers, Paul VI says:

…you constitute half of the immense human family. As you know, the Church is proud to have glorified and liberated woman, and in the course of the centuries, in diversity of characters, to have brought into relief her basic equality with man. But the hour is coming, in fact has come, when the

\textsuperscript{101} Helman, \textit{Women and the Vatican}, 13.

\textsuperscript{102} Pope Paul VI, Second Vatican Council Closing Speech, found at \textit{Papal Encyclicals Online}, at \url{http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6closin.htm}, accessed October 20, 2014.
vocation of woman is being achieved in its fullness, the hour in which woman acquires in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is under-going so deep a transformation, women impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid mankind in not falling.\(^{103}\)

Where *Arcanum divinae sapientiae* saw women as unequal to men and considered the emancipation of women a crime towards women, God and families, the above address presents quite a strong contrast. Yet even in this new support for women, it also still seemed to retain the 1930-50’s mindset of what Betty Friedan named as the “feminine mystique” and this is seen further in the later parts of Paul VI’s closing speech:

> You women have always had as your lot the protection of the home, the love of beginnings and an understanding of cradles. You are present in the mystery of a life beginning. You offer consolation in the departure of death. Our technology runs the risk of becoming inhuman. Reconcile men with life and above all, we beseech you, watch carefully over the future of our race. Hold back the hand of man who, in a moment of folly, might attempt to destroy human civilization…Women, you do know how to make truth sweet, tender and accessible, make it your task to bring the spirit of this council into institutions, schools, homes and daily life. Women of the entire universe, whether Christian or non-believing, you to whom life is entrusted at this grave moment in history, it is for you to save the peace of the world.\(^{104}\)

Thus, whilst we have a change in perception of the woman by the Church (from *Castii Connubii* in 1930 to *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* in the 1960’s), they remained imaging the mother as teacher, primary carer, and source of life for her children. *Humanae Salutis* affirms this image by calling upon *Mater et Magistra* within itself and adds to the maternal image a Church desiring to reach out to all peoples and embrace them within herself. The primary pastoral intent of the Council finds one

\(^{103}\) Ibid.

\(^{104}\) Ibid.
form of expression in presenting this maternal image throughout the
documents as will be seen in the next two chapters where the maternal texts
of Vatican II are explored.

7) The four Constitutions as “interpretative keys”

In 1985, twenty years after the conclusion of Vatican II, the Synod of Bishops met to assess the Council. There they determined that its four Constitutions provided the “interpretative keys” for reading the remaining documents as the final report on the Synod states:

The theological interpretation of the conciliar doctrine must show attention to all the documents, in themselves and in their close inter-relationship, in such a way that the integral meaning of the Council's affirmations—often very complex—might be understood and expressed. Special attention must be paid to the four major constitutions of the council, which contain the interpretative key for the other decrees and declarations. It is not licit to separate the pastoral character from the doctrinal vigor of the documents. In the same way, it is not legitimate to separate the spirit and the letter of the council. Moreover, the council must be understood in continuity with the great tradition of the church, and at the same time we must receive light from the council's own doctrine for today's church and the men of our time. The church is one and the same throughout all the councils.\(^{105}\)

Ormond Rush describes the relationship between the four constitutions and the remaining conciliar documents as “analogous” to the relationship between the four Gospels and the remaining books of the New Testament.\(^{106}\) Moreover, he points to the hierarchy of importance of the documents even amongst the four constitutions: that the theological focus of *Dei verbum* should be the lens with which the other three ecclesiologically


focused constitutions are to be read. 107 Yet, though there exists an order of importance (Constitutions first, then Decrees and last the Declarations) and “difference in authority and impact”, John O’Malley points out that “all sixteen documents are interconnected in many ways. They form a coherent corpus and must be interpreted accordingly.” 108

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has outlined certain points for consideration concerning the exploration of the mother metaphor within the Vatican II documents. The first few points specifically concentrated on analysis of the document on the Church, Lumen Gentium, seeing as the mother metaphor appeared within the document quite significantly more than in any of the other documents in the Vatican II Council. The first point, the Council’s pastoral intention, showed a shift in the image of Mother Church from a legislative-judicial body at Trent to one that retained that role but adopted a more pastoral image at Vatican I and II. At Vatican II, the pastoral image becomes personified in Mary. The second point, the insertion of the Marian schema, highlighted that the text of Lumen Gentium, especially chapter 8, results from a heated compromise between two different schools of thought which wished to promote, respectively a christotypical or an ecclesiotypical Marian theology. The text does not read smoothly because of this compromise; and the ongoing work of rereading and reinterpretation is left to theologians. The third point proposed some working definitions of type and antitype in terms of Mary, the Church, and the community for use in this Vatican II section. It proposed the idea of Mary as ecclesia-type in her

107 ibid.
complete ability to reflect the Church as mother and virgin, whilst the faithful were antitype in their incomplete ability but ongoing pursuit to represent the full sense of the Church’s motherhood and virginity, through their faithfulness and engagement with its apostolic work. The fourth point explored other ecclesial images, particularly ‘People of God’, which battled the Council with ‘Mystical Body of Christ’ for the place of central ecclesial metaphor. In the end, the Church as Mystery was put forward as a solution, since it was able to highlight both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of Church, something that the other metaphors could not necessarily immediately convey. For Congar it was the very concept of ‘People of God’ that was most difficult to introduce into the council framework. The metaphor had many advantages but also had its limitations. By suggesting ‘Body of Christ’ as its partner metaphor, he believed that the limitations could be overcome. Revisions of LG6 on the different images of Church reveal a movement from imaging a Church solely in its vertical dimension to one incorporating also the horizontal dimension. Here the Church as bride was seen to be the most expressive of all ecclesial metaphors.

On the fifth principle, some commentary exist pointing to the utilization of the ideal woman as mother in the 1930’s to 50’s to address the traumas and/or anxieties experienced from a history of political, economic and social unrest especially in the post World War eras. The emphasis on woman’s place as being in the home and being a dedicated mother and wife alleviated the fear of instability within the family and society caused by the women’s movement from the private to the public sphere. But there were many women who were discontented with domesticity and ignored the propaganda provided by State and Church alike by entering the workforce
Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1930) highlighted the idealisation of woman as mother and wife whose place was in the home and this mystique was seen reflected in the Catholic Church’s documents concerning women pre-1960’s, *Castii Conubii* (December 31, 1930) and *Arcanum divinae sapientiae* (February 10, 1880). Despite the change in perception of women in the 1960’s by the Church (as seen in *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), women’s roles as primarily mothers and wives in the home were upheld. As mother the woman is seen as teacher and primary carer of her children.

Sixth, several documents, considered formative to the mindset of Vatican II Council, also point to its assumed maternal imaging for the Church. The Council’s opening speech “*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*” (October 11, 1962) presents Mother Church as holder and teacher of religious truth but one who desires to reach out and teach beyond her own members. This maternal Church acknowledges faith outside the Church contrasting the Tertullianic-Cyprianic dictum “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*”. But the Mother Church depends upon her members to represent her presence to the world, correcting error and promoting unity and peace. As can be seen this work towards unity is an active duty. *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961) similarly points to the Church as mother and teacher “of all nations” (article 1). She not only holds the truth but wishes to mother and embrace all peoples. This Mother expresses a hope that people may find completeness and salvation in her. But first of all she is a mother who gives life to her children. In *Humanae Salutis* (February 2, 1962), the apostolic Constitution which convoked the Second Vatican Council, the Mother Church of *Mater et Magistra* is called upon and reaffirmed. Vatican II’s maternal ecclesial
concern for the realities of daily life of the human person, in all areas of
human living, finds its earliest expression in this document announcing the
Council. The change in ecclesial perception of the woman from *Castii
Connubii* (1930) to *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* (early 1960’s)
still retains the image of the mother as teacher, primary carer, source of life
for her children, within the domestic sphere. The closing speech at the
Council (December 8, 1965) evidenced this image and called mothers “the
first educators of the human race in the intimacy of the family circle”. It
affirmed the mother as one who passed on tradition and prepared her
children for the future. As well, the mother is able to live on in history
through her children. The closing address to all women echoed Friedan’s
1930 feminine mystique theory calling women the salvation of the world
and particularly of men because of her very femininity.

The seventh and final principle highlighted the four Constitutions of
Vatican II as interpretative keys to reading the other documents. Whilst all
16 documents are interconnected a hierarchy exists amongst them and this
must be kept in mind in the attempt to interpret the documents.
CHAPTER VII: MOTHER CHURCH WITHIN THE CONSTITUTIONS

This chapter explores the presence of the maternal metaphor within the four Constitutions of Vatican II Council—Lumen Gentium, Sacrosanctum Concilium, Gaudium et Spes, and Dei Verbum. As shown in Chapter 6, the four Constitutions are the “interpretative keys” for reading the other Vatican II documents in the same manner as the books of the New Testament are read in light of the four Gospels. Because of this significance, the exploration of the maternal metaphor is also treated more extensively in the four Constitutions.

Further, the method of exploring the maternal metaphor within Lumen Gentium slightly differs from the other three Constitutions—not only because it is the very Constitution on the Church but also because unlike the other documents where the maximum number of times “Mother” appears is seven, Lumen Gentium uses a maternal image fifty-three times. The manner of exploration in Lumen Gentium is as thus: the reading of the maternal texts is divided into two sections, first an initial reading without consideration of the Vatican II background, commentary and principles, and then a rereading which takes these considerations into account. The purpose of this initial reading is to question what image of the ecclesial mother is presented to a member of the Church of today who does not usually have the knowledge of Vatican II background and commentary but wishes to learn from the documents. This initial reading also questions what purpose the maternal metaphor may serve for the lay faithful today. Last, it will investigate the early patristic references from Ambrose’s Exposotio in
Lucam and Augustine’s *In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus* 13 and *Sermones* 191, used in the key passage of LG 64 where the Church is imaged as a mother as well as the community and Mary. The thesis will read back into the contexts of the uses of the maternal metaphor by these Early Fathers and compare its uses in *Lumen Gentium*.

The method applied in the investigation of other documents is that first the Mother Church texts are provided in Latin (in dark italics) and then in three different English translations. The Latin version is from Norman Tanner and the English translations are from Walter M. Abbott (1966), Austin Flannery (1988), and the Vatican Website.¹ Then the second section considers the principles set out in chapter VII. Along with this, commentaries directly concerning the articles with the Mother Church texts are utilized, and her images and purposes within the document are investigated.

Some particulars on the analysis of the documents are here noted. First that when only one English and one Latin translation is provided, the English is usually taken from Abbott as it is the closest translation to the Latin and the Latin is usually from Tanner, unless specified otherwise. Second, often Abbott, Flannery, and the Vatican website agree in English translations of certain phrases whilst Tanner significantly contrasts. In this case the abbreviation AFV (Abbott, Flannery, Vatican) is applied. Third, the key maternal texts are highlighted for ease of analysis.

1) In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church - Lumen Gentium (LG)

a) An Initial Reading

LG 6 The Church, ‘that Jerusalem which is above,’ is also called ‘our Mother’ (Gal. 4:26; cf. Apoc. 12:17). She is described as the spotless spouse of the spotless lamb (Apoc. 19:7; 21:2 and 9; 22:17). She it was whom Christ ‘loved and delivered himself up for her that he might sanctify her’ (Eph. 5:26), whom He unites to Himself by an unbreakable covenant, and whom He unceasingly ‘nourishes and cherishes’ (Eph. 5:29). Once she had been purified, He willed her to be joined unto Himself, and to be subject to Him in love and fidelity (cf. Eph. 5:24). Finally, He filled her with heavenly gifts for all eternity, in order that we might know the love of God and of Christ for us, a love which surpasses all knowledge (cf. Eph. 3:19). The Church on earth, while journeying in a foreign land away from her Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6), regards herself as an exile. Hence she seeks and experiences those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, where the life of the Church is hidden with Christ in God until she appears in glory with her Spouse (cf. Col. 3:1-4).

The first appearance of the ecclesial maternal metaphor in LG states that the Church is ‘our Mother’ without giving any further attention to such maternal roles as birthing, breastfeeding, or other maternal/paternal-parental activities such as boundary-setting, nurturing, disciplining, teaching, holding on, and letting go. Rather, the passage describes the Church a Spouse of Christ (sponsa immaculata agni immaculati) who purifies her (sanctificaret) and sacrifices himself on her behalf (se ipsum tradidit pro ea). In turn the Mother-Bride Church is subject (subditam) to her spouse.

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2 Latin: Ecclesia etiam, "quae sursum est Hierusalem" et "mater nostra" appellatur (Gal 4,26; cf. Apoc 12,17), describitur ut sponsa immaculata agni immaculati (cf. Ap 19,7; 21,2 et 9; 22,17), quam Christus "dilexit... et se ipsum tradidit pro ea, ut illam sanctificaret" (Eph 5,25-26), quam sibi foedere indissolubili sociavit et indesinenter "nutrit et fovet" (Eph 5,29), et quam mundatam sibi voluit coniunctam et in dilectione ac fidelitate subditam (cf. Eph 5,24), quam tandem bonis caelestibus in aeternum cumulavit, ut Dei et Christi ega nos caritatem, quae omnem scientiam superat, comprehendamus (cf. Eph 3,19). Dum vero his in terris ecclesia peregrinatur a Domino (cf. 2Cor 5,6), tamquam exsulem se habet, ita ut quae sursum sunt quaerat et sapiat, ubi Christus est in dextera Dei sedens, ubi vita ecclesiae abscondita est cum Christo in Deo, donec cum sponso suo appareat in gloria (cf. Col. 3, 1-4).
Christ, in love and fidelity (*dilectione ac fidelitate*), and lives in exile (*tamquam exsulem se habet*) until she joins him in the eschatological future (*donec cum sponso suo appareat in gloria*).

In a similar manner, the scriptural references in LG6 concentrate on images of the Church as purified bride rather than on the mother figure introduced in the paragraph. This purified bride is subject to her pure husband Christ, the Lamb (*sponsa immaculata agni immaculati*) (Ephesians 5:26, 29; Revelations 19:7, 21:2, 21:9). The references act as proof texts, lifted straight from their source: for example, ‘The Church, “that Jerusalem which is above” is also called “our Mother”’ (*Ecclesia etiam, "quae sursum est Hierusalem" et "mater nostra” appellatur*) from Galatians 4:26. Sometimes the connection between text and reference is questionable: for example, when LG6 cites Revelations 12:17. Galatians 4:26 presents a city and a mother, while Revelations 12:17 presents a woman enraging a dragon and the dragon waging war on her children, who keep God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Furthermore, the Church is imaged by LG6 as an exile (*tamquam exsulem se habet*): 2 Corinthians 5:6 speaks of being at home in our bodies but being absent to the Lord, walking by faith rather than by sight. This image is curiously juxtaposed with mother and the juxtaposition is questioned since it points to a state of existence (exile) rather than to a person. The final reference in LG6, Colossians 3:1-4, also presents a state of negative existence. It speaks of being hidden in Christ as spouse (*ubi vita ecclesiae abscondita est cum Christo in Deo*), only to be revealed when he is revealed in glory (*donec cum sponso suo appareat in gloria*).
Clearly the mother image in article 6 is of little importance or at best taken for granted. We read of a Church that is ‘free’ as ‘the Jerusalem from above’ but also subjected, in exile and hidden. The Church is loved, sanctified, and filled with heavenly gifts, but also subjected (to Christ) and journeying in exile. The Church is hidden, but one day will appear in glory. Meanwhile the Church that is ‘free’ as ‘the Jerusalem from above’ seems supersessionist, rather than illuminated by a dual-covenant perspective (Galatians 4:26), and at war with an entity represented by a ‘dragon’ (Revelations 12:17). These images of Church do not align with the pastoral and open outlook that was adopted at Vatican II, as the richness of the scriptural texts in light of current research are yet untapped.

Traditional interpretations of Gal 4:21-30 present it as a theology of supersessionism, of Christianity over Judaism, where Sarah becomes representative of the new ekklesia in Christ, the ‘Jerusalem from above’ replacing Hagar, the old community of Israel, bonded by its reliance on Jewish law. Brigitte Kahl challenges this notion (and the notion of Paul as anti-Jewish), stating that the passage draws on Paul’s own experience of acceptance into the Galatian community. As Jewish other, in his brokenness he embodied Christ crucified and dying. The Galatian community in their acceptance and “solidarity with him…brought him back to life.” The community and Paul together “became the incarnation of the messianic community” which “rebirths the self through the other.” This is what Kahl described as the (pro)creative power at work in the Galatians community as the body of Christ. In a similar manner Gal 4:26 is about self and other “integrated and reconciled in a new global ‘mother city’ of freedom where Jews and Galatians/ nations can communicate, associate and unite other than through Rome and Caesar’s body.” In Brigitte Kahl, Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 283-84. Another interpretation sought to tap into the sociological context of the Galatian community but falls into the supersessionist perspective: the article perceives the issue of the Galatian community as a choice between two enslaving mothers and the mother that frees. The two enslaving mothers are the Anatolian Mother of the Gods, a remnant figure of the Galatian community’s Phrygian background and worship and the Jewish religion enslaved to Law and circumcision. The free mother in contrast is the community adopting members as free sons of Christ. In Elliott, "Choose Your Mother, Choose Your Master".

Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther argue that the primary struggle for the ekklesiāi at the time was to resist participation or “assimilation into the dominant Roman imperial ethos. The issue was whether those ekklesiāi who had faithfully resisted Rome would continue in that practice, and whether those who had been co-opted by Rome could be renewed in their resistance.” For Howard-Brook and Gwyther, the New Jerusalem “is found wherever human community resists the ways of empire and places God at the centre of its shared life.” In Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 116, 184 respectively.
After its brief appearance at LG 6, ‘Mother Church’ only appears seven other times in LG⁵, while the term ‘mother’ is applied to Mary 44 times. At LG 63 and 64, the constant maternal references to Mary are briefly interrupted by the statements pointing to Mary as the type for Mother Church.⁶ In particular LG 64 states that by emulating Mary, the Church becomes a mother and virgin itself:

LG 64 The Church, moreover, contemplating Mary’s mysterious sanctity, imitating her charity, and faithfully fulfilling the Father's will, becomes herself a mother by accepting God’s word in faith. For by her preaching and by baptism she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God. The Church herself is a virgin, who keeps whole and pure the fidelity she has pledged to her Spouse. Imitating the Mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she preserves with virginal purity an integral faith, a firm hope, and a sincere charity.*⁷

* St. Ambrose as cited in footnote 282, as well as his “Expos. Lc.” X, 24-5: PL 15, 1810; St. Augustine, “In Io.,” tr. 13, 12: PL 35, 1499, and see also his “Serm.,” 191, 2, 3: PL 38, 1010, as well as other of his texts. Cf. Venerable Bede, “In Lc. expos.,” I, c.2: PL 92, 330; and Isaac of Stella, “Serm.,” 51. PL 194, 1863 A.

Overall in LG, 44 uses of the word ‘mother’ refer to Mary whilst eight refer to Mother Church and three of the eight appearances of Mother

⁵ At LG14, she embraces catechumens. At LG15, she prays, hopes, and works towards the unity of all Christians. At LG41, couples who express mutual charity express the fruitfulness of Mother Church and at LG42, she “rejoices at finding within her bosom men and women who more closely follow and more clearly demonstrate the Savior’s self-giving by embracing poverty with the free choice of God’s sons, and by renouncing their wills.”

⁶ LG 63. As St. Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a model of the Church in the matter of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ. For in the mystery of the Church, herself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar of both virginity and motherhood.

Latin: … ut iam docebat S. Ambrosius, in ordine scilicet fidei, caritatis et perfectae cum Christo unionis. In mysterio enim Ecclesiae, quae et ipsa iure mater vocatur et virgo, Beata Virgo Maria praecessit, eminenter et singulariter tum virginis tum matris exemplar praebens...

⁷ Latin: Iamvero ecclesia, eius arcanam sanctitatem contemplans et caritatem imitans, voluntatemque Patris fideliter adimplens, per verbum Dei fideliter suscepturn et ipsa fit mater: praedicatione enim ac baptismo filios, de Spiritu sancto conceptos et ex Deo natos, ad vitam novam et immortalem generat. Et ipsa est virgo, quae fidem sponso datam integre et pure custodit, et imitans Domini sui matrem, virtute Spiritus sancti, virginaliter servat integram fidem, solidam spem, sinceram caritatem.
Church in LG point to Mary as type and model for the Church as mother
and virgin:

Mary

Mother Church
LG6, LG14, LG15, LG41, LG42, LG 63, LG 64, LG 65

In conjunction, peppered throughout the last two chapters of the document are statements directing the faithful to place themselves under the mothering care of Mary:

LG 53 Indeed she is “clearly the mother of the members of Christ . . . since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful, who are members of Christ their Head.”* … the Catholic Church honors her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved mother.8

* St. Augustine, ‘De s. virginitate,’ 6 : PL 40, 399.

LG 54 …this sacred Synod intends to describe with diligence the role of the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of the Incarnate Word and the Mystical Body. It also wishes to describe the duties of redeemed mankind [sic] toward the Mother of God, who is mother of Christ and mother of men [sic], particularly of the faithful.”9

8 Latin: …immo "plane mater membrorum (Christi),... quia cooperata est caritate ut fideles in ecclesia nascerentur, quae illius Capitis membra sunt”… spectatissimum salutatur eamque catholica ecclesia…filialis pietatis affectu tamquam matrem amantissimam prosequitur.

9 Latin: …Sacrosancta Synodus, doctrinam de Ecclesia, in qua divinus Redemptor salutem operatur, exponens, illustrare sedulo intendit tum munus Beatæ Virginis in mysterio Incarnati Verbi et Corporis Mystici, tum hominum redemptorum officia erga Deiparam, matrem Christi et matrem hominum, maxime fidelium, quin tamen in animo habeat completam de Maria proponere doctrinam, atque quæstiones labore theologorum nonum ad plenam lucem perductas dirimere. Servantur itaque in suo iure sententiae, quae in scholis catholicis libere proponuntur de Illa, quae in Sancta Ecclesia locum occupat post Christum altissimum nobisque maxime proinquum
LG 61 ...she is a mother to us in the order of grace.\textsuperscript{10}

LG 62 By her maternal charity, Mary cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led to their happy fatherland.\textsuperscript{11}

Whilst Mary is not described as a spouse of Christ, she works in union with him:

LG 57 This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation was manifested from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to His death.\textsuperscript{12}

LG 63 Through the gift and role of divine maternity, Mary is united with her Son, the Redeemer, and with His singular graces and offices. By these, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united with the Church.\textsuperscript{13}

And she is not only mother and spouse-like but also a virgin:

LG 57 This association was shown also at the birth of our Lord, who did not diminish His mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it…\textsuperscript{14}

LG 61 The Blessed Virgin was eternally predestined, in conjunction with the incarnation of the divine Word, to be the Mother of God.\textsuperscript{15}

By the end of LG, it is very easy to imagine that the Mother-Virgin-Spouse Church refers to Mary. As members of the Church are encouraged to put themselves under her care, it is hard to imagine that the faithful are called to become Mother Church themselves. Yet at LG 65, they are called to birth Christ (even if it is in an indirect manner):

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{10} & \textit{Latin:} Quam ob causam mater nobis in ordine gratiae exstitit.
\textsuperscript{11} & \textit{Latin:} Materna sua caritate de fratribus Filii sui adhuc peregrinantis necnon in periculis et angustiis versantibus curat, donec ad felicem patriam perducantur.
\textsuperscript{12} & \textit{Latin:} Haec autem Matris cum Filio in opere salutari coniuncto a tempore virginalis conceptionis Christi ad eius usque mortem manifestatur…
\textsuperscript{13} & \textit{Latin:} Beata autem Virgo divinae maternitatis dono et munere, quo cum Filio redeemptore unitur, suisque singularibus gratiis et muneri, etiam cum Ecclesia intime conungitur…
\textsuperscript{14} & \textit{Latin:} …in nativitate vero, cum Deipara Filium suum primogenitum, qui virginalim eius integritatem non minuit sed sacratit…
\textsuperscript{15} & \textit{Latin:} Beata Virgo, ab aeterno una cum divini Verbi incarnatione tamquam Mater Dei praedestinata, divinae Providentiae consilio…
\end{flushright}
Hence the Church in her apostolic work also rightly looks to her who brought forth Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin, so that through the Church Christ may be born and grow in the hearts of the faithful also.\(^\text{16}\)

This is a call for each individual member to birth Christ. But, this call seems lost in the numerous occasions ‘mother’ or ‘mothering’ points to Mary (40+ times): in her various titles or roles as mother of humanity and the Church, mother of men ("*matrem hominum*" LG54, 69), mother of the members of Christ ("*plane mater membrorum (Christi)*" LG53), to be honored as a mother ("*filialis pietatis affectu tamquam matrem amantissimam prosequitur*" LG53; "*filialem erga Matrem nostram amorem*" LG67), mother of the living ("*matrem viventium*" LG56), “mother to us in the order of grace” ("*mater nobis in ordine gratiae exstitit*" LG61); in reminders to the faithful that he or she is under Mary’s maternal care ("*Mariae autem maternum munus erga homines*" LG60; “*Materna sua caritate de fratribus Filii*” LG62; “*sub cuius praesidium fideles in cunctis periculis et necessitatibus suis deprecantes confugiunt*” LG66); and in LG7’s call for him or her to become like Christ so as to collectively become Christ’s body rather than to birth Christ individually. LG 7 says:

Through baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ: ‘For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body’ (1Cor12:13). In this sacred rite, a union with Christ’s death and resurrection is both symbolized and brought about: ‘For we were buried with him by means of Baptism into death.’ And if ‘we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be so in the likeness of his resurrection also’ (Rom6:4-5).

Truly partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. ‘Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread’ (1Cor10:17). In this way all of us are made members

\(^{16}\) Latin: “Unde etiam in opere suo apostolico ecclesia ad eam merito respicit, quae genuit Christum, ideo de Spiritu saneto conceptum et de virgine natum, ut per ecclesiam in cordibus quoque fidelium nascatur et crescat.”
of His body (cf. 1Cor 12:27), ‘but severally members one of another’ (Rom 12:5).  

b) Analysis in Light of Vatican II Background and Commentary

Given that the first chapter of LG deals with the Church as mystery of salvation and care before ‘People of God’ (LG Chapter 2) or ‘Body of Christ’, its competing metaphor, it highlights that ‘Mystery’ was the primary ecclesial image for the council. This was the image proposed after the Theological Commission failed to put forward other ecclesial images beyond presenting the Church as mystical body as the central metaphor. Consequently, other images would need to encompass or complement ‘Mystery’, ensuring that the visible and invisible dimensions of Church as well as the idea of grace at work within the Church are highlighted. The utilization of the maternal-bridal ecclesial metaphor in LG6 makes some sense in light of this primary intent. But, as will be shown, the female metaphors do not necessarily combine to form a single, ultra-female figure. Each figure seemed to be utilized to highlight a different aspect of the Church as Mystery.

LG6 has three clear sections marked by the metaphors employed and the way they are employed. The first section presents a divine city (‘Jerusalem from above’) and a mother; the second section, a purified bride; and the third, a Church in exile and hidden. The first section, the Church as ‘Jerusalem from above’ points to the invisible aspect of Church by the

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17 Latin: “Per baptismum enim Christo conformamur: ‘Etenim in uno Spiritu omnes nos in unum corpus baptizati sumus’ (1Cor 12,13). Quo sacro ritu consociatio cum morte et resurrectione Christi repraesentatur et efficitur: ‘Consepulti enim sumus cum illo per baptismum in mortem’; si autem ‘complantati facti sumus similitudini mortis eius, simul et resurrectionis erimus’ (Rom 6,4-5). In fractione panis eucharisticī de corpore domini realiter participantes, ad communionem cum eo ac inter nos elevamur. ‘Quoniam unus panis, unum corpus multi sumus, omnes qui de uno pane participamus’ (1Cor 10,17). Ita nos omnes membra illius corporis efficimur (cf. 1Cor12,27), ‘singuli autem alter alterius membra’ (Rom12,5)”.

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positional term ‘above’. As regards its juxtaposing image, Church as ‘our Mother’, the function of the maternal metaphor here points to the visible dimension of Church, the missing aspect in the paired dimension of the Church as Mystery. In a commentary on articles 63 to 65 in LG, when describing Mary’s conception of the Logos, Otto Semmelroth explains that the conception occurred in “Mary’s believing mind and in her motherly body”.\(^{18}\) Whilst Semmelroth speaks implicitly of a spiritual motherhood conceiving the Logos through the mind, he firmly associates together the concepts of ‘mother’ and ‘body’. In this interpretation motherhood is clearly connected with bodiliness and therefore with the visible dimension.

Having presented the Church as Mystery through analogizing its visible and invisible aspects, the second section concentrates on the ecclesial image of the purified bride of Christ—explaining the how of Church as Mystery. The texts portray Church as pure bride and subject, while Christ is the agent that acts in numerous ways upon the subject. The subject does not reciprocate except in keeping itself pure. The supporting Ephesian references (Ephesians 5:24, 26, 29) point to the ‘how’ of grace, by drawing mainly from a passage (Ephesians 5:25-30) where Paul instructs husbands to love and treat their wives as they love and treat their own bodies. Ephesians 5:25-30 says:

> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body,

but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body.

Taking the Church as subject and Christ as agent, the argument of Ephesians runs thus: Christ loves the Church his bride who is also his own body. The Church exists separately from Christ but is also one with him as his body. There are no explicit or implicit connections made here to the maternal metaphor introduced in article 6 of LG.

The curious positioning of the bridal ecclesial image immediately after the maternal-divine city image can be explained. According to Aloys Grillmeier, the original draft of LG6 discussed ‘the church as mystical body of Christ’. Because of the conciliar call for a ‘whole biblical approach to the Church’, the resulting text of LG6 eventually presented a variety of ecclesial images drawn from scripture. But as can be seen in the concentration on the Church as pure bride loved by Christ as Christ loves the Church (his body), remnants of the original mindset had remained.

The third section presents the Church in exile and hidden in the present, looking towards an eschatological future and promise. The metaphor of the Church as a pilgrim, from LG Chapter 7, is brought to mind especially in LG6’s phrasing “while on earth, (the Church) journeys…” (“Dum vero his in terris ecclesia peregrinatur...”). Semmelroth says that chapter 7 was initially not part of the draft on the Church but was included through the intervention of Pope John XXIII and later confirmed by Paul VI. For Semmelroth, the chapter significantly highlighted “an essential

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feature of the Church, without which she cannot be properly described”, and that is its characteristic of “eschatological dynamism”. Meanwhile, the Church as “hidden” seems to hark back to a Reformist view of Church, which stresses the invisible dimension of the Church over the visible. LG6 then ends with a reference to important notions from previous sections, the ‘above’ from the first section and the Church’s concern with it, and the ‘Spouse’ from the second section and the promise of her appearance in glory with Christ--tying together the paragraph into one contained argument but not necessarily one combined metaphor. The maternal ecclesial metaphor at LG6 certainly does not function as a central image. It is simply part of a larger argument that wished primarily to present the Church as mystery of salvation before other images. It seems that the particular role of the maternal metaphor in LG6 was to highlight the visible dimension of the Church as mystery, which probably tapped into the association of ‘mother’ with ‘our’ own earthly mothers.

Further on in LG, most of the maternal references point to Mary (44 towards Mary and 8 towards Mother Church). This comes from 42 of the 44 references towards Mary being found within Chapter 8, originally the De

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21 Ibid.  
23 If this is so, it can be readily argued that motherhood in its visibility, undeniable physicality, earthiness, messiness and quotidian living, can still point to something beyond the visible. Moreover it may be argued that it verily embodies the paired dimensions of the visible and invisible in itself. Cf. Cristina Lledo Gomez, "Early Motherhood and the Paschal Mystery: A Rahnerian Reflection on the Death and Rebirth Experiences of New Mothers," The Australasian Catholic Record 88, no. 2 (2011). Cf. also Margaret Hebblethwaite, Motherhood and God (London: G. Chapman : Cassell, 1984). For a secular perspective on the invisible dimensions of motherhood, motherhood as transformative work or as rebirth of the self, see Marie Porter, Transformative Power in Motherwork: A Study of Mothering in the 1950s and 1960s (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2008); Lisa Raith, “(Re)Birth of the Self: Ordinary Women’s Complex Journey into New Motherhood. A Feminist Poststructural Narrative Study. Volumes I and II” (PhD, University of Southern Queensland, 2008).
The numerous appearances of the maximalist position, as the faithful are encouraged in devotion towards Mary or to place themselves under her maternal care, even when the text is paired with the minimalist position (the placement of Mary back into an ecclesial context), is the issue at hand. The maternal role seems clearly encouraged in the figure of Mary, and the faithful are encouraged to be children under her maternal care. From this, it is clearly hard to imagine a maternal-spiritual role for the faithful collectively and as individuals.

Yet, the call for the faithful to this role is present in LG65. Semmelroth comments on the Council’s attempt to properly align Mary’s relationship with the Church and Christ. He explains that while the faithful look to Mary as an example of “perfection fully achieved”, she does not replace Christ as “model of Christian life”. Instead, “[b]y leading a Marian life” (that is, imitating her virtues [LG 65]) “the Church encounters Christ her bridegroom and is more and more transformed into his likeness.”

Against temptations to imagine that Mother Church is expressed only through Mary or the clergy and religious, Semmelroth points out that LG65 ends with an emphasis on the entire community engaged in the Church’s apostolic work—and in this then their own ability to image the Church as fruitful mother. Therefore, Semmelroth concludes, whilst Mary is named as type for the Church, the people become antitype of Mary in their engagement with the Church’s apostolic work. He says a possible misunderstanding could occur if apostolic work was tied only to an office of

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24 In LG 52-59, 61, 63-69.

25 For more clarification on the differences between the maximalist and minimalist positions, see the previous chapter of this thesis – chapter 7, on the principles for exploring the maternal metaphor.

26 In Semmelroth, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Chapter VIII," 294.
the Church. But apostolic work, the mission of the Church, belongs to the entire community. Therefore “one can regard the whole Church as the one bride of her glorified Lord and as such the antitype of Mary who conceived and bore Christ”.  

LG may have put more emphasis on following Christ than on birthing him. But the argument that LG7’s call to the individual faithful to become like Christ and collectively become Christ’s body rather than to birth Christ individually misreads LG7. Article 7’s intent was to expound the biblical concept of the ‘body of Christ’. Understandably the passage concentrated on the collective faithful as “an organic unity of members with different forms and functions”. But for Grillmeier, this was only the first stage of how the analogy of body of Christ was developed in the article. The second stage involved discussion on the multiplicity inherent within this body. He describes the “true life of the Church” as one that demands that “both the unity and the diversity of the body of Christ should be personally lived and realized.” The call to become like Christ and be part of his body avoids the limitation of simply birthing Christ in the individual, because it highlights the necessary characteristic of the Church to be unified in its diversity.

c) The Ecclesial Mother of LG

Maternal images appear at least 52 times within LG but 44 of these appearances point to Mary as mother whilst only 8 point to the Ecclesial Mother. From those 8 instances, 3 (LG 63, 64, 65) pointed to Mary as a type

27 In ibid., 294-95.
28 Grillmeier, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Chapter I," 144.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
for the Church as mother and virgin. In its first appearance in LG, the maternal metaphor at LG6 seemed to be obliterated and instead the bridal figure was prioritized. But this maternal-bridal figure was not necessarily one ultra-female figure but simply highlighted particular aspects of the Church as mystery of salvation: the maternal figure highlights the visible dimension of the Church as Mystery of Salvation whilst the bridal figure represents its invisible dimension.

Because many occurrences of the maternal metaphor came from within Chapter 8, originally the De Beata schema, LG appears to relegate spiritual ‘motherhood’ to Mary whilst members of the Church were encouraged to place themselves under her ‘maternal’ care. As a result of this significant occurrence in chapter 8 an initial reading of the maternal metaphor in LG resulted in a reading that perceived an overshadowing of any call to the baptized faithful to grow in maturity in faith and to engage in the apostolic work of the Church. Thus what seemed to be presented was less an emphasis on the faithful to become spiritual mothers and instead pointed to Mary as a spiritual mother to the faithful. Yet this very call to the faithful to reflect the motherhood of the Church is found in LG65. But also, as will be shown further in this chapter and the next, this call for the faithful to represent the motherhood of the Church is found within other documents of the Council: in an explicit sense in Presbyterorum Ordinis 6, and in Gravissimum Educations 7 and Optatam Totius 19, in an implicit sense by calling the faithful to undertake the apostolic work of the Church. It will also be shown that such a call to reflect the motherhood of the Church by undertaking its apostolic work is based on a call to the faithful to full active
participation in the Church as found in *Gaudium et Spes* part 2, chapter 2, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* chapter 6.

d) *The Ambrosian and Augustinian Key References of LG*

Articles 64 and 65 of *Lumen Gentium* are those key passages in which Mother Church is imaged as Mary, as Mother and Virgin, and as the Community. Article 65 does not make any citations but article 64 does cite the early Patristic writers, Ambrose and Augustine, and Church Fathers from the middles ages, Venerable Bede and Isaac of Stella. Article 64 says:

The Church, moreover, contemplating Mary’s mysterious sanctity, imitating her charity, and faithfully fulfilling the Father’s will, becomes herself a mother by accepting God’s word in faith. For by her preaching and by baptism she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God. The Church herself is a virgin, who keeps whole and pure the fidelity she has pledged to her Spouse. Imitating the Mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she preserves with virginal purity an integral faith, a firm hope, and a sincere charity.*

* St. Ambrose as cited in footnote 282 [*“Expos. Lc.,” II, 7: PL 15, 1555*], as well as his [*“Expos. Lc.,” X, 24-25: PL 15, 1810*; St. Augustine, *“In Io.,” tr.13, 12:PL 35, 1499*, and see also his *“Serm.,” 191, 2, 3: PL 38, 1010* as well as other of his texts. Cf. Venerable Bede, *“In Lc. Expos.,” I, c.2: PL 92, 330*; and Isaac of Stella, *“Serm.,” 51: PL 194, 1863 A.*  

Having earlier investigated Ambrose’s and Augustine’s maternal ecclesial metaphorical use, the thesis turns to their citations which are used by article 64 to justify its claim that the Church as Mary as Mother is also the Community as Mary as Mother.

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31 Latin: *Iamvero Ecclesia, eius arcanam sanctitatem contemplans et caritatem imitans, voluntatemque Patris fideliter adimplens, per verbum Dei fideliter susceptum et ipsa fit mater: praedicatione enim ac baptismo filios, de Spiritu Sancto conceptos et ex Deo natos, ad vitam novam et immortalem generat. Et ipsa est virgo, quae fidei Sposo datam integre et pure custodit, et imitans Domini sui Matrem, virtute Spiritus Sancti, virginaliter servat integram fidem, solidam spem, sinceram caritatem.*
First, Augustine’s *Sermons 191.2* and *191.3* are observed:

**191.2**: The Church, therefore, imitating the Mother of her Lord in mind, though not in body, is both mother and virgin. Since the virginity of His Mother was in no way violated in the birth of Christ, He likewise made His Church a virgin by ransoming her from the fornication of demons. You holy virgins, born of her undefiled virginity, who, scorning earthly nuptials, have chosen to be virgins in the flesh, rejoice now and celebrate with all solemnity the fecundity of the Virgin on this day. The Lord was, indeed, born of a woman, but He was conceived in her without man's co-operation. He who has offered to you this blessing of virginity to cherish did not deprive His Mother of that gift. Far be it that He who repairs in you the harm wrought by Eve should even in the slightest degree mar in His Mother Mary that virginity which you have prized.32

**Sermon 191.3**

She in whose footsteps you are following had no human intercourse when she conceived; she remained a virgin when she brought forth her child. Imitate her as far as you can, not in her fecundity, because this is not in your power, but in the preservation of your virginity. She alone enjoyed both prerogatives; you have chosen one of them and you lose this one if you desire to possess both. She alone could be both virgin and mother because she brought forth the omnipotent Lord by whose power she thus miraculously conceived…

Indeed, you have gained as the spouse of your heart Him whom you could not bring forth as your child in the flesh. He is a spouse whom your joy so cherishes as a redeemer that your virginity does not shrink from Him in fear of violation. For He who did not deprive His Mother of virginity by actual child-bearing preserves that virginity in you to a much greater degree in His spiritual embrace.33

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32 In Augustine, “*Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons (FC)*”, Muldowney, 30. *Latin*: *Ecclesia ergo imitans Domini sui matrem, quoniam corpore non potuit, mente tamen et mater est et virgo. Nullo itaque modo virginitate matru suae nascendo Christus ademit, qui Ecclesiam suam de fornication demonum redimendo virginem fecit. Ex cujus incorrupta virginitate procreatae virgins sanctae, quae terrenas nuptias contemnentes, esse etiam carne virgins elegistis, gaudentes celebrate solemniter hodierno die Virginis partum. Ille quippe est natus ex femina, qui non est a masculo satus in femina. Qui vobis attulit quod amaretis, matri non abstulit quod amatis. Qui sanat in vobis quod traxistis ex Eva, absit ut vitiaret quod dilexistis in Maria. PL 38, 1010*

33 In *ibid*. *Latin*: *Illa igitur cujus vestigia sectimani, et ut conciperet, cum viro non mansit; et cum pareret, virgo permansit. Imitamini eam quantum potestis; non fecunditate, quia hoc non potestis, salva virginitate. Sola utrumque potuit, quorum vos unum habere voluistis; quia hoc perditis, si utrumque habere velitis. Sola utrumque potuit, quae omnipotentem peperit, per quem potuit… Ipsum quippe vos, quem filium edere non potuistis carne, sponsum invenistis in corde: et tales sponsum, quem et redemptorem sic teneat felicitas vestra, ut peremptorem non timeat virginitas vestra. Qui enim matri
Here we see Augustine’s *Sermon 191* was in fact mainly an address not to the entire Church but specifically towards ecclesial virgins. And what were the virgins’ main concerns? In their ecclesial virginity, they would not be able to fulfill the societal expectation that one day they would become mothers. As seen in the discussion of the ancient Roman context of Ambrose (in Chapter IV), the same ancient Roman context Augustine shared, the call to Roman Vestal Virginity was a call to temporary celibacy and a reassurance that later on, the virgins would become mothers for the Empire. One of the purposes of Vestal Virginity was to highlight the unnatural state of a woman to be celibate and thus this highlighted that women were essentially made for motherhood, to create sons for the Empire. But ecclesial virginity as introduced by Ambrose was of a permanent type. When Augustine explained that the virgins birthed Christ not in the flesh but in their ‘minds’ in *Sermon 191*, he assured them that, unlike Roman Vestal Virginity, they were fecund in and because of their virginity, and that this was a higher form of fecundity. That Augustine still addressed ecclesial virgins of his time concerning this matter indicates that this was still an issue long after Ambrose had introduced the practice of consecrating virgins for the Church.

The significance of understanding the context of *Sermon 191* is that the Mother-Virgin concept applied to the Church was not simply utilizing a traditional ecclesial metaphor and ‘applying new tricks’ to it. Rather it was a live metaphor, addressing the concerns of the ecclesial virgins and utilizing concepts that they collectively understood. That is, the metaphor

\[ \text{virginitatem nec corporali abstulit partu, multo magis in vobis eam spirituali servat amplexu. PL 38, 1011.} \]
was cognitive and created a web of associations, which could not be addressed by any other metaphor, image or concept.

In contrast, these aspects of the Mother-Virgin metaphor applied to the Church today are lost. Contemporary Christians have no concept of the significance of Vestal Virginity and fecundity for the Roman Empire. Even if they did, no longer do the people of the Church belong under Roman imperial jurisdiction and cultural influence. Thus, the original metaphor has lost the particular networks of association that formed it, and now when employed is basically just an allegory for Mary, whereas originally Mary was used as an allegory to support the metaphor.

**Sermon 191** does end with an address to the entire Church. Augustine says:

> Finally, I address all here present; I speak to all; I include in my exhortations the whole Church, that chaste virgin whom the Apostle speaks of as espoused to Christ. Do in the inner chambers of your soul, what you view with amazement in the flesh of Mary. He who believes in his heart unto justice conceives Christ; he who with his mouth makes profession of faith unto salvation brings forth Christ. Thus in your souls, let fertility abound and virginity be preserved.\(^{34}\)

Here we have Augustine calling the entire Church a mother, spouse, and virgin—calling them to birth Christ and remain faithful to him, by “believing in his heart unto justice” and by making a “profession of faith unto salvation” with their mouths. Here again Augustine calls Church members to conceive Christ in their hearts, to be Mother Church themselves, rather than simply placing themselves under her care. For Augustine’s audience, this Mother-Virgin concept has meaning as described above but for today’s

audience, the metaphor is non-cognitive and certainly does not create a singular web of associations. Furthermore, Chapter IX will argue that the understanding of motherhood is so diverse today that it will not be generally accepted as meaning the same thing, unlike it’s more universal connotations of *materfamilia* and *matrona* in the ancient Roman Empire.

The other reference to Augustine in LG64 was to his reflection on *John’s Gospel*, tractate 13, number 12:

…The whole Church is being called a virgin. The members of the Church are diverse; you can see and rejoice that they have a variety of gifts: some are married men, some are married women, some are widowers who are no longer looking for wives, some are widows not looking for husbands, some are men who have remained chaste from their youth, some who are women who have vowed their virginity to God; many are the gifts, but together they are all one virgin. Where is this virginity found? It is not after all, in the body. Bodily virginity is something that few women enjoy, and, if one can talk about virginity in men, that holy purity of body is something that few men in the Church have. And these are the Church’s more honourable members. Other members have not kept virginity in the body, but all keep virginity of the mind.

What is virginity of the mind? Integral faith, solid hope, sincere love. The man who was jealous on behalf of the bridegroom feared that his virginity might be corrupted by the serpent. Just as a particular part of the body gets violated, so too does the seductive tongue violate the virginity of the heart. Let the one who does not wish to preserve the virginity of the body in vain take care not to be corrupted in the mind.

Augustine used the “Mother Church” appellation to explain that the whole Church was a virgin and more importantly he called members of the Church to become virgins (not in body as it was not possible for most of them) but in mind, by keeping “an entire faith, firm hope, and sincere charity.”35 What was interesting in this rhetoric was his affirmation of the

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variety people who were part of the Church and that variety added richness to the whole. Moreover, here Augustine didn’t just throw around the word ‘virginity’ and assumed his audience would understand. Knowing that they would be Roman minded and interpret the concept as bodily virginity, Augustine clarified for his audience what it meant to be a virginal Church—expanding their own ecclesiological vision by building on what they had previously understood from a cultural perspective (that is, Vestal Virginity).

The context of this speech was in refutation of the Donatists who did not keep the entire faith but rather had an exclusive faith, as Augustine said himself:

But what am I to say, brothers and sisters? Let us see clearly what he [Christ] bought. For he bought it in the place where he paid the price. How much did he pay? If he paid just for Africa, let us be Donatists, not calling ourselves Donatists but Christians, because Christ only bought Africa (although there are not just Donatists here). But, in this transaction, he did not keep quiet about what he bought. He kept a record. Thank God, he has not misled us. The bride needs to hear and then to understand to whom she has vowed her virginity…

We see here what we saw earlier in chapter V on the discussion of Augustine’s context: in response to the Donatists, Augustine expanded the concept of Church from being located in the temporal to also the eschatological Church. We also saw that the Donatists considered


themselves as traditionalists—following the Tertullianic-Cyprianic tradition, which demarcated insiders from outsiders of the Church and thus saw themselves guaranteeing the Holy Spirit’s dwelling within the Church. For Augustine here, keeping virginity of the mind is keeping virginity for a universal Church rather than simply the early North African Church.

In using the maternal ecclesial metaphor, Augustine called all the members of the Church themselves to become fruitful mothers (that is to conceive Christ in their hearts and give birth through their actions) and to keep virgin minds (that is by keeping an entire faith, firm hope, and sincere charity). He supported his exhortation by using Mary as a great example of virginity and motherhood. But in LG64, we do not get this whole background and the sense that the whole of the faithful are being called to motherhood and virginity themselves. LG64 strips this layer of meaning from Augustine, leaving an image of Mother Church as a distinct entity from the faithful, rather than a powerful metaphor that calls them to be dedicated and fruitful in their own spiritual lives.

(ii) AMBROSE IN LG 64

Turning now to the Ambrosian references, LG 64 utilizes Expositio Lucam Liber II, §7 and Liber X, §§24-25 to promote the Mother-Virgin-Spousal Church like Augustine. First, ExpLucLibII, §7 states:

...It is good that Mary is both a wife and virgin, for she is a figure of the Church who is without stain (cf.Ep5:27), and yet a spouse. As a virgin she has conceived us by the Spirit; as a virgin she brings us forth without the pangs of labour. There may, too, be another reason why Holy Mary became fruitful by One who was not her husband, for the individual churches—made fruitful by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rv 2:17) and by grace—are visibly united to a mortal bishop."

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We remember here again the contexts in which Ambrose insisted in putting forward these images, utilising Mary for his ascetic cause as seen in Chapter IV. Generally, presenting the Church as fecund and virginal, ultimately (not initially) in the figure of Mary, provided many advantages on a personal, ecclesiological, Christological, and ecclesio-political fronts, fighting the heresies of Jovinianism, Manichaeism, and Arianism. In particular the context here in *Expositio Lucam* was that it was circulated after the ‘Cathedral Controversy’ of 385 CE. Ambrose’s new emphasis of the Church as mother and virgin distracted the Pro-Nicenes and Pro-Homoians from their vicious debates. But by putting forward Mary’s motherhood and virginity with the Church’s own, Ambrose was distinguishing the Church from Arian heretics who were in fact the Pro-Homoians (as opposed to Pro-Homousians). Presenting the Church as mother, wife, and virgin was a politically-charged situation in which Ambrose’s audience were well aware that denial of the Church’s and Mary’s motherhood, spousehood, and virginity would have consequences ecclesiologically, soteriologically, and Christologically.

The other Ambrosian references, *ExpLucLibX*, §§24-25 state:

24: “But there are others again who are with child and who do not escape condemnation. These are they who conceive excellent intentions, but who produce absolutely nothing in the way of good works. There are those who conceive out of fear of God and who say: “Of Your fear we have conceived and been in labour” (Is 26:18). But not all bring forth children; not all are perfect; not all can say: “We have brought forth the spirit of salvation on earth” (Is 26:18). Not all are Mary, who conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit, and gave birth to the Word.

sed nupta. Concepit nos virgo de Spiritu, parit nos virgo sine gemitu. Et ideo fortasse sancta Maria alii nupta, ab alio replete; quia et singulae Ecclesiae Spiritu quidem replentur et gratia; junguntur tamen ad temporalis specem sacerdotis. PL 15, 1555.
There are those who abort the Word before its birth; there are those who carry Christ in their womb, but as yet He is not formed. To the latter Paul says: “My little children, with whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you” (Ga 4:19). Those still in the womb are being formed, and are not yet perfect. But to those who are already more perfect, Paul says: “It is I who have begotten you through the Gospel” (1 Co 4:15). 38

25 “Many are fathers through the Gospel; and many are mothers who give birth to Christ. Who will show us Christ’s parents? He Himself has shown them to us, when He said: “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers and sisters? Those who do the will of my Father in Heaven are my brother, my sister, and my mother” (Mt 12:48;50). Do the Father’s will and you will be Christ’s mother. Many have conceived Christ but have never brought Him into the light of day. She who brings forth justice, brings forth Christ; she who brings forth wisdom, brings forth Christ. She who bears the Word, carries Christ. 39

Ambrose’s adjustment of his rhetoric to suit his particular audience is seen in the first line of the passage:

But there are others again who are with child and who do not escape condemnation. These are they who conceive excellent intentions, but who produce absolutely nothing in the way of good works.

It is possible that in this text Ambrose contrasts both the empty works of ancient Roman Vestal Virginity and Arian belief, which was very much in the minds of his audience, with the fruitfulness of ecclesial virginity. In


light of his general criticism of Jews in *Expositio*, he then criticizes the Jewish belief in the text:

There are those who conceive out of fear of God and who say: ‘Of Your fear we have conceived and been in labour’

As a result, Ambrose puts in the same vein the Arians, the Jews, and Pagan Vestal Virginity, showing these beliefs as producing no fruit in contrast to ecclesial virginity, eventhough these faiths claim to be sincere.

Distinguishing then between the heretics and true believers, Ambrose turns his attention towards the Catholic community and acknowledges their various levels of faith: those who “abort the Word before its birth” (the baptized but who do nothing else with their faith), those who “carry Christ in their womb, but as yet He is not formed” (the Christian neophyte faith), those who “still in the womb are being formed, and are not yet perfect” (the catechumenate faith), and “those who are already more perfect”, begotten through the Gospel and who “brings forth justice…brings forth wisdom [and]…bears the Word…”. Ambrose’s use of the Mother-Virgin image has the contexts of his audience in mind and thus the image is not foreign and its use in a metaphorical utterance becomes very much a living metaphorical application. Again in articles 63 and 64 of *Lumen Gentium* where these Ambrosian citations appear, the Mother-Virgin concept is lost for the Western contemporary community and one wonders what the Catholic Church have in mind in promoting such images and what particular meaning are they meant to convey. Is it about sexual purity or purity of the mind or both? Is the imitation of Mary also about being sexually pure? Vatican II’s meaning is lost and presents the maternal ecclesial metaphor used in this way already as a dead metaphor.
2) In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy - Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC)

a) Mother Church Texts of SC

SC4

Traditioni denique fideliter obsequens, sacrosanctum concilium declarant sanctam matrem ecclesiam omnes ritus legitime agnitos aequo iure atque honore habere.

Tanner: “Finally, faithfully in accordance with the tradition, this holy council declares that the church regards all duly recognised rites as having equal legal force and as to be held in equal honour; it wishes to preserve them for the future and encourage them in every way.”

Flannery: “Finally, in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that Holy Mother Church holds all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.”

Abbott: “Finally, in faithful obedience to tradition, this most sacred Council declares that holy Mother church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal authority and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.”

Vatican Web: “Lastly, in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.”

SC14

Valde cupit mater ecclesia ut fideles universi ad plenam illam, consciam atque actuosam liturgicarum celebrationum participationem ducantur, quae ab ipsus liturgiae natura postulator et ad quam populous christianus ‘genus electrum, regale sacredotium, gens sancta, populous adquisitionis’ (1 Pt 2,9; cf. 2, 4-5), vi baptismatis ius habet et officium.

Tanner: “The church very much wants all believers to be led to take a full, conscious and active part in liturgical celebration. This is demanded by the nature of the liturgy itself; and by virtue of their baptism, it is the right and the duty of the Christian people, ‘the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people of whom God has taken possession’ (1Pt2,9; see2,4-5).”

Flannery: “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Pet.2:9; 4-5) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.”

Abbott: “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as a ‘chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people’ (1 Pet.2:9; cf.2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.”

Vatican Web: “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a
holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.”

SC21

Pia mater ecclesia, ut populous xchristianus in sacra liturgia abundantiam gratiarum securius assequatur, ipsius liturgiae generalem instaurationem sedulo curare cupit.

Tanner: “In order that the christian people can more surely obtain the abundance of graces in the liturgy, the church wishes to make strenuous efforts at a general reform of the liturgy itself.”

Abbott: “In order that the Christian people may more securely derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself.”

Flannery & Vatican Web: “In order that the Christian people may more certainly derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself.”

SC36.2, 36.4, 54, 63, 76, 78 linguae vernaculae = mother tongue

SC60

Sacramentalia praeterea sancta mater ecclesia instituit. Quae sacra sunt signa quibus, in aliquam sacramentoprum imitacionem, effectus praeertim spiritualis significatur et ex ecclesiae impetratione obtinentur. Per ea homines ad praecipuum sacramentorum effectum suscipiendum disponuntur et varia vitae adiuncta sanctificantur.

Tanner: “The church has also set up sacramentals. These are sacred signs through which, rather like with the sacraments, effects brought about primarily on the spiritual level are symbolized, and obtained through the prayer of the church. Through them people are opened up to absorb the action of the sacraments, action of such crucial importance; and various features of life are sanctified.”

Flannery: “Holy Mother Church has, moreover, instituted sacramentals. These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the Church's intercession. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy.”

Abbott and Vatican Webb: “Holy Mother Church has, moreover, instituted sacramentals. These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments: they signify effects, particularly of a spiritual kind, which are obtained through the Church's intercession. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy.”

SC84-85

Divinum officium ex antiqua traditio christiana ita est constitutum ut totus cursus diei ac noctis per laudem Dei consecetur. Cum vero mirabile illud laudum canticum rite peragunt sacerdotes aliique ad hanc rem ecclesiae instituto deputati vel christifideles una cum sacerdote forma probate orates, tunc vere vox est ipsius sponsae, quae sponsum alloquitur, immo etiam oratio Christi cum ipsius corpore ad Patrem.
Tanner: “Following ancient Christian tradition, the divine office is arranged in such a way that the whole cycle of day and night can be consecrated through the praise of God. When priests and others assigned to this task by a decision of the church perform this wonderful hymn of praise properly—or when it is done by Christian believers at large together with a priest, praying it according to an approved form—then it is really the voice of the bride herself, speaking to her husband: and what is even more, it is the prayer of Christ to the Father, which he makes in union with his whole body.”

Flannery: “The divine office, in keeping with ancient Christian tradition, is so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God. Therefore, when this wonderful song of praise is correctly celebrated by priests and others deputed to it by the Church, or by the faithful praying together with a priest in the approved form, then it is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father.”

Abbott: “By tradition going back to early Christian times, the divine Office is arranged so that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praises of God. Therefore, when this wonderful song of praise is rightly performed by priests and others who are deputed for this purpose by Church’s ordinance, or by the faithful praying together with the priest in the approved form, then it is truly the voice of the bride addressing her bridegroom; it is the very prayer which Christ Himself, together with His body, addresses to the Father.”

Vatican Web: “By tradition going back to early Christian times, the divine office is devised so that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praises of God. Therefore, when this wonderful song of praise is rightly performed by priests and others who are deputed for this purpose by Church’s ordinance, or by the faithful praying together with the priest in the approved form, then it is truly the voice of the bride addressed to her bridegroom; it is the very prayer which Christ Himself, together with His body, addresses to the Father.”

85

*Omnes proinde qui haec praestant, tum ecclesiae officium explant, tum summum sponsae Christi honorem participant, quia laudes Deo persolventes stant ante thronum Dei nomine matris ecclesiae.*

Tanner: “Thus all those who have this responsibility are at once carrying out an office of the church, and are sharing in the highest honour of Christ’s bride, because while they perform their acts of praising God, they are standing in front of God’s throne explicitly as the church.”

Flannery: “Hence all who take part in the divine office are not only performing a duty for the Church, they are also sharing in what is the greatest honor for Christ’s Bride; for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God’s throne in the name of the Church their Mother.”

Abbott: Hence all who perform this service are not only fulfilling a duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the greatest honor accorded to Christ’s spouse, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God’s throne in the name of the Church their Mother.”

Vatican Web: “Hence all who render this service are not only fulfilling a duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the greatest honor of Christ’s
spouse, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church their Mother.”

SC102

Pia mater ecclesia suum esse ducit sponsi sui divini opus salutiferum, status diebus per anni decursum, sacra recordation celebreq. In unaquaque hebdomada, die quam dominicam vocavit, momram habet ressurectionis Domini, quam semel etiam in anno, solemnitate maxima paschatis, una cum baeta ipsis passion, frequentat.

Tanner: “The church considers it her role to celebrate the salvific action of her divine husband by recalling to mind in worship on fixed days throughout the course of the year. In each week, on the day it has called “the Lord's day” (Sunday), the church has a commemoration of the resurrection of the Lord, which, in union with his passion, it also celebrates once a year, in the greatest of festivals, Easter.”

Flannery: “Holy Mother Church believes that it is for her to celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse in a sacred commencement on certain days throughout the course of the year. Once each week, on the day which she has called the Lord's day, she keeps the memory of the Lord's resurrection. She also celebrates it once every year, together with his blessed passion, at Easter, that most solemn of all feasts.”

Abbott: “Holy Mother Church is conscious that she must celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse by devoutly recalling it on certain days throughout the course of the year. Every week, on the day which she has called the Lord's day, she keeps the memory of His resurrection. In the supreme solemnity of Easter she also makes an annual commemoration of the resurrection, along with the Lord’s blessed passion.”

Vatican Web: “Holy Mother Church is conscious that she must celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse by devoutly recalling it on certain days throughout the course of the year. Every week, on the day which she has called the Lord's day, she keeps the memory of the Lord's resurrection, which she also celebrates once in the year, together with His blessed passion, in the most solemn festival of Easter.”

SC103 – Mary as Mother and Ecclesiotype

In hoc annuo mysteriorum Christi circulo celebrando, sancta ecclesia beatam Mariam Dei genetricem cum peculiari amore veneratur, quae indissolubili nexu cum Filii sui opera salutary coniungitur; in qua praecellentem redemptionis fructum miratur et exaltat, ac veluti in purissima imagine, id quod ipsa tota esse cupit et sperat cum gaudio contemplator.

Abbott: “In celebrating this annual cycle of Christ's mysteries, holy Church honors (sancta ecclesia veneratur) with special love (cum peculiari amore) the Blessed Mary, Mother of God (beatam Mariam Dei genetricem), who is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son. In her the Church holds up and admires the most excellent fruit of the redemption, and joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless model (veluti in purissima imagine), that which she herself wholly desires and hopes to be.”

SC122

Alma mater ecclesia proinde semper fuit ingenuarum artium amica, earumque nobile ministerium, praecepque ut res ad sacrum cultum pertinentes vere essent dignae, decorae ac pulchrae, rerum supernarum,
signa et symbola, continenter quaesivit, artificesque instruxit. Immo earum veluti arbitram ecclesia iure semper se habuit, diiudicans inter artificum opera quae fidei, pietati legibusque religiosae traditis congruerent, atque ad usum sacrum idonea haberentur.

Tanner: “Thus the church has always been a friend of the fine arts. It has never ceased to seek after the noble service they provide and to train artists and craftspeople. The chief purpose for this has been so that the things which form part of liturgical worship can be suitable, dignified and beautiful—signs and symbols of things above. Moreover, the Church has always, with good reason, thought of itself as a kind of judge, separating out works of art that are religiously consistent with its traditions of faith, holiness and law, and that are to be regarded as suitable for use in worship.”

Flannery: “For that reason holy Mother Church has always been the patron of the fine arts and has ever sought their noble ministry, to the end especially that all things set apart for use in divine worship should be worthy, becoming, and beautiful, signs and symbols of things supernatural. And to this end she has trained artists. In fact the Church has, with good reason, always claimed the right to pass judgment on the arts, deciding which of the works of artists are in accordance with faith, piety, and the laws religiously handed down, and are to be considered suitable for sacred use.”

Abbott: “Holy Mother Church has therefore always been the friend of the fine arts and has continuously sought their noble ministry, with the special aim that all things set apart for use in divine worship should be truly worthy, becoming, and beautiful, signs and symbols of heavenly realities. For this purpose, too, she has trained artists. In fact, the Church has, with good reason, always reserved to herself the right to pass judgment upon the arts, deciding which of the works of artists are in accordance with faith, piety, and cherished traditional laws, and thereby suited to sacred purposes.”

Vatican Web: “Holy Mother Church has therefore always been the friend of the fine arts and has ever sought their noble help, with the special aim that all things set apart for use in divine worship should be truly worthy, becoming, and beautiful, signs and symbols of the supernatural world, and for this purpose she has trained artists. In fact, the Church has, with good reason, always reserved to herself the right to pass judgment upon the arts, deciding which of the works of artists are in accordance with faith, piety, and cherished traditional laws, and thereby fitted for sacred use.”

b) The Ecclesial Mother of SC

The Ecclesial Mother of SC appears seven times throughout the document—at SC4, 14, 21, 60, 85, 102, and 122. The other times ‘mother’ appeared pertained to Mary as Ecclesiatype where Marian piety was placed into an ecclesial context (SC103), and in English translations of SC36.2, 36.4, 54 (two instances), 63, 76, and 78. These translations in fact referred to vernacular language (linguae vernaculæ) rather than some maternal or
feminine imaging of the Church. Nonetheless, the use of the vernacular was of particular importance as shown by its repeated appearance (six times) but also since the early years of the liturgical movement it was evidenced that people desired use of their own languages for celebrations. John O’Malley in fact points to the question of the use of Latin in liturgy, as “the first” and “awkward wrestling” of “the larger direction the council should take”. The debate occupied the council for many weeks. Whilst in the end Vatican II Council provided a “moderate, somewhat ambiguous, position”, after the Council, that position was trumped by Vatican II’s basic principle of a desire for the full participation of the whole assembly in liturgical practice (cf. SC14).

At SC14, 21, and 122, SC’s Ecclesial Mother was utilized to communicate a juridical statement in a pastoral way. At SC14, “Mother Church earnestly desires (valde cupit mater ecclesia) that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.” The eminent canonist Frederick McManus highlights that this formal statement was from Pius X’s Tra le sollecitudini (no.3) of November 22, 1903. McManus describes this statement from SC14 as “the primary and indispensable source” and primary goal: “(a) not only of the reform of liturgical rites, (b) but also of the promotion of the sacred liturgy.” Josef Jungmann agrees with H. Schmidt that it is “the refrain” of SC, since the phrase is repeated 15 other times.

44 ibid., 20-21.
times within the document.\textsuperscript{45} The statement’s significance derives from the sixteenth century Church’s inheritance of a liturgy marked by “unintelligibility and exclusion of the laity”.\textsuperscript{46} No correctives had been previously attempted on the exclusion of the laity from active participation since its promotion would encourage the Reformers’ point of view. The theology of full participation of the laity found its basis in the priesthood of the faithful. The Reformers claimed this was the only valid type of priesthood, and ministerial priesthood was simply a human construct fraught with power-hungry men.\textsuperscript{47} The idea of full participation of the laity was promoted in Pius X’s \textit{Motu Proprio} on Sacred Music (1903) encouraging the faithful to join in the singing of plainsong. Howell says “[t]he papal document contained the germ of what became the pastoral liturgical movement: it stated that the foremost and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit is the active participation of the people in the holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church.”\textsuperscript{48}

SC14’s significance is particularly highlighted by its utilization of the maternal ecclesial metaphor. Whilst Flannery, Abbott, and the Vatican Web translate “\textit{Valde cupit mater ecclesia...}” as “Mother Church earnestly desires…” Tanner translates the phrase as: “The church very much wants…” Depending on the association the article’s author/s assume/s of the ‘Mother Church’ from the authorial and audience points of view, ‘\textit{Valde cupit mater ecclesia}’ could be interpreted in many ways—a ‘\textit{mater}’ who spoke from an authoritative/juridical, or pastoral, or indeed both points of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} Howell, "From Trent to Vatican II,” 287.
\item \textsuperscript{47} ibid., 288.
\item \textsuperscript{48} ibid., 290.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
view. Consequently the text that follows—“that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy”—gains a sense of implicit urgency or higher priority. In contrast, Tanner’s much simpler translation, without the ‘mater’, somehow lacks this urgency.

SC21 similar to SC14 has the Mother Church express a desire (“cupit”): this time on the careful reform of the liturgy (“ipsius liturgiae generalem instaurationem sedulo curare”). Again, the maternal metaphor has been utilized for a highly significant theme for SC. As Ormond Rush points out the very opening lines show such a priority for SC: “It is the intention of this holy council…to adapt (“accomodare”) those structures which are subject to change (“mutation”).”⁴⁹ He says of SC’s aim: “While its aim was an aggiornamento of the Church’s liturgy, the council’s first promulgated document Sacrosanctum concilium, is simultaneously a work grounded on ressourcement of the tradition.”⁵⁰ These two terms, ressourcement and aggiornamento, were the two interrelated dimensions of the consciousness of reform at the Council.⁵¹

For reform was not only a principle agenda for SC, it was also one of the main guiding principles for the entire Council, and SC (including the debates and history surrounding the document) played a defining part in its implementation. As “the first document debated and approved by the council on November 22, 1963—with a majority vote of 2162 to 46 after a

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⁵⁰ ibid., 558.

⁵¹ ibid., 557.
debate that featured 328 oral interventions.”\textsuperscript{52}–SC set the tone of approach taken within the other documents. Massimo Faggioli explains the initial but limited conciliar awareness of the significance of liturgical reform taken within SC and the Council majority’s subsequent conclusion that it was “the best possible interpretation of the pastoral character of the council”, against a small minority who completely opposed the “comprehensive and programmatic” reform approach:

At the beginning of the preparatory phase of Vatican II, it became clear even to the Roman Curia that the liturgical reform would play a major role but they hoped it would do it as an ‘icebreaker’ for a quick and smooth council, not as a ‘path-opener’. The history of the council shows that the debates went all but smoothly and that the debate on the liturgical constitution between October 1962 and November 1963 turned out to be much more than an ‘icebreaker’.

The Roman Curia and the so-called ‘minority’ rejected the comprehensive and programmatic reform of the liturgy laid out in the schema prepared by the liturgical preparatory commission, while the ‘majority’ accepted the reform and long-awaited renewal of liturgy as the best possible interpretation of the pastoral character of the council. The outcomes of the debate and the almost unanimous final vote on the constitution on November 22, 1963 left no doubt as to the step taken in the direction of liturgical renewal.\textsuperscript{53}

In SC21, like SC14, Tanner also ignores the mother metaphor. Thus “\textit{Pia mater ecclesia}” simply became “the church”. Meanwhile, Abbott, Flannery and the Vatican Website (AFV) more faithfully translate “\textit{Pia mater ecclesiae}” as “holy Mother Church”, although “pia” could be more accurately translated as “affectionate/dutiful”. AFV in using “holy” is employing a well-known, to the point of clichéd, English phrase for the Church. Further, Tanner interprets “\textit{sedulo curare}” as making “strenuous


\textsuperscript{53} ibid., 447-448.
efforts” as opposed to AFV’s interpretation—undertaking with “great care”, as shown:

Original: “Pia mater ecclesia,...ipsius liturgiae generalem instaurationem sedulo curare cupit”
Tanner: “…the church wishes to make strenuous efforts at a general reform of the liturgy itself.”
AFV: “…holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself.”

Comparing the English translations between AFV and Tanner, AFV’s utilization of the mother metaphor hints at the extensive debates surrounding reform within SC between the conciliar majority and minority. It is as if the use of “pia mater ecclesia” alongside “sedulo curare cupit” assures the conciliar minority that the liturgiae generalem instaurationem would not involve a simple exercise of aggiornamento for the sake of aggiornamento but would undertake careful consideration (“sedulo curare”) of many factors, such as: Church traditions, belief and practice on liturgy as revealed by a ressourcement approach, the experiences of the faithful, and the ecclesiology lying at the heart of the liturgy driving its practice. Tanner’s translation, meanwhile, concentrates on the aggiornamento dimension of reform but does not hint at conciliar tensions to be considered and juggled.

SC122 describes Mother Church as the friend of the arts (“Alma mater ecclesia proinde semper fuit ingenuarum artium amica…”: “Holy Mother Church has therefore always been the friend of the fine arts…”) but also its judge (“Immo earum veluti arbitram ecclesia iure semper se habuit, diiudicans inter artificum opera quae fidei”: “In fact, the Church has, with good reason, always reserved to herself the right to pass judgment upon the arts, deciding which of the works of artists are in accordance with faith”). Jungmann explains that the ultimate aim of the arts is to “lift up the mind of
man to God.” Yet this was not always the case. The inherited liturgies from the Tridentine era were characterised by the arts as the centre of attention rather than the Mass itself. The minds of attendees may have returned to the Mass by a pause in elaborate music played during liturgies but were otherwise too distracted by its extravagance or the extravagance of the décor of the churches in which Masses were celebrated. Howell explains how the arts reached such immoderate proportions and the consequences:

The turn of the sixteenth century saw the rise of the great polyphonic school of composers; the next two centuries brought the organ and other musical instruments to the service of the Church. Courts of princes and choirs of great cathedrals view with each other in the production of magnificent works involving at times two or more choirs answering each other or combining with large orchestras in masterpieces by Mozart, Beethoven, and other men of genius...In this Baroque age not only the ear, but also the eye, was entranced...The Churches became great halls scintillating with marble and gold, adorned with paintings and sculptures arrayed in whirling draperies, angels playing harps and blowing trumpets while seated on clouds of heavenly glory. The liturgy had degenerated into a sort of opera looked at by the nobility from galleries and boxes near the sanctuary while choirs and orchestras displayed their talents from other galleries in the nave. The people down below gazed and listened.

The ecclesial mother as judge is no new image but the Mother Church as amica (of the arts) is new and does not appear anywhere else in Vatican II, I, or Trent. The imaging is extended further to incorporate Mother Church as reliant upon the faithful who are artists and wish to share their skills with the Church. The appearance of the maternal metaphor in this article is made necessary by her juridical role, but is turned into a more pastoral image by also calling Mother Church a “friend” of the arts.

55 Howell, "From Trent to Vatican II," 289.
The straightforward juridical ecclesial Mother also appears in SC but only at articles 4 and 60. At article 4, the familiar formula “sanctam mater ecclesiam...habere” (“Holy Mother Church holds…”) juxtaposes juridic-like texts, “omnes ritus legítimae agnitos aequo iure atque honore” (“all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal authority and dignity”) and “sacrosanctum concilium declarant” (“the holy Council declares”), producing overall an action of the Church that carries much authority and legitimacy. Jungmann explains the contentious issue of article 4:

It was a much-debated question in the Preparatory Commission...how the Ecumenical Council, in its enactments on the liturgy, could confine itself among the many rites to one single, the Roman...In answer to this not only the numerical superiority of Latin Christianity was referred to, but it was also pointed out that a reform of the Oriental liturgies would presuppose an agreement with the corresponding separated communions as well as an already existing liturgical movement...therefore, the Council contents itself with the declaration that not only all existing rites, but all rites which fulfill the conditions of legitimacy will have equal validity before the Church. The phrase employed in the schema, omnes ritus legítimae vigentes, was, therefore, changed into the present version: legítimae agnitos, that is, embracing the present and the future.56

Whilst the change of wording from vigentes (“enforce”) to agnitos (“acknowledges”) is clearly a pastoral move, the Mother Church image remains juristic and magisterial. Mother Church’s purpose is to affirm the boundaries of acceptable liturgical rites given that so many existed. For before the era of printing, liturgical books were written on manuscripts and there were many variations of the liturgy due to local interpretations and adaptations of surrounding customs and culture. “Every country, every diocese, almost every church throughout the West had its own way of celebrating Mass, for there was no close control from any central

authority.” The Tridentine Council felt an imposition of uniformity would be a corrective to this flaw in the Church. But it was determined at Vatican II, that instead of rejecting all rites and imposing (or “enforcing”, “vigentere”) the one Roman Latin rite all over the world, Vatican II Council opens up the possibility of other rites existing as long as they affirm and/or correspond with the Latin Roman rite. As Theodor Klauser comments: “She cannot at one and the same time want to be the Church of the world and the Church of the city of Rome.”

Using different words but in a similar juridical sense, article 60 presents an ecclesial mother engaged in the “instituere” of “sacramentalia”: “Holy Mother Church has, moreover, instituted sacramentals…”. According to Jungmann, this article was “a later interpolation in response to a demand which, among others, Cardinal Ruffini had made, that a clearer distinction should be drawn between sacrament and sacramental.” There was a great need for renewal of the sacramental, the sign, since it “received little attention” from a theological perspective in the tradition of the Church. For McManus, SC60 simply presents a teaching on the sacramentals that was already recognized in the Church. Though it avoids mechanistic or detailed explanations of prayer and its effects.

At SC102 Mother Church’s presence seems to be unnecessary. In this article she is given the duty of celebrating the paschal mystery of “her spouse” (“Pia mater ecclesia suum esse ducit sponsi sui divini opus

57 Howell, "From Trent to Vatican II,” 286.
60 ibid., 47.
61 McManus, Sacramental Liturgy, 112.
“salutiferum...celebrare”: “Holy Mother Church is conscious that she must celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse ...”). Here it is noted “the real theme of Christian feasts” celebrated throughout the liturgical year.62 That is, Christ’s paschal mystery. Over the centuries the liturgical calendar had become crowded with feasts obscuring the precedence of Easter and Sundays as Klauser explains:

…too many other feasts of Our Lord, too many feasts of the Saints, and other festivals have accumulated in the calendar. Each new festival to some extent robs those already in existence of some of their importance, especially the Sundays, as together with Easter they are the important elements in the framework of the whole system.63

By highlighting the Church as a spouse of Christ, the analogy of the Church necessarily centering its celebrations on the paschal mystery makes sense. It is the presence of the mother metaphor that does not find qualification since even without her presence the analogy remains. A comparison between Tanner’s translation and Abbott’s shows this:

**Tanner:** “The church considers it her role to celebrate the salvific action of her divine husband by recalling to mind in worship on fixed days throughout the course of the year.”

**Abbott:** “Holy Mother Church is conscious that she must celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse by devoutly recalling it on certain days throughout the course of the year.”

Yet as also seen in the comparisons above, the use of “Holy Mother Church” somehow gives a sense of officiality to the Church’s duty to center its celebrations on the paschal mystery.

Finally, SC85, seems to counter the pastoral call of SC14 or “refrain” of SC, by its relegation of Mother Church onto the clergy: “Hence all who perform this service are not only fulfilling a duty of the Church, but

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63 Klauser, A Short History of the Western Liturgy, 91.
also are sharing in the greatest honor accorded to Christ’s spouse, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God’s throne in the name of the Church their Mother.” Jungmann says of SC85:

the prayer, which is spoken of here and through which the Church fulfills one of its most essential commissions, what is meant is not all prayer which is continuously offered in the Church, but the prayer of that narrow circle, to whom this is committed as a special obligation. All who belong to this circle participate in a special way in the highest honour of the bride of Christ, because they pray in her name.64

Article 85 in SC concerns the idea of the clergy as representing Mother Church (“stant ante thronum Dei nomine matris ecclesiae”), in their task of praying the Divine Office. As part of Chapter IV (articles 83 to 88) of SC on the Divine Office, the argument belongs to what was described as the weakest chapter within the Constitution as it did not “overcome the clericalization of the Divine Office to make the prayer offices truly popular.”65 That is, just as the liturgy of the Mass had come to be known as a “one man sacrifice” pre-Vatican II,66 so the Divine Office is limited to an act only by the clergy. However, the Divine Office is the prayer of the entire Church. The statement echoes a return to the Tridentine perspective of the Mother Church as the clergy as opposed to Vatican II’s understanding of the Church as the entire community, the People of God (Lumen Gentium, chapter 2). Here then, the Ecclesial Mother appears to be more juridical where the clergy are simply acting a function that belongs to the Church.

From another perspective, the actions of the Mother Church in SC present particular images of the maternal Church and below those images are summarized:

65 Senn, Christian Liturgy, 630.
66 Howell, “From Trent to Vatican II,” 287.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions of the Ecclesial Mother of SC</th>
<th>Images of the Ecclesial Mother of SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* desires, showing an implicit request onto her children (<em>cupit</em>, SC14)</td>
<td>* Clergy as Mother Church (<em>stant ante thronum Dei nomine matris ecclesiae</em>, SC84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* reforms with great care (<em>curare cupit</em>, SC21)</td>
<td>* the Spouse of Christ (<em>sponsi sui divini opus salutiferum...sacra recordatione celebrare</em>, SC102)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* institutes (<em>instituit</em>, SC60) or holds (<em>habere</em>, SC4)</td>
<td>* Friend and critic of the arts (<em>ingenuarum atrium amica et arbitram</em>, SC122)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* praying the Office (<em>quia laudes Deo</em> SC85)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* celebrates (<em>celebrat</em>, SC102) the paschal mystery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* judges (<em>arbitrat</em>, SC122) artists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the ecclesial Mother of SC for the most part was either utilized solely for juridical purposes (SC 4, 60) or to state juridical statements in a pastoral way (SC14, 21, 22). Her pastoral presence was particularly necessary to provide reassurance in areas where reform of an aspect of the liturgy was the subject. At SC102 her presence seemed unnecessary but again the utilization of this female metaphor seemed to provide some authority to a statement as seen in SC102.

3) In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World - Gaudium et Spes (GS)

a) Mother Church Texts of GS

GS2
_Ideo concilium Vaticanum secundum…iam non ad solos ecclesiae filios omnesque Christi nomen invocantes, sed ad universos homines incinctanter sermonen convertit._

Tanner: “…the second Vatican council now immediately addresses itself not just to the church’s own daughters and sons and all who call on the name of Christ but to people everywhere…”

Flannery: “…the Second Vatican Council…resolutely addresses not only the sons of the Church and all who call upon the name of Christ, but the whole of humanity as well…”

Abbott, Vatican Web: “Hence this Second Vatican Council…now addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity.”
Qua de causa ecclesia filios suos, sed etiam omnes homines monet (warns), ut in hoc familiaris spiritu filiorum Dei, omnes dissensiones inter nationes…

Tanner: “For this reason the church enjoins its sons and daughters, and all people, that in this family spirit of God’s children they should transcend all disagreements between nations and races…”

Flannery: “With this in view the Church calls upon its members…in the family spirit of the children of God, all conflict between nations and races…”

Abbott, Vatican Web: “For this reason, the Church admonishes her own sons…to overcome all strife between nations and races in this family spirit of God’s own children”

A Spiritu sancto ducta, ecclesia mater indesinenter (ceaselessly) filios suos, ad purificationem et renovationem exhortatur (exhorts)

Tanner: “Guided by the holy Spirit, mother church continually exhorts her children.”

Flannery: “Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church ceaselessly ‘exhorts her children to purification and renewal’…”

Abbott, Vatican Web: “Led by the Holy Spirit, Mother Church unceasingly exhorts her sons ‘to purify and renew themselves’…”

Ipsa grato animo percipit se, in sua communitate non minus quam in singulis suis filiis, varium adiutorium ab hominibus cuiusvis gradus vel conditionis accipere.

Tanner: “The church gratefully acknowledges the variety of help which it receives as a whole, as well as in its individual children, from people of every class and condition.”

Flannery: “The Church is happy to feel that, with regard to the community it forms and each of its members, it is assisted in various ways by men of all classes and conditions.”

Abbott, Vatican Web: “She gratefully understands that in her community life no less than in her individual sons, she receives a variety of helps from men of every rank and condition.”

b) The Ecclesial Mother of GS

The Ecclesial Mother of GS appears only 4 times within the document: at GS 2, 42, 43, and 44. In three of these instances (GS 2, 42, 44) she appears implicitly in the imaging of her as having children; only once is she referred to explicitly as Mother Church (“ecclesia mater”, GS 43). As an implicit image, the maternal metaphor is utilized to project the concept of belonging (GS2, 42, 44) as being associated with the Church. In GS2, the
sense of belonging is projected in the association with Mother Church by
the naming of its members as its own sons and daughters ("ecclesiae filios")
who are seen in contrast by their very naming to those who call on the name
of Christ ("omnesque Christi nomen invocantes"). Similarly at GS 42 and
44, by calling its members its children (ecclesia filios suos [GS42], suis
filiis [GS44]), a sense of belonging becomes associated with membership in
the Mother Church.

As an explicit image at GS 43, Mother Church exhorts
("exhortatur") her children, the members of the Church to purification
("purificationem") and renewal ("renovationem"). Of interest is the text
preceding this description. It states that pastors ("pastores") of the Church
present her face to the world ("demonstrent ecclesiam sola sua praesentia")
as "an unspent fountain of those virtues which the modern world needs the
most" ("inexhaustum fontem esse illarum virtutum, quibus mundus
hodiernus maxime indigent"). Especially in light of the first sentence of this
paragraph in GS 43, what is communicated here is the hierarchy
representing Mother Church and therefore are those who exhort the
Church’s members and act as "mothers" to the Church’s children (its
members):

Bishops, to whom is assigned the task of ruling the Church of
God, should, together with their priests, so preach the
message of Christ that all the earthly activities of the faithful
will be bathed in the light of the gospel. (Episcopi vero,
quibus munus moderandi ecclesiam Dei commissum est, cum
presbyteris suis nuntium Christi ita praedicient, ut omnes
fidelium terrestres activitates evangelii luce perfundantur.)

This is also seen in John XXIII’s Humanae Salutis (25 Dec 1961), a papal
bull which announced the forthcoming of Vatican II Council:

In the face of this twofold spectacle—a world which displays
a serious state of spiritual poverty and the Church of Christ,
still so vibrant with vitality—we, at the time when, despite our unworthiness and by an act of divine Providence, we ascended to the supreme pontificate, felt at once the urgent duty to call our children together in order to give the Church the possibility to contribute more effectively to the solutions of the problems of the modern age.⁶⁷

GS2 similarly expresses such interest of a Mother Church, which wishes to address itself to the world and not just its members. But its greater significance lies in this act of wishing to address itself to the world rather than condemn it and address only its own members:

Hence this Second Vatican Council...now addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity. (Ideo concilium Vaticanum secundum...iam non ad solos ecclesiae filios omnesque Christi nomen invocantes, sed ad universos homines incunctanter sermonen convertit.)

For the world is afflicted with many conditions and the Church believes itself to be a remedy (GS2, 42, 43). This is also affirmed in Humanae Salutis:

And finally, to a world which is lost, confused, and anxious because of the constant threat of new frightful conflicts, the forthcoming Council is called to offer a possibility for all men of good will to turn their thoughts and proposals toward peace, a peace which can and must come above all from spiritual and supernatural realities, from human intelligence and conscience enlightened and guided by God, Creator and Redeemer of humanity.⁶⁸

This desire of the Church to open itself to the world could not have been predicted in the vota submitted by various bishops, individuals and organisations concerning the hopes for the forthcoming Vatican Council. Neither was it seen in the ten preparatory commissions and ‘secretariats’

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established for the purpose of preparing draft decrees to be put forward for consideration at the Council.\textsuperscript{69} It is all the more pertinent then that we have this image of a Church (as a mother) opening itself up to the world and addressing it. This maternal ecclesial image of Vatican II Council is explicitly seen in \textit{Humanae Salutis}:

\begin{quote}
...the Church has shown that she wishes to be \textit{Mater et magistra}, to use the expression of our distant and glorious predecessor, Innocent III, spoken at the Fourth Lateran Council. Although she has no directly earthly ends, she cannot in her journey be disinterested in the problems and worries of here below. She knows how beneficial to the good of the soul are those means which render more human the life of those individual men who are to be saved. She knows that by giving life to the temporal order by the light of Christ, she is also revealing men to themselves, leading them, that is, to discover in themselves their own nature, their own dignity, their own purpose. This is why the living presence of the Church today extends by right and by fact to international organizations; this is why she elaborates her social teaching on the family, the school, work, civil society, and all the related problems, so that her teaching office has been raised to the highest level as the most authoritative voice, the interpreter and champion of the moral order, the defender of the rights and duties of all human beings and of all political communities.\textsuperscript{70}
\end{quote}

John XXIII’s social encyclical \textit{Mater et Magistra} (15 May 1961), did not only present an image of the Church as “Mother and Teacher” to all peoples, it also set the methodological approach for the Council especially seen in \textit{Gaudium et Spes}.\textsuperscript{71} Tanner describes the approach of \textit{Mater et Magistra} as adopted in \textit{Gaudium et Spes}:

While \textit{Mater et Magistra} repeated many traditional formulations, it introduced new ideas and approaches. Its method was more inductive than deductive, taking as its

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{69} See Norman P. Tanner, \textit{The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica, Rediscovering Vatican II} (New York/ Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 3-4.
\item \textsuperscript{70} In AAS 54 (1962), p.10. English Translation from Komonchak, \textit{Pope John XXIII Convokes the Second Vatican Council}, p.3.
\item \textsuperscript{71} See Tanner who briefly discusses the influence of Mater et Magistra on Gaudium et spes. In Tanner, \textit{The Church and the World}, 6.
\end{itemize}
starting point concrete and current issues rather than a code of somewhat abstract principles.

Reflecting back on the differences in images between the juridical mother, one who began its statements with the teachings of the Church, and the pastoral mother, one who began with acknowledgement of the issues of the people of the world before expounding the Church’s teachings, it can be said that the methodology applied in Mater et Magistra, was not just adopted for Gaudium et Spes but also the 15 other documents of Vatican II Council.

The imaging of the Mother Church of GS through her actions and projected images can be seen below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions of the Ecclesial Mother of GS</th>
<th>Images of the Ecclesial Mother of GS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* invokes (invocantes, GS2)</td>
<td>* authority: critique of world (GS42) &amp; guide/command her members (GS43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* warns or admonishes (monet, GS42)</td>
<td>* mother to all peoples not just its members (GS42, 44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* exhorts (exhortatur, GS43)</td>
<td>* disciplinary (GS42, 43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* gratefully acknowledges (Ipsa grato animo percipit se, GS44)</td>
<td>* grateful – Church as a mother receiving various help (GS44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of consideration within GS are also the ways in which the non-ecclesial senses of “mother” is imaged and used. In GS 52 and 67, the image of motherhood is highly associated with the domestic sphere:

**GS 52**
The children, especially the younger among them, need the care of their mother at home [cura domestica matris]. This domestic role of hers must be safely preserved, though the legitimate social progress of women should not be underrated on that account.

**GS 67**
The entire process of productive work, therefore, must be adapted to the needs of the person and to the requirements of his life, above all his domestic life. Such is especially the case with respect to mothers of families…
At GS 48, motherhood is paired with fatherhood in terms of the religious education of children. At GS 61, “mother” is used in the sense of ‘source’ within the context of family and the education of children. This signals that the Church as magistra is not necessarily a solely maternal function (cf. GS 48), but it is given this priority since the “mother” is seen as the ‘source’ of the education of children (GS 61).

In summary, the Mother Church of GS is one who sees herself as opening up to the world, concerned with its issues, approaching it as mother to a child to be taught. Like the mother assumed in GS, as one who primarily belongs in the domestic sphere, the Mother Church is seen separate to the world, a contrast to the public sphere but opening itself up to and engaging with it. The pastors, especially the bishops, are representatives of this Mother Church in her function of teaching, exhorting or advising but also receiving help from the world. Whilst the Mother Church sees herself as moral and spiritual authority and critic of the world, it also acknowledges the help of the world with its own mission of unity and peace. Yves Congar comments that the Church recognizes the steps the world has taken towards unity and peace but considers itself adding the higher principle of love towards this unity.\(^{72}\)

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4) In the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation – Dei Verbum (DV)

a) Mother Church Texts of DV

DV11

*Libros enim integros tam veteris quam novi testament, cum omnibus eorum partibus, sancta mater ecclesia ex apostolica fide pro sacris et canonicis habet, propterea quod, Spiritu sancto inspirante conscripti (cf.Io 20,31; 2Tm3,16;2Pt1,19-21; 3,15-16), Deum habent auctorem, atque ut tales ipsi ecclesiae traditi sunt.*

Tanner: “By the faith handed down from the apostles, holy mother church accepts as sacred and canonical all the books of both the old Testament and the new, in their entirety and with all their parts, in the conviction that they were written under the inspiration of the holy Spirit (see Jn 20,31; 2 Tm3,16;2Pt1,19-21;3,15-16) and therefore have God as their originator: on this basis they were handed on to the church.”

Flannery: “For Holy Mother Church relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn.20:31; 2 Tim.3:16; 2 Pet.1:19-21;3:15-16), they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.”

Abbott: “Holy Mother Church, relying on the belief of the apostles, holds that the books of both the Old and New Testament in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21, 3:15-16), they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.”

Vatican Web: “For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (see John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-20, 3:15-16), holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.”

DV19

*Sancta mater ecclesia firmiter et constantissime tenuti ac tenet quattuor recensita evangelia, quorum historicitatem incunctanter affirmat, fideliter trader quae Jesus Dei Filius, vitam inter homines degens, ad aeternam eorum salutem reapse fecit et docuit, usque in diem qua assumptus est.*

Tanner: “Holy mother church has firmly and constantly held and continues to hold and unhesitatingly assert, that the four gospels just named are historical documents and faithfully communicate what Jesus, the Son of God, during his life among men and women, did and taught for their eternal salvation, until the day when he was taken up.”

Flannery: “Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy maintained and continues to maintain, that the four Gospels just named, whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms, faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation, until the day when he was taken up.”

Abbott, Vatican Web: “Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held, and continues to hold that the four Gospels just named,
whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand
on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for
their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven.”

**DV21**

_In sacris enim libris Pater qui in caelis est filii sui peramanter occurrerit et cum eis sermonem confert; tanta autem verbo Dei vis ac virtus inest, ut ecclesiae sustentaculum ac vigor, et ecclesiae filii fidei robur, animae ebus, vitae spiritualis fons purus et perennis exstet._

Tanner: “In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to
meet his children and talks with them. There is such force and power in
the word of God that it stands as the church’s support and strength, affording
her children sturdiness in faith, food for the soul and a pure and unfailing
fount of spiritual life.”

Flannery: In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to
meet his children, and talks with them. And such is the force and power in
the word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigor, and
the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a
pure and lasting fount of spiritual life.”

Abbott: “For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His
children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in
the word of God is so great that it remains the support and energy of the
Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and
perennial source of spiritual life.

Vatican Web: For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets
His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in
the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the
Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and
everlasting source of spiritual life.

**DV22**

..._ecclesia materna sollicitudine curat, ut aptae ac rectae exarentur in varias lingus versions, praesertim ex primigenis sacrorum librorum textibus._

Tanner: “the church, with motherly care, sees to it that appropriate and
correct translations are made into different languages, especially from the
original texts of the sacred books.”

Flannery: “the Church, with motherly concern, sees to it that suitable and
correct translations are made into various languages…”

Abbott: “the Church with maternal concern sees to it that suitable and
correct translations are made into different languages, especially from the
original texts of the sacred books”

Vatican Web: “the Church by her authority and with maternal concern sees
to it that suitable and correct translations are made into different languages

**DV23**

_Verbi incarnati sponsa, ecclesia nempe, a sancto Spiritu edocta, ad profundiorem in dies scripturarum sacrarum intelligentiam assequandam accedere satagit, ut filios suos divinis eloquiis indesinenter pastas...Sacra synodus ecclesiae filii, biblicarum rerum cultoribus, animum addit, ut opus feliciter suscipiendum, renovates in dies viribus, omni studio secundum sensum ecclesiae exsequi peregant._
Tanner: “The Church, the ‘spouse of the incarnate Word’, taught by the holy Spirit, strives to attain, day by day, to an ever deeper understanding of holy scripture, so that she may never fail to nourish her children with God’s utterances … The synod encourages those members of the Church who are engaged in biblical studies to renew their efforts and forge ahead, thinking with the church, in the work they have so happily undertaken.”

Flannery: “The spouse of the incarnate Word, which is the Church, is taught by the Holy Spirit. She strives to reach day by day a more profound understanding of the sacred Scriptures, in order to provide her children with food from the divine words … This sacred Synod encourages the sons of the Church who are biblical scholars to continue energetically with the work they have so well begun, with a constant renewal of vigor and with loyalty to the mind of the Church.”

Abbott: “The Bride of the incarnate Word, and the Pupil of the Holy Spirit, the Church is concerned to move ahead daily toward a deeper understanding of the sacred Scriptures so that she may unceasingly feed her sons with the divine words … This sacred Synod encourages the sons of the Church who are biblical scholars to continue energetically with the work they have so well begun, with a constant renewal of vigor and with loyalty to the mind of the Church.”

Vatican Web: “The bride of the incarnate Word, the Church taught by the Holy Spirit, is concerned to move ahead toward a deeper understanding of the Sacred Scriptures so that she may increasingly feed her sons with the divine words … The sacred Synod encourages the sons of the Church and Biblical scholars to continue energetically, following the mind of the Church, with the work they have so well begun, with a constant renewal of vigor.”

DV25

Sacris autem antististibus, ‘apud quos est apostolica doctrina’, fideles sibi commissos ad rectum divinorum librorum usum, praesertim novi testamenti et evangeliorum, opportune instituere competit per sacrorum textuum vesciones, quae necessariis et veer sufficientibus explicationibus instructae sint, ut tuto ac utiliter ecclesiae filii cum scripturis sacris conversentur earumque spiritu imbuantur.

Tanner: It is the duty of bishops, ‘who have the apostolic ministry of teaching’ duly to instruct the faithful entrusted to them in the right use of the biblical books, especially of the new Testament and above all of the gospels. Biblical translations should be published, equipped with such explanatory notes as necessary and really meet all needs, so that members of the church can become familiar with holy scripture to their profit and without danger of misunderstanding, and can become soaked in its spirit.”

Flannery: “It is for the bishops, ‘with whom the apostolic doctrine resides’ suitably to instruct the faithful entrusted to them in the correct use of the divine books, especially of the New Testament, and in particular of the Gospels. They do this by giving them translations of the sacred texts which are equipped with necessary and really adequate explanations. Thus the children of the Church can familiarize themselves safely and profitably with the sacred Scriptures, and become steeped in their spirit.”

Abbott: “It devolves on sacred bishops "who have the apostolic teaching"(7) to give the faithful entrusted to them suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels,
through translations of the sacred texts. Such versions are to be provided with the necessary and fully adequate explanations so that the sons of the Church can safely and profitably grow familiar with the sacred Scriptures and be penetrated with their spirit.”

Vatican Web: “It devolves on sacred bishops "who have the apostolic teaching"(7) to give the faithful entrusted to them suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels. This can be done through translations of the sacred texts, which are to be provided with the necessary and really adequate explanations so that the children of the Church may safely and profitably become conversant with the Sacred Scriptures and be penetrated with their spirit.”

b) The Ecclesial Mother of DV

The Ecclesial Mother of DV appears six times within the Constitution (DV 11, 19, 21, 22, 23, and 25). When it appears explicitly as “Mother Church” it presents itself as the juridical image (DV 11 and 19). In fact, in both instances, Mother Church is the ‘holy’ Mother Church (*sancta mater ecclesia*) and she follows the Tridentine line “Holy Mother Church holds…..” (“*sancta mater ecclesia …habet*” [DV11]) or “Holy Mother Church holds and continues to hold…” (“*Sancta mater ecclesia...constantissime tenuti ac tenet*” [DV19]). Alois Grillmeier says DV11 expresses the relationship between inspiration and canonicity as the first Vatican Council saw it. Therefore there was no innovation expressed in this area for Vatican II.

Meanwhile, whilst DV19 also utilises a juridical ecclesial mother, it is innovative, considering previous councils that covered the same issue of the historicity of the Gospels. Béda Rigaux explains Vatican II’s new approach:

> The Council had to move with caution between two positions. An excessive clinging to the literal meaning led to unreal results. On the other hand it was necessary to face the

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risks that arose from the questioning of the historical value of the Gospels as happens in various schools of contemporary exegesis. The Council considers that it was not enough to make a straightforward condemnation of this kind of dangerous skepticism. It is better to move beyond the present situation and treat the problem in its own right, while taking note of the results of contemporary research.\textsuperscript{74}

Such an approach is in line with the Council’s concern to be more pastoral without disregarding the teachings promoted by the Mother Church of Vatican I.

The other times Mother Church appears in DV are in articles 21, 22, 23, and 25. In all of these instances, she appears in an implicit sense. Particularly at articles 21, 23 and 25, her presence is only indicated by the reference to her as having children ("ecclesiae filiis").

At DV21, the Word of God equates with the “food for the soul” ("animae cibus") for members of the Church who are described as its “children” ("ecclesiae filiis")—so that they may become “sturdy in faith” ("fidei robur"). Even with the presence of this maternal metaphor, Ratzinger highlights that the dominant image for this article was Christ’s body:

\begin{quote}
...the text emphasizes...what had already been made clear in the Constitution on the Liturgy: namely that the liturgy of the word was not just a preliminary part of the Mass that could be more or less dispensed with, but of fundamentally equal value with the liturgy that is sacramental in the narrower sense; that the Church, as the community of the body of Christ, is definitely also the community of the Logos, living on the word, so that the ‘flesh’ and ‘word’ in which the ‘body of Christ’, the word made flesh, comes to us becomes our ‘bread’.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}


As a mother, the Church feeds her children with the bread of Christ not only in the Eucharist but also equally in the Word of God. The Church feeding her children is a traditional image that is perhaps consciously employed to bolster the challenging statement regarding the equivalent importance of the Word to the Eucharist.

As in DV 21, at DV 23, members of the Church are also imaged as children to be fed with God’s Word. Whilst article 21 described the Word of God as “animae cibus”, article 23 presented God’s Word as that to be ceaselessly fed to the Church’s children (“ecclesia nempe…ut filios suos divinis eloquii indesinenter pascat”). Like DV21, the maternal Church in DV23 is a marginal image against one more important, this time the Church as spouse (“Verbi incarnati sponsa”). The use of this image “indicates the inner orientation of the Church to the Word,” for the article’s concern was “interpretation as the next stage of making the Bible available in every age, and hence with the subject of exegesis.” ⁷⁶ Ratzinger points out that exegesis has a fundamental place in the Church and the Church has a constant duty to “immerse” itself in the Word of God “in order to be able to offer ever anew the water of life that it contains.” ⁷⁷ Once again, it is a given that members of the Church must be fed like children with the Word of God. It is the constant and correct interpretation of this Word, which was of greater concern.

In article 25, the maternal Church’s concern is the safe reception of God’s Word by the Church’s children. The main thrust of the article is that the reading of Scriptures is central to the Christian life as opposed to other devotional practice begun in the Middle Ages: the rosary, veneration of the

⁷⁶ ibid., 266.
⁷⁷ ibid.
saints and the Sacred Heart, and so forth. On the interpretation of scripture, the Council is not ignorant of possible erroneous readings and thus placed individual personal reading within the context of ecclesial reading—that which was practiced in the common liturgical gathering. This was to avoid the same problems that Luther had against the enthusiasts.  

Despite the cautiousness shown in DV25, Stanislas Lyonnet points out there was a “new spirit” underlying the conciliar approach to revelation here: in the translations of the scriptures into various languages, in the translations created in collaboration with other Christian denominations (DV22), and also in the successive redrafting of article 25. For the first draft (text 1) instructed that translation and adequate explanations be given solely by bishops. Interpretation of scripture was entrusted to the magisterium alone. Text 2 changed in its instructional tone to the laity calling all Christians to “go gladly to the sacred text itself…with the approval of the authority of the Church”. Text 3 then removed the clear distinction between laity and clergy seen in previous texts and simply instructed clergy with the more serious duty than the rest of the Christians to read and study the scriptures. By text 4, the call for all Christians to read the scriptures became most strong (“…the Sacred Synod forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful…”).

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78 ibid., 270-271.
80 ibid., 199, column 1.
81 ibid., 199, column 2.
82 ibid., 199-200, column 1.
83 ibid., 199, column 2.
ecclesial metaphor was taken as a given image for the Church’s teaching authority whilst other issues for the Council on revelation were addressed.

But at article 22, the particular emphasis on the maternal ecclesial image was curiously applied. Why, according to the text, must the translation of scriptures be approached with “motherly care” (“*materna sollicitudine curat*”)? Moreover, what characterized “motherly care” as opposed to “great care” or some other adverb added to describe the extent of “care” applied? Noticeably too, the Vatican website not only translates “*materna sollicitudine curat*” as “maternal care” but also adds “with authority”. It has been shown above that careful reading and interpretation of the Scriptures was a concern for the Council (DV25). Moreover, just as there was great debate over the translation of the language of the liturgy from Latin to the vernacular (SC36.2, 36.4, 54, 63, 76, and 78), the same concern echoes in DV 22 where the Latin Vulgate was seen as the definitive and only translation for the entire Church.

Lyonnet shows a movement in the drafting of DV22 (texts 1 to 4)—from insistence on the Latin Vulgate as the Church’s preferred translation, the “authentic witness to the faith...absolutely free from all errors as concerns matters of faith and morals” (text 1), to an openness to careful vernacular translations (texts 2, 3 and 4). The differences between these three drafts is as follows: in text 2, “careful translations” were simply recommended; in text 3, “careful translations” were not only recommended, but also they had to be “suitable and correct”; finally where text 3 recommended translations “into various languages”, text 4 added

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84 Cf. pg.294 of this thesis, which discusses the *Sacrosanctum Concilium’s* concern for proper Latin to English translations.

85 Lyonnet, ”A Word on Chapters IV and VI of Dei Verbum,” 191-192.

“preferably from the original texts” to avoid condemnation of current Latin liturgical practice which naturally utilized the Vulgate.\(^87\)

The question of utility of the maternal metaphor in DV22 finds some insight when texts 3 and 4 are compared\(^88\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text 3</th>
<th>Text 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>However, since the Word of God must be made available to men of all times, the Church attaches her authority, with motherly concern, to her desire that translations be carefully made into various languages, for use in the liturgy, in catechetics and spiritual reading, from the original texts of the holy books.</td>
<td>...the Church with motherly concern, sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made into various languages, preferably from the original texts of the holy books.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst the motherly concern is in relation to careful translation of the scriptures preferably from the Latin Vulgate, Greek Septuagint or Hebrew, the particularly maternal characteristic of the Church referred to here remains unclear. Is it for the purposes of protecting, nurturing, teaching, and/or disciplining the Church’s children? It may be that with the Council’s juxtaposition of the Church’s “authority” alongside its “motherly concern”, the text in utilizing the maternal metaphor intended to communicate that the “careful translation” was for the benefit of the Church’s children—as a mother would act to protect her children from error. But this is just one interpretation. What is clear is that the change from Latin to vernacular in scripture translations was of great concern to the Council—evidencing in a microcosmic way one of the larger issues under other issues at the Council as described by John O’Malley: “the circumstances under which change in

\(^87\) ibid.
\(^88\) Translations from Lyonnet at ibid., 192.
the church is appropriate and the arguments with which it can be justified.”

By the actions and the images presented of the ecclesial mother in DV a picture of her is summarised below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions of the Ecclesial Mother in DV</th>
<th>Images of the Ecclesial Mother in DV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* holds (habet, DV11,19 - juridical)</td>
<td>* juridical (held and continues to hold, DV11, 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* providing/concerned for her children’s faith nourishment (“...tanta autem verbo Dei vis ac virtus inest, ut ecclesiae sustentaculum ac vigor, et ecclesiae filiis fidei robur, animae cibus, vitae spiritualis fons purus et perennis exstet”, DV21 - pastoral)</td>
<td>* pastoral (DV21, 22, 23, 25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* unceasing in nourishing her children (indesinenter pascat, DV23 – pastoral)</td>
<td>* a spouse (DV23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* authorizes and carefully translates (DV22 - juridical)</td>
<td>* feeding, concerned mother (DV23, 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* protective (safe engagement with scriptures, DV23, 25 and careful translation DV22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this picture we can conclude that there are various purposes of the ecclesial mother in DV. Sometimes she is utilized to reassure that a balance of care and authority have been applied in the reforms undertaken. Other times she is the feeding, protective and concerned mother. In addition, she is a spouse to highlight the deep connection between the Church and Christ. At times she is a figure taken for granted (DV21, 23). But in DV 22 her uniqueness as a mother is conjured, possibly as an image of reassurance.

**Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter explored the presences of the maternal metaphor within the four Constitutions of Vatican II Council. A reading of the metaphor in LG was first undertaken. We asked how the mother metaphor was

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communicated and what it communicated to the general faithful within the document. The reading reveals that the mother-bride theme of LG6, which was the first appearance of the metaphor, downplays the mother figure and prioritizes the bridal image. As well, the maternal-bridal figure is not necessarily representative of one single ultra-female figure but simply highlighted particular aspects of the Church as mystery of salvation. The mother metaphor symbolizes the visible dimension of the Church as “Mystery of Salvation” whilst the bridal figure simply symbolizes the “Church as Mystery”.

In general, the use of the maternal metaphor in LG relegates motherhood to Mary. For the maternal metaphor is most commonly used in Chapter 8, what was originally the De Beata schema. Further, members of the Church were encouraged to place themselves under Mary’s maternal care. This results in an overall reading that overshadows any call to the community to be spiritual mothers—and yet this call is present in LG65. This call is found in the other Vatican II documents, for example in SC14, DV8, and GS21. These articles offered implicit calls for members of the Church to move from spiritual infancy to spiritual motherhood by engaging in the apostolic work of the Church.

This chapter also explored the early patristic references in that key passage of Lumen Gentium, article 64, where the Church is imaged as a mother as Mary as the community. Augustine’s sermon 191 revealed an address mainly to virgins in their concern of not ever becoming fecund for the empire. Augustine showed virgins it was because of their virginity that they were fecund in a higher sense than fecundity as viewed by the Roman Empire, that is, the Vestal Virginal sense. The sermon ended with an
address to the entire community to become virginal and fecund like the Mother Church. Their meaning was not lost to the ancient Roman peoples because of their common understanding of these concepts. A similar circumstance applies to Augustine’s reflection on John’s Gospel—the meaning of virginity and fecundity is also not lost to his ancient Roman audience, as Augustine responded to the Donatists. In contrast, the application of virginity simultaneously with motherhood upon the Church today is meaningless because the contemporary community have no similar singular concept of fecundity and virginity as in the ancient Roman sense.

With Ambrose, his reflection on Luke’s Gospel tapped into his audience’s exposure to Vestal Virginity, Arian, and Jewish belief. He placed them all in the same category as heretical and contrasts the maternal Church with them, using maternal images concentrating on stages found in early motherhood—conception, abortion, and birthing. As opposed to the ancient Christian-Roman-Carthaginians, today’s contemporary Church again has no singular understanding of the meaning of the Church’s virginity and fecundity. Moreover one wonders if virginity means the promotion of sexual purity, mental purity, moral purity or all of the above by the Church today?

In SC, the maternal ecclesial metaphor is often utilized to present juridical concepts and sometimes in a pastoral way. The large concern for SC, especially being the first document to explore reform for the Council, was the method and consequences of the reform that was to be undertaken at the Council. The utilization of the maternal metaphor provides not only authority to those reforms but also some reassurance that they would be undertaken with great care.
In GS, the maternal ecclesial figure more often appears as an implicit figure while her children are the explicit subjects of the articles. For example, her children are contrasted with the “omnesque Christi nomen invocantes” at GS2. At 2, 42, and 43, Mother Church is presented as the Mother Church of the papal documents *Humanae Salutis* and *Mater et Magistra*, opening herself up to the world rather than reacting to, closing herself off from, or condemning the world.

Finally in DV, like in SC, the maternal metaphor is often utilized either to show authority in its claims (DV11, 19), to provide reassurance (DV22) or as a marginal figure but whose presence was taken for granted. At articles 21, 23, and 25 the Church’s members are named its children and the great concern of these implicitly maternal texts is the proper provision of the “Word” of God into their souls.

Except for *Lumen Gentium* which often pointed to Mary as mother, the mother used in the Constitutions evidences one that does not seem to be based on a real, historical, or even a particular type of mother from a particular culture. Rather the maternal metaphor pointed to concepts of either authority, reassurance, careful application of reform, or exhortation to act as a member of the Church. When utilised alongside a juridical statement, it was clearly for the purpose of presenting such a statement in a pastoral sense. This purpose very much aligned with the larger aim of the Council to generally present no new teaching but to simply present the Magisterium in a pastoral sense, in order to reach out to the world and not just Church members, in its current situation with its many ills and new contexts.
CHAPTER VIII: ‘MOTHER CHURCH’ IN THE OTHER VATICAN II DOCUMENTS

This chapter continues with the exploration of the presences of the maternal metaphor, now turning to the remaining fourteen Vatican II documents. The documents examined in order of study (from having the most occurring maternal texts to none) are: Inter Mirifica, Gravissimum Educationis, Ad Gentes Divinus, Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate, Dignitatis Humanae, Perfectae Caritatis, Presbyterorum Ordinis, Optatam Totius, Christus Dominus, Apostolicam Actuositatem, and Orientalium Ecclesiarum. With the findings from the four Constitutions seen in the previous chapter in mind, as well as the use of commentaries and the principles set out in Chapter VI, the maternal texts of these documents are explored and analysed. The method of presentation of the findings are as per previous chapter with the provision firstly of the Mother Church texts in Latin from Tanner and then in three different English translations from Abbott, Flannery, and the Vatican Website. The second section then presents the analysis.

1) Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication – Inter Mirifica (IM)

a) Mother Church Texts of IM

IM13

\textit{Omnes ecclesiae filii communi animo consilioque contentur ut instrumenta communicationis socialis, nulla interposita mora et maxima adhibita industria...}

Tanner: “All members of the church should be of one mind and heart in their efforts to utilize the media, effectively and without delay, in the manifold works of the apostolate, as times and circumstances demand.”

Flannery: “All the members of the Church should make a concerted effort to ensure the means of communication are put at the service of the multiple forms of the apostolate without delay and as energetically as possible,
where and when they are needed.”

Abbott: “With common heart and mind, let all the sons of the Church strive immediately and most energetically to use the instruments of social communication effectively in the many fields of the apostolate, as the circumstances and the times require.

Vatican Web: “All the children of the Church should join, without delay and with the greatest effort in a common work to make effective use of the media of social communication in various apostolic endeavors, as circumstances and conditions demand.”

**IM17**

*Cum prorsus dedeceat ecclesiae filios desides pati verbum salutis alligari ac praepediri technicis moris vel expansis…*

Tanner: “It would be a disgrace if apathy on the part of members of the church allowed the work of salvation to be fettered or impeded by the technical difficulties which the mass media present and their admittedly enormous costs.”

Flannery: “It would be shameful if by their inactivity Catholics allowed the word of God to be silenced or obstructed by the technical difficulties which these media present and by their admittedly enormous cost.”

Abbott: “It would be dishonorable indeed if sons of the Church sluggishly allowed the word of salvation to be silenced or impeded by the technical difficulties or the admittedly enormous expenses which are characteristic of these instruments.”

Vatican Web: “It is quite unbecoming for the Church's children idly to permit the message of salvation to be thwarted or impeded by the technical delays or expenses, however vast, which are encountered by the very nature of these media.”

**IM24**

*Ceterum confidit haec sancta synodus hanc suam institutorum et normarum traditionem libenter acceptam et sancte custodiam fore ab omnibus ecclesiae filiis, qui idcirco, etiam his auxiliis utentes, nedum damna patiantur…*

Tanner: “For the rest, this synod has every confidence that its presentation of undertakings and norms will be willingly received and faithfully observed by all members of the church. In this way, they will not suffer harm in their use of the media, but rather be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.”

Flannery: “For the rest, the Council is confident that all the sons of the Church will welcome the principles and regulations contained in this decree and will observe them faithfully. Thus, they will not suffer damage as they use the media. Rather will the media, like salt and light, add savor to the earth and light to the world.”

Abbott: “For the rest, this sacred Synod trusts that all the sons of the Church will cordially welcome and religiously observe this program of precepts and guidelines. By so doing they will not only avoid harm in the use of these advantages, but they will season the earth as its salt, and illumine the world as its light.”

Vatican Web: “As for the rest, this sacred Synod is confident that its issuance of these instructions and norms will be gladly accepted and religiously kept by all the Church’s children. By using these helps they will
experience no harm and, like salt and light, they will give savor to the earth and brighten the world

b) The Ecclesial Mother of IM

The Mother Church of IM appears three times within the Decree, at articles 13, 17, and 24. In all three instances, she appears implicitly and it is her children who are the more important subjects of the texts. It seems too that at all three instances the naming of the Church’s members as its children gives the impression that such naming states their belongingness to the Church and as such gives the Council right to provide them with instruction as alluded to below:

IM13
...let all the sons of the Church strive… (Omnes ecclesiae filii...conentur)

IM17
It would be dishonorable indeed if sons of the Church sluggishly allowed… (Cum prorsus dedeceat ecclesiae filios desides pati...)

IM24
...this sacred Synod trusts that all the sons of the Church will cordially welcome and religiously observe this program of precepts and guidelines. (…confidit haec sancta synodus hanc suam institutorum et normarum traditionem libenter acceptam et sancte custoditam fore ab omnibus ecclesiae filiis...).

Karlheinz Schmidthüs perceives something similar in saying that the whole “tenor and attitude” of the Decree was of a “certain clericalism” in which “the duty of laymen to instill a Christian and human spirit into the media of communication is added as a kind of afterthought to the assertion of the Church’s right.” He believes article 13 is the only text within the Decree that “suggests that the layman and his secular duties may have some significance of their own”. But even in this recognition, the ‘layman’ is not

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acting on his own initiative but from the direction of the Council who are made up of the clergy. Schmidthüs’ observation of article 17 further affirms his perception of the clerical bias of the Decree: saying that the style and tone of the article seemed to have the clergy in mind as its audience rather than “all men of good will” and “all who are involved, either actively or passively with the media”.2

Tanner also says something similar to Schmidthüs’ observations. Tanner says the Decree’s approach was ‘top-down’ and members of the Church simply had to follow the instruction of the Church through its clergy:

Emphasis was upon the church’s teaching. This extended to details: ‘The right of the church to teach and to regulate regarding the media pertains not only to doctrinal principles but also to particular regulations’ (no.10). The approach was from above, starting with the teaching given to them, though their technical competence was appreciated.3

Thus we find here the Mother Church as a marginal figure and it is rather the clergy who step in her place of authority and instruct her children alongside members of media. Even the media themselves saw the document’s hierarchical top-down approach. A group of American journalists who were also reporters at the Council signed a petition (Dated Nov 16, 1963) concerning the schema for Inter Mirifica, saying it was a step backward and gave a “‘hopelessly abstract’ picture of relations between the Church and modern culture: ‘It deals with a press that exists only in textbooks and is unrecognizable to us’ and endows ‘the Catholic press with a teaching authority and near infallibility that is neither proper to journalism

2 Ibid.
3 Lyonnet, "A Word on Chapters IV and VI of Dei Verbum,” 192.
nor helpful to the formation of public opinion in the church.”

This petition was followed by another dated November 17, 1963, signed by 97 Council Fathers also arguing that:

the document emphasized too exclusively the rights and authority of the church and disregarded the fact that all communication springs from the search for truth and the desire to express it. Catholic laity in the media, moreover, were not given their proper standing and were placed too much under clerical control.

After some minor amendments, a main vote on the schema (1598 in favor and 503 against) showing a significant number unhappy with it, and a final vote (1960 in favor, 164 against and 27 abstentions), the schema was approved as one of only two documents at the end of the second period of the council.

2) Declaration on Christian Education – Gravissimum Educationis (GE)

a) Mother Church Texts of GE

GE Intro

Cum vero sancta mater ecclesia ad mandatum implendum a divino suo conditore acceptum…integram hominis vitam etiam terrenam…curare debeat.

Tanner: “But since holy mother church, in order to fulfill the command received from its divine founder…must care for the whole life of people, including their earthly life”

Flannery: “For her part Holy Mother Church, in order to fulfill the mandate she received from her divine founder…is under an obligation to promote the welfare of the whole life of man, including his life in this world…”

Abbott: “In fulfilling the mandate she has received from her divine Founder…Holy Mother the Church must be concerned with the whole of man's life, even the earthly part of it…”

Vatican Web: “To fulfill the mandate she has received from her divine founder … Holy Mother the Church must be concerned with the whole of man's life, even the secular part of it.”

GE1

Filios autem ecclesiae exhortatur ut generoso animo operam praestent in universo educationis campo...

4 O'Malley, What Happened at Vatican II, loc 223 of 8506.
5 Tanner, The Church and the World, 95.
6 ibid., 102.
Tanner: “it (the synod) exhorts the church’s sons and daughters to exert themselves generously in the whole field of education”

Flannery: “It therefore exhorts the sons of the Church to assist in a spirit of generosity in the whole fields of education.”

Abbott: “It urges sons of the Church to devote themselves generously to the whole enterprise of education”

Vatican Web: “It further exhorts the sons of the Church to give their attention with generosity to the entire field of education”

GE3

*His igitur filiis suis tanquam mater eam praestare ecclesia tenetur educationem, qua tota eorum vita spiritu Christi imbuatur*

Tanner: “Therefore as a mother, the church is bound to offer her children that sort of education by which their whole lives may be imbued with the spirit of Christ.”

Flannery: “The Church as a mother is under an obligation, therefore, to provide for its children an education by virtue of which their whole lives may be inspired by the spirit of Christ.”

Abbott: “As a mother, the Church is bound to give these children of hers the kind of education through which their entire lives can be penetrated with the spirit of Christ.”

Vatican Web: “The Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education”

GE7

*Gravissimum praeterea officium persentiens morale et religiosam educationem omnium suorum filiorum sedulo curandi, ecclesia peculiari suo affectu et adiutorio praesens sit oportet iis plurimis qui in scholis non catholicis instituuntur.*

Tanner: “Furthermore, keenly aware of its very serious duty of sedulously attending to the moral and religious education of all its children, the church ought to be present with its own special affection and help to those very many children who are being educated in non-catholic schools.”

Flannery: “Acknowledging its grave obligation to see to the moral and religious education of all its children, the Church should give special attention and help to the great number of them who are being taught in non-Catholic schools.”

Abbott: “The Church is keenly aware of her very grave obligation to give zealous attention to the moral and religious education of all her children. To those large numbers of them who are being trained in schools which are not Catholic, she needs to be present with her special affection and helpfulness. Vatican Web: “Feeling very keenly the weighty responsibility of diligently caring for the moral and religious education of all her children, the Church must be present with her own special affection and help for the great number who are being trained in schools that are not Catholic.

b) The Ecclesial Mother of GE

The Ecclesial Mother of GE appears only four times: at the introductory paragraph, and articles 1, 3, and 7. It appears twice explicitly
as a mother (introductory paragraph and article 3) and twice implicitly (articles 1 and 7) in the indication she has children (*filios*).

In the introductory paragraph, she appears explicitly as *sancta mater ecclesia* who is concerned not just with the spiritual aspect of a person but his or her whole entire life— that is, including his/her secular life. Johannes Polschneider explains that “[t]his concern arises from the incarnational understanding of the Church’s redemptive mission”.\(^7\) Originally it had been understood that the Church was concerned only with “the cure of souls”. But to narrow the interpretation of this to a concern only for the spiritual aspect of a person ignored the incarnational process. The Church then was concerned with the whole sphere of the human person’s life, including secular aspects, “in light of the coming kingdom of God”. Schneider points out that this was a pastoral viewpoint that would give the declaration a positive significance for the future.\(^8\)

It is interesting to find here that Tanner includes “Holy Mother” alongside “Church” in his translation of this article: for often in the other 15 documents he reduced *sancta mater ecclesia* to just the “Church”. The purpose of the Ecclesial Mother here is again questionable—is her image really necessary to give the statement full force? This is unless what the council wished to convey was that the Church’s care of the entire lives of peoples was meant to parallel a Mother’s care to the entire life/ves of her child/ren. The extent of the care and how that care is to be executed is not specified within the article but seen in light of the whole document especially articles 3 and 7, this maternal care likely entailed educating

\(^7\) ibid.
\(^8\) Ibid.
members of the Church with “the way of salvation through Christ” as will be shown below.

The concept of a mother providing a particular type of care appears again in article 7. Tanner, Abbott and the Vatican Webb translations highlight that in the area of attending to the moral and religious education of students (“moralem et religiosam educationem”) especially in non-Catholic schools (qui in scholis non catholicis), the Church has a serious duty (gravissimum) and must be present with her special affection and help (ecclesia peculiari suo affectu et adiutorio praesens sit oportet). This special affection and help is actually specified:

1. the testimonium vitae of the Catholic teacher in these non-Catholic schools,
2. “the apostolic activity of their school mates”
3. “but most of all through the services of the priests and laymen who transmit to them the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their age and circumstances, and who afford them spiritual assistance through programs which are appropriate under the prevailing conditions of time and setting.”

There is nothing particularly maternal concerning these three concepts—unless the article is understood in light of LG 65 which speaks of all members of the Church participating in the Church’s motherhood by engaging in her apostolic work.

At article 3, again the Church’s particular maternal role is highlighted: as a mother the Church is bound or obligated (“tenetur”) to provide her children with an education (“educationem”) that by “which their entire lives can be penetrated with the spirit of Christ” (“qua tota eorum vita

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9 Latin: “...tum per testimonium vitae eorum qui eos docent et moderantur, tum per condiscipulorum apostolicam actionem, tum maxime per ministerium sacerdotum et laicorum qui eis doctrinam salutis tradunt, rationeaeutati et adiunctis accomodata et spiritual auxilium praebent opportunis incoeptis pro rerum temporumque condicione.”

10 Cf. previous chapter on the mother texts in Lumen Gentium).
spiritu Christi imbuatur”). The particular maternal ecclesial role here is to teach its members “announcing the way of salvation to all men” and “communicating the life of Christ to those who believe.” It is interesting though that the article began with a recognition that because parents “conferred life on their children”, both had the obligation of educating “their offspring”. The duty then of educating the Church’s children is not solely the duty of the ecclesial mother but also presumably involves the divine “Father”. As well this obligation to educate her children whilst unmentioned is also because the Church is a spouse of Christ. The imaging of the mother here is as parent—the first educator of the child before society.

Finally, in article 1, Mother Church is an implicit and marginal figure. The more important subjects are the Church’s children (“filios…ecclesiae”), exhorted (“exhortatur”) by the synod “to devote themselves generously to the whole enterprise of education” (“generoso animo operam praestent in universo educationis campo”). The main significance of article 1 is the recognition of “the universal and unrestricted right of men [and women] to education…because it sees this right as founded upon the personal dignity of man…”.11 In fact, Polschneider says the entire Declaration, GE “is an outstanding testimony to human dignity in general.”12 The Ecclesial mother has no role in here other than having given birth to children who themselves are now instructed to enter the whole enterprise of education.

GE’s Ecclesial Mother is primarily imaged as the primary teacher to her children in educating them in the way of salvation through Christ, so that they may be equipped for life. The Ecclesial Mother is represented here

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11 Tanner, The Church and the World, 103.
12 Ibid.
not only in the clergy but also in the people (fellow students, lay ministers, teachers in non-Catholic schools (GE 7)) who witness Christian lives and engage in the apostolic work of the Church. Hastings comments that this Decree should be seen as linked with Optatam Totius, part 2 chapter 2 of Gaudium et Spes (GS 53-63, On the proper development of culture), and chapter 6 of Apostolicam Actuositatem “to give us the Council’s mind on the theory and practice of education.” Article 19 of Optatam Totius and chapter 6 of Apostolicam Actuositatem both discuss the matter of education of the laity for the apostolic work of the Church. This links again with the conciliar mindset that the full, conscious and active participation of the Church’s members are one of its priorities for the Council. The (Mother) Church as teacher encouraging her children, both clergy and the lay, to growth in faith are the images communicated in these texts (GE7, OT, GS part 2, chapter 2, OT19, and SC14) as well as OT19, PO6, LG65, and AA chapter 6.

3) Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity – Ad Gentes Divinus (AG)

a) Mother Church Texts of AG

AG11

Ecclesia his coetibus humanis praesens sit oportet per suos filios qui inter eos conversantur vel ad eos mittuntur.

Tanner: “The church ought to be present to these groups of people through its members who live among them or are sent to them.”

Flannery: “The Church must be present to these groups through those of its members who live among them or have been sent to them.”

Abbott: “The Church must be present in these groups of men through those of her children who dwell among them or are sent to them.”


14 Cf. OT19, PO6, SC14, LG65, AA chapter 6, and O’ Malley who says “What, then, were the most important issues at the council? The desire to recognize the dignity of lay men and women and to empower them to fulfill their vocation in the church was certainly among them.” In John W. O’Malley, What Happened at Vatican II (Cambridge/ London: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2008), 5.
Vatican Web: “The Church must be present in these groups through her children, who dwell among them or who are sent to them.

AG12
Sicut ergo Christus circuibat omnes civitates et castella curans omnem languorem et infirmitatem… ita et ecclesia per filios suos iungitur cum hominibus cuius cumque condicionis…
Tanner: “Accordingly, just as Christ went about all the towns and villages curing every disease and infirmity… so the church through its children is linked with people of every condition”
Flannery: “As Christ went about all the towns and villages healing every sickness and infirmity… so the Church, through its children, joins itself with men of every condition”
Abbott: “Christ went about all the towns and villages, curing every kind of disease and infirmity… So also the Church, through her children, is one with men of every condition”
Vatican Web: “Just as Christ, then, went about all the towns and villages, curing every kind of disease and infirmity… so also the Church, through her children, is one with men of every condition, but especially with the poor and the afflicted.”

AG36
Quare omnes ecclesiae filii vivam suae erga mundum responsibilitatis conscientiam habeant, spiritum vere catholicum in seipsis foveant…
Tanner: “Therefore, let all sons and daughters of the church have a lively awareness of their responsibility for the world; let them foster in themselves a genuinely catholic spirit…”
Flannery: “So all the children of the church should have a lively consciousness of their own responsibility for the world; they should foster within themselves a truly Catholic spirit…”
Abbott: “Therefore, all sons of the Church should have a lively awareness of their responsibility to the world. They should foster in themselves a truly catholic spirit.”
Vatican Web: “Therefore, all sons of the Church should have a lively awareness of their responsibility to the world; they should foster in themselves a truly catholic spirit;…”

b) The Ecclesial Mother of AG

The Ecclesial Mother of Ad Gentes appears three times throughout the Decree only in an implicit sense but with some significance. At articles 11, 12, and 36, the consistent image presented is that of the Mother Church being present to all peoples of the world (“humanis praesens”, AG11), making connections with them (“cum hominibus cuius cumque condicionis”, AG12), and even being responsible for them (“erga mundum
responsibilitatis”, AG36)—but this is achieved through her children (“ecclesiae filii”).

The link between this Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity and the Constitution on the Church in the World, Lumen Gentium, is found in this very concept of the Church being present to the world, and as seen in the first lines found in each document:

**Ad Gentes**
The Church has been divinely sent to all nations…
(Ad gentes divinitus missa ut sit…)

**Lumen Gentium**
Christ is light of all nations.
(Lumen Gentium cum sit Christus.)

It seems in this Decree that the purpose of the maternal ecclesial metaphor is to communicate that in calling its members ‘children’, they belong to the Church and by this belonging, members are given the imperative duty or missionary activity of the Church to be present to all peoples of the world. Such duty is seen in particular phrases from these maternal texts: “the Church must be present in these groups of men through those of her children…” (“Ecclesia his coetibus humanis praesens sit oportet per suos filios…”, AG11) and “all sons of the Church have a…responsibility to the world” (“omnes ecclesiae filii…mundum responsibilitatis…habeant”, AG36). This duty is especially seen in the use of the auxiliary verb “must” (“oportet”) in article 11.

Following on from “The Church has been divinely sent to all nations…” as found in the first words of Ad Gentes, the text then continues onto say “…to be unto them ‘a universal sacrament of salvation…” (“universale salutis sacramentum”). Similarly, in Lumen Gentium 48, the

Council spoke of the Church as “the universal sacrament of salvation” (“universale salutis sacramentum”). It is in this sense that Mother Church can be perceived as existing not just for her own children, the members of the Church, but also for all peoples in the world as “a sign and instrument of the fullness of salvation”. But it is through her children that this presence to the world is dependent upon. Then how appropriate it must be for the children of the Church to grow in maturity in their faith as full, conscious, active participants (SC14) rather than passive recipients and infant-like in their faith, so that they may reflect Mother Church as sign and instrument of the fullness of salvation for the world and its peoples. AG does not quite make this connection between action and representation.

4) Decree on Ecumenism – Unitatis Redintegratio (UR)

a) Mother Church Texts of UR

UR4
Attamen divisiones christianorum impedimento ecclesiae sunt, quominus ipsa ad effectum deducat plenitudinem catholicitatis sibi propriam in iis filiis, qui sibi quidem baptisme appositi, sed a sua plena communione seisunti sunt.

Tanner: “Nevertheless, the divisions among Christians prevent the church from realizing in practice the fullness of catholicity proper to her, in those of her sons and daughters who, though attached to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her.”

Flannery: “Nevertheless, the divisions among Christians prevent the Church from realizing the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her sons who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her.”

Abbott: “Nevertheless, the divisions among Christians prevent the Church from effecting the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her sons who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her.”

Vatican Web: “Nevertheless, the divisions among Christians prevent the Church from attaining the fullness of catholicity proper to her, in those of her sons who, though attached to her by Baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her. Furthermore, the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all her bearings.”

Haec sacrosancta synods instanter exoptat ut filiorum ecclesiae catholicae incepta cum inceptis fratrum seiunctorum coniuncta progiediantur, quin Providentiae viis ullum ponatur obstaculum et quin futuris Spiritus sancti impulsionibus praedijectur.

Tanner: “It is the urgent wish of this holy synod that the measures undertaken by the sons and daughters of the catholic church should in practice develop in conjunction with those of our separated sisters and brothers, so as to place no obstacle to the ways of divine providence and to avoid prejudging the future inspirations of the holy Spirit.”

Flannery: “This sacred Council firmly hopes that the initiatives of the sons of the Catholic Church, joined with those of the separated brethren, will go forward, without obstructing the ways of divine Providence, and without prejudging the future inspirations of the Holy Spirit.”

Abbott: “This most sacred Synod urgently desires that the initiatives of the sons of the Catholic Church, joined with those of the separated brethren, go forward without obstructing the ways of divine Providence and without prejudging the future inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

Vatican Web: “It is the urgent wish of this Holy Council that the measures undertaken by the sons of the Catholic Church should develop in conjunction with those of our separated brethren so that no obstacle be put in the ways of divine Providence and no preconceived judgments impair the future inspirations of the Holy Spirit.”

b) The Ecclesial Mother of UR

The Ecclesial Mother appears only twice in this Decree, at articles 4 and 24, in both as an implicit image. It can also be said that in their positioning, the Ecclesial Mother implicitly appears at bookends and quite significant parts of the Decree. At the beginning she is positioned where the Catholic principles for ecumenism are set. At the end she, through her children, points to a hoped for ecumenical future.

The Mother Church’s appearance in article 4 forms part of the setting up of the Catholic Church’s position in the work of ecumenism and its relationship with other Christian Churches. It states that all the children of the Church are joined to her by baptism (“qui sibi quidem baptismate appositi”), but are separated from full communion with her (“sed a sua plena communione seiuncti sunt”) because of the divisions present among these Christian children (“attamen divisiones christianorum impedimento
ecclesiae sunt’). At the end of the document, at article 24, after having set out the principles and practices of ecumenism and discussing the Churches separated from the Roman Catholic Church, the Decree ends on a positive note, stating its hope for the ecumenical future: “that the measures undertaken by the sons and daughters of the catholic church should in practice develop in conjunction with those of our separated sisters and brothers” (“ut filiorum ecclesiae catholicae incepta cum inceptis fratrum sequendorum coniuncta proguntur”).

Johannes Feiner comments on the Decree saying that its “lofty ultimate aim is perfecta ecclesiastica communio. That is, full unity in the Church must be expressed by ‘the common celebration of the Eucharist on the part of all Christians, because the Church is essentially a eucharistic table fellowship.’” But the idea expressed is not about the separated Churches ‘returning’ to the Catholic Church and that is why such language has been avoided. Rather it involves a reform of all Churches, in which movement to unity is not just made on the part of separated Churches but also the Roman Catholic Church itself. The appearance of that unity “in concrete form” is at present impossible to tell even if the Catholic faith is certain its form “should always be characterized by the ministry of the successors of the apostles and the Petrine office”.

The certainty of this form of unity echoes the contentious phrase, “subsists in”, found in Lumen Gentium 8:

This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed

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18 Ibid. 86-87.
by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him…

Cassidy states the draft version claimed the Catholic Church “is” the one and only true Church. Yet this did not “close the discussion about the relationship between other churches and the one, true church.” Francis Sullivan argues from a more circumscribed perspective—that the theological commission changed the wording of the draft from “is”, as found in Pius XII’s Mystici Corpori, to “subsists in” in recognition of the tradition of the early Patristic writers who saw that the one and only true Church included union of the Western Church with the separated Eastern communities.

But the rest of the statement above from Lumen Gentium 8 also states:

…although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity.

Viewed in conjunction with NA2, GS22, and LG 16, the Decree opens up a new possibility for unity that could not be found in pre-conciliar

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19 Latin: Haec ecclesia, in hoc mundo ut societas constituta et ordinata, subsistit in ecclesia catholica, a successore Petri et episcopis in eius communione gubernata…


23 Latin: …licet extra eius compaginem elementa plura sanctificationis et veritatis inveniantur, quae ut dona ecclesiae Christi propria, ad unitatem catholicam impellunt.
teaching as Cassidy says “the council presents the ecumenical movement as being ‘fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit’” and this is a “clear and radical departure” from pre-conciliar teaching. As well this mindset presents quite a contrast from the Tertullianic-Cyprianic stance which utilized the maternal ecclesial metaphor to communicate that separated ‘Churches’ needed to ‘return’ to the ‘Mother’ or else the salvation of their souls were lost (“extra ecclesiam nulla salus”).

At article 4 we find then the Mother Church a somewhat unifying figure, for through baptism all Christians are ‘joined’ to her even in the separations or divisions amongst her ‘children’. At the same time the ‘children’ are not in ‘full communion’ with her, and thus the fullness of her Catholicity cannot be brought to fruition. This means what is prevented is “all the institutional means of salvation…being effective among separated Christians” but also makes it “scarcely possible for the Catholic Church to express in its actual life all aspect of the catholicity of the Church.” Even with this recognition of separation and challenges to the full catholicity of the Church, the document ends with the characteristic outlook of the ecumenical movement at the time of the Council: “looking forward in hope to the future”.

The Council’s hopes for the future exist not without awareness of the dangers that could prevent ecumenism’s progress, and this is echoed too at the end of the document in article 24. Feiner suggests examples of such danger are that ecumenism may be seen as simply a “fashion”, giving rise to “unjustified hopes”, that its real difficult work may be obscured by

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24 Cassidy, Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, 14.
26 Ibid., 156.
“indolence” or “unenlightened zeal”, and that engagement in it may be seen as a form of disloyalty to or a compromise of the Catholic faith. To counter such dangers, the Church must be seen as committed to the truth “inherited from the apostles and the Fathers and taught in the Catholic Church”, but also to the pilgrim nature of the Catholic Church. The urging of the Synod that the initiatives of the Church’s children not be hindered (“filiorum ecclesiae catholicae incepta…obstaculum”) along with “the ways of divine Providence” (quin Providentiae viis ullum ponatur) and that “the future inspiration of the Holy Spirit” (quin futuris Spiritus sancti impulsionibus”) not be “prejudged” (“praeiudicetur”) acknowledges that the work of ecumenism is not solely a “human undertaking”. Here the Mother Church plays a marginal role and it is the work of her children, along with the work of the Holy Spirit, which is of main concern in this final word within the Decree.

5) Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christians –

Nostra Aetate (NA)

a) Mother Church Text of NA

NA2

Filios suos igitur hortatur, ut cum prudentia et caritate per colloquia et collaborationem cum assecisis aliarum religionum, fidem et vitam christianam testantes, illa bona spiritualia et moralia necnon illos valores socioculturales, quae apud eos inveniuntur, agnoscant, servent et promoveant.

Tanner: “It therefore calls upon all its sons and daughters with prudence and charity, through dialogues and cooperation with the followers of other religions, bearing witness to the christian faith and way of life, to recognize, preserve and promote those spiritual and moral good things as well as the socio-cultural values which are to be found among them.”

Flannery: “The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life,

27 Ibid., 156-157.
acknowledge and preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture.”

Abbott: “The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons: prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture.”

Vatican Web: “The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.”

b) The Ecclesial Mother of NA

The Ecclesial Mother of Nostra Aetate appears only once in the entire document and as an implicit and marginal figure. She appears in article 2 where her children are called upon to practice prudence and charity (“prudentia et caritate”) in “dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions” (“colloquia et collaborationem cum asseclis aliarum religionum”). John Oesterreicher comments that this Declaration “holds a special place among the documents of Vatican II”. For the first time in history, the Council acknowledges “the search for the absolute by other men and by whole races and peoples, and honours the truth and holiness in other religions as the work of the one living God.”

Read in conjunction with Gaudium et Spes 22:

All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way…we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.

and Lumen Gentium 16:


29 Latin: “Quod non tantum pro christifidelibus valet, sed et pro omnibus hominibus bonae voluntatis in quorum corde gratia invisibili modo operatur…tener debemus Spiritum sanctum cunctis possibilitatem offerre ut, modo Deo cognito, huic paschali mysterio consocientur.”
Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience…Whatever goodness or truth is found among them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the gospel. She regards such qualities as given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life.\footnote{Latin: Qui enim evangelium Christi eiusque ecclesiam sine culpa ignorantes, Deum tamen sincero corde quaerunt, eiusque voluntatem per conscientiae dictamen agnitarum, operibus adimplere, sub gratiae influx, conantur, aeternam salutem consequat possunt…Quidquid enim boni et very apud illos inventur, ab ecclesia tamquam praeparatio evangelica aestimatur et ab illo datum qui illuminat omnem hominem, ut tandem vitam habeat.}

Nostra Aetate teaches the possibility of salvation beyond the Catholic Church, but as Stephen Downs notes “[t]hough it does not explain how this happens.”\footnote{Francis Sullivan, "Quaestio Disputata: Further Thoughts on the Meaning of Subsistit In," Theological Studies 71, (2010): 135.} Downs says NA “left a number of issues unanswered”: like many of the documents of Vatican II, issues were brought to surface but left the answering of details to theologians after the Council.

One such issue is reconciling the oft-repeated phrase “\textit{extra ecclesiam nulla salus}” with this concept. It would have been appropriate here as well as in \textit{Unitatis Redintegratio} to address this image of the \textit{mater ecclesia}, first utilized by Tertullian and consequently repeated over the centuries by different councils and popes. But both documents do no such thing in an explicit manner and rather portray the maternal image only in an implicit sense, concentrating rather on her children and their engagement with other Christian Churches (\textit{UR}) or other religions (\textit{NA}) when implementing the maternal metaphor. On Nostra Aetate, O’Malley says it “ignited such bitter controversy inside and outside the council” regarding the Church’s relationship to the Jews and other Christian religions that few
documents experienced such a “rough road” as NA.\textsuperscript{32} Discussion of the Mother Church and the phrase “extra ecclesiam nulla salus” may have exacerbated such controversy seeing as it had been part of Christian tradition to consider the Jewish Mother of Galatians 4 as being superceded by the Christian Mother. It would have been too complex an issue for the Council to debate seeing as its intention was to open up possibilities and avoid too contentious issues.\textsuperscript{33}

6) Declaration on Religious Freedom – Dignitatis Humanae (DH)

a) Mother Church Text of DH

DH\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Ecclesia catholica, ut divino obtemperet mandato: }‘docete omnes gentes’ (Mt28, 19), \textit{impensa cura ad laborare debet }‘ut sermo Dei currat et clarificetur’ (2 Th 3,1). \textit{Énixe igitur rogat ecclesia, ut a filiis suis primum omnium fiand omisit obsecrationes, orationes, postulationes, gratiarum actiones pro omnibus hominibus...’

Tanner: “To obey the divine command, ‘teach all nations’ (Mt 28,19), the catholic church must work unremittingly ‘that the word of God may speed on and triumph’ (2 Th 3,1). So the church earnestly begs its children that as a matter of the greatest moment there be made ‘supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings for everyone’…”

Flannery: “In order to satisfy the divine command: ‘Make disciples of all nations’ (Mt.28:19), the Catholic Church must spare no effort in striving ‘that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph’ (2 Th. 3:1). \textit{Hence the Church therefore earnestly urges her children first of all that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men…”’

Abbott: “In order to be faithful to the divine command, ‘Make disciples of all nations’ (Mt.28:19), the Catholic Church must work with all urgency and concern ‘that the Word of God may run and be glorified’ (2 Th. 3:1). \textit{Hence the Church earnestly begs of her children that, first of all, ‘supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all men’…”

Vatican Web: “In order to be faithful to the divine command, "teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19-20), the Catholic Church must work with all urgency and concern "that the word of God be spread abroad and glorified" (2 Thess. 3:1). \textit{Hence the Church earnestly begs of its children that, ‘first of all, supplications, prayers, petitions, acts of thanksgiving be made for all men’....”

\textsuperscript{32} O’Malley, \textit{What Happened at Vatican II}, 6-7.

\textsuperscript{33} The other issues “potentially explosive” and “too sensitive” for Vatican II Council were: “clerical celibacy, birth control, and the reform of the Roman curia”. In Cassidy, \textit{Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue}, 13.
b) The Ecclesial Mother of DH

The Ecclesial Mother appears here as an implicit figure but one who strongly urges (“enixe igitur rogat”) her children to undertake “supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving” for everyone (“obsecrationes, orationes, postulationes, gratiarum actiones pro omnibus hominibus”), as a first act in response to the divine command to “teach all nations” (Matt 28:19). Such exhortation even extends the call to work with the confidence and boldness of the apostles to the point of shedding their blood (“…et fortitudine apostolica, ad sanguinis usque effusionem, diffundere satagant”, DH14). This urgency arises from the desire for everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (“qui omnes homines vult salvos fieri et agnitionem veritatis venire”, DH14). But such apostolic vigour must not be enacted in contradiction to the gospel (“exclusis mediis spiritui evangelico contrariis”, DH14), namely the use of violence. For Pietro Pavan, Church members collaborate in the mission of the Church by “prayer, sacrifice and the Christian witness of their life; by understanding others, respecting their personal dignity, patient and persistent love; especially in the power of the Word of God and the efficacy of the holy Spirit in souls.”34 The image of the Ecclesial Mother here is a pastoral one—urging Church members rather than commanding them to the evangelical and apostolic work of the Church in the spirit of the gospels. From an ancient Roman perspective, this taps into the Roman sense of pietas, but for current contemporary culture, it is simply a mother who asks her children to act. The unsaid response here is “How can one say no to a mother?”

7) Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life – Perfectae Caritatis (PC)

a) Mother Church Text of PC

PC1

Unde e consilio divino mirabilis varietas coetuum religiosorum succrevit, quae valde contulit, ut ecclesia, non solum ad omne opus bonum instructa (cf 2Tm 3,17) et ad opus ministerii in aedificationem corporis Christi (cf. Eph 4, 12) parata sit, sed etiam variis donis filiorum suorum decorata appareat sicut sponsa ornata viro suo (cf. Ap21, 2) et per eam innomescat multiformis sapientia Dei (cf. Eph 3,10)

Tanner: “In God’s providence, therefore, there developed religious communities so remarkably distinctive in character, that the church was equipped for every good work (see 2Tm3,17), and disposed for developing the body of Christ. Further, the church, in all its gifted variety, truly revealed the bride adorned for her husband (see Ap21, 2), and outwardly displayed the manifold wisdom of God (see Eph 3,10).”

Flannery: “Thus in keeping with the divine purpose , a wonderful variety of religious communities came into existence. This has considerably contributed towards enabling the Church not merely to be equipped for every good work (cf. 2Tim.3:17) and to be prepared for the work of the ministry unto the building-up of the Body of Christ (cf.Eph.4:12), but also to appear adorned with the manifold gifts of her children, like a bride adorned for her husband, and to manifest in herself the multiform wisdom of God.”

Abbott: “And so it happened by divine plan that a wonderful variety of religious communities grew up. This variety contributed mightily toward making the Church experienced in every good deed (cf. 2 Tim. 3:17) and ready for a ministry of service in building up Christ’s body (cf.Eph. 4:12). Not only this, but adorned by the various gifts of her children, the Church became radiant like a bride made beautiful for her spouse; and through her God’s manifold wisdom could reveal itself.”

Vatican Web: “So it is that in accordance with the Divine Plan a wonderful variety of religious communities has grown up which has made it easier for the Church not only to be equipped for every good work (cf. 2 Tim 3:17) and ready for the work of the ministry-the building up of the Body of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:12)-but also to appear adorned with the various gifts of her children like a spouse adorned for her husband.”

b) The Ecclesial Mother of PC

Again in the one instance in which the Ecclesial Mother appears, she is implied and plays a marginal role. It is her children who are emphasized:

They in their variety contribute various gifts to the Church ("variis donis filiorum suorum decorata appareat"). This statement pointed to the
Decree’s purpose of affirming that religious orders and societies, in their variety were a characteristic part of the Church. But there were issues to be addressed: 1) that new societies were constantly being formed and the old ones seldom ended. The fourth Lateran Council of 1215 forbade the foundation of new societies but this did not stop new formations; 2) finding a resolution between the spirituality with which the societies were founded and the “chief stresses of the Council” (such as a spirituality characterized by a ‘flight from the world’ versus the Council spirituality of ‘openness to the World’); 3) the necessity for religious orders when the supreme vocation was to baptism; 4) the suitability of the theologies and spiritualities on which societies were founded for the modern context; and 5) the particular problems of contemporary nuns in which the spiritualities in which their orders were founded occurred before female emancipation.35 The Ecclesial Mother plays no part in this Decree and it is the members of the Church, called children here who are the subject of the article.

8) Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests—Presbyterorum Ordinis (PO)

a) Mother Church Text of PO

PO6
Praeterea caritate, oratione, exemplo et poenitentiae operibus, ecclesialis communitas veram erga animas ad Christum adducendas maternitatem exercet.

Tanner: “Furthermore, by charity, prayer, example and penitential exercises, the Christian community plays a truly motherly part in drawing souls to Christ. For it is itself an effective means, for those who do not yet believe, of pointing and nourishing and arming them for their spiritual warfare.”

Flannery: “In addition the ecclesial community exercises a truly motherly function in leading souls to Christ by its charity, its prayer, its example and its penitential works. For it constitutes an effective instrument for showing or smoothing the path towards Christ and his Church or those who have not yet found faith; while also encouraging, supporting and strengthening believers for their spiritual struggles.”

Abbott: “Moreover, by charity, prayer, example, and works of penance, the Church community exercises a true motherhood toward souls who are to be led to Christ. For this community constitutes an effective instrument by which the path to Christ and to His Church is pointed out and made smooth for unbelievers, and by which the faithful are aroused, nourished, and strengthened for spiritual combat.

Vatican Web: “The ecclesial community by prayer, example, and works of penance, exercise a true motherhood toward souls who are to be led to Christ. The Christian community forms an effective instrument by which the path to Christ and his Church is pointed out and made smooth for non-believers. It is an effective instrument also for arousing, nourishing and strengthening the faithful for their spiritual combat.”

b) The Ecclesial Mother of PO

The Ecclesial Mother of PO appears once implicitly at article 6. Here it is the community that plays the motherly function of the Church (“maternitatem exercet”)—“by charity, prayer, example, and works of penance” (“...caritate, oratione, exemplo et poenitentiae operibus”). Curiously though, the article does not refer back to such similar calls as found in LG 65 or allusions to such call as found in GE 7.

The placement of this text within a document that is meant to concentrate on the particular ministry of priests is also a curiosity. But it makes sense considering the content of the article is the care of the faithful, which is not meant to keep the faithful in a spiritually infantile state. By “gathering them as a family of God” or forming a “real christian community”, leading them in the Spirit of Christ, and educating them in the faith so that everyone is “led by the Holy Spirit to develop their own vocation in the light of the gospel”, the priest plays the motherly functions of the Church. Here then is implied a collaborative exercise in the maternal functions of the Church where the clergy acts as Mother Church by “teaching them and correcting them as dearly loved children” (“eos docents et ut filios etiam carissimos monentes”, PO6) but also the laity play a motherly part (“Praeterea caritate, oratione, exemplo et poenitentiae...”)
operibus, ecclesialis communitas veram erga animas ad Christum adducendas maternitatem exercet”, PO6). The particular maternal functions of teaching and gathering by the priest is especially seen in PO4:

Toward all men, therefore, priests have the duty of sharing the gospel truth in which they themselves rejoice in the Lord. And so, whether by honorable behavior among the nations they lead them to glorify God, whether by openly preaching they proclaim the mystery of Christ to unbelievers, whether they hand on the Christian faith or explain the Church’s teaching, or whether in the light of Christ they strive to deal with contemporary problems, the tasks of priests is not to teach their own wisdom but God’s Word, and to summon all men urgently to conversion and to holiness. (8)

(8) (“...Gather your people to the word of doctrine like a foster-mother who nourishes her children:” H. Denzinger, Oriental Rites, Book II, Wurzburg 1863, p. 14.)

This emphasis on gathering the community and leading them in the spirit of Christ, in one way by teaching and correcting them, readjusts the imaging of the Priest since the Middle Ages, as one who simply said the mass. The priest’s parental role is also seen in the Decree on Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis), article 6:

With the bread of holy writ and the bread of heaven for nourishment, they love their shepherds with the reverence of sons and daughters (Ita in mensa divinae legis et sacris altaris refecti Christi membra fraterne ament pastores spiritu filiali).

The collaborative call for the entire community (clergy and laity) to play the motherly functions of the Church is quite significant given that one of the main issues of the Council was “[t]he desire to recognize the dignity of lay men and women and to empower them to fulfill their vocation in the

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36 Latin: “Omnibus ergo debitores sunt presbyteri, ut cum eis communicant veritatem evangelii qua in Domino gaudent. Sive igitur, conversationem inter gentes habentes bonam, ad Deum glorificandum eas adducunt, sive, aperte praedicantes, mysterium Christi non credentibus annuntiant, sive catechesim christianam tradunt vel ecclesiae doctrinam explanant, sive sui temporis quaestiones sub luce Christi tractare student, eorum semper est non sapientiam suam, sed Dei Verbum docere omnesque, ad conversionem et ad sanctitatem instanter invitare.”

37 O'Malley, What Happened at Vatican II, Location 180 of 8506.
church”. In summary, the main maternal ecclesial image within this document is the mother as gatherer, teacher, nourisher, but also one who encourages growth in adult faith and exercises that adult faith in example or witness of life, prayer, charity, and penance.

9) Decree on Priestly Formation – Optatam Totius (OT)

a) Mother Church Text of OT

OT19
Accurate instituantur in animarum moderandarum arte, qua universos ecclesiae filios imprimis ad vitam christianam plene conscientiam et apostolicam atque ad sui status officia implenda conformare valeant

Tanner: “Let them be carefully trained in the art of directing souls: in this way they will be able to guide all the daughters and sons of the church especially towards a fully conscious and apostolic Christian life and fulfillment of the duties of their state.”

Flannery: “They should receive precise instruction in the art of directing souls. They will thus be able, first of all, to form all the members of the Church in a Christian life which is fully conscious and apostolic”

Abbott: “Let them receive careful instruction in the art of guiding souls, so that they can lead all sons of the Church, before everything else, to a Christian life which is fully conscious and apostolic, and to a fulfillment of the duties of their state.”

Vatican Web: “They are to be carefully instructed in the art of directing souls, whereby they will be able to bring all the sons of the Church first of all to a fully conscious and apostolic Christian life and to the fulfillment of the duties of their state of life.”

b) The Ecclesial Mother of OT

The Mother Church in Optatam Totius appears only once as an implicit and marginal figure, at article 19. The more important subjects in this article are the Church’s children who, through the careful training of priests (“accurate instituantur in animarum moderandarum arte”), are led “to a Christian life which is fully conscious and apostolic, and to a fulfillment of the duties of their state” (“ad vitam christianam plene conscientiam et apostolicam atque ad sui status officia implenda conformare

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This line particularly echoes the call to full conscious and active participation as found in SC14, but also in PO6 where priests are called to lead the community into adult faith so that they can truly play a motherly part in the Church as shown above, and of course as found in LG65. Yet, the commentary on this article finds no necessity to highlight this issue that was one of the larger issues for the Council. Instead, the commentary concentrates on the necessity of the priest’s preparation for modern pastoral work, which includes developing the capacity to form human relationships. The utilization of the Mother Church here is to show that to belong to the Mother Church is to be directed by the Church through its priests who have hopefully received good training in pastoral work.

10) Decree on the Bishop’s Pastoral Office in the Church – Christus

Dominus (CD)

a) Mother Church Text of CD

CD13

Doctrinam christianam proponant ratione temporum necessitatibus aptata, quae scilicet respondet difficultatibus et quaestionibus quibus maxime homines premuntur et anguntur; eandem doctrinam quoque tueantur, ipso fideles docentes illam defendere et propagare. In eadem tradenda, maternam ecclesiae sollicitudinem comprobent erga omnes homines, sive fideles sive non fideles, et peculiari cura prosequantur pauperes et tenuiores, quos evangelizare misit eos Dominius.

Tanner: They should present Christian doctrine in ways relevant to the needs of the times. Obviously, such teaching should deal with the most pressing difficulties and problems which weigh people down. They must preserve this doctrine and teach the faithful themselves to defend it and spread it. In handing on this doctrine they should make evident the maternal solicitude of the Church for everyone whether they are believers or not, and take particular care to further the interests of the poor and the underprivileged to whom the Lord has sent them to preach the gospel.

Flannery: Bishops should present the doctrine of Christ in a manner suited to the needs of the times, that is, so it may be relevant to those difficulties and questions which men find especially worrying and intimidating. They

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39 Cf. Ibid., 140.
should also safeguard this doctrine, teaching the faithful themselves to
defend it and propagate it. In presenting this doctrine they should proclaim
the maternal solicitude of the Church for all men, whether they be Catholics
or not, and should be especially solicitous for the poor and weaker brethren
whom the Lord has commissioned them to evangelize.
Abbott: The bishops should present Christian doctrine in a manner adapted
to the needs of the times, that is to say, in a manner corresponding to the
difficulties and problems by which people are most vexatiously burdened
and troubled. They should also guard that doctrine, teaching the faithful to
defend and propagate it. In propounding this doctrine they should manifest
the maternal solicitude of the Church toward all men whether they be
believers or not. With a special affection they should attend upon the poor
and the lower classes to whom the Lord sent them to preach the Gospel.
Vatican Web: The bishops should present Christian doctrine in a manner
adapted to the needs of the times, that is to say, in a manner that will
respond to the difficulties and questions by which people are especially
burdened and troubled. They should also guard that doctrine, teaching the
faithful to defend and propagate it. In propounding this doctrine they should
manifest the maternal solicitude of the Church toward all men whether they
be believers or not. With a special affection they should attend upon the
poor and the lower classes to whom the Lord sent them to preach the
Gospel.

b) The Ecclesial Mother of CD

The Ecclesial Mother of Christus Dominus appears once only in this
Decree and only as an implicit figure, at article 13. It is the Mater et
Magistra Church image that is presented here. That is, the Church as mother
and authoritative teacher, represented in the Bishops: The Decree calls for
Bishops to direct their teaching not just towards Church members but also
towards all peoples of the world. Hastings says articles 11 to 18 of CD
simply repeat LG 24 to 27 in which the diocesan duties of the bishop are
outlined.\textsuperscript{41} Moreover, the Decree “stresses” three characteristics of the
office of the Bishop: (1) its apostolic character “which guarantees the
teaching of truth and the unity of our fellowship both at the local and at the
world level”; (2) its pastoral character, that is, the bishop not as prince,
administrator or member of parliament, but as ‘shepherd and teacher”; and

\textsuperscript{41} Hastings, A Concise Guide to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council,127.
(3) the importance of the duty of teaching as a bishop. The bishop as Mater et Magistra is moreover highlighted when Hastings comments “the faithful Christian does not only believe in the Church and the apostolic ministry, but he is a member of the former and he obeys the latter.”

It is unfortunate that the maternity of the Church seems to remain only with the bishops here especially since Presbyterorum Ordinis 6 specifies that the purpose of the teaching by priests is to lead the community also into the maternal work of the Church. That connection of course would be reinforced by Lumen Gentium 65’s call for the community to engage in the maternal work of the Church. This exemplifies that at times within the Vatican II documents the image of the Ecclesial Mother returns to its traditional image as Mater et Magister through the clergy only even when other times the Council calls for the entire community to represent the Ecclesial Mother.

11) Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity – Apostolicam Actuositatem (AA)

There are no mother texts, images, or metaphors, in implicit or explicit senses, to be found in Apostolicam Actuositatem (AA). AA is only 1 of 2 documents amongst the 16 of Vatican II that do not utilize the maternal ecclesial metaphor. The other document is the Decree on Eastern Rite Churches, Orientalium Ecclesiarum. In AA, rather than speaking of Church member as filios as in many of the other documents, they are called membræ or membrorum (AA 2, 3, 6, 11, 29) and even populi Dei as activa membra (AA 30). As Adrian Hastings says that the Council wished to communicate here, particularly in chapter 6 on training for the apostolate that Christian

42 Ibid., 127-128.
43 Ibid., 128.
life is meant to be “always an active, giving way of existence, not just a passive, receiving one.” It would have been very appropriate to highlight the engagement of the laity in the motherly function of the Church here, particularly the function of bringing others to baptism into the Church by the laity’s life witness, prayer, and charity, since such maternal metaphor and its concept is applied in other documents and such a concept was a large concern for the Council—that is, the more full and conscious engagement of the entire community. Interestingly though, it seems AA deemed it unnecessary to utilize the maternal metaphor in discussing the formation of the laity for the apostolate (cf. Ch 6, articles 28 to 32). Does this indicate a sense that the maternal metaphor has lost its utility as metaphor for the people of God, post Vatican II?

12) Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches—ORIENTALIUM ECCLESiarum (OE)

Like Apostolicam Actuositatem, there are no Mother Church texts to be found within this Decree. Like AA, members of the Church are referred to as mainly the “faithful” or “fidelibus”, “fidelium”, or “fideles” (OE2, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15,16, 21, 22). In fact, sancta catholicae ecclesia makes an appearance but without the mater (OE2). Instead, this Holy Church is referred to as the corpus Christi mysticum (OE2).

The only time the word mother or mater appears is in reference to Mary as Mother, wherein the Decree calls on both the East and Western Churches to turn to Mary to assist in the unity of the two Churches towards the eschatological future:

45 Cf. Ibid.
Meanwhile, however, all Christians, Eastern as well as Western, are earnestly asked to pray to God fervently and insistently, indeed daily, that with the aid of the most holy Mother of God, all may become one. (*Interim tamen omnes christiani, orientales nec non occidentales, enixe rogantur, ut ferventes atque assiduas, immo quotidianas preces Deo fundant ut, sanctissima Deipara auxiliante, omnes unum fiant*) (OE30).

Again the question of the utility of the maternal ecclesial metaphor presents itself since the Council has considered here unnecessary to use the metaphor in regard to the Church.

**Chapter Conclusion**

Within the Decrees and Declarations of Vatican II Council, the ecclesial mother more often appears in an implicit sense. As such it is usually the members of the Church (as its children or *filii*) who are the more important figures. The consequence of calling Church members “children” is that it provides justification for the Church to instruct (eg.IM13), teach and correct (eg. PO6), and exhort (eg. GE1) them. This presents a Church that is very much a teaching Church but also teaches from authority (the *Mater et Magistra*). Further, it is often implied that the clergy provides the Church’s teaching (PO6, OT19, UR24, GE1, GE3 IM13, IM17, IM24, NA2). But this is also expressed in an explicit sense (PO6, CD13, OT19). Though sometimes it is simply the Mother Church who instructs or exhorts (DH14, AG11, AG36).

But the children of the Church are not called to simply be recipients of instruction and action from the Church. They are called to represent the Mother Church in the world (AG11, 12, 36), by dialoguing with other children (UR24) and followers of other religious belief (NA2), by praying and interceding for the salvation of everyone (DH1), by witnessing the
Christian life (GE7). Even the ministry of the clergy is to empower the children to such action (PO6, OT19).

Noticeably in the documents where one would expect to find an exploration on the Catholic Church as Mother and an exploration of the dictum “extra ecclesiam nulla salus” (NA, DH, UR) instead one finds less emphasis on the Mother in this way and more emphasis on the “children” and their dialogue and engagement with others. In one sense this may be seen as a pastoral move to avoid an image of the Church as closing itself from non-members. It may also be seen as a round-about-way of redressing the oft-repeated dictum “extra ecclesiam nulla salus” pronounced over many centuries by different popes and Councils. In this, Mother Church is somewhat seen in a new light as a unifying image: for under her all Christians are united by their baptism (UR4). At the same time her children are separated from full communion with her because of the divisions within Christianity (UR4).

For the most part, the Mother Church of the Vatican II documents retains its Mater et Magistra role, a figure that provides authority to ecclesial claims (“the sancta mater ecclesia”) and sees itself very much the keeper (“Mother Church holds and continues to hold...”) and instructor of the faith. In line with the primary pastoral aim of imaging a Church that reaches out to the world, the image of Mother Church expands to include being present to all (AG11, CD13) even described further in GE, as being present with a special maternal affection (GE7, GE3). But also in these articles, the Church’s main role whilst showing “affection” and “concern” is still very much the teaching role.
CHAPTER IX: Analysis and Critique of the Maternal Ecclesial
Metaphor in the Vatican II Documents

This chapter critiques the overall use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor in the Vatican II documents by applying the three tests for a living metaphor, based on Soskice’s metaphor theory. This will form the first part of the chapter. The second part critiques the metaphor from various maternal theory perspectives. For, part of the critique of the maternal metaphor according to the Soskicean-based criteria involves entering into maternal theory perspectives, as the third criterion requires examination of a metaphor’s relationship with the model. In this case the metaphor is the mother in the documents and the model is what contemporary culture perceives the ‘mother’ to be. This picture of the contemporary ‘mother’ will become clarified in this second part of the chapter based on the understandings of twenty-first century maternal theorists. The chapter ends with considerations for the Church’s uses of the mother metaphor, as a result of the findings from each section.

Critique from a Soskicean Metaphorical Theory Perspective

According to Soskice, if a metaphor is not alive then it fails to expand the receiver’s horizon of understanding and rather closes it off to a narrow and limited perspective. This is the reason for the importance of whether or not Mother Church is a living or dead metaphor. The development of the Mother Church image by the Patristic writers was very much as a living metaphor that extended ecclesiology in new and fruitful ways. It will be argued here that by the time of Vatican II the use of this image had been stripped of its original vitality and network of associations leaving it a dead cliché. For convenience Soskice’s three criteria for a living metaphor are presented again here. They are: 1) Is there an initial dissonance, even an inappropriateness in its use? 2)
Can the metaphor be easily paraphrased or does the metaphor have an indispensable function that would completely change the meaning of the text in question? 3) Is the model related to the metaphor such that the metaphor readily calls to mind the model with its associated web of implications?

On the first criterion, Vatican II’s Mother Church metaphor fails since it is imaged more a teacher than a mother except in *Lumen Gentium* article 6 where she is predominantly the bride, and in LG Chapter 8 where she is imaged more as Mary, mother and virgin, than as the community (as found in LG article 65). Mother Church as teacher does not create a rhetorical dissonance or tension for readers of the conciliar documents since her imaging does not expand the Mother Church of *Mater et Magistra* or even Vatican I. Instead her pastoral-maternal image is simply emphasized. Mother Church as teacher is not a new image and does not expand or create a new vision for the Church.

In the imaging of Mother Church as Mary or Mary as Mother Church, the greater weight was on the expansion of Mariological understanding than ecclesial vision. Mary becomes the model of discipleship for the Church and in this way does slightly expand ecclesial understanding. But the greater effect was that Marian piety was placed in an ecclesiological context, thus expanding and emphasizing a Mariological vision. For in the lead up to Vatican II, Mary and the Church were considered quite distinctly and the original intention was to give them two separate documents at the Council, as shown in Chapter VI of this thesis. Thus, here the maternal ecclesial metaphor imaged as Mary fails the first criteria for a living metaphor.

It is only when the maternal ecclesial metaphor is used to call the entire community to spiritual motherhood [LG 64&65] does the metaphor then seem
to appear striking, even initially inappropriate. For the pre-Vatican II emphasis was on the hierarchy as Church who executed the Church’s apostolic work on its people rather than the people themselves who were engaged in this work.

Here we find a dissonant factor characteristic of a living metaphor but it is overshadowed by the imaging of Mary as Mother Church and Church members as children placed under Mary’s maternal care, as found particularly in Lumen Gentium.

Apropos the second criterion, the fact that Tanner often omitted the “mother” in the translation of Mater Ecclesia into English and its omission did not significantly change the meaning of the text shows that the maternal metaphor was often redundant. Article 4 of Sacrosanctum Concilium exemplified this:

Latin: Traditioni denique fideliter obsequens, sacrosanctum concilium declarant sanctam matrem ecclesiam omnes ritus legitime agnitos aequo iure atque honore habere, eosque in posterum servari et omnimodo foveri velle, atque optat ut, ubi opus sit...

Tanner: Finally, faithfully in accordance with the tradition, this holy council declares that the church regards all duly recognised rites as having equal legal force and as to be held in equal honour; it wishes to preserve them for the future and encourage them in every way.

Flannery: Finally, in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that Holy Mother Church holds all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.

Abbott: Finally, in faithful obedience to tradition, this most sacred Council declares that holy Mother church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal authority and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.

Vatican Web: Lastly, in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.

The removal of “Holy Mother” does not change the meaning of this text from SC4; its authoritative force remains. When “Holy Mother” is included, as in the translations of Flannery, Abbott and the Vatican website, the Church becomes imaged as a female but the content of ‘mother’ is practically empty as
the only information we receive about this mother is that she wishes to preserve the rites in the future and foster them in every way. Again it is the image of an authority figure who is bearer and conveyor of something precious to the Church rather than someone particularly maternal. In addition to portraying no particular maternal image, no web of maternal associations comes to mind. Rather it is the association to the authoritative Mother Church of Trent which surfaces.

Looking at another example where Tanner has ignored the “mother”, we see again that the meaning and force of the text does not change very much as shown here in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* article 21:

- **Latin**: Pia mater ecclesia, ut populous christianus in sacra liturgia abundantiam gratiarum securius assequatur, ipsius liturgiae generalem instaurationem sedulo curare cupit.
- **Tanner**: In order that the christian people can more surely obtain the abundance of graces in the liturgy, the church wishes to make strenuous efforts at a general reform of the liturgy itself.
- **Abbott**: In order that the Christian people may more securely derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself.
- **Flannery & Vatican Web**: In order that the Christian people may more certainly derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself.

In fact, as mentioned previously, Abbott, Flannery and the Vatican Website all eschew translating the adjective “pia” as “affectionate” or “dutiful” (both of which could be seen as maternal attributes) but rather as the more clichéd “holy Mother Church”. But whether the Church is “affectionate”, “dutiful” or “holy”, the actual sense of the text does not change, with the focus remaining on the reform/restoration of the liturgy.1151

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1151 It is actually the translation of “instaurationem” into “reform” by Tanner but translated as “restoration” by Abbott, Flannery and the Vatican Web that is more significant here. Reform implies a renewal, whilst restoration implies a reversion to the old ways.
In Tanner’s translation and neglect of the ‘mother’ in article 85 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the text does not change but its urgency or forcefulness does change:

**Latin:** Omnes proinde qui haec praestant, tum ecclesiae officium explant, tum summum sponsae Christi honorem participant, quia laudes Deo persolventes stant ante thronum Dei nomine matris ecclesiae.

**Tanner:** Thus all those who have this responsibility are at once carrying out an office of the church, and are sharing in the highest honour of Christ’s bride, because while they perform their acts of praising God, they are standing in front of God’s throne explicitly as the church.

**Flannery:** Hence all who take part in the divine office are not only performing a duty for the Church, they are also sharing in what is the greatest honor for Christ's Bride; for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church their Mother.

**Abbott:** Hence all who perform this service are not only fulfilling a duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the greatest honor accorded to Christ’s spouse, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church their Mother.

**Vatican Web:** Hence all who render this service are not only fulfilling a duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the greatest honor of Christ’s spouse, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church their Mother.

In Tanner’s translation, it is clear the church is the community and it is for this very reason alone (and sufficiently so in Tanner’s view) that the community performs the required service and praise God. In contrast, Flannery’s, Abbot’s, and the Vatican Web’s translations show that by the faithful’s performance of the Divine Office they share in the honour of their “mother”, the Church.

In passages where the “mother” is utilized to project a more pastoral-maternal ecclesial image, but where Tanner has ignored the “mother” in his translation, the effect is as similar to the previous example, as seen here in Article 14 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*:

**Latin:** Valde cupit mater ecclesia ut fideles universi ad plenam illam, consciam atque actuosam liturgicarum celebrationum participationem ducantur, quae ab ipsus liturgiae natura postulator et ad quam populous christianus ‘genus electrum, regale sacrédotium, gens sancta, populous acquisitionis’, vi baptismatis ius habet et officium.

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Tanner: The church very much wants all believers to be led to take a full, conscious and active part in liturgical celebration. This is demanded by the nature of the liturgy itself; and by virtue of their baptism, it is the right and the duty of the Christian people, ‘the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people of whom God has taken possession’.

Flannery: Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.

Abbott: Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as a ‘chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people’, is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

Vatican Web: Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people, is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.’

The meaning of the text does not change but its emphasis does if one imagines it as the Mother who desires her children into action rather than simply the church as abstract entity wanting believers to participate in a certain way. Remembering here too that this passage is considered the refrain of the Council in terms of its view of reform. This explains the need for a sense of urgency that has been applied here. But again the meaning of the text does not change much and the urgency is only slightly affected by the inclusion or non-inclusion of the ‘mother’.

Tanner did include the “holy mother” and the mother with “maternal concern” in some translations as seen here in articles 19 and 22 of Dei Verbum:

**DV19**

Latin: *Sancta mater ecclesia firmiter et constantissime tenuti ac tenet quattuor recensita evangelia, quorum historicitatem incunctanter affirmat, fideliter trader quae Iesus Dei Filius, vitam inter homines degens, ad aeternam eorum salutem reapse fecit et docuit, usque in diem qua assumptus est.*
Tanner: Holy mother church has firmly and constantly held and continues to hold and unhesitatingly assert, that the four gospels just named are historical documents and faithfully communicate what Jesus, the Son of God, during his life among men and women, did and taught for their eternal salvation, until the day when he was taken up.

Flannery: Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy maintained and continues to maintain, that the four Gospels just named, whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms, faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation, until the day when he was taken up.

Abbott, Vatican Web: Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held, and continues to hold that the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven.

DV 22

Latin: ...ecclesia materna sollicitudine curat, ut aptae ac rectae exarentur in varias linguas versions, praesertim ex primigenis sacrorum librorum textibus.

Tanner: the church, with motherly care, sees to it that appropriate and correct translations are made into different languages, especially from the original texts of the sacred books.

Flannery: the Church, with motherly concern, sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made into various languages...

Abbott: the Church with maternal concern sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made into different languages, especially from the original texts of the sacred books

Vatican Web: the Church by her authority and with maternal concern sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made into different languages

DV19 echoes again the juridical Mother of Trent. Clearly at DV19 the mother is used as a figure of authority especially when ‘holy’ is added to her title. This gives the statement a sense of divine approval or forcefulness, which is imaginably the highest level of approval. If ‘holy mother’ was removed, the meaning of the passage would remain but the association to the authority and forcefulness from the Council of Trent would be lost. It should be noted here that the mother as a mother is not important. Rather it is her association with authoritativeness that is seen as significant.

In DV22, the ‘mother’ is utilized to provide a sense of reassurance concerning the translations of the Gospels. As shown below the ‘mother’ can
be removed from the text and replaced instead with ‘the most enormous pains’, which is a better translation of ‘sollicitudine curat’ than ‘motherly care’, or even ‘motherly/maternal concern’ as translated by Flannery and Abbott. With the new paraphrase, the meaning of the text and the conveyance of reassurance being sought would remain as shown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin original</th>
<th>Tanner translation</th>
<th>Possible paraphrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ecclesia materna sollicitudine curat</em></td>
<td>the church, with motherly care</td>
<td>the church, with the most enormous pains</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Vatican Web translation even adds ‘by her authority’ which is not found in the original Latin. This shows that the point of the mother at least from the perspective of the translator from the Vatican Website, is to convey a sense of authority with use of the ‘mother’, alongside a pastoral sense, as seen below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin original</th>
<th>Flannery &amp; Abbott Translation</th>
<th>Vatican Web Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ecclesia materna sollicitudine curat</em></td>
<td>the Church, with motherly/maternal concern</td>
<td>the Church, by her authority and with maternal concern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The meaning of the text would change if ‘mother’ became associated with ‘love for children’. The translation would not be literally accurate but would support the pastoral intention of the Council. In this case ‘mother’ could not be easily paraphrased. It is uncertain though as to be expected of the documents that this is the added meaning in the use of ‘motherly or maternal concern’. What is definite is the projection of Mother Church as image of authority and the great concern the Church has in making careful translations of the Gospels.

The omission of the ‘mother’ often did not change the meaning of the text but did change only in a slight sense the statement’s urgency or authority, for use of the image either creates an association with the authoritative Mother...
Church of Trent or points to a generic pastoral-maternal mother, which has its problems according to feminist maternal theories as will be shown in the second half of this chapter.

Concerning the third criterion, in one sense the metaphor does not meet this test for it does not resemble the model of any particular mother (let alone a contemporary mother of today) and rather resembles the figure of the teacher. In another sense, at a few instances, the use of “Holy Mother Church” did conjure another ‘mother’, the authoritative Mother Church of Trent and Vatican I, as already stated above. In this sense, the metaphor of the Holy Mother Church of Vatican II was closely related to the model which is the Mother Church of Trent and Vatican I. Also too at times, the mother metaphor conjured the readers’ own pictures of their mother. In both senses, the mother metaphor fulfills the third criterion for a living metaphor but again these are problematic. The first does not support a maternal imaging of the Church and the second points to a generic mother who is not even that important herself but utilized to convey the images of authority and great concern. For what does *materna sollicitudine curat*, ‘the mother, with the greatest anxiety’, really mean? Further, how is this singular dimensional mother connected to any complex real mother? In this way, the metaphor would be unrelated to the model (the real mother) and would not act as a living metaphor.

Looking at Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and perceiving her as a homeomorphic model\(^\text{1152}\) for the Mother Church, where she is viewed as type of the Church and the people as anti-type, as described in *Lumen Gentium* article 65, the metaphor then can be seen as fulfilling the Soskicean-based third

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\(^{1152}\) As Mary reflects Mother Church and Mother Church reflects Mary, she would be a homeomorphic model for the Church according to Soskicean metaphorical theory terminology. See introductory chapter of this thesis for an explanation of homeomorphic model.
criterion for a living metaphor. However, this can only work if in Mary there could be imaged the various types and images of mothers. This is possible, since historically Mary has already been represented using various maternal images from different cultures. Of course this imaging would often have been a projection of a cultural ideal rather than presenting the reality of motherhood of particular cultures. Whilst in the past this was an acceptable, or at least unquestioned practice, the idealization of mothers and women today would not hold with contemporary audiences without some extensive critique as will be shown in the second section of this chapter. This is then the challenge of utilizing Mary as homeomorphic model for the Church such that the maternal ecclesial metaphor does become a living metaphor rather than a superfluous addition to the Vatican II texts.

Mother Church as the whole people of God engaged in the apostolic work of the Church is a re-envisioning of the Church, especially after the great emphasis on the magisterium prior to Vatican II. The Mother Church metaphor used in this way would show a quality of the live metaphor, with a network of associations that develops a new vision for the Christian community, and could positively benefit the Church today. However, it will be argued that the network of associations this metaphor draws upon are idealized, historical and culturally bound, and not based on the reality and diversity of motherhood in the modern world.

One significant fault in the metaphor is found in that what the word “Mother” is used to represent in the Vatican II documents is more a teacher than a mother. A teacher’s dominant function is to teach, to bear and pass on knowledge and understanding, whilst commanding authority so that he or she can disciple their students. On motherhood, the traditional image perceives her
primary function as birthing, feeding, nurturing and caring for her child or children. But furthermore, based on the work of feminist critics, and particularly maternal theory researchers, it will be argued that this picture of the mother is inadequate and unhelpful in the modern context. To investigate the issues that have come to surface in terms of modeling the metaphor Mother Church on the mother of today (the third criterion for the test of the living metaphor), the next section investigates the Mother Church as metaphor from a few maternal theoretical perspectives.

**Critique from Feminist Maternal Theoretical Perspectives**

In the way the ‘mother’ has been utilized within the documents, at least four issues become apparent in light of twenty-first century feminist maternal theories: 1) the utilization of mother to represent materiality as seen in LG6; 2) her appearance as a one-dimensional mother who is only ever caring, self-sacrificing, and positive even if she shows command and authority; 3) her utilization to represent mystery as also seen in LG6; and 4) her utilization to represent something other than the mother in the constitutions, and then as the present but hidden figure in the decrees and declarations, which can be critiqued both by feminist maternal theorists and feminist literary theorists.

First, the utilization of ‘mother’ to represent materiality (in LG6) leads to a common feminist critique that falls under the areas of ‘motherhood as identity’ and ‘gender essentialism’. It asks in part the question why ‘mother’ becomes representative of bodiliness when there are mothers who do not give birth to their own children and there are birth mothers who do not rear

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1153 In maternal theory, the four categories of research fall under the following topics: motherhood as institution, motherhood as experience, motherhood as identity or subjectivity, and motherhood as agency. In Andrea O'Reilly, Twenty-First-Century Motherhood: Experience, Identity, Policy, Agency (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 2-3.
their own children. Further, we question here why divinity is relegated to the father. In one sense this can remain unquestioned since it is based on Christianity’s tradition of naming God a ‘father’ drawn from the scriptures. However, this thesis has shown that the pairing of Father God with Mother Church was a novel development in the writings of Tertullian. The inequality of the relationship between the materfamilia and the paterfamilia was unquestioned for Tertullian and Cyprian’s time but in contemporary Western society the subjection of a wife to her husband is no longer accepted. Thus, utilizing the ‘mother’ to represent bodiliness has negative implications not only in terms of gender essentialism but also gender inequality.

Second, and connected to the first issue, is the concern that the maternal is utilized to present a Church teaching in a pastoral way but presents a mother in a one-dimensional sense as one who cares, nurtures, teaches, and even has authority, but does not have anger, ambivalence or any other complexities that can be said about the realities of mothers. Sarah Ruddick (1935-2011), one of the most prominent 20th-21st century philosophers concerning maternity and maternal practice describes motherhood today:

Maternal practice begins in a response to the reality of a biological child in a particular social world. To be a ‘mother’ is to take upon oneself the responsibility of child care, making its work a regular and substantial part of one’s working life. Mothers as individuals, engage in all sorts of other activities, from farming to deep sea diving, from astrophysics to elephant training. Mothers as individuals are not defined by their work; they are lovers and friends; they watch baseball, ballet, or the soaps; they run marathons, play chess, organize church bazaars and rent strikes. Mothers are as diverse as any other humans.1155


Marie Porter and Julie Kelso state that “representations of motherhood, and the accompanying expectations of mothers, are in constant flux as they adapt to the changing socio-cultural context”. ¹¹⁵⁶ Susan Goodwin and Kate Huppatz explain that “many contemporary women understand themselves (and are understood by others) as ‘choosing’ motherhood”.¹¹⁵⁷ Therefore, they resist the automatic identification of woman as ‘mother’, potential or otherwise. This understanding, what Goodwin and Huppatz describe as the “de-naturalisation of motherhood and the opening up of the categories woman/mother” is a consequence of “research that demonstrates diversity in women’s experiences of pregnancy, birth, child rearing, care work, and familial roles and responsibilities.”¹¹⁵⁸

Andrea O’Reilly, founder of Association for Research on Mothering¹¹⁵⁹ provides a more scathing critique of what she perceives as the underlying maternal imagery communicated by patriarchal institutions whilst she points to the reality of biological mothers:

Under the patriarchal institution and ideology of motherhood, the definition of mother is limited to heterosexual women who have biological children, while the concept of good motherhood is further restricted to a select group of women who are white, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied, married, thirty-something, in a nuclear family with usually one to two children, and, ideally, full-time mothers. Feminist scholars over the last two decades have vigorously and rigorously challenged this patriarchal construct and called for new and expansive definitions of maternal identity. ‘Good’ mothers, from the feminist perspective, include noncustodial, poor, single, old, young, queer, trans, and ‘working’ mothers; likewise, the


¹¹⁵⁷ Goodwin and Huppatz, The Good Mother, 3.

¹¹⁵⁸ ibid.

¹¹⁵⁹ This organization later became MIRCI–Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement in 2010. O’Reilly is also founder and editor of Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering, now the Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement and founder of the first publishing house dedicated to motherhood research, Demeter Press, in 2006.
biological category of mother itself is expanded so as to allow for other nonbiological identities of maternity such as other-mothers—grandmothers and mentors—and fathers.\textsuperscript{1160}

This ‘Good Mother’ myth has been especially critiqued in motherhood studies.\textsuperscript{1161} Ruddick explains the effect of the myth’s existence on real mothers’ lives:

An idealized figure of the Good Mother casts a long shadow on many actual mothers’ lives. Our days include few if any perfect moments, perfect children perfectly cared for. Self-doubts are compounded by others’ promptings. ‘Experts’ can undermine the most self-respecting woman’s confidence when her child is delinquent, ‘underachieving,’ or simply sad. Fathers, grandparents, even best friends can seem like judges. Most painfully, children make clear the unhappiness we cause them, as indeed they should. Many mothers who live in the Good Mother’s shadow, knowing that they have been angry and resentful and remembering episodes of violence and neglect, come to feel that their lives are riddled with shameful secrets that even the closest friends can’t share.\textsuperscript{1162}

However, Ruddick is not purely negative about motherhood despite her critique of maternal essentialism. She states that whilst the sacrifices she described above are not intrinsic to maternal work, “they are often balanced, even in impoverished or oppressed groups, by the pleasures children bring in tolerably good times.”\textsuperscript{1163} Maternal work involves frustrations exacerbated by maternal ideology, but Ruddick reminds her readers that motherhood should not be equated with victimhood, and to suggest this is in itself oppressive to mothers:

\textsuperscript{1160} O'Reilly, \textit{Twenty-First-Century Motherhood}, 7.


\textsuperscript{1162} Ruddick, \textit{Maternal Thinking}, 31.

\textsuperscript{1163} ibid.
To suggest that mothers, by virtue of their mothering, are principally victims is an egregiously inaccurate account of many women’s experience and is itself oppressive to mothers. For many women, mothering begins in a fiercely passionate love that is not destroyed by the ambivalence and anger it includes. Many mothers develop early a sense of maternal competence—a sense that they can and will care for their children. Often they are socially rewarded for their work by the shared pleasure and confirmation of other mothers, by the gratitude and pride of grandparents, and frequently by the intense, appreciative love of their mates. At home mothers frequently have more control over the details of their work more than any other workers do. Many mothers, whatever their other work, feel a part of a community of mothers whose warmth and support is hard to match in other working relationships. When their children flourish, almost all mothers have a sense of well-being.\(^\text{1164}\)

Can Mother Church be imagined as any of the complex and diverse mothers described by Ruddick, Porter and Kelso, Goodwin and Huppatz, or O’Reilly above? This is not the image of motherhood found in Vatican II and Ambrose and Augustine, whose use of the metaphor relies on contemporaneous idealizations of the Good Mother (from materfamilia and matrona to 1950s housewife). Representing the ecclesial mother with this one-dimensional Good Mother is problematic for what it unintentionally communicates and supports: a mother is a good mother who is modeled on the Western able-bodied, privileged, middle-class, biological mother in a nuclear family. She is warm and affectionate, rarely gets angry or has doubts, and is willing to sacrifice her own desires and needs completely for the sake of her children. As argued, this is disempowering for mothers and women and limiting in its definition of ‘mothers’ and their work. However, to move past the ‘Good Mother’ imagery and draw upon the reality of contemporary motherhood would provide a very different web of associations about the Church, which in our complex and diverse context could breathe new life into

\(^{1164}\) ibid., 29-30.
the metaphor, be challenging and surprising, and work to expand the understanding of the Christian community.

Third, from the psychoanalytic perspective the imaging of Mother Church as mystery (as found again in LG6) is an expression of imaging the woman as great mystery, and more specifically the mystery of her motherhood. This theory is explained in terms of the perspective of psychoanalyst, Jessica Benjamin.¹¹⁶⁵ She starts with the premise that men have a “dread of maternal power” which is coupled with their longing for woman. The resulting fear “may be concealed either by contempt or by admiration.” The contempt “repairs the blow to masculine self-esteem” whilst “adoration covers dread with awe and mystery”. Now “[i]f the grown man continues to regard woman as great mystery, in whom is a secret he cannot divine, this feeling of his can only relate ultimately to one thing in her: the mystery of motherhood.”¹¹⁶⁶

The dominant narrative guiding psychoanalytic thinking has been the “notion that the child begins in helpless dependency upon a mother from whom he must separate”.¹¹⁶⁷ The need for the denigration or domination of women resulting from this kind of thinking is explained as the man’s desire to gain the woman’s omnipotence but also to create a separate identity from his mother. But Benjamin says this does not explain the problem of omnipotence: “It does not recognize any intrinsic psychic force that would oppose the tendency to project omnipotence onto the parental figure.”¹¹⁶⁸ She solves this

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¹¹⁶⁷ ibid.

¹¹⁶⁸ ibid., 574-575.
problem by first asking: “If we assume that children do have the capacity to recognize the mother’s subjectivity, to perceive her as human rather than as omnipotent, the question is, why don’t they?” Benjamin then rejects solutions involving the obliteration of “the fantasy of the omnipotent mother”. Instead, she promotes the idea of the double-sidedness of the psychic life where “both the fantasy of the maternal omnipotence and the capacity to recognize the mother as another subject” exist and are held in tension. She states that “It is the breakdown of the tension between these two modes, and not the existence of fantasy (omnipotence) per se, that is detrimental to the recognition of other subjects.” She explains this breakdown as “moving from the state in which I know my fantasy to be a result of my feeling…to a state in which I externalize, I project my feeling onto someone else…”  

So in the case of male dread of a woman, the feeling of all that is bad and dreaded is projected onto her. I would add here that the opposite works just as much and has been shown especially in the imaging of the ancient Roman matrona as shown in Chapter III of this thesis--that the adoration of a woman is the projection of the feeling of, or desire for, all that is good and pure. From Ambrose onwards, it can be seen that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, has been increasingly utilized in this way to promote the ideal of the good pure ‘Mother Church’, as seen in Chapters IV and V of this thesis, culminating with her being identified as ‘Mother of the Church’ and the high Mariology of LG 52-69.

For Benjamin the inability to hold the tension between fantasy and reality is the essential problem. “Ultimately,” she says “whether it is a maternal or paternal ideal, the fantasy of an omnipotent figure, in and whom we are redeemed, condemns us to a life of denial of loss and to a world in which

1169 ibid., 576-577.
complementary power relations triumph over mutual understanding." The loss she speaks of here is the separation from the mother; and this experience of loss for both mother and child is in opposition to the experience of upholding the perfect mother fantasy:

The perfect mother of fantasy is the one who is always there, ready to sacrifice herself—and the child is not conscious of how strongly such a fantasy mother makes him or her feel controlled, guilty, envious, or unable to go away. The child simply remains terrified of her leaving or of destroying her by becoming separate. In turn, the mother feels terrified of destroying her child with her own separation. For Christians, Benjamin’s description of the fantasy mother as a self-sacrificing omnipotent figure resonates with their central beliefs about Jesus, but he in contrast frees people from guilt and exclusion. However, it seems that over the centuries the Church took on the characteristics described by Benjamin, instilling in members a sense of control, guilt, captivity and a fear of being outcast (excommunicated).

There is something to be found here in the imaging of the Church as an omnipotent, self-sacrificing Mother, and its own gender power struggles, and the understanding of Mother Church’s children never separating from her but instead become more attached to her, as Hugo Rahner explains:

…whereas, in the physical order, the child leaves the womb of his mother, and withdrawing from her, becomes increasingly independent of her protective guardianship as he grows, becomes stronger and advances in years, the Church brings us forth to the new life she bears by receiving us into her womb, and the more our divine education progresses, the more we become intimately bound to her.

We can also take from Benjamin’s perspectives that Christian maternal imaging, especially onto figures of power such as Mary and the Mother

1170 ibid., 588.
1171 ibid., 586.
1172 Rahner, Our Lady and the Church, Bullough, 69.
Church, need to be examined so that they are not really projections of fear disguised as adoration (or indeed contempt) of the power of the maternal or the woman or both. We have seen that this projection is possible in the example of the utilization of the female to alleviate the anxieties of the citizens of ancient Roman Carthage. In addition Cyprian seems to have tapped into this need in his society and applied it to his Mother Church.

Integrating the findings of feminist psychoanalytic theory with a critique of representing the Church as a mother is beyond the scope of this thesis but it does take seriously the possibility that in such an investigation of the mother-infant relationship, particularly the pre-oedipal phase of a child’s development, that psychoanalytic theory has something to say about the imaging of the Church as a mother whilst its members are imaged as infants. Presenting the Mother Church as mystery has its problems as it can reinforce the imaging of woman as great mystery and this has implications for relations between the sexes according to psychoanalytic theory, particularly the inability to hold the tension between fantasy and reality, which in turn fosters a struggle of power relations between genders rather than fostering mutual cooperation and distribution of power. This is especially significant for a Church that wishes to model itself on the Pauline image of the Church, the totus Christus or the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

The fourth issue concerns a common occurrence in which the mother appears but is left in the shadows in the documents. In the Constitutions, she is called upon but more often it is another image put forward that overshadows the Mother (Bride in LG6 or the teacher throughout the documents). Moreover, in the declarations and decrees, Mother Church is present in so far as Church members are named children of the feminine Church. It was shown in this
thesis that in part the purpose of this naming was that members could be imaged as ‘children’ and therefore be instructed or called to action. The issue here is the presentation of the common occurrence of the present and yet hidden mother. This mother allows a relationship of inequality where one has power over another (mother-dependant child/Mother Church-Church member). This has the effect of removing maternal agency (the mother’s self-transformation of her marginalization and resulting disempowerment) and hands that power over to a prevailing patriarchal-hierarchical structure (in this case, Mother Church’s dominant teaching image and function is the very role given to the hierarchy—priests and bishops).

The common occurrence of the hidden but present mother is highlighted by both feminist psychoanalytic and literary theories as Lisa Baraitser explains:

In some senses, (the mother) is everywhere, our culture saturated with her image in its varied guises, and yet theoretically she remains a shadowy figure who seems to disappear from the many discourses that explicitly try to account for her. Perhaps this is unsurprising given that we all, as infants, may have needed to conjure up an ever-present fantasy mother whom we are told must find just the right balance of presence without impingement, and who needs therefore to remain partly in the shadows, and then gradually but appropriately ‘fail’, and finally sort of … fade away.\textsuperscript{1173}

Philosopher, psychoanalyst and literary critic Julia Kristeva more strikingly and famously suggests it is our inability to “kill the mother” which enables the mother to simultaneously exist as present and absent, or exist as the lost mother.\textsuperscript{1174} Kristeva’s concept of the necessity of matricide is a long and complicated concept involving an exploration of sexuality, melancholia,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1173] Lisa Baraitser, \textit{Maternal Encounters: the Ethics of Interruption} (Hove, East Sussex; New York: Routledge, 2009), 4-5.
\end{footnotes}
depression, familial relationships, the pre-oedipal stage, and mother loss. For the purposes of brevity and accessibility, we turn to Baraitser’s explanation of Kristeva’s matricidal theory and the present and absent mother, which is the present issue:

Instead of being able to accept the loss of the mother which would entail bearing matricidal guilt in order to achieve autonomy, the melancholic negates maternal loss, cannot murder the mother, and instead buries the maternal Thing alive within the symbolic.\textsuperscript{1175}

Even with this explanation, the ‘symbolic’ and ‘melancholic’ have their particular meanings in the Kristevan psychoanalytic sense. The main point is to understand that according to a psychodynamic perspective, the inability to separate from the mother poses a problem that leads to the phenomenon of the present yet absent mother.

Based on feminist psychoanalytic theory, feminist literary theory also focuses on the pre-oedipal phase of the child’s development and critiques and challenges the phenomenon of the present and absent mother in literature.\textsuperscript{1176}

Here we turn to Kristeva’s perspective on the absorption of femininity into motherhood, the resulting fantasy, and Christianity as participating in this absorption of the feminine into motherhood. She says:

First, we live in a civilization where the consecrated (religious or secular) representation of femininity is absorbed by motherhood. If, however, one looks at it more closely, this motherhood is the fantasy that is nurtured by the adult, man or woman, of a lost territory; what is more, it involves less an idealized archaic mother than the idealization of the relationship that binds us to her, one that cannot be localized—an idealization of primary narcissism...This resorption of

\textsuperscript{1175} Baraitser, \textit{Maternal Encounters}, 6.

\textsuperscript{1176} This is done in three main ways: criticism of maternal imaging, establishing a matrilineal literary tradition, and exploring the mother as writing subject. For a detailed explanation of these strategies see Emily Jeremiah, "Troublesome Practices: Mothering, Literature and Ethics," in \textit{Mother Matters: Motherhood as Discourse and Practice: Essays from the Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering}, ed. Andrea O'Reilly and Association for Research on Mothering(Toronto: Association for Research on Mothering, 2004), 232-233.
femininity within the Maternal is specific to many civilizations, but Christianity, in its own fashion, brings it to its peak. Could it be that such a reduction represents no more than a masculine appropriation of the Maternal, which in line with our hypothesis, is only a fantasy masking primary narcissism.\textsuperscript{1177}

Kristeva continues onto questioning the need to depict the maternal in general in society and the virgin Mother specifically in Christianity. This is relevant for our questioning of the appropriation for today of Mary as Mother Church in the Vatican II documents:

What is there, in the portrayal of the Maternal in general and particularly in its Christian, virginal, one that reduces social anguish and gratifies a male being; what is there that also satisfies a woman so that a commonality of the sexes is set up, beyond and in spite of their glaring incompatibility and permanent warfare?\textsuperscript{1178}

\textit{Considerations}

There are no easy solutions to be found here. This concern of the absent but present mother in the decrees and declarations of Vatican II is an additional problem with the use of the Mother Church metaphor today. The underlying messages of gender essentialism, the marginalization of women and the infantilization of the laity tied to the utilization of the ecclesial mother metaphor by Vatican II were not deliberate intentions of the Council. Their primary aim lay in communicating a pastoral image and the Mother Church metaphor happened to be an available rhetorical tool at the time.

But continuing to use the ‘mother’ to represent the Church in the way it has been presented in the texts ignores the associated problems of such application and makes the Church complicit with a patriarchal-hierarchical culture that marginalizes and disempowers mothers and women, whether


\textsuperscript{1178} ibid., 163.
deliberately or not. Further, the metaphor’s utilization in the way of imaging
the ‘Mother Church-member of the Church’ as inseparable may be the very
image that obstructs the full, conscious and active participation of the member
of the Church, just as the inability to separate for them also poses as a problem
from the feminist psychoanalytic and literary theory perspectives. If ‘Church as
Mother’ and ‘members as children’ images were to be continued to be applied
onto the Church, it may be necessary for these metaphor to be further extended
to include the real life dynamic of a child’s necessary separation from the
‘mother’ in order that the Church member may grow in adult faith and become
a self-responsible, accountable, and well integrated spiritually and morally
mature adult in the Church. Better still would be the recovery of one of
Augustine’s uses of the metaphor, to use it to image ‘member as Mother’ in
order to indicate that each member of the faithful has the responsibility to
spiritually birth Christ into the world.

Based on all of these investigations, this thesis presents some basic and
clear considerations for the ongoing usage of the ecclesial mother metaphor for
the Church. First and foremost, in any text that wishes to utilize their image,
mothers must necessarily be consulted. Employing this approach leads
naturally to the second consideration, which is the necessary expansion of the
limited image of the mother. This approach may in fact expand the vision of
the Church as community, as family, and would in turn have implications for
how members relate with themselves and the world as well as how the Church
is organized.

**Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter has critiqued the overall uses of the maternal ecclesial
metaphor in the Vatican II documents using criteria from Soskice’s metaphor
theory as well as ideas from feminist maternal and literary theories. Applying Soskice’s criteria, Vatican II’s employment of Mother Church is as a dead metaphor, an image that has survived through the ages but has lost its initial dynamism, no longer evokes the original network of associations, does little to expand the understanding of ecclesiology, and has just become a clichéd title. It fails the first criterion as it is overshadowed by other images, such as the teacher or authority figure (throughout the documents), as bride (at LG6), or as Mary (at LG Chapter 8). There is no sense of tension in its rhetorical application. ‘Mother Church’ is basically used as a synonym for ‘Church’ and ‘teacher’ which was the prevailing ecclesial image pre-Vatican II (that is, the juridic Mother Church of the Council of Trent and the pastoral Mother Church of *Humanae Salutis* and *Mater et Magistra*). Only when the Mother Church is imaged as the community mothering, does the metaphor have some indications of life in it.

The metaphor is also dead according to Soskice’s second criterion, as it can be easily paraphrased and is even considered redundant by Tanner who often omits the word “mother” from his English translations of “*mater ecclesia*”. When Tanner does include the mother, the metaphor conjured an association with the Holy Mother Church as authority figure. In these occasions the motherly aspect is marginalized and the image was used mainly for its ability to convey the Church as figure of authority. Investigating the metaphor against Soskice’s third criterion indicates again that it is a dead, or at best dying, metaphor as it is not strongly related to any particular mother model of today. In fact, rather than representing a mother, the image is used more to represent a teacher and authority figure. If the model was the Mother Church of *Mater et Magistra* and Vatican I and Trent, then the metaphor does
relate to a particular historical web of associations. But when the maternal texts seek to present a real mother, the model of motherhood is generic and emptied of the complexity as found in real life. There are times when the mother metaphor seeks to invoke the readers’ image of their own mothers, to engage the readers affectively and thus encourage them to participate in the work of the Church. However, this use of imagery does not expand the understanding of the Church but rather is a rhetorical device that appeals to a sense of pietas as a motivation for involvement with the Church.

This third criterion also leads to investigating the metaphor from the lens of feminist maternal and literary theories. If there is a necessary relationship between the metaphor and the model, then that relationship needed to be explored and the model itself questioned. Based on selected theories, this thesis found four issues of concern in the contemporary use of Mother Church as metaphor: first, the utilization of mother to represent materiality leading to gender essentialism and inequality; second, the use of a one-dimensional and mythical image of the ‘Good Mother’ that consequently disempowers mothers and defines them in a limiting way; third, imaging Mother Church as great mystery (in LG6) relates to a larger issue of imaging woman as great mystery which has implications for gender and power relations; Fourth, the utilization of the mother to represent something other than herself removes her own maternal agency and hands her power over to a prevailing patriarchal-hierarchical entity (in this case the Mother Church as teacher in the form of bishops and priests). The chapter ends with considerations that, in order to apply the Mother Church metaphor meaningfully today real mothers must be engaged in the process, and that the image of the mother must be expanded to reflect the complex and diverse reality of motherhood. Only in this way can the
metaphor hope to act in a living sense for the people of the twenty-first century.
This thesis has sought to explore the maternal ecclesial metaphor in the documents of Vatican II. It has employed a *ressourcement* approach in which an exploration was undertaken of the development of the metaphor by the early Church in the context of the Roman Empire. The writings of five key early Patristic writers have been explored: Irenaeus of Lyons, the first to utilize the metaphor in the sense of the community as the mother; Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage, who explicitly named and further developed the imagery of “*Mater Ecclesia*”, making the significant link of Mother Church as spouse to Father God; and finally Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo, who associated Mother Church with a range of other images—including Virgin, Bride, Queen and especially Mary—and who are the only early Patristic writers referenced in Vatican II for the naming of Church as mother.

Some of the research is based upon the extensive findings of early Patristic scholars. To this I have added original investigations in areas such as the connection between the Mother Church metaphor and the mother of the contemporary culture of the speakers as it acts as the paramorphic model for their imaging of the ecclesial metaphor. There is a considerable amount of scholarship in terms of the context with which the maternal metaphor had been applied but a dearth of research in terms of the connection between the metaphor and model. It was in examining this connection that it was shown that Mother Church was developed by the Patristic writers as what Soskice would classify as a live metaphor. A large part of this thesis was focused on this investigation as it provides the necessary background for the study of the employment of the ecclesial mother metaphor by the Second Vatican Council.
Throughout the thesis, Soskice’s theory on the metaphor, particularly on the qualities of a living metaphor, have been applied to analyze the use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor. The relevant key points of her theory are that the metaphor is linguistic, not reduced to the lexeme, is cognitive or explanatory, is contextual, and when it is living is the opposite from literal language. For each speaker the context of their use of the metaphor, their backgrounds, influences and surrounding culture have been investigated. This is because Soskice argues that metaphor only makes sense within the context of the speaker’s and audience’s community and their background, lexicon, traditions, and so forth. Their ability then to understand the referent (in this case the Church) and the associations arising from the use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor depends on their shared context as a community.

Based on Soskice’s living metaphor theory, a living Mother Church metaphor extends ecclesiology and develops new horizons of understanding whilst a dead Mother Church metaphor has become detached from its original network of meaningful associations to become an empty cliché. For Soskice, a metaphor is considered living when there is initial inappropriateness or tension in its use, when the metaphor cannot be easily replaced or paraphrased, and the metaphor’s relation to the model enables the audience to directly or indirectly call to mind the model and the web of implications associated with this model. These have been the three basic criteria applied in the investigation of the uses of the maternal ecclesial metaphor in the early Patristic writers and the Vatican II documents in order to determine whether the metaphor’s use is ecclesiologically enriching or just superfluous ornamentation.

In Chapter I it was found that Irenaeus utilized the maternal ecclesial metaphor to address the Lyons community who were already quite familiar
with maternal imagery from Scripture (Galatians 4, 2 Maccabees), their Phrygian roots (the Anatolian mother), Roman influence (the she-wolf who saves Romulus and Remus by suckling them), as well as by their exposure to the Gnostic-Valentinian teaching of the Mater who feeds her children with Gnostic truths. In Irenaeus the breastfeeding-saving mother is a dominant image alongside the ecclesial images of virginal-bride and martyr-intercessor. Irenaeus presented a contrasting mother to the Gnostic-Valentinian mother, highlighting the Catholic Church as the true Mother who (breast)feeds the truth to the real children of God (the Church’s members). Paired with this breastfeeding-teaching Church image was a network of womb images with which Irenaeus associated the community of martyrs for the Church, as seen in HE 5.1.45-46, through the concepts of ‘quickening’, ‘miscarriage’, ‘birthing’, and ‘conceiving’. At this early stage, Mary was not seen as ecclesial-type of the Church. Her imaging as true mother (and more than mere container) was used by Irenaeus to confirm Christ’s humanity which is different to how he uses the maternal ecclesial metaphor to promote the Church as teacher of the truth. Irenaeus’ use of the maternal metaphor was in a living sense because: 1) his maternal metaphor was initially inappropriate and expanded the Church’s ecclesial vision (cf. the Mother Church as interceding-salvific martyr as well as conceiving and miscarrying); 2) it played an irreplaceable role linguistically, particularly against the Gnostic-Valentinians; and 3) the metaphor had a relationship to the model such that the referent and the associations tied to the model were apparent to his community.

In Chapter II it was shown that Tertullian continued the tradition of imaging Mother Church as birthing and breastfeeding. However, he extends both images such that Mother Church’s birthing becomes essentially associated
with baptism whilst its role as providing nourishment involves not only tending to the spiritual needs of its members but also their physical needs, in order to prepare them for martyrdom, an act highly valued by the North African community. Tertullian highlights the role of Mother Church as Mother to new infants by describing it as providing milk and honey to neophytes, post-baptism, just as new infants were traditionally fed in ancient Greco-Roman practice. For Tertullian, Mother Church also becomes a separate entity from the community and is tied to Father God such that he could put forward the idea that “without Mother Church, there is no access to Father God.”

Tertullian imaged Mother Church as the *materfamilia* and associated it with the highly significant ancient Roman familial concepts of ‘belonging’, ‘inheritance’, and ‘legitimacy’. He utilized the maternal ecclesial metaphor to highlight the importance of being within the Church, while outsiders were not only denied access to Father God and the spiritual life, but were also paralleled with civilians who did not belong to any family, who had no mother, and therefore experienced death in their living. The metaphor was utilized in part as a reassuring and at the same time threatening metaphor (‘be in the Church or perish’). The metaphor was also utilized to create an ‘us and them’ mentality, between members of the Church and those outside of its membership, to moreover help define the Church in the midst of a multi-religious society and the dangers of the North African community’s cultural openness to other religious perspectives such as that of the Marcionites. In this too, Tertullian upheld the image of the Mother Church of Catholicism over the Mother Church of the Marcionites and the Mother Synagogue of Judaism (as based in Galatians 4). Whilst he also described the Church as virgin, he did not state it was a mother at the same time. Tertullian’s Mother Church evidenced the
qualities of a living metaphor because the Mother Church as *materfamilia* was a striking image that reminded Christian Carthaginians that their membership in the Church paralleled their membership in a family and therefore society (fulfilling Soskice’s criteria 1 and 3). Without this membership, they may as well experience death. Such a metaphor could not be easily replaced (criterion 2) and the web of associations (criterion 3) it conjured was very clear to readers of the maternal metaphor texts.

Chapter III argued that, for the most part, Cyprian’s maternal ecclesial image parallels the image of the ancient imperial Roman *matrona*, commonly portrayed as a seated matron with two infants at her lap (*in sinum matris*) as seen in the *Ara Pacis Augustae* monument. In contrast to Tertullian who had low regard for the *matrona* and who rather emphasized the *materfamilia*, Cyprian employs a maternal image very similar to this celebrated *matrona* of the Roman Empire. This *matrona* was a symbol of peace (*pace*), harmony (*concordia*), piety (*pietas*), justice (*iustitia*), and fidelity (*fidelitas*) that counteracted the Carthaginian experience of instability, disunity, and uncertainty as a result of constant wars and the imminent sense of the apocalyptic in the Empire. Just as Carthage experienced these things so did Cyprian’s Church experience instability, disunity and uncertainty as a result of the Decian decree and the ensuing persecution of Christians.

Although the *matrona* was under the *manu* of the *paterfamilia*, she had power and influence usually exercised through her husband (such as Livia through the Emperor Augustus) or her son (in Livia’s case Tiberius who succeeded his father as emperor). Augustus used Livia for propaganda, promoting her as an ideal *matrona* image that could not be ignored since it permeated the Roman Empire in various ways, such as through coinage,
sculpture, hair arrangements, and funerary art. This thesis proposed that whether deliberate or not on Cyprian’s part, his portrayal of Mother Church aligned with this cultural model. The Mother Church as the matrona was not only a mother to infants but was also presented with similar characteristics to the general picture of the ancient Roman mother: she expressed the maternal characteristic grief, she showed maternal devotion but also ambition, she was the univira (the only spouse of her husband) and commanded the practice of pietas (duty, affection, gratitude) from her children towards her.

In Cyprian the maternal Church image becomes more complex when Cyprian describes it as mother-daughter, mother-virgin, mother-sister-bride, and mother-bride. This imaging contrasted Tertullian’s, wherein he called the Church a virgin and a bride but did not combine these images with the Church’s motherhood. In addition, Cyprian’s Mother Church is not simply bride to Father God but also a spouse to Christ in order to emphasise the one and only true Church. These feminine ecclesial metaphors were utilized as a direct response to specific situations: regarding the lapsi baptized under Novatian wanting to return to the Church; as an address to ecclesial virgins; concerning those who threatened the Church’s unity by making decisions for the community without the approval of Cyprian or the college of bishops; and as a warning against baptism by heretics.

Cyprian had various sources for his maternal ecclesial imaging—from the ancient Roman cultural matrona, from predecessors such as Tertullian and the tradition of the Church, from Scripture (Song of Songs 6:8), and possibly even from the source material that would later be collected into the Babylonian Talmud that images the Jewish community as mother. In utilizing the mother from Song of Songs, Cyprian was also responding to the threat of Marcionic
and Valentinian-Gnostic thinking. He employed the notorious ancient Roman image of the stepmother to represent heretical Churches, to further highlight the Catholic Church as the one and only true ecclesial Mother. Of all the early Patristic writers explored, Cyprian’s Mother Church most evidenced the quality of a live metaphor because of the very direct relationship of the metaphor to the model, the *matrona* (criterion 3). Because of this, it was not easily replaceable with a phrase or another piece of text (criterion 2). In Cyprian’s employment of the metaphor it was as, if not more, striking than his predecessor Tertullian as the mother comes to the forefront out of the shadows of her husband the *paterfamilia* (criterion 1).

Chapter IV presented Ambrose’s imaging and rhetorical utilization of Mother Church. Ambrose was particularly concerned with presenting its virginity alongside its maternity. Whilst in Tertullian and Cyprian, the Church was called a virgin or a mother or both, in Ambrose for the first time, the Mother-Virgin Church is transposed onto the individual Church member, particularly the ecclesial virgins. Ambrose uses Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as an image of how the Church could be simultaneously pure virgin and fruitful mother. Ambrose often concentrates on the early stages of motherhood for his image of Mother Church, particularly the stages of conception, childbirth, and the initial nurturing of an infant. However, his image also shows traces of the Roman *matrona* or *materfamilia* in the presentation of the Church as maternally weeping for the lost, breastfeeding good teachings, and deserving of the Roman virtue of *pietas* from Church members. Whilst Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian generally imaged the Church’s maternity in a collective communal sense, Ambrose also focuses upon the individual Church member as the location of this maternity. In the individual Church member,
Christ could be conceived (by the reception of God’s Word in his or her chaste soul) and brought to birth depending upon the individual’s response to the “Father’s will” (*ExpIILucBk10§25*). Despite Ambrose’s great emphasis on the Church’s virginity, it is the Church as a spouse or bride, which is most dominant among his feminine ecclesiial images. Ambrose also utilizes female images of daughter, sister and widow for the Church but does not link these images with the Church’s motherhood. His emphasis on the Church’s virginity was due in part from his personal perspective of virginity’s soteriological significance as reflected in the Roman high regard for Vestal Virginity (the sense of fecundity and prosperity it brought to its cities) but also the general cultural trend towards asceticism. The promotion of ecclesial virgins also afforded him some legitimacy in his ecclesiastical role. By introducing a ritual of installing virgins for the Mother Church and placing themselves under his physical and spiritual care, he modeled himself on the *paterfamilia* who has power over but also responsibility for those within his household. As well, it created a distraction away from the vicious Homoian-Nicene debates that continued to cause controversy and disunity within his Church. The introduction of Mary as embodying the maternal-virginal Church furthered these aims. In addition, the utilization of Mary as mother and virgin supported a pro-Nicene theology, acting as a foil against Arian threats, as well as refuting Jovinian claims against the special status of virginity that would ultimately question the Church’s nature as maternal because of its virginity. Initially relying upon the martyrdom tradition to promote virginity and the sacrifices made by virgins, Ambrose then turns to Song of Songs and Psalm 45 to convince his community of the value of virginity.
Ambrose’s Mother Church initially did not evidence the qualities of a live metaphor. The Church imaged as a mother-virgin was not striking enough to convince Ambrose’s Milanese audience to send their daughters to become ecclesial virgins. By then employing Mary, mother and virgin, as a model for the metaphor, it was able to take on qualities of a living metaphor. That is, it becomes striking in its presentation creating a tension that did not pre-exist: Mary as mother and virgin models the Church as fecund and virginal (criterion 1). Also, the maternal text could not be easily paraphrased, and if it were paraphrased, it would require a long piece of text that would remove the striking quality of the metaphor (criterion 2). Finally, the metaphor very much related with the model, and Ambrose made sure his audiences understood the model for the Church by writing explanations about what he meant when he called Mary and the Church mother and virgin. In one sense, we could say the metaphor was a forced living metaphor. The important point though was that it was a living metaphor because the referent and the web of associations conjured by the metaphor became clear and its use elicited a response from Ambrose’s audiences.

In Chapter V, the thesis discussed Augustine’s maternal ecclesial imaging as paralleling the image of his mother as well as the image of Mother Jerusalem from the Christian scriptures. All three mothers were presented in both the earthly and divine senses. The dissonant factor of Augustine’s maternal ecclesial metaphor, evidencing its quality as live metaphor, is the imaging of the birth of new Christians from the bosom of Mother Church rather than her womb. It is from this same bosom too that Christians new and old alike are shown as being nourished. This is the highlighted image when Augustine deals with the Manicheans. With them Augustine imaged Mother
Church as nourishing infants with the milk of truth in contrast to the erroneous teachings offered by them. However, this was not an indication that Augustine viewed Church members as infants only. Rather he assumed that some were fully grown and called for the rest to grow in faith so that they themselves can be spiritual mothers and thus reflect the Mother Church.

Augustine’s Mother Church also aligns with the ancient Roman matronal/materfamilia who was the univira, who birthed, fed, taught, interceded and mourned over her children. But his more dominant maternal ecclesial image is that of his mother Monica. This is seen especially in his dealings with the Donatists. In Confessions, just as Monica is portrayed as the pained mother pleading with her wayward child to return to the Christian faith, so Augustine creates an image of a pained maternal Church pleading with the Donatists to return to the Catholic Church, as particularly seen in Psalmus. Then just as Monica exerted her maternal influence onto Augustine forcing him out of an improper relationship, leading him ultimately to convert to Christianity, so Augustine’s Mother Church changes tack with the Donatists in Epistle 93 when the Catholic Church gains support from the Roman State to force Donatists back into the Church or suffer imperial consequences. Augustine justifies the use of force here by imaging it as both maternal and divine paternal disciplining.

It was in his dealings with the Donatists that Augustine developed the concept of the Church as consisting of both saints and sinners. Breaking with the Cyprianic-Tertullianic tradition of imaging the Church as filled only with pure, holy members and located only in the North African region, Augustine opens up the idea that the Church is located both in the present and in the future. The saints dwell in the Church as “a lily among the thorns” just as the
“beloved” dwell among the Church’s “daughters”. Whilst Ambrose utilized the early stages of motherhood (conception and birthing) to create distinctions between members of the Church, Augustine utilizes various female roles to create a greater number of distinctions in types of membership: the true believers were mothers (e.g., *De Virg 5*) and midwives (*Ep.48.2*) who lived among the immoral daughters (*Ep.Cath14.5*) of the Church, just as the lily lived among thorns (Song of Song 2:2).

Against the Jovinianists, the motherhood and virginity of the Church were emphasized to uphold the value of both, even though virginity was Augustine’s preference. In fact, for Augustine spiritual virginity was the prerequisite for spiritual motherhood. Mary the Mother of Jesus was utilized here as a concrete example of the Church’s divine motherhood and virginity, one whom Church members were called upon to emulate. However, this use of Mary was uneasy and unresolved for Augustine. For, having both physically and spiritually birthed Christ, her position in the Church could not be relegated to simply as its member. In the end, Augustine sought to emphasize Mary’s greater role as that of spiritual mother. One explanation for Augustine’s dilemma here was that he sought to combine two ecclesiolgies—a maternal/associative with a virginal/ascetical type. From another perspective Augustine’s two dominating ecclesial metaphors, the Church as *Totus Christus* and as Virgin Mother, could not be reduced into a singular image.

Mary is not the only biblical figure used by Augustine as a type for Mother Church. In *The City of God*, Hannah is also upheld as an ecclesiatype. In one of Augustine’s Christmas sermons, Anna is presented as an example to widows, Elizabeth as an example to married women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus as example mainly for the ecclesial virgins. Further, Augustine also
images Mother Church as the New Eve in order to refute the Gnostic denials of the role of the feminine in salvation and to refute the Manichean denial of the Old Testament and in their imagining of Adam and Eve as mere by products of a war between the kingdoms of darkness and light. Mother Church is also imaged as Mother Wisdom, Mother Hen, and Mother Charity. Thus there is no singular imaging of the Church as mother, even if Augustine carried on the tradition of calling the Church a bride, mother, and virgin.

One reason that Augustine’s Mother Church metaphor was a live metaphor was because it was clearly related to the model, Monica, who exemplified the good Christian Roman woman (criterion 3). Augustine’s uses of the metaphor are also quite striking in the way he gave Mother Church her own voice and speaking of the birthing location of the Church as at her bosom not her womb (criterion 1). With these uses, there was no way another text or image could imitate the maternal metaphor’s effect. In explicitly fulfilling Soskice’s three criteria, Augustine’s maternal metaphor very much exemplified the qualities of a live a metaphor.

Overall, for Part One of the thesis, it was concluded that for the early Patristic writers their use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor exemplified the qualities of use of a live metaphor. Their maternal metaphors were linguistic and served explanatory and necessary functions for the different communities they were applied to. Their various uses of the maternal ecclesial metaphor had an initial dissonant quality about them. The metaphor could not be easily paraphrased. The relation of the metaphor to the model was very close, such that the metaphor could evoke an emotional, moral, or spiritual response from its audiences because it aligned with their own cultural imaging of the maternal.
The examination of the Vatican II documents meanwhile pointed to a maternal ecclesial metaphor that was at times redundant and at other times was little more than a cliché title for the Church. Before the metaphor was explored in the documents, certain principles serving as background and context for the reading were set out in Chapter VI. The first four principles specifically pertain to the context with which the maternal metaphor was to be explored in *Lumen Gentium*, seeing that it is the very Constitution on the Church and that the maternal metaphor occurs most within this document. The first principle states that the primary intent of LG is pastoral, a contrast from the Tridentine juridical Church approach. The second principle explains why LG had the most occurrences of the maternal metaphor: the *De Beata* schema, a document on Mary, initially envisaged as a separate document to the *De Ecclesia* schema, was ultimately inserted into LG—creating a text that sought a compromise between a Christotypical and ecclesiotypical Mariology. The third principle explains the meaning of Mary as type and the Church community as antitype to Mother Church. The fourth principle highlights the other ecclesial metaphors present within the Vatican II documents. It is not the Mother Church which best explains the Church’s nature but rather the Church as Mystery. However, it was put forward that the People of God paired with the Church as Bride best represented the Church as mystery.

The fifth principle explores the imaging of the mother in the 1930’s to 50’s, the period before Vatican II. This version of motherhood can best be described by Friedan’s feminine mystique theory, where the woman’s location and role was idealized into a picture of domesticity for the purpose of creating a sense of harmony and stability for society after a continuous modern period of wars and economic depression. Notably, the Church documents *Castii*...
*Conubii* (1930) and *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae* (1880) similarly reflected this cultural idealization of the mother. The sixth principle explores particular Church documents that shaped the mindset of Vatican II, and therefore the image of Mother Church. These were *Mater et Magistra* (1961), *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* (1962) and *Humanae Salutis* (1962). In these three documents Mother Church was the holder and teacher of religious truth but wished to reach out and teach beyond her own members. *Humanae Salutis* in particular showed a Mother Church concerned with the daily life of the human person in all areas of life. But even with the change in perception of the woman-mother from *Castii Connubii* (1930) to *Mater et Magistra* and even *Pacem in Terris* (early 1960’s), Mother Church retained the image of the mother as teacher, primary carer, source of life for her children, and within the domestic sphere. Vatican II’s closing speech validated this image by describing mothers as “the first educators of the human race in the intimacy of the family circle”. It affirmed the mother as one who passed on tradition and prepared her children for the future. As well, the mother was able to live on in history through her children. The seventh and final principle noted that the four constitutions were the interpretive keys for reading the other Vatican II documents. Further, among the four constitutions, *Dei Verbum* was the most significant and the interpretative key with which to read the constitutions.

Chapters VII and VIII then investigated the use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor in the documents of Vatican II. In Chapter VII, the approach to the exploration of the metaphor in *Lumen Gentium* differed from others as the metaphor occurred most within this constitution and it was the very document concerning the Church. The exploration involved first reading the maternal texts as texts in themselves without drawing on the intertextual
interpretative keys of the other documents, approaching them as one of the faithful, without knowledge of the entire Vatican II context, would read the document. This reading revealed the maternal metaphor pointed most onto Mary and overshadowed the concept that the community itself was called to reflect the motherhood of the Church through active participation in the Church and engaging in its apostolic work as discussed specifically in LG65. This call was reiterated in the other documents: *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 6, *Gravissimum Educations* 7, *Optatam Totius* 19, *Gaudium et Spes* part 2, chapter 2, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* chapter 6. This reading also revealed that the mother figure was subsumed into the bridal figure at LG6, where the various images of the Church were initially presented. Thus the mother of LG was subsumed into either Mary or the bridal figure, and the community as Mother Church was deemphasized, especially since it was called to put itself under the maternal care of Mary.

In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Mother Church image was employed to present juridical statements in a pastoral way. Her presence was necessary to provide reassurance over any anxiety held concerning reform at the Council. In one instance the metaphor’s use seemed quite redundant but at the same time lent a slightly greater forcefulness to the statement.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the pastoral Mother who wishes to open herself to the world, as foreshadowed in *Humanae Salutis*, appears most evidently. Notably, the magisterium see themselves as representing this Mother Church in her function of teaching, exhorting, advising and engaging with the world. Mother Church sees herself as moral and spiritual authority but open also to learning from the world.
In *Dei Verbum*, Mother Church appears explicitly as the juridical Holy Mother Church of Trent in articles concerning the relationship between inspiration and canonicity. More often though, she appears implicitly as the mother who feeds her children with God’s Word and in one instance as the spouse of Christ. She appears in DV22 but her use is redundant since the metaphor could be replaced with another description without affecting the meaning. The mother presented is empty of any particular maternal content. Thus it is difficult to see the relationship of the metaphor to any model. Motherhood here is associated with authority but also serves to provide reassurance that translations will be undertaken with great care.

Chapter VIII continued on the investigation of the use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor, this time in the decrees and declarations of the Council. In *Inter Mirifica*, the mother is a marginal figure and it is her children that are the focus of the maternal texts. In calling them children, *ecclesiae fillii*, the Council has justification for instructing them in the document. The imaging of the Mother Church here is as teacher represented by the clergy. This is also the image of Mother Church in *Christus Dominus*, where the bishops are the Mother Church as teachers, but a Mother Church who wishes to reach out to all peoples (the Mother Church of *Mater et Magistra*).

In *Gravissimum Educationis*, the Mother Church is again the teacher, provider of care, as well as representing a pastoral-maternal image that is not clearly defined. In this last image it is assumed readers understand the special affection that is provided by the mother (*ecclesia peculiari suo affectu et adiutorio praesens sit oportet*, GE7). But here, it is not only the clergy who are imaged as representing Mother Church as teacher but also many members of the Church (students, teachers, and lay ministers). The concept of Mother
Church as the community here is linked with the concept of Church members being educated so that they may reflect Mother Church and engage in its apostolic work. This Mother Church image is also found in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* chapter 6, *Optatam Totius* 19, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 6, *Gaudium et Spes* part 2, chapter 2, and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14.

In *Ad Gentes*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Nostra Aetate*, *Diginitatis Humanae*, the *Mater Ecclesia* again appears only through its *filii*, understandably so as these documents are concerned with the Church’s engagement with people beyond its own membership—with the world, other religions, and with the work of ecumenism. In these documents again members are called children, so that they may be instructed by the Church to take certain courses of action. Again, whilst the pastoral-maternal image of the Church is emphasized, the Mother Church is still more the teacher or authority and only appears in a maternal sense as showing care for its people and the world when it communicates with them and instructs its own.

In *Perfectae Caritatis*, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, and *Optatam Totius* Mother Church appears only once in each and in an implicit sense, focusing the attention of the maternal texts on the Church’s *filii*. At *Perfectae Caritatis*, Mother Church’s presence was for the purpose of highlighting the religious orders and societies as belonging to her. At *Presbyterorum Ordinis* and *Optatam Totius*, as mentioned above, Mother Church is both the clergy and the laity engaged in its apostolic work.

There are only two documents that do not call upon the maternal ecclesial metaphor, that is *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. Given that the call to reflect the Mother Church and engage in its apostolic work was present in many of the documents of Vatican II including
Lumen Gentium, it would have been appropriate in Apostolicam Actuositatem to highlight that particular image for the work of the laity. Mother Church is not referred to in Orientalium Ecclesiarum, the Church’s Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches, which could have benefited from this recognition that the Eastern and Latin rite Catholic Churches are both children of the one, universal Mother Church. However, it is possible that there may have been tension over the idea that the Latin rite might claim preeminence over the others, thus claiming motherhood for itself. Interestingly, the Church is described as Sancta Catholicae Ecclesiae, evidencing this avoidance of using the mother metaphor.

Overall in the Vatican II documents, apart from the dominant use of the maternal metaphor in Lumen Gentium to point to Mary (named by Vatican II as “Mother of the Church”), the maternal ecclesial metaphor was imaged quite narrowly as a figure of authority, teacher, bearer or keeper of the truth, and was used as a rhetorical tool to provide a pastoral bent to juridical statements. As figure of authority, she approves the careful reform undertaken within the Council. As teacher, she provides the saving truth and reaches out to all people including non-members of the Church so that they may be saved by the gospel truth. As bearer of truth, she seeks to communicate this truth not only to its members but those outside of its membership. As the pastoral mother, the use of the metaphor sought to communicate care for members whilst they were instructed or taught by the Church. This use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor within juridical statements seemed to soften an otherwise harsh instruction by the Church towards its members. Further, by calling the Church a mother, it allowed for members to be called its children and consequently gave authority to the Church to instruct, teach, and exhort its members to action.
The final chapter, Chapter IX, critiqued the maternal ecclesial metaphor by questioning whether it acts as a live metaphor for the people of today or not. The Soskicean based criteria outlined in the Introduction was used to test for the presence of living metaphor in the documents, just as the criteria was used on the Early Patristic writers’ use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor. The results showed that at times the metaphor is redundant, easily replaceable or even lost in translation. In fact, rather than conveying a network of associations surrounding the concept of motherhood, the Council is using this image to convey the Church as a teacher or figure of authority. At other times the metaphor conjured images of the juridic mother of the Council of Trent, Sancta Mater Ecclesiae. The third criterion especially highlights how the metaphor can be considered problematic from a range of different viewpoints. For the model of Mother generally presented could be seen as supporting gender essentialist notions, gender inequality, and the ‘Good Mother’ myth. Consequently this image can limit, marginalize, and disempower, women and mothers even without intending to do so. Thus the chapter ended with the acknowledgement that the ongoing usage of the maternal metaphor for the Church is problematic. But, if it is decided that the metaphor may be meaningfully revived, in the least mothers must be engaged in a work of reappropriation that acknowledges the diverse and complex reality of contemporary motherhood. This has the dual possibility of allowing mothers and women to become agents of transformation of their situations but also expands the Church’s own vision of itself as a family. This expansion entails in part, opening up limited imaging of what constitutes or defines a family, a mother, a father, a child, and their relationship with one another. Such a
development could assist in the Church’s own ongoing intra and ad extra issues.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Pope Francis has said: “I am extremely fond of this image of the Church as mother. For this reason I wish to return to it, because I feel that this image not only tells us what the Church is like but also what face the Church—this Mother Church of ours—should increasingly have.” He has already used it often enough and in unusual ways to have captured global attention, as evidenced by the headlines: “Mother Church is not a babysitter”, “Be a Mother, Not an Old Maid” and “Church is a Mother not an NGO.” As he further develops his use of the maternal ecclesial metaphor it will be interesting to see to what extent his use of the image draws upon the understandings of the Patristic writers and Vatican II as well as whether he grounds the metaphor in the contemporary experience of women and continues to develop it in new and imaginative ways.

This thesis has sought to contribute to the larger task of feminist theologians to reclaim the use of feminine images in the Church. It has begun this by investigating the cultural understanding of motherhood in early Patristic times, which often reduced women to their biological functions of birthing, feeding and nurturing. While these at least grounded the image of Mother Church in part of the lived reality of mothers, the use of this metaphor in Vatican II is quite devoid of reference to any networks of association to do with contemporaneous maternal experiences. Vatican II often reduced the living metaphor developed by the early Patristic writers into a clichéd title for the Church or an assertion of the Church’s solicitudinous teaching authority. Perhaps the contributions of Pope Francis might prove a step in the right direction in reviving this dying, if not deceased, metaphor. The reclamation of
this image is not only important for feminist theology but also the contemporary Christian community. It highlights the issue of language used in the Church: the purpose of the language, the people who benefit from its usage, and the danger of its use when meaning becomes obscured (because it has remained part of the Church’s lexicon despite changes in context and meaning over the centuries), or worse, it disempowers the community and sustains unhelpful structures and restrictive identities within the Church.


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