

THE JESUSIFICATION OF MARY
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I. Introduction

As those who personally knew Jesus as a historic individual passed away, the image of Jesus changed. Instead of Jesus, who had the “friend of publicans and sinners”, there arose another Jesus who was ascetic and one who was less likely to deal with individuals because of the sinfulness of the flesh. This more ascetic Jesus began to appear in the writings of the church fathers and began to eclipse the more compassionate Jesus. As the more ascetic form of Christianity came into ascendancy, anything involving the flesh became evil and unworthy of God with the most extreme views eventually moving into heresies such as Gnosticism and a dualism where there was the good God of the Spirit and a dualistic, evil god of the flesh. In the Christian church those espousing asceticism and celibacy came into positions of authority and excluded those who had more moderate beliefs. Women instead of being the children of God became temptresses and snares used by Satan. Women could only be saved through child-bearing and through raising Christian families. The upper echelons of ecclesiastical power were taken over by ascetics and celibates and who imposed their spiritual authority with a legalistic fervor. Clergy who were married were slowly rooted out both in the Western and Eastern Christian churches.

At the same time, the concept of a married clergy which was more acceptable in Jewish Christianity was extinguished as the Jewish Church went into eclipse by Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem and later by the rise of Islam. In the Western Church, the married clergy was first reduced to remaining unmarried from the time they took their religious vows, to being celibate after they took their vows and eventually marriage was practically excluded for clergy altogether. In the Eastern Church, married clergy were permitted to exist but were excluded from climbing the ecclesiastical ladder. All positions at the level of bishop or above were reserved for persons who were unmarried and celibate.

Scripture which required that a pastor, elder, bishop or deacon be married was conveniently ignored.

As ascetics came into authority, the character of Jesus began to reflect their beliefs and Jesus became more ascetic. As many historiography classes teach, those who win the wars are the ones who write the histories. The ascetics, the celibates and those who feared and excluded women had won the day, and these were the ones which wrote the histories, set forth the dogma and wrote the teachings.

The female aspects of God once more went into eclipse. The male aspects of God, including things like judgment, severity, strength and even violence once again came into ascendancy. Female aspects of God including concepts like mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and compassion began to decrease.

Simultaneously, the position of women and families were removed from having any effect upon the male leadership of the church. Wives were banished or condemned not to have sexual contact with their husbands. Governorship by married church leaders was no longer a criteria for positions of leadership. The requirement to have raised your children in the faith was eradicated because the clergy were no longer to have wives or families.

Women were also demoted by the ascetics. Female leadership in the church was no longer tolerated, much less encouraged. Women desiring a spiritual life and who had spiritual gifts and callings were told not to pursue their callings except through motherhood or in a group of women under the ultimate control of men.

As the female aspect of God were stripped from Jesus (or at least written out of the narrative), the need for the gentler and female aspects of God for the day to day individual still existed. Therefore, almost of necessity, we have two developments occur involving the history of Mary and her place in the church. First, the characteristics of God which had been excluded from Jesus migrated to the person of Mary. If one could not feel the compassion of Jesus, one could better feel the compassion of Mary.

Surprisingly in light of the emphasis on Mary today, the New Testament had very little to say about Mary. For one so esteemed, the first century seemed to have treated Mary in a much more humble fashion. Outside the birth of Jesus, the role of Mary in the ministry of Christ was limited. If people wanted access to Jesus they went to Peter, James and John instead of to Mary. Mary's role in Scripture is also limited. In Matthew she is mentioned five times of which four are in connection with the birth of Christ. (Matt. 1:16, 18, 20; 2:11). In Mark she is named only once (Mark 6:3) although mentioned three times. In John she is not mentioned by name and is referred to at the Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12) and as standing near the cross (John 19:25-26). In Luke she is mentioned 12 times and all of these relate to the story of Jesus' birth. In short, the role of Mary in the birth of Jesus is essential; however outside of the birth narratives, little is said. The position of Mary has been enlarged through Catholic and Orthodox practice to a role much greater than is found in Scripture. Due to this, Protestants have circumscribed the role of Mary trying to base her role and function to be more in accordance with Holy Scripture than the tradition of the Church where her position and role received regular accretions of honor and respect as theology and Catholic practices grew more and more complex, if not convoluted.

The second development was the conversion of Mary into a second, but female, Jesus from a theological view. Although, theologians and religious authorities would state that Mary derived her powers from Jesus and therefore was a little lower than Jesus, in practice, she became as important if not more important, on a practical and day to day basis than Jesus. Although, this was never the intent, this was the practical effect. Meanwhile Jesus was promoted to a senior administrator who had Mary under his authority but Mary became the face of Catholic and Orthodox Christianity. It was Mary who with her great purity got down into the trenches with the ordinary believer and secured their faith. This is an event which did not occur in everyday Protestant belief which instead tried to go back to a first century belief in Christ prior to the elevation of Mary to "*Theotokos*" and prior to all of the honors which she received over the years.

However, the Scripture does say that she was "favored among women" and that she would be called "blessed" which is a recognition that Protestants should acknowledge and not minimize. We all are saved through the sacrifice of Christ, and the fact of our salvation allows all of us to participate in the crushing of Satan's head. It is indeed the fruit of woman which prevailed and that woman is the people of faith and in particular one woman selected by God, Mary.

From a gender standpoint, through Jesus and Mary, we have the whole complement of the characteristics of God. Jesus became a strong, celibate ascetic person like the priests. I suspect this may be an instance in which Christ was built in the image of the priests as opposed to the priests being in the image of Christ. However, Mary was also like the priests in that she was celibate, but she was also gentle, kind and loving. Priests may have not had wives, but they did have mothers. Jesus came to have the characteristics of the father while Mary had all of the characteristics of the kind and compassionate mother. The remainder of this article will detail the historical and theological conversion of Mary into the female Jesus, a process which I call the Jesusification of Mary.

Although my conclusions may not be welcomed by some, my description of what happened from a theological perspective should not be read necessarily as though I disagree with the conclusions, or at least some of the conclusions, of the Catholic Church. Instead this paper is to set forth what happened historically and why it happened. It is my hope that the reader will understand that I have a deep appreciation of Mary. After all the angel Gabriel said that Mary would be the most blessed among women. At the same time, the church may have come to conclusions which are extreme due to the fact that the theologians and writers are overlaboring to arrive at a female Christ figure. Honoring Mary, which is a good, is not always the same as honoring Christ despite the conclusions of the Catholic Church that to honor Mary is to honor Christ. When Mary and the brothers/relatives of Jesus came to get Jesus, Jesus chose not to go with them but instead looked around and said at Matt. 12:48-50:

But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are my brothers?" And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother".

II. The Incarnation of Jesus and the Virgin Birth

One of the fundamentals of the Christian faith is that Jesus was literally the Son of God and was born from a virgin who had not had sexual relations with a man. When Gabriel announces to Mary in Luke 2 that Mary will "conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son" (Luke 1:31), Mary responds "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Luke 1:34). The Angel Gabriel then explains what will happen at Luke 1:35 which says, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." Mary consents to this mystery and miracle at Luke 1:38 "Let it be to me according to your word."

The incarnation of Jesus Christ from the Holy Spirit of God with the virgin Mary is one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith and is found in the earliest creeds.

The Apostles Creed or the Old Roman Creed in the Fourth Century says:

I believe in God almighty
And in Christ Jesus, his only son, our Lord
who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary

Christian theology would wrestle with the exact nature of Christ with the Church concluding at the Council of Chalcedon that Jesus was

...the only begotten Son of the God, begotten of the Father before all worlds,
 Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father,
 by whom all things were made;
 who for us men, and our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate
 by the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, and was made man...

Although, the focus of doctrine was on the nature of Christ, the decisions regarding the nature of Christ impacted the treatment of Mary.

III A. The Protoevangelium of James and Other Early Myths Regarding Mary.

To understand the subsequent development of the theology around Mary it is helpful if one understands the apocryphal book called *The Gospel of James* or the *Protoevangelium of James*. This book purports to be written by James the Just who was a relative of Jesus and headed up the Jerusalem Church. The Gospel of James was written in the Second Century A.D. and fills in all of the details regarding the life of Mary. In this narrative, Mary is born to Joachim and his wife Anna /Anne. This is the first time that the mother of Mary is named. At three years old Mary is sent to the Temple where she remains until 12 where Joseph is selected as a guardian. Joseph is elderly, has grown sons and has no sexual interest in Mary. (St. Jerome believed that Joseph had always been celibate and that the "brothers" of Jesus were not brothers through Joseph but were instead cousins.) The book covers the announcement to Mary that she is to be the mother of Christ and covers the general things found in Scripture regarding Mary as well as a number of apocryphal stories including stories about midwives including one who confirms Mary's virginity.

The Protoevangelium affirms Mary's virginity before, during and after the birth of Christ and explains the brothers of Jesus as being children by Joseph from an earlier marriage.

At any rate, this apocryphal book fills in all the details regarding Mary and the birth of Jesus. The Protoevangelium was one of many apocryphal writings in the Second Century. It was not considered worthy of being in the earliest canons including the Muratorian Canon. It would later be questioned by St. Jerome, rejected by Pope Damasius, by Pope Innocent I in 405 A.D. and by Pope Gelasius I. The Protoevangelium would not appear in the list of accepted books of the Catholic Bible by the Gelasian Decree (circa 500 A.D.)

Despite its ultimate rejection of this book by the Church, the Protoevangelium was popular and helped shape many of the views of Mary and her origins and the theology around Mary. It is an unfortunate fact that in a number of instances in Catholic history, spurious books and practices have crept into the Church, been formally rejected but the books and practices have affected practical devotions and later have crept into the doctrine of the Church at a later time although their initial entrance into the faith has been repudiated. The Protoevangelium is an excellent example of this.

III.B. Mary as Mother of God ("*Theotokos*")

One of the events which catapulted the veneration of Mary was the fact that she was given the title of "*Theotokos*" at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. "*Theotokos*" is Greek for "God-bearer." The importance of the title for early Christianity related to the nature of Jesus. Theologians had grappled with whether Jesus was created or begotten from God's being or whether Christ had been eternally with God. The Nestorians took the former position whereas the the majority took the position that Christ had been eternally present and was one with God. The Nestorians preferred the term "*Christotokos*" meaning "Christ bearer." The majority considered this to be objectionable because it caused Christ to be part man and part God seemingly dividing him into two persons. John 1:1 said that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God." The Council of Ephesus found that Jesus was fully God and fully man with one divine person with a divine and human nature which were hypostatically united. The hypostatic union meant that the two natures of Christ were joined in one person and not two persons. Jesus was fully God and at the same time was fully man.

The leap to calling Mary "*Theotokos*" was an easy one. If Jesus was fully God, then Mary was the bearer of God or "Theotokos." In reality, all knew that Mary was only the mother of Christ and so some made the distinction of referring to Mary as Mother of Christ Incarnate. However, because of the conclusion that Christ was fully and completely God, the leap was easy to make to say that Mary was "God-bearer." The position taken by Nestorius was condemned and the position taken by Cyril of Alexandria and the majority of the Council of Ephesus was approved.

The declaration of Mary as "*Theotokos*" appeared to have accelerated her veneration. At the beginning of Christianity there are not that many paintings of Mary. Gradually some paintings appeared of Mary and the baby Jesus in the catacombs although there is some question today regarding whether some of these were really of Mary. The Council of Ephesus allowed icons (flat images) to be made of Mary and the baby Jesus and these quickly took off in popularity.

After the Council of Ephesus, churches began to be renamed or established in the name of Mary. In Rome, the Santa Maria Maggiore was built by Sixtus III to commemorate Mary as "*Theotokos*". In 609 the Roman Pantheon was dedicated to Mary as Santa Maria ad Martyres ("Holy Mary and the Martyrs). In addition, in the East, devotion to Mary intensified and icons related to Mary and the baby Jesus proliferated.

Feast Days to commemorate and venerate the Virgin had already begun in some locations prior to the Council at Ephesus. After Ephesus, the feast days would begin to proliferate both in the West and the East with Pope Sergius I (687-701) adding a Marian feast to the Roman liturgical calendar. The number of feasts celebrating Mary and the events of her life would continue to increase over time.

The proclamation of Mary as "*Theotokos*" (God-bearer) would launch Mary from a humble girl giving birth to Jesus to a place slightly less than the position of Christ in the Christian World after the Fourth Century with additional honors to be added in the future. The Angel Gabriel had said to Mary "blessed are you among women!" (Luke 1:28). In the "Magnificat", Mary had responded:

For He has regarded the lowly estate of His maidservant;
for behold, henceforth all generations will call me
blessed.

After the first centuries after Jesus, the star of Mary began to rise in the Christian church where it would approach in brilliance, but not exceed, the star of Jesus Christ. The importance of Mary would continue to shine brightly in the Catholic and Orthodox versions of Christianity. However, among the Protestants the role of Mary would begin to dim somewhat as Protestants focused upon Christ alone and Scripture alone. Likewise in the Protestant faith, the role of the celibate priesthood would diminish and return to something closer to the First Century. Virginity was no longer a *sine qua non* for the priesthood or the virtue of being celibate would decrease among the Protestants.

IV. The Immaculate Conception of Mary

The dogma pertaining to the Immaculate Conception of Mary appears to be an attempt to deal with the issue of original sin in Mary's life. If Mary had original sin, wouldn't that have infected Jesus causing him to be born in sin instead of being born sinless. After all under the Levitical laws of cleanliness, it is clear that that which is unclean or sinful affects that which is pure and clean. So even if one accepted the position of St. Augustine that original sin was transmitted through the sperm of man, you still have the issue of whether Mary was herself sinful due to being born with original sin. This question which was pressing to the Western Church was not as pressing to the Eastern Church which did not accept that people were born with original sin but only had the propensity to sin. To the Orthodox, sin was still a choice and not a given.

The cure for the original sin issue to the Roman Church was the "Immaculate Conception" meaning that Mary somehow got a special dispensation through the grace of Christ and that unlike all other women was born without original sin.

Although Scripture says nothing about the birth of Mary, some of the earlier apocryphal works such as The Protoevangelium of James does describe the birth of Mary. That book, which we have described earlier in this article, gives the names of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna. The Protoevangelium says little about the conception of Mary. The following is written in that book:

And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood by saying, "Anna, Anna, the Lord hath heard thy prayer, and thou shalt conceive, and shalt bring forth; and thy seed shall be spoken of in all of the world.

According to the Protoevangelium, Mary was taken to the Temple at three years old and lived there until she was 12 being fed by angels until Joseph was appointed by the Temple as her protector.

The Protoevangelium does not describe whether there was original sin in Mary's birth only that it was a special birth. Later, people would add details making it clear that Mary was born perhaps without sex and certainly without sin. Some believed that Mary had not been born through sex but by Ann kissing her husband Joachim. According to St. Bridget of Sweden who lived in the fourteenth century, Mary revealed in a vision to St. Bridget that she had been conceived by Ann and Joachim through a sexual union but it was free of sexual desire.

The view of the Immaculate Conception was not universally accepted in the Catholic Church and some who rejected it were Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas who believed that if Mary did not have original sin then Christ's sacrifice for her was not required. In addition certain orders of the Roman Church took varying positions on the Immaculate Conception with the Dominicans having some caution being concerned that granting Mary this honor and dignity might possibly subtract from the honor Christ had of being the only one who was born sinless. On the other hand, most Franciscans supported the Immaculate Conception. Gradually, the supporters of the Immaculate Conception became stronger. Dominicans were forbidden to call those supporting the Immaculate Conception "heretics" by Pope Sixtus IV (who had been a Franciscan) in 1482. Also in 1477, Pope Sixtus IV had added the Immaculate Conception to the list of Church festivals.

The honoring of Mary continued to grow. The Council of Basil in 1431 considered the Immaculate Conception to be consistent with faith and Scripture. The Council of Trent in the early 1500's excepted Mary from original sin. In 1571, the Pope began celebrating the Feast of Immaculate Conception each December 8.

Finally in 1854, Pope Pius IX made the Immaculate Conception part of the dogma of the Church in a Bull entitled "*Ineffabilis Deus*" (the "Bull") This Bull made it a requirement that every Catholic believe in the Immaculate Conception. The Bull uses, what I believe is, circular reasoning, in that it supports its conclusions based upon actions that the church had had taken in the past. Pius IX espoused many reasons for making the Immaculate Conception dogma including arguments from the Church's liturgy, past teachings by the Church, the fact that the Church had allowed Mary to be a patron to cities, kingdoms and provinces, the actions of prior popes such as Alexander VII, decisions of the Council of Trent and many more reasons. In short, the logic was that the Church had recognized the Immaculate Conception as true at various times in the past so that proved that it must be true.

Sixtus compared the Immaculate Conception to Noah's ark, Jacob's ladder, the burning bush, the strong tower, the walled garden, the City of God and the Temple of God, all as allusions to Mary and her innocence, sanctity and faultlessness.

Mary was the Second Eve who had not listened to Satan and that Mary and Christ had crushed the Head of the Serpent.

The Bull also said that she, with Jesus, is "the most powerful Mediatrix and Conciliatrix in the world." She "has been chosen by God to be the Queen of heaven and earth" and "even stands at the right hand of her only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ..."

The Bull encourages people to pray to Mary when it says, "...let them continue to venerate, invoke and pray to the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, conceived without original sin...What she asks, she obtains. Her pleas can never be unheard."

The words of the Bull could not have been stronger or more absolute. Those who do not believe in the Immaculate Conception are anathema, excluded from the church and "shipwreck in the faith." In short, all debate is over and the decision is made.

Here are some of the statements in the Bull regarding Mary and the Immaculate Conception.

Statements Regarding Mary

“...absolutely free of all stain of sin, all fair and perfect....”

“...the Virgin’s supreme sanctity, dignity, and immunity from all stain of sin, and her renowned victory over the most foul enemy of the human race.”

“...so the most holy Virgin, united with him (Jesus) by a most intimate and indissoluble bond, was, with him and through him, eternally at enmity with the evil serpent, and most completely triumphed over him, and thus crushed his head with her immaculate foot.”

“The most Blessed Virgin, on the contrary, ever increased her original gift, and not only never lent an ear to the serpent, but by divinely given power she utterly destroyed the force and dominion of the evil one.”

“...the Virgin undefiled, immaculate, ever blessed, and free from all contagion of sin, she from whom was formed the new Adam, the flawless, brightest, and most beautiful paradise of innocence, immortality and delights planted by God himself and protected against all the snares of the poisonous serpent....”

“...for to her more grace was given than was necessary to conquer sin entirely.”

“...she is beautiful by nature and entirely free from all stain; that at her Immaculate Conception she came into the world all radiant like the dawn.”

“...in the most Blessed Virgin—in the all fair and immaculate one who has crushed the poisonous head of the cruel serpent and brought salvation to the world....”

“...in her who, with her only begotten Son, is the most powerful Mediatrix and Conciliatrix in the whole world....”

“...she will obtain pardon for the sinner, health for the sick, strength of heart for the weak, consolation for the afflicted, help for those in danger....”

“...let them (children of the Catholic church) continue to venerate, invoke and pray to the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, conceived without sin.”

“Because, while bearing toward us a truly motherly affection and having in her care the work of our salvation, she is solicitous about the whole human race. And since she has been appointed by God to be the Queen of heaven and earth, and is exalted above all the choirs of angels and saints, and even stands at the right hand of her only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, she presents our petitions in a most efficacious manner. What she asks, she obtains. Her pleas can never be unheard.”

“so completely free from the taint of original sin that she would triumph over the ancient serpent.”

“...her soul, in the first instant of its creation and in the first instant of the soul’s infusion into the body was, by a special grace and privilege of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, her Son and Redeemer of the human race, preserved free from all stain of original sin.”

“...she was never subject to the curse...”

“...the Blessed Virgin was, through grace, entirely free from every stain of sin, and from all corruption of body, soul and mind; and she was always united with God and joined to him by an eternal covenant; that she was never in darkness but always in light; and that, therefore, she was entirely a fit habitation for Christ, not because of the state of her body, but because of her original grace.”

“...that the flesh of the Virgin, although derived from Adam, did not contract the stains of Adam.”

“They have frequently addressed the Mother of God as immaculate, as immaculate in every respect, innocent, and verily most innocent; spotless, and entirely spotless; holy and removed from every stain of sin; all pure, all stainless, the very model of purity and innocence....”

“We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful.”

To summarize, Mary was proclaimed Mother of God at the Council of Ephesus. By 1854, Pope Pius IX made it a dogma of the Catholic Church that Mary had been born, thanks to the grace of Jesus Christ, without sin. Mary was the Second Eve who had not fallen. She was proclaimed Queen of Heaven and Earth was worthy of being beseeched and prayed to and as an intercessor between man and Christ. She was (through Jesus) a Mediatrix and Concilatrix of the whole world. Mary was the only recipient of a special grace of being born without original sin (other than Christ) and played a role with Christ as a Co-Redemptrix of the world.

Early Dominicans had expressed a concern whether the raising of Mary to these titles and the basis of the Immaculate Conception might detract from the work of Christ. These concerns were silenced by the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* but those same concerns that were earlier held by the Dominicans motivate many Protestants today.

All of that being said, there was a tide of devotion to Mary. Men and women sensed that the female virtues of Mary were more susceptible to understanding the sins and sorrows of mankind. People were drawn to Mary. They believed that she was more likely to hear their prayers and to intercede for them. Instead of Christ being the intercessor for man, another intercessor was added to the chain. Mary interceded for man to Jesus who in turn interceded for man. In essence, it was easier for man to go to Mary for mercy than to go directly to Christ. Christ would be sure to hear the pleas of Mary.

Now instead of dealing with the King of Kings, there was a more approachable Queen of Heaven who was sympathetic toward man.



Immaculate Conception of Mary
By Giovanni Battista Tiepolo
(1696-1770)

V. The Sinless Life of Mary

It is not surprising that believers might come to the conclusion that Mary was sinless. It was almost unthinkable that the Mother of God would commit sin. Also if the incarnate Christ was free of sin, would not his mother also be free of sin? These conclusions became almost obvious once the church had concluded that Mary had experienced the Immaculate Conception. When she was born through St. Ann, Mary had received a special grace from God through Jesus Christ which had exempted her from original sin. In this section we will go back and look a little closer at the thought that Mary was sinless.

Differences between the Catholic View and the Orthodox View of Mary's Sinlessness

The Catholic view was that Mary through the Immaculate Conception had been granted a special grace exempting her from original sin. In addition, Mary was sinless due to her choices after her birth. A special and unique grace had been given to her which not only exempted her from original sin but it allowed her to escape sin altogether.

The Orthodox Church, on the other hand, did not accept the concept of original sin. Instead it believes that there is ancestral sin which imposes upon mankind the consequences of the first sin of Adam and Eve. As a result Mary, even as the second Eve, need to receive the gift of new life through Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Mary was able to refer to God as her "Savior" in Luke 1:47. The Orthodox Church also believed that Mary had the ability to sin, but chose not to sin. Due to the lack of the concept of original sin, the Orthodox Church was free to believe that Mary was conceived normally.

Thus to the Orthodox, Mary had chosen not to sin but she was still born with a nature which suffered the consequences of Adamic sin.

Questions about Mary's Sinlessness from Some Early Christian Writers

Early Patristic writers were not unanimous on Mary's sinlessness.

Both Origen and Basil the Great dealt with Luke 2:35 where Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce Mary's heart. Both believed that this was the "sword of doubt" especially as Mary saw her son crucified. Both felt that the resurrection cured this piercing just as the doubts of Peter and the other Apostles were cured after the resurrection of Christ. In short, Mary had experienced a moral weakness and wounds which Christ healed just as he heals all of our wounds. (*Hominies on Luke 17:6-7*)

Tertullian believed that Mary and Jesus' relatives had doubted him when they came to bring him home in Matt. 12:48 and Jesus said to those around him:

"Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

Tertullian even went to compare Mary to the unbelieving Jews in the synagogue. (*On the Flesh of Christ*, Chapt. 7).

John Chrysostom also saw that Mary had some imperfection. (*Homily 21 on the Gospel of John*)

Some Affirmations of Sinlessness by Other Early Christian Writers.

Other Church Fathers considered Mary to be sinless.

St. Augustine saw Mary as being without sin.

We must except the Holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins, out of honour to the Lord; for from Him we know what abundance of grace for overcoming sin in every particular was conferred upon her who had the most merit to conceive and bear Him who undoubtedly had no sin.
(*De nat. et gratia* 36, 42)

St. Ambrose wrote: “Mary, a Virgin not only undefiled but a Virgin whom grace has made inviolate, free of every stain of sin.” (Ambrose, *Sermon* 22:30).

Further Athanasius described Mary as being the Ark of the Covenant clothed with purity instead of gold in which rested the Manna which was Jesus Christ.

The concept of a sinless Mary had not been dealt with especially within the lives of the people which had known Mary. By the fourth century there were people believing that Mary was sinless and others who did not believe that she was.

As Mary was declared the “*Theotokos*” people increasingly saw Mary as sinless and by the proclamation of the *Ineffabilis Deus* Bull in 1854, the sinlessness of Mary was definitively dealt with by the Roman Church.

Scriptures That Might Impact upon the Issue of Mary’s Sinlessness

Below are some of the Scriptures people have had to consider as the dealt with Mary being sinless.

Romans 3:23. –“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”

Romans 3:10—“For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. “As it is written, “There us none righteous, no, not one;””

The difficulty with this passage is that it says “all.” The Orthodox Church takes the position that Mary chose not to sin. The Catholic Church takes the position that Mary got a special grace which removed not only the taint of original sin but the ability to overcome sin the rest of her life.

Both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches have apparently interpreted “all” to mean “all except Mary.”

Notwithstanding this, both Protestants and Catholics believe that we have the ability to be holy and to choose not to sin through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:47.—In the Magnificat, Mary said...“And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

Mary acknowledges that God is her Savior. Generally speaking, the need for a Savior implies that one needs to be saved from something. That something is “sin.”

Luke 2:22-24. Mary goes to the Temple to make herself clean and presents a “sin offering.” However, I am not convinced by this argument. For instance the same argument could have been used for Christ when he was baptized by John the Baptist. Instead at Matt. 3:15, Jesus said to John when he objected and said that Christ should be baptising him: “Permit it now, for thus it is to fulfill all righteousness.” Jesus did many things which he was not required to do. The same might be said of Mary.

John 2:44.—When Mary asks Jesus to do something about the fact that there was no wine at the Marriage Feast at Cana, Jesus seems to mildly object to Mary’s request. He says “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” Some have interpreted this as sin by Mary; however, to the devout proponent of the position of Mary, they respond that this only shows how important Mary is. Whatever Mary requests, she gets.

Luke 2:35.—Simeon’s prophecy to Mary was...“a sword will pierce through your own soul also....” We have previously written about how some early Christian authors believed that this was the sword of doubt, again suggesting the possibility of sin in Mary.

Matthew 12:48-50.—We have previously dealt with the passage where Mary and his brothers come to get him and Jesus refuses to grant them entrance or go with them saying that his mother and his brothers are those who do hear his word and do it. It is clear that the brothers (or relatives) did not believe in Jesus and this again suggests that Mary had been convinced by them and wanted Jesus to come home rather than to continue on his mission.

Notwithstanding these Scriptures and the little support of Mary enhancing doctrines in the very early years, those seeking the elevation of Mary were not dissuaded but continued to seek the elevation of Mary in every possible way through dogma, titles, songs and in every other fashion.

The View of the Majority of Protestants

Protestants have been less sanguine regarding Mary. Martin Luther and Lutherans were smart enough not to attack the position of Mary but reserved their efforts to focus on grace. Also Martin Luther got rid of the concept of a celibate priesthood.

At the time of Martin Luther, he did not have to deal directly with the Immaculate Conception of Mary since it did not become Catholic Dogma until 1854. The concept of the Virgin Birth had been agreed upon much earlier by all Christians as an article of faith. Like Jerome and others, Luther was satisfied with Mary having remained a virgin all of her life. A Lutheran Confession of faith called The Smalcald Articles said that Jesus ...“was conceived by the Holy Spirit, without the cooperation of man, and was born of the pure, holy, and ever-virgin Mary.” In short, Martin Luther had to choose where to pick his battles and the nature of Mary was not one of those battlegrounds.

Some in the Church of England have followed Catholic Doctrine on Mary. Other than that, most Protestants have relegated Mary to a position which is more reminiscent of the First Century which is to a minor position. Statues, icons, prayers to Mary, feasts to Mary, praying to Mary are virtually unknown to most Protestants. Mary is generally not referred to with the "*Theotokos*" title and she is certainly not considered to be either an intercessor or as a Co-Savior or Co-Redemptrix. Churches are not named generally after Mary and praying to Mary is eschewed and considered to be almost pagan.

VI. The Perpetual Virginity of Mary (Mary as Ever-Virgin).

Introduction`

One of the four dogmas of the Catholic Church pertaining to Mary is the ever-virginity of Mary. In this section we will review what that doctrine means. In essence it means that Mary was virgin at the conception of Jesus, she was a virgin during the birth of Jesus and she remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus, having no sexual relations with Joseph or anyone else and having no children but Jesus. Mary is recognized as being *Aeiparthenos* or "ever-virgin" by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Virgin Birth-Conception (virginitas ante partem)

There is little controversy between Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox or Protestants regarding the Virgin Birth of Jesus. In Luke 1:31, Gabriel says to Mary, "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus." In Luke 1:34, Mary asks, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" Gabriel responds in Luke 1:35, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that the Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."

The vast majority of Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Protestants agree that Mary was a virgin and that she conceived Jesus miraculously from God.

Virginity-Birth Process (virginitas in partu) And the Gospel of James

Although the topic of virginity as part of the birth process seems embarrassing and inappropriate to talk about, it must be treated as a part of discussion regarding the virginity of Mary. First the subject was graphically dealt with in the Protoevangelium of the Gospel of James, it is graphically discussed by ancient, medieval and modern commentators and by the Papacy itself which has enshrined these discussions and descriptions as a part of their dogma.

Virginitas in partu has various descriptions. Some are gentle and oblique such as one by William Smith in an Article entitled "The Theology of the Virginity In Partu and its Consequences for the Church's Teaching on Chastity" in 1980 where he says: I understand the *virginitas in partu* to mean total physical integrity, in the traditional and biological sense which those words—total physical integrity—possess." This is a fairly anitseptic description. A more graphic and eye-opening description of the term comes

from David Schultz who was the Executive Officer of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission of the Archdiocese of Melburn from 2002 to 2020. In a post by him in 2011 entitled “My preliminary conclusions on the “*virgo in partu*” doctrine (found at [www. Scecclesia.com/archives/4952](http://www.Scecclesia.com/archives/4952)) he writes:

The *virgo in partu*” doctrine requires us to believe—as a matter of historical fact—that Jesus’ birth was miraculous not only in the fact that Mary experienced no pain as she gave birth, but that furthermore Jesus passed through her vagina in such a way that her hymen was not broken.

Although the description is graphic, it is helpful in understanding what the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church really holds. As a person who spent many years in various Protestant churches, this is a concept which I found both undiscussed and embarrassing to deal with. The concept of birth without pain was due to the fact that Mary was without sin and therefore presumably exempt from the pains of child birth which were part of the curse placed upon Eve in Genesis 3:16 where God said “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children;”

The concept that Jesus would somehow spring forth from the womb and by-pass the normal birth process keeping the hyman intact is not found in Scripture and one to which most people would find surprising. I presume that part of the Roman Catholic answer is that the whole concept of divine incarnation is beyond understanding and so that all bets are off and that God can make it work however he wants to. However, somehow under this concept Jesus just miraculously appears having by passed the birth process that the rest of us go through just as his conception was both original and done through a virgin birth.

This concept of virginity during the birth process (or perhaps, despite the birth process), was not a new concept but one believed to be written in the Protoevangelium of James , which we have discussed previously. In the Protoevangelium, Salome is an assistant to the unnamed midwife who assists at the nativity. (Scripture, makes no mention of midwives whatsoever). However, Salome insists upon checking Mary and is judged for doing so but then is miraculously healed. Here is the account in Sections 19 and 20 of the Protoevangelium:

And the midwife went forth out of the cave , and Salome met her. And she said to her, Salome, Salome, I have a strange sight to relate to thee: a virgin has brought forth—a thing which her nature admits not of. Then said Salome; As the Lord my God liveth, unless I throust in my finger, and search the parts I will not believe that a virgin has brought forth.

And the midwife went in, and said to Mary: Show thyself; for no small controversy has arisen about thee. And Salome put in her finger and cried out, and said: woe is me for mine iniquity and mine unbelief, because I have tempted the living God; and, behold, my hand is dropping off as if burned with fire. And she bent her knees to the Lord...And behold an angel of the Lord stood by her saying to her Salome, Salome, the Lord hath heard thee. Put thy hand to the infant, and carry it, and thou will have safety and joy. And Salome went and carried it, saying: I will worship Him because a great King has been born to Israel. And behold, Salome was immediately cured, and she went forth out of the cave justified.

Although the Protoevangelium was later repudiated by the Catholic Church, its theology and the telling of the nativity was believed by many and crept into the theology of the Catholic Church. The apochryphal story of Salome gave justification to early church writers that the virginity of Mary included virginity during the birth process. This virginity rang true with those writers and theologians who had taken vows of virginity and who were convinced that virginity was a higher calling than marriage.

Moreover some writers have found that there is a hint of Docetism in the Protoevangelium. Docetism took the heretical view that Jesus was not really flesh but was spiritual only or a resemblance to the flesh instead of being a true person in the flesh. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches would deny that there are any hints of Docetism in their views of the Virginity of Mary in the birth process.

Most Protestants would be surprised by the notion that Jesus appeared in the birth process without breaking the hymen as is taught by the Church. Some, such as myself, are surprised and would hold that Jesus was immaculately conceived by Mary through the Holy Spirit but was born like the rest of us. In short, Mary went through the nine months of pregnancy, had labor pains (some Catholics reject labor pains saying that those pains would not have been felt by Mary because she was immaculately conceived and was sinless), her water would have broken and Jesus would have been born normally just like you and I. However there is one verse which which the Catholics might consider in connection with their opinion of Jesus being born without breaking the hymen. In John 20:5-7, Peter and John came into the tomb of Christ and saw the bandages around Jesus lying there. Assuming Jesus passed through the bandages as some believe (instead of unwrapping them), it might be analagous to Jesus passing through the hymen of Mary without breaking it just as Jesus passed through the bandages of his death without breaking them.

*Virginity—After Birth (virginitas post partem)
(Brothers and Sisters of Jesus)*

Virginity after birth assumes that Mary remained virgin after the birth of Jesus for the rest of her life. As part of this belief, there are numerous references to the brothers and sisters of Jesus in Scriptures as well as some other Scriptures which require explanation. Some of the Scriptures where the brothers and sisters of Jesus are mentioned include: Mark 3:31; 6:3; Matthew 13:55-56; John 7:3. Acts 1:13; Galatians 1:19 and 1 Cor. 9:5.

Those subscribing to the ever-virgin position, must deal with the references to the brothers and sisters references in Scripture. The position of the majority of early writers was that the word “brother” and “sister” could mean a biological brother or sister but it could also mean a close relative, a half-brother or sister or even a cousin. Obviously the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches have concluded that the word must mean a close relative as opposed to someone with a direct blood relationship. Obviously, since Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, there could never be a complete blood relative or a full brother or sister since there was only one incarnation.

In Scripture, we know that the New Testament was written in Koine Greek. In addition most Jews were familiar with Hebrew and most, including Jesus, spoke Aramaic.

The word used in Greek for brother was *adelphos* meaning brother in general. However, Greek also had a word for cousin, nephew or niece which was *anepsios*. The word used in New Testament Greek is *adelphos* not *anepsios*.

However, the words actually spoken by Jesus and the Apostles were Aramaic. Neither Aramaic nor Hebrew have a word for “cousin” . Therefore as events were recorded and written down , the word adelphos may have been used. However, one wonders if the intent was to refer to a cousin, why the precise word of anepsios would not have been utilized especially if one subscribes to the verbal inspiration of Scripture. The word *anepsios* is used to describe Mark’s relationship to Barnabas in Colossians 4:10.

In Aramaic and in Hebrew there was no word for cousin. Accordingly, there are from the Hebrew standpoint instances as close relatives as being called brothers. In addition there are instances of half-brothers and sisters such as among the children of Jacob who are called brothers even though they have different mothers. For instance Joseph and Judah would be brothers even though one was the son of Leah and the other the son of Rachel.

Various authors and groups have come to different conclusions as to whom the brothers of Jesus were from. A minority who were disfavored felt that the brothers were natural children of Joseph and Mary born after Jesus. This view was objectionable from the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in my opinion because they concluded that God would never have allowed the womb of Mary to be profaned any more than a Gentile or for that matter even a normal Jew would have been allowed into the Holy of Holies.

In the Protoevangelium, Joseph is claimed to be a widower with children. Therefore any brothers or sisters would have been half brothers or sisters through Joseph. The Eastern Orthodox Church follows the position of the author of the Protoevangelium (as well as Eusebius and Epiphanius) and believes that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were half-brothers and sisters from Joseph from a prior marriage.

Jerome in his book *The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary*, concluded that the brothers and sisters were the children of Mary’s sister who was married to Cleopas and therefore cousins. The Roman Catholic Church follows the views of Jerome.

Others take the view that the brothers and sisters were cousins through a sister of Mary or a brother of Joseph.

There are other areas of Scripture, some which must be dealt with.

Jesus as First Born

Matthew 1:24-25 says:

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her til she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus. (NKJV Bible)

The same passage is translated differently in The New American Bible:

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him

and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus (NAB).

In Note 1 to verse 25, the St. Joseph's version of the New American Bible (Catholic Bible) says: "The Greek word translated "until" does not imply normal marital conduct after Jesus' birth, nor does it exclude it."

Despite the protestations of Catholic theologians that this verse means that Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary after Jesus was born, I leave it to each reader to decide what it means. For instance, if I said that a man had ceased relations with his wife and no further relations with her until her son was born, it would NOT be construed as a life of celibacy. However, since the conclusion is too horrible for a good Catholic to consider as a possibility, they must "swallow the camel" and come to one of a number of difficult conclusions. It seems to me that it might be a better idea for both Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant theologians to absent themselves from the bedroom altogether especially the bedroom of Joseph and Mary.

I also agree that Matthey 1:24-25 does make it clear that Joseph had nothing to do with Mary's pregnancy prior to the birth of Jesus.

Furthermiore, I also concur that the term firstborn as used in Matthew 1:25 and Luke 2:7 does not necessarily mean that there is a second born but is a term which can refer both to the first born of several or to an only born as Jerome points out.

Did Mary Make a Vow of Virginity ?

Some Catholic authors such as Stefanbio Mabnelli in *All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed*, pages 137-140 believe that she did. They argue that when Mary said "How shall this be, seeing I do not know man" at Luke 1:34 in essence means that Mary had made a vow or promise "not to know man." They base this conclusion upon St. Augustines statement that that "Mary certainly would not have spoken these words if she had not vowed her virginity to God."

On the other hand, I disagree with this conclusion and believe that it is highly improbable that a young 16 year in the Jewish culture would take a vow of celibacy and that it is much more likely that she simply meant that she was still a virgin. It seems to me that a contrary conclusion is unlikely in light of the culture of the time and Jewish beliefs.

Further, it seems to me that due to the dogmas of the Catholic Church, today's Catholic theologians find themselves being in an awkward place where they are forced to seek out facts and theories which support the stated and "infallible" conclusions of the Church. They therefore no longer have the freedom to review the facts and see what conclusions they lead to. Instead the facts now must be marshalled and arranged skillfully to support the conclusions of the Church. A review of various articles written after 1854 seem to almost uniformly support the conclusions of the Church and the freedom to disagree academically has been reduced significantly in as much as they would indicate a departure from the Catholic faith.

Some Other Arguments from Scripture regarding the Perpetual Virginity of Mary

Some Catholic Theologians argue that there are no other places in Scripture where Mary is referred to as being the mother of anyone other than Jesus. However, this argument only holds true assuming that one accepts the fact that the term brothers (adelphos) do not mean brothers which is a natural meaning of the word but instead means close relatives such as cousins or half-brothers through a prior marriage of Joseph.

Other theologians argue that there are no mention of brothers or sisters when Mary and Joseph accidentally leave Jesus at the Temple after his 12th birthday. However, it is clear that Mary and Joseph were travelling with a group of relatives and friends from Nazareth and it is completely likely they could have dropped their children off with friends when they turned around and returned to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. Personally, the author had a very similar incident and we simply dropped off our remaining kids with close friends as we went to look for a missing child. In short, I do not believe that the approach on proving that Mary was virgin by using this incident is very reliable. Further if Joseph had children prior to Mary, those children would have been more than 12 years older than Jesus making them in their mid-twenties or later in age and perhaps considerably older than Jesus. In addition if there were both younger children from Joseph and Mary and there were older children from Joseph prior to Mary, the younger children could have easily been left with the families of the older children from Joseph's line. The very fact that Jesus was not missed immediately after the departure from Jerusalem suggests that there was a group of relatives and close friends from Nazareth and Mary and Joseph simply assumed that Jesus was travelling with that related group.

The suppositions above do not prove that there were children from Joseph and Mary however, there could easily have been children from a prior marriage of Joseph or cousins travelling on the trip from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

Another situation used to "prove" that Mary was a virgin was the fact that Jesus gave her into the care of John. The argument is that if there were a blood relative or a child of Mary and Joseph, certainly Jesus would have not have needed to entrust his mother into the care of John. I likewise am not persuaded by this argument. One might as well ask why Jesus would not have entrusted her into the care of a half brother or a first cousin other than John. I believe that Jesus entrusted Mary into the care of John because he loved and trusted John, John had the means to care for Mary and further that his brothers or other close relatives were at that time not followers of Christ. Apparently his brother James who became the head of the church at Jerusalem did not actually become a believer in Christ until some time after the resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, although Mary and other women were at the crucifixion there is no evidence that his brothers or other close male relatives were present at the crucifixion. For these reasons, I do not believe that entrusting Mary to John is a good evidence of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Some Other Issues relating to the brothers of the Lord

We have previously discussed the fact that James who was called the "brother" of Jesus became head of the church in Jerusalem. Again James may have been a half brother or another relative. We do know that there was a close relationship and this is apparently one of the reasons that he came to lead the

Jerusalem Church. Further insight regarding James the First Bishop of Jerusalem and Simeon the Second Bishop of Jerusalem comes from Eusebius who lived circa 260-340 A.D. and wrote his *Ecclesiastical History*. Eusebius quotes extensively from an earlier historian Hegesippus who lived circa 110-180 A.D. The works of Hegesippus no longer exist except for large fragments incorporated into the *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius. In addition, Eusebius had also included into his works some parts of written works by a Christian named Sextus Julius Africanus who lived circa 160-240 A.D. Thus Eusebius had access to, and relied upon, some of his conclusions from historians closer in time to Mary.

Eusebius recounts the fact that according to Clement (*Institutions*, Bk 6), Peter, James and John did not seek to be the Bishop of Jerusalem but chose James the Just to be the first Bishop of Jerusalem. (*Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. 2, Chapt. 1 (3)). Eusebius quotes Hegesippus at Book 2, Chapt. 23, (4-5) ;

Hegesippus also, who flourished nearest the days of the apostles, in the fifth Book of his commentaries gave the most accurate account of him: "James, the Brother of the Lord, who, as there were many of this name, was surnamed The Just by all, from the days of our Lord until now, received the government of the church with the apostle. This apostle was consecrated from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used a bath.

Eusebius also quotes Josephus saying "These things...happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was the brother of him that is called Christ, and whom the Jews had slain, notwithstanding his pre-eminent justice." (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book 2, Chapt. 10.) In short, Hegesippus, who lived very close in time to James and the Apostles identified James as the "brother of the Lord." On the other hand, apparently the second bishop of Jerusalem, Simeon who also was a close relative of Jesus was identified differently as a "cousin" of Jesus. Eusebius records the following from Hegesippus:

After James the Just had suffered martyrdom, as our Lord had for the same reason, Simeon, the son of Cleophas our Lord's uncle, was appointed the second bishop, whom all proposed as the cousin of our Lord. (*Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. 4, Chapt. 22(4)).

Also in the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. 4, Chapt. 32 (3 and 4), Hegesippus specifically mentions that Simeon's father was the son of Cleophas. Likewise in Book 3, Chapter 11, Eusebius states that Hegesippus had identified Simeon as the first cousin of Jesus and that Cleophas was a brother of Joseph.

Apparently Hegesippus saw James the Just as a brother of the Lord and Simeon as a first cousin of the Lord. Could it be that when the people of Nazareth said at Mark 6:3, "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" that there was a gaggle of relatives some brothers and others cousins which were referred to in Aramaic but ultimately were classified as "*adelphoi*" in Greek. Even so, there could still be questions as to whether those who were brothers were half brothers from Joseph's earlier marriage or later born children to Joseph and Mary.

Another term utilized by Eusebius was the a group of people called *desposyni* meaning that they claimed blood descent from Jesus meaning that they were somehow related by blood to Mary. If Mary had later children through Joseph they would have been "desposyni." As a general matter, the *desposyni* would have been those who had blood relationship with Mary's parents, her first cousin Elizabeth and Zachariahs (parents of John the Baptist) or from Clopas and his wife, who was also believed by some to

be a first cousin of Mary. Eusebius reports that two of the *desposyni* were called to Rome by the emperor of Domitian. The two were grandchildren of Judas mentioned in Mark 6:3. When interrogated by the emperor, they explained that the kingdom of God ...”was not a temporal nor an earthly kingdom, but celestial and angelic; that it would appear at the end of the world, when coming in glory he (Jesus) would judge the quick and the dead, and give to everyone according to his works.” Apparently Domitian treated them with contempt and ended the persecution against Christians believing them no danger to his rule. (*Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. 3, Chapt 20.)

Again, the fact that there were blood relatives to Mary in existence and well known to the early church, this is not conclusive proof that were issue born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus just as there is no evidence in my opinion of the virginity of Mary after Jesus apart from the doctrine of the Church and belief of early priests who were strong proponents of celibacy for their own lives, for the clergy and most certainly for Mary and Joseph.

Jerome and Helvidius

One of the important books on the perpetual virginity of Mary is a pamphlet which was written by St. Jerome to oppose the position taken by Helvidius that the mention of “brothers” and “sisters” in the Scripture was evidence that Mary had marital relations with Joseph and had given birth to children after the birth of Jesus. We know that Helvidius wrote his work sometime prior to 383 A.D. but the writings of Helvidius no longer exist and we are forced to depend upon Jerome to extrapolate their substance. Jerome and Helvidius were both in Rome when Jerome’s work opposing Helvidius was written.

Helvidius evidently referred to the plain word of Scripture relating to the “brothers and sisters” of Christ and also to the opinions of Tertullian (circa 160-220 A.D.) and Victorinus of Petavium (died circa 303 or 304 A.D.). Rather than dealing with Tertullian, Jerome dismisses him as a heretic. In dealing with Victorinus he states that Victorinus did not really mean that the brothers were brothers in terms of kinship but instead in being spiritual brothers. The works dealing with Mary by Victorinus are lost but there is good reason to think that Jerome was making an assumption not a factual statement. Jerome further states that there are numerous ancient writers who believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary including “Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr and many other apostolic and eloquent men.” However apparently Jerome overstated his case and a search of the writings of these authors apparently do not support Jerome’s claims. (See J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2000 at 106-107.)

Jerome in *The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary*, takes the position that the children mentioned in Scripture are not children of Joseph or Mary but instead are either children of an earlier marriage of Joseph (the same position taken in the Protoevangelium) or are children from a sister of Mary.

Throughout Jerome’s book he promotes virginity and celibacy concluding that virginity is an elevated state above marriage because as Paul says it allows one to devote oneself to prayer and fasting.

Here are some quotes from Jerome showing his strong defense of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

I must call upon the Holy Spirit to express His meaning by my mouth and defend the virginity of the Blessed Mary...And I must also entreat the mother of His Son, who was a mother before she was a bride, continued a Virgin

after her son was born.

Helvidius, I say, would have us believe that Joseph, through well acquainted with such surprising wonders, dared to touch the temple of God, the abode of the Holy Ghost, the mother of his Lord?

But you (Helvidius) do worse. You have set on fire the temple of the Lord's body, you have defiled the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit from which you are determined to make a team of four brethren and a heap of sisters come forth.

In short Jerome was an advocate for the perpetual virginity of Mary. His advocacy runs parallel with his strong views regarding the many virtues of celibacy. Jerome say Mary's womb to be like the Holy of Holies and none was permitted in this holy area except the Holy Spirit of God.

Early Writers Supporting the Ever-Virginity of Mary

Below are quotes from some of the early church writers and authorities who accepted Mary as being "ever- virgin."

Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-236 A.D.)

But the pious confession of the believer is that ...the Creator of all things incorporated with Himself a rational soul and a sensible body from the all-holy, ever-virgin...
(*Against Beran and Helix*: Fragment VIII.)

Origin (c. 185-254 A.D.)

Now those who say so wish to preserve the honor of Mary in virginity to the end so that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word...might not know intercourse with a man after the Holy Spirit came to her and the power from on high overshadowed her. And I think in harmony with reason that Jesus was the firstfruit among men of the purity which consists in chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the firstfruit of virginity.
(*Commentary on Matthew 2:17*)

Athanasius (c. 296-373 A.D.)

Let those, therefore, who deny that the Son is by nature from the Father and proper to this essence deny also that he took true flesh from the ever-virgin Mary. (*Discourses Against the Arians 2:70*)

Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315-403 A.D.)

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things both visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God...who for us men and our salvation came down and took flesh, that was born perfectly of the holy ever-virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. (*The Man Well-Anchored 120*)

Didymus the Blind (c. 313-398 A.D.)

...for neither did Mary, who is to be honored and praised above all others, marry anyone else, nor did she ever become the Mother of anyone else, but even after childbirth she remained always and forever an immaculate virgin.
(*The Trinity* 3:4)

Ambrose (c. 339-397 A.D.)

...nor did the Virgin seek the consolation of being able to bear another son.
(*Letters* 63:111)

Pope Siricius I (c. 334-399 A.D.)

You had good reason to be horrified at the thought that another birth might issue from the same virginal womb from which Christ was born according to the flesh. For the Lord Jesus would never have chosen to be born of a virgin if he had ever judged that she would be so incontinent as to contaminate with the seed of human intercourse the birthplace of the Lord's body, that court of the eternal king.
(*Letter to Bishop Anysius*).

Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.)

A virgin conceiving, a virgin bearing, a virgin pregnant, a Virgin bringing forth, a virgin perpetual (*Sermons* 186:1)

Heretics called Antidicomarites are those who contradict the perpetual virginity of Mary and affirm that after Christ was born she was joined with her husband.
(*Heresies* 56.)

Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444 A.D.)

Therefore he kept his Mother a virgin even after her childbearing.
(*Against Those Who Do Not Wish to Confess That the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God*. 4)

Pope Leo I (d. 461 A.D.)

Human usage and custom were lacking, but by divine power a virgin conceived, A virgin bore, and virgin she remained.
(*Sermons* 22:2)

Ecclesiastical Approval of the Ever-Virginity of Mary

The Second Council Of Constantinople was held in 553 A.D. That Council refuted the *Three Chapters* which related to the Nature of Christ by various authors and which were oposed by the Council and Emperor Justinian who had called the Council. As part of the condemnations by the Council it referred to beliefs which had gone against” ...glorious Mary, mother of God and ever-virgin...”

The Lateran Council of 649 A.D. set forth a much more specific statement regarding the perpetual virginity of Mary. Pope Martin I was present and the Third Canon of this Lateran Council said the following:

If anyone refuses to confess in accordance with the holy Fathers that the ever-virgin immaculate Mary is literally and truly Mother of God inasmuch as in this last age she conceived without seed, of the Holy Spirit, and brought forth without corruption the very one who is literally and truly God the Word born of God the Father before all ages, her virginity remaining inviolate after birth as well-let him be condemned.

The position of the Roman Catholic Church on Mary is espressed in the Church’s *Catechism*.

The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary’s real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. In fact, Christ’s birth “did not diminish his mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it.” And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the “Ever-virgin.”
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., No. 499).

Protestants Accepting the Ever-Virginity of Mary

In connection with the Reformation there was a general movement by Protestants away from the veneration of Mary, prayers to Mary, and the use of statues and artwork to honor Mary. Most Protestants returned to doctrine and practice based upon Scripture alone. Scripture utilized a much simpler approach to Mary than the many developments which had accreted to Mary over the history of the Cartholic and Orthodox faiths. Protestants accepted the Virgin Birth, but pretty much stopped there. Nevertheless there were a number of Protestants who accepted Mary’s perpetual virginity. Some did so because of belief; but others may have been attempted to reserve their opposition to the Catholic and Orthodox churches on matters dearer to their hearts such as salvation by grace alone and ecclesiastical direction from others than the papacy or patriarchy. Below are some of the Protestants who accepted the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Martin Luther (1483-1546 A.D.)

Martin Luther, Father of the Reformation, stated that “Christ was the only Son or Mary and the Virgin Mary bore no children besides him.” (*Sermons on John*, Chapt. 1-4).

However, Luther ceased celebrating the feast of the Assumption of Mary in 1532 and discontinued supporting the concept of the Immaculate Conception.

Ulrich Zwingli (1458-1531 A.D.)

Zwingli was an anabaptist leader and said, "I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the Gospel as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact virgin." (*Corpus Reformatiorum*).

Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556 A.D.)

Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer as well as others involved in the English Reformation generally accepted the perpetual virginity of Mary. Another Anglican, John Pearson, Bishop of Chester, said, "We believe the Mother of our Lord to have been not only before and after his Nativity, but also forever, the most immaculate and blessed Virgin. (John Pearson, *An Exposition of the Creed*).

John Calvin (1509-1564 A.D.)

Although John Calvin is often portrayed by Catholic authors as a supporter of the perpetual virginity of Mary, his support is not as strong as they portray. Calvin did agree with Jerome that the fact that Jesus was "first born" was not an evidence that there were other children. Calvin wrote:

And knew her not. This passage afforded the pretext for great disturbances, which were introduced into the church by Helvidius. The inference he drew from it was, that Mary remained a virgin no longer than till her first birth, and that afterwards she had other children by her husband. Jerome, on the other hand, earnestly and copiously defended Mary's perpetual virginity. Let us rest satisfied with this, that no just and well-grounded inference can be drawn from these words of the Evangelist, as to what took place after the birth of Christ. He is called first-born; but it is for the sole purpose of informing us that he was born of a virgin. It is said that Joseph knew her not until she had brought forth her first-born son; but this is limited to that very time. What took place afterwards the historian does not inform us. Such is well known to have been the practice of the inspired writers. Certainly, no man will ever raise a question on this subject, except from curiosity; and no man will obstinately keep up the argument, except from an extreme fondness for disputation. (John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*)

Similarly, the *Second Helvetic Confession*, which was a confession which Calvin did not write but was in sympathy with, referred in Section XI that "Christ...was most chastely conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the ever virgin Mary, as the evangelical history carefully explains to us (*Matt.*, ch. 1)."

Thus we can conclude that Calvin generally supported the position of Jerome although he was careful to add that history did not really speak to the virginity of Mary after the birth of Christ. Calvin however, does not appear to be favorably inclined to the opinion of Helvidius and considered him to be a theological troublemaker.

Moreover, the Reformed theological position apparently had no problem with the perpetual virginity of Mary as evidenced by the Second Helvetic Confession.

John Wesley (1703-1791 A.D.)

I believe that John Wesley accepted the perpetual virginity of Mary. John Wesley in a wonderful letter entitled *To A Roman Catholic* and dated 1749 wrote at Paragraph 7:

I believe that He was made man, joining the human nature with the divine in one person, being conceived by the singular operation of the Holy Ghost, and born of the blessed Virgin Mary, who, as well after as before she brought Him forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin.

Conclusions

Once Mary had been proclaimed "*Theotokos*," it was not a far jump to conclude that Mary was "Ever-Virgin." To do this the Catholic and Orthodox churches had to deal with those who believed that Mary and Joseph had other children. Good faith arguments were made by theologians that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were not really brothers or sisters. Instead they argued that the relatives were half-brothers and sisters, step brothers and sisters or cousins. However the deep emotion motivating the arguments were not so much as academic as it was the fact that it was impious to think that there are been a violation of the Holy womb which had housed Jesus. Some of the justifications utilized to buttress the perpetual virginity including the fact that the doors to Noah's ark were shut, the golden gate closed, and the Most Holy Place was shut and interlopers (including Joseph) were excluded.

At the same time, that the virginity of Mary after the birth of Jesus was being protected from what was viewed as renegade and impious writers, virginity was considered by the celibate priests and writers to be one of the greatest virtues of the time and evidence of holiness and righteousness. In Mary and Joseph, it was important that they demonstrated the highest of virtues, including celibacy. Interestingly, Mary and Joseph could be the paragon of the marriage relationship and in the eyes of many, such as Jerome, they could also be the paragon of virtue in celibacy with Mary being perpetually celibate and Joseph being celibate at least from the time that he knew Mary until his death. Marriage (without sex of course) and celibacy could coexist comfortably both in Catholic and Orthodox theology.

Further the justifications for the ever-virginity of Mary were written by celibate men who had put aside both marriage and sex, and expected the Apostles and Mary to do the same. Like good children everywhere, it was unacceptable and unseemly to think of their actual parents, much less their spiritual parents (including the Apostles and Mary), to have ever engaged in sex. Their reaction and approach is not surprising.

Once, the Reformation arrived, a celibate priesthood was no longer required or desired at least by Protestants. Simultaneously there was less emphasis on the need for the perpetual virginity of Mary.

However, in the Reformation, there was more emphasis on removing Mary's roles as co-savior and intercessor as well as the removal of images of Mary than dealing with the issue of the perpetual virginity of Mary. The perpetual virginity of Mary was closely identified with the virgin birth and most reformers did not attack the concept of the perpetual virginity having more important fish to fry so to speak. Accordingly, in most cases the concept of perpetual virginity was left to be kept or discarded as groups of Protestants determined. Meanwhile, the veneration of Mary was left to atrophy where Protestants were in the majority.

VII. The Bodily Assumption of Mary

Introduction

Both the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches believe that Mary was assumed into heaven. In this section we will briefly review the development of the doctrine of the assumption of Mary and distinguish between the Catholic and Orthodox views. The event in the West is known as the "Assumption of Mary" and in the East as the "Dormition of Mary". Although these two terms generally apply to the same event, there are differences between the beliefs of the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church which will be dealt with later in this study. The Feast Day honoring the assumption of Mary in the West is known as The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the Eastern Church, the feast day is known as the Dormition of the *Theotokos*. Both the Western and Eastern Church celebrate the Feast on or close to August 15.

The development of the views regarding to the assumption of Mary are interesting in many respects and are instructive as to how views which come from non-Scriptural sources have a tendency to creep into history, get adopted by the pious, have their antecedents cleansed and expunged, persist over the years, and become increasingly stronger until they are elevated into articles of faith and dogma.

Further the development of the doctrines relating to Mary are bolstered by other increasingly elevated views of Mary until Mary is elevated to a position just under Jesus. Beliefs regarding Mary become more devout and ingrained with every passing year.

Scripture

The beliefs regarding the assumption of Mary are held passionately by both the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches despite the fact they have absolutely no real Scriptural Authority in the New Testament. Although attempts have been made especially by the Catholic Church to marshal some rudimentary Scriptural authority those attempts generally rely upon analogies or a stretching of Scripture. Some of the passages quoted by Pius XII when he transformed the assumption of Mary into Catholic Dogma are 1 Corinthians 15, Genesis 3:15, Psalms 8:6, Psalm 132 and Revelation 12:1-2. Rather than seeking to refute these Scriptures, I simply encourage the reader to read these Scriptures and determine for themselves whether they are convinced.

At any rate, there is apparently nothing directly said in the New Testament regarding the death or assumption of Mary.

First Centuries

It is interesting that when the importance of Mary is viewed today from the Catholic and Orthodox faiths, that there is so little said about Mary during the first centuries of Christianity and the church. After Mary was proclaimed "*Theotokos*" her position quickly advanced and she is moved from almost an unknown to the patron saint of celibacy bridging the difficult conceptual gap between motherhood and virginity.

Later Development

One of the first investigations made on whether Mary died a natural death or alternatively died and was resurrected and assumed into heaven or perhaps never died and was assumed bodily into heaven was made by Epiphanius the Bishop of Salamis (315-403 A.D.). Epiphanius wrote a work entitled *Panarion* (Koine Greek for "bread basket"). In this extensive work he made an effort to define and answer every heresy of his time. After reviewing the Scriptures and the sources of his time he acknowledged that after searching one is unable to find "...Mary's death, nor whether or not she died nor whether or not she was buried." He considers that she may have died a normal peaceful death, been martyred or even possibly did not die at all. He makes reference to Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce her own soul and evaluates the passage of John where the dragon chases the mother of the man-child and considers whether this might refer to Mary and her being caught up to heaven. Epiphanius finally concludes that he just does not have reliable information on Mary and that "Scripture simply kept silence because of the overwhelming wonder, not to throw men's minds into consternation." Epiphanius, *Panarion, Antidicomarians* 11,2). Also he states after referencing the Revelation passage (Rev. 12:13-14): "Perhaps this can be applied to her; I cannot decide for certain, and am not saying that she remained immortal. But neither am I affirming that she died." Epiphanius, *Panarion, Antidicomarians*, 11,3)

Epiphanius was obviously a Christian writer who deeply respected and was devoted to Mary. Epiphanius also dealt with another group in his *Panarion* regarding a small and less well-known group in Arabia called The Collyridians. This group was generally made up of women who would make offerings in Mary's name of little cakes or rolls of bread. The cakes were called in Greek *collris* and gave birth to the name Collridians. Some scholars have questioned the existence of the Collyridians and others have wondered if it was some type of Mary cult as Epiphanius suggested.

In contrasting the beliefs of Antidicomarians and the Collyridians, Epiphanius comments that one (the Antidicomarians) belittled "the Holy Virgin" (due to questioning the perpetual virginity of Mary) while the other (Collyridians) glorified her to excess." (Epiphanius, *Panarion, Collyridians* 1,5). Epiphanius points out that God utilized the Virgin Mary by forming himself from a Virgin. However he goes on to say, "But certainly not from a virgin who is worshiped, or to make God, or to have us make offerings in her name, or, again, to make women priestesses after so many generations." (Epiphanius, *Panarion, Collyridians*, 7,2).

Due to the fact that there was an increasing desire during the Third and Fourth Centuries to know more about Mary and the end of her life, there would be apocryphal books arise to answer the questions that spiritually inquiring minds wanted to know.

During the time before and after Mary was proclaimed as "*Theotokos*" at the Council of Ephesus in 431 interest in Mary grew greatly. Sometime during the third and fourth centuries apocryphal texts began to appear dealing with Mary's life and death. Two of these were known as *Liber Requiei Mariae* ("Book of Mary's Repose) and the *Six Books Dormition Apocryphon*. Both of these books related apocryphal stories about Mary and her death. These two early books seemed to have a gnostic basis with references to secret knowledge, demiurges and angels. Along with these books there were many other accounts which suddenly arose about Mary's death, resurrection and assumption. By the tenth century there were over sixty different narratives in nine ancient languages dealing with Mary. Some of these accounts dealt with Jesus being present at her death, calling the apostles from their missions around the world to attend her death and many other details many of which were fanciful. The later accounts were generally purged of their heretical passages relating to Gnosticism and cleaned up for use by the faithful.

The majority of the versions had Mary dying in Jerusalem but some had her dying in Ephesus. In the East, the views of the Dormition of Mary were expressed by John of Damascus a monk (circa 650-753 A.D.) through three homilies. John of Damascus accepted the accounts passed on by Juvenal of Jerusalem who served as bishop of Jerusalem from 422 until his death in 458. Those accounts included the fact that as Mary lay dying, the apostles were gathered by clouds and numerous angels. Mary passed from life into immortality through a trance or a sleep. After three days in her tomb, the Apostle Thomas got there late (he had to come from India) and the tomb was opened to show her body to him and the sarcophagus was found empty. The apostles believed that God had resurrected the body of the Virgin Mary and took her to heaven not having to wait for the general resurrection for the dead

Differences between Catholic and Orthodox

As indicated above, the Orthodox generally believe that Mary died or passed from life to death through sleep. Her body was resurrected by God after three days and her body was physically resurrection in advance of the resurrection that will come to the rest of the saved at a later time.

The Catholic Church believes that Mary was assumed into heaven but was for many years unclear whether Mary underwent death prior to her assumption.

In both cases, Mary got a special resurrection and assumption apart from other Christians.

Development of Catholic Theology

In 1946, Pope Pius XII asked the bishops of the world whether the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven should be made a dogma of the Catholic Faith. To the surprise of no one, the vast majority of Catholics bishops believed that the assumption of Mary should be made an article of faith. On November 1, 1950, the Pope issued *Munificentissimus Deus*. In this statement, the Pope said that Mary was exempted from the general rule that a person's body was corrupted after death and that on the last day a person's body is joined to their soul. Mary was not subject to this rule by her Immaculate Conception and therefore did not have to wait for the last day to have her body joined to her soul.

Munificentissimus Deus (5). In paragraph 40, the Pope said Mary was “preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages.”

Another statement of the dogma is found at paragraph 4 of *Munificentissimus Deus* where the Pope wrote...“we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.”

The justification for the conclusions of the Catholic Church are not strong in my opinion and the reasoning found in this edict is not the Catholic Church at its best. That being said, the historic outcome of the assumption of Christ appears to be driven incrementally from the declaration of Mary as “*Theotokos*”, her being perpetually virgin, and being immaculately conceived. After the “*Theotokos*” domino fell, it is not surprising that it would take with it a whole train of dominoes.

Let’s look a little closer at some of the reasoning utilized by the writers of the *Munificentissimus Deus* to support its conclusions. In paragraph 15, the document points out the fact that temples dedicated to the Virgin Mary’s assumption and that areas placed under the protection of the Virgin assumed into heaven support her assumption into heaven.

In paragraphs 16, 17 and 18, the document states that the liturgies in the East and the West support her assumption into heaven. To me, this sounds like the fact that the Church had been saying it for years in various forms and fashions made it theologically so. In paragraph 20, the document seems to retract itself and admits that the fact that the liturgy in itself is not really a proof but the Catholic faith which engenders the liturgy is really the proof of the assumption. Again, this seems logically to mean that “because we believe it, that makes it so.”

The document next turns to the church authorities. In paragraphs 21 and 22 the document looks to John Damascene who we dealt with earlier. In paragraphs 25-31. The document turns to various doctors and authorities in the Roman Catholic Church. In Paragraph 34 the document quotes St. Robert Bellarmine who wrote “My soul is filled with horror at the thought that this virginal flesh which had begotten God, had brought into the world, had nourished and carried him, could have been turned into ashes or given over to be food for worms.” This argument I call the “too terrible to think about” argument and find it very similar to the arguments utilized against Mary having natural children with Joseph which a number of authors have said that it was too terrible a concept to be contemplated. My comments on these arguments do not go to my personal beliefs on the perpetual virginity or the assumption of Mary but do reflect upon the logic utilized to buttress these beliefs by the papacy.

In paragraph 35 of *Munificentissimus Deus*, the papacy relies upon the quotation of St. Francis de Sales who asked “What son would not bring his mother back to life and would not bring her into paradise after her death if he could?” This type of argument seems to be that “the assumption must be true because it would not be nice for a good son not to do it argument”.

In paragraph 38 we meet arguments such as “These set the loving Mother of God as it were before our very eyes as most intimately joined to her divine Son and as always sharing his lot.” This argument for the assumption is apparently if that it is “good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for Mary.” In fact this paper hopes to show that this is exactly what has occurred over the years. When Mary became

"Theotokos" she was elevated to a level almost equivalent to Jesus. If Jesus died and resurrected after three days, so did Mary. Since Jesus was assumed into heaven, so Mary must have been assumed into heaven. Since Christ was born from the seed of God, likewise Mary must have been born without the taint of original sin.

In paragraph 38, we meet another argument supporting the assumption which says, "And, since it was within his power to grant her this great honor, to preserve her from the corruption of the tomb, we must believe that he really acted in this way." Again this argument falls under the argument "because it is possible, it must be so."

The overall pronouncement made in *Munificentissimus Deus* is, in my opinion, are weak. The papacy boot straps its own arguments. It looks for support for the assumption to be supported in Scripture but has great difficulty. Instead, it must use scholastic theologians to make various arcane arguments due to the fact that little is directly said in Scripture. When it looks to Tradition (See Paragraph 12), it ends up supporting itself by traditions which it has put in place and which it previously encouraged and supported. Ultimately the Church looks to the support of the bishops and people with the underlying support being that we have believed this for a long time and the people have accepted what we told them and therefore it must be true.

Pope John Paul II in a General Audience dated Wednesday, 25 June 1997, made some clarifications regarding Mary and addressed whether Mary faced death prior to her assumption or whether she had been assumed into heaven without experiencing death. Pope John Paul made it clear that Mary, like Jesus, had experienced death. In paragraph 3, the Pope wrote: "Involved in Christ's redemptive work and associated in his saving sacrifice, Mary was able to share in his suffering and death for the sake of humanity's Redemption."

Conclusion

As I have reviewed the support of the Eastern and Western support of the assumption of Mary, I find two things at work. First, the assumption seems to be a completion of the process begun with the proclamation of Mary as *"Theotokos."* That concept (which may have been necessary to combat Arianism and bad theology regarding the nature of Christ) set in motion further developments in beliefs regarding Mary in both the East and the West. The assumption is a tree grown from the soil of the *"Theotokos"* decision as were the other decisions regarding the perpetual virginity of Mary (which was also developed in the ground of the traditions of asceticism and celibacy). Once the decision was made to identify the Immaculate Conception as dogma in the Western Church, it was only a matter of time until the assumption would need to become dogma as well.

Further the theology of the House of Mary is a grand one indeed. However its foundations were humble. Yet at the same time they were blessed foundations. Honor was to be accorded to Mary among women. However, Mary did not originally become a female Christ. Upon the humble foundations of Mary, each succeeding generation after the *Theotokos* decision built an even greater edifice in her honor. Mary is like a grand mansion with a humble first floor and each succeeding floor has become more and more ornate and grand with people struggling to adorn Mary more and more. Part of this adornment is perhaps right and true. However, part of this adornment is a result of the Western and Eastern churches trying to deal with the role of women and as atonement for their abysmal treatment of women. Women have been treated as second class citizens by the churches, and

their contributions minimalized. In Mary the celibates found a way to honor women but only if they exemplified celibacy like Mary. Further, they were able to honor the role of women as mothers. Mary is the highest of mothers and represented the mothers of the faithful but also the mothers of the celibate priests as well. She was truly the Second Eve, but she was the Second Eve without the indignity and embarrassment of sex or reproduction. She was truly the Virgin and virginity apparently was a big part of what it was all about. Part of the first Eve's "punishment" was to conceive children and give birth to them in pain. The priests had concluded that the punishment must have been the sex involved in conceiving the children. The Second Eve did not need to conceive. She had no conception other than Jesus. An argument could have been made that the Second Eve (which may have been Mary or the Church or both) also continues to conceive and give birth to children who are the "children of God." Yet to the celibate priests, no conception was worthy if it involved sex and especially if that sex involved anything remotely pleasurable.

As Mary was honored more and more, truly the edifice built for her by man, and generally by celibate men, also honored their decisions regarding celibacy until that edifice, like the Tower of Babel, reached the heavens. The assumption was a foregone conclusion of the process. As paragraph 43 of *Munificentissimus Deus* says, we are able "to adorn the brow of God's Virgin Mother with this brilliant gem, and to leave a monument more enduring than bronze of our own most fervent love for the Mother of God." The Catholic Church and the Eastern Church has heaped honor upon Mary and have built her an extraordinary house. Somewhere in that house is the humble and true Mary who is the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High. Despite the honors of this world, I would suggest that God has built an adequate house for Mary and is not dependent upon the Western or Eastern Church to manufacture that building for Him. Further I believe that the church has indeed, perhaps with the best intent, created a "female Christ" and have provided a vehicle for some to transfer their love and affection for Christ to what they consider to be a more approachable Christ, that is the Blessed Virgin Mary .



Dormition of Mary
Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos at Kondopoga
1774



Assumption of Mary
By Jan Frans Bescheij
18th Century

VIII. Ave Maria and Mary Full of Grace

Ave Maria is Latin for “Hail, Mary.” It is a popular Roman Catholic prayer prayed to The Virgin Mary. The prayer is as follows:

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

The first sentence of the prayer “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed are you among women” comes from the Angel Gabriel’s address to Mary in Luke 1:28. The second sentence, “Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus” comes from Elizabeth’s greeting to Mary at Luke 1:42.

The Section of the Ave Maria which reads “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death” apparently did not appear until 1495 where it is found in Girolamo Savonarola’s work entitled “Esposizione sopra l’orazione della Vergine.” The prayer was prepared evidently at the request of some nuns in Ferrara. The exposition of the prayer says at the section on “Pray for us sinners”:

“Pray for us sinners” because we are ashamed to go before the throne of God’s Majesty on account of the great number and frequency of our sins; so we turn to you, as to the one (Mary) who is most merciful...Therefore if you are weighed down with sins, do not be obstinate, but rather repentant, run to her feet with confidence and say “Ora pro nobis peccatoribus,” that is, “you, Mother of God, to whom the son can deny nothing you, spouse to whom the husband can deny nothing, you, great queen, mother of pity and our mother, for which reason you must have compassion upon us, pray not only for me alone, but for all of us sinners here on earth.” And no doubt you will be heard.

(Ferrigno, James (1978) “*Esposizione sopra l’orazione della Vergine translated In English*” Marian Library Studies,:B Vol 10, Article 9, Pages 118-130).

The Exposition makes similar statements regarding praying at the hour of death where it says: “If ever we have need of the Mother of God, we shall need her most of all at the moment of our death, when he who gains the victory will nevermore lose the crown.”

The Ave Maria with the part “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners” was included by the Jesuit Petrus Canisius in his *Catechism* in 1555. In 1565, The “*Catechism of the Council of Trent*” added the

words of Canisius. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* says that to the first part of the Hail Mary it has “wisely added prayers and an invocation addressed to the most holy Mother of God...we should earnestly implore her help and assistance; for she possesses exalted merits with God, and that she is most desirous to assist us by her prayers, no one can doubt without impiety and wickedness.”

The Hail Mary was next added to the Roman Breviary of 1568 by Pope Pius V and has been popularly used by the Catholic Church from then on.

The Ave Maria or Hail Mary has made its way deeply into the Catholic psyche by being utilized in Catholic devotions including in the Angelus which devotion is practiced by many Catholics commemorating the incarnation and where the Hail Mary is said three times. It is also repeated numerous times during the Rosary which will be discussed in depth later on in the article.

The Catholic Encyclopedia interestingly admits that “there is little or no trace of the Hail Mary as an accepted devotional formula before about 1050.”

As a final note, it is of interest that the translation of “full of grace” is generally not utilized today. We find the translation of “full of grace” in the *Douay-Rheims Bible* where Luke 1:28 is translated “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee....” The translation results from the fact that the *Douay-Rheims Bible* is based upon the *Latin Vulgate Bible* translated by St. Jerome (342-420 A.D.). The Latin term in that verse is *gratia plena* which is translated correctly as “full of grace.” However, a more correct translation is found when the verse is translated from the original Greek (as opposed to Latin) in which case the best translation is that the salutation refers to Mary as being the “favored one.” In fact the official Catholic Version in English today is the *New American Bible Revised Edition* which translates the verse as “Hail, Favored One”.

The Greek word utilized is “*kecharitomene*” which *Strongs* translates as “favored with grace.” *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* translates it as “compass with favor” or “to honor with blessings.” The fact of the matter is that Mary was greatly honored by God and favored with God’s choice of her as the Mother of Jesus Christ.

Mary was the door by which prayer to God was changed. Somehow, the mercy of Christ alone, was no longer enough. Christ had become distant and perhaps too severe to hear the prayers of the faithful directly. A more sympathetic ear was needed to hear the prayer of sinful men and women. That ear was Mary. Christ who, as some imagined, could easily refuse the prayers of mankind, perhaps would be more sympathetic to the prayers of his mother. After all, he had acceded to her request at the Wedding of Cana. Apparently, it was felt that an additional level of intercession was needed. Man and women improved their chances of having their prayers answered by praying to Mary and having her to intercede with her son. The topic of praying to Mary and the Saints will be discussed again later in this article.

IX. Praying to Mary (The Intercessory Work of Mary)

In order to understand the position of the Catholic Church on praying to Mary or to other saints, one must first understand that the Catholic church views the church as being made up of saints who are living and saints who are dead, including those who are being purified by Purgatory. Therefore when

Scripture says that saints should pray for one another, to the Catholic Church that would include Saints who are deceased as well as those who are living. It would also include asking angels to intercede for you.

To the Catholic Church, the best person to pray for you, other than Jesus, is Mary. There are a number of reasons for this. First, Mary made intercession for the wedding party at Cana when they ran out of wine and Jesus heard her plea. (John 2:1-11). Other reasons, according to Catholics why Mary would hear prayers would be that she is “full of grace,” she is sinless, she was conceived without sin through the Immaculate Conception, she is the Mother of God (“*Theotokos*”) and she was assumed into heaven. To the Catholic, Mary sits at the right hand of Jesus Christ and whatever Mary requests, Jesus will grant.

Further, since Mary and the other Saints are in heaven, they are not distracted by the things of the flesh and the world, and they are that Cloud of Witnesses referred to in Hebrews 12:1.

Catholics admit to all of the Scriptures where we are instructed to pray for one another including 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Rom. 15:30-32; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25 and 2 Thes. 3:1.

To those who would point out that Jesus is the one mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5; see also Heb. 7:9 and Rom. 8:26-27), the Catholics respond that this is true but even Protestants not only look to Jesus as their intercessor but they also act as intercessors as they pray for those in authority, intercede for their churches and pray for healing and for people with needs. Of course, Protestants respond that when we pray for others, the real intercessor is not us but is Jesus. We simply have the opportunity to have a small role in participating in bringing in the Kingdom of God to earth by bringing needs of others and of our world to the true and only intermediary, Jesus Christ. In one sense we are like the friends who let down the sick man through the roof to Jesus. It is Jesus who does the work. We do not bring the sick to Mary first. Also, we do not believe that Jesus is more likely to answer our prayers if it is filtered through Mary.

Prayers to Mary began fairly early in church history. Here is a Coptic prayer from the third or fourth century called *Sub Tuum praesidium*. The prayer is as follows:

We fly to thy patronage, O Holy Mother of God;
 Despise not our petitions in our necessities,
 But deliver us always from all dangers,
 O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

A number of church fathers believed that angels and saints could pray for members of the church. For instance, Jerome wrote :

If the Apostles and Martyrs, while still in the body can pray for others,
 at a time when they must still be anxious for themselves, how much more
 after their crowns, victories and triumphs are won!”
 (*Against Vigilantius* (translated by William Henry Fremantle, 1893))

In Catholic doctrine, Mary does not have the power of Christ in her mediation but due to her special position as the *Theotokos*, being without sin and being assumed into heaven, she has a better ability to mediate than anyone other than Christ. For that reason she is known as the Mediatrix of all graces. As we review Mary as Co-Redemptrix in a future section, we will learn that “the redemptive grace of

Christ is conferred on nobody without the actual intercessory co-operation of Mary.” (Dr. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, pg. 213 (1960).

The position of the Catholic Church is illustrated by the Leo XIII's encyclical entitled *Octobri Mense* (1891):

Thus as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother. How great are the goodness and mercy revealed in this design of God! What a correspondence with the frailty of man! We believe in the infinite goodness of the Most High, and we rejoice in it; we believe also in His justice and we fear it. We adore the beloved Saviour, lavish of His blood and of His life; we dread the inexorable Judge. Those whose actions have disturbed their consciences need an intercessor mighty in favour with God, merciful enough not to reject the cause of the desperate, merciful enough to lift up again towards hope in the divine mercy the afflicted and the broken down. Mary is this glorious intermediary; she is the mighty Mother of the Almighty....

Therefore, Mary is like Christ in that she is a mediator between man and God. If you want to reach Christ, you must go through Mary because she is full of grace and greatly favored by God. The title of Mediatrix for Mary first appeared in the fourth century and was utilized in the Middle Ages by such people as Bernard of Clairvaux and Bonaventure. Since that time the term has been continued to be utilized including by Leo XIII, and by John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*.

In 1954 in Paragraph 42 of his encyclical entitled *Ad Caeli Reginam*, Pius XII writes:

...to quote again our Predecessor of immortal memory, Pius IX, “does she approach the problem of our salvation, and is solicitous for the whole human race; made Queen of heaven and earth by the Lord, exalted above all choirs of angels and saints, and standing at the right hand of her only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, she intercedes powerfully for us with a mother's prayers, obtains what she seeks and can not be refused.

Interestingly, Christ stands at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us and Mary stands at the right hand of Christ to intercede for us. Apparently there is a double line of intercession. One must ask whether the love of Christ and the intercessory work of Christ is not enough. Further the concept of Mary standing next to the right hand of Christ does not appear to my knowledge in Scripture.

Mary is also referred to as Mediatrix and her role as intercessor is also described by Pope Paul VI in the papal encyclical entitled *Lumen gentium* (1964) at paragraph 62 in the following manner:

Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvic duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and cultics, until they are led into the happiness of their true home. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix and Mediatrix. This, however, is to be so understood that it neither takes away from

nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator.

Despite the pious protestations that the insertion of Mary between man and Jesus does not diminish the mediation between man and God through Christ, I do not find the protestations convincing. The right thing is being said theologically but the effect of adding Mary and saints as mediators does, at least in my opinion, practically act to dilute the mediation by Christ. It is Christ and Christ alone who serves as our mediator.

Further, in Scripture, Mary is not generally seen as the one who has access to Jesus once his ministry began. Mary and the brothers/relatives of Jesus were turned away when they came to get him (Matt. 12:46-48). When people came to Jesus they did not go through Mary instead they went through the apostles Peter, James and John. Also we learn that when some Greeks who wanted to see Jesus they went to Philip and Philip got Andrew and the two approached Jesus about seeing the Greeks (John 12:20-22). Also it was Peter, James and John who are on the Mountain of Transfiguration with Jesus (Mark 9:2-3) and in the Garden of Prayer with Jesus (Matt. 26:36-38), not Mary. In short, special access to Jesus in his ministry went through his disciples as opposed to through Mary.

X. The Rosary

The Rosary is a method that Catholics use to enhance prayer, contemplation and meditation through focusing upon a series of events in connection with the lives of Jesus and Mary. Often a string of beads called a Rosary are utilized to keep track of the events and the various prayers said. The word "rosary" comes from the Latin word *rosarium* which means a bouquet of roses. Each Hail Mary that is said is considered to be a rose to Mary (or to Jesus through Mary). The saying of the entire Rosary is a bouquet of roses to Mary.

The Rosary strings together a number of contemplations and prayers. One keeps track of the progress through the Rosary by the use of the beads but you can do the Rosary without utilizing the beads.

The Rosary begins with saying the Apostle's Creed. Some of the prayers utilized are the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father" or "Pater Noster"), the Hail Mary ("Ave Maria), and the "Glory Be." The Glory be is "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end."

The Rosary concludes with prayer "Hail Holy Queen." That prayer is as follows:

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up
our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most
Gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile,
Show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O clement, O loving
O sweet Virgin Mary!

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God. That we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.

O God, whose only-begotten Son, by His life, death and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal salvation; grant we beseech Thee, that meditation upon these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise. through the name Christ our Lord. Amen.

The mysteries contemplated relate to the lives of Mary and Jesus. The groups are the following. The Joyful Mysteries are the Annunciation, the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, the Nativity, the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple. In these mysteries, Mary is present.

The Sorrowful Mysteries are the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging of Jesus, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross and the Crucifixion.

The Glorious Mysteries are the Resurrection, the Ascension of Jesus, the Descent of the Holy Spirit (with Mary being present), the Assumption of Mary and the Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth. Note that the last two of the Glorious Mysteries are not found in Scripture.

In 2002, Pope John Paul added the Luminous Mysteries. These mysteries are the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, the Wedding at Cana, the Proclamation by Jesus of the Kingdom of God, The Transfiguration, and the Institution of the Eucharist and the sacrament (which Protestants see as an ordinance and call the Last Supper). To the Catholic, the importance is much more and the bread and wine are actually translated into the actual physical body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Pope Leo X approved the universal use of the rosary. Pope Pius V (Pontificate 1566-1572) implemented the Joyful Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries and the Glorious Mysteries which were 15 in all. As mentioned previously Pope John II added the Luminous Mysteries taking the total mysteries up to 20.

As a means of prayer, meditation and contemplation, the Rosary focuses on both events in the life of Jesus and Mary including some events recognized by the Church including the Assumption and Crowning of Mary.

Moreover, the entire complex of the Rosary is done within the honoring of Mary with the church claiming that the honoring of Mary is the same as honoring Christ. The practice however, is fairly obvious to the non-Catholic viewer. For instance, in the course of the Rosary 53 Hail Mary's are utilized and only 5 Our Fathers and five "Glory Be's." The Rosary then ends with the Hail Holy Queen Prayer to Mary.

The beginning of the use of the Rosary is unknown but many Catholics believe that it began in the 1208 when St. Dominic the founder of the Dominicans had a vision of the Virgin Mary. Certainly the Dominican Order was a proponent of the Rosary and helped to spread the use of the Rosary. The use of the Rosary was greatly promoted by Pope Leo XIII (Pontificate 1878-1903). Pope Leo XIII was known as the "Rosary Pope" due to twelve encyclicals and five apostolic letters relating to the Rosary. Many popes after Pope Leo XIII have continued to promote the Rosary including Pope Pius XII, John XXIII, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

How Important is Saying the Rosary to Catholics

The importance of saying the Rosary to Catholics can not be underestimated. First Catholics believe there are benefits promised to those who say the Rosary.

It is generally accepted that there are 15 promises to those who say the Rosary. The fifteen promises apparently came by a revelation from Mary and are as follows:

1. Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the Rosary, shall receive signal graces.
2. I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the Rosary.
3. The Rosary shall be a powerful armor against hell, it will destroy vice, decrease sin, and defeat heresies.
4. It will cause virtue and good works to flourish; it will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God; it will withdraw the heart of men from the love of the world and its vanities, and will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means.
5. The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish.
6. Whoever shall recite the Rosary devoutly applying himself to the consideration of its sacred mysteries, shall never be conquered and never overwhelmed by misfortune. God will not chastise him in His justice, he shall not perish by an unprovided death (unprepared for heaven). The sinner shall convert. The just shall grow in grace and become worthy of eternal life.
7. Whoever shall have a true devotion for the Rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the church.
8. Those who are faithful to recite the Rosary shall have, during their life and at their death, the light of God and the plenitude of His graces; at the moment of death they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise.
9. I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary.
10. The faithful children of the Rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in heaven.
11. You shall obtain all you ask of me by the recitation of the Rosary.
12. All those who propagate the holy Rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.
13. I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the Rosary shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court through their life and at the hour of death.
14. All who recite the Rosary are my sons, and brothers of my only son Jesus Christ.
15. Devotion of my Rosary is a great sign of predestination.

Although these promises are not grounded in history they are considered to be "private revelation." Catholics are free to believe them or not to believe this revelation.

However, if one were to believe these revelations, recitation of the Rosary would bring a host of benefits.

The saying of the Rosary has been praised and lauded by many key Catholic figures. Some of the well-known statements regarding the Rosary are the following:

"The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish."

Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Dominic (1170-1221 A.D.)

“When you say your Rosary, the angels rejoice, the Blessed Trinity delights in it, my Son finds joy in it too, and I myself am happier than you can possibly guess. After the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, there is nothing in the Church that I love as much as the Rosary.”

Blessed Virgin Mary to Alan de la Roche (1428-1475 A.D.)

“The Rosary is the compendium of the entire Gospel.”

Pope Paul V (1550-1621 A.D.)

“The greatest method of praying is to pray the Rosary.”

Francis de Sales (1567-1622 A.D.)

“When the Holy Rosary is said well, it gives Jesus and Mary more glory and is more meritorious than any other prayer.”

Louis de Montfort (1673-1716 A.D.)

“The Rosary is the most excellent form of prayer and the most efficacious means of attaining eternal life. It is the remedy for all our evils, the root of all our blessings. There is no more excellent way of praying.”

Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903 A.D.)

“Give me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world.”

Pope Pius IX (1792-1881 A.D.)

“The Rosary is the most beautiful and the most rich in graces of all prayers; it is the prayer that touches most the Heart of the Mother of God...and if you wish peace to reign in your homes, recite the family Rosary.”

Pope Pius X (1835-1914 A.D.)

“The Rosary is a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight and to keep oneself from sin...If you desire peace in your hearts, in your homes, and in your country, assemble each evening to recite the Rosary. Let not even one day pass without saying it, no matter how burdened you may be with many cares and labors.”

Pope Pius XI (1857-1939 A.D.)

“Love the Madonna and pray the Rosary, for her Rosary is the weapon against the evils of the world today. All graces given by God pass through the Blessed Mother.”

Padre Pio (1887-1968 A.D.)

“To recite the Rosary is nothing other than to contemplate the face of Christ with Mary.”

Pope John Paul II (1920-2005)

“the Most Holy Virgin in these last times in which we live has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families...that cannot be solved by the Rosary. There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary:

Sister Lucia dos Santos of Faima (1907-2005 A.D.)

“The Rosary is a school of Prayer. The Rosary is a school of Faith.”
 Pope Francis (1936-)

After reading all the benefits and blessings for saying the Rosary, one almost would ask why Christ did not teach his disciples the Rosary instead of the Lord’s Prayer.



XII. The Feast Days of Mary

One of the methods by which the Catholic Church has honored the Virgin Mary and propagated her popularity is by utilizing Feast Days as a way to honor Mary. Feasts to celebrate Mary in connection with the nativity of Jesus were in existence in the fifth century. By the seventh and eighth century the Eastern Church were celebrating the Feasts of the Dormition (Assumption) . Also in the seventh century the Marian Feasts were celebrated in connection with the Nativity. Also the Western Church began to celebrate feasts relating to Mary. Feast Days are celebrated with special masses and in some cases processions.

Mary has a special place in the Catholic religious calendar. Some of the Feast Days relating to Mary which are celebrated today in the West are the following:

January 1--Feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

February 2—Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Candle Mass)

March 25—The Annunciation

Month of May—The entire month is dedicated to Mary. During this month many statues are crowned which will be discussed in a separate section later.

May 31—The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Monday after Pentecost—The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church

9 days after Corpus Christi—The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

August 15—Assumption of Mary. This feast day celebrates the assumption of Mary's body and soul into heaven.

August 22—The Queenship of Mary

September 8—The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Marymas)

September 15—Our Lady of Sorrows

October 7—Our Lady of the Rosary

November 21—The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary—This feast celebrates the presentation of the three year old Mary by her parents to the Temple to be raised as a consecrated virgin. (Again there is no reference to this in Scripture but the information is found in the Protoevangelium which was later rejected by the Church).

December 8—Feast of Immaculate Conception. This feast celebrates that Mary had a miraculous birth free from original sin.

In addition to the feasts mentioned above there are certain optional commemorations and memorials to Mary including those listed below:

February 11—Our Lady of Lourdes

May 13—Our Lady of Fatima

July 16—Our Lady of Mount Carmel

August 5—Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major (the largest Marian Catholic Church in Rome)

September 12—The Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 10—Our Lady of Loreto

December 12—Our Lady of Guadalupe

As indicated above, the month of May is dedicated to Mary. During this month many special devotions are held to Mary including singing of anthems, sermons, praying the Rosary and setting up home altars with pictures of Mary and flowers. Families are encouraged to pray the Rosary.

During the month of October, the Catholic faithful are encouraged to pray the Rosary and October is known by some as “Rosary Month”.

In conclusion, the feasts of Mary are celebrated both in the East and the West although I have for this section mainly focused upon the Catholic Church in the West. The multiplicity of feasts and celebrations illustrate the focus upon Mary. Again the official Catholic view is that devotions and veneration of Mary ultimately lead the devotions and veneration of Christ who far supersedes Mary. As a practical matter, devotions to Mary become larger each year crowding out the devotions to Christ. That being said, the emphasis of the Catholic Sacrament which is the highest and best focus of Catholicism on Christ continues strong.

XIII. Mary as Co-Redemptrix

Since the Middle Ages there have been writings in the Catholic Church regarding Mary’s role as a Co-Redemptrix. Under this concept, Mary played a supporting role in the mission of Christ to save the world by assenting to the Incarnation and by the role of her life in connection with Jesus and with her suffering in connection with the death of Jesus. Some Catholic theologians have taken the position that Mary had a spiritual unity with Christ and as such is involved in his redemptive work.

Mary’s role as Co-Redemptrix may have received some support in the the twentieth Century by Pope Benedict XV in a 1918 commemorative letter. In that letter Pope Benedict XV said:

As she (Mary) suffered and almost died together with her suffering and dying son, so she surrendered her mother’s rights over her son for salvation of the human race. And to sacrifice the justice of God, she sacrificed her son, as well as she could, so that it may justly be said that she together with Christ has redeemed the human race.
(Pope Benedict XV, *Inter sodalica* (1918) as found in *The Church Teachings-Documents of the Church* in English Translation by the Jesuit Fathers of St. Mary’s, St. Mary’s, Kansas, 2015)

There are strong words of support of Mary as Co-Redemptrix in the encyclical of Pope Pius XII dated October 11, 1954 and entitled *Ad Caeli Reginam* and proclaiming Mary as “Queen of Heaven.” In paragraph 35, Pope Pius XII makes the reasonable conclusion that due to giving birth Christ “God has willed her to have an exceptional role in the work of our eternal salvation”. This conclusion seems reasonable however, the next jump from an exceptional role to co-redemptrix is too big a jump in my opinion. Paragraph 38 of that encyclical sets forth the co-redemptrix logic and the the argument that Mary in her grief at the foot of the cross is in unity (at least to a minor extent) with the sacrifice of Jesus at the cross. It also sets forth the conclusion that just as Jesus is the “New Adam” so is Mary the “New (and sinless) Eve”. Here is a portion of paragraph 38.

From these considerations, the proof develops on these lines: if Mary in taking

an active part of the work of salvation, was, by God's design, associated with Jesus Christ, the source of salvation itself, in a manner comparable to that in which Eve was associated with Adam, the source of death, so that it may be stated that the work of our salvation was accomplished by a kind of "recapitulation", in which a virgin was instrumental in the salvation of the human race, just as a virgin had been closely with its death; if, moreover, it can likewise be stated that this glorious Lady had been chosen Mother of Christ "in order that she might become a partner in the redemption of the human race; and if, in truth "it was she who, free of the stain of actual and original sin, and ever most closely bound to her Son, on Golgotha offered that Son to the Eternal Father together with the complete sacrifice of her maternal rights and maternal love, like a new Eve....."

In same paragraph of the Encyclical, Pope Pius XII writes: "... but Mary, too, as Mother of the divine Christ, as his associate in the redemption, in his struggle with His enemies and His final victory over them, has a share, though in a limited and analogous way, in His royal dignity."

Later in paragraph 42 of the same Encyclical Pope Pius XII again concludes that God has used Mary in the work of redemption when he writes: "He uses His Sacraments and Saints as instruments for the salvation of men, why should He not make use of the role and work of His most holy Mother in imparting to us the fruits of redemption?"

Pope Paul VI, in *Lumen gentium* in 1964 discussed the role of Mary in "the economy of salvation" where he states: "The Sacred Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament, as well as ancient Tradition show the role of the Mother of the Saviour in the economy of salvation in an ever clearer light and draw attention to it. (*Lumen gentium*, Chapter VIII, II 55). In Paragraph 56, Pope Paul VI says that the holy Fathers saw Mary "as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. He goes on to discuss Mary as the new Eve and repeats a ancient quotation of "death through Eve, life through Mary."

In Paragraphs 61 and 62 of *Lumen gentium*, Pope Paul VI writes:

(61)...She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace.

(62). This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent when she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside the salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. ...For no creature could ever be counted as equal with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer. ...The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary.

In short, Pope Paul VI supported the role of Mary in salvation through her love and support of Jesus but acknowledges that this role is subordinate to what Jesus did. The popes in their pronouncements

appear to use a legalistic sounding clause which might be something to the effect of : “Notwithstanding any other provision made in this Encyclical or document, nothing contained herein no matter how laudatory toward Mary should in any way be construed to imply that Mary is greater than Christ.” We will see this type of *caveat* utilized in many papal documents. Statements such as this fireproof the most laudatory and excessive statements made by the Church and protect it, at least according to their theologians, from the threat of outrageous error.

Pope Paul VI in an encyclical entitled *Marialis Cultus* (1974) in discussing the devotions which should be rendered to Mary in Paragraph 33 acknowledged that there was resistance to Mary in non-Catholic churches when he wrote in Paragraph 33: “We realize that there exist important differences between the thoughts of many of our brethren in other churches and ecclesial communities and the Catholic doctrine on “Mary’s role in the work of salvation.”” I would say that this is an understatement.

In recent years the Papacy has backed away from petitions to proclaim a new and fifth Marian dogma where Mary is proclaimed to be “Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate”.

One effort relating to this approval came from an alleged series of apparitions of the Virgin Mary which came to Ida Peerdeman in Holland. The apparitions had to do with visions of Mary where she proclaimed herself as “Lady of All Nations” and desired the Pope to proclaim “the fifth Marian dogma” where the Lady of All Nations would be recognized under the titles of Mary Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate. Associated with this proclamation was a painting showing Mary standing on earth before a cross with nail indentions in her palms. Ultimately the church expressed some doubts as to whether the visions were of supernatural origin. The Church’s doctrinal office urged Catholics not to promote “the alleged apparitions and revelations” associated with the Lady of All Nations.

An effort was made by some bishops to get the term “Co-Redemptorix” approved by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), but those efforts were never approved.

In 1996 A Mariological Congress was held in Poland where a commission was established to consider adding a dogma recognizing Mary as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate. The commission unanimously determined that the time was not opportune to do so.

The establishment of Mary as Co-Redemptrix was opposed by Cardinal Ratzinger who later became Pope Benedict XVI due to the fact that the term gave rise to misunderstanding.

Pope Francis speaking informally in 2021 said that the entire Church was entrusted to Mary but “as a mother. Not as a goddess. Not as a co-redemptrix. As a mother.”

The approach of Pope Francis and the current Church authorities on the Redemptrix question is refreshing.

XIV. The Immaculate Heart of Mary

The Immaculate Heart of Mary as utilized by the Catholics relates to the spiritual heart or interior spiritual life of the Virgin Mary. Of course in the Catholic context “Immaculate” means “free of sin.”

Therefore when we say Immaculate Heart of Mary we are reminded of the Catholic view that Mary's heart is free of sin. The Immaculate Heart of Mary has a connection to the Seven Sorrows of Mary which is discussed in the next section of this article.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary refers to her great love for Jesus Christ and her love for all of mankind. The Catholic Church has interpreted Jesus' words to John when he said "Behold, your mother" as running not to John but to all those of faith who are sons to Mary and she is a mother to them. In short Mary's heart is compassionate and loving to Christ and to all men and women.

To some degree, the Immaculate Heart of Mary is tied to the sinlessness of Mary and to her cooperation with the redemptive work of Christ by assenting to be a vessel for the Incarnate Word. In addition she is viewed as sharing his compassion for the world and for being willing to share her son for the salvation of the world. Moreover, Mary suffers along with Christ as he is crucified and experiences the pain of the sword in her heart as prophesied by Simeon.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary is portrayed as a heart surrounded by roses. Often the heart has a sword piercing it as predicted by Simeon.

Scriptures relating to Mary and Her Heart

Some of the Scriptural bases relating to the heart of Mary include Simeon's prophecy to her in Luke 2:35 where Simeon tells Mary "a sword will pierce through your own soul also." A second verse relates to Mary's heart after she and Joseph had located Jesus in the Temple when he had been lost where it says in Luke 2:31, "but His mother kept all these things in her heart." A third verse which sometimes is used is John 19: 25-27 when Mary is at the foot of the cross and Jesus says (to John) "behold your mother."

The Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary

To some degree the Immaculate Heart of Mary is an echo of the devotion to the the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Sacred Heart of Jesus represents "God's boundless love and passionate love for humankind." During the first millenium of the church there was no emphasis on the Sacred Heart. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries , Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi renewed a focus upon the the wounds of Jesus. Bernard of Clairvaux stated that from the piercing of Christs side with the lance, God's love became manifest to the world. Various religious orders focus and promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus including the Franciscans, Domincans and the Carthusians.

Two German Benedictine nuns Mechtilde of Helfta (1241-1298 A.D.) and her protégé Gertrude the Great (1256-1302 A.D.) were greatly devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Mechtilde believed that Jesus had given her his heart as a pledge of his love and through devotions to the heart of Jesus people would be blessed with all types of benefits.

Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690 A.D.) a nun in the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary claimed that she had visions of Jesus instructing her regarding devotions to the Sacred Heart. These devotions became very popular with numerous people including the Capuchin Friars.

Another nun instrumental in the devotions was Mary of the Divine Heart (1863-1899 A.D.) who was a nun with the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. Her confessor in 1898 wrote to Pope Leo XIII stating that Mary of the Divine Heart had received a vision from Jesus requesting the Pope to consecrate the entire world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In 1899 after her death, Pope Leo XIII consecrated the world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Subsequent popes have supported the continued consecration of the world to Jesus and to the devotion of the the Sacred Heart.

There are often joint devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Differences between the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

There are a number of differences between the focus of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as opposed to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Sacred Heart of Jesus focuses upon God's divine love for humanity. The emphasis on the Immaculate Heart of Mary is Mary's devotion to Jesus.

Development of the Doctrine of the Immaculate Heart

The concept of the Immaculate Heart did not really come to fruition in Catholic theology until the Middle Ages. Devotion to the Heart of Mary was practiced by Anselm of Canterbury and by Bernard of Clairveau. In addition, a great amount of interest had arisen relating to the sacred heart of Jesus including by two Benedictine Nuns, Mechtilde of Haceborn and her protégé Gertrude the Great discussed previously. These two women were visionaries who were also devotees to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Later Saint John Eudes (1601-1680) wrote a Mass and Divine Order for the Sacred Hearts of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin. He promoted masses for both sacred hearts during his lifetime. During February 1648 the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mother of God was celebrated for the first time and in October 1672 the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was celebrated. In 1805, Pope Pius VII permitted a feast to celebrate the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The Apparition of Mary to Catherine Laboure and the Miraculous Medal

One of the factors promoting the devotions to the Immaculate Heart of Mary were visions of Mary which appeared to Catherine Laboure (1806-1876) who was a member of Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. In 1830 Mary instructed Laboure to make a medallion. Around the edge of the medallion were the words: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." On the the back of the Medallion there were a circle of twelve stars, a large M surmounted by a cross and the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate heart of Mary.

The medallion called "The Miraculous Medal" was extremely popular among Catholics. The words "conceived without sin" were popular but the Immaculate Conception was not approved until 1854. Nonetheless, the Miraculous Medal was a great impetus in the promotion of the Immaculate Heart of Mary which was on the Medal and which was joined to The Sacred Heart of Jesus which was also on the Medal.



The Miraculous Medal

The Apparition of Mary at Fatima and the Immaculate Heart

One of the visions which promoted the Immaculate Heart of Mary was the vision of Mary at Fatima, Portugal in 1917. Mary at that time conveyed a message to the three children there that God wanted to establish the devotion to her Immaculate Heart to save souls from hell. She also asked that Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart. Pope Pius XII consecrated Russia to the Virgin Mary in 1952. Subsequent Popes have also consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Conclusion.

Although the Immaculate Heart of Mary is not an exact duplicate of the Sacred Heart of Jesus it is a counterpart. For instance, Jesus has a Virgin birth whereas Mary has an Immaculate Conception, both Jesus and Mary are sinless, Jesus is a Mediator and Mary is a Mediatrix, Jesus is Redeemer and Mary is a lesser Co-Redemptrix. The honors and devotions to Mary arising out of her initial designation as "*Theotokos*" continue to profligate. What Jesus is-- Mary becomes-- but only to a slightly lesser extent. However, devotions to Mary continue to grow and their growth seems to outstrip the growth in devotions to Jesus Christ which should be a concern to the Catholic Church.

One of the difficulties is that once a concept or belief becomes dogma there is no backing up and no reevaluation. Papal infallibility and the right to pronounce “anathema” makes the topic forever closed to discussion among the faithful forcing people such as myself outside of the Catholic faith to say something. The area of dogma is like driving a rental car into a car rental compound where there is no backing up without the tires being torn to ribbons. This leaves the scholastics and thinkers of the Church into positions where their logic and defenses have to become increasingly tortured and convoluted to explain the Church’s theological positions.

In addition, as we review the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we begin to see more clearly the effect of mystics, visions and Marian apparitions and the effect they are having on the direction and theology of the church. Those visions are primarily looked at a fairly low level administratively and then slowly work their way up to the Vatican. In this section we see how how visions are promoting church actions regarding such items as Mary being ever- virgin and the concepts of the Immaculate and Sacred Hearts. Popes are requested to take actions under the threat of dire spiritual consequences by humble men and women having visions. The visionaries are often popular with the people and the Chair of Peter must be careful that it does not bow to popular appeals under the guise of visions. An example where the Papacy has been more reticent to accept visions is the Ida Peerdeman vision.

Interestingly the church is running into the type of difficulties that some Holy Spirit oriented Protestant Churches get into when they hear prophecies from the laity. Some are right; some are wrong. How do you distinguish? Do you just throw out all prophecies. As we get into Marian apparitions, in another article in the future, we run into the same issues. How does the church separate the wheat from the chaff. How do we separate good prophecies from bad ones or good visions from false visions.



The Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

XV. The Seven Sorrows of Mary

What are the Seven Sorrows

The seven sorrows of Mary are generally pictured as seven swords or daggers piercing the heart of Mary. The seven sorrows are the following:

1. Prophecy of Simeon that a sword would pierce Mary's heart.
2. The flight by Mary, Joseph and Jesus to Egypt.
3. The loss of Jesus at the Temple when he was twelve.
4. Mary's Meeting of Jesus on his way to the crucifixion (not in Scripture)
5. The Crucifixion of Jesus
6. Taking down Jesus from the cross.
7. The Burial of Jesus in the tomb.

These seven sorrows illustrate the sorrows which Mary felt in her life and have become the focus of devotions by many to Mary.

Some of the titles given to Mary who bore these sorrows are : Our Lady of Sorrows, Sorrowful Mother, Mother of Sorrows, Our Lady of Piety, Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, Our Lady of Dolours, and Our Lady of Seven Dolours.

To celebrate the seven sorrows, Catholics often say one Our Father and seven Hail Mary's for each Sorrow.

History of the Seven Sorrows

One of the means by which Mary of the Seven Sorrows were popularized was from the Order of Friar Servants of Mary (Servite Order). This order arose from seven cloth merchants in Florence who began meeting together and taking vows of poverty and penance in 1233 A.D. This order dedicated itself to Mary under her title of Mother of Sorrows and its members focused on the Sorrows of Mary and the Passion of Jesus and spreading these devotions to others including the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows.

A separate Feast was granted to the Servants of Mary to celebrate the Seven Sorrows in 1668. That feast was added to the Roman Calendar in 1814. On Feast Days there are often processions honoring Mary often with life-size statues of her.

Our Lady of Sorrows is also the patron saint of Poland, Malta, and Slovakia.

Mary as Woman of Sorrows compared to Christ Man of Sorrows

Jesus is the man of sorrows. Isaiah 53:3-4 describes Jesus in this fashion:

He is despised and rejected by men
a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
Surely He has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken
smitten by God and afflicted.

During the Middle Ages there was an emphasis upon Christ as the Man of Sorrows. As this emphasis continued, an emphasis upon Mary and her sorrows grew along side it.

One medieval writer, St. Bernard, wrote "The sword would not have reached Jesus if it had not had pierced Mary's heart".

In short, the wounds of Mary were linked to the wounds of Christ.

The Five Wounds of Jesus vs the Seven Wounds of Mary

We have previously discussed the seven sorrows of Mary with each sorrow being like a sword or dagger which pierced her heart. These wounds are contrasted with the five major wounds of Christ which included the nails through both hands/wrists, the nail through the feet, the crown of thorns and the lance in the side.

In actually the wounds of Christ by some in the Middle Ages were estimated to be 5466 wounds. Devotions to the Sacred Wounds of Christ were encouraged by the two Benedictine Nuns who we mentioned previously, St. Mechtilde and St. Gertrude of Helfta. In Germany 15 Pater Nosters (Our Fathers) were said each day of the year to honor these wounds (a total of 364 days x15 pater nosters=5466 wounds.)

As the Rosary was said, the five large beads for the Pater Nosters honor the five Sacred Wounds of Christ.

In short, the five wounds of Christ were a matter of devotion as were the seven wounds or sorrows of Mary. Once again Mary had become "like" Jesus Christ and the faithful celebrated both the wounds of Jesus and the wounds of Mary in their devotions.

As a final comment to this section, I believe that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches have done a much better job in recognizing the sufferings of Mary and the concept of a sword piercing her heart than Protestant churches have done. The suffering of seeing your own child crucified is beyond comprehension and even more when that child is the incarnated Word of God, sinless and the son in whom your hopes rested as well as the hopes of the world. Simeon's prophetic word was correct and I believe that a sword pierced the heart of Mary every bit as much as a lance pierced the side of Christ. I believe that great pain was only assuaged by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.



Icon of Virgin Mary
Seven Sorrows

XVI. Pre-Christian Beliefs and Mary

Since the earliest days of history, men and women have worshipped female goddesses often with their cults associated with reproduction, the production of grain and food, crops and harvests. Many of these cults involved a maternal aspect and sometimes children. There have been a succession of goddesses coming out of the Middle East, Egypt, Greece and Rome which were worshipped both before and after the time of Christ. Some of the goddesses that various authorities thought might have had an impact upon the development of the adoration of Mary have included goddesses like Gaia, Cybele/ Magna Mater, Artemis, Astarte, Ceres, Demeter, Diana, Ishtar and Isis

An example of a goddess mentioned in the Bible is a Canananite female deity known as Astoreth or Ashteroth. She was also known by other names such as Astarte, Ishtar and Astartu. The Hebrew people from time to time worshiped Astoreth and her male consort Baal. (Some Scriptures referring to Ashteroth in the Old Testament would include Jude 2:3; 10:6; 1 Kings 11:5,33; 18:19; 2 Kings 23:13 and 1 Sam. 7:4) Ashteroth was associated with fertility and sexuality. In addition her worship included sexual acts and ritual prostitution.

The Romans were not bashful about incorporating the gods of civilizations which they conquered into their own pantheon and society. For instance, the Greek Goddess of love, Aphrodite became Venus in Rome. The Greek goddess of hunting, Artemis, became the Roman goddess of hunting, Diana. However there were many types of goddesses worshipped both prior and in addition to those mentioned above.

Stephen Benko in his book *The Virgin Goddess: Studies in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology*, Leiden: E.J. Brill (1993) felt that the cult of the Magna Mater (Great Mother or Cybele) and had some significant influences on the development of the cult of Mary. Some cults which may have had some relation to the Magna Mater Cult may have been the cult of the Gaia (Earth-goddess), Rhea (Minoan equivalent to Gaia) or Demeter. The Magna Mater Cult was closely attached to the productivity of the earth. The cult utilized priests who were celibate or self-castrated and priestesses called "Galli" who were virgin. The cult had a concept of salvation and a baptism in the blood (of a sacrificed bull).

The Magna Mater Cult was accepted in Rome because the Romans had been guided by a Sibylline Oracle in 205 to bring the cult into Rome in its efforts to stand against Carthage in the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.). The Magna Mater was considered to be the protector of Rome (amusingly, somewhat like a Patron Saint). The Magna Mater had been the goddess of Troy and many Roman patricians including Julius Caesar were thought to have Trojan antecedents. Statues during the Roman Imperial period showed the Magna Mater as having the face of Livia the wife of Augustus Caesar and being dressed in the robes of the Vestal Virgins. In short, she was highly distinguished, pure and virginal.

Another pagan religion which may have had some influence upon the development of the cult of Mary was the cult of Isis from Egypt. The story is complex. The husband of Isis is Osiris who is killed by Seth. Isis in essence resurrects the body of Osiris and becomes pregnant with Horus the Younger who becomes the first Pharaoh.

Around Isis, one of the mystery religions grew up. As part of these mysteries, candidates would agree to worship Isis (but not exclusively), there would be various ritual purifications, some type of initiation

ceremony where one would undergo a symbolic death and rebirth and perhaps things such as sounds, lights and seeing a play or presentation or someone portraying the goddess,

Isis became the protector of sinners, slaves, young women, children and the dead.

The Roman Emperor Caligula (12 A.D.-41 A.D.) built a temple to Isis in Rome. Isis is also considered to be the Patron of some of the Roman Emperors including Vespasian (9 A.D.-79 A.D.), Titus (39 A.D.-81 A.D.), Trajan (53 A.D.-117 A.D.) and Hadrian (76 A.D.-136 A.D.). A vast temple to Isis was built in Rome to Isis.

One of the best known and widely accepted mystery religions were the Eleusian Mysteries involving the Greek goddess Demeter. These originated at Eleusis near Athens. Part of the initiation into the mystery related to Demeter searching for her daughter Persephone. The candidate was led into a dark area, saw various sights and ultimately entered into a bright room lit with fire where various announcements regarding new birth were pronounced.

It is not without some irony that Mary was pronounced as "*Thotokos*" or "God-Bearer" in Ephesus. Originally Cybele had been the goddess of Ephesus and later became known as Artemis of Ephesus. During the Roman times she was also known as "Diana" which is the Roman equivalent for Artemis. Some time around 57-58 A.D. Paul spends two years living and preaching in Ephesus. (Acts 19:10). As a part of Paul's ministry, many brought to him and burned their books of magic with a value of over 50,000 pieces of silver which would be quite a group of magic books burned. (Acts 19:18-20).

A silversmith named Demetrius who made shrines of Diana called together other silver-smiths saying that Paul had been convincing people in Ephesus and elsewhere that there were no gods and that the business of the silver-smiths was going to be ruined and the Temple of Diana would be destroyed. (Acts 19:23-27). The result was that a riot was instigated and people yelled for two hours "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:28) Eventually the City Clerk quietened down the riot basically telling the people to bring their complaints legally to the proconsuls in court. Paul after the event, continued his missionary journey by going to Macedonia. The passage is instructive in many respects because it shows the inroads that Christianity was making into pagan religions. It also shows how the economic interests of those who are making products for the pagan religions are threatened. Artemis/Diana is closely tied to Ephesus.

The Temple of Artemis/Diana was one of the seven ancient Wonders of the World. The original temple had been burned down in 356 B.C. by arson and was rebuilt around 323 B.C. This second Temple was destroyed in 262 A.D. by a band of Goths. Mary was proclaimed "*Thotokos*" at the church council held at Ephesus in 431 A.D. Mary had effectively replaced Artemis in Ephesus.

Christianity became tolerated in the Roman Empire in 313 A.D. under the Edict of Milan. Ten years later, Christianity under Constantine became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine abolished animal sacrifices by pagans and the fortune telling which was done by looking at the entrails of animals.

The eradication of paganism in the Roman Empire began in earnest in the Eastern Roman Empire by Emperor Theodosius I. At first Theodosius was tolerant because over fifty percent of the Empire was still pagan with an even higher percentage being pagan in the Western Half of the Roman Empire. Between 389-391 A.D. there were a number of decrees where pagan feasts were converted from feast days to work days. In 391 decrees were passed disallowing blood sacrifices and people were prohibited

from walking through temples or honoring statues created by the hands of men. In 391 A.D., Valentinian II was emperor in the West but under the control of Theodosius. Valentinian II issued a law that prohibited anyone from visiting pagan temples. And then followed another edict declaring pagan temples were to be closed.

In 392 A.D., Theodosius became emperor over both the Eastern and Western Roman Empire. After 392, pagan temples were closed. In 394 A.D., Theodosius visited the Roman Senate and tried to convert the remaining Roman Senators who were pagan. Not being successful, all funds utilized for the public performance of pagan rites ceased. Also in 394, the eternal fire in the Temple of Vesta in Rome was extinguished and the Vestal Virgins were abolished. In addition the Altar of Victory was removed from the Senate. Most of the cities became Christian. More people in the country remained pagan and many of the Roman provinces including Gaul and Spain also largely remained pagan. Many pagan sites in the cities were torn down and others became churches. The Temple at Delphi was ruined as was the site of the Eleusian Mystery cult. Many pagans became "Christian" in order to get ahead in the Empire.

As paganism was eradicated, many people who had worshipped at pagan altars or who had participated in pagan mystery religions, simply made a nominal conversion to Christianity. During this period, the Christian Church received financial support from the Roman Empire and there was a major influx of people who moved from paganism to the new Roman religion which was Christianity.

People who had worshipped Cybele and Isis found that they could transfer their allegiance from these female goddesses to Mary. On some occasions images of Isis were even repurposed and became statues of Mary and Jesus rather than of Isis and Horus. Titles for Isis like Queen of Light and Queen of Heaven could also be applied to the Virgin Mary. Isis statues often portrayed the baby Horus sitting on the lap of his mother whereas Christian statues of Mary showed Jesus sitting on the lap of his mother.

Interestingly Stephen Benko in his previously mentioned book entitled *The Virgin Goddess* believes THAT the Black Madonna of Halle, is really evidence of an ancient earth goddess cult. Many goddesses including Artemis of Ephesus, Isis and Ceres appear black because of the color of the soil. In addition some of the places associated with the Black Madonna may have also been places of Isis worship.

I do not personally believe that paganism gave rise to the cult of Mary. Instead, I believe that Christianity through its veneration of Mary provided an acceptable alternative for those seeking to experience a maternal influence in their spiritual pilgrimage and the ability to transfer beliefs from pagan alternatives was a relatively easy transition. Mary could provide all of the psychic benefits that the pagan goddess provided but in a purer and more loving state. In one sense, Mary extended her hands welcoming into Christianity those who for political and other reasons had to flee from their pagan religions and at the same time provided a real spiritual upgrade to their religious practices. If the pagans were uncomfortable moving from a female goddess belief to the male oriented belief involving Jesus, the veneration of Mary provided them an avenue to make the progression from female goddess to male God via the female, Mary.

XVII. Mary as Queen of Heaven

Introduction

In this section we review the use of the title of Queen of Heaven used in reference to the Virgin Mary. The use of the title began in the third and fourth centuries. Prior to that time there was little evidence that the church considered Mary to a “Queen.” Instead she was simply viewed as the Virgin Mother of Jesus. As she was elevated to “*Theotokos*” by the church, her status was increased.

Simple Logic behind the Title

The logic regarding the exaltation of Mary to “Queen Status” is simple. Jesus is the King of Kings. Instead of Jesus coming from a poor and humble woman, it was befitting that he come from royal status. Jesus was of the royal lineage of David as was Mary.

Although I may come from a lineage with kings, I am not generally considered to be a king. However the Bible says that I come from a lineage of kings and priests (Rev. 1:6). At any rate, since Jesus was King and Kings, his mother must be a Queen. Further, as Mary was further exalted by the Catholic Church as having a sinless life, participating in the redemption of mankind by being the mother of Jesus, becoming mother of all of the faithful believers, living a sinless life, and being assumed up into heaven, it is not surprising that upon her assumption she was viewed as being Queen of Heaven.

History of the Title

Various early church fathers made reference to Mary as “Queen” . Pope Pius XII in his Enclycal *Ad Caeli Reginam* proclaiming the Queenship of Mary (1954) does an outstanding job of summarizing the history of early writers acknowledging the Queenship of Mary. Those saints and fathers included Origen, St. Jerome, St. Gregory Nazianzen St. Andrew of Crete (650 A.D.), St. Germanus (d. 156 A.D.) , St. John Damascene and others. One of the earliest was Ephrem the Syrian (306 A.D.-373 A.D.) who was both an important writer, poet and hymnist of the earliest years of the church. He is considered to have written three million lines of hymns and has been called the “harp of the Holy Spirit.” One of his favorite topics was Mary. Pope Pius discusses him in Paragraph 10 of his Encyclical. Pope Pius quotes a hymn written by St. Ephrem:

Majestic and Heavenly Maid, Lady, Queen, protect and keep me under your wing
Lest Satan the sower of destruction glory over me....

Scriptures Supporting the Title

The Queen Mother has always had access to the King. Some Catholics see the role of Bathsheba being Queen and having access to her son Solomon as a precursor to Mary as being Queen Mother having access to Jesus. They recount the request made by Adonijah to Bathsheba that he be married to Abishag. The verses in question are:

So he continued, "Please ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife. "Very well," Bathsheba replied, "I will speak to the king for you." When Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah, the king stood up to meet her, bowed down to her and sat down on his throne. He had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat down at his right hand. (1 Kings 2:17-21)

Somewhat laughably this is a terrible Scriptural precedent for Mary being Queen and Mary making requests on behalf of her supplicants. Adonijah is trying to steal the throne from Solomon and Mary falls into the trap set by him. Solomon not only does not grant his mother's request but berates her for making the request and puts Adonijah to death for making the request and trying to steal his kingship. Thus it seems to me that the illustration of Bathseba is ill chosen as an example for Mary making a request to Jesus. In Bathsheba's request, the request is NOT granted and the supplicant is killed.

Another set of Scriptures are those which say that all believers are kings and priests. The argument goes that since all believers are royalty, Mary is royalty. Some verses supporting this are :

To Him who...has made us kings and priests to His God and Father.... (Rev. 1:6)

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. (1 Pet. 2:9)

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life. (James 1:12)

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:4)

If we endure, we will also reign with Him.... (2 Timothy 2:12)

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne. (Rev. 3:21).

The difficulty with using these verses to support Mary as Queen of Heaven is that these verses apply to each believer in Christ. For instance, if I were to use these verses to claim that my wife who is a believer is a Queen of Heaven, it would probably be considered objectionable by the Church. Instead a good Catholic would rightly call my attention that there is a difference because in my wife's case in that there is no immaculate conception, no sinless life, no Virgin Birth and no assumption into heaven.

Another set of Scriptures utilized by the Catholic Church to support Mary being the Queen of Heaven is the passage in Revelation 12:1-5 which says the following:

A great and wondrous sign appeared in the heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven; an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky

and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

Various interpretations have been given of this imagery found in the Book of Revelation. Some have postured that the woman in this passage represents Israel. Others believe that it represents the church with the stars being the twelve apostles. The Catholic Church, interprets the passage literally and concludes, not unreasonably, that the woman is Mary. It is interesting that in this particular instance, the Catholic Church takes a literal translation whereas Protestants and others are more likely to take a more symbolic translation perhaps due to the fact that the the other entities such as the dragon and stars are symbols for Satan and the angels respectively. All agree that the child is Jesus Christ and that being snatched up to God and his throne refers to the Assumption of Christ.

It is of some interest to me that the passage could have said that the child and the woman (Mary) were snatched up to God and to his throne as well, but in fact the passage only refers to the assumption of Jesus suggesting that the writer had not been apprised of the coming Catholic dogma of the assumption of Mary. The argument may be that at the time Revelation was written the Assumption of Mary had not happened although accounts given by Catholics to the Assumption show that John was present at the Assumption of Mary (assuming the Catholic accounts are correct). At any rate, the Catholic Church takes the Revelation 12 passage literally and states that the passage means that Mary is in heaven notwithstanding the fact that the passage says nothing about the assumption of the woman (Mary).

Ad Caeli Reginam

On October 11, 1954, Pope Pius XII promulgated his encyclical proclaiming Mary as Queen of Heaven. In Paragraph 3 he mentions that in 1950 he had proclaimed the dogma of Mary's Assumption. It is appropriate that he connected the Title of "Queen of Heaven" to his proclamation of the Assumption of Mary because the proclamation of dogma relating to her title is logically connected to his earlier action regarding the Assumption. Pope Pius then recounts the history regarding the use of the title by various fathers and church authorities in Paragraphs 10-25 of his Encyclical.

In Paragraph 14 of the Encyclical, the Pope reminds us of St. Jerome's statement that Mary means "Our Lady in the Syrian language." The Pope also mentions that Mary means "Domina" or the equivalent of lady in Hebrew. Apparently the Pope's conclusion is that because the Angel Gabriel addressed the Virgin as "Mary" the angel and all generations following should address Mary as "Our Lady." In other words, Mary has a royal title because her parents named her "Mary."

In Paragraph 25, the Pope agrees with St. Alphonsus Ligouri that because Jesus is King of Kings it is appropriate for the Catholic Church to address Mary as "Queen."

As is often the case in Encyclicals, there are many "boot-strapping" arguments regarding why Mary should be addressed as "Queen of Heaven" including church songs and hymns. The logic seems to be that the Church has done it informally in the past ; therefore it needs to be a formal dogma of the faith in the present. (See Paragraphs 28-30)

An interesting argument is met in Paragraph 31. In that paragraph, apparently the proclamation of the dogma is justified because it has already been included in the fifth glorious mystery of the Rosary. In short, apparently a short cut to becoming a dogma can be to get the concept included in the meditation practices of the church.

In Paragraph 32, the Pope rightly connects the proclamation of Mary as Queen of Heaven to the Council of Ephesus where Mary was proclaimed as “*Theotokos*” or “God-bearer.” The Council of Ephesus and the proclamation made there is the trunk of the tree regarding the exaltation of Mary and subsequent dogmas regarding Mary grow logically from the proclamation made in Ephesus. In Paragraph 32 the Pope writes the following regarding the iconography which began to appear immediate after the Council of Ephesus:

Finally, art which is based upon Christian principles and is animated by their spirit as something faithfully interpreting the sincere and freely expressed devotion of the faithful, has since the Council of Ephesus portrayed Mary as Queen and Empress seated upon a royal throne adorned with royal insignia, crowned with royal diadem and surrounded by the host of angels and saints in heaven, and ruling not only over nature and its powers but also over the mechanations of Satan.

Litanies and Hymns (Litany of Loreto)

In *Ad Caeli Reginam*, Pope Pius XII discusses the effect that litanies and hymns have had on causing the church to promulgate dogma including the dogma relating to recognizing Mary as Queen of Heaven. (See paragraphs 26-32). In paragraph 32, the Pope mentions the Litany of Loreto.

Litanies in the Catholic Church are a way to worship and praise. When relating to the Virgin Mary, they begin with invoking her name or title then follow by saying “Pray for us.” One of the oldest litanies in the Catholic Church is the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is also known as Litany of Loreto. It would begin with the leader saying “Holy Mary” and the people then saying “Pray for us.” This Marian Litany was approved by Pope Sixtus V in 1587 and has been said there since 1558. Over the years, the Litany of Loreto spread to Catholic Churches in Rome and later around the world.

Over the years, various titles to Mary have been added to the litany and approved by the Church. For instance the term Queen of the Most Holy Rosary which had been around since 1614 was made applicable to the entire Catholic Church in 1883 by Pope Leo XIII. The Title “Queen conceived without original sin” was included in 1843 prior to the approval of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The Title “Queen of Peace” was added in 1916 by Pope Benedict XV. The Titles “Queen Assumed into Heaven” and “Our Lady of Assumption” were added by Pope Pius XII in 1950 in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*.

Today in the Litany, many titles of Mary are said and the people respond “Pray for Us” after each title. Some interesting titles of Mary are : “Tower of David, House of Gold, Ark of the Covenant, Gate of Heaven and Morning Star.” Some of the Queen titles of Mary that are said are: “Queen of Angels, Queen of Patriarchs, Queen of Prophets, Queen of Apostles, Queen of Martyrs, Queen of Confessors, Queen of Virgins, Queen of all Saints, Queen conceived without original sin, Queen assumed into heaven, Queen of the most holy Rosary, Queen of Families and Queen of Peace.”

The use of litanies and hymns (not gone into in this study), causes Mary to be permeated into the Catholic conscience and imagination. The use of Mary in prayer and in contemplation such as the saying of the Ave Maria drills Mary down into the Catholic psyche causing her to be inseparable from the Catholic concept of Christ and the Church. Often the inclusion of titles of Mary into the Litany is a precursor of theological changes or additions to official teaching and dogma. Catholic theology is reflected by the litanies and sometimes forecasts dogma even before it happens at the Papal level. Other Titles of the Virgin can reflect Catholic belief such as “Mother Inviolable,” “Queen Conceived without Original Sin,” “Queen Assumed into Heaven,” and “Queen of the most holy Rosary” reflect the distinctives about Catholic belief.

The ability to include Catholic Distinctives into meditation, contemplation and worship help to cement the hold of the Catholic church on its people and the inclusions of Catholic distinctives.

A good example on how this is done relates to the meditation practices regarding the Twelve Stations of the Cross which includes items not found in Scripture such as the inclusion of the Sixth Station where Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. This is an instance in which a non-Scriptural event is included into meditation practices.

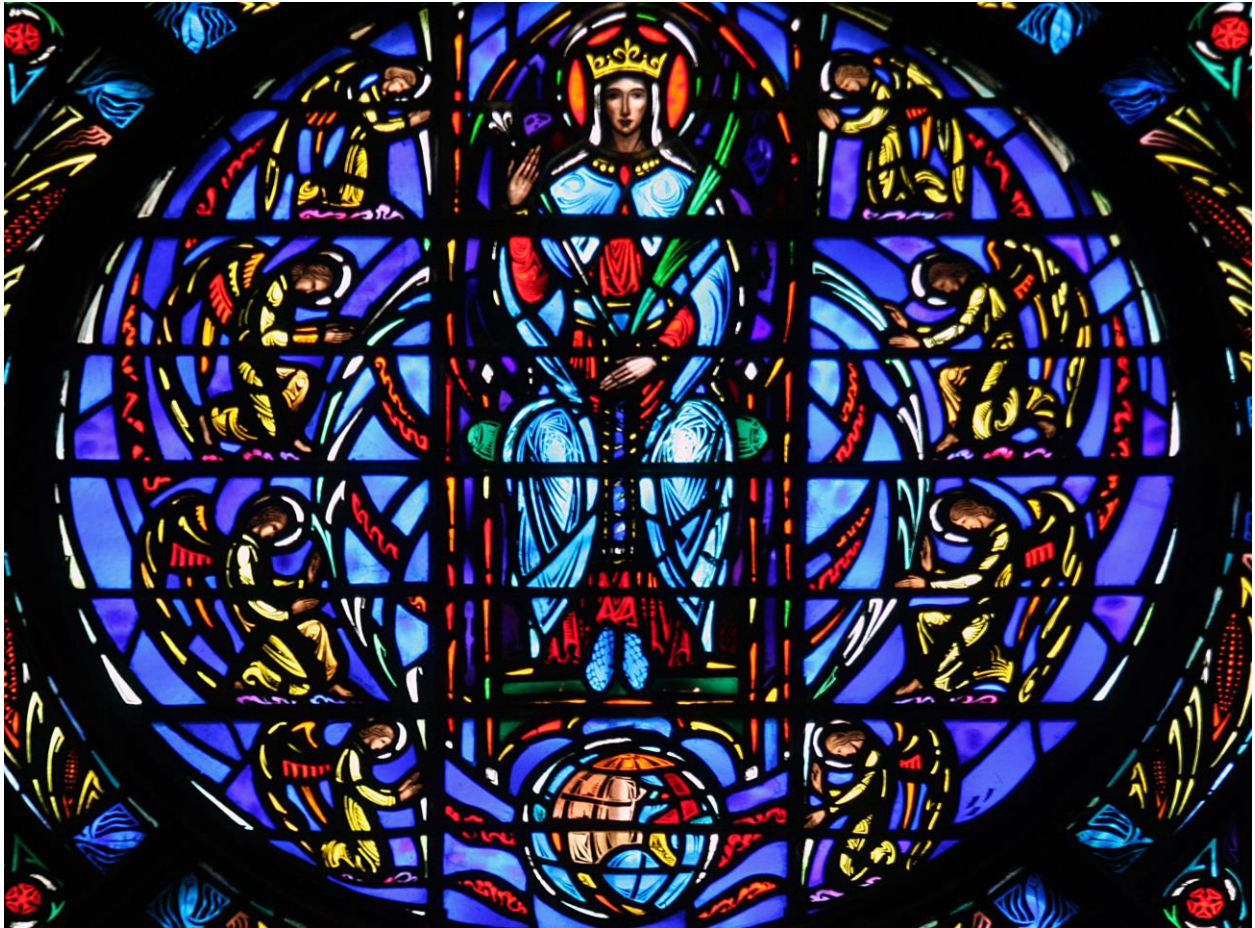
Queen of Heaven Title Used in Some Other Pagan Religions

The Queen of Heaven title has been utilized in connection with a number of pagan deities. We encounter the title in Jeremiah, Chapters 7 and 44 where it is utilized in connection with Asherah who was the Queen of Baal. People worshipped the Queen of Heaven by baking cakes, making drink offerings, burning incense and making Asherah poles.

We have also previously mentioned that the Title “Queen of Heaven” was one of the many titles of Isis, who was an Egyptian goddess and had a mystery religion found at various spots around the Roman Empire.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, it was a short jump of logic to move from Mary as *Theotokos* or “God-bearer” to Mary as Queen of Heaven. The logic of the title is obvious in as much as Jesus is the King of Kings. His mother therefore must be “Queen of Queens.” Mary increasingly became more elevated by being “always virgin” like Jesus and her faithful priests; she became associated with the redemptive and mediator aspects of Christ; she was given titles by theologians such as David’s Tower and Ark of the Covenant; she was considered to be born without sin, living a sinless life like Jesus and she was assumed into heaven like Jesus. It is no wonder in light of all these honors and accomplishments that she would ascend to every exalted title available to the imagination including the title “Queen of Heaven.”



Mary, Queen of Heaven
Cathedral of St. Paul, MN
Sharon Mollerus CCby 2.0

XVII A. Marian Statues
And the Crowning of Mary

Statues in the Catholic Church (None in the Eastern Church)

Various components of the larger Christian Church have come to different conclusions on the appropriateness of use of statues and images of Christ. The issue centers around the Ten

Commandments and the prohibition against making “graven images” found in Exodus 20:4 and Deuteronomy 5:8. Exodus 20:4 says:

You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them, nor serve them.

From a historical standpoint, at first there were few images utilized in the church and most of them were symbolic in nature.

Over time the multiplicity of images increased especially after Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire.

The Roman Catholic Church supported the use of images and some of the justifications for their use will be mentioned below.

The Byzantine and Eastern Churches concluded that flat icons of Christ, Mary and the Saints were acceptable but statues were inappropriate and violated the Old Testament prohibitions. However, at various periods in history the Byzantine Empire and the Eastern Church prohibited even the use of icons for various reasons, including during the years 726-787 A.D. and then again 814-842 A.D. Various reasons for this prohibition include the fact that the icons were idolatrous in that they could not display the true divine nature of Christ but only his human nature. Others have speculated the movement against icons in the East during those periods may have to do something with the incursions of Muslims who strictly prohibited the reproduction of images and the fact that the icons may have provoked God’s judgment because they contravened the prohibitions of the Old Testament. At any rate, the veneration of icons was later reestablished in the East after their prohibitions by the iconoclasts. The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 A.D. (also known as The Seventh Ecumenical Council) supported the use of religious icons.

The end result was that the use of icons in the East was acceptable but statues were not. In the Western Catholic Church, both icons and statues were permissible and even encouraged. The use of large free-standing statues representing Jesus and Mary was at first avoided even in the West apparently because it was reminiscent of the use of Greek and Roman pagan statues which were thought to have demons. Apparently during the Carolingian period the use of larger statues began to appear again.

The justification for the use of statues in the West was extensive. Some of those justifications are as follows:

- Believers do not worship the statues, they simply venerate them and use them as a means of receiving God’s grace.
- God allowed images in certain situations including: Statues of the Golden Cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:18-22); the Cherubim embroidered on the Curtain separating the Most Holy Place (Ex. 26:31); the walls and tents of the Tabernacle had Cherubim on them (Ex. 26:1) and the bronze serpent raised up in the wilderness (Nu. 24:8-9).
- Statues, paintings, stained glass and other art was a way of teaching people who were unable to read the Scriptures.

- St. John of Damascus argued that in effect the Incarnation of Christ permitted the use of images. He wrote: “In other ages God had not been represented in images, being incorporate and faceless. But since God has been seen in the flesh, and lived among men, I represent that part of God which is visible.” (Quoted by Pope Benedict XVI on May 6, 2009 at a General Audience on St. Peter’s Square).

The position of the Catholic Church on the use of images is set forth In Question XXIV of the Catechism of the Council of Trent (Part III, Chapter 1) regarding the use of images in the church which says:

But the pastor will not content himself with merely showing the lawfulness of the use of images in churches, and of paying them honor and respect, since this honour and respect are referred to their prototypes; but he will also show that, up to the present time, this practice has been attended with the greatest advantage to the faithful....He will also instruct the unlearned, and those who are ignorant of the purpose of images, that they are intended to instruct in the history of the Old and New Testaments, and to recall to remembrance the events which they record; and thus excited by the recollection of heavenly things, we may be more intensely inflamed to adore and love God himself. He will also point out that the images of the saints are placed in the churches to be honoured, and also that, admonished by example, we may conform ourselves to their lives and virtues.

During the Reformation, Protestants with a few exceptions such as the Lutherans, generally rejected the use of icons and statues taking almost an iconoclastic view. In Chapter 4 of The Second Helvetic Confession, images of Christ were rejected by the Law and the Prophets. Further Chapter 4 said the following about images of saints:

And since the blessed spirits and saints in heaven, while they lived here on earth, rejected all worship of themselves and condemned images, shall anyone find it likely that the heavenly saints and angels are pleased with their own images before which men kneel, uncover their heads and bestow other honors? But in fact in order to instruct men in religion and to remind them of divine beings and of their salvation, the Lord commanded the preaching of the Gospel—not to paint and to teach the laity by means of pictures. Moreover, he instituted sacraments, but nowhere did he set up images.

The Confession also quoted the statement by Lactantius (240-320 A.D.) which said: “Undoubtedly no religion exists where there is an image.” It also mentioned the actions of Epiphanius who ripped down a veil with a picture of Christ which had been found on the door of a church as being against Scripture. Notwithstanding the views of Protestants on images, it is not unusual to see a picture of Christ at prayer in church or to find churches with an abundance of Stained Glass with images of various Biblical accounts. That being said, outside an occasional Episcopal church, it is very unusual to see representations of Mary in art in Protestant churches or representations of the saints. Unfortunately, Protestants apparently have lost knowledge and contact regarding the great saints of the faith at least of those prior to the Reformation. Having rejected the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church, they apparently also rejected all of the good aspects of Church history prior to the Reformation proving the truth of the aphorism that one should not “throw out the baby with the bath.”

Coronations of Mary and Crowning of Statues of Mary by Popes.

The Catholic Church often says the right things but actual practice differs from the pious platitudes. For instance, the church takes the position that its members do not pray or worship images and that images are just a way to point people to love God better. Yet at the same time that these protestations are made, the church takes such actions as encouraging the parading of statues in processions, the throwing of flowers at statues and the crowning of statues even by the Pope himself.

Although the crowning of images of Mary began as early as the 1600's, the first image of Mary crowned by the pope himself was done in 1782 by Pope Pius VI. The procedure for crowning images is found in the *Ordo Coronandi Imagin Beatae Mariae Virginis* set forth by the Catholic Church in 1981.

There are many images and statues of Mary and Christ which have been crowned by the Pope or his representatives.

In *Ad Caeli Reginam* by Pope Pius XII (1954) he mentions crowning images twice. In Paragraph 4 of that Encyclical he wrote:

It is well known that we have taken advantage of every opportunity-through personal audiences and radio broadcasts-to exhort Our children in Christ to a strong and tender love, as becomes children, for Our most gracious and exalted Mother. On this point it is particular fitting to call to mind the radio message which We addressed to the people of Portugal, when the miraculous image of the Virgin Mary which is venerated at Fatima was being crowned with a golden diadem.

Likewise at Paragraph 33 of that same Encyclical he wrote:

The Roman Pontiffs, favoring such types of popular devotion, have often crowned, either in their own persons, or through representatives, images of the Virgin Mother of God which were already outstanding by reason of public veneration.

It is certainly understandable that the laity might get confused when seeing a statue of Mary crowned. On one hand the Church proclaims that the statue is not to be worshipped. On the other hand people and ecclesiastical authorities kneel, bow, throw flowers and crown the images.



Master of Rubielos de Mora
The Coronation of the Virgin with the Trinity
Circa 1400

XIX. Other Titles of Mary

We have previously discussed some of the titles of Mary including some of the Titles utilized in the Litany of Loreto.

Some of the Titles relate to the dogma of the Catholic Church including:

- Mother of God or *Theotokos* (God –bearer) reflecting the conclusions of the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.
- Virgin Mary, Blessed Virgin, Ever-Virgin and Spouse of the Holy Spirit. The Lateran Council of 649 proclaimed the perpetual virginity of Mary.
- Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, The Immaculate Conception, Queen Conceived without Original sin. (Dogma from *Ineffabilis Deus* proclaimed by Pope Pius IX in 1854 on the Immaculate Conception).
- Our Lady of the Assumption; Queen Assumed into Heaven. These titles resulted from the dogma relating to the Assumption of Mary into heaven proclaimed by Pius XII in 1950 in *Munificentissimus Deus*.

Some other titles given to the Mary by the church fathers included the “New Eve,” “Mary Help of Christians”, “Our Lady, Star of the Sea”, “Most Holy,” “Cause of Our Salvation,” “Most Pure” and a host of other titles.

Other titles of Mary are local titles of Mary or titles which relate to one of her apparitions. Some examples would be :

Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Our Lady of Bethlehem
Our Lady of Chartres
Our Lady of Combermere
Our Lady of Covadonga
Our Lady of Ipswich
Notre-Dame de Liesse
Our Lady of Korattymuthy (India)
Our Lady of Lebanon
Our Lady of Loreto
Our Lady of Manaoag
Our Lady of La Naval de Manila
Our Lady of Nazaré
Our Lady of Peñafrancia
Our Lady of Piat
Our Lady of Porta Vaga
Our Lady of Turumba

Some titles Of Mary relating to apparitions would be:

Our Lady of Akita
Our Lady of Banneux
Our Lady of Beauraing

Our Lady of Fátima
 Our Lady of Good Health
 Our Lady of Good Help
 Mother of the Word (Kibeho)
 Our Lady of Knock
 Our Lady of La Salette
 Our Lady of La Vang
 Our Lady of Lourdes
 Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal
 Our Lady of Mount Carmel
 Our Lady of the Pillar
 Our Lady of the Snows

Other titles of Mary are devotional in nature:

Ark of the Covenant
 Comfort (or Help) of the Afflicted
 Our Lady, Gate of the Dawn
 Holy Mary
 Mother of Mercy
 Mother of Sorrows
 Mother for the Journey
 Mother of the Church
 Mystical Rose
 Our Lady of the Annunciation
 Our Lady of Charity
 Our Lady of Providence
 Our Lady of Ransom
 Our Lady of Solitude
 Our Lady, Star of the Sea
 Queen of All Saints
 Queen of Angels
 Queen of Apostles
 Queen of Confessors
 Queen of Families
 Queen of Martyrs
 Queen of Patriarchs
 Queen of Prophets
 Queen of Virgins
 Queen of the World

In conclusion, titles are important. The Church has seen fit to invest Mary with a host of titles to illustrate her royalty but also to endear her and to make her accessible to people. One has to wonder whether the Church has invested more titles in Mary than it has in Christ. But then following the logic of the church, a title of Mary only leads you love Christ more for when you love Mary, you love Christ.

XVIII. Mary as Patron Saint

The concept of a “patron” saint is interlocked with the concept that saints can pray for you-- both saints who are presently living and those who have died in the faith. These saints would include Mary who, from a Catholic point of view, was assumed into heaven and who was sinless on earth. Mary in particular would have a privileged access to Jesus Christ because she was his mother, is “God-bearer” and “Spouse of the Holy Spirit.”

Some patron saints are appointed by the Pope, others evolve locally; some are associated with professions. Generally a church which is named after a saint will have that saint as a patron saint. Sometimes, individual patron saints come from the name of the saint which is celebrated on the day you were born.

A patron saint generally has a close connection with who you are, where you go to church, or live or is associated with your profession.

The Virgin Mary is considered to a patron of all humanity but she is also particularly close (or a patron of) certain professions, localities, particular dioceses, certain countries and certain Catholic Orders.

Here are a few examples where Mary is considered to be a patroness.

Orders: Benedictines, Brothers Hospitallers of St John of God, Cistercians.

Professions and Workers: Fishmakers, Seafarers (Our Lady, Star of the Sea); Pilots-Our Lady of Loreto.

Countries: Algeria (Our Lady of Africa), China (Mary Help of Christians); India (Our Lady of the Assumption); Korea (the Immaculate Conception).

Towns: (Just a few are named); Austin, Texas; Bismark, North Carolina; Cologne, Germany; Denver, Colorado ; Guadalajara, Jalisco; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Honolulu, Hawaii (Our Lady of Peace); Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (Immaculate Conception); Nashville, Tennessee; Phoenix, Arizona; Reno, Nevada; and Tyler, Texas.

As discussed earlier, Mary is considered to have outstanding access to God and better access than many of the other saints due to her close relationship with Jesus Christ and her privileged position and many titles and positions.

XX. Mary as Part of the Trinity

According to Catholic doctrine, Mary is not part of the Trinity. However, proponents of the dignity of Mary are standing just outside the door and are knocking and seeking entrance. The Trinity consisting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit which is one but has three distinct persons is difficult for us to comprehend and is a mystery. Mary has a relationship with each of the three distinct persons of the Trinity according to Pope Paul II. (See an Article in the Vatican Publication L’Osservatore Romano (in English) for 17 January 1996 at page 11).

According to Pope Paul II, Mary has a unique relationship with each of the members of the Trinity. With the Father, she is the “beloved daughter.” With the Holy Spirit, Mary became the “faithful spouse.” With the Son, Mary became the “Mother of the Son” which “is expressed in Christian doctrine and devotion with the title “Mother of God.”” Thus Mary is the beloved daughter of the Father, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and the Mother of the Son (and *Thotokos* meaning God-bearer.)

This relationship with the Trinity causes Mary to become “an integral part of the economy of communicating the Trinity to mankind.” The Pope Paul goes on to say: “Mary’s privileged relationship with the Trinity therefore confers on her a dignity which far surpasses that of every other creature.” By this I presume that the Pope meant every other creature than Jesus or perhaps he does not consider that Jesus falls into the creature category which would seem to be heretical in that it would deny that Jesus was fully man.

Finally the Pope comments upon the the role that Mary plays in salvation where he writes: “Here we see the authentic meaning of Mary’s privileges and of her extraordinary relationship with the Trinity: their purpose is to enable her to co-operate in the salvation of the human race.” Keep in mind that words like “Co-Redemptorix” do not mean an equal or superior role but really mean, they play a role to some extent or a lesser role or a supporting role.

In conclusion, the fact that Mary has an extraordinary and unique role with each member of the Trinity and a special relationship with each member of the Trinity suggests that at some future time she may be considered as a candidate for joining in the Trinity. Interestingly, man through his relationship with the Bride of Christ, may have the same opportunity to participate in the Trinity due to our conjugal relationship with the Son.

XXI. What is *Hyperdulia*

To the poor Protestant, worship is a relatively simple issue and the issue really revolves around to what degree one worships and to what extent one adores God.

To the Catholic, worship is a much more complex affair with there being different types of worship. At the highest level there is the highest level of worship which in Latin is called *Latria*. *Latria* is adoration and adoration belongs only to the Trinity. The English word utilized to reflect *latria* would be “adoration.” *Latria*, however also is made to the Sacrament of the Eucharist since Christ is actually present in the Eucharist according to paragraph 56 of the Encyclical *Mysterium fidei* by Pope Paul VI (1965).

The next type of honor and worship would be “*hyperdulia*”. *Hyperdulia* is a type of honor given only to the Virgin Mary. It is different in nature than *Latria* discussed above or *dulia* discussed below. It is unique and it goes only to Virgin Mary. It is a “*dulia*” on steroids. The English word to describe “*hyperdulia*” is veneration.

Dulia is an honor and worship which goes to good angels and to Saints. Again, this is a special worship and honor that is rendered to angels and to those determined by the Catholic Church to be worthy of

receiving this honor. The English word to describe *dulia* again is veneration. Therefore, to summarize, one adores God, venerates the saints and really venerates (“*hyperdulia*”) Mary.

Beneath these classifications is the concept of simple honor which is given to people such as to the Pope, the Prelates, the Kings and Queens, to the father by the mother and the children and to the mother by the children.

A detailed discussion of these classes of honor and worship can be found in a writing by Pope Pius XIII entitled “*Latria, Hyperdulia, Dulia and Simple Honor*” dated March 17, 1999.

To make the matter slightly more complex, Pope discusses the differences between absolute honor and relative honor. If honor is rendered directly to a person it is absolute but if it is directed to an image it is relative. Therefore honoring your mother directly is absolute whereas honoring a photograph of your mother is relative. Honoring images of Jesus, Mary, or the Saints is a relative honor.

By utilizing these classifications the Papacy is able to argue that showing veneration to a statue is far different than showing honor to the reality behind that statue or image both in terms of the type of honor and as to whether it is a reflected honor or an absolute honor.

To the Catholic, the various types of distinctions between *latria*, *hyperdulia* and *dulia* are not just distinctions in amount but distinctions in nature. In short, one type of worship is different from the other in nature. To put it another way, you can’t have a whole lot of *hyperdulia* and because of the great amount have it turn into *latria*.

To summarize, the Virgin Mary has her own type of worship and honor which is called *hyperdulia* or super-veneration. The use of distinctions between types of honor helps the Catholic to be able to defend that he or she is not worshipping Mary like they would worship God. It is a different type of worship altogether. Further giving honor to a statue of Mary is not like giving honor to Mary herself in that the honor given to a statue of Mary is a relative honor whereas giving honor to Mary is an absolute honor or worship called veneration. Further giving veneration to Mary is totally different to giving adoration or *latria* to God.

To the Protestant reading this, their heads are probably reeling at the complexity of worship and giving honor which has more distinctions than honor in a Mandarin court.. Further to the Protestant, worship may appear to be a matter of quantity or degrees. Whereas to the Catholic worship is of different types. To the Protestant, there is no problem because they only worship God and obey authorities to the extent that they can do so without conflicting with their obligations to God. They do not need to have different words for worshipping God, Mary and the Saints because they only worship God.

Practically speaking, I am not sure what the indicia would be from the various types of worship apart from the objects of that worship. If the end result it is God, then it must be *latria*. If it is an angel or saint, it must be *dulia*.

The nature of worship like many things in the Catholic Church are complex. The old adage comes to mind about how Catholic Scholastics would debate “how many angels stand on the head of a pin.” Perhaps this is an overstatement, but indeed it was Thomas Aquinas who considered whether seven angels could be at the same place at the same time. (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Edition, Question 52-Angels and Space).

XXII. The Eschatology of Mary and Why it is Important

Eschatology is the study of end things. The study of eschatology is important. For instance, if one believes that Christ will return in the next 30 days, one might choose to discontinue such things as payments for insurance or retirement. In short what we believe about the end times can impact decisions regarding today. The Catholic Church has shown a wise handling of eschatology and has avoided some of the mistakes that others have made probably because of the church's long experience in dealing with eschatological expectations. For instance, the church dealt with many of the issues regarding the question of an immediate return of Christ not only in the first centuries of the faith but also as return expectation increased at the end of the first millennium of Christian history.

One of the many verses regarding the church and the return of Christ is found at Revelation 19:7-8 which states:

Let us be glad and rejoice and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

In the Introduction to *Redemptoris Mater* (1987), Pope John Paul II reminds the reader that Mary is "already the eschatological fulfillment of the Church" and writes as follows: "In the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph. 5:27) and at the same time the Council says that "the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin, so that they raise their eyes to Mary, who shines forth to the whole community of elect as a model of the virtues."

The Pope quotes from the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (1964). Section 65 of *Lumen Gentium* continues: "Piously meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word made man, the Church with reverence enters more intimately into the great mystery of the Incarnation and becomes more and more like her Spouse."

My concerns with the conclusions raised in *Redemptoris Mater* and *Lumen Gentium* is that the Catholic Church has evidently posited Mary as the Lode Star for the church being made ready for the Marriage of the Lamb through her righteous acts. Instead Mary has already through her sinless life and identification with Jesus satisfied the purification of the church. Further the church which is the bride of Christ does not look first to the bridegroom instead is rapt with gazing upon the beauty of the Mother of the Bridegroom seeing in the Mother the reflected light of the Son instead of looking to the Son Himself.

XXIII. Can Marian Dogmas be Reversed (Infallibility)

One almost wonders what the Catholic Church would look like today if it had taken the title "*Christotokos*" (Christ-bearer for Mary. However, that was not what happened. The choice of

"Theotokos" would put a number of conclusions and dogmas in place which flowed naturally from the title selected. Could an ecumenical council ever be wrong or reversed? Both the Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox say every aspect of a true ecumenical council is free of errors. However, iconoclasm was approved at the Council of Hieria in 754 which was participated in by some where between 330-340 bishops. That Council concluded that the painting of icons was of no value and anathema. That being said, both the present day Catholic and Orthodox churches dispute the legitimacy of the Council because none of the five patriarchs attended it. Also a representative of Rome did not attend. Muslims controlled Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria and the patriarchy of Constantinople was vacant. The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 A.D. reauthorized the use of icons. In short, the Catholic Church takes the position that the Ecumenical Councils are without fault; however the Church may dispute whether a certain Council is truly ecumenical if the Catholic Church does not agree with the result.

Making things much more difficult, a Vatican I Dogmatic Constitution entitled *Pastor aeternus*, on the Church of Christ proclaimed the doctrine of Papal Infallibility in 1870. That Dogma, boldly and even brazenly, proclaimed that the Catholic Church had primacy over all of the Christian Churches of the world and that Peter had received the keys to the kingdom of God and those keys were passed down through the bishops of Rome. As the successor to Peter, the pope had the "supreme power of teaching." The promulgation went on to proclaim that when the Pope "speaks EX CATHEDRA, that is, when in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer will his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals."

To summarize, the Pope was preeminent in Christianity and when he spoke on faith or morals EX CATHEDRA he was infallible. The term EX CATHEDRA means from the "Chair" of Peter or the Holy See.

Certainly the promulgation of Papal Infallibility was not in the traditions of humility and footwashing of the disciples. Instead, it clearly stated that the Pope is Numero Uno and when he speaks about dogma, he is infallible and what he says not only is correct, but since it is infallible, it can not be reversed.

However, the Pope must be speaking about faith and morals. Apparently the Pope is speaking EX CATHEDRA if he uses certain language to let you know that he is. Some have stated that the only example of the use of papal infallibility since 1870 is when Pope Pius XII in *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950) proclaimed the Assumption of Mary. At the end of that proclamation, the Pope said: "Hence if anyone, which God forbid should dare willfully to deny or to call into doubt that which We have defined, let him know that he has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic Faith."

Interestingly there is no definitive lists of infallible pronouncements by the Pontiff. Most would agree that Pope Pius IX's pronouncement in 1854 on the dogma of the Immaculate Conception would be an instance of papal infallibility even though it occurred prior to 1870. Various other pronouncements by the Popes have been included by some writers as being "infallible." Then of course then there are

pronouncements regarding the Councils which are considered to be infallible such as the declaration of Mary as “Theotokos.”

Obviously the non-Catholic Christian world has not be excited by the Proclamation of the Dogma of Infallibility and furthermore, there remain some Catholics who are not very excited about it either. There are numerous objections to this papal doctrine but the purpose of this study is not to set forth those objections.

In conclusion, the concept of church councils being infallible (at least certain acceptable church councils) make it difficult to reconsider some of the conclusions reached. For instance the declaration of Mary as *Theotokos* or God-bearer is considered to be infallible and therefore irreversible. All further debate by Catholics is shut down. Moreover, the dogma of Papal Infallibility does exactly the same thing. Once the Pope pronounced that Mary was assumed into heaven, all debate was shut down and there is no room nor procedure to reconsider the issue.

Some of the dogmas regarding Mary including the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption into Heaven of Mary are areas which keep Protestants from reuniting with the church. Other areas such as the dogma of papal infallibility act as a mechanism which forecloses any reapprachment between Eastern Christianity and Roman Catholicism.

In my opinion, there is no realistic possibility that the Marian Dogmas will be reversed or even reconsidered. The Catholic Church, like Julius Caesar, has crossed the Rubicon when it declared itself in certain instances, infallible.

XXIV. The Cult of Mary

There is a great difference in how the non-Catholic and the the Catholic use the word “cult.” To the non-Catholic the word “cult” has a perjorative meaning. One imagines a small religious sect which has peculiar religious beliefs which generally are in error. A cult may use various types of manipulation (religious, psychological, and emotional) to keep its members in order and faithful to the cult.

In Catholicism, if liturgies or prayers are centered about a person, it is called a “cult.” Therefore the term the “cult of Mary” simply means that Mary is honored by a cult or group of people who practice Marian devotions. For instance, Paragraph 66 of *Lumen Gentium* says : “...Mary intervened in the mysteries of Christ and is justly honored by a special cult in the Church.” Moreover paragraph 67 of *Lumens gentium* states that it is the policy of the papacy to encourage the development of that cult. Paragraph 67 reads in part:

This most Holy Snod deliberately teaches this Catholic doctrine and at the same time admonishes all the sons of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety, recommended by the magisterium of the Church toward her in the course of the centuries be made of great moment, and those decrees, which

have been given in early days regarding the cult of images of Christ the Blessed Virgin and the saints, be religiously observed.

In conclusion, the papacy actively promotes the cult of Mary. They encourage Marian liturgies and devotions. Some of the ways which they do this are covered in the next section.

XXV. The Promotion of Mary by the Papacy (Catholic institutions dedicated to promoting Mary)

Imagine if you will, a group of Protestants who said that they were going to dedicate substantial resources to the emphasis of John the Baptist and to baptism by immersion. Suppose they took several thousand people to do things such as to study John the Baptist and all instances in Scripture promoting the possibilities of baptism. Assume they set up colleges particularly for this study, had yearly seminars regarding baptism, and ran numerous periodicals dedicated to the study of John the Baptist and baptism. In fact the entire goal of this group was to make John the Baptist known and to justify and extend the practice of baptism. I use this as an illustration only. Of course there are denominations which prize baptism by immersion such as Baptists, Church of Christ, the Christian Churches and others. However the example I have given above is exactly what is done on behalf of Mary. It is not just devotions which grow by themselves but the cult of Mary is encouraged and promoted by the papacy as a way to drawing men and women to the Catholic Faith, meeting their needs in the Faith and retaining them in the Faith. The propagation of the "cult" (utilized in the Catholic sense) is planned and deliberate.

There are a host of Marian organization and societies concentrating on Mary, her Immaculate Conception and the Rosary. Some of these organizations have members in the thousands and others in the millions. Early groups of priests would include the The Sodality of Our Lady (began in 1563), Marians of the Immaculate Conception (began in 1673), Company of Mary (also known as "Montfort Missionaries and begun in 1705), Marianists (also called the Society of Mary and begun in 1801), and the Marist Brothers (not clerics and begun in 1817).

In the 20th century you have the Schoenstatt Movement begun in Germany, the Legion of Mary formed in Dublin in 1921, the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, the Marian Movement of Priests, America Needs Fatima and numerous other organizations promoting devotions to Mary.

One organization which I will mentioned specifically is the the Mariological Society of America (MSA) which is Catholic society dedicated to studying Marian history and practices and encouraging devotions to Mary. The MSA meets annually and publishes papers regarding Marilogy.

To learn more about organizations promoting Mary you might consult the materials of the University of Dayton in their Religious Studies or see:

<https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/archive.php?tags=Marian%20Organizations,%20Secular%20and%20Religious>

In summary, the promotion of devotions and beliefs regarding Mary by organizations centered about the Virgin Mary are pervasive. These organizations grow not just organically and naturally, but they are carefully nurtured and cultivated by the Catholic Church to increase the growing honor and devotion to Mary.

XXVI. The Marian Apparitions

A Marian apparition is the physical appearance of Mary in the environment. It is different than a vision, dream or a miracle associated with a painting or a statue. The apparition may speak or be silent but generally some type of message or meaning is associated with the appearance.

The apparitions or appearances of Mary have been increasing as her position in the church has been exalted .

The number of apparitions are numerous and the entire topic of apparitions of Mary will hopefully be dealt with by me in a separate article.

Some of the more famous appearances of Mary even known by Protestants would be Our Lady of Guadeloupe in 1531, Our Lady of Lourdes in 1858 and Our Lady of Fatima in 1917.

It is of interest, at least to me, that the great messages to the modern world have come through apparitions of Mary instead of apparitions of Jesus Christ. Some in the Catholic Church believe that this because of the unique position of Mary as mother of the faithful and her unique love of the Church.

From another standpoint, I find it interesting that apparitions (and visions of Mary) are able to imbue life into the Church outside of the Church norms where celibate men seem to be the controlling factor along with long years of dogma and history. Mary sometimes comes as fresh breeze to Catholics renewing their heartstrings of faith. Apparitions and visions of Mary provide an avenue outside of the normal to reinvigorate the faith and dedication of the people to things relating to the heart and to personal repentance and devotion.

In some sense, God may be using the apparitions of Mary for the millions of Catholics in a similar way that he uses prophecy in Pentecostal churches. Both Catholics and Protestants have structures and beliefs which overtime become ossified. God may open our strictures by unusual means. In the case of personal prophecy and the Marian apparition or vision, those in charge of the religious structure must have a means of testing the prophecy or the apparition. In the case of the prophetic, many Pentecostals have done this by means of testing the prophecies by having them reviewed and tested by other prophets. Sometimes prophecies or personal revelations are tested by the pastor of the church. In all cases the prophecies can not be contrary to the written word of God as found in Scripture. Likewise apparitions have to be tested by the Catholic Church as well before they are definitively accepted.

The Catholic Church reviews many alleged apparitions but only accepts a small percentage of them. The Catholic Church has guidelines known as *Normae Congratationis* or "*Norms of the Congregation for Proceeding in Judging Alleged Apparitions and Revelations.*" The testing can be done by the bishop or a national episcopal conference or by the Papacy. Numerous tests are run to validate the apparition or vision. Some of these tests go to the integrity of the person or persons seeing the apparition or vision, the fruits from the apparition, the theological message of the apparition and whether miracles validate the apparition.

In conclusion for purposes of this article, it is important to know that the apparitions of Mary may be more numerous and more well known than the apparitions of Christ in calling the world to repentance

in these last days at least from the Catholic environment. Also it is indeed possible that God may use the apparitions as a means of calling Catholics to personal faith and repentance in these last days in a manner which does not run through strict Catholic structure and dogma. In short there seems to be an outreach to the heart as opposed to a more formalistic, legalistic, and learned approaches to Christ through dogma and church teaching.

Mary is a wild horse, which the Church has empowered and now the church must ride and try to tame to keep it under control through the testing and control of the apparitions. At the same time, Protestants should be generous and realize that God loves the Catholic people and may indeed be trying to reach them and touch their hearts in a way which is unfamiliar to Protestants and sometimes even suspicious to Protestants.



Virgin of Guadalupe

XXVII. The Business of Mary

Mary is big business. This is just a fact of life. Jews made money by selling doves and doing money changing in the temple (Jesus did not like this). The silversmiths of Ephesus made money by making images and statues of Diana. Protestants make money by having Christian Book stores, selling religious music, and doing tours of the Holy Land. Innumerable Protestants make money through publishing, home schooling, seminars, t-shirts, bumper stickers and religious paraphernalia. There are also many people holding jobs and professions which are somehow connected to religion. In short, it is not unusual for money making activities to gravitate to any religious enterprise or activity. This is also true in connection with the Catholic Church and its devotion to Mary. Some business opportunities accrue to the church; others do not and are made by individuals utilizing beliefs as a way of making money for themselves.

For instance, just the tour and pilgrimage business to the Marian Shrines are big business. Two of the most popular shrines would be Lourdes and Fatima. Lourdes has had over 200 million visitors since 1860 and currently has six million visitors per year. Lourdes has the second largest numbers of hotels in France with Paris having the largest number of hotels. In addition there are about five million visitors to Fatima, Portugal each year in connection with Our Lady of Fatima. The pilgrimage business generates travel, hotel/motel, food and souvenir business. There are many other Shrines to Mary where pilgrims visit but Lourdes and Fatima would be two of the biggest.

Other businesses and products generated by Marian devotion would be the manufacture, sale and donation of Rosaries, religious scapulars, religious medals, candles, statues, figurines and images of Mary, books, jewelry, holy water and many other products. Some surprising products include masks to protect from germs with pictures and symbols of Mary, night lights, fountains and yard ornaments and even throw pillows and coverlets.

Finally, it should be mentioned that many people are employed in businesses relating to Mary and devotions to Mary. These people are paid salaries and wages.

The purpose of discussing the business of Mary is not to imply that there is anything wrong with it. However it should be remembered that are economic as well as religious reasons supporting an increased devotion to Mary and the the value from a locality standpoint of Marian apparitions. Further there is a vested interest in keeping things pretty much the same from a devotional standpoint. Increasing devotion may ultimately result in additional economic revenue whereas decreased devotion is not in the best interest of providers of services and products to the Marian industry anymore than they were to the silversmiths of Ephesus.

XXVIII. Conclusion

Part A. Chart

The following chart will illustrate how Mary became a miniature of Jesus:

Jesus-Mary Comparison Chart

JESUS	MARY
1. Son of God	1. God-bearer (Theotokos)
2. Incarnation-Born without sin	2. Immaculate Conception –born without sin
3. Ever-Virgin	3. Ever-Virgin
4. Lived a sinless life	4. Lived a sinless life
5. New Adam	5. New Eve
6. Resurrection of Jesus	6. Greek Orthodox-Mary died or fell asleep (dormition) and was resurrected three days later. Catholic—Some believe Mary died and was resurrected and was assumed; others believe she never died and was assumed.
7. Assumption of Jesus	7. Assumption of Mary
8. Grace for Salvation	8. Full of Grace
9. The Intercessory Work of Jesus Jesus is Mediator	9. Mary intercedes with Jesus Mary is Co-Mediatrix
10. The Lord's Prayer	10. The Ave Maria and The Rosary
11. Jesus is the Redeemer	11. Mary is Co-Redemptrix
12. The Sacred Heart of Jesus	12. The Immaculate Heart of Mary
13. Jesus is the Man of Sorrows	13. The Seven Sorrows of Mary
14. The Five Wounds of Jesus	14. The Seven Wounds of Mary
15. Jesus, King of Heaven and Earth	15. Mary as Queen of Heaven
16. Jesus as a Part of the Trinity	16. Mary has a special relationship with each member of the Trinity. God-Daughter Jesus-Mother Holy Spirit-spouse

Part B. Conclusion

Mary's importance to the church increased significantly from the first years of Christianity. During the first centuries of the church, the church fathers and priests moved into the direction of celibacy. Sex

was considered to be of the flesh and ultimately sinful unless it was for the purpose of procreation. Even then, based upon the example of Jesus and the teachings of Paul, celibacy was considered to be preferable. Gradually over church history, the married priesthood was extinguished. The priesthood was bereft of the love, counsel and wisdom of female partners in marriage.

Notwithstanding the view of the priests and writers, many had an appreciation of chaste womanhood which was illustrated in many cases by the righteous mothers which many of the priests had. In addition, the celibates appreciated the love, care and protection of their mothers. In fact the connection of children and their mothers are profound, even children who grow up to become chaste priests. Most of the time the first word of a child is that of mother who provides both food and protection for the child. Priests wanted a female presence in their life but that mother needed to be a mother without sex, without sin, and without fault who could protect them. That mother was Mary and love for her ran deep and was primal in nature.

As I have discussed previously, in God is a mixture of male and female attributes. In the male and female, the attributes of God are manifested. A society or religion which strictly excludes the attributes and blessings of male or female by focusing upon one gets out of balance. As the church became focused upon the attributes of male celibacy, it became out of balance. Within the parameters that man had set, God utilized Mary as a way of seeking to bring the church back into balance. Mary and the female virtues of Mary became both permissible and even greatly loved and appreciated by Catholics and helped to bring back some of the balance direly needed as a result of the church's historical choices and direction.

Mary became a type of can opener so to speak opening up the closed circle of male dominance in the Catholic Church. Ultimately we know that God loves all those who follow him regardless of whether they are male or female. As Paul said in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The role of the male priesthood in the Old Testament and in the New Testament (through the example of the Old Testament) are matters of the law and not grace. The Church has fallen into the trap of being legalistic and forgetting that Jesus looks on the heart. We have looked to people's gender for our decisions on leadership not on the heart of each individual. We have squelched the Deborah's in our church and have granted true freedom only to one woman, who is Mary, the mother of Jesus. When we come to Christ, we are no longer bound to the law as Paul wrote in Galatians 3. Instead we through Jesus are now the children of freedom. In a similar situation when Peter saw that the Holy Spirit had fallen on the Gentiles he said at Acts 10:34: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." God with the eyes of grace sees through our legalistic barriers of Jew and Gentile, slave and free and male and female. He looks upon the individual heart.

God's Holy Spirit has touched many people both within and without the Catholic, Eastern and Protestant Churches and he touches both men and women. He is not a discriminator of persons as Peter the Head the confessed head of the Catholic Church said, but instead God looks upon the heart. The revelation of to Peter and to Paul of God's piercing through of these legalistic barriers have been lost not only to the Catholic Church but to the Eastern Church and to the Protestant Churches as well.

The Catholic Church by heaping titles upon Mary and honoring her as blessed among women in one sense seeks to honor all women who are obedient to Christ.

In Luke 11:27-28 this is written:

As Jesus was saying those things, a woman in the crowd called out
 "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." He replied,
 "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and who obey it."

God took a simple, young and humble girl who said "Yes" to God to be mother of the Incarnated Word of God, Jesus Christ. God proclaimed her as favored and blessed among women."

God's pronouncement that Mary was blessed among women is true. All of the titles given by the world and by the Church will never eclipse the honor of being the Mother of Christ. However, the church at the same time that it proclaimed Mary as blessed relegated women to spiritual second class citizens. Mary they freed; the other women they continued to enslave and see as temptresses and as Liliths as opposed to Second Eves. Women only had value to the extent that they gave birth to sons. Women were stricken from serving as priests of God despite the fact that Christ had elevated them to being not only children of God but being priests and kings through His blood sacrifice. Meanwhile, the church almost in an apology for instituting celibacy, awarded Mary divine titles and royal robes of righteous. It treated Mary almost as a female Christ making her even a Co-(but lesser) Redemptrix.

However, God continues to find ways to speak to His people. Meanwhile, Catholics elevated Mary to the highest positions and even to positions far, far higher than the positions given by the original church of the First Century, which had known the real Mary. Mary was not only crowned with honors by the Church but as one of the saints she was incorporated into the many devotional practices of the Church including through prayers to Mary, invocations, meditations and litanies. The result is that the emphasis on Mary has almost outstripped the devotion of the Church to Christ even if the theology of the Catholic Church makes it clear that Mary is always subordinate to Christ. However in devotional practices, I dare say that the love of Mary is more a driver in Catholic devotional and theological practices than is Jesus Christ. In fact one might wonder whether the extreme exaltation and devotion to Mary would be pleasing to Mary or to Christ himself.

The Roman Church not hearing the original words of Christ regarding Mary, instead encrusted those words as well as his cross with gold and jewels. Notwithstanding this, God used the promotion of Mary to His own benefit. Perhaps it is possible that God is speaking in His mercy to the common people of the Catholic Church (as opposed to its scholastic theologians) through prophecies, dreams, visions and apparitions of the Virgin. Could God would even creatively use the dogma and the awards of the Catholic Church to speak to the millions of Catholics in a way outside of the papacy, the councils and the priests? Perhaps it is possible that God through His Holy Spirit is speaking to millions of people through these spiritual phenomena in a language which they can understand and is using Mary to breath new life into an old and venerable institution which has been encrusted by a combination of wealth and years of tradition.