

The Assumption and Theology.

I. Can the Assumption be defined?

a) The glorification and assumption of our Lady's body into heaven undoubtedly can be defined as true. This follows from the infallibility of the Church and the fact that this doctrine has long been taught.

b) The same doctrine can be defined as a matter of faith.

Excellent theologians of different schools draw this conclusion from the infallibility of the episcopacy and the petitions addressed to the Holy See.

II. Why can the Assumption be defined as a matter of faith?

a) Not because it is contained explicitly and certainly in Holy Writ.

b) Nor probably because of an explicit, oral, apostolic tradition.

The contrary view seems less probable because of a) the silence of the early centuries, b) the diversity of views exhibited by the apocrypha, c) the long-standing doubts that existed in the Church.

c) Implicit revelation suffices for a doctrine being a matter of faith. This is illustrated by our Lord's expecting the two disciples to believe what he concluded from Moses and all the prophets in Luke XXIV.

d) The doctrine of the Assumption is revealed implicitly.

The implication can be presented in a variety of manners. The fundamental step is to meditate on the Christian transfiguration of death. From Adam's sin flows death of soul and body. From Christ's death flows resurrection of soul and body.

When one asks our Lady's place in this divine economy, a number of considerations converge on the single conclusion of the Assumption.

e) This implication is certain.

For the understanding of Holy Writ is not subject to the type of vicissitude that obtains in the understanding of phenomena. In the present instances the understanding of the whole, the general picture, is given in Scripture; the implication lies in determining our Lady's place in the whole. Finally, it is not ~~the~~^a question of some individual's understanding nor even of merely human understanding in a large group and over a long period; it is an understanding aided by grace and of the Church.

Ultimately, however, as the relevant understanding is the understandings of the Church, so the relevant judgment, to which properly belongs certitude, is the judgment of the Church.

f) This implication suffices for definition as of faith.

Theologians distinguish formal and virtual implication; a majority at the present time require formal implication if a doctrine is to be defined as of faith; but what is meant by formal implication is not sufficiently clear.

The great theologians of the Spanish Renaissance disputed whether virtual implication was sufficient. Whether it was or not, they did not agree. But it was at least clear what virtual implication meant.

The implication of the Assumption in Scripture is not virtual, as that term unanimously was understood by the older theologians. The parallel between the Assumption and other

doctrines defined as of faith and, more generally, the fact that theologians no matter what they think of formal and virtual revelation agree that the Assumption could be defined, makes this discussion irrelevant.

III. Did our Lady die? Could that be defined?

a) One may recognize an abstract possibility that our Lady might not have died. But doubts about the fact of her death have no ^{solid} foundation.

b) A definition of the Assumption might a) make no mention of our Lady's death, b) state it as a fact in an expository preamble, c) include it within the tenor of the ~~definition~~ definition itself as a dogmatic fact.

Petitions addressed to the Holy See follow the above divisions with the great majority passing over the issue.

Theologians seem ^{somewhat similarly} divided, mainly on questions of opportuneness.