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And the Virgin's Name Was Mary

By Dr. H. T. Spence, President: Foundations Bible College

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The revival of Romanism in our times initially can be attributed to the modernistic changes that took place in Vatican II in the early 1960s and to the medium of the Charismatic movement in the early 1970s. One of the side effects of Romanism's revival is the popularizing of their subtle, anti-biblical presentation of the virgin Mary. This Romanist picture of the virgin Mary is fast becoming a prominent belief among Protestants.

The Legends of some Concerning the Virgin Mary

Traveling throughout Europe as well as Central and South America, one discovers the true powers of Rome and the overwhelming influence of Rome's Virgin Mary upon the people. Out of 433 Roman Catholic churches and chapels in the city of Rome today, 121 are dedicated to Mary while only 15 are dedicated to Christ. Already this season a number of priests have pressed for a prominent use of the phrase "Mary Christmas."

The following list includes a few titles bestowed upon Mary by the Romanists:

1. Most Holy Mary
2. Virgin, Mother of God
3. Mother of the Word Incarnate
4. Mother of Mercy
5. Queen of Heaven
6. Advocate of Sinners
7. Dispenser of Divine Grace
8. Queen of the Angels
9. Queen of the Apostles
10. Door of Heaven and Intercessor
11. Mary, Mother of America
12. Mother of the United Nations
13. Mother of the Atomic Age
14. Our Lady of Television

Throughout the centuries the Roman Catholic Church has declared several dogmas about Mary based upon "tradition" and has believed each to be co-equal with the Scriptures. The "Dogma of the Perpetual Virginity" holds that Mary had no other children after the birth of Jesus. This dogma asserts that the virginity of Mary was never destroyed during or after the birth of Jesus, so that she remained a virgin till she died. The "Dogma of the Immaculate Conception" of Mary asserts that she was spared from all stain of original sin. The basis of this dogma is taken from another gospel of Matthew (a pseudo gospel different from the one in the New Testament) and another book of James (again, different from the one in the New Testament). These books were supposedly written in the second and third centuries. In these books the reputed parents Joakim and Anna supposedly conceived Mary during a time of embrace at the Golden Gate in Jerusalem.

In 1950 Pope Pius XII declared that Mary, rather than experiencing permanent death, bodily ascended into heaven as disciples gathered around her and Jesus and Gabriel met her in the air. In 1954 Pope Pius declared her the "Queen of Heaven." Pope John Paul II has declared her to be the Co-Mediatrix with Christ and the Co-Redemptrix.

Mary has been given special veneration by the Romanist system. In their writings God is to be given latria, or



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full adoration; saints are to be given *dulia*, or veneration; but Mary is to be given *hyperdulia*, being declared next to God in adoration. It is clearly evident in other writings of Rome that Mary is as great as Jesus Christ; certain writings even glorify her more than Christ. One of the most influential books written for Romanism is *The Glories of Mary* by Cardinal Alphonse de Liqouri, a celebrated, devotional writer of the Roman Catholic Church. This book is a clear declaration of Rome's view of Mary:

1. Mary is the Mediatress of peace between sinners and God, sinners receiving pardon by Mary alone.
2. She is acknowledged as not only the Queen of Heaven but also the Queen of Hell, and Sovereign Mistress of the Devils.
3. She is called the Gate of Heaven because no man can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through Her.
4. All power is given to her in Heaven and on earth; God has placed the whole Church under the domination of Mary.
5. The book implies that mankind often more quickly obtains what it asks by calling on the name of Mary, than by invoking that of Jesus.
6. The following is stated in this work: "The whole Trinity, O Mary, gave thee a name . . . above every other name, that at Thy name, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (p. 260).

The acclaimed power of Mary has been increasing over the centuries by constant propaganda of the Romanist Church to its people. She has become the greatest figure of history. Her Romanist myth is instilled early among children. On February 6th the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of Purification, in which each young girl is asked to lay a lily at the feet of the Virgin Mary's statue and say, "Mary I give you the lily of my heart; be thou its guardian forever." They also wear blue ribbons as a sign that they are of Mary and have dedicated themselves to the Virgin (who is the culmination of womanhood). The blue ribbon associates these girls with the color of the virgin Mary. Even the poet Dante spoke of Mary as one "who turns all of heaven blue."

A title that originated in the Council of Ephesus (a.d. 431) was *theotokos*; the term eventually came to indicate the "Mother of God." Amidst the controversy during those years of whether Jesus was very God of very God and very man of very man, the term *theotokos* was after some time placed with emphasis upon Mary herself. She was believed to be the Mother of our Lord's deity; because she brought Him into existence, she was therefore greater than He. The Roman Catholic Church believes Christ "comes to us through Mary, and we must go to Him through her."

The Virgin Mary of the Scriptures

Although the only title given to Mary in Scripture is the "mother of Jesus," Jesus never called Mary "mother"; He chose to use the term woman instead. Mary is mentioned five times in the Gospel of Matthew: three times in the context with Joseph, one time as "Mary and the child" as the wise men came to visit, and one time in Matthew 13: "Is not his mother called Mary?" In the Gospel of Mark she is mentioned twice (3:32 and 6:3). The Gospel of Luke mentions her twelve times by name, all in the first two chapters in the context of Christ's birth. John's Gospel, which is the last Gospel to have been written, acknowledges two appearances of Mary (at the marriage of Cana and at the Cross) but never by name. In Acts 1:14 Mary is mentioned as being in the upper room. After this acknowledgment she is never mentioned again in the New Testament.

Almost every mentioning of Mary in the New Testament is in a subordinate position. In John 2 Christ responded to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." Although His answer was neither harsh nor disrespectful, He maintained some reserve and distance in addressing her. Mark 3 states, "Thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee." Luke 11:27, 28 state, "Blessed is the



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womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." Christ's response to such praise of His mother was "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." When Christ was in agony on the Cross He showed His filial respect by providing a home for her with John ("Behold, thy mother"). There was no special honor given to her, but simple, earthly duty.

It is a tragedy that the Roman Catholic Church symbolizes John at the Cross as humanity and Mary as the mother of humanity, the second Eve. It is clearly evident in the Gospels that when the lame, blind, and deaf wanted healing, they always asked Jesus, never His mother. The dying thief requested forgiveness of Jesus, not of His mother who was at the foot of the Cross. After the resurrection, as far as the Bible is concerned, Jesus never appeared to His mother during those forty days; there were other Marys to which He did appear during those days, but His mother is never mentioned. The final view of Mary in the Bible is in Acts 1 when she is in the upper room; the disciples are not praying to her, but to God.

The biblicist must be strong against the deification of such a mortal. By the time of Revelation 5, when John is looking throughout heaven for one who is "worthy" to open the book found in the hand of God the Father, Mary is there, Paul is there, Peter is there, and a multitude of others are there. However, John wept much because no one was found worthy to take the book sealed with seven seals. Yes, not even Mary was worthy. Nonetheless, within the Throne there was One Who was worthy: it was the Lamb, Christ Jesus Himself! This scene in the heaven of heavens sealed the testimony once and for all who was truly the One of Worth in Heaven!

"Hail, Thou That Art Highly Favoured"

Amidst our strong stand against the Roman Catholic Church's presentation of an unbiblical view of the Virgin Mary, we as true Christians must render to her the appropriate honor which the Scriptures do give her. "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28); "And she [Elisabeth] spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (1:42); and, "For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (1:48).

The phrase "highly favoured" in Luke 1:28 has been used by Romanists to support their doctrine which speaks of Mary as being "full of Grace." This phrase in the Greek is *charitoo*, meaning endowed with grace (*charis*). Although endowed with grace, Mary is not the fountain of grace that flows to humanity. To the contrary, the Greek word is a perfect, passive participle, revealing that Mary was given grace by God. The passive voice proclaims Mary is only the recipient of grace, not its origin. The perfect tense informs us that not only was there a beginning to her receiving this grace in her heart, but also it had continued until the time the angel spoke to her.

Mary must be viewed with deep respect. Christians should acknowledge her unique character not only for her generation but also for any generation. Let us note these characteristics.

1. She was a chaste girl. Often occupied by licentious Roman soldiers, Nazareth at that time was known for its immorality. Nathanael stated in John 1:46, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Even in our times fornication has become a master sin; the pure are in the minority. It is rare to find a young lady who does not have loose behavior before and even after marriage. Mary is truly an example of purity for us all.
2. She was a submissive girl. After the most unusual announcement from the angel, Mary simply responded, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). Unlike Moses she did not respond "I cannot." She did not bring up any inadequacies of training or experience. She did not even bring up the potential loss of Joseph as her husband. The Lord was truly first in her life!
3. The Scripture saturated her soul. It is evident from her words beginning in Luke 1:46 that she was thoroughly acquainted with the Old Testament. She quotes from I Samuel, Psalms, Isaiah, Micah, and Exodus. She concluded with the words, "As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever"



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(verse 55). God could have given immediate inspiration for these passages, but it is more probable that the Holy Spirit inspired her heart with words she had meditated upon since the annunciation.

4. She was a keeper of secrets. We read of this in Luke 2:19 and 51. We do not read of her bragging or boasting about her appointment in the plan of God. People tend to talk, gossip, and brag. But Mary possessed rare grace which enabled her to control her tongue.
5. She was a sufferer for righteousness' sake. Her reputation was at stake; questions of wondering, no doubt, entered the minds of Joseph, her parents, brethren, and even later, the Jews. Perhaps this is part of what Simeon meant in Luke 2:35, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." In John 8:41, the leaders cried, "We be not born of fornication." Was the rumor still circulating when Jesus was in His prime ministry? Only eternity can reveal what she went through in suffering for righteousness' sake.
6. She sacrificed her Son. Mary was there at the Cross the day the people crucified her Son. We read of no cry in His defense; she was willing to let Him die. What a great example to other mothers: to be willing to sacrifice their children to God and His will! Her sacrifice reminds us of the story that took place at the turn of the twentieth century when three young men went to the mission field and established the Sudan Interior Mission. After two of the men died of disease in inland Africa, Roland Bingham, the surviving founder, brought the remains of one of the young men home. When Roland gave the remains to the mother, she responded, "Well, Mr. Bingham, I would rather have had Walter go out to the Sudan and die there, all alone, than have him home today disobeying his Lord." That was Mary's heart for her Son.

Conclusion

Mary was a sinner and she needed a Saviour! The question may be asked if she knew who her child really was. The answer may be found in three passages of Scripture. Luke 1:31 states, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus [Jehovah is salvation]"; Luke 1:32 states, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David"; Luke 1:35 states, "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Mary acknowledged in Luke 1:47, that God was her Saviour. She gloried more in that happiness which she had in common with all believers than in being Jesus' mother.

Mary was chosen by God as a vessel to be used. But her Son obscures her in praise. Let us find ourselves so yielded to the Spirit of God that we will be used, yet with all the glory and honor being rendered to our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.