

OUR LADY OF EPHEBUS

Our Lady of Ephesus

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TO
MY MOTHERS
MARY AND MARIE

Acknowledgments

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Preface

You need not feel inferior if you have never heard of Mary's home at Ephesus, where she spent her last years on earth. I myself learned of it as recently as 1957 and found practically everyone to whom I have since mentioned the shrine in complete ignorance of such a place. The basic reason anywhere for lack of knowledge of the shrine is its recent discovery and more recent restoration. In America, however, there is a more widespread ignorance than elsewhere because of the lack of pertinent and expository literature. Although works on Mary and Ephesus have appeared in many languages, extremely few have been written in English, and of those none exceeds the size of a pamphlet. With the hope of appreciably improving that situation this book was conceived.

The problem concerning *Panaya Kapulu*, Mary's home in Ephesus, can be stated simply. There are traditions, as well as historical and diversified arguments, which establish it as the dwelling place of Mary during her final years on earth, as well as the site of the Assumption. In Jerusalem, however, there is the tomb popularly supposed to be that of Mary as well as the site of her Assumption. Thus either the Ephesus or the Jerusalem tradition is false: Mary could not have spent her last years, and died perhaps, and been assumed into heaven at more than one place. Although absolute scientific certitude as to the geographical location does not seem possible, a moral certainty concerning one of the two possibilities may be enjoyed.

It is only fair that from the outset you be informed of my attitude toward the evaluation of this problem. I am, if not skeptical, altogether circumspect when it comes to most private visions, some extraordinary cures, certain pious traditions, and so on. And I am at

least as wary as is the Church itself in issuing its official declarations on such matters. But once something fundamental concerning them can be established from solid factual arguments, then all the attending circumstances assume a new significance. The case for the Ephesus tradition may be said to enjoy real factual foundation plus manifold auxiliary arguments. The Jerusalem tradition, however, has apparently few of the latter and none of the former.

I have been as objective as possible in considering the evidence of the controversy and have arrived at a judgment. It is my hope, of course, that you reach the identical conclusion. The facts and arguments in the following chapters seem more than adequate to fulfill that hope. All the evidence known to me, whether for or against the Ephesus tradition, is included and generally evaluated.

Regardless of your final judgment it cannot be denied that *Panaya Kapulu* is a shrine of our Lady, and as such it has the highest ecclesiastical sanction. Mary surely dwells there today; this is evident, for instance, from the many cures. While the frequent cures do not prove the authenticity of the shrine, they would at least seem to indicate divine approval of the faith and devotion manifested there. If those cures alone could be used as proof that *Panaya Kapulu* was Mary's home at Ephesus, then nothing further would have to be said.

The decision on the authenticity of *Panaya* may and should be formed, therefore, from the collection of facts and related arguments presented prior to the treatment of apparitions and cures.

People are all fascinated in various degrees by the unknown, the mysterious, the supernatural. Elements of this nature permeate the text which follows. As this narrative proceeds you will be exposed to all of the history of Mary's home that I am capable of presenting. You will learn of the remarkable discovery of the shrine. You will marvel, it is hoped, at the many traditions, the related legends, the extensive writings, and various facts concerning it. You will acquire knowledge of the pilgrimages, cures, and innumerable other details. But it is my hope, most of all, that you will be thinking of Mary throughout this book and will thereby be in some way honoring her. Most likely she and her home at Ephesus will occasionally come to mind long after you have finished this handbook.

The term *handbook* is used in the sense that this is the most complete and up-to-date work available on Mary's home, a sort of manual on Our Lady of Ephesus. A wealth of further reading matter is indicated in the bibliography.

For several years I have wished many times for a manual wherein references and sources for all the salient points of *Panaya* could be found. This is the first attempt at one in English.

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OUR LADY OF EPHEBUS

CHAPTER I

Allow Me to Present...

§ 1. *Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774–1824)*

It was through Anne Catherine Emmerich that the Shrine of Our Lady of Ephesus was discovered. While it is quite true that Mary's cult was practiced in Christian Ephesus, and that one could speak of Our Lady of Ephesus in that sense, the title refers to Mary primarily as she is honored at her home in Ephesus, the house wherein she lived for the last nine years of her life, the place of her Dormition — the site of her Assumption. It is altogether proper to say that without Catherine Emmerich, Mary's home, or *Panaya Kapulu*,¹ as the local people call it, would in all probability not be known to the world today. Without her, then, this house of the Holy Virgin, where already hundreds of thousands have venerated Mary, would still be nothing but a relatively deserted ruin, known only to a few.

Catherine Emmerich was born on September 8, 1774, in the village of Flamske, near Coesfeld, in the diocese of Münster, Westphalia, Germany. A peasant, she was bound out to a farmer at the age of twelve. Six years later she was apprenticed to a dressmaker in Coesfeld, and after two years of sewing she went home and began in earnest her efforts to enter a convent, a desire she had entertained from her early teens.

She asked to be received at the Convents of the Augustinians at Borken, of the Trappists at Darfeld, and of the Poor Clares at Münster; but her poverty, and that of these convents, always presented an insuperable obstacle to her being received.²

Catherine simply did not have a dowry; she would have appeared, therefore, to any poor convent as a definite liability. When twenty

years were behind her, she had amassed through her sewing the vast fortune — vast to a poor peasant girl — of about ten dollars. The idea had come to her that with that money she might learn in Coesfeld how to play the organ and then, armed with such a talent, perhaps gain admittance to some convent. But once in Coesfeld, she spent so much time, and all her money, serving the poor that there was none left for learning music. She remained at Coesfeld some four years, working and spending on the poor what little she earned.

While from her youth visions were commonplace to Catherine, she told of one that was distinctly different. She was twenty-four years old and still at Coesfeld. One day about noon, while kneeling in meditation in the Jesuit church, she experienced actually and visibly the sufferings of Christ's sacred head crowned with thorns.³

Four more years in Coesfeld passed, all the while Catherine's desires of becoming a nun increasing and her chances decreasing. Finally the opportunity came when the parents of a young girl whom the Augustinian nuns of Dülmen wished to receive into their order refused to give their consent unless Catherine was taken at the same time. "The nuns yielded their assent, though somewhat reluctantly, on account of their extreme poverty, and on the 13th November 1802, one week before the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, Anne Catherine entered on her novitiate."⁴

Catherine's life in the convent of Agnetenberg was not always easy, inasmuch as she was "different" from the other nuns. But she bore all things patiently and lovingly. At the age of twenty-nine, exactly one year after her admittance, she pronounced her solemn vows.

Catherine's life in the convent was accompanied by many remarkable phenomena,⁵ not the least of which were her numerous visions during her illnesses. Catherine had never been the picture of health, nor in fact did she enjoy what little health was rightly hers, for she had asked God to allow her the suffering of others and He granted her desire. In 1807 Catherine began to experience pains corresponding to the wounds of Christ, and the pain in her feet often prevented her walking.

On the 3rd December 1811, the convent was suppressed [under the government of Jerome Bonaparte, King of Westphalia] and the church closed. The nuns dispersed in all directions, but Anne Catherine remained, poor and ill. A kindhearted servant belonging to the monastery attended her out of charity, and an aged emigrant priest, who said Mass in the convent, remained also with her. These three individuals, being the poorest of the Community, did not leave the convent until the spring of 1812.⁶

In the spring of that year Catherine was thirty-seven and a very sick woman. She was moved to the home of a poor widow in the neighborhood, where she had a miserable little room for a year and a half.⁷ It was toward the end of December that the full stigmata of Christ's cross and crucifixion were imprinted upon her. Not only was Catherine unable to walk or rise from bed but she also soon became unable to eat.

Word of her stigmata leaked out early in 1813 and the village doctor forced her to undergo an examination. Contrary to his expectations he was convinced of the truth of the phenomena and forthwith drew up an official report.⁸ He attended Catherine as physician and friend from that time until her death. Once his examination had been conducted, of course, word spread. On March 28, 1813, the Church authorities from Münster decided that an ecclesiastical investigation was desirable, and a commission which included Dean Bernard Overberg, the vicar-general, and three physicians proceeded to Dülmen. The members of the delegation found her stigmata genuine, and one of the doctors published in 1814 a detailed account of the phenomena in the *Medical Journal* of Salzburg.

On October 23, 1813, Catherine was moved again; this time she had a window overlooking a garden — a big improvement over the past year and a half. Catherine's aged mother came there from the country in 1817 to die by her side. Her father had died at home a short time earlier.

In view of what has been said of Catherine's peasant youth, it should not come as a surprise to learn that she was practically illiterate. She nonetheless believed that God wished her to leave "for the good of many souls" the many revelations with which He

had blessed her. In spirit she had already visited many places and witnessed numerous events, relating especially to the lives of the saints and the feasts of the Church. And she was yet to witness, in her bedridden state, even more. In her last years (1821–1824) the visions became increasingly concentrated on the life of Christ and the saints about Him, particularly Mary. When Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), the German poet, first visited her on September 17, 1818, she recognized him as the man who was to enable her to fulfill her wish to set her visions down in writing. Although her personal conviction alone would have sufficed, she was furthermore counseled personally by Bishop Michael Sailer on October 22, 1818, to relate everything to Brentano.⁹

Catherine passed her remaining years in ecstasies and sufferings, always repeating her visions to her scribe. In 1823 she said that God would soon take her to Himself.¹⁰ On February 9, 1824, at half-past eight in the evening, having received the Last Sacraments, she breathed her last in the presence of a priest and a few friends. She was carried to the grave the following Friday, the thirteenth, followed by the entire population of the place.

As a postscript to Catherine's life, here is an extract, printed in December, 1824, from the *Journal of Catholic Literature* of Kerz:

About six or seven weeks after the death of Anne Catherine Emmerich, a report having got about that her body had been stolen away, the grave and coffin were opened in secret, by order of the authorities, in the presence of seven witnesses. They found with surprise not unmixed with joy that corruption had not yet begun its work on the body of the pious maiden. Her features and countenance were smiling like those of a person who is dreaming sweetly. She looked as though she had but just been placed in the coffin, nor did her body exhale any corpse-like smell. *It is good to keep the secret of the king, says Jesus the son of Sirach; but it is also good to reveal to the world the greatness of the mercy of God.*¹¹

The case for Catherine's beatification was introduced in 1892 by the Bishop of Münster and is still pending. As will become clearer later on, the question of Catherine's visions, as edited by her scribe, Brentano, had hindered the process all along. A gigantic step forward occurred when Pope Pius XI (1922–1939) eliminated them from further consideration.

§ 2. *Her Visions in General*

The visions of Catherine Emmerich as transcribed by Brentano are not wholly perfect. But after all, when you consider the means afforded her for handing them down to posterity, this is not surprising. There are some errors, but they are practically always of little consequence — chronological, geographical, or philological. And as one expert remarked, “. . . the statements of Anne Catherine Emmerich . . . are never found to be counter to the Scriptures, nor mistaken about Jewish ritual at the time.”¹²

The man ultimately responsible for the written version of Catherine's visions was something of a controversial character himself. Clemens Maria Brentano (1778–1842), part-time poet and prominent member of the Romantic School, is perhaps best known for having published *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. He married a divorcée named Sophie Mereau, and after her death in 1806 became a drifter. A second marriage proved disastrous and he left his second wife. The year 1818 found him in Berlin and “converted” — his previous indifference to his Catholic birthright transformed into fervent devotion.

Later in 1818 he first learned of Catherine Emmerich on reading a published letter of the Count de Stolberg, which bore witness to the authenticity of the phenomena observed in the stigmatic. He afterward learned more from a friend who had visited Catherine. In September, 1818, he managed an invitation from Bishop Sailer, and obtained from Dean Overberg, the bishop's vicar-general, a letter of introduction to Catherine's doctor. His first visit with her was on September 17. Shortly after that, and for reasons already mentioned, he began to transcribe all that she told him. He passed in this manner six years, although he allowed a few deliberate interruptions. Thus he remained her servant from the moment of introduction to the end.

When Catherine died in 1824, Brentano again wandered, settling finally in Munich in 1833. From the mass of the recorded visions he extracted everything pertaining to the life of Christ and edited the very last portion, some ten years after Catherine's death, under the

title *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord*.¹³ Besides the large collection on the life of Christ, he extracted another smaller collection on the life of Mary. He began printing this in 1841, but never finished it because of illness. He died on July 28, 1842. His brother, Christian, who fell heir to his papers, wished to continue printing *The Life of Our Lady*, but died in 1851 without having really accomplished anything. Christian's widow, with the aid of some friends, finally succeeded in having this and other collected writings published at Frankfurt in nine volumes (1851-1855).¹⁴

In editing Catherine's visions, Brentano attempted wherever possible to add footnotes from Sacred Scripture, history, tradition, and geography, to show their agreement with reality. It is probable that he may even have made some changes in the visions themselves. Then, too, the language and expressions employed by Brentano, a man of superior education, are quite likely different from Catherine's own oral report. Concerning these questions the following may be noted:

We have no hesitation whatever in allowing the force of this argument. Most fully do we believe in the entire sincerity of M. Clement Brentano, because we both know and love him, and, besides, his exemplary piety and the retired life which he leads, secluded from a world in which it would depend but on himself to hold the highest place, are guarantees amply sufficient to satisfy any impartial mind of his sincerity. A poem such as he might publish, if he only pleased, would cause him to be ranked at once among the most eminent of the German poets, whereas the office which he has taken upon himself of secretary to a poor visionary has brought him nothing but contemptuous raillery. Nevertheless, we have no intention to assert that in giving the conversations and discourses of Sister Emmerich that order and coherency in which they were greatly wanting, and writing them down in his own way, he may not unwittingly have arranged, explained, and embellished them. But this would not have the effect of destroying the originality of the recital, or impugning either the sincerity of the nun, or that of the writer.¹⁵

No attempt will be made to give further details of the controversy concerning Brentano. For that the reader is referred to some of the studies already made.¹⁶ And, as already noted, the obstacle which this question had presented to Catherine's beatification has been removed.¹⁷ Brentano undoubtedly rephrased Catherine's simple state-

ments, enhanced them, and added some ideas of his own; let him, therefore, bear the blame for the few errors contained, and give the little nun credit for the rest. The idea of making Brentano responsible in greater part than Catherine for the germ or basic content of the majority of visions is incredible. That the finger of God is evident in those visions, even as handed down by Brentano, cannot be denied. At all times Catherine appeared humble, simple, charitable, docile.

The visions of Catherine were, at best, private revelations. Such revelations have been the object of skepticism down through the ages, and are still such today. Visions of this nature ordinarily possess merely a relative value, and the measure of their worth may be disputed. The Catholic Church, while inflexible in dogma, permits complete liberality to the human mind in almost everything else. You may, therefore, believe private revelations or reject them, as you will. You may place credence in the visions of Catherine Emmerich and others, or you may decline to accept them and dispute their authenticity and divine origin. Even when the Church approves private revelations as written by this or that saint, it does not thereby confirm the content; it gives assurance that nothing offensive is contained. The Church would only reject and condemn revelations which contained matter contrary to faith or morals, or which were opposed to Scripture and apostolic tradition. No such fault can be found with Catherine's revelations as embodied in the ecclesiastically approved *Dolorous Passion* or the *Life of Mary*, nor can fault be found with the nun herself for she related everything in a spirit of complete submission to the Church.

Revelations such as Catherine's are edifying and, since they effectively serve to promote piety, this is sufficient reason for their existence and nominal acceptance. They read as easily as the daily newspaper, and are much more credible and captivating. They took their place in the world rapidly, once they appeared, and they hold it in many languages to this day. Their acknowledged place is, of course, that of a most impressive and singularly memorable collection of meditations, having the extraordinary power of enabling their readers to appreciate the full story behind the brief and austere gospel narratives.

CHAPTER II

Mary's Home—Panaya Kapulu¹

§ 1. *Catherine's Description*

In practically all of the accounts on Mary's home at Ephesus the pertinent vision of Sister Emmerich and the actual discovery of the house by the Lazarists are interwoven. This is entirely acceptable. There is no reason, however, why Catherine's vision cannot be preserved as such, and be separated from the account of the actual discovery. One problem does arise by placing her vision ahead of the discovery, and that is that you know what Mary's home looks like before you learn that it has been found. But this order is not really too illogical when you consider that the Lazarists themselves used Catherine's revelations to locate Mary's home, and that Catherine herself pictured the house from afar and described it in 1821-1822, while it was not discovered until seventy years later, in 1891.

The following descriptions were made by Catherine in different years, for the most part in 1821 and 1822, generally in the middle of August just prior to the feast of the Assumption.

After Our Lord's Ascension Mary lived for three years on Mount Sion, for three years in Bethany, and for nine years in Ephesus, whither St. John took her. . . .

Mary did not live in Ephesus itself, but in the country near it where several women who were her close friends had settled. Mary's dwelling was on a hill to the left of the road from Jerusalem some three and a half hours from Ephesus. This hill slopes steeply towards Ephesus; the city as one approaches it from the south-east seems to lie on rising ground immediately before one, but seems to change its place as one draws nearer. Great avenues lead up to the city, and the ground under the trees is covered with yellow fruit. Narrow paths lead southwards to a hill near the top of which is an uneven plateau, some half-hour's journey in circumference, overgrown, like the hill itself, with wild trees and bushes. It was on this plateau that the Jewish settlers had made their home. It is a very lonely place, but

has many fertile and pleasant slopes as well as rock-caves, clean and dry and surrounded by patches of sand. It is wild but not desolate, and scattered about it are a number of trees, pyramid-shaped, with big shady branches below and smooth trunks.²

A momentary pause in Catherine's description of the site of Mary's home seems in order. You should note at this point that she has already established the general direction of Mary's Mountain, as it is called today, as well as the walking time from Ephesus and some general features of the locale. Her vision continued as follows:

John had a house built for the Blessed Virgin before he brought her here. Several Christian families and holy women had already settled here, some in caves in the earth or in rocks, fitted out with light woodwork to make dwellings, and some in fragile huts or tents. They had come here to escape violent persecution. Their dwellings were like hermits' cells, for they used as their refuges what nature offered them. As a rule, they lived at a quarter of an hour's distance from each other. The whole settlement was like a scattered village.³

By Catherine's reference to a persecution you already have good reason to presume that she had in mind certain fugitive Jewish converts. Such a presumption would be correct, as is obvious from one of her earlier statements. On a prior occasion Catherine, in speaking of some of Mary's Jewish neighbors, mentioned that some Jews had come to Ephesus to escape the persecution in Jerusalem, and that a number of them lived in caves in the rocks nearby.⁴ Now to continue with the vision:

Mary's house was the only one built of stone. A little way behind it was the summit of the rocky hill from which one could see over the trees and hills to Ephesus and the sea with its many islands. The place is nearer the sea than Ephesus, which must be several hours' journey distant from the coast. The district is lonely and unfrequented. Near here is a castle inhabited by a king who seems to have been deposed. John visited him often and ended by converting him. This place later became a bishop's see. Between the Blessed Virgin's dwelling and Ephesus runs a little stream which winds about in a very singular way.⁵

It is apparent that the site of Mary's home had been seen in vision as it existed while Mary lived there. The city of Ephesus was just beginning to be introduced to Christianity, and later it did become

an episcopal see. The topography, of course, would remain basically the same through the course of centuries, and the house, if it remained at all, would have to be in the same place as it was when Mary used it. Just as Catherine viewed the site as it was in the first century, so also did she envision the house. She described the home in detail, as it existed with its original occupant.

Mary's house was the only one built of stone. The front and sides of the house were square, while the back was round, as viewed from the inside, or angular, as seen from the outside.⁶

Catherine said, in other words, that the house was boxlike; more precisely, it was cruciform. The single exception to the straightness of the walls appeared at the back of the house in the form of the semicircular apse. This was round, as seen from inside the house, but angular, from the outside.

. . . the windows were high up near the flat roof. The house was divided into two compartments by the hearth in the center of it. The fireplace was on the floor opposite the door; it was sunk into the ground beside a wall which rose in steps on each side of it up to the ceiling. In the centre of this wall a deep channel, like the half of a chimney, carried the smoke up to escape by an opening in the roof. I saw a sloping copper funnel projecting above the roof over this opening.⁷

The main section of the house, approximately a modest twenty by forty feet, thus had a lovely fireplace and tapering chimney as a central room divider, or at least as an effective and substantial means of dividing that main section into two rooms. Catherine continued the description of the main section in these words:

The front part of the house was divided from the room behind the fireplace by light movable wicker screens on each side of the hearth. In this front part, the walls of which were rather rough and also blackened by smoke, I saw little cells on both sides, shut in by wicker screens fastened together. If this front part of the house was needed as one large room, these screens, which did not nearly reach to the ceiling, were taken apart and put aside. These cells were used as bedrooms for Mary's maidservant and for other women who came to visit her. To the right and left of the hearth, doors led into the back part of the house, which was darker than the front part and ended in a semicircle or angle. It was neatly and pleasantly arranged; the walls were covered with wickerwork, and the ceiling was vaulted. Its

beams were decorated with a mixture of panelling and wickerwork, and ornamented with a pattern of leaves. It was all simple and dignified.⁸

The description, so far, is rather clear. One point of possible confusion between the last two quotations, however, is the question of the roof. Catherine first said that the windows were high up and close to the roof, which was flat; then she said that the ceiling was vaulted. Inasmuch as both statements were made on the same occasion, Catherine cannot be accused of contradicting herself. And with no more information than she has already offered, the statements can be readily reconciled. First, the roof could have actually been completely flat. In this case the vaults, or what appeared to be vaults, were such only inside the house—they could have been either real or merely simulated by interior decoration. Second, the roof could have been both flat, at its outer extremities near the walls, and vaulted, but only beginning at some distance toward its center. Third, the roof could have been vaulted even at its extremities, the walls themselves, and flat at a point still close to the walls, and remaining flat for the greater portion of its area, rather than swelling outward into full domes.

Catherine presented a few more details about the principal two-room section, and about the back room in particular.

The farthest corner or apse of this room was divided off by a curtain and formed Mary's oratory. In the centre of the wall was a niche in which had been placed a receptacle like a tabernacle, which could be opened and shut by pulling at a string to turn its door. In it stood a cross about the length of a man's arm in which were inserted two arms rising outwards and upwards, in the form of the letter Y, the shape in which I have always seen Christ's Cross.⁹

After spending a short time speaking of the cross and the other objects with it, Catherine continued her description of Mary's home, in particular the larger, back portion of the house, which included the tiny room at the rear right, Mary's bedroom.

To the right of this oratory, against a niche in the wall, was the sleeping-place or cell of the Blessed Virgin. Opposite it, to the left of the oratory, was a cell where her clothes and other belongings were kept. Between these two cells a curtain was hung dividing off the

oratory. It was Mary's custom to sit in front of this curtain when she was working or reading. The sleeping-place of the Blessed Virgin was backed by a wall hung with a woven carpet; the side-walls were light screens of bark woven in different-coloured woods to make a pattern. The front wall was hung with a carpet, and had a door with two panels, opening inwards. The ceiling of this cell was also of wicker-work rising into a vault from the centre of which was suspended a lamp with several arms. Mary's couch, which was placed against the wall, was a box one and a half feet high and of the breadth and length of a narrow plank. A covering was stretched on it and fastened to a knob at each of the four corners. The sides of this box were covered with carpets reaching down to the floor and were decorated with tassels and fringes. A round cushion served as a pillow, and there was a covering of brownish material with a check pattern.¹⁰

This description of Mary's bedroom might possibly lead you to wonder whether it was in fact a separate room to the right of the rear main section or merely a compartment of some kind to the right of the rear main section. Any ambiguity may be eliminated by this statement, which Catherine made on another occasion:

I came into Mary's house, some three hours' journey from Ephesus. I saw her lying on a low, very narrow couch in her little sleeping-alcove all hung with white, in the room behind and to the right of the hearth-place.¹¹

The following remark may be added in still further clarification: "A little altar had been set up by the Apostles in the alcove beside the Blessed Virgin's couch."¹² If Mary's bedroom was not seen by Catherine as a separate room, there would have been no reason for an altar close to her bed — the already present larger oratory would have been within arm's reach. It is obvious, therefore, that Mary's bedroom was an individual and separate room in the house.¹³

A review of the floor plan of Mary's home at this point is a simple and rapid matter, and perhaps even advantageous. Imagine a large capital T, or a beam surmounted by a crossbar, which has fallen to the ground intact. The door to Mary's house was at the bottom of the T, or at the end of the beam which is opposite the transverse. Halfway along that main section was a fireplace in the middle of the floor. Behind that was the rear of the main section, terminating in a semicircular apse, wherein was located the large

oratory. This room was called by Catherine simply Mary's room — it was her sitting room, obviously the most pleasant place in the house, close simultaneously to the oratory and the hearth.¹⁴ To the right was Mary's bedroom, which also had an apse at the back; to the left was a general storeroom.

Catherine began this vision by describing the site of Mary's home; she then turned to the details of the house itself; finally she spoke once again of the site.

The little house stood near a wood among pyramid-shaped trees with smooth trunks. It was very quiet and solitary. The dwellings of the other families were all scattered about at some distance. The whole settlement was like a village of peasants.

The Blessed Virgin lived here alone, with a younger woman, her maidservant, who fetched what little food they needed. They lived very quietly and in profound peace. There was no man in the house, but sometimes they were visited by an Apostle or disciple on his travels. There was one man whom I saw more often than others going in and out of the house; I always took him to be John. . . .¹⁵

There remains one important object outside Mary's home for Catherine to describe, and she spoke of it on two different occasions. On one of them she said:

Behind the house, at a little distance up the hill, the Blessed Virgin had made a kind of Way of the Cross. When she was living in Jerusalem, she had never failed, ever since Our Lord's death, to follow His path to Calvary with tears of compassion. She had paced out and measured all the distances between the Stations of that *Via Crucis*, and her love for her Son made her unable to live without this constant contemplation of His sufferings. Soon after her arrival at her new home I saw her every day climbing part of the way up the hill behind her house to carry out this devotion. At first she went by herself, measuring the number of paces of Our Lord's different sufferings. At each of these places she put up a stone, or, if there was already a tree there, she made a mark on it. The way led into a wood, and upon a hill in this wood she had marked the place of Calvary, and the grave of Christ in a little cave in another hill. After she had marked this Way of the Cross with twelve Stations, she went there with her maidservant in quiet meditation: at each Station they sat down and renewed the mystery of its significance in their hearts, praising the Lord for His love with tears of compassion. Afterwards she arranged the Stations better, and I saw her inscribing on the stones the meaning of each Station, the number of paces and so forth.

I saw, too, that she cleaned out the cave of the Holy Sepulchre and made it a place of prayer. At that time I saw no picture and no fixed cross to designate the Stations, nothing but plain memorial stones with inscriptions, but afterwards, as the result of constant visits and attention, I saw the place becoming increasingly beautiful and easy of approach. After the Blessed Virgin's death I saw this Way of the Cross being visited by Christians, who threw themselves down and kissed the ground.¹⁶

§ 2. Actual Discovery

In 1881 Abbé Gouyet of Paris, an admirer of Catherine Emmerich, went to Palestine to verify her descriptions of Christ's life. Very happy with the results obtained, he thought he might as well go on to Ephesus. On his arrival in Smyrna, present-day Izmir, the local ordinary, Archbishop Timoni, arranged some help for Gouyet by giving him as a companion a young man who later became a priest. And so the two of them set out to find the mountain at Ephesus; they were armed with only a little note in Greek which read: "Please spare a poor traveler, harmless and without resources."¹⁷ They encountered no brigands. After several days at Ephesus they returned, alleging to have found what they went for. But no one, except the Archbishop, believed them.¹⁸

Ten years later in Smyrna, when everyone had forgotten Gouyet, Sister Marie de Mandat-Grancey, superioress of the French hospital, had the French translation of Catherine's *Life of Mary* read to her community. Toward the end of the book, when the reader came to the chapters on Mary's sojourn and death in Ephesus, Sister Superior remarked: "Ephesus is not very far from here . . . it might well be worth the effort to go there and see!"¹⁹

Almost simultaneously Father Eugene Poulin, C.M., superior of the Lazarist College in Smyrna, was introduced to Catherine's book. Meanwhile, in order to keep peace at the hospital, the chaplain, Father Henry Jung, C.M., was reading the copy which the Sisters of Charity had forced upon him. In short order the first expedition to Ephesus was arranged. Four persons comprised the caravan: Father Jung, head of the expedition, another Lazarist, Father Vervault, and two other men — Thomaso, a servant, and Mr. Pélécas. At Ephesus they were joined by a fifth companion, a negro Mussulman

who knew the countryside. Thus the expedition began on July 27, 1891. The express purpose of at least two of its members was not to find something, but rather to prove once and for all that Catherine Emmerich was out of her mind, and that her visions were nice little dreams and reveries, but nothing else.²⁰

In the general area of Ephesus the explorers came upon a small monastery with two monks. After the usual amenities Father Jung asked them: "Where did the Blessed Virgin die?" And they answered without hesitation: "In Jerusalem!" The two monks were well versed in the Byzantine tradition concerning Mary's tomb at Gethsemani.²¹

On July 29 the group once again set out from Ayasuluk,²² this time with Catherine's book in hand, and began to climb the mountain which fitted her description. After eleven hours of climbing under the hot July sun the indefatigable explorers reached a small plateau, where they found some women working in a tobacco field. Hot and thirsty after the tedious climb, they asked for water. The women told them that they could find some at the monastery, not far from there, indicating the direction. They hurried that way and found the water. After having refreshed themselves they scanned the horizon — this little stream from which they had just drunk, that little stone house in ruins, this uneven plateau, that rocky hill behind the house. They looked at each other stupefied, as details from Catherine's revelations were recalled one after the other. They opened her book once again and read:

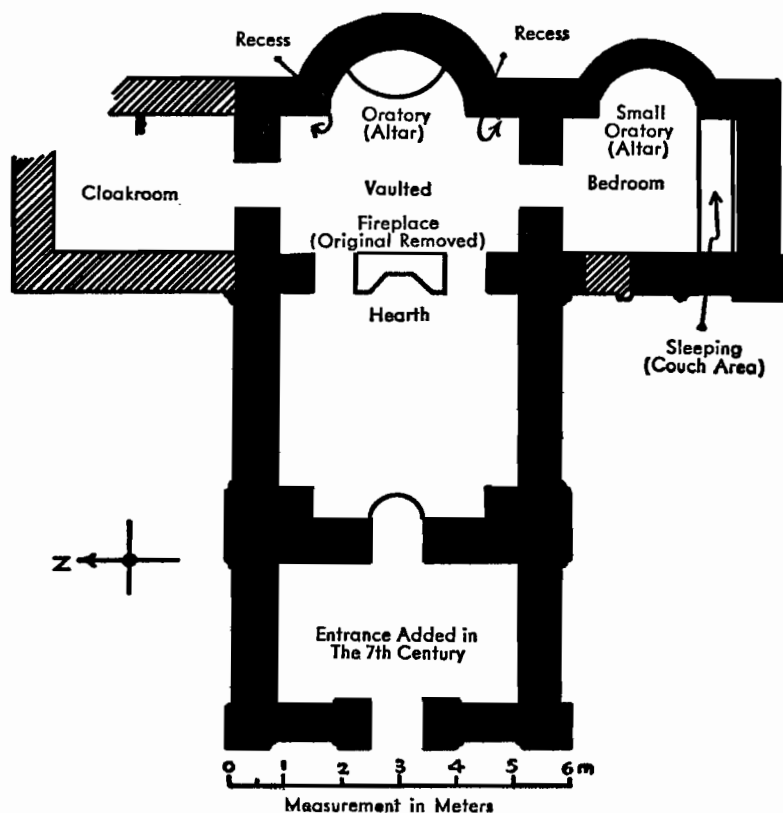
Mary's house was the only one built of stone. A little way behind it was the summit of the rocky hill from which one could see over the trees and hills to Ephesus and the sea with its many islands.²³

One of them ran up the hill, and back and forth they shouted: "Can you see Ephesus?" "Yes!" "And the sea?" "Yes!" "How about islands?" "Yes, yes!" By this time they were all at the top of the hill, with their fatigue completely forgotten. Exactly as the seeress had stated, there was Ephesus and the whole plain, and the sea, and Samos, which itself looked like many islands by reason of its contours. They could not believe their eyes — they had found it!²⁴

After their initial excitement, so as not to be deceived by first

impressions, the explorers spent two days diligently examining everything — the house, its orientation, the surroundings. There was no other summit in the area, from which both Ephesus and the sea could be seen, except Ala Dagh, but that was much too far to the south. After the inspection of everything possible — each step performed with book in hand — they returned to Smyrna to announce their incredible discovery.²⁵

Other expeditions and investigations followed. The Lazarist superior, Poulin, went to Ephesus with a group on August 12, 1891. After two days spent in examining Mary's home, they returned to Smyrna joyous and inspired. Poulin, Jung, and four others made an extended



Floor Plan of "Panaya Kapulu"

visit and a still more thorough examination from August 19 to August 25 of that same year. They returned home with maps, photographs, sketches, diagrams, and, above all, with the happy conviction that they had indeed found Mary's home.²⁶

The ruins, for all the great discovery they were, did not make a pretty sight. Our Lady's house, when first discovered and for many years afterward, was far from being presentable. Only God knows how long the roof was gone. The archways had collapsed, and the walls had fallen in to a great extent. When you consider the centuries of its neglect, you probably would acknowledge that it is quite remarkable that the ruins of the house were in as good a state as they were. It is amazing how anything as isolated as that tiny building could long remain, without the help of God or man. But then, was there no aid, either divine or human? It is known, for instance, that twenty-seven years prior to its discovery by the Lazarist expedition some crude repairs had been undertaken. By whom and why is a story yet to come.²⁷ It is also known that on its discovery the house was nestled in a clump of high and healthy trees, which offered considerable protection.²⁸

A full account of the explorers' findings, along with the results of archaeological and other studies, is presented later.²⁹ And to offer here even their complete report on the house in ruins would merely be to repeat Catherine's vision — the harmony between her description and the reality was phenomenal, as can be seen, for example, from the results of the subsequent official ecclesiastical inquiry.³⁰ As we shall see, the explorers themselves, for various reasons, did not release their report to the world until 1896. So as not to put you too far ahead of yourself, just a small portion of the substance of that announcement will be quoted here:

“. . . the ruins found at Panaya Kapulu were of a church built in the Fourth Century over the remains of a house which, as also supported by local tradition, was the House of the Virgin Mary during the First Century A.D.”³¹

The Lazarists found, in other words, a house that had been transformed into a chapel. This was to be expected. Catherine herself had said of the Apostles, after Mary's death and before their de-

parture from her home: "They made Mary's room in the house into a church."³² That the Christians of subsequent eras would make some changes was likewise to be expected. None of these changes, however, was of such a substantial nature as to mutilate the original floor plan and basic features of Mary's home as seen by Catherine Emmerich.³³ If there had been such a transformation, Father Poulin could not have stated:

The marvelous conformity between the edifice discovered and the description of the visionary of Dülmen proves that she really saw it in her visions and revelations.³⁴

One question is the influence of Brentano on the particular revelations of Catherine which led to the discovery of Mary's home. His overall role in her visions has already been discussed.³⁵ Undoubtedly Brentano exercised some influence on this vision of Mary's home, just as he did on the other revelations. But that he was responsible for its substance is sheer nonsense. It would have been impossible without God's help for him or anyone else, except for the few local people, to describe either the site or the house itself. And even those few local people could not have given all the details that Catherine did. As shall be seen later, for example, Catherine spoke of certain things, the foundations and remnants of which were not found until years after the initial discovery of the house and which were completely buried well below the surface of the ground.³⁶ It is necessary to conclude, therefore, that at least the substance of the revelations on Mary's home came immediately from Catherine herself and that divine assistance played an integral part.³⁷

Here it is worth noting that the eminent scholar Mgr. Albert Farges (1848-1926), after stating that all the details of Mary's house corresponded to the description of Catherine, added:

Now it is clear that the object of this vision was beyond the natural scope of the mind of a poor girl of Westphalia, without education, who had never travelled out of her province, such as was Catherine Emmerich. The transcendence is thus manifest, and hallucination admittedly impossible.³⁸

Even though the supernatural element seems apparent in this vision, it should not be used as an argument for the authenticity of

Mary's home. Other clairvoyants have seen the site of Mary's Dormition as Jerusalem. St. Brigit of Sweden indicated in 1371 that the Blessed Virgin appeared to her and said that she was buried in, and gloriously assumed from, the tomb in the valley of Josaphat.³⁹ Maria de Jesús (d. 1665), abbess of Agreda in Spain, similarly favored the Jerusalem tradition. You might compare visions and say, for instance, that those of Maria of Agreda were much more fantastic and artificial than Catherine's, but this really does not prove anything.⁴⁰ Even the fact that the Church gives its approval to certain visions in no sense means that it also thereby subscribes to their content.

While Catherine did in fact point the way to Mary's home in Ephesus, and described it so admirably well, her revelations do not prove the authenticity of the house. The house can, of course, stand on its own merits. Still, you cannot help noting the remarkable "coincidence" between her vision and the actual house, which correspondence goes unexplained, if there were no supernatural intervention. If you are reluctant to recognize such divine inspiration, as those who favor the Jerusalem tradition are, you remain faced with an inscrutable fact.

Surely you may, if you can, disregard Catherine's vision as having any probative force in the matter of the authenticity of Mary's home. In the following chapters you will be exposed to enough other arguments, both for and against the Ephesus tradition, to keep your mind occupied and to assist you in making a personal judgment. And just as Catherine's vision should not unduly influence you in one direction, neither should the inane attacks made on her and the vision influence you in the other. Some of the opponents of the Ephesus tradition revel in the few inaccuracies for which she or Brentano was responsible.⁴¹ Such attacks on those minor discrepancies remind me of the fairy tale wherein the wolf huffed and puffed in vain at the little brick house. Not much sympathy was ever wasted on the stupid wolf.

§ 3. *Inside Story*

The caption "Inside Story" should not delude you into believing, that you are entering upon a confidential report on Mary's home.

Nor should it even imply the slightest notion of anything defamatory to *Panaya Kapulu*.⁴² What is meant is the account, presented to you here and now, and for the first time anywhere in English, of the acquisition, loss, and recovery of ownership of *Panaya*.⁴³

After the initial discovery of Mary's home and the subsequent expeditions to it, Eugene Poulin was convinced of its authenticity and thought it only proper that *Panaya* be in Catholic possession. He wanted very much to buy it, but he did not have the money. The thought came to him that Sister Marie de Mandat-Grancey, since she was of noble French lineage, just might have access to the necessary funds. He had scarcely broached the subject when she said: "The thought already came to me. Buy it!"⁴⁴ It was only after extremely laborious negotiations, which began on January 15, 1892, that the conveyance was finally signed on the following November 15. Ownership of the house and a large portion of the surrounding land was acquired in the name of Sister de Grancey.⁴⁵

The new owner of *Panaya* was, of course, solicitous to restore Mary's home and do everything necessary to make it suitable for pilgrimages. While both restoration and pilgrimages were later initiated, they are separate stories reserved for later.⁴⁶ The owner was also aware of the need for adequate arrangements concerning succession to the property. Sister Marie, therefore, transferred the ownership and legal title to Eugene Poulin on May 11, 1910, five years before her death. She nevertheless remained responsible until her death for the expenses involved in the restoration.⁴⁷

World War I put a stop to everything at *Panaya*, and the subsequent troubled times in Turkey kept things at a standstill for many years thereafter. In July, 1921, however, Father Joseph Euzet, C.M., and Father Paul Saint-Germain, C.M., after they had fulfilled all formalities and acquired special permission, were allowed to visit Mary's home to survey the war damage. Any plans which they and the other collaborators of *Panaya* might have had were halted by the events of 1922. They actually had little business making plans in that period when, even prior to the Conference of Lausanne (1922-1923), the new Turkey was in the process of development and organization.⁴⁸

After 1914 the property taxes on *Panaya*, which had been paid

regularly up to this time, were no longer sought, nor was the owner particularly anxious to pay them. And even if he were, there would have still been the question to whom they should be paid. The advice given to Poulin, and reluctantly accepted by him, was to keep to himself and forget about the mountain as much as possible. This was, of course, inconvenient for many reasons, of which one was the obvious indication or appearance of complete abandonment of the site. Poulin nevertheless refrained from visiting Mary's home. For many who were no less devoted to *Panaya* the troubled times and the instinct of self-preservation were sufficient causes to remain at a safe distance.

Despite those conditions, Father Euzet had little hesitation in accompanying a group of sisters to *Panaya* in November, 1926. After Mass had been celebrated in Mary's home, the members of that pilgrimage were of one mind to search and find the means to end as soon as possible the state of desolation and abandonment that they found at Mary's home.⁴⁹

It was once again deemed necessary before anything else, in this process of practical recovery of the property, to provide for its succession. Originally in the name of Sister de Grancey, and later transferred to Eugene Poulin, ownership of *Panaya* would soon pass by escheat, if nothing were done. Although over eighty years old, Poulin obstinately refused to do anything. No one could understand his attitude, but later everyone was grateful for it. At long last, on October 23, 1926, and at the age of eighty-three, Poulin made a holographic will, in due and proper form, with Joseph Euzet instituted as heir to *Panaya*. After the death of Poulin in 1928, there followed one attempt after another to have the will executed. Finally, in May, 1931, all the formalities had been successfully completed, and Euzet took the train to Kuşadasi, near Ephesus, to have the title drawn up in his name.

After he arrived at Kuşadasi on May 26, Euzet went to the proper municipal office and opened his briefcase to withdraw the money to cover the delinquent taxes. But the officer of the cadastre, after perusal of his registers, asked: "How can I put in the name of J. Euzet property which no longer belongs to E. Poulin?"⁵⁰ The

property was recorded as belonging, at that time, to the Treasury. This expropriation was, of course, the result of the necessary precaution whereby the owner had departed from and apparently abandoned the property. All abandoned property which belonged to belligerents reverted to the Treasury.

Euzet's only hope then was to institute a judicial process to prove illegal confiscation. Prior to presenting himself before a judge he located a dragoman, one Jacques Aboulafia, who would act as advocate, even though he was not a certified lawyer. The dragoman wanted to make sure whether the property was truly *djebel*, mountain, or *tarla*, arable land, for this was a capital point. The two of them, Euzet and his interpreter-lawyer, went to the mountain and returned late that night.

On May 28, 1931, the case was opened and at the outset the judge was petitioned to issue an injunction restraining the Treasury from alienating the property in question prior to the pronouncement of the definitive sentence. The case was pending for four months and undoubtedly caused great hardships to Euzet, such as the repeated commuting between Kuşadası and İzmir.

In the session of July 10 the advocate for the Treasury contended that Poulin did not have the right to bequeath and devise the property in question and that, therefore, Joseph Euzet had no capacity to institute this process against the Treasury. Euzet's dragoman-advocate then requested several hours to study the Code — there was not much else he could have done. The judge granted a recess until the afternoon of the same day.

During the interval a Code was procured and an idea was conceived. The article cited in court by the counsel for the Treasury could not be found in the Swiss Code. What was the date of Poulin's will? October 23, 1926. And on what date did the Swiss Code go into force in Turkey? October 3, 1926. That meant that the will was not subject to the law of the old Code which the defense had cited. At this point you may recall Poulin's obstinacy in making his will. Had he made it when requested, the property would have been lost. There was good reason for his delay and, even though he did not know it, doubtlessly someone else did.⁵¹

The greatest obstacle had been overcome. The only problem which remained was to establish that the property had not been "abandoned." You can imagine, of course, that that might not be too simple to prove, since a few years had passed without anyone even seeing the place.

A judicial inspection of the site was required. The judge, his secretary, two experts chosen by the municipality, and three acceptable witnesses chosen by the plaintiff went to Panaya and conducted the inspection. They concluded that the property had not been abandoned inasmuch as it had been planted with trees, and so on. As for any apparent abandonment, they concluded that it was due exclusively to the state of war which did not allow the owner even to go there to see the place. This on-site inspection, which followed the decree of access, took place on September 15, 1931.

The session of September 23 witnessed the final address of the lawyer for the Treasury and response of the dragoman. It was recessed to the next day in order to allow time for preparing the decision. The judgment was delivered, as anticipated and scheduled, on September 24, 1931.⁵² After appeal at Dorilée (Eskischir) on January 9, 1932, the first decision was ratified and confirmed. Yet it was not until October 23, 1932, that Euzet finally received the regular document of title of ownership from the officials at Kuşadası.

With all the expenses involved over the period of four months, you might well wonder whether it would not have been cheaper, and much more convenient, simply to purchase the property from the Treasury and forget the lawsuit. There is no way of determining what the exact difference in costs would have been, but two things are certain: (1) there was no assurance that the Treasury would have sold the property immediately and, even if it would have, it could have offered it only at a prohibitive price; (2) Euzet himself had already thought of buying it back, but only as a last resort.

After the first decision, but prior to the futile appeal, a caretaker was found for Panaya. His name was Aziz, and he went to Mary's home with his wife and two small children in September, 1931. The isolated life at Panaya surely could not have been easy for them. Like other good Moslems, Aziz knew of Mary from the Koran; he also

knew that he was living at a holy place. He died in May, 1951, and on his deathbed avowed: "At Panaya extraordinary things will be seen. Although I shall not see them, my children will see them. It will be like a paradise there."⁵³

In 1947 there was still another threat of expropriation — from that time all forests belonged by law to the State. The indispensable official inspection of the site resulted in the declaration that there were no trees of the requisite size to constitute what could be properly called a forest. When you ponder the various successive contingencies, any of which might have effected loss of ownership of Panaya, it surely seems that the Blessed Virgin had protected her property. She undoubtedly continues that guardianship today, even though everything humanly possible has now been done to assure the future stable control of Mary's home. In 1952 Euzet transferred ownership of Panaya to a Catholic corporate body, the *Dernek* of Mother Mary, chartered in the previous year.⁵⁴

That is the *inside* story; now to the stories on the outside.

In 1896 an anonymous manifesto, bearing the approbation of André Timoni, Archbishop of Smyrna and Vicar Apostolic of Asia Minor, announced "to the Christian World" the discovery of Mary's home and place where she died on Bülbül Dagħ, a mountain bordering on the ruins of Ephesus. The discovery was effected through the indications of the Westphalian visionary, Anne Catherine Emmerich.⁵⁵

This proclamation marked the beginning of a considerable amount of literature which would be written concerning Panaya from that day forward. Earlier the publication of Catherine's *Life of Mary* had provoked numerous writings. But the Ephesus tradition had existed for eighteen centuries before that, so that you might expect some reference to it in Sacred Scripture, historical documents, the works of the Fathers and early historians, and even in scholarly studies on the subject. With such expectations you are prepared for the next two chapters, which consider many things — traditions, legends, ancient and more recent references, documents, related facts, studies, controversies, expert reports, activity in Rome on the subject — all of which spheres of knowledge will better acquaint you with Mary's home, and place you in an excellent position for passing judgment on it.

CHAPTER III

Relevant Legends, Traditions, and Literature

The title of this chapter makes a distinction between legend and tradition. The former refers to that which is commonly unauthentic or apocryphal. The latter applies to that which has some substance, even though handed down primarily by word of mouth. Both legends and traditions sooner or later appear in writing, and literature is generated which records and sometimes embellishes them. Quite often, too, they are already enhanced before ever appearing in written form. Only apostolic tradition is guaranteed by God.

The testimony of early historians and Fathers of the Church, which will appear in a moment, has limited value. While such testimony is usually more than mere legend, nothing can be definitely proved from it in respect to the matters presently under consideration. Where the Fathers themselves disagree, outside of matters of doctrine, for instance in the explanation of certain scriptural passages, you are free to follow whichever of their interpretations you might choose.¹

As for Sacred Scripture itself, it serves little in establishing many aspects of the following stories. In a word, it contains too many lacunae, and thus is often used by opposite sides of a controversy, each in an attempt to prove its own point.

Once certain definite facts appear, however, then the statements of historians, Fathers, Scripture, as well as other sources, may all be advantageously applied in interpreting those facts. One problem for this and the following chapters was to decide which should be presented first — established facts or the auxiliary material. Logically it might seem better first to know a fact and later interpret it through

other sources. In practice, however, a greater and more lasting impact can often be effected by the inversion, for instance, by dropping the hard rock of fact into the quiet pool of legend — the waves go on, and on, and on. For this reason among others, which will most likely become evident to you, it seemed better to give first the auxiliary material provided by legend and tradition and to follow this with the factual data.

§ 1. *Mary and John in Ephesus*

On various occasions writers have referred to Mary, or Mary together with John, or simply John in Ephesus. Those who recorded history would naturally have been more concerned with St. John the Apostle, the missionary, the public figure, than with Mary, the retiring, quiet, Mother of God, who kept to herself at home. But even when John alone was mentioned, as was the usual case with the writers of the first several centuries, Mary's presence in a place close to John's activity would seem to have been assured by reason of Christ's commission given to John from the Cross: "Behold, thy mother!" And the passage, written by John long after Mary's Assumption, confirmed the result by continuing thus: "And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own."²

Exegetes, both ancient and modern, have explained the phrase *unto his own* as meaning *into his house*, so that, if John's area of apostolic endeavor centered about Ephesus, Mary would have lived there too.³

And (i.e., therefore, because Jesus had ordered it) *that disciple took her unto his own* (*sua*). Some read *sua*, "his own house," as Nonnus paraphrases it. Bede suggests, "for his own mother," or better still, "into his own charge." As St. Augustine says, "not into his own hands, but into those kind offices, which he undertook to dispense." St. John accordingly took her with him to Ephesus, and the Council of Ephesus (cap. xxvi, Synodical Epistle) says that they both for a time lived at Ephesus.⁴

The Ephesus tradition must be postulated on an early departure of John and Mary from Jerusalem. Such a tradition is not contrary to Scripture, but neither can it be proved directly from Holy Writ. There is a period of about twelve years (A.D. 37-49), beginning with

the martyrdom of St. Stephen, during which John's activities and whereabouts are not mentioned. That he was in Asia during that time is an excellent theory which can be supported by many scriptural passages.⁵

Now that you have been advised of that hypothesis, it seems only fair to offer it to you in a condensed form at least.

Some hold that St. John came to Ephesus for the first time only after the death of St. Paul in 67. But through a diligent examination of the New Testament (e.g., Gal 1:18, Acts 12:17, Gal 2:9) one may easily gather that nothing is known of John from 37 to 48. Where was that active man whom St. Paul called "a pillar of the church"? Is it conceivable that this "son of thunder" hid timidly and inactively with Mary in troubled and hostile Palestine, while other Apostles had already set out for various parts of the world? It is doubtlessly far more probable that after the Ascension John lived with Mary at Ephesus whence he made excursions through Asia.

Furthermore, after the Council of Jerusalem, held about the year 50, Paul and Barnabas passing by Phrygia and Galatia were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word of God in Asia (Acts 16:6). For what reason? Because, as St. John Chrysostom writes in his Commentaries, the evangelization of Asia already belonged to John.

When Paul first came to Ephesus in 53, he found faithful brethren in Phrygia and Galatia (Acts 18:23). If John had come to consular Asia later than Paul, then who could have established the seven churches mentioned in the Apocalypse? Everyone admits that, at the time John had charge of and was travelling through Asia, Paul supervised the Church at Ephesus merely for two years, after which time he never again returned.⁶

Objections to that theory will appear here and there in both this and the following section. While the Ephesus tradition is based on John's early departure for Asia, some scholars admit only a late departure, and a few even doubt any sojourn of John at Ephesus. Of the three opinions just mentioned, the first thesis seems most likely, the second less likely, and the third scarcely possible.

Until about thirty years ago [i.e., 1875] it was not doubted, except in restricted circles, that the Apostle John had spent the closing years of his life at Ephesus. To be sure Vogel, Reuterdahl, and Lützelberger had, some time before this, expressed their doubts, but had found no support even from the Tübingen school.⁷

If all the arguments against John's sojourn at Ephesus were as-

sembled you would see that at least they “. . . do not prove that the Apostle John . . . did not live in Ephesus during the closing years of his life.”⁸ And the conclusion, at least in respect to John, if not also to Mary, may be expressed as follows:

It is highly probable that the Virgin Mary and St. John came to Anatolia [Asia Minor] before 66 A.D. and probably between 42 and 48 A.D. There is no reference in the Holy Scriptures to the fact that St. John took Mary with him in his mission to Anatolia. The strict silence observed in the Holy Scriptures in this respect is believed to be due to the extraordinary nature of the event, and to the fear of excitement and surprise it may have caused.⁹

An investigation of the early literature on the matter results in almost universal affirmation of the sojourn in Ephesus. Tertullian (ca. 150–230) indicated that John came to Asia early.¹⁰ And Hippolytus Portuensis (ca. 160–235) recalled that John died there.¹¹ A letter of the second century from Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, to Pope St. Victor (189–199) mentioned that John was buried at Ephesus.¹² St. Irenaeus (b. ca. 150), a disciple of the Papia who was a pupil of St. John,¹³ stated that John wrote his Gospel while living at Ephesus,¹⁴ and he added, as verified and reported by Eusebius (ca. 263–339), that it was a matter of apostolic tradition that John presided over the Church of Ephesus to the time of Emperor Trajan (98–117).¹⁵

Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 215) noted that John returned to Ephesus after his exile on Patmos.¹⁶ His pupil Origen (ca. 185–253) maintained that John was in charge of Asia, that he lived there a very long time, and that he died at Ephesus.¹⁷

Eusebius, the great early Church historian and most eminent scholar of his day, left several pertinent texts. His first statement followed on the remark that the Jews had just begun to persecute the Christians:

. . . the holy Apostles and disciples of our Savior . . . were scattered over the whole world; Thomas, as tradition holds, received Parthia; Andrew, Scythia; John, Asia, and with the people there he lived and he died in Ephesus.¹⁸

Eusebius noted also that after the stoning of St. Stephen (37) and the martyrdom of St. James (42) the rest of the Apostles, who had

to undergo a thousand vexations, went forth into all nations.¹⁹ At another time he stated:

Furthermore, there is also John, who leaned on the breast of the Lord, and was a priest wearing the breastplate, and a martyr, and teacher. This one rests at Ephesus.²⁰

St. Epiphanius (ca. 315–403) wrote the following observation, the final phrase of which has been subjected to many fatuous explanations:

And while John meanwhile left for Asia, nothing is said that he took the Blessed Virgin with him as a companion on the trip; concerning this matter Scripture is utterly silent . . . so as not to cause the minds of men to bow in greater stupefaction.²¹

Of course, as already indicated, Scripture is silent about many things. If you should wonder, supposedly along with Epiphanius, why the book of the *Acts of the Apostles* contains no mention of this journey of Mary and John to Ephesus, then you may as well worry also over its omission of Peter's first stay at Antioch, his arrival at Rome, where he later suffered martyrdom with Paul, and innumerable other events.²²

But it is altogether possible, and even probable, that the silence of Epiphanius was motivated by reasons other than the one alleged. He was a Jewish convert, and wrote his *Panarion* against eighty current heresies. One of those affirmed, according to the example given by John and Mary, that monks could live a community life together with virgins dedicated to our Lord. The Council of Ancyra (314) had already denounced that idea, and Sts. Jerome (ca. 347–419) and John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) later gave their orthodox views. In his turn Epiphanius also combated that repugnant proposition. St. Epiphanius, who knew Jerusalem quite well, could have simply and utterly crushed the proposition in his *Panarion* by pointing out that Mary's tomb was in Jerusalem, and that she had not been with John in Ephesus. But he did not! Here then is an argument that around the year 350 the sojourn of John and Mary at Ephesus was already discussed and that the Asiatic tradition existed.²³

St. Jerome wrote that John founded and governed all the Churches

of Asia, and that after his exile he returned to Ephesus where he was buried.²⁴ He also confirmed the fact that John had a little house there.²⁵ Jerome was an authority on Jerusalem — he lived there. It might be mentioned incidentally, though a bit prematurely, that in his book *The Hebrew Names* he virtually eliminated any tomb of Mary in Jerusalem by preterition; Epiphanius, another authority on the “souvenirs” of Jerusalem, did the very same thing.²⁶ As an expert on the holy places, at least on those which existed in his day, Jerome mentioned Gethsemani as a site consecrated by Christ’s prayer whereon a church was built, with no indication of a “remembrance” of a tomb of Mary.²⁷

At the very beginning of this section you were advised of a crucial period of twelve years when John was preaching in Asia out of his headquarters in Ephesus whither he had taken Mary. Those very years were spanned by a text of St. Gregory of Tours (538–594). After having spoken of Christ’s Ascension and having fixed the date as May 14, 33, he said:

After this the Apostles were dispersed to various regions to preach the word of God (*in the year 36*). And later, when the Blessed Virgin Mary was at the end of her days on earth and was called from this world, all the Apostles were assembled from their individual regions at her home (*in the year 48*).²⁸

T. Ruinart’s note, made in the mid-nineteenth century on that passage of Gregory, added that the opinion of the best scholars was that Mary died at Ephesus.²⁹

St. Gregory of Tours referred to the presence of John in Ephesus, and even to a little house on a nearby mountain where he stayed while he wrote his Gospel. That house could be the home of Mary, which John used after her Assumption. The passage follows:

In Ephesus, then, there is a place wherein this Apostle wrote the Gospel which is read under his name in the Church. At the summit of a near-by mountain of Ephesus there are four walls without a roof. John dwelled within these walls, devoting himself to prayer, assiduously beseeching the Lord for pardon of the sins of the people; and it came to pass that in that place no rain fell until he had completed his Gospel. And also even to this day it is brought about by the Lord that no violent rainstorms come near the place and no rain falls on that spot.³⁰

The few apparent scriptural and traditional difficulties which do exist in relation to John's presence in Ephesus, such as Paul's preaching in Ephesus and leaving his disciple Timothy to direct the community there (1 Tm 1:3), Eusebius' calling Paul the first bishop of Ephesus (*Hist. Eccl.*, III, 4), St. Irenaeus' stating that Paul founded the Church of Ephesus (*Adv. haer.*, III, 3), and others,³¹ can be easily reconciled. Most of them have already been solved by reason of the material presented in this section, and for clarification of what few may remain you are referred elsewhere.³²

At this point you have the assurance of being familiar with almost all of the earliest literature on the sojourn of Mary and John in Ephesus. A few texts have been deliberately omitted because they are essential to matters which will be treated subsequently. There is surely no need for repetition — you have had enough of a burden in struggling through these texts, without having to read some of them twice.

While there was no serious attempt to prove anything in this section, many ideas were no doubt suggested to you. One observation, which is most obvious, is that people had spoken of John in connection with Ephesus, and Mary with him, long before Catherine Emmerich pointed the way for the great revival of devotion to them in that place. One modern scholar stated without hesitation that there was always a cult of Mary and John in Ephesus.³³ Another, who studied the early veneration of Mary in Asia Minor, concluded that in that area there was a solid Marian tradition with concreteness in Ephesus.³⁴ And still another scholar, Don Calmet (1672–1757), who wrote years before Catherine was born, stated simply and concisely:

The Apostle John passed a great part of his life at Ephesus, and died there; as did the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen, according to tradition.³⁵

§ 2. *Mary's Tomb in Jerusalem*

In the preceding section the problem of the death of Mary was avoided as much as possible. While that question necessarily comes under consideration in this section, inasmuch as one cannot very

easily speak of Mary's tomb without suggesting also her death and burial, Mary's death is not treated *ex professo*. There is abundant material which has already done that.³⁶

Since the tradition of Mary's death rests heavily and imposingly on the apocrypha, these too must be treated. The various names having relation with Mary's passing, as well as the question of Mary's age when she left this earth, may also be briefly mentioned. But the principal object of this section is the discussion of the place, the location, of Mary's passing. There are two possibilities, Ephesus or Jerusalem, but the one seems much more probable than the other.

Various terms connected with the events of Mary's last day on earth are *dormitio* (sleeping away), *transitus* (passing over), and *assumptio* (being taken up). The first two would seem to imply death, but the third not necessarily. One scholar who wrote about the feast of the Assumption viewed those terms in this manner:

The whole Church, Greek and Latin, celebrates nowadays the death and glorification of the Holy Virgin on August 15. The Greeks call this feast the *Dormition*, and sometimes the *Passing*, of the Holy Virgin. The Latins are also familiar with the name *Dormition*, but as a rule they give this feast the name *Assumption*.³⁷

Another drew the following distinction:

The Passing of the Blessed Mary is called by way of antonomasia the Assumption, because first she was assumed in soul and a little later, as is piously believed, she was assumed in body.³⁸

There are more precise distinctions between those terms, but for present purposes they are of little use and the names may generally be used interchangeably. Since the feast has been mentioned, however, you may be interested in the following:

In the East, evidence of a feast unmistakably connected to the dormition of Mary is not discoverable till the sixth century. It apparently made its initial appearance in the second half of that century in the Syrian Jacobite Church . . . the decisive document is the decree of Emperor Maurice (582-602) imposing August 15 for the celebration of the *koimesis* of God's Mother. . . . In the West it was Rome which first received the Byzantine feast, perhaps as late as Pope Sergius I (687-701), with the August 15 date and the original title, *Dormition of the Mother of God*.³⁹

It may also be noted incidentally that when the Mass *Signum magnum* for August 15 replaced the Mass *Gaudemus* in 1951 every vestige of reference to Mary's death had been removed. This was in keeping with the solemn definition of the dogma of the Assumption, which contained no declaration of Mary's death.⁴⁰

In any event, and apart from the question of death, you may inquire about Mary's age at the time of the Assumption. Unfortunately, however, that age cannot be determined with any accuracy. Many writers have selected ages ranging between sixty-two and sixty-nine years.⁴¹ In a special study one author observed that the majority of writers chose ages between fifty-seven and seventy-two, and that one went as high as one hundred and twenty-one years.⁴² The final conclusion of that treatise was well put: *Ignoramus et ignorabimus* — "We do not and we will not know."⁴³

It would be rash, however, to apply that same conclusion to the question of Mary's death. The matter might have been settled in the definition of the Assumption, if the Holy Father had been so inclined. But he was not. Mary's death, therefore, remains an open question. You may believe it or not, as you choose. The author is among the many who believe in Mary's death. Everyone knows that Mary, by reason of her Immaculate Conception, was not subject to death. But everyone also knows how similar to Christ she was in all things, and Christ, also not subject to death, offered up His life for mankind.

The belief that Mary died seems to have been the more common opinion through the ages, but it was never unanimous.⁴⁴ In the first centuries among those who spoke of Mary's death were Origen, St. Ephrem, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory of Nyssa.⁴⁵ In later times the Fathers and other theologians mentioned the death of Mary so often that any further enumeration seems superfluous.⁴⁶ Sacred art, moreover, did not fail to reflect the tradition.

In the numberless touching representations of the death of our Blessed Lady which medieval sculpture has left us, St. Peter and the Apostles surround her death-bed, according to legend. . . . St. John is indeed often represented as giving Holy Communion to the Mother of God, for she could receive this great sacrament of spiritual life to increase her love for her Divine Son.⁴⁷

On the hypothesis that Mary did die, the circumstances of her death are strictly legendary. The fanciful stories describing the event come from the apocrypha — the unauthentic, noncanonical, books resembling Scripture.⁴⁸ Those of primary relevancy are the books of the *Transitus Mariae* — *Passing of Mary*.⁴⁹ They are utterly worthless as historical accounts of the Assumption.⁵⁰

In a word, the apocrypha describe Mary's death, and imply or assert the place as Jerusalem or vicinity. They say, for example, that John while preaching at Ephesus, on the Lord's day and at the third hour, was raised on a cloud during the attending earthquake, and the cloud bore him to Mary's house.⁵¹ That same example, quoted from the Syriac text, follows:

John said: "To me in Ephesus the Holy Spirit announced it and said: 'The time draws nigh for the mother of your Lord to leave the world; go to Bethlehem to greet her.' And a cloud of light snatched me away, and I stood between heaven and earth, and saw the chariots of all the apostles, which were flying and coming to me."⁵²

As for the date of these apocryphal narratives of Mary's death, many versions find their origin in the seventh century. The most ancient writings of the *Transitus Mariae* go back to the fifth and sixth centuries,⁵³ and the earliest of all could not have been written before the year 476.⁵⁴ The Gelasian Decree (ca. 496) indicated that the *Transitus* was known at the end of the fifth century. The decree specifically rejected "The apocryphal book called the *Transitus*, that is, the Assumption of Holy Mary."⁵⁵

The belief that Mary died and was buried in Jerusalem is partially founded on these apocrypha. The Jerusalem tradition is also based on a story, to be presented momentarily, which is equally dubious. Sometimes, in an attempt to strengthen that tradition, an *ad hominem* argument is also invoked. One such follows: Mary was so attached to Jerusalem by reason of Christ's passion and death, for instance, that she could not have abandoned it. But, of course, contrary arguments of the same quality, and no less pious, are equally meritorious. No one, for example, could accuse John and Mary of lacking either man's fundamental instinct or common sense. In danger one either removes the danger or, where that is impossible,

removes himself. Mary and John, therefore, fled Jerusalem and the hostile conditions there.

The other support for the Jerusalem tradition is what may be called either the Juvenal or the Euthymian story. It is called the former because Juvenal, the bishop of Jerusalem in 451, was the principal subject of the story. It may be called the latter because St. John Damascene (ca. 675–749) quoted an unknown man named Euthymius as his source. But of the basic arguments on behalf of the Jerusalem tomb, this one is by far the oldest, easily predating those based on the apocrypha.

St. John Damascene in his second homily on the Dormition quoted the work of a certain Euthymius, which reported that Pulcheria, wife of the eastern Emperor Marcian (450–457), was building a church (*in Blachernis*) in Constantinople. She and her husband asked Juvenal of Jerusalem, who happened to be in town in connection with his trip to the Council of Chalcedon (451), for the body of the Blessed Virgin to put in their new church. Juvenal replied that he could not accommodate them because the body of Mary was in heaven, and added that there remained in Jerusalem only her winding sheets and the *loculus* — sarcophagus or bier, perhaps. Whereupon the emperor and empress requested that he send to Constantinople the cloths and the *loculus*, and when they had received them they completed their church.⁵⁶

Whether Bishop Juvenal actually sent the *loculus* and winding sheets to the emperor is doubtful.⁵⁷ And Juvenal, whom Pope Benedict XIV (1740–1758) described as an habitual liar and forger,⁵⁸ may very well have manufactured the story of their existence. Among other things, Juvenal attempted with the aid of forged documents to escape the jurisdiction of Antioch and to acquire a patriarchal authority over Palestine, Phoenicia, and Arabia.⁵⁹

It is obvious that the Jerusalem tradition is based on flimsy evidence. Nevertheless there are many followers of the Jerusalem theory. After all there is a church over Mary's tomb and one also over the site of the Dormition; the former edifice is in Jordan under the control of schismatics, the latter is in Israel under the administration of Benedictines. Around the year 1900 the present attractive church of

the Benedictines of Beuron replaced the ancient Basilica of the Dormition.⁶⁰

An older church, not quite so decorous, at Gethsemani, is said to be over Mary's tomb. This church dates from the Christian reign of Jerusalem. It may well have been originally the work of Emperor Maurice (582–602), who imposed by decree the fifteenth of August as the date of Mary's death.⁶¹ Furthermore, it is possible that there was, after Juvenal (i.e., a. A.D. 450), a cult having as its object a sepulcher hewn in the base of the Mount of Olives in the Cedron or valley of Josaphat.⁶²

As a matter of fact, Catherine Emmerich spoke of a "tomb" of Mary in Jerusalem. She said that a tomb was prepared, but never used. In vision she saw Mary make the journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem for a visit, while the persecution of Christians was temporarily halted. In Jerusalem Mary became quite ill and it was thought that she was dying. During that time it was announced more than once that the Blessed Virgin had died, and rumors of her death and burial spread. A tomb was prepared for Mary, but she recovered and returned to Ephesus.⁶³

If all that is true, so also is the following observation:

The sarcophagus remained in Jerusalem and was placed in a cave near the garden of Gethsemani. This could possibly be the tomb of the Virgin Mary now shown in Jerusalem.⁶⁴

And still another simple explanation of the Jerusalem tradition is that it arose after the city of Ephesus began to deteriorate. As one author put it, "From the votaries to her tomb Ephesus flourished, until on its fall, Jerusalem acquired all the glory of this claim."⁶⁵

At the very most, however, the Jerusalem tradition cannot possibly go back beyond 450 and Juvenal, if it actually goes that far. If you will recall for a moment the Euthymian story, an interesting facet will be revealed.

Some unknown person around the year 500 wrote several treatises wherein he posed as Dionysius the Areopagite, a convert of St. Paul. In the role of Dionysius, or Denis, he could claim to speak of Mary's burial with the authority of an eyewitness.⁶⁶ He was, of course,

a fraud and his writings are known today as the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, or simply Pseudo-Denis. From the recent excellent treatise of Gabriel Roschini, O.S.M., on Pseudo-Denis and the death of Mary, the following observations may be made:

1. It is commonly held that Pseudo-Denis wrote around the year 500, or between 480 and 530. The earliest possible date is 476.⁶⁷

2. Pseudo-Denis had definite connection with the Euthymian story of John Damascene.⁶⁸

3. The Euthymian story is found for the first time in the second homily of John Damascene.⁶⁹

4. Pseudo-Denis was prior to, or contemporary with, the apocrypha.⁷⁰

5. No tradition existed in Jerusalem in 377 (time of Epiphanius) relative to Mary's death, nor did any localization of a tomb implying her death.⁷¹

6. The first Marian shrine in Jerusalem was the *Kathisma*, erected after the Council of Ephesus, about 450 or later, to honor Mary's divine Maternity.⁷²

7. Only in the sixth century did the *Breviary of Jerusalem* first speak of a tomb in the valley of Josaphat.⁷³

8. It is evident from the Jerusalem liturgy of the year 450 for August 15, celebrating the day of Mary *Theotokos* at the *Kathisma*, that there was no knowledge of Mary's death and no mention of it.⁷⁴

9. That very feast of August 15, celebrated at the *Kathisma* near Jerusalem, was later moved to Gethsemani, but not until the sixth century.⁷⁵

10. The writings of the Fathers, which treated of Mary's death in Jerusalem *ex professo*, were all dependent on Pseudo-Denis.⁷⁶

11. In the sixteenth century, under Pius V (1566–1572), the Euthymian story entered the *Roman Breviary* (II Noct., Aug. 18) and remained till the time of Pius XII (1939–1958), despite the fact that the commission established by Benedict XIV (1740–1758) for reforming the breviary had decided to suppress it because no respectable critic would accept it.⁷⁷

It might be well to note that this spurious Euthymian story was removed from the breviary, not with the deletion of every reference

to Mary's death in the Mass of the Assumption, but only with the change and suppression of the octave of the feast.⁷⁸ This story of Mary's death in Jerusalem no longer has any place in the Roman liturgy. It surely took its toll, however, in deluding the Fathers, whether in the form of the testimony of Pseudo-Denis or the Euthymian story.

It might also be well to note the final conclusions of the treatise of Roschini:⁷⁹

1. Pseudo-Denis influenced the early Fathers and writers who treated the question of Mary's death in Jerusalem.
2. Pseudo-Denis was prior to the apocrypha on Mary's death.
3. Pseudo-Denis was prior to the counterfeit tomb of Mary at Jerusalem.
4. Pseudo-Denis was prior to the liturgical feast of the Dormition.

The author's last word was a plea that those who speak of the "death" of Mary abstain at least from calling on a nonexistent "tradition" regarding it.⁸⁰

Roschini's work was truly a devastating blow to the Jerusalem tradition. And the remarkable part of it all is that it was struck without even having Ephesus in mind. Roschini wrote, as is obvious from his final remark and the work itself, to prove that there was no true tradition concerning Mary's death at Jerusalem. Jerusalem was merely incidentally attacked, because the author's main object was to disprove the notion of a "tradition" of Mary's death. You may or may not admit that he accomplished his purpose, but you cannot dismiss his arguments.

Since the Jerusalem tradition could not have originated before 450, the Ephesus tradition is obviously older. This has already been indicated in the preceding section and will be proved beyond doubt subsequently.⁸¹ Even those who favor Jerusalem are forced to admit that the Ephesus tradition is earlier as, for example, the following statement shows:

There are two traditions claiming respectively Ephesus and Jerusalem as the places of her death and burial. The tradition of Ephesus seems to be prior in time.⁸²

There are many also who would not be so generous as to allow the

origin of the Jerusalem tradition to be placed at such an early date as the year 500. As Jugie (1878–1954) observed:

The existence of a tomb of the Holy Virgin at Jerusalem or in its environs is completely ignored by the tradition of the first five centuries and even up to about the year 570.⁸³

Jugie argued principally against the existence of an early tradition concerning a tomb at Jerusalem. To support his view he noted these significant omissions: the silence of the *Peregrinatio Sylviae* (*Etheriae*), which spoke at length of Gethsemani, but with no mention of a tomb or shrine of Mary; the silence of St. Jerome, who lived in Jerusalem and explored the holy places quite carefully, but mentioned in his books no tomb of Mary; the silence of Pope St. Leo (440–461), who wrote to Juvenal and enumerated in his letter the principal shrines of Jerusalem, but failed to include a tomb of Mary.⁸⁴ He also cited many works which did mention a tomb of Mary in Jerusalem, for example, the anonymous *Breviary of Jerusalem*, the writings of St. Andrew of Crete, St. Germain of Constantinople, Hippolytus of Thebes, St. John Damascene; to that oriental assemblage he added the occidentals, Sts. Willibald, Isidore of Seville, and Bede.⁸⁵ But in evaluating all those writings which mentioned a tomb in Jerusalem, he successfully demonstrated the unreliability of each.⁸⁶ In every case those statements were influenced by the apocrypha.⁸⁷

It would be appropriate to offer more foundation for the Jerusalem legend but, once the apocrypha and the Juvenal or Euthymian story have been discussed, there is little more to add. The proponents of Jerusalem continue to repeat, for example: "The Holy Virgin probably died at Jerusalem, and it is unlikely that she ever came to Asia Minor."⁸⁸ Occasionally they admit, as has been seen, that the Ephesus tradition is the older, or they make some concession of the following nature:

The "orthodox" Church, in spite of its literary and liturgical tradition which is unanimous in locating the tomb of the Virgin in Jerusalem, is beginning to shift openly in favor of Ephesus.⁸⁹

The opponents contend, for instance, that the Jerusalem tradition is spurious, confused, and of relatively late origin.⁹⁰ Then there are a

few neutrals, who can accept neither the Jerusalem nor the Ephesus tradition, because they believe that there is no definite proof for either.⁹¹

There is extensive modern literature on the subject of Mary's tomb in Jerusalem. But such literature has been omitted as much as possible in this section, because it does not really change the status of the question which prevailed earlier, and also because it receives mention subsequently.⁹² The modern literature on *Panaya*, however, has decidedly enlivened and adorned the Ephesus tradition.⁹³

One point may be noted now. In reading literature on Jerusalem which arose after the discovery of *Panaya*, I have noted that the greater volume of it was more interested in belittling the Ephesus tradition and even destroying it, if possible, than in giving solid facts to support a Jerusalem tradition. The reason seems to be obvious enough: there simply was not very much to say in favor of Jerusalem, and accordingly as much as possible was said against Ephesus. Some works, such as the diatribe of Barnabé of Alsace (Meistermann), even pretended to be concerned simply with the tomb in Jerusalem, but proved to be attempts to discredit Ephesus.⁹⁴

As a final remark on recent literature, this peculiarity may be noted. It seems rather odd, at least to me, that the literature almost invariably compared the Jerusalem tomb with the Ephesus tomb. The strange thing about this is that there is no tomb at Ephesus; if there is, it has not as yet been found. Catherine Emmerich said that there was a tomb there, that it was covered over, and that it would someday be found.⁹⁵ But regardless of how you accept her statement, a tomb at Ephesus is not absolutely essential to the Ephesus tradition. Mary's deathbed, for example, could easily enough have been the very site of the Assumption — she may never have seen a tomb; she may never even have died. All that appears at *Panaya* today is the home where she spent her last years. Of course, once you have read Catherine's description of Mary's house, and then have actually seen it, you are inclined to believe what she said also about the tomb, or about almost anything else, for that matter.

Yet the simple distinction as just described was drawn in practically none of the literary endeavors.⁹⁶ While the advocates of the

Ephesus tradition would no doubt be delighted with the discovery of the tomb, the tradition of Mary's sojourn there, extended even to death in her home, can and does stand without a tomb. The past proponents, nevertheless, defended the ancient tradition under its fullest, and perhaps not as ancient, form and interpretation, namely, that Mary lived, died, and was buried at Ephesus. They were satisfied that there was a tomb, even though it had not yet come to light.

§ 3. *Syrian Jacobites and Kirkindjites*

The two traditions which will now be examined are regional, and both contend that Mary lived and died at Ephesus. That of the Syrian Jacobite Church is the more extensive by reason of the number of adherents, but also the farther removed geographically. That of the people of Kirkindje, a large village in the hills to the east of Ephesus, is quite restricted, but phenomenally specific. The two are distinct traditions and receive separate treatment, but the object of each is the same, namely, the sojourn and passing of Mary in Ephesus.

The Syrian Jacobite Church has always followed the Ephesian tradition since the 8th century. They confirmed their belief in the 12th and 13th centuries and still continue to the present day to keep it alive.⁹⁷

Exactly how or when the Syrian tradition began cannot be determined. Perhaps it started in the first century, for John and Mary in traveling to Ephesus along the old Roman roads would have had to pass through Syria, and thus would have been remembered.⁹⁸ St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. ca. 110), in his epistles which are recognized as genuine, wrote often of Mary; among the doubtful fragments ascribed to him there is even a letter to, and a reply from, the Blessed Virgin.⁹⁹ One of his letters indicated that Mary died and was buried at Ephesus on the Enchilos mountain.¹⁰⁰ That mountain was later called the Korresos, and is the site of Mary's home.¹⁰¹ Perhaps the tradition began only about the time of the Council of Ephesus (431).¹⁰² And perhaps it originated still later.

That there was such a tradition in Syria in the ninth century, however, is beyond doubt. And once it has been established that

there was one at that time, then there is a logical presumption that its origin would antedate the evidence. Moses bar Kepha (813–903), philosopher and theologian, became bishop of Baruman and Beyt Kayuna in 863. A prolific writer,

He wrote twenty-four books in one of which he refers to the death of the Virgin Mary and her tomb in Ephesus, "Saint John took the Virgin Mary with him when he left Jerusalem for Asia Minor and they settled in Ephesus where the Virgin Mary died, and her tomb is in Ephesus." This book is now the property of Hori Numan Aydin at Midyat.¹⁰³

Later literature confirming that tradition is abundant. Dionysius bar Salibi (d. 1171), Jacobite patriarch of Tmida, wrote in his *Discourse on St. Matthew* that Mary died at Ephesus and that John and his disciples buried her.¹⁰⁴ Michael the Syrian (d. 1199), patriarch of Antioch, wrote in his *Chronicle*:

John preached at Antioch and afterwards went to Ephesus and the Mother of Our Lord accompanied him. Soon afterwards, they were exiled to the isle of Patmos. On returning from exile, he preached at Ephesus and built a church. Ignatius and Polycarp assisted him; he buried the blessed Mary. He lived 73 years and died after all the apostles; he was buried at Ephesus.¹⁰⁵

Abdul Faradji (1226–1286), another Jacobite patriarch, spoke of the assertions of Bar Salibi, and added that St. John buried Mary at Ephesus but kept the exact place secret.¹⁰⁶ And finally, Gregorius bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), the great theologian of the Syrian Jacobites, in his *Scholia on St. Matthew* repeated Michael the Syrian and the others.¹⁰⁷

Beyond its antiquity, this tradition is also significant in that it endured despite the contrary, contemporary, and universal belief of the orthodox Church that Mary's tomb was in Jerusalem. Significant, moreover, is the fact that the Syrian Jacobite Church continued to celebrate the commemoration of Mary's death on August 15, contrary to the practice of the Coptic and Ethiopian Church.¹⁰⁸

One final note, which may be of interest before passing on to the next story, is that the Jacobite tradition stressed corporeal interment, rather than an assumption. The menologies and other liturgical documents of the Syrian Jacobite Church spoke for the most part of the

death of the Mother of God, her passing away, and they silently ignored her Assumption, particularly as it is understood today.¹⁰⁹ Although the precise reason for such an attitude and tradition cannot be ascertained, its origin may perhaps lie in an erroneous interpretation of the famous relevant text of the Council of Ephesus.¹¹⁰

The second regional tradition, that of the Kirkindjites, is strictly local and full of meaning. The people of the town of Kirkindje formed the last group of known lineal descendants of the Ephesian Christians. Their ancestors lived in Ephesus until they were forced to leave, at the end of the eleventh century, as a result of the invasion of the Seldjuks, a group of Turks who soon established an empire and became a contributing cause of the Crusades.¹¹¹

One contingent of Ephesian Christians fled to the hills and took refuge on a mountain about ten miles to the east of their old home.¹¹² They built a village and continued in the traditions of their forebears, preserving their Christian heritage. One of those traditions, faithfully transmitted from father to son, was to make an annual pilgrimage to *Panaya Kapula*,¹¹³ on the Bulbul Dagh,¹¹⁴ on August 15 to commemorate the Dormition of the Immaculate Virgin Mary.¹¹⁵

This would have been a relatively easy tradition and practice to observe while they lived in Ephesus, but it must have been arduous to fulfill afterward by reason of both distance and terrain. Their journey to Mary's home and back, starting from Kirkindje, required nine to ten hours; it was about a five-hour trek for them each way. On arrival at *Panaya* their priests celebrated Mass, attended devoutly by all; everyone lighted candles and prayed. They then ate and rested before returning home.¹¹⁶

That annual pilgrimage was an event which, if not recognized for what it really was, defies any other explanation. Those Christian peasants, all Greek schismatics, held to the local traditions of their forefathers despite the contradictory doctrine of the whole orthodox Church, which favored the Jerusalem tradition. They celebrated the Holy Sacrifice and commemorated Mary's Dormition at *Panaya* contrary to their own liturgical books.¹¹⁷ They were thus alone in that unique belief and practice. With them it was not merely a tradition

of Mary's Dormition in Ephesus, but also a belief in the same house which Catherine Emmerich had envisioned from afar, and which the Lazarists later discovered.

The village of Kirkindje, which boasted four thousand inhabitants in 1892, is no more. The town is there, but the population was entirely changed after the complete dispersion of the orthodox Christians in 1922. The new inhabitants, who came from various areas, found the place so pleasant that they called the town Serindje, which means agreeable. The two churches of the Kirkindjites were not destroyed, but one was transformed into a mosque.¹¹⁸

Quite fortunately, however, prior to that unhappy dispersal, all the details of the Kirkindje tradition were recorded, and the people themselves were available for interrogation for some thirty years after the discovery of Panaya. The Lazarists, as soon as they had been made aware of that remarkable tradition by having encountered the people during one of their annual pilgrimages, started an investigation for the purpose of determining its authenticity. The inquiry was conducted by C. Constantinidis, a lawyer and also mayor of Kirkindje, who issued on December 14, 1892, the following testimonial:

After the crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, our blessed Virgin mother of God was in the care of St. John; and they lived at Ephesus . . . from there she moved to the mountain Bulbul Dagh . . . and it is there in her home of Kapulu that her "Dormition" took place, the feast of which is celebrated on August 15.¹¹⁹

If this curious yet wonderful tradition could have been invented (from what motives, and by whom?), it could not have been received because the neighbors of the Kirkindjites were completely ignorant of it, and the orthodox Church to which the Kirkindjites belonged followed a contrary tradition. It must have been handed down, therefore, from generation to generation and preserved in the rather isolated village. If Ephesus had been without a tradition in the sixth or seventh century, as was Jerusalem, then the city surely would have subscribed to the apocryphal movement. The fact that Ephesus resisted it with invincible firmness cannot be ignored.¹²⁰

Aside from all the wonderment of the Kirkindje tradition, it clearly answers several other questions, for instance, the source of

the name *Panaya Kapulu*. This title, used by the Kirkindjites to denote Mary's home on the Mountain of Nightingales, is an idiomatic hybrid from Greek and Turkish.¹²¹ The name is really no more of an anomaly, however, than were the Kirkindjites themselves — they were Greek schismatics, but they spoke for the most part Turkish, whence that hybrid name.¹²² They may not have preserved their language, but they at least kept their Christian faith and their traditions.¹²³

Another question solved by the tradition is that of the comparatively superior state of preservation of Mary's home. For more than the first ten centuries of its existence there was no problem of maintenance — the Christians living nearby and in Ephesus took care of it.¹²⁴ After 1087 the annual pilgrimage of the Kirkindjites assured at least minor and crude repairs from time to time. On investigation it was learned, for instance, that in 1864, twenty-seven years before *Panaya* was discovered, an inhabitant of Kirkindje had undertaken rather extensive repairs, one of which was doing the walls over with plaster.¹²⁵ Once *Panaya* was discovered in 1891, all efforts directed toward its subsequent preservation and restoration were well documented, but they constitute another story.¹²⁶ Prior to that time, however, the Kirkindjites can be credited not only with the preservation of the tradition of *Panaya*, but also to some degree with the preservation of *Panaya* itself.

§ 4. *Mary Magdalen and Seven Sleepers*

The legends of St. Mary Magdalen and of the Seven Sleepers are separate legends, and absolutely unessential to the tradition of Mary's sojourn. Nevertheless, the legend of Magdalen's tomb in Ephesus has some relation to Mary's sojourn there, and thus may be considered. The legend of the Seven Sleepers is included here not merely because of the topographical juxtaposition of their caves to Magdalen's tomb, but also because of the connection of the legend with Christianity and Islam, and the subsequent mention of the latter is association with Mary's home.¹²⁷

So the Seven Sleepers' Basilica at Ephesus, as well as the common belief, especially, in the final resurrection of the soul and body, and

finally the cult of the Seven Sleepers, represent very important links between the Christians and Moslems. The veneration of the Seven Sleepers is the only liturgical link, while Jesus and the Blessed Virgin are the only scriptural link between the Gospel and the Koran.¹²⁸

The tomb of Mary Magdalen lies at the entrance of the grotto of the Seven Sleepers, at the foot of Mt. Pion in Ephesus. Just as the the legend of the Seven Sleepers involved the concept of resurrection of the body and soul, so also Magdalen's life had been coincidentally or otherwise involved with that concept.

St. Mary Magdalene was an eye-witness of the first evidence of the resurrection offered by our Lord, in the person of her brother, Lazarus. . . . She was, as we have seen, the first among all followers of Jesus to discover the empty tomb of our Lord and to bring this news to St. Peter and St. John.¹²⁹

It is altogether possible that she lived close to Mary in Ephesus and thus in some way witnessed Mary's Assumption. The combination of the Blessed Virgin, St. John, and St. Mary Magdalen has been referred to as ". . . the second Holy Family . . . formed at the foot of the Cross."¹³⁰ The presence of Magdalen's tomb in Ephesus suggests at least a conjecture that she too traveled with Mary and John from Jerusalem to Ephesus. In fact St. Gregory of Tours (ca. 538-594) wrote:

In Ephesus is found the place where this apostle [John] wrote the Gospel which is read under his name in the Church. . . . In that city Mary Magdalen rests, having no protection over her. . . . In it also are found the Seven Sleepers.¹³¹

Moreover, the Byzantine Church always favored the Ephesus legend regarding the tomb of Magdalen, and six Greek historians have confirmed the story.¹³²

Echoes of that legend have been sustained through the Middle Ages to the present day.

In his *Hodoeporicon* (cap. IX, T. Tobler, *Descriptiones*) St. Willibald, who visited Ephesus in the year 722, mentions another church, that of Maria Magdalena.¹³³

The relics of Magdalen were transferred to Constantinople around the year 905, and were moved again between 1204 and 1279.¹³⁴ Such

transfers no doubt contributed to the survival of the legend. Tillemont (1637–1698) repeated that Magdalen died at Ephesus, and that it was quite natural to believe that she had accompanied the Blessed Virgin.¹³⁵ Subsequent writers stated the same thing.¹³⁶

The identity of Magdalen's tomb in Ephesus had been lost sometime after the Middle Ages, but in 1952 it was once again identified by Louis Massignon, a singularly renowned authority on archaeology, and may be seen today.¹³⁷

Žužić summarized in the following words the theory that Magdalen was the principal messenger of the dogma of resurrection:

So the fact that Mary Magdalene had been buried, many, many years earlier, precisely at the entrance of that which developed to be the glorious grave and basilica of the Seven Sleepers, might have had a deep significance and be a sign given by Divine Providence. . . . There can be no doubt anymore that Divine Providence reserved for Mary Magdalene a special place not only in the mystery of penance, but also in the mystery of resurrection; and even more, a mission! Did not our Lord say to her: “. . . Go to my brethren and say to them . . .” As we have seen from the Gospel, she had been directly and personally implicated in the main manifestations of the resurrection, which God opened to the physical senses of man. We may say, where there is a sign of the resurrection, there has to be sought Magdalene, and vice-versa, where is Magdalene, there must be some evidence of the resurrection.

God must have had, in His fathomless mercy, a special purpose in making His choice of a main messenger of resurrection the great sinner who became the greatest repentant. We should never forget this special sign and grace!¹³⁸

You may think what you will of that thesis, but at the very least it provides a pleasant transition to the following story.

The legend of the Seven Sleepers, which is treated in both Christian and Moslem religious literature, may be summarized as follows:

At the time when the Roman Emperors were still pagan, under the reign of Decius (249–251), seven young princes of his imperial court, being Christians, refused publicly to offer sacrifices to idols. Afraid of the consequences of their demonstrative refusal, they took refuge in the mountain nearby (which we know as Feast Mountain) and fell asleep in a deep cavern.

Some 150 to 200 years later, the young men rose from sleep and,

feeling hungry, sent one of their number to go cautiously into the town to buy something to eat. The wall had through age in the meantime collapsed. The young prince found what he wanted and offered for payment the old pagan imperial gold coin. The city of Ephesus being at that time entirely Christian found the story significant, inasmuch as at that time, the dispute whether the resurrection was of the soul and body, or only of the immortal soul, had reached its most dramatic climax.

The story came to the Imperial Court, and the Bishops and the Emperor personally came to Ephesus to look into the matter. In the meantime, the young men really died, but their bodies remained incorrupt, as if they were only sleeping. So the Church and the Emperor offered special masses for the souls of these Seven Martyrs and built a special basilica over that cavern containing their bodies.¹³⁹

The Moslem version of that tale is substantially the same. With Islam, however, there actually is no question of a legend — the story is recorded as historical fact in the Koran, in Surah XVIII: "The Dwellers in the Cave."¹⁴⁰

The Basilica of the Seven Sleepers in Ephesus, a shrine precious first to Christianity and later to Islam, was visited by countless pilgrims through the centuries. Documents show that the cave and the church were visited by Christian pilgrims from about the beginning of the sixth century until the end of the Middle Ages.¹⁴¹ The devotion of the Moslems is apparent from the following passage:

Having the Christian Basilica in Ephesus as a prototype, some eighteen other shrines in the entire Islamic world have been built and consecrated to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and their veneration, even though the Islam does not allow, under any circumstances, sanctuaries to be consecrated to mortal beings. The Prophet himself has no sanctuary of his own. The only exception, as we can see, has been the one made with the Seven Sleepers, the seven Christian martyrs. . . .¹⁴²

On the *Armoodi*, a gold coin of the Turks, the names of the Seven Sleepers were inscribed as *Jemlika*, *Meshilina*, *Mislina*, *Mernoos*, *Debbernoos*, *Shazzernoos*, and *Kephestatjoos*. One more name appeared; it was *Ketmehr*, the dog who was trapped along with the seven princes.¹⁴³

These names are considered by the Turks as particularly fortunate [lucky], they are placed on buildings to prevent their being burnt, and on swords to prevent their breaking. The Mahomedans have a

great veneration for the dog Ketmehr, and allow him a place in Paradise, with some other favorite brutes: and they have a sort of proverb which they use in speaking of a covetous person, that "he would not throw a bone to the dog of the seven sleepers": nay, it is said that they have the superstition to write his name, which they supposed to be Ketmehr, on their letters which go far, or which pass the sea, as a protection or kind of talisman to preserve them from miscarriage.

The seven sleepers are held in great repute of sanctity throughout the East, and their names, engraved on gold or precious stones, are supposed to act as a powerful charm to avert evil.¹⁴⁴

The names of the Seven Sleepers were listed by Christian sources as follows: Maximian, Malchus, Martinian, Denis, John, Serapion, and Constantine. The relics of these martyrs are in Rome; after a stay at the church of *San Sebastiano*, they were transferred to that of *Santa Maria del Popolo*, where they remain at present.¹⁴⁵ The devotion of Christians to the Seven Sleepers may be gathered from the following facts:

In addition to the Basilica of the Seven Sleepers in Ephesus, we have among the Christians, *twenty other sanctuaries* consecrated to them. The most visited seems to be, at the present, the one in France. It belonged before to the seignorial properties of the family of the well-known French General and statesman, Marquis de Lafayette, who served as volunteer in the Continental army of the American Revolution. Marquis de Lafayette transferred the sanctuary to the local parish. On the feasts of St. James the Greater and St. Anne, the 25th and 26th of July each year, a great and very important world-wide Christian-Moslem pilgrimage is regularly made there.

However, the most popular in the past was doubtless the shrine in Kiev, in the Ukraine, Soviet Union, where annually some 200,000 pilgrims used to come. . . .

Rome, too, has a sanctuary consecrated to the Seven Sleepers, the time of construction we do not know. In 1710 Pope Clement XI restored it and used to pray there personally. It is located at the Via Porta di San Sebastiano at the beautiful property of Princess Elvina Pallavicini, which is near the sanctuary of St. John, commemorating his legendary martyrdom in Rome at the Via Porta Latina (Latin Gate).¹⁴⁶

There is no point in dwelling further on either of these legends. They have little connection with the Ephesus tradition. They are recounted simply to prepare you for any future discussion of Ephesus.

I would not wish to leave you in the awkward and unenviable position of speaking of Our Lady of Ephesus with some authority, and then have a listener astound or embarrass you with a disturbing question on the tomb of Magdalen or the grotto of the Seven Sleepers.

CHAPTER IV

Relevant Documents, Facts, and Studies

§ 1. Council of Ephesus (431)

The Third Ecumenical Council, convoked in the year 431, summoned the bishops of the Church to the city of Ephesus. The synod convened for the purpose of dealing with Nestorianism, a heresy advanced by Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople. A capital point of Nestorianism was the denial that Mary was the Mother of God. The heresy argued that she bore Christ as man, and hence was in no sense God's mother. Accordingly two of the dogmas defined by the council Fathers were that Christ's personality is one and divine and that Mary is, therefore, the Mother of God.¹

The term for *Mother of God* in Latin is *Deipara*, and in Greek, transliterated, *Theotokos*. That title, which was attributed officially to Mary by the council, was not a new creation.

The historian Sozomen reports that Origen [ca. 185–253] used the title *Theotokos* for Mary, although we cannot be surprised that it is not found in the wreckage of his works. This title had been employed in the School of Alexandria for a long period to express Mary's divine motherhood, when in the first half of the fifth century it was attacked and defended in the Nestorian controversies and defined in the Council of Ephesus (431).²

Once the title had been authoritatively approved, confirmed, and defined by the council, the dogma was clear, and Nestorianism unequivocally condemned. It is a passage of the letter of the council Fathers, which announced this condemnation to the clergy and people of Constantinople, that is of the greatest interest here. For in this letter we read that Nestorius was present in Ephesus, "in which place John the Theologian and the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God"³ were.

These words provide documentary proof for the Ephesus tradition.

Even allowing an erroneous understanding of that phrase, Mary and John are still mentioned in some way in association with Ephesus. According to proper exegesis, and the precise interpretation, the very sojourn of Mary and John in Ephesus is definitely indicated.

A purely grammatical study, which followed all the most rigorous laws of syntax, showed the dependence of the elliptical clause on the preceding verb form modifying Nestorius, namely, *arrived* (*pervenisset*). The most precise conclusion, therefore, is that the passage truly meant that Nestorius arrived “. . . in the country of the Ephesians, at the place where John the Theologian and the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, arrived.”⁴ Thus Mary and John did come to Ephesus and, if they arrived, then there is surely enough other evidence to conclude that they stayed a while or, in other words, that they lived at Ephesus.⁵

A similarly noteworthy study, made three decades earlier in Rome, explained that according to the rules of Greek grammar the imperfect tense had to be understood in the ellipsis; the letter of the Fathers was, of course, written in Greek.

In such elliptical clauses, according to the finest of grammarians, Krüger and Kühner-Gerth, the third person *present* indicative must ordinarily be understood; but if the context excludes the present tense, then the third person *imperfect* indicative is understood.⁶

And the sense, therefore, was that John and Mary *lived* in Ephesus at some time. While that interpretation is not as precise as that of *arrived*, it is nevertheless quite correct; it expresses the true meaning, and it is thoroughly acceptable.

Since these things are so, at the end of the related clause we must add not *are*, but *were*, and then the sense of the clause is: “in which city the persons of John the Theologian and the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, *were*,” that is, they lived there at some time.⁷

Some scholars supplied the present tense in the ellipsis, and explained that the *remains* of John and Mary are there. This is impossible, of course, for Mary was taken to heaven. Others understood that the *churches* of John and Mary are there. While that is all very true, such a meaning for the passage must be denied. Those

who interpreted the phrase in that sense argued that the names in the passage were simply the names of the churches of John and Mary — John the Theologian Church, and Holy Virgin Mary Mother of God Church. But this is ridiculous.

First, such an interpretation cannot be sustained in view of the practice of the council Fathers, which was contrary to the use of such terms as names of the churches. In the letter of Nestorius to the Emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian III, wherein the churches of Ephesus were enumerated, the basilicas of John and Mary were mentioned, but the titles as given above did not occur.⁸ When the Fathers of the council spoke of the church in which they convened, they modified it always with the simple name *Mary*. In the *Acts of the Council* there were ten occasions on which such usage occurred.⁹ Thus the word *church* cannot be understood in the ellipsis, for it is clearly contrary to the usage of the council Fathers.¹⁰

Here we may note, in advance, that even if one understands *church* in this passage, the reference would still prove that Mary either lived or died in Ephesus. This will be explained in the following section.¹¹

The principal modes, then, of completing the phrase are these: John and Mary are in Ephesus; that is, they are *buried* there; they *died* there; there were *churches* there dedicated to their names; they *arrived*, *were*, or *lived* there. While the last interpretation expresses the true meaning, all of them give evidence of a sojourn there.

Cornelius à Lapide (1567–1637) maintained that the text indicated that John and Mary lived for a time at Ephesus.¹² Tillemont (1637–1698) similarly argued that the text indicated a sojourn. He denounced the idea that the phrase understood *churches*, and showed that the actual practice was to use the simple name of the saint in whose honor the church was built. His auxiliary argument *ad hominem* was this rhetorical question: “Can you really believe that any church would bear the title ‘The Holy Virgin Mary Mother of God?’”¹³ He continued that such a case would be most unlikely and without example, and he had a point.

But the best argument of Tillemont against the long and unseemly name was that, if the church were really called Holy Virgin Mary

Mother of God, and if this were the ordinary usage of the faithful of Ephesus, that name would doubtlessly have entered as such into the *Acts of the Council* and have been used to considerable advantage against Nestorius.¹⁴ But, as has been seen, it was not! And Tillemont was right. The Church is never wont to pass up such golden opportunities. To think otherwise would in this case be to consider the council Fathers stupid. They would not have failed to note the identity between the dogma they defined and the name of the church wherein they defined it, if such identity had existed.

Don Calmet (1672–1757) made the following observation: “There is a letter of the Oecumenical Council of Ephesus, importing that in the fifth century it was believed she [Mary] was buried there.”¹⁵ At the same time he indicated that Mary and John had lived and died at Ephesus.¹⁶

The marginal notes, which appeared in recent centuries in various editions of the *Acts of the Councils*, and which were appended to that text on Mary and John and Ephesus, read simply, for instance: “Some understand that they lived there at some time; others, that they had churches there.”¹⁷ But at any rate, as the celebrated Otto Bardenhewer, professor at the University of Munich, attested, the greatest philologists and historians of all times have seen the sojourn of Mary and John in the territory of Ephesus.¹⁸

There are a few scholars who have implied that the elliptical text was meaningless, or at most referred to the council church, which had a double title.¹⁹ The first opinion is somewhat inane, because the letter made perfectly good sense both to the Fathers who wrote it and to the people to whom it was written. The second opinion, while it formerly had somewhat of an admissible basis, is nevertheless false.

The interpretation which promoted the sense of *church* is thoroughly vanquished in the next section, but here also it can be demonstrated to be false by simple argumentation. The following discussion must serve as a general example of such erroneous interpretations, their argumentation and rebuttal, because it would be neither practical nor desirable to burden you with detailed commentary on all of them.

The particular argument and interpretation selected stated that the words *John the Theologian and the Holy Virgin Mary Theotokos* designated the two patrons and titularies of the principal church of Ephesus, wherein the council convened.²⁰ The author of the statement argued that the expression revealed a manner of speaking still current, for example, "I am going to Sts. Peter and Paul," and thus an Ephesian would have said, "I am going to Sts. John and Mary." In support of his contention he quoted the letter of St. Cyril in which, as noted earlier in this section, appeared the rare use of the name *Mary Theotokos* to designate the church.²¹

With a separate basilica of St. John just at the edge of town, it seems hardly credible that the Ephesians would have dedicated the city church also to John; it seems unlikely, furthermore, that St. Cyril would have been so careless in his letter as not to offer the Alexandrians the full double title, rather than simply half of it, if what he wrote was actually part of the title. This improbability is doubly confirmed by the fact that St. Cyril in two other letters, one a message to certain clergymen of Constantinople,²² the other an apology to Emperor Theodosius II,²³ stated that the church was called *Hagia Maria* — St. Mary. Although the usage of the council Fathers has been indicated earlier, it may be noted here that in their official report to the emperors they too called the church *St. Mary*.²⁴

The final argument in favor of the incorrect interpretation under consideration was the contention, after the admission that St. John's tomb was in Ephesus and that it was well known in Christendom, that certain documents were significant in that they mentioned the tomb of John at Ephesus without also mentioning the tomb of Mary. A selection from the letter of Pope St. Celestine (422-432) to the council at Ephesus was then invoked.²⁵ The text cited read as follows:

I exhort you, most blessed brethren, that only that love be looked to in which we surely must abide, according to the words of the Apostle John, whose remains you venerate by carrying them in procession.²⁶

In the preceding three sections of that letter, however, the Pope

had been speaking of the Apostles and the proclamation of the word of God to the Ephesians.²⁷ There seems to be no reason why he would have had to mention also Mary. And furthermore, there was no corpse of Mary that could be carried in procession.

The next document cited was a portion of a letter of John of Antioch and companions to the senate in Constantinople.²⁸ That section read as follows:

The holy churches and shrines of the invincible martyrs have been closed, so that it is not possible for those desiring to do so to pray there; those people came from even very remote places and were burning with the desire of visiting all the shrines of the holy and triumphant martyrs, especially that of St. John the theologian and evangelist (who is known to have obtained the greatest trust from, and familiarity with, Our Lord).²⁹

The logic of the argument from that text, namely, that it was significant because it omitted the tomb of Mary, fails completely. The text spoke precisely of the visitors to Ephesus and their burning desire to honor all the shrines of the holy martyrs, especially that of St. John. The expression *all the shrines* confirmed the fact that there were several at Ephesus. If the Latin word *monumenta*, which was translated in the text above as "shrines," denoted tombs only, then Mary's *monumentum* would have rightfully been omitted, both because it was not in the city, but several hours distant, and because, if there ever was a tomb, she may never have been in it and certainly was not in it then. And if *monumenta*, as has been assumed, included shrines other than tombs, such as the church dedicated to Mary, the omission would have been equally meaningless. The text simply mentioned one *monument* specifically.³⁰ It was exactly the same thing as if you told someone that you desired to visit all the monuments in the nation's capitol, especially the Lincoln Memorial. Did you thereby exclude the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, or any others? Of course not! The argument is ludicrous.

§ 2. *Basilicas of Mary and John*

In Ephesus you may visit today the remains of two basilicas, one dedicated to Mary, the other to John. The basilica of Mary, scene

of the Council of Ephesus, is sometimes called the double or twin church. Such usage is historically and archaeologically acceptable. But the notion that Mary's basilica was jointly dedicated to St. John must be rejected as false. While all these ideas receive consideration in this section, you will see also that the main objective here is to demonstrate that the mere presence in Ephesus of those early shrines consecrated to Mary and John is in itself sufficient evidence that they had lived or died there.

The basilica of St. Mary was most likely completed between the great Peace of the Church (313) and the Council of Ephesus (431). The probable date would seem to be about the year 350.³¹ The church was actually a transformation of the huge building called *Museion*, which was so named because it was dedicated to all nine of the Muses, and thus probably served as a sort of university.³² Although the exact date of completion of the church remains uncertain, it was in use at least well before the council met there. It was very likely the first basilica, and was surely the first cathedral, dedicated to Mary anywhere.³³

When some two hundred bishops arrived at Ephesus for the council, they must have been impressed with the cathedral there.

At the beginning of the second century when the city was still under the Roman rule, a very impressive building called "Museion" was built in the middle of the city. This building, which was 98 feet wide and 883 feet long, was either the meeting place of professors and doctors or some sort of exchange. The western part of this building was transformed into the first Christian basilica and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. When the basilica, which was supported by high columns and adorned with beautiful mosaics, was too old to be used, the eastern part of the *Museion* was turned into a domed church. It is for this reason that these ruins are called the Twin Churches.³⁴

The reason for such terms as *twin churches* and *double church* is clear — one part of the *Museion* was used after the other.

The greatest (471 feet) part of the *Museion* was immediately transformed into a church and dedicated to St. Mary, and the rest into offices and the official residence of the bishop of Ephesus and his numerous prelates. A beautiful baptistry was added on the North side of the church, with a large, deep waterpool in white marble for

baptism then by immersion. It is probably the most beautiful and also the best preserved baptistry of that kind from the early Church.

The Basilica itself had three longitudinal aisles: the central one, the nave, was very high.

The remains of ornaments and mosaics on hand today give us full evidence of the beautiful interior decoration of the church. Experts and archaeologists are unanimous in asserting that the Basilica offered a fairy-like scenery of architecture, interior decoration, and incomparable harmony of lines and colors that the primitive Christians of Ephesus and Asia Minor offered to our Lord and His Mother.³⁵

The false hypothesis, which this division of the old *Muscion* generated, was that the council letter referred to twin churches — one of Mary and one of John juxtaposed. As verified from archaeological evidence, there were surely two churches, but the historical evidence and explanation were ignored. Thus it happened that in the archaeological and biblical dictionaries³⁶ that erroneous thesis was perpetuated. The pamphlets and other works, which attacked the Ephesus tradition, all capitalized on that error in an attempt to diminish the force of the council letter, and to interpret the elliptical clause in the sense of the churches, rather than the persons, of Mary and John.

The number of incorrect interpretations of the twin churches and the council text diminished dramatically in 1930, and they appear only rarely these days. A plaque was discovered in that year, in the narthex of the basilica of Mary, whereon the Archbishop Hypatios (531–536), in the time of Justinian, clearly indicated that this was the church of *St. Mary* and the site of the council.³⁷ The name of Mary's basilica was, therefore, as already clearly shown by the usage of the council Fathers, simply *St. Mary*. And the council text retains all its force and confirms the sojourn of Mary in Ephesus.

Another confirmation of Mary's sojourn is the simple fact that there was a church dedicated to Mary in Ephesus. According to custom reflected in the actual canon law of that period, churches could be dedicated to the saints in those places only where they had lived or died or were buried. If this was the practice, then Mary and John had lived, or died, or were buried in Ephesus.

In the third century a constitution of Pope Felix I (269–274) established that Holy Mass was to be celebrated only over the tombs

or monuments of the martyrs.³⁸ Apart from the authenticity of that enactment, however, there was undeniably in the early Church the cult of martyrs and the custom of using relics in the altars.

The cult of the martyrs betrays its connection with the cult of the dead by the fact that it was at first exclusively associated with the grave. Antiquity hardly knew what might be called an abstract worship of the saints. As we have already noted, the graves of the martyrs were the scene of assemblies and the destination of pilgrimages. The shrines built over the tombs became veritable basilicas. This created the rather odd situation that in larger cities there were really two kinds of churches: within the city, the churches intended for community worship — what we would call parish churches — and on the outskirts of the city, the cemeterial basilicas of the martyrs.³⁹

While the tomb of St. John on the outskirts of Ephesus was a cemeterial basilica, the basilica of St. Mary, the first parish church of the city, was not.

From what has been said, perhaps the difficulty has arisen in your mind that here is a case contrary to the contemporary custom of dedicating a church to one who was not a martyr, namely, to Mary. The following words should solve that problem:

In the early days of the Church it was established by custom that Churches or Temples could be built only in memory and under the name of the Holy Martyrs who had died fighting bravely for Christ. Under the title of martyrs are understood the Apostles, and all who are themselves actually martyrs; but the most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, who is called by St. Jerome more than a martyr, is not excluded from this title.⁴⁰

At the time when the church of Mary in Ephesus was being constructed, a custom also prevailed which required some special connection of Mary with Ephesus for dedicating a church to her. The churches and smaller shrines (*martyria* and *memoriae*) were erected for the most part in the places where the martyrs had suffered, or where their bodies were laid to rest.⁴¹ However, the places of dwelling or property, or transferred remains of the body, were permissible substitutes for those requirements. A law was formulated just prior to the year 400, which gave official recognition to the custom that had already prevailed for years. That law read as follows:

Canon 83: *Concerning false shrines of martyrs.* Likewise, it is our opinion that altars, which are erected here and there in the streets and out in the fields as shrines of the martyrs, in which no body or other remains can be proved to be contained, should if possible be destroyed by the bishops who preside over those places. If this cannot be brought about, however, because of popular uproar, the people must none the less be admonished not to visit those places, so that with the proper understanding they will not be considered as devoted to a superstitious practice there. And absolutely no shrine of martyrs can be laudably permitted except where the body or its remains are present, or in the place of dwelling, or property, or martyrdom as acknowledged from the most trustworthy source. And accordingly those altars, which are put up all over the place as a result of the imagination and inane simulated discoveries of all sorts of people, are wholly and altogether condemned.⁴²

With all those restrictions in mind, you may easily arrive at the basis for the construction of Mary's church in Ephesus by a simple process of elimination. The place of her body or its remains is necessarily excluded. The place of martyrdom or of property (*possessio*) in Ephesus is similarly eliminated. The only remaining sufficient cause which would justify the presence of her basilica in Ephesus is that she lived there — perhaps even in the city for a while, and later at a distance on the Mountain of Nightingales rising from the city.⁴³

With the basilica of St. John just outside the city of Ephesus, at the site which later developed into Ayasoluk and then the modern Seldjuk, there is scarcely any problem. John died and was buried in Ephesus, as has already been indicated.⁴⁴ A memorial was built at once over his tomb, and later on, in the fourth century, a basilica was constructed over that tomb. This was the so-called Theodosian basilica.⁴⁵ It was later remodeled, as described by the following quotation:

The beginning of the sixth century saw a new and large Church over the tomb of the Apostle, although the old one was quite of an unusual size and beauty for that epoch. The sixth century gave the so-called Justinian Basilica, the greatest and most magnificent church of early Christendom.

The Justinian Basilica from the sixth century had six large and high cupolas (95½ feet of height) that covered the main aisle, the nave of the Church laid down in the form of a Latin cross. Five

other smaller cupolas covered the entrance, the so-called Narthex. This third Basilica was 428 feet long and 213 feet wide, covering the entire width, at that place, of St. John's Hill in Ephesus. If this natural topographical limit did not exist, probably the faithful Christians in their incomparable love and veneration toward the Apostle, would have made the Basilica still longer and wider.⁴⁶

The tomb of John and the basilica erected over it were known to almost all ages. Pope St. Celestine, who convoked the Council of Ephesus, referred to St. John's tomb there.⁴⁷ A rescript of June 1, 527, from the Emperor Justinian spoke of the contemplated preservation of the venerable oratory of St. John.⁴⁸ And the other early literature on St. John's mission and death in Ephesus has already been treated.⁴⁹

There is one composite passage which is noteworthy by reason of its indication of the pilgrimages to St. John's basilica in the Middle Ages. It reads as follows:

Ephesus was famous in the early Middle Ages, and Western pilgrims likewise resorted thither on account of a church which is never heard of now, the church of the sepulchre of John the Evangelist, who died and was buried in Ephesus. . . .

In the beginning of his *Hodoeporicon*, Willibald the pilgrim, just mentioned, says: "Ambulaverunt ad Sanctum Iohannem Evangelistam in loco specioso secus Ephesum." In 1102 the pilgrim Saewulf came from Patmos to Ephesus "where he [St. John] entered the sepulchre living." Sir Maundeville in the account of his journey in 1322 writes "From Patmos men go to Ephesus, a fair city and nigh to the sea. And there died St. John, and was buried in a tomb behind the high altar. And there is a fair church, for the Christians were always wont to hold the place."

. . . We see that the interest of travellers who resorted to Ephesus in the Middle Ages was mainly centered in recollections of John the Evangelist. The legend of the manna is told by an anonymous writer in the eighth century. Concerning the fate of the Church of St. John under Turkish dominion, I have only been able to find a notice . . . "When Sultan Sason (in 1308) made Ephesus surrender from starvation, on condition of sparing the lives of the inhabitants, he carried off the valuable vessels of the Church of St. John and the immense hoard of treasure collected there."⁵⁰

The author concluded the presentation above with the conjecture that the basilica was probably destroyed by Tamerlane in 1402.⁵¹

St. John's basilica is at present in the process of reconstruction,

and during the necessary preparatory excavations many interesting discoveries were made.⁵² But even some time prior to those excavations, some fascinating coins were unearthed in Ephesus.

Perhaps the most interesting of the coins are those struck at Ayasalouk, bearing as they do the word "Theologos," which was the medieval name for Ayasalouk, and going far to prove that St. John's Church was erected at that place.⁵³

As a final comment on this matter, it would be well to note that a common objection to the Marian tradition of Ephesus is that, while much was written about the tomb of John, nothing is known of Mary's tomb. The answer should by now be obvious. The tomb of Mary, if in reality there was one, did not contain her sacred body by reason of her Assumption, and was located in a distant and isolated place, difficult of access. Furthermore, from the earliest times until such time as the basilica of St. Mary was built, the cult of St. John in Ephesus may very well have overshadowed that of the Blessed Virgin. At any rate, the cult of Mary was slow to develop, first at Ephesus with a grand basilica dedicated to her, and then elsewhere.⁵⁴ Practically all other churches dedicated to Mary were of the fifth century or later.

The Marian cult, in the first centuries, already on the proper path of development, was still quite far from enjoying the fullness in which we see it after its development. There were indeed few churches bearing her name at Jerusalem, at Constantinople, at Rome. What a contrast, when one thinks of the blossoming of the cathedrals dedicated to Our Lady during the Middle Ages!⁵⁵

§ 3. *Papal Attitudes*

All Christians are interested in the attitudes, opinions, and statements, both official and private, of the Popes. Even prior to the discovery of Mary's home in 1891, when the Ephesus tradition had been for centuries gaining new vigor by reason of critical studies enriched with documentary evidence,⁵⁶ the vicars of Christ did not remain silent. Perhaps the one Pope, also an outstanding scholar, who studied the matter more than all the others was Benedict XIV (1740-1758).

The pertinent statements of Benedict are found principally in two

places: (1) in his treatise on Good Friday, specifically in the commentary on the third of Christ's seven last words;⁵⁷ (2) in his treatise on the Feast of the Assumption.⁵⁸ The latter composition is professedly a treatment of Mary's death and Assumption, while the former obviously is not.

In his commentary on Christ's third word from the Cross, "Woman, behold thy son . . . Behold thy mother" (Jn 19:25), Pope Benedict wrote the following:

So that He might declare His special love for His mother, He said to her that she should love John from then on just like a son; and likewise to John, that he should take care of Blessed Mary like his mother. John amply fulfilled Christ's orders; in every way he forever cared for Mary with a sense of duty; he had her live with him while he remained in Palestine, and he took her with him when he departed for Ephesus, where the Blessed Mother at length proceeded from this life into heaven. Christ so commended Mary to John because, as the sacred interpreters argue, Joseph was no longer among the living at that time.⁵⁹

At that point Benedict gave references to various sources and concluded his discussion of the matter. Although he made no mention of Mary's death in that passage, he clearly stated that Mary and John both went to Ephesus and that Ephesus was the site of the Assumption. Elsewhere the Pope had already stated not only that Mary died, but also that this was the opinion of the Church Universal. When he commented on the silence and consequent inference of St. Epiphanius (ca. 315-403),⁶⁰ Benedict noted the following:

The sentiment of this otherwise extremely reliable Father is opposed to the opinion of others and, what is most important, to that of the Church Universal, which holds that she died: so that the only controversy is whether she died in Ephesus or in Jerusalem, and this controversy is brilliantly treated in the work of Tillemont. . . .⁶¹

In addition to stating definitely that the common opinion at that time of the Church Universal was that Mary suffered death,⁶² the Holy Father also plainly betrayed his sentiments in support of the Ephesus tradition. He not only cited, but also lauded, Tillemont who had rejected the Jerusalem tradition as completely false and had demonstrated the genuineness of the Ephesus tradition.

If you were familiar with no more of Benedict's writings than the passages already quoted, you could already be certain of his attitude toward Ephesus and Jerusalem. But his treatise on Mary's Assumption covered so many notions which have received mention in this book, that all relevant passages should at least be summarized.

On the question of the age of Mary at the time of her death, the Pope mentioned the various opinions, most of which neighbored on the age of sixty-two or sixty-three, and then concluded: "Nothing at all on that point, however, can be defined as sure and certain."⁶³ He did interject, however, that one of his recent predecessors, Benedict XIII (1724-1730), entertained the opinion which preferred sixty-two years.⁶⁴

The next matter which the Holy Father treated was the Jerusalem tradition. Benedict noted that the Juvenal story was based only on the authority of John Damascene's report. He mentioned several devotees of the Jerusalem tradition, namely, Canisius, Abbot Guericus, Urban II, Burcardus, Andricomius, Petrus a Valle, and said that their opinions proved nothing because they were based on the Euthymian story, and that no one even knew who this Euthymius was, on whom John Damascene, Andrew of Crete, Nicephorus, and others relied. He added that Juvenal himself was considered by Cyril of Alexandria and Leo the Great as a felon, guilty of forgery, sedition, and a few other crimes.⁶⁵

Benedict continued his discussion of Bishop Juvenal of Jerusalem, and agreed with the declaration of Serry that Juvenal was an habitual liar and forger. Anyone like Juvenal, he argued, who was accustomed to falsifying the documents of others, would surely have been capable of fabricating a false letter to Marcian and Pulcheria; a false letter, that is, not in the sense that it lied about its author, but because it gave testimony about a tomb of Mary at Gethsemani near Jerusalem, which tomb did not in fact exist.⁶⁶

Toward the end of his remarks about Juvenal, the Holy Father pointed out that Juvenal was, after all, the bishop of Jerusalem and that it was easy to see, therefore, how he would be solicitous for the glory of his church, to which so much honor would come as the result of the lie that the Blessed Virgin died and was buried at

Jerusalem. Benedict added that anyone could see this.⁶⁷ Then the Pope, a distinguished jurist himself, concluded with a presumption and noted that according to the jurisconsults with their principle, "Once a liar, always a liar," Juvenal was worthy of absolutely no credence.⁶⁸

The Holy Father made his transition from Jerusalem to Ephesus through the following observation: "Those who reject the authority of Juvenal, and are unable to persuade themselves that the Blessed Virgin died at Jerusalem, think that she died at Ephesus."⁶⁹ And he immediately passed on to the letter of the Council of Ephesus.

In his commentary on the elliptical text Benedict noted that some proponents of Ephesus believed that *is* or *are* must be understood according to the rules and style of the Greek language. But, since John and Mary were no longer alive at the time, no other meaning could be given the passage than that their tombs were at Ephesus.⁷⁰

As the arguments on Ephesus and Jerusalem proceeded, it became obvious that the Pope favored Ephesus, even though he cautiously framed almost everything in the third person. For instance, in his treatment of the Jerusalem tradition and its advocates, he said: "They do not, however, by any means prove this opinion."⁷¹ But of the Ephesus advocates, of which Benedict was one, he said approvingly: "They think Mary died at Ephesus."⁷² Moreover, he slipped into the plural of majesty several times, and thereby expressly gave the views as his own.⁷³ Furthermore, he devoted two pages to the demonstration that the Jerusalem tradition had no merit, and on a single page enumerated arguments all in favor of Ephesus.

Benedict concluded by stating his neutrality on the issues of the year and place in which Mary died. He said that he was content with having offered the various opinions and the bases on which they rested. But by that very statement he again betrayed his feelings, at least on the question of place, if not also on the problem of age. His final words, before he proceeded to the theological questions concerning the Assumption, contained a reaffirmation of Mary's death and Assumption.⁷⁴

It is difficult to conceive that anyone could have any doubt that

Pope Benedict XIV favored the Ephesus tradition. The intrinsic evidence is apparent and, as far as an extrinsic argument is concerned, practically all subsequent writers, whether for or against Ephesus, regarded Benedict XIV as an ally of Ephesus. There was only one notorious exception.

A peculiar monk in his book *The Tomb of the Holy Virgin at Jerusalem* quoted the passage from Benedict's treatise on Good Friday, which stated that Mary came with John to Ephesus whence she was later taken to heaven. The monk then strangely attempted to devaluate this statement by citing the opinion given in Benedict's later treatise on the Assumption, wherein the Holy Father, after thoroughly studying the question, said that he wanted no part of it.⁷⁵ The monk thus made the Pope appear both unscholarly and imprudent. If anything, Benedict, in his deliberate treatment of the place of Mary's death, that is, in his treatise on the Assumption, academically left the matter open for discussion, although it was obvious from his article which side he favored. Then, in his commentary on Christ's last words, which was not an intentional treatment of Mary's passing, he flatly stated his personal belief in this matter-of-fact manner: "John took Mary with him to Ephesus whence she was assumed into heaven."⁷⁶

Throughout the past hundred years, practically all the Popes lent support to the Ephesus tradition. While some of them were more active in this respect than others, each deserves mention. The successor of Peter at the middle of the nineteenth century was Pius IX (1846-1878). His preference for Ephesus was made manifest in several ways, one of which follows in some detail:

It is extremely significant that Pope Pius IX adopted the theory which awakened a great deal of interest. It is significant also to note that Pope Pius reestablished the patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1847 and in recalling the past glories of the church of Jerusalem, he mentioned only that Mary had stayed there a number of years. He failed to mention either the death or the tomb of the Mother of God. To us his silence is very eloquent.⁷⁷

This quotation refers to the *Apostolic Letter* of July 23, 1847, which restored the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The letter did recall past glories, for example, the first council of the Apostles,

the monuments, such as the Holy Sepulcher, but of Mary it said only that she lived in Jerusalem with the Apostles for a while.⁷⁸ The simple fact that Pius did not mention any Marian shrine in his enumeration of the Jerusalem monuments might be insignificant in other circumstances. The fact that the Pope had mentioned Mary specifically in that context, however, and then failed to note her death or tomb, cannot be as easily dismissed.

Exactly what the time element indicated in the Pope's letter — "for a while" (*diu*) — means is debatable. In view of the fact that Pius IX favored the Ephesus tradition, however, he probably intimated that Mary left Jerusalem with John before the other Apostles departed. At any rate, the phrase implied that Mary did not remain long in Jerusalem. It is very likely, of course, that most of the Apostles themselves left at the earliest opportunity.

The successor of Pius IX was Leo XIII (1878–1903), and it was during his reign that *Panaya Kapulu* was discovered. It seems only natural to suppose that after the discovery of Mary's home in 1891, and after word of the discovery reached Rome, there would be some reaction at the Vatican. But the news was, in fact, slow to reach the papal chambers. It came several years after the discovery, and then in a rather accidental manner.

In 1895 Pope Leo sent to the East a commission, headed by Father Eschbach, to study the question of the Oriental rites. Eschbach was the superior of the Pontifical French Seminary in Rome. In the course of his mission he met Father Poulin in Smyrna on May 18, 1895, and at that time mentioned that he had heard of *Panaya* while in Jerusalem and that he was eager to see it. The necessary arrangements were made and on May 20 Eschbach went to Ephesus with Father Jung as his companion. He returned from Mary's home a veritable apostle of *Panaya*.⁷⁹

On his return to Rome, Eschbach appeared before the Holy Father to give an account of his mission, and he also mentioned his delightful visit to Mary's home. Pope Leo showed the liveliest interest in the news of *Panaya*. "Do you have any pictures?" asked His Holiness. Eschbach did, and he showed them. The Pope examined them at length and conveniently forgot to return them.⁸⁰

It was shortly after that audience that, coincidentally or otherwise, Pope Leo issued a decree whereby he transferred the indulgences, which had been previously attached to Mary's tomb at Gethsemani, to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Gauls, or Franks, in Jerusalem. This special brief signed by Leo on April 18, 1896, removed the plenary indulgence from Mary's tomb in Jerusalem *in perpetuum* — for all time.⁸¹

The Pope's true motive for removing those indulgences from the Jerusalem tomb cannot be known with certitude. The reason he proposed in the decree itself, namely, that the place was in schismatic hands and could not be visited without grave risk, was a diplomatic formula, because in fact the tomb was as easy to visit as the other shrines, if not more so. Furthermore, it almost appears that he intended his sentiments to be known because, in the sentence previous to this, he had just made provision for gaining the indulgences where a place was difficult to enter or too small for the pilgrims, so that the indulgences attached to such places could be gained without really ever entering them.⁸²

Father Eschbach, who became the apostle of Panaya at Rome, had started something. He preached Ephesus to everyone, including the cardinals. As a result, Cardinal di Lai made the journey from Rome to Panaya on October 4, 1902. After he had seen everything with his own eyes, he returned quite exultant and deeply convinced.⁸³

The attitude of Pope Leo toward Ephesus was explicitly manifested in 1903 when he restored the following annotation, at one time removed, in the *Diario Romano* next to the date, August 15, the feast of the Assumption: "At Ephesus . . . where according to the more probable opinion Mary died."⁸⁴

Leo XIII had, furthermore, planned to send a pontifical commission to Ephesus in the autumn of 1904. Eschbach had launched the project to study Panaya with the encouragement and support of Cardinal Parrochi. The illustrious archaeologist, O. Marucchi, was commissioned to head the endeavor. But during the process of preparation, Leo died in August, 1903, and that brought the project to a halt.⁸⁵

The interest at Rome continued to increase, however, as is evident

from the letter of Cardinal di Lai to Poulin in October, 1903. Shortly after that, Pope St. Pius X (1903–1914) sent his first message to *Panaya*. His Holiness was fully aware of the importance of the research at Mary's home. He sent his apostolic blessing to all concerned, and encouraged the workers with a prayer that Mary herself would help them find the place of her tomb. The letter was dated April 6, 1906, and signed by Cardinal Merry del Val, Secretary of State.⁸⁶

That letter was, for the most part, a piece of banal chancellery, and the Holy Father expressed therein little of his personal sentiment on *Panaya* and its authenticity. His opinion was disclosed, however, in other ways. On one occasion St. Pius privately declared himself for *Panaya*, and gave as the reason for his position the fact that he had been convinced by the text of St. John.⁸⁷

St. Pius disclosed his attitude toward *Panaya* by the reception which he gave Sisters de Grancey and Fiévet on April 20, 1912. "Has the tomb been found?" he asked. "Not yet, Holy Father," replied Sister de Grancey. She added that she was embarrassed just then by reason of the information given by another visionary (Rosalie Putt). St. Pius then replied with a smile that one should believe the old woman (Catherine Emmerich) rather than the young girl. Sister de Grancey thereupon stated, with the boldness for which she was so well known: "Most Holy Father, I know that you believe, as did your illustrious predecessor Benedict XIV, that the Blessed Virgin died at Ephesus." St. Pius confirmed her remark, though only with a nodding smile.⁸⁸

The final act of St. Pius in regard to *Panaya* was to grant the favor of a plenary indulgence to the pilgrimage there in 1914.⁸⁹ He promised that he would also grant the indulgences of the holy places to Mary's home, but he died soon afterward on the eve of World War I.⁹⁰

During the war there was little activity concerning Mary's home anywhere, whether in Rome, or Ephesus, or elsewhere. The troubled times in Turkey continued until it became a republic in 1923. But within that period there was one letter from Rome, and one outstanding conference in Rome.

The conference was held by Father M. Hetzenauer, professor at the *Apollinaris*. On February 27, 1921, toward the end of the reign of Benedict XV (1914–1922), he delivered a well-documented lecture on Ephesus and *Panaya* at the Pontifical Roman Major Seminary, in the presence of seven cardinals and numerous prelates of the Roman Curia.⁹¹

The letter from Rome was the result of the presentation to the Holy Father of a small book. In 1922 Poulin forwarded to Pope Pius XI (1922–1939) his latest literary endeavor on the place of Mary's death,⁹² and he received a letter from the Secretariate of State, signed by Cardinal Gasparri and dated August 13, 1922. Gasparri wrote that the Holy Father had given the brochure the warmest welcome and wished to congratulate Poulin for his contribution in this disputed question.⁹³

Pope Pius XI was succeeded by Pope Pius XII (1939–1958) who, among the many things for which he will be long remembered, defined the dogma of Mary's Assumption on November 1, 1950.⁹⁴ In that definition the questions of both Mary's death and the site of the Assumption were omitted, and thus these matters are still open for discussion. But just as the discovery of *Panaya* in 1891 had generated much interest in Mary's home, and produced studies for and against Ephesus,⁹⁵ so also did the official proclamation of Mary's Assumption, and the subsequent dedication at Ephesus of the reconstructed *Panaya* in August, 1951.⁹⁶

Meanwhile Radio Vatican became involved with *Panaya*. There is no intention of leaving the impression that Radio Vatican is an official organ of the Holy See. It is no more official than *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper. It is fairly sure, however, that very little which is opposed to the views of the Holy Father and the Roman Curia would be publicized, certainly not in a favorable light, by either of these semiofficial organs. But the story of *Panaya* was broadcast to the world by Radio Vatican on a Sunday afternoon in June, 1951.⁹⁷

In 1951 *Panaya Kapulu* was declared an official sanctuary for the pilgrims of the Catholic religion in a communication sent by Pope Pius XII to the most Rev. Joseph Descuffi, C.M., Archbishop of

Smyrna.⁹⁸ In the papal decree of June 19, 1951, special privileges were granted in favor of both Mary's home and the old basilicas of John and Mary in Ephesus. Any sacerdotal pilgrim to Mary's home could celebrate there the Votive Mass of the Assumption. Similarly, the Votive Mass of the Divine Maternity at the site of Mary's basilica in Ephesus and the Votive Mass of St. John at the site of St. John's basilica at Seldjuk were permitted.⁹⁹ The question of a plenary indulgence for all pilgrims to Mary's home, under the usual conditions, was referred by Pius XII to the Sacred Penitentiary where it received favorable action.¹⁰⁰ Incidentally, it may be mentioned that Pius XII spoke of the Ephesus tradition with the greatest esteem in his letter of 1957 to Archbishop Descuffi, on the occasion of the latter's fiftieth anniversary in the priesthood.

The plenary indulgence granted by Pius was confirmed for all time by Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) by a decree of August 18, 1961.¹⁰¹ Pope John was the only pope who had visited Ephesus; he did so in 1931, on the occasion of the fiftieth centenary of the Council of Ephesus. At that time he was the papal legate in Bulgaria and later, of course, he functioned as the delegate of the Holy See in Istanbul.¹⁰²

While Pope John did not actually climb the mountain and visit Mary's home, but merely went to the council church down in Ephesus, one of his delegates did go to *Panaya*.¹⁰³

On July 1, 1960 His Excellency, Most Reverend Archbishop Francis Lardone, Nuncio-Internuncio to Turkey, came to the House of Our Lady. Incidentally, he is an American citizen. His Excellency celebrated a special Mass at the very place where Our Lady used to pray, and after the Mass, spent a long time in deep prayer and meditation. Afterward, he visited all houses and institutions on the grounds of the Sanctuary and openly expressed his great admiration of the work accomplished and his personal happiness in having lived a couple of hours at this holy place. It was the first time that an official delegate of the Holy Father visited the House of Our Lady in Ephesus. His Excellency also spent much time in deep prayer at the tomb of St. John the Apostle.¹⁰⁴

Pope John manifested his special interest in Mary's home and Ephesus in many ways. From 1960, and through the subsequent

years of his reign, he remembered *Panaya* on the feast of the Purification.

. . . the Pontiff sent a special candle to Our Lady of *Panaya* from among the candles he received from all parts of the world on February 2, Feast Day of Purification of the Blessed Virgin, or Candlemas Day. These candles are, after a special Apostolic benediction, sent to the most important Marian shrines in the world. His Excellency Archbishop Descuffi, in a special great ceremony, lighted the Papal candle, assisted by his clergy and some 2,000 pilgrims. In his sermon, His Excellency stated among other things, that Our Lady has now in her personal oratory burned the very light of Jesus Himself. "This candle," stated the Archbishop, "represents the very soul and heart of the Holy Father in the *Meryem Ana* Sanctuary. . . ." ¹⁰⁵

Again Pope John remembered Ephesus in still another way when, in preparation of the Ecumenical Council, he thought of the Council of Ephesus, a shining star in the history of the Church. On February 2, 1962, after the candles were offered to Pope John in St. Peter's basilica, he said in his sermon:

Here you have . . . the *Motu proprio*, which fixes the date of the solemn opening of the Vatican Ecumenical Council II. This date is October 11th of the year 1962, already commenced: the liturgical feast of the Divine Maternity of Most Holy Mary, indeed a commemoration of the Council of Ephesus — third ecumenical — which proclaimed this Marian dogma. ¹⁰⁶

There can be no doubt that Pope Paul VI (1963—) is well aware of Mary's home. That is assured through his past correspondence with the Archbishop of Smyrna, and by his close association with Pius XII. ¹⁰⁷ The story of his activity as pope in respect to *Panaya*, however, must be patiently awaited.

§ 4. *Studies and Expert Opinions*

Of the older studies concerning the Ephesus tradition, some of which have received mention here and there throughout this work, those of Tillemont (1637–1698) and Benedict XIV (1740–1758) were the most outstanding. ¹⁰⁸ None of the treatises could discuss Mary's home, of course, for prior to 1891 it was unknown to the world. Once it was discovered, however, reports began to spread. Some news of it leaked out even before the official public announce-

ment of 1896, which marked the beginning of the vast modern literature on *Panaya Kapulu*.¹⁰⁹ Prior to that manifesto a few articles appeared and several events transpired which are of interest and relevance.

After the discovery of Mary's home, Eugene Poulin began to work on the historical questions which were related to *Panaya*. His first thought was to obtain the opinions of experts, and thus he wrote to the historian, Louis Duchesne, on January 22, 1892. This was six months after the actual discovery and ten months before the official ecclesiastical inquiry of December, 1892.¹¹⁰ Duchesne's reply, dated February 4, 1892, read as follows:

The views of Catherine Emmerich are nothing but an abominable imposture. In what measure the alleged visionary and her associate Clemens Brentano share the honors of having compiled so many apocryphal gospels and deceitful legends, is not for me to determine and I think one could use his time more advantageously. . . . Pardon me for speaking to you in this manner, but I am a Breton and have the habit of calling a cat a cat. Moreover, my religious and moral conscience demands that I protest against the establishment of a sanctuary under such conditions. It is here that I wish I had the eloquence of St. Paul to beseech you not to go farther and not to expose your society and even the Church to exceedingly deserved criticism which will not be lacking to greet your discovery. I think you are more carried away than convinced. For the love of God, stop!¹¹¹

Duchesne was still in the mood for correspondence and, after he had written the above letter, decided to inform Poulin's superior. Thus he sent another letter the next day to P. Fiat, superior general of the Lazarists (Vincentians), wherein he called the general's attention to the discoveries at Ephesus, as well as to the attitude of his subjects there. Fiat then wrote to Poulin and, although he did not object to the continuation of research, he did advise the greatest reserve and circumspection.¹¹²

Those letters did not discourage Poulin. He studied the texts of the Fathers and historians, and at length drew the following conclusions:

1. There was no known real authority for the Jerusalem tradition prior to the sixth century.

2. Where the Fathers spoke of the tomb of Gethsemani, they did so only with hesitation and relied on the apocrypha.

3. The best authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries favored the Ephesus tradition, and did so quite frankly.

4. The most recent historians were divided.

5. In view of all the evidence it was undeniable that the Ephesus tradition at least balanced that of Jerusalem, if it did not outweigh it.¹¹³

Meanwhile, as the news of the discovery was slipping out, an article by Nirschl appeared in 1894 which attacked the discovery.¹¹⁴ Shortly thereafter a small book, written as a reply to that article, was published by Wegener in 1895.¹¹⁵

Once Poulin learned that the Pope, cardinals, and the Roman Curia had been informed of Mary's home through the instrumentality of Eschbach, he publicly disclosed to the world at large the discovery of *Panaya*. Out of regard for the counsel of his superior, *Fiat*, the manifesto appeared anonymously, but with the approbation of the Archbishop of Smyrna. Communiqués were sent to the journals — *La Vérité*, *La Gazette de France*, *L'Univers*, *Le Bien Public*, *The Morning Leader*, *L'Italia*, and many more. And literature, both benevolent and hostile, consequently appeared in every quarter of Europe.

Poulin thought it then opportune to publish the brochure which he had prepared from his research. But from Paris came the following advice of the superior general: "Even though the matter be true, it should not be for our congregation to make this question its own affair."¹¹⁶ For that reason the Lazarists completely disassociated themselves, as such, from the booklet *Panaghia-Capouli* which appeared in 1896, and they left total responsibility with the Archbishop of Smyrna, André Timoni.¹¹⁷

Thus the publication appeared anonymously — disassociated from the Congregation of the Mission — and the subsequent works of Poulin were published under the pseudonym of M. Gabrielovich.¹¹⁸ There was something parallel on the Jerusalem side, at least as to the use of pseudonyms.¹¹⁹

The public announcement made to the journals and the appear-

ance of the anonymous brochure *Panaghia-Capouli* seemed to be interpreted as a declaration of war, or so it would appear from the tenor of many of the writings which flourished after that time. Dr. Nirschl attacked Mary's home once again with a brochure of his own.¹²⁰ Leopold Fonck, S.J., the founder of the Biblical Institute of Rome, replied to Nirschl and wrote many articles after that, both in simple exposition and in defense of Mary's home.¹²¹

In the following years articles, brochures, and full-length books kept appearing on both sides of the controversy. Gabrielovich (Poulin) published a work called *Ephesus or Jerusalem* in 1897.¹²² This was violently attacked by the work of Barnabé in 1903,¹²³ and Gabrielovich refuted him in 1905.¹²⁴

De la Broise, S.J., wrote a brief article in 1897, in which he demonstrated his adherence to the Jerusalem tradition.¹²⁵ In that same year M. Jugie wrote a lengthy article, which also favored Jerusalem.¹²⁶

Strangely enough, some of the most renowned authorities of that day contented themselves with expressing their views merely by way of reviews of articles or books. DeSmedt, for instance, in his appraisal of the work of Gabrielovich, said that the book did not change his opinion. He added:

In truth I do not consider the tradition of Jerusalem as positively certain. But, at this point, I do not see any solid foundation for the tradition of Ephesus.¹²⁷

And Lagrange declared his predilection for the Jerusalem tradition only through his review of the work of Zahn.¹²⁸ Lagrange and the *Revue Biblique* were accused by Euzet of having always attempted not to establish the Jerusalem tradition but to discredit the Ephesus tradition.¹²⁹

In contrast to the generally negative approach, or nonconstructive efforts, toward confirmation of the Jerusalem tradition, the contributions from the proponents of Ephesus began to stand out like monuments, for example, masterful books by Gabrielovich (Poulin),¹³⁰ and excellent articles by Fonck¹³¹ and Bardenhewer.¹³² During the first years after the announcement of *Panaya* to the public, therefore, the literature assumed a general pattern, which

it apparently never lost. The writers who were convinced of the merits of Ephesus had something to say about Ephesus, and then in their zeal, but not always, they compared the tradition with that of Jerusalem. Those who favored Jerusalem usually attacked Ephesus first, and only then mentioned what meager arguments they could scavenge in corroboration of Jerusalem.

It seems neither expedient nor desirable to review all the works that appeared subsequently, but certain ones must be included here; those chosen are representative of them all.

In 1898 Abbé Gouyet, the man who had visited Ephesus fifteen years earlier, lauded the Ephesus tradition in his admirable book about the discovery on Mary's Mountain.¹³³ In the following year Theodore Zahn, the learned Protestant professor of exegesis, berated Ephesus in a small booklet,¹³⁴ as did Le Camus in a work which dealt with many other subjects.¹³⁵ Le Camus will be remembered for the following statement:

The most appreciable thing about the recent discovery (on the Mountain of Nightingales) is the good fortune of the Turk who through the intervention of a Christian has sold a loyal and enthusiastic religious [Sr. de Grancey] a ruin without any value for 35,000 francs.¹³⁶

In 1906 Dr. Johannes Niessen of Cologne produced a well-documented and positive study on the authenticity of *Panaya*.¹³⁷ In a subsequent work he included a chapter on Ephesus,¹³⁸ and still later produced a second but smaller book on *Panaya*.¹³⁹ His death in 1938 thwarted his plans to revise and supplement the work of 1906. In the year prior to his death, however, Niessen made the following statement, which is like a legacy from this great intellectual:

The further I advance in the literature on the subject, the more I prove that there is no serious objection to the contrary, and the more I am strengthened in the conviction that the site of the Dormition of the Virgin and of her Assumption is found at Ephesus.¹⁴⁰

In the earliest years of *Panaya*, after the announcement of its discovery, many scholars actually visited Mary's home and drew their own conclusions. For example, the Baron Carra de Vaux from the Catholic Institute of Paris went to *Panaya* in 1896 in order to

verify the descriptions of Catherine Emmerich. He returned home convinced of the authenticity of Mary's home.

Also in 1896 Admiral Antoine, together with eight of his officers, was there with books, maps and pictures. His astonishment was such that he could not refrain from saying: "Indeed, one would be almost prone to think that the landscape and the house were designed and built on the very plans of Catherine Emmerich."¹⁴¹

Again, Paul Joüon, S.J., of the University of Beirut, wrote the following brief acknowledgment:

Prior to climbing up to Panaya Kapulu on September 27, 1899, I was convinced, by the study of the Jerusalem tradition relative to the tomb of the Holy Virgin at Gethsemani and above all by the study of St. Epiphanius, that it was necessary to search for Mary's tomb other than in the environs of Jerusalem. This opinion was in no way motivated by the authority of Catherine Emmerich. Then, on the 27th of September I established between the description of C. Emmerich and the things of Panaya Kapulu a concordance such that I deem capable of only one explanation. C. Emmerich had contemplated in vision the site and the house actually called Panaya Kapulu.¹⁴²

Another such acknowledgment was made by Jean Parrang, who resided at Smyrna from 1904 to 1913. It read as follows:

There is no serious evidence in favor of Jerusalem, but more than enough against it. The possibilities in favor of Ephesus are very great. Can one ever arrive at the absolute certainty which history would like on this question?¹⁴³

The following quotation contains still another acknowledgment:

Among others who were able to go to Panaya we have yet to mention Prince George of Saxony, duly renowned for his profound knowledge and his piety. He was accompanied on his trip by Mr. Bendorf, director of the excavations at Ephesus (1908). When he returned from his pilgrimage, he exclaimed: "Veni, vidi, credo."¹⁴⁴

Many of the men who published works for or against Ephesus never had the opportunity to visit Mary's home. They drew their conclusions from other sources, which included the treatises on Panaya that had already appeared. The following quotation mentions two such scholars whose names have not as yet been included in this section: