against the pneumatic "Church of love." On the other side, there was the traditional view based on the doctrine of St. Robert Bellarmine, interpreted in the light of Mystici Corporis. The contrast was confirmed the following day by the opposing speeches by Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez of Santiago, Chile, and Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini, of Palermo, Sicily. Silva Henriquez maintained that the Church must be considered as a communion of local churches in the same sense in which St. Paul addressed "the church of Corinth" and "the church of Ephesus." Ruffini, in a polemic aimed also at Frings, criticized the concept of church-as-sacrament, a term already used by the heretic Tyrell, and disputed the scriptural basis for collegiality, recalling that Christ said to Peter alone: "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church."

The discussion on ecclesiology, which was at the center of the debate during the second session, focused on the four chapters of the schema: 1) the mystery of the Church in the economy of salvation; 2) the hierarchical constitution of the Church; 3) the people of God and the laity; and 4) the universal call to holiness.

Inside the hall two tendencies collided: the first reiterated the classic concept of the Church as a society both visible and invisible at the same time; the second tended to emphasize the invisible, charismatic dimension of the Church at the expense of the juridical, visible dimension.

On October 12, 1963, Bishop Frančič of Split, Yugoslavia, proposed that in article 7 the traditional title "Church Militant" should be added to the title "Pilgrim Church" already found in the schema. Bishop Frančič explained:

The reason for this proposal is certainly not an appetite for provocation; far be it from us especially who desire the precious treasure of religious peace. But it does seem to me, venerable fathers, that this observation is somehow fundamental for the council as a whole. In fact, peace is the highest good: Christ himself is called our peace, but, alas, we cannot achieve and preserve peace, either in our souls or in the Church, without a difficult and continuous daily battle, of course not a battle with atomic bombs or any kind of classical weapons, but with spiritual weapons. Unless we clearly present the Church with such an image and in such a situation, then she really could find herself in the condition that is commonly called psychological disarmament. In that case, we would be presenting the Church to the faithful and to the world as being essentially defective. And that would not only be harmful to our faithful; it would represent spiritual harm for the whole world... How can we fight as good soldiers of Christ, as St. Paul teaches, unless in addition to charity and the other virtues we cultivate also in ourselves and in our priests and in our faithful the virtue of fortitude in confronting the malicious and atheistic world? For the love of the world, then, and also for the atheistic world, we must not only call the Church militant, make sure that she is militant. I firmly believe that no reasonable man, nor even the Marxists themselves, could be offended by the use of this term: Church Militant. Otherwise, the atheists would have to start despising themselves, since they too describe themselves as militant.

The bishop of Split was recalling an elementary truth: the Church will never cease to be confronted by enemies, who are not abstract ideas but men and groups organized to fight and, if possible, to destroy the Church. The militant nature of the Church had often been mentioned by Pius XII; according to him, "what is going on is a battle that is increasing almost every day in scale and violence, and it is therefore necessary for all Christians, but especially all militant Catholics, 'to stand up and fight, if necessary even to the death, for their mother the Church, with the weapons that are allowed' (St. Bernard, Ep. 221, n. 3)." Bishop Frančič, however, was not an intransigent hard-liner like his predecessor, Archbishop Stepinac.
Yet his request seemed too strong to Cardinal Wyszyński, who the next day rejected the concept of a Church Militant, inasmuch as "the men of our time oppose all armed strife, because, for the most part, if not usually, they are defeated in that battle."

The archbishop of Warsaw expressed himself as follows:

The notion of a Church Militant is certainly a theological concept, and no doubt it points to the very great merits of the Church in the universal human family. We do not want to disregard what is taught by fundamental dogmatic theology or the public law of the Church; but we cannot ignore the real situation in which many hundreds of thousands of the children of God’s Church find themselves... We fear that the notion of the Church Militant, still keeping the traditional definition, at this particular psychological moment, will end up replacing the more essential notion of the Church, namely, a life-giving Church (the life and light of men) and a sanctifying Church ("be holy..."). The men of our time who possess the gift of faith are opposed to all strife, because for the most part, if not usually, they are defeated in these battles [pl. sic]. Nevertheless they prefer to trust in the Church, which gives life and holiness, which defends the natural rights of man, which forms souls and urges them to sustain and defend the natural, moral, and social order, and above all the supernatural order in the world.”

With these words, the Polish Cardinal, although staunch in his defense of the liturgy and of moral principles, confirmed that he advocated an accommodating line with regard to communism, an approach that was quite different from the one personified in those same years by Cardinal Mindszenty. Bishop Franći himself recorded this in his memoirs: "A new line had to be followed at the council; avoid provocations or condemnations of any kind, and to make only conciliatory speeches...."

6. The Marian question

a) “Maximalists” and “minimalists” at the council.

Early in October a new conflict broke out when it came time to decide whether the schema on the Blessed Virgin should be discussed by itself or included in the schema on the Church. The debate revealed the existence of two opposing tendencies, “maximalist” and “minimalist.” The “maximalists” were the supporters of the great Marian movement of the twentieth century, which, after the definition of the Dogma of the Assumption, looked forward to the proclamation of a new dogma by the pope and the bishops assembled in council: the dogma of Mary, Mediator of all graces.

No Catholic theologian at that time doubted that Mary exercised an influence that was in a certain way immediate and actual in the application of the fruits of the redemption, or rather in the distribution of all graces to each and every human being. At the Marian Congress held at Lourdes in 1958, two tendencies among Mariologists who had emerged, however:

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108 The seeds of the “Mariam movement,” in its modern phase, go back to the apostolate of St. Louis-Matthieu Grignon de Montfort (1673–1716), with his treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin (published for the first time in 1942) and of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori (1696–1787) with his Glories of Mary (1750).

maximalist tendency, which held that all of Mary’s privileges stemmed from her divine maternity within the hypostatic order; \(^{123}\) and a minimalist tendency, according to which Mariology had its foundation in the parallel between Mary and the Church. \(^{124}\) The first tendency was defined as “Christotypical” because it emphasized the intimate connection between Christ and His Mother in the one act of salvation. The co-redemption and the mediation of Mary derived from this union. The second tendency asserted instead that Mary’s role was subordinate to that of the Church, which held the first place after Christ and of which Mary was only a member. Her privileges were to be understood within the Christian community, of which she remained the “type” and model. For this reason the second tendency was called “ecclesiotypical.”

The “maximalists” were represented among the council periti by two strong personalities: Father Carlo Balić, \(^{125}\) president since 1960 of the Pontifical International Marian Academy, and Father Gabriele Maria Roschini, head of the Marianum in Rome.

Carlo Balić, born in Croatia in 1899, brought to the debate the rugged character of his birthplace. He had been living in Rome since 1933, when he had been called to teach at the Antonianum, where he was engaged in various activities as a scholar, editor, and, especially, organizer of Mariological Congresses, including the one held on the occasion of the Lourdes Centenary (1958), which was a kind of “dress rehearsal” for the conciliar conflict between “maximalists” and “minimalists.” Father Congar, who did not share Balić’s passionate Mariology, described him disdainfully in his diary as making a “voluble sales-pitch” \(^{126}\) and being a “Dalmatian street vendor,” \(^{127}\) a “clown,” \(^{128}\) and a “fairground tumbler.” \(^{129}\)

Monsignor Antonio Piolanti, on the other hand, wrote of Balić as a “titan, as it were, built overlooking the abyss of the contrasts of a great soul with unlimited horizons and immense desires. It was easy to detect in the vigorous physiognomy of this worthy son of strong, noble Croatia a kind of coincidentia oppositorum (combination of opposites): the heart of a child and the driving force of St. Jerome; the tenderness of a mother and the imperiousness of a captain; an acute and penetrating intelligence and a fiery, decisive will; a broad-minded generosity and Dantian indignation.” \(^{130}\)

Father Roschini, a Servite priest from Viterbo, was a man of faith and scholarship and had to his credit, like Balić, a very extensive bibliography, including ponderous treatises and an entire Dictionario di Mariologia, \(^{131}\) published in 1960, in which he explored the mystery of Mary in all of its aspects. It was owing to his diligence that the Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum was established on December 8, 1950. His extraordinary scholarly, organizational, and popularizing work has yet to be studied in its entirety. \(^{132}\)

The dream of both Balić and Roschini to have Mary proclaimed as Mediatrix was shattered in the council hall. Recalling the strenuous battle that he had waged at the council in defense of the Marian privileges, Father Balić, still clear-eyed though exhausted, declared to Piolanti: “There, of all places, all my work was ruined!” \(^{133}\)

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126 Congar, Journal, 52.

127 Ibid., 54.

128 Ibid., 538.

129 Ibid. 605.


The majority of the council fathers, as the various votes had highlighted, cultivated a lively devotion to Mary and leaned toward the positions of the "maximalists." The central European minority, in contrast, was characterized by its aversion to what Father Yves Congar described as "Mariano-Christianity." Congar's diary entry for the evening of September 22, 1961, reads: "I [realized] the drama which I have experienced all my life. The need to fight, in the name of the gospel and of apostolic faith, against a development, a Mediterranean and Irish proliferation, of a Mariology which does not come from revelation, but is backed up by pontifical texts." Congar had the support of Rahner, but also that of the young Mariologist René Laurentin, the best-grounded of the "minimalists," whom Congar credited with launching "the anti-maximalist battle" at the council. "We tell each other that we must not be TOO antagonistic, for fear of bringing about something worse than what we are anxious to avoid." 

b) The anti-maximalist offensive gets underway

The signal for the anti-maximalist offensive was the publication, immediately before the second session, of Laurentin's book, The Question of Mary, in which the Marian movement was presented as "a problem. There is no doubt that the Marian movement is fruitful, fervent, and prosperous," Laurentin wrote. "But would it not be true to say that its abundance is excessive, its intensity unhealthy, its development specialized and partly pathological?" Contemporary Mariology, characterized by an excessive abundance of writings, had exhibited, according to Laurentin, an a-priori tendency that was committed to the unconditional exaltation of Our Lady. It was necessary to "purify" this tendency in order to make it compatible with the requirements of ecumenism and of the new theology. The minimalist line that the French Mariologist suggested following was the typically hypocritical line of the "Third Way": neither a Christianity of the Virgin that St. Paul would not recognize, nor a Christianity without the Virgin that would no longer be Catholic." This framing of the issue won the sympathy of the moderates, and above all the support of the media, whose mechanisms Laurentin, a theologian-journalist, was well acquainted with.

Laurentin's book was refuted in great detail by a great Mariologist, Father Aldama, at the request of Father Balić and Father Roschini; the latter in turn joined in the debate with a little volume on The So-called "Marian Question." Father Aldama recalled, as characteristic of the great Marian revival of the twentieth century, the numerous religious congregations, of both men and women, that had arisen with the name of Mary; the repeated Marian apparitions in Paris (in 1830 to St. Catherine Labouré), La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858), Phillippsdorf (1858), Pontmain (1871), Fatima (1917), Beauruing (1932), and a Banneux (1933), with their respective shrines, pilgrimages, and devotions; the congresses, societies, publications, and cathedrals dedicated to Mary; the countless pronouncements by the Roman pontiffs, true promoters of the Marian movement. Pius XII, in particular, saw in the ever growing devotion of the faithful to the Blessed Virgin "the
most encouraging sign of the times” and “an infallible touchstone to distinguish true from false Christians.” It was thus a matter of continuing down a path already marked out.

Roschini, in his study, compared the attempts to “diminish” the impetus of the Marian movement to the Monita salutaria (Salutary Warnings) (1673) of the German jurist, Adam Widenfeld (1618-1680) who, three centuries earlier, had attacked the Marian devotion of his day. “History repeats itself,” Roschini declared. “Around three centuries later, here we see a new, undoubtedly exaggerated reaction against the Marian movement, against today’s Mariology, and against devotion to Mary.” It was not possible, in his opinion, to speak about a maximalist tendency; “one can, however, with real grounds, speak about a minimalist tendency, which, prescinding from the teachings of the ordinary magisterium of the Church, not only denies absolute truths or calls them into question, but has gone so far as to privilege faith in the divine maternity, so as to identify the Most Holy Mary with the Church, thus lowering her to the level of all the other members of the Mystical Body of Christ, as a prima inter pares (first woman among equals).”

The “minimalists” enjoyed the support of John XXIII who, in 1954, six months before the encyclical by Pius XII, Ad Coeli Regina, which instituted the feast of the Queen of Mary, had experienced “considerable hesitation” in his mind with regard to a new feast of the Queen of Mary, “fearing some serious harm to the apostolic efforts being undertaken to restore the unity of the Holy Catholic Church in the world.” This explains why Pope Roncalli was disposed to accept the requests of the “minimalists,” who accused the “maximalists” of prejudicing ecumenism. (Paul VI would later subscribe to the same minimalist line.) His final intervention, during the work of the Preparatory Commission, had been on June 20, 1962, when he had sided with Cardinal Liénart against a proposal to confer on the Virgin the title of “Mediatrix,” which he had described as “inopportune and even harmful.” Father Bevilacqua confided in then-Bishop Helder Câmara: “I call the pope’s attention to it every time I see a good book like The Marian Question by René Laurentin, or the books on the council written by Hans Küng. He likes Rahner and Häring very much. I do too.” Bishop Helder Câmara, for his part, commented: “Little by little the citadel of reaction is being transformed.”

In January, 1963, after the closing of the first session, the Coordinating Commission of the council decided that the schema on the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, would be treated independently from the schema De Ecclesia. “There is no doubt,” Komonchak admits, that the schema De Beata Maria Virgine, even in its section on her mediatrix role, met the expectations and desires of a very large number of the bishops, as expressed in their antepreparatory vote.”

The revised Schema constitutionis dogmaticae de Maria Mater Ecclesiae was sent to the fathers during the month of May. Neither the decision nor the text approved by the commission pleased Father Rahner. In a letter addressed to all the participants in the Fulda conference in August 1963, he expressed his lively concerns with regard to the document, assuring his readers that these concerns were shared by Fathers Grillmeier and Semmelroth. If the text were to be adopted, he said, “unimaginable harm would result from an ecumenical point of view, in relation to both Orientals and protestants.” Of course, Rahner added, it was not possible to try to scrap the schema, as had been done with the schema on the sources of revelation. In order to diminish its importance, therefore, it was a question of pressuring the fathers, as insistently as possible, to make the schema into a chapter or the epilogue of the schema on the Church. This, in his opinion, “would be the easiest way to delete from the schema statements which, theologically, are...
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not sufficiently developed and which could only do incalculable harm from an ecumenical point of view. It would also prevent bitter discussion.

The point that Rahner attacked more forcefully was the schema’s teaching on the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and, more precisely, the title accorded to her of “Mediatrix of all graces.” This teaching, proposed in the schema not as a dogma of faith but rather as a common doctrine of the Church, was rejected by Rahner, on account of the negative consequences which, in his opinion, it could have on Mariology and on the devotion of the faithful to Mary. Protestants flatly denied any cooperation whatsoever by Mary in redemption and abhorred the terms “Mediatrix” and, even more so, “co-redemptrix.” He concluded by asserting that the bishops of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland should consider themselves obliged to commit themselves to an outright rejection of the schema in its current form.

The Fulda conference adopted Rahner’s suggestions, but on the question of Mary’s mediation the participants limited themselves to criticizing the expression, “Mediatrix of all graces.” Their proposal, officially submitted by the fathers of Fulda to the secretary general of the council, cited protestant sources too, recalling that the German Lutheran Bishop Debelius had declared in 1962 that the teaching of the Catholic Church on Mary was one of the major obstacles to ecumenical union. According to other German protestant authors, the council fathers had to remember that by approving a schema on Mary, they would set up another wall of division; they should therefore remain silent on the whole matter or else call back to order those who were guilty of excesses.

c) The success of the “minimalists”

On the day of the opening of the debate, September 30, 1963, the “minimalists” suddenly requested, through a speech by Cardinal Frings, that everything related to the Blessed Virgin Mary be included in the schema on the Church, in order to facilitate ecumenical dialogue with the separated brethren. The next day, Cardinal Silva Henríquez, too, maintained that in Latin America devotion to the Virgin Mary went beyond the limits of Christian devotion and that the approval of a schema on Our Lady would aggravate the situation. Consequently, speaking on behalf of forty-four bishops from Latin American countries, he supported the proposal of Cardinal Frings. A similar declaration was made that same morning by Archbishop Garro of Toulouse, on behalf of “numerous French bishops,” and others were made by Bishop Elchinger and Bishop Méndez Arceo.

On October 4, the hierarchy of England and Wales also came out in favor of Frings’s proposal. Meanwhile, that same day, a document composed by the Servite Fathers was distributed to the council fathers which suggested that, besides the title of “Mediatrix,” the title of “Co-Redemptrix” should also be applied to Mary. Father Balić, an expert on the Theological Commission, circulated in his turn a document in which he expounded the reasons why the schema on the Blessed Virgin Mary should be kept separate from the schema on the Church. Cardinal Arribay Castro, archbishop of Tarragona, taking the floor in the name of sixty Spanish bishops, declared that, given the importance of the Mother of God in the economy of redemption, and contrary to what had been said in the hall until then, it would be preferable to adopt a separate schema on the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The discussion continued with interventions from the opposing sides. On October 24, the cardinal moderators announced that, in view of the large number of fathers who had called for the inclusion of the schema on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the schema on the Church, the Holy Father had charged the Doctrinal Commission with choosing two of its members to set forth the different positions. The commission designated Cardinal Rufino

155 Ibid., 366–368.
156 Ibid., 374–375.
158 Ibid., 385–386.
Santos of Manila as the advocate of the separate schema and Cardinal Franz König of Vienna as the advocate for its incorporation. The two council fathers presented their contrasting theses in the hall on October 24.165

The archbishop of Manila articulated ten arguments in favor of a separate schema, affirming that Our Lady is the first and principal member of the Church, but at the same time is above the Church and, in the words of St. Bernard, “stans intra Christum et Ecclesiam” (“stands between Christ and the Church”). He added that the faithful would interpret the incorporation of De Beata into De Ecclesia as the sign of a downgrading of Marian devotion. König affirmed, on the contrary, that the faithful needed to “purify” their Marian devotion in order to avoid an attachment to what is secondary and accidental and, above all, so as not to damage to the cause of ecumenism. The texts of the two cardinals’ reports were distributed on October 25. The “ecclesiotypical” conception of the “minimalists” aimed at relativizing the role of the Blessed Virgin, considering her not in relation to her divine son, but with the common faithful of the Church.166 They turned upside down the traditional understanding, which had always considered Mary not the image, but as the model and exemplar of the Church. In fact, “the image is inferior to that which is imaged, of which it is the effect, while the model or exemplar is superior to its image, of which it is the cause. Therefore the Church is sooner the image and figure of the Virgin.”167

On October 29, the following question was put to a vote: “Does it please the council fathers that the schema on the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, should be revised so as to become chapter 6 of the schema on the Church?”168 The results of this vote were 1,114 in favor, 1,074 opposed. The assembly proved, for the first time, to be split down the middle, with a difference of only forty votes between the two sides; this division corresponded to the one between two opposing theological views and marked the victory of the “minimalists,” if only by a narrow margin.169

The success of the progressives was due, according to Melissa Wilde, not so much to their strength as to the weakness of the conservatives, who had not yet found an organizational structure. In spite of the individual efforts of some of them, such as Father Ballí, who on his own initiative had passed out one of his leaflets to the council fathers, there was no systematic or coordinated action. “As the council was voting on Mary, CIP [Coetus Internationalis Patrum] leaders were just beginning to correspond and had not yet formed their organization in earnest. In fact, their defeat on the Marian schema, combined with the ‘disastrous’ votes on collegiality the following day, is what probably spurred conservatives to organize…. Evidence suggests that they could have done much better in regard to the Marian schema had they organized a bit more effectively earlier in the council.”170

7. The anti-Roman party in the second session

a) Jacobins and Girondists

The rapidity of the success of the progressive European alliance, which by now had become “worldwide,” led also to a divergence of strategic visions within its ranks. Within the progressive alignment, therefore, a split opened up between Jacobins and Girondists or, as Grootaers puts it, between “possibilists” and “maximalists.” “The latter defended positions on principle, denouncing as a betrayal any concession on the doctrinal level; the former, in contrast, cited the concrete situation of the moment and the need to win a solid majority.”171 The German theologians and an Italian group headed by Cardinal Lercaro signed on to the Jacobin approach, while Cardinal Suñens became the leader of the “Girondist” council fathers.

At the beginning of the second session, Hélder Câmara described Suñens as “the key man at the council, sure to have the direct and personal


167 Ibid., 282.

168 For an overall description of the two concepts, see Laurentin, La Vierge au Concile, op. cit., 138.

169 Wilde, 108.