

## The Marian Dogmas

As we study the Marian dogmas, we find ourselves in an area defined primarily by speculation. The amount of scriptural information regarding Mary is very limited. In order to get to the conclusions the RCC does, a vigorous imagination unlimited by any norms of interpretation is required. The principles of context, where one part of scripture is compared with another are discarded. The original language of scripture is ignored in favor of a less accurate translation which serves the RCC's purpose.

The first dogma is the Perpetual Virginity of Mary. While all Christians are well aware of her virginity at birth, no scripture states that she remained so after. In fact, the account in Matthew 1 (Q1), when read most naturally, implies that after Jesus birth, Joseph and Mary assumed a normal married sexual life. Joseph was told of Mary's pregnancy "before they came together", and he kept her a virgin "until" Jesus was born. The RCC denial of the obvious requires verbal gymnastics which we will see again shortly.

Throughout the gospels we see multiple references to Jesus' "brothers" (Q2). One even mentions his "sisters". These texts, taken in their natural reading, implies that Mary was the mother of an ordinary Jewish family. The RCC insists that this natural reading is incorrect. They correctly state that Hebrew does not have separate terms for "brother" and "kinsman" (or cousin). Therefore, the "brothers" are really cousins, and Mary was a virgin forever. Unfortunately for the RCC, the gospels were all written in Greek, and Greek does have separate terms for "brother" and "cousin". In order for the RCC interpretation to hold, it must deny the inspiration of the gospel writers. No other possibility exists. Of course, to deny inspiration would be to deny the canonicity of the gospels, and without them, Mary essentially disappears.

We may also confirm the fact that Jesus had siblings by looking at other near contemporary writings. Early church fathers Irenaeus and Origen both confirm the presence of Jesus' natural brothers (Q3). Even this, however, is unimportant in the gospel plan, since the continued virginity (Q4) of Mary is irrelevant to Jesus ministry, either on earth or in heaven. Perpetual virginity's only purpose is to serve as a foundation stone for further Marian dogmas.

It is worth tracing a bit of the history of the dogma. The earliest hints of the idea are found in second and third century gnostic tainted writings such as the "Ascension of Isaiah" and the "Odes of Solomon". Tertullian, a second century historian, discounts such notions by noting that Mary had children (plural). The early church fathers were not to be denied. Ambrose used an allegorical interpretation of Ezek 44:1-3 to support perpetual virginity. The issue was not settled for centuries, but when it was, warped tradition overruled scripture.

The dogma of the immaculate conception states that Mary was born without original sin, and that she remained free of sin throughout her life. This is built upon the perpetual virginity theory, and expands it to be a foundation for the next dogmas. The Bible states that Mary was of the house of David. Being human, it is proper to expect that she was as sinful in nature as anyone else (Q5). In truth, there is no Biblical statement which would lead us to think of her as sinless. Yet the RCC takes the statement by Mary in Luke 1:48 "from this time on all generations will count me blessed" (Q6) as an indication of Mary's unique status with regard to sin. They overlook the obvious fact that being the mother of the savior was an incredible blessing, and fully accounts for the statement. In verse 48, she gives an indication of her true status by declaring herself a "bondslave", or a person voluntarily in slavery to a master. Elizabeth's statements in verses 42-45 (Q7) about Mary being blessed naturally refer to her receiving a blessing at that time, not at the time of her birth.

Gabriel makes a similar statement (Q8) when he greets Mary as "favored one". The Greek indicates the granting of a favor at that time, not at Mary's birth. For comparison, we note that Gabriel greeted Daniel with the equivalent Hebrew expression in Dan 9:23 and 10:11. Christians are called by the same Greek expression in Matt 25:34. Yet in neither of these cases do we find the RCC declaring those persons to be free of original sin. Since they are not free of original sin, there must be some scriptural identification of Mary which allows her to be regarded as sinless, and none can be found. In fact, Mary herself denies sinlessness (Q9) when she declares that her son would be her "savior". Unless Mary had sin, she had no need of a savior!

Paul concludes our evaluation of the immaculate conception by denying it outright (Q10). He declares that "all" (no exceptions other than Christ) have sinned. Since Paul defines Christ as sinless, he must declare Mary to be so if it were to be true, but he does not. Only one conclusion is possible: Mary sinned.

To conclude this dogma, let us consider its history. The early church had no thought of sinlessness for Mary. In fact, Leo I ("The Great", Bishop of Rome from 440-461) adamantly denied the idea that anyone other than Christ was sinless. (So much for the church never changing anything!) In fact, Popes Gregory I, Innocent III, Gelasius I, Innocent V, John XXII, and Clement VI ALL denied the immaculate conception. This actually followed the pattern set by Augustine. In the twelfth century, the British monk Eadmer proposed the idea. It was immediately rejected. Yet, once the seed was planted, it grew. A totally unscriptural idea eventually became dogma "divinely revealed", in contradiction to the divinely inspired truth.

The dogma of Mary as mother of God seems simple. And its sheer simplicity is the source of its error. The RCC puts the elements together this way. Jesus is God, and Mary is the mother of Jesus. Therefore, Mary is the mother of God. This conclusion is incorrect. While Mary was the mother of the incarnate Jesus, she was NOT the mother of God. After all, (Q11) Jesus created this world (John 1:1-3, 14) and existed "from everlasting unto everlasting" (Psalm 90:2). God has no beginning or end, and has no mother. Mary was just one of us who was granted a special privilege.

Unfortunately, the RCC, once it has the ball moving, runs hard with it. The next step is that, since she was "overshadowed by the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:35) and was a perpetual virgin, Mary is the "spouse of the Holy Spirit". No, I'm not making this stuff up! Also, since Jesus is a king (John 18:37), Mary must be a queen. Since Jesus is the King of the Universe, the Mary is the Queen of the Universe. You can see how a little speculation goes a long way. Now we have Mary in a position of authority in heaven. (True, we haven't gotten her there, but the dogma of the assumption will take care of that.)

As Queen of the Universe, Mary is regarded as worthy of worship and praise. But the RCC gets very careful at this point. They separate worship into two levels, the lesser of which is called "veneration", described by the Latin word "*dulia*". Mary is given "*hyperdulia*", a term used to describe that adoration which is extreme, but just shy of true worship. Unfortunately, Catholics bow down to Mary's statues and pray to her. That is worship (Q12) as defined by the second commandment. In fact, (Q13), the Vulgate, which is the official RCC source Bible, translates the second commandment as saying that we should not give "*dulia*" to anyone other than God. It uses *latria* and *dulia* interchangeably. So the worship of Mary is in fact true worship. The RCC has proposed a distinction without a difference. An additional point on the second commandment is worth noting. The text says that God requires us not to have any other gods "before Him". The Hebrew word used here "*paniym*" means "in the presence of". God is saying that we are to have no other gods in His presence. Since God's presence is everywhere, this is an absolute prohibition on other gods.

The RCC claims that all of the power and prerogatives they claim for Mary do not make her a God. Yet, in John 10:33 (Q14), we find that assuming the prerogatives of God is blasphemy, whether you claim to be God or not. The RCC actually places Mary HIGHER than God by requiring the faithful to go to her, rather than to Him.

The motivation for all this is simple. The RCC paints Jesus as a spiteful, vindictive judge. He is waiting for some poor sinner to cross Him and be struck down. Mary is the kindly mother who keeps her temperamental son from destroying everyone in fits of pique (Q15). But it only takes us a brief look to find a host of scriptural statements to show how patient and loving God is (Q16). This leads one to wonder why Catholics don't know this. We can only speculate, but it is a fact that Bible possession and study are not encouraged at all in the RCC. If Catholics were to study, they would quickly learn that our Savior was tempted like we were (Q17), understands our plight, and stands ready to help when we come to him. He lives to be our intercessor. The RCC tries to insert Mary between Christ and man, stating that the awesome majesty of God requires an intercessor with the intercessor. This subterfuge is flatly denied by Paul (Q18) when he states that there is ONLY one intercessor between God and man.

The dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary states that Mary was taken into heaven. This is obviously necessary for her to do all the things she is said to do. Unfortunately, there is not the slightest shred of scriptural evidence for this. We should take the advice of Isaiah 8:20 and reject such a teaching.

Mary as Co-Redemptrix (Co-Redeemer), is stated in a host of official RCC dogmas. The only thing missing is the actual declaration of the title. In order to support the statement that Mary shared equally with Christ in the cross, the RCC begins with Gen 3:15 (Q20). Since this text clearly states that Eve's offspring (many generations removed, Jesus) would defeat Satan, the RCC has to deliberately mistranslate the Hebrew to make it say that the woman would win the victory. This still is of no help, since the woman in view is Eve, not Mary. So the RCC has to make this an allegorical passage pointing to Eve. Then they are able to say that Eve "crushed the evil serpent's head with her immaculate foot", a clause

seen in numerous RCC publications.

Simeon's statement in Luke 2:34-35 (Q21) is often used to say that Mary would share in the cross. But we should note that the comment that "a sword will pierce even your own soul" is a parenthetical statement. It is not the primary thought. Simeon's focus is on Jesus and His mission. The comment about Mary is added to show that she will suffer pain as a result of Jesus' mission. It is not connected directly with the task of redemption, and cannot be used to support the idea that Mary had an integral part of the process other than being Jesus' mother. It is worth noting that no NT writer ever makes a statement which can be said to plainly indicate such a role for Mary.

Subsidiary comments by the RCC make it clear that they require a sinner to call on Mary for all assistance, and that "all graces flow through Mary". In other words, even though protestations are made to the contrary, they have made Mary into God, giving her all of His prerogatives. As we discussed earlier, this is just as much blasphemy as claiming to be God. This act of setting Mary up to be God is an act of idolatry prohibited by the second commandment (Q22).

So how should we tackle the problem (Q23) of bringing Catholics to the truth? It is of little help to show how they are incorrect. This will seem to be an attack, and they will defend themselves vigorously. In such a situation, no one wins. In fact, it is possible to drive them away. I propose that we should show the marvelous glory of the one true God. His mercy to us through the cross (Titus 3:3-7) saved us in our sin without any help on our part. We should then come boldly to Him for help (Heb 4:15-16), since He knows our struggles. Finally, there is no other name under heaven (Acts 4:10-12) that can save us. When the Catholic realizes that Jesus did it ALL, Mary will disappear. Only the glory of the cross will remain.