

Why Don't We Pray to Mary and the Saints? (Part One)

Chapter 1

Mary and the Saints in Scripture

The question we will address in this booklet is whether or not the Virgin Mary and the Saints (those humans called saints by the Catholic and Orthodox Church) should be worshipped and/or venerated. For some believers in Mary and the Saints, we could consider what these Christians do as worship. The Catholic and Orthodox Church would use the word veneration to distinguish respect and admiration of the Saints from worship of

God. Even some Protestants, like the Anglican Church, promote veneration of Mary and a belief in her Immaculate Conception (born without original sin) and Assumption to heaven. In order to address this matter, I want to begin with a focus on any scriptural evidence that would indicate that these individuals should be worshipped or venerated. Our primary focus in the Church of God International is to rely on scriptural evidence for our practices and beliefs. The Catholic and Orthodox Church believe Scripture is equal to their tradition in determining doctrine and belief. Hopefully this booklet will help you make up your mind as to which method makes more sense on this subject.

Let us begin by focusing on the relevant scriptures pertaining to the Virgin Mary. Below I will cite the New Testament scriptures addressing Mary, and we will summarize what

each scripture is saying. Please look up the scriptures for yourself to see if you agree with our assessment. We will be looking for any scriptural evidence that supports the concept of worship or veneration being due to Mary. Many Catholics and Orthodox Christians pray to Mary and believe she can answer their prayers. But does Scripture provide evidence for this?

Matthew 1:16–20. Mary is mentioned in reference to her husband Joseph; Mary is mentioned as the mother of Jesus and as being with child through the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 2:11. The Magi visit the young Jesus in His house and worship Him. Mary is just mentioned as being there.

Matthew 12:48–50. Jesus puts no special emphasis on His mother.

Matthew 13:55. Mary is merely mentioned as the mother of Jesus here, and it is also mentioned that Jesus has brothers and sisters.

Mark 3:31–35. Same as Matthew 12:48–50.

Mark 6:3. This scripture is very similar to the preceding scripture in Matthew.

Luke 1:27. Mentions that Mary was a virgin when she was betrothed to marry Joseph.

Luke 1:30. An angel informs Mary that she has found favor with God (this scripture will be addressed a little later).

Luke 1:34. Mary asks a question of the angel.

Luke 1:38. Mary says she is the Lord's servant.

Luke 1:39. Mary hurries to a town.

Luke 1:41. Mary greets Elizabeth.

Luke 1:46. Mary says her soul glorifies the Lord.

Luke 1:56. Mary stays with Elizabeth three months.

Luke 2:5. Mary is Joseph's espoused wife.

Luke 2:16. Shepherds find Mary and Joseph.

Luke 2:19. Mary ponders.

Luke 2:34. Simeon blesses Mary.

Luke 8:19–21. Same as Matthew 12:48–50

and Mark 3:31–35.

Luke 11:27–28. Jesus does not offer Mary any special praise when He had opportunity to do so.

Acts 1:14. Mary prays with the disciples.

Carefully reading each of these scriptures we find no support for the idea that Mary the mother of Jesus has any special power or position. Mary was a righteous woman, for God to choose her, but should we be praying to her? There is no scriptural support for the special veneration or adulation or even worship of Mary by Christians. If the Bible does not support veneration or worship for Mary, how did this practice come to take root within a major part of Christianity? We will now begin to look at historical evidence to find the answer, but let us first turn to any biblical evidence to support veneration or worship of “saints.”

In the Old Testament there are four words

translated “saint” or “saints.” The words are qadowsh, qaddiysh, qodesh, and chacyd. These four words are used 38 times in the Old Testament. In none of these 38 occurrences are the saints ever addressed as being prayed to or worshipped. The saints are not mentioned as being aware of anything in death or residing in heaven. When we turn to the New Testament, one word is used for “saint” or “saints” and that word is hagios in the Greek. This word is used 62 times in the New Testament, and once again there is no mention of anyone praying to the saints or the saints having any special powers after death to answer prayers.

One scripture that causes some confusion is found in Revelation 6:9–11, which speaks of the souls under the altar in heaven crying out to God. We must remember the book of Revelation is a vision that John is seeing. The book is highly symbolic and most of it is not

to be understood literally. Notice in verse 11 these “souls” are told to rest a little while longer. We understand this to mean these souls are asleep awaiting the Second Coming of Christ when they will awaken out of their graves. Please see a literature and audio recording list at the end of the next section that will provide numerous resources to prove this point.

There is one scripture in Jude 14 which could cause some confusion in regard to where the saints reside. We will show in the next section of this booklet that the dead saints (Peter, Paul, Moses, etc.) are asleep in death. But some believe Jude 14 addresses saints like Peter and Paul coming out of heaven with Jesus. We must remember that hagios means “holy ones” in Greek and can refer to true believers in Jesus (Peter, Paul, etc.), or it can also refer to God’s angels. Jude is referring to a prophecy made by Enoch about Jesus

returning to the earth with His angels.
“Enoch’s ‘holy myriads,’ ten thousands of
angels, are found throughout Scripture: Deut.
33:2; Dan. 7:10; Matt. 25:31; II Thess. 1:7.”¹
Holy ones not only refer to “saints” in
Scripture, but also to “angels.”

Chapter 2

Where are Mary and the Saints Now?

Many Christians today are taught that the dead go to heaven to be with God. Many are also taught the wicked people go to hell and burn forever or live in separation from God. Many in the Christian professing world continue to believe these basic teachings. But does the Bible teach this? First, let us begin by looking at the Word of God on what the state of the dead is. This needs to be understood before we begin to look at what the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church

teach about prayer to the saints and the Virgin Mary. We will also address how this false teaching infiltrated the Christian Church. Let us begin by looking at scriptures in the Old Testament dealing with death.

Genesis 2:7. God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

Genesis 3:19. Man is dust and to dust he will return.

Genesis 7:21–22. Animals have the same breath of life that man has.

1 Kings 2:10. Death is likened to sleep.

1 Kings 11:21, 43. Death likened to sleep.

1 Kings 14:20, 31. Death likened to sleep.

2 Kings 8:24. Death likened to sleep.

2 Kings 10:35. Death likened to sleep.

2 Kings 16:20. Death likened to sleep.

2 Kings 24:6. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 9:31. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 16:13. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 21:1. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 27:9. Death likened to sleep.

2 Chronicles 33:20. Death likened to sleep.

Job 4:17. Man is mortal not immortal.

Ecclesiastes 3:19–20. Men and beasts die alike. A man has no preeminence over a beast when it comes to death. They both return to the dust.

Ecclesiastes 9:5–10. The dead know nothing.

They are not aware of anything in death.

Psalm 6:5. There is no remembrance of God in death.

Psalm 115:17. The dead don't praise God, they are silent.

Psalm 146:4. When you die your thoughts perish.

Daniel 12:1–4. The dead will sleep until the time of the end.

Here are some New Testament scriptures that support the contention that in death man is asleep.

1 Timothy 6:15–16. God only has immortality.

1 Timothy 1:17. God is immortal (incorruptible).

1 Corinthians 15:53–54. Man is corruptible and mortal, but he can attain incorruption and immortality (only through God).

1 Corinthians 15:14–18. If Christ did not rise from the grave than all those who have died would have no chance for life.

1 Corinthians 15:23. The resurrection of the righteous dead occurs at Christ's second coming.

1 Thessalonians 4:16. The dead in Christ don't wake up until the second coming of Christ.

John 11:11–14. Jesus called death sleep.

1 Corinthians 15:51–53. Death is likened to sleep and we overcome death when we are resurrected.

1 Corinthians 11:30. Death likened to sleep.

Revelation 20:5. The rest of the dead are

resurrected at the end of the millennium.

Two major views of human nature are held in Christianity. One is called classical dualism and the other is called biblical wholism.

Dualism maintains that human nature consists of a material, mortal body and a spiritual, immortal soul. The soul survives death and goes to heaven, hell, or purgatory. At the resurrection the soul is reunited with the body. The wholistic view holds that body and spirit are part of one indivisible organism. At death man is unaware until a future resurrection when God will reanimate the dead being.

Many scholars are in agreement with the Church of God International's take on the state of the dead, which is wholistic. Some noted Protestant theologians who counter their own denominations dualistic perspective include Oscar Cullmann, Clark Pinnock, and John R. W. Stott.

Professor Phillip Cary is Professor of Philosophy at Eastern University and Scholar-in-Residence at the Templeton Honors College. He holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Religious Studies from Yale University. He says this about the state of the dead: “The Christian hope was not the hope of going to heaven with Jesus, but the hope of Christ coming from heaven to earth to establish the Kingdom of God on earth and restore all things and redeem the world and raise everyone from the dead. The hope was resurrection from the dead.” He goes on to say, “It’s in that interval or interim between death and resurrection that the Christian notion of the immortality of the soul ended up developing. I mentioned that the immortality of the soul is not an idea that turns up in the New Testament...”² If the immortality of the soul concept did not come from the Bible, where did it come from?

Cary has this to say about that: “It’s Greek philosophy, and in particular, the great philosopher Plato...of the 4th century B.C. who taught us that human beings are made of body and soul, that body and soul together make us human. This is rather different, it turns out, from biblical ways of thinking.... It’s Plato who defines death as separation of the body and soul in a treatise called the Phaedo.... It’s also Plato who, at great length, argues that the soul is immortal, imperishable, and cannot die.... That is not a doctrine taught anywhere that I know of in the New Testament.”³

Finally, Cary has one more thing to say that will be important for us to recognize as we move forward in this booklet: “Another Platonic concept is the notion that good souls ultimately go to heaven. Plato has that picture of souls going up to heaven. It’s a picture that gets into the Western tradition through

writers like Cicero, who also wrote philosophical stuff imitating Plato. You'll never see anywhere in the New Testament or the Old Testament a picture of souls going to heaven."4 For further proof on this see our free booklets and CDs at the end of this section. Plato and Cicero helped influence the early Christian thinkers, but these ideas predate even ancient Greece.

We know that the Greeks from very early times believed, as all primitive peoples do, that each man had a soul which inhabited the body as its life-spirit, and that this soul survived the dissolution of the body and either departed to a shadowy realm where it passed a mournful existence or still hovered about the tomb.5

Many scholars agree the Israelites of the Old Testament did not have this belief until they began to be influenced by the religions around them. The same thing occurred with the early Christians.

Some of you may be in disagreement with the first few pages of this booklet. You may be thinking of scriptures like Lazarus and the rich man or the thief on the cross. We do not have the time or space in this booklet to deal with some scriptures that can appear confusing. But we do have other resources that address these scriptures. We have a number of other booklets on this subject that you can order free of charge. Just go to our website at cgi.org and order these titles under our literature section or read them online: *Immortality: God's Gift to the Saints*; *Hell, You Say?*; and *The Rich Man and Lazarus: Where Are They?* You can also order these CDs from our website (cgi.org): “Where Are Enoch and Elijah?” and “What About Heaven?”

Chapter 3

Pagan Survivals in Christianity

Before we move into the details of the veneration of Mary and the saints, we first need to recognize how the Christian Church, in the first few centuries of its existence, took over and “Christianized” pagan practices. This is a well-known fact for anyone who has done some research on the early Christian Church. Perhaps the two greatest examples of “Christianized” pagan customs are the two most prominent holidays in Christianity, Christmas and Easter.

Today December 25 is celebrated as the birthday of Jesus, although this celebration did not take place until the fourth century, A.D. The celebration of Christmas did not take root in Christianity until 300 years after Christ’s ascension to heaven. Scripture and history make it clear the early Christians continued to observe the biblical holy days mentioned in Leviticus 23 (Acts 2:1; Acts 20:6, 16; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8). Slowly, as the

Church began to take on more pagan converts, it took on the Roman celebration date for the Sun god and claimed the date of December 25 for Christ. In ancient Greece, there had been a Sun-festival known as the Helia celebrated on December 25.⁶

Lent might better be compared with the fast which preceded the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, commemorating Demeter's period of abstinence from food during her search for her ravished daughter Persephone.⁷ Growing up Greek Orthodox, I had always assumed we fasted for 40 days because Jesus did so prior to His temptation by Satan. I came to learn there is no mention of a fast preceding Christ's resurrection in Scripture. Christ's encounter with Satan also takes place at the beginning of his ministry rather than a few years later, at the end.

What about the holiest day in the Christian year, Easter Sunday? A little research into the

word Easter will reveal it derives from the name of an ancient pagan goddess, Ishtar or Astarte. Hard to believe, but truth is sometimes stranger than fiction.

In some cases, Christian churches were erected on the same locations where previous pagan temples stood. Saints took on the attributes of previous pagan gods. And as we have just seen above, pagan festivals were repackaged into Christian holidays and festivals. The people were taught that the saints were not to be worshipped like Christ, but that they were merely mediators between God and men; but the people, polytheistic in their nature, were sure to regard them as they regarded Christ the great Mediator.⁸ Greek religion was not obliterated by Christianity, but that the two were fused, and after the process was complete many of the older forms and beliefs reappeared.⁹

In its veneration of the Virgin Mary, not only

did Roman Catholic Christianity absorb many elements of the cults of Greek and Roman goddesses, but Mary in effect replaced these deities and continued them in a Christian form.¹⁰ Even Mary's mother Anne is a saint with many followers. There is no historic or archaeological evidence to suggest Anne was real—other than the apocryphal writings that mention her. How, then, did she become so important in the cultic practice of the church? The veneration of “St. Anne” may also be due to pagan survivals. Pagans dating back to the first century knew of a goddess named Anne. As Anne Perenna, she is mentioned by the Roman poet Ovid as a provider of provisions.¹¹ Romans also associated her with the figure of a water nymph in whose honor cups were emptied, and in Celtic pagan traditions she appears as Dana.¹² All these pagan traditions have been added to the cult of St. Anne in various Catholic countries.¹³

Those who worship in the many festivals for St. Anne are not aware that they participate in rites much more ancient than Christianity, ceremonies with pagan origins in which Anne, or a Roman goddess, or Dana, the goddess of the Celts, was religiously venerated.¹⁴ Neither the name nor the development of the festival has changed much through the centuries.¹⁵ In his book, *The Myth of Mary*, author Cesar Vidal addresses ten similarities between Marian devotion and the worship of pagan mother goddesses:

- Both were honored through visual means (sculptures, paintings, or icons).
- Mary and the goddesses were the mother of all.
- Both were worshipped with a child.
- Both are associated with the sun and the horns of a cow (since the lower Middle Ages the crescent moon over Mary's head looks

similar to the cow horns of pagan goddesses).

- Both are associated with the harvest—it is common to associate agricultural work in Catholic countries with some particular virgin who is seen as the patron of those specific people.
- Mary and the goddesses are both associated with the possibility of influencing lives beyond the grave.
- The worship of stones or litholatry
- Both venerated in grottos or in caves.
- The connection of Mary and goddesses to the mountains or mountain ranges
- The sacrifice of sexuality

Again, a couple of the items on this list (images) are condemned in Scripture (Exodus 20:4–5; Deuteronomy 5:8–10). Artemis, also in her assimilation with Hecate, was venerated at crossroads. This tradition is obvious in the case of Marian veneration in countries such as

Spain or Greece, where it is easy to find hermitages and shrines where roads cross each other.¹⁶

Schmidt also tells of a ceremony which takes place in Arachova on the evening before the festival of the “Presentation of the Virgin” on November 21.¹⁷ “A porridge...is eaten by the family for the purpose of asking the Virgin for a favorable harvest the following year.”¹⁸ This ceremony also appears to be a survival of the offerings of the first-fruits, which were originally made to Demeter or to some agrarian goddess, and which now have been transferred to the Virgin.¹⁹

In its theology and ethics, Christianity has been profoundly influenced by its contacts with Greek philosophy; in its ritual and hagiology (literature dealing with the lives and legends of the saints) it owes an equal debt to ancient Greek religion, which has also handed over an enormous mass of superstitious

beliefs. 20 In the resultant blend, Christianity has incorporated pagan beliefs and usages, which, though modified, have remained essentially Greek to this day.²¹ A great amount of original Christianity has been lost to mainline Christianity. The living legacy of ancient Greece to the Christian Church of today includes theological and ethical concepts, rites and ceremonies, and, also, alas a great body of unworthy superstitions.²² Another connection between Mary worship and paganism is the Rosary. In a number of Marian apparitions, Mary tells the seers that praying the Rosary can help save the world from its dire situation. The Church dedicates October 7 on its liturgical calendar to celebrate the Rosary. For Catholics, the Rosary became a popular tool in Marian veneration in the Middle Ages. The Rosary is a set of meditative prayers that recall events in the lives of Jesus and Mary. It is also the string of

beads Catholics use to count the prayers. The Rosary gets its name from Mary's association (in the Middle Ages) with the sign of the rose. The origin of such a connection has been sought out in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus (24:14) which says, "I was exalted like the Rose of Jericho," although the passage obviously has nothing to do with her.²³

The earliest use of prayer beads, like the rosary, can be traced back to Hinduism. The Hindus used prayer beads similar to the rosary to pray to Vishnu and Shiva. Buddhists and Sikhs used similar prayer beads. Even within Sufi Islam prayer beads can be found in the ninth century. In all the cases mentioned, the rosary (prayer beads) served as an instrument to exalt the respective divinities of each religion through a constant repetition of the divine name.²⁴

Besides its origins in paganism, the Rosary is

not a valid tool for prayer because of various biblical scriptures. First of all, the Bible teaches us not to pray in vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7–8). The “Hail Mary” prayer is used over and over again in the Rosary. The Bible also teaches there is one mediator between man and God (1 Timothy 2:5–6), which is Jesus Christ. By praying to Mary we are praying to another mediator. If you doubt that Catholics think of Mary as a mediator, notice what they said at the Vatican II Council: “Because after her assumption into heaven she has not set aside this saving function, but continues to obtain for us, with her multiple intercession, the gifts relative to eternal salvation. With her maternal love, she cares for the brothers of her son that still journey and move among dangers and distresses until they reach the happy homeland.”²⁵

Vatican II went on to use the titles of

Advocate, Assistant, Helper, and Mediator.

This title Mediatrix, however, applied not only to Mary's place in the history of salvation but also to her continuing position as intercessor between Christ and humanity—so that it was possible to “demand salvation of thee [Mary].”

26 In fact, God had chosen her for the specific task of pleading the case of humanity before her Son. Mary was addressed as the one who could bring cleansing and healing to the sinner and as the one who would give succor against the temptations of the devil; but she did this by mediating between Christ and humanity.²⁷ This sounds great, and Catholics can believe whatever they want, but there are no Bible verses that can back up this kind of belief. Religious leaders should be leery of establishing beliefs that are not rooted in the Bible (Matthew 15:9).

But getting back to the Rosary, there are other ideas as to how the practice moved into

Christianity. In 1041, Lady Godiva of Coventry left in her will a circlet of gems on which she used to say her prayers.²⁸ It was, she specified, to be hung round a statue of the Virgin.²⁹ Although the exact point of entry of the Rosary into Western Christendom is not known, the Crusaders are generally given the credit for spreading a habit picked up from their Moslem adversaries.³⁰ But as the legacy of Lady Godiva shows, the practice of counting one's prayers was known in England before the First Crusade and may therefore have arisen spontaneously, or it may have been imported by pilgrims to the holy land.³¹ By the end of the sixteenth century, Pope Pius V pushed for the use of the Rosary with a bull, or proclamation. He also instituted a feast for Mary in 1573 to commemorate a victory over the Turks in 1571. The battle had been given to God's side, said the Pope, through the intercession of the Virgin

obtained by the Rosaries offered to her on earth by confraternities of Rome.³² The Pope's evidence for devotion to the Rosary was a vision by St. Dominic of the Madonna. According to tradition, Dominic, while conducting the Inquisition against the Albigensian heretics at the beginning of the thirteenth century, had been given the Rosary in a vision by the Virgin herself, who told him that Christian men and women should invoke her aid on the beads.³³ This story helped popularize the use of the Rosary. A number of popes after Pius V encouraged the use of the rosary based on this story.

If Dominic did see a vision, was God the source of it? Many religious figures throughout history have claimed visions from God, but God is not always the source of visions. It is interesting that the Catholic Church would promote this story knowing what the Church did to the Albigensians. The

Catholics perpetrated a genocidal crusade against this group.

We will discuss apparitions of the Virgin a bit later, but many of the apparitions in the nineteenth and twentieth century had some connection to the Rosary. Let us keep this in mind when we begin to investigate the Marian apparitions.

There are many other similarities between Marian devotion and the ancient worship of a mother goddess, suggesting that the more ancient forms of worship survived through the veneration of Mary. Keep in mind that, as we address these survivals, there is no biblical admonition for veneration of Mary. One example is the large number of monuments from ancient Babylon which depict the mother goddess Semiramis with her child Tammuz in her arms. Another example is the plethora of images of goddesses suckling their infant divine offspring. Mary with the baby

Jesus on her lap or suckling is a common theme in Catholic and Orthodox depictions. The theme of the nursing Virgin probably originated in Egypt, where the goddess Isis had been portrayed suckling the infant Horus for over a thousand years before Christ.³⁴ One writer goes as far to say that “the ancient portrait of Isis and the child Horus was ultimately accepted not only in popular opinion, but by formal episcopal sanction as the portrait of the Virgin and her child.”³⁵ Some of the same statues that were worshipped as the mother goddess and her child were renamed as Mary and the baby Jesus. “When Christianity triumphed,” says one writer, “these paintings and figures became those of the Madonna and child without any break in continuity: no archaeologist, in fact, can now tell whether some of these objects represent the one or the other.”³⁶

In the Greek Orthodox Church, at the end of some liturgies on Sunday, there is a special short memorial service for loved ones who have recently died. Again, there is no biblical basis for what we are about to describe. A cake like item is placed on a table symbolizing the lost loved one. The priest prays over the cake symbolizing the departed family member, who is believed to be with God. At the end of this service, the family members of the dearly departed receive a small bag of Kolyva (what the cake-like item is made of)—a mixture of wheat and grain. Such cake offerings can be traced to the sixth century in connection with the Assumption, and seem to be the survival of first-fruit offerings, such as those offered the Syrian goddess of agriculture, and now transferred to Mary.³⁷

These cake-like offerings have their roots in antiquity. Another example comes from the Greek island of Zante. The peasants bring

such a cake, there called sperma, or vesper offerings, to the church in a basket at the celebration of the “Holy Transfiguration of Christ” on August 6, and at the “Assumption of the Virgin” on August 15.³⁸ It is put in the middle of the church on a stand with a candle burning nearby. During mass, the priest blesses it and strews the chancel with a portion of it broken into crumbs, and distributes the rest among the people, who eat it and make a wish.³⁹ This ceremony recalls the “first-fruit” offerings at certain old Athenian festivals.⁴⁰

Even when Christianity came to the new world we find examples of a syncretism between the mother goddess of the indigenous Mexican people and Mary. The female deities of the Mexican people were powerful symbols of staple foods, fertility, and sexuality.⁴¹ Mary came to be identified with the fruit of the maguey plant—a large cactus—the fermented

juice of which produced the alcoholic drink pulque.⁴² Pulque was drunk at festivals, was offered to the gods, and was associated with fertility and plenty, the domain of the goddess Mayahuel.⁴³

The Franciscan missionaries who converted the first indigenous Mexicans to Christianity were concerned with the Christians they were creating. They adhered ardently to Mary in her immaculate purity but could not easily trust the indigenous priests, who served the vast majority of new parishes throughout the land, to do so.⁴⁴ It was too easy to merge Mary with indigenous deities, and this is what the bearers of Christianity feared most.⁴⁵

The primary Feast days dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Orthodoxy and Catholicism are March 25 (Annunciation) and August 15 (Assumption). The Annunciation commemorates the announcement of the coming birth of Jesus and the Assumption

commemorates the bodily taking up of Mary into heaven. Both of these dates are on the exact dates of pagan celebrations to mother goddess figures. Hera, the queen of the Greek gods, presided over the spring season which begins at the spring equinox (March 25). In pagan Rome, March 25 was a holiday celebrating the annunciation of the virgin, in honor of Cybele, the mother of the Babylonian messiah.⁴⁶ The Romans had a three-day festival for the goddess Diana. On the first day, the goddess allegedly came to earth, and on the third day, August 15, they apparently celebrated her assumption into heaven as the queen of heaven.⁴⁷ But like many of the mother goddess stories, there are also connections that go further back in history.

Five thousand years ago, in southern Mesopotamia, during the month of August, when nature's anger was most pitiless and the

scorched earth and relentless drought held the farmer captive, a chant went up as the priests invoked the life-giving powers of the new season and recited the annual liturgies to Dumazi, the shepherd, and Inanna, the queen of heaven, his mother and his bride.⁴⁸

Dumazi had been sacrificed to the underworld, tortured and afflicted by demons, just as Christ suffered the tortures of His passion and then descended into hell.⁴⁹ Well, not exactly—the idea that Christ descended into hell to free the dead prior to His death and resurrection is taught in both Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The scripture used to support that belief (1 Peter 3:18–20) pertains to Christ preaching to “spirits in prison.” These are undoubtedly fallen angels who are in some manner confined to certain boundaries, and whose disobedience was evident in the time of Noah, but it is doubtful that Christ’s proclamation to them occurred in the pre-

Flood period. For a full explanation of this scripture please order our booklet *The Questions and Answers Book* from our website at cgi.org or read the booklet there online.

According to the church fathers, as early as the second century A.D., the purpose of the harrowing of hell was the liberation of the righteous dead like Abraham, David, and John the Baptist.⁵⁰ But the problem for Catholics is that the belief implies souls can be delivered from hell, which has been considered heresy since Augustine laid down the firm distinction between purgatory and hell.⁵¹ The Council of Trent decreed the harrowing should simply be seen as a metaphor of Christ's victory over death and evil.⁵²

In order to accommodate the problem, another region of the afterlife, limbo, a shadowy world of neither pain nor joy, has been accepted since Aquinas.⁵³ There,

according to contemporary teaching, the righteous who died before Christ (or some of them—John the Baptist definitely in heaven) and the innocent who have not been redeemed, like unbaptized babies, spin out eternity in a kind of numb nirvana.⁵⁴ But only one papal document mentions limbo and belief is not mandatory.⁵⁵

Perhaps the origins of the story of Christ's descent into hell also come from paganism. The harrowing of hell recalls other gods' epic tussles with the forces of destruction: the underworld raided by Herakles and Orpheus; the victory of Osiris over Set and his triumph as judge over the living and the dead.⁵⁶ We are not saying the Catholics and Orthodox consciously used these stories, but the early church fathers were perhaps spiritually influenced to misinterpret Scripture (Ephesians 6:12).

But getting back to Innanna and Dumazi,

notice some more connections to Christ and Mary. In the religion of Sumer, Inanna was the “lady of heaven,” and Dumuzi was the guardian of flocks, a shepherd. His name means “true son,” and in some Sumerian laments he is called Duma, the child.⁵⁷ Yes, this sounds like Christ and Mary, and this and other similarities between the ancient mother goddess and son have led some to believe the story of Christ was just a myth originating in ancient pagan stories. But further study of the pagan “christs” and the true Messiah will reveal some important differences. Finally, let us not forget that Satan has made an effort to deceive the whole world (Revelation 12:9). One of the ways he does this is by casting doubt on the truth of Jesus Christ and influencing people to misinterpret His Word. Now some will argue Mary is a biblical figure and not a pagan goddess. No doubt this is true, but the degree to which some Christians

go in their devotion to Mary is not consistent with what Scripture has to say about her. In my view, this excess devotion gets into the realm of idolatry. I grew up in the Greek Orthodox Church and witnessed the excess and gratuitous devotion to Mary, which is not supported by Scripture. As society has gotten more sophisticated, so has Satan's deception. He has created a figure and inserted it into Christianity rather than outside Christianity—to take some of the focus off of Christ. In my mind, this is not much different than the apostasy of the ancient Israelites who mixed the worship of the true God with other gods. In Judges 2:13 we read about Israel forsaking the worship of Yahweh and worshipping Baal and Ashtaroth. Ashtaroth was the name of the mother goddess figure at that time. Later, in the time of Jeremiah, Israel is rebuked for worshipping the “queen of heaven” (Jeremiah 44:17–19).

Mother goddess worship was very popular in the ancient Roman Empire into which Christianity began. Inscriptions prove that the two (the mother and child) received divine honors, not only in Italy and especially at Rome, but also in the provinces, particularly in Africa, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany and Bulgaria.⁵⁸

One of the best examples of the carryover from paganism to Christianity is mother goddess worship. Many pagans were drawn to Christianity, but they were not willing to give up all their prior beliefs. Just as ancient Israel mixed the worship of the true God with false gods, Christianity began to mix with prior pagan beliefs. As we have seen and will further see, the parallels between mother goddess worship and Marian veneration is striking. Did this just happen by coincidence? Were churchmen looking for more converts? Or is there something more sinister afoot?

Hopefully this booklet will answer those questions.

As we noted earlier, no great emphasis was placed on Mary in the early centuries of the Church. This point is admitted by the Catholic Encyclopedia also: “Devotion to Our Blessed Lady in its ultimate analysis must be regarded as a practical application of the doctrine of the Communion of the Saints. Seeing that the doctrine is not contained, at least explicitly, in the earlier forms of the Apostles’ Creed, there is perhaps no ground for surprise if we do not meet with any clear traces of the cultus of the Blessed Virgin in the first Christians centuries,” the worship of Mary being a later development.⁵⁹

By the early part of the fourth century we begin to see evidence of Marian worship influenced by the goddess worship of the pagans. At this time such worship was frowned upon by the church. This is evident

by the words of Epiphanius (bishop of Salamis 315–403 A.D.) who denounced the Collyridians (Christian heretics) for worshiping Mary as a goddess and offering cakes to her.⁶⁰ She should be held in high honor, he said, “But let no one adore Mary.”

61

At the beginning of the fifth century the Roman Empire was experiencing changes. Emperor Theodosius’s ban on pagan worship and his destruction of statues and temples to gods and goddesses were keenly felt by the country people, now forced into the cities for safety from the invading barbarians.⁶²

Historian Pamela Berger observes that “The exclusion of any female images from the Christian concept of deity was particularly hard on agricultural people whose experience with the growth and life-producing forces had been connected with the female principle for millennia. At the same time, Christian

doctrine was becoming devoid of all imagery incorporating a female aspect into the divine.”

63

Approximately thirty years later at the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) the church provided Mary with the title “Theotokos,” the “Godbearer” or “Mother of God.” A number of commentators today attribute the enthusiasm for this decision to the city’s having long been the seat of worship to Diana; a new church dedicated to Mary would soon rise over the old temple to the goddess which had been destroyed in 400.⁶⁴ Another example that Marian worship developed from pagan goddess worship pertains to the names given to Mary. For example, Mary is often called “the Madonna.” According to Hislop, this phrase is the translation of one of the titles for the Babylonian goddess. In deified form, Nimrod was known as Baal. The title of his wife, the

female divinity, would be the equivalent of Baalti. In English, this word means, “My Lady,” in Latin, “Mea Domina,” and in Italian, it is corrupted into the well-known “Madonna.”⁶⁵ Isis, the Egyptian goddess figure, was known as the “mother of god.” This same title was applied to Mary at the Council of Ephesus, which was presided over by St. Cyril of Alexandria (Egypt). Among the Phoenicians, the mother goddess was known as “The Lady of the Sea.” Mary also is known by a similar title, “Our Lady, Star of the Sea,” among certain sea faring locations. This could just be a coincidence, or it could be some type of syncretism among those who passed on the old beliefs.

Chapter 4

The Immaculate Conception

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is

a Roman Catholic doctrine that refers to Mary the mother of Jesus. The doctrine states that Mary was born without “original sin.”

Original sin stems from the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Since that first sin in the garden, all of humanity is born with this predilection to sin due to our original parents Adam and Eve. The Orthodox Church believes Mary was sinless from birth, but was not born without original (or “ancestral”) sin. The Church of God International does not believe in original sin (as defined by the Catholic Church) but believes that all humanity, including Mary, are born with a carnal nature that leads us to sin during our physical life.

To better understand this Catholic doctrine we need to understand their dualistic view of life. According to the dualistic view, at conception a body is formed in the womb of a mother as a result of insemination of a

father.⁶⁶ At the moment of the conception of the body, a soul is created and infused into the body.⁶⁷ This process is called animation, that is, the implantation of an anima (which is the Latin term for the soul) into the body.⁶⁸ Each soul is infused into the body with the stain of the original sin.⁶⁹ Under normal circumstances, such a stain is supposed to be removed at baptism soon after the birth of the child.⁷⁰ In the case of Mary, however, the stain of original sin was not removed at baptism, but was excluded altogether from her soul at the time of conception.⁷¹ Thus, the conception of Mary was immaculate because she was exempted from the presence of original sin in her soul and from inherited sin in her body.⁷²

To understand how some Christians came to believe in Mary's Immaculate Conception, we need to understand early Christian views on virginity. The roots of the dogma of Mary's

perpetual virginity may have multiple sources. Some thought the end of the world was near, so they chose not to have children. Others thought renouncing sex would make them holier. Beginning in the second century, small groups of Christian men and women committed to sexual renunciation scattered throughout the eastern Mediterranean as missionaries of celibacy.⁷³ As the enthusiasm for permanent sexual renunciation grew, it won over bishops like Athanasius, Basil, and Augustine.⁷⁴

Some within Christianity thought sexual intercourse was sinful in some way. Augustine, an early influencer in Catholic dogma (354–430 A.D.), taught that original sin was transmitted by the act of procreation.

Augustine suggested that either the hereditary taint was transmitted through the male genitals themselves during intercourse, and that the body itself, not the soul, was

genetically flawed by the fall of man, or that because a child cannot be conceived outside the sexual embrace, which necessarily involves the sin of passion, the child is stained from that moment.⁷⁵ Ambrose (340–397), the Bishop of Milan, and Jerome (347–420), an influential priest and theologian, also thought the celibate life was more spiritual. Jerome even wrote a treatise against the Stoic philosopher Helvidius defending the perpetual virginity of Mary. But the views of these influential Christian leaders are in opposition to the God-ordained creation of sex in marriage (Genesis 1:28; Hebrews 13:4). To better understand Augustine's theology of original sin we need to understand Augustine's thinking before he became a Christian. Prior to becoming a Christian, Augustine was influenced by both Manichaeism and by the writing of Plotinus. Both Mani and Plotinus had a distaste for the world, a profound sense

of a breach between things of the flesh and things of the spirit, and a restless quest for spiritual fulfillment through detachment from earthly concerns and pleasures.⁷⁶ Plotinus wrote, “The soul has become ugly, by being immersed in what is not itself, by its descent into the body.”⁷⁷

The Eastern Church (Orthodox) also had influential leaders that mirrored the teaching of the Western Church with a negative perception of the female. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, warned: “The whole of her bodily beauty is nothing less than phlegm, blood, bile, rheum, and the fluid of digested food.... If you consider what is stored up behind those lovely eyes, the angle of the nose, the mouth and the cheeks you will agree that the well-proportioned body is merely a whitened sepulcher.”⁷⁸

It was therefore essential that the Son of the Highest should not be contaminated by any of

this sinfulness, inherent in the whole human species but more pronounced in the female.⁷⁹ Thus during the ascetic revolt of Christianity's first centuries, the need to exempt the mother of Christ from tainted sexuality and to proclaim her virgin purity exerted an overwhelming pressure on definitions of doctrine and on scriptural commentaries.⁸⁰ Many Christian theologians were influenced by Neo-Platonism (Plotinus was an early adherent). When that happened, Christian asceticism expressed itself in a rejection of the body that appeared to deny that God had created it, and therefore in a revulsion at sexuality that equated it with immorality.⁸¹ Because most writers on the subject were men, and unmarried men at that, the revulsion easily became a misogynous contempt for women as the devil's snare to corrupt the *vita angelica* of the ascetic or celibate man.⁸² The idea that sex was sinful helped influence some

that Mary had to be virgin in order to be the “God-bearer.” Finally, in 451 A.D. at the Council of Chalcedon, the concept of Mary’s perpetual virginity was recognized by the Church.

This poses a problem when we investigate scriptures that clearly teach Jesus had brothers and sisters (Matthew 13:55–56; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; John 7:3; Galatians 1:18–19; 1 Corinthians 9:5). The Eastern Church Fathers taught that these “brothers” were step-brothers from a previous marriage Joseph possibly had. The Western Church Fathers taught these “brothers” were first or second cousins of Jesus. These reasons are used due to the Orthodox (East) and Catholic (West) teaching that Mary remained a virgin for her entire life. There are some problems with the idea that Jesus did not have younger siblings. Tertullian, Hegesippus, and John Chrysostom, among other fathers of the Church, denied the

perpetual virginity of Mary and affirmed that the “brothers and sisters” of Jesus which the Gospels mention (Matthew 13:54–55; Mark 6:3) were Mary’s children.⁸³ Another problem is the census of Caesar Augustus addressed in Luke 2. If Joseph had at least six children from a previous marriage, we would expect them to travel with him as a family, especially since every family member was expected to register.⁸⁴ Luke 2:5 only mentions Mary and Joseph registering. Another problem is Matthew 1:24–25. Here it mentions that Joseph “knew her not, till she had brought forth her firstborn son.” The implication here is Joseph and Mary had not been together sexually until after Jesus was born. Some argue the Greek wording does not have to mean they did come together sexually afterward. But why would they not, since they were married and there is nothing wrong with sexual relations in marriage (Hebrews 13:4). As we

have already seen there was an anti-sexual theme in early Christianity.

Before we can understand the development of the perpetual virginity of Mary we must understand what came before this notion.

There is only one direct mention of Mary in New Testament texts pertaining to the period following the death of Jesus (see Acts 1:14).

We do not find reference to Mary or her family in material dating from the late first or early second centuries.⁸⁵ Tradition tells us

Mary's parents were Joachim and Anne. There is no reference of these people before the apocryphal writings known as the

Protoevangelium of James (140–170 A.D.),

the Gospel of Pseudo Matthew (seventh–ninth century) and the Book of the Birth of

Mary (second century).⁸⁶ It is doubtful we

can trust these sources. They were written long

after the events they describe. In the first two

cases, the authors tried to deceive the reader,

falsely attributing the work to Matthew and James, important figures in the primitive church.⁸⁷

Taking a closer look at the Protoevangelium of James, we begin to see why the idea that Mary was “ever Virgin” begins to take shape. It’s depiction of Saint Joseph as an elderly widower made Mary’s virginity more secure in the minds of many and provided a handy way of explaining that the “brothers and sisters of the Lord” were children from Joseph’s first marriage.⁸⁸ The book also states Mary was conceived without sex due to the infertility of her mother Anna. Scholars believe the book was written sometime between 140 and 170 A.D. The book also asserts Mary was a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ. We must remember this Protoevangelium of James (also called the Gospel of James) is an apocryphal book. It is not accepted as a valid biblical book, and for good reason. Scholars

believe the book may have been written by the Ebionites. The group was a sect within early Christianity. They also fell into a praise of sexual asceticism, to the point of considering virginity to be something morally superior to matrimony.⁸⁹ Even Catholic scholars admit the idea of Mary's virginal childbirth does not come from Scripture. Catholic priest, J.M. Carda has noted: "The Holy Scriptures do not mention the historical origin of Mary; nor do they expressly allude to any privilege in her conception."⁹⁰

The idea of Mary's perpetual virginity began to gain traction in the fourth century. The Second Council of Constantinople proclaimed her perpetual virginity in 381 A.D. Later, in 649 A.D. Mary's perpetual virginity becomes a dogma of the church. During the Middle Ages, other famous theologians supported the concept of Mary's perpetual virginity. On the Catholic side,

Thomas Aquinas was a proponent of Mary always being a virgin. For example, he argues that if Mary had intercourse with Joseph after the birth of Jesus, that would be “an insult to the Holy Ghost, whose shrine was the vaginal womb wherein he had formed the flesh of Christ; wherefore it is unbecoming that it should be desecrated by intercourse with man.”⁹¹ On the Protestant side, Martin Luther wrote, “It is an article of faith that Mary is Mother of the Lord and still a virgin.... Christ we believe, came forth from a womb left perfectly intact.”⁹² Calvin referred to Mary as “Holy Virgin.”⁹³ and Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) 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.”⁹⁴

One scripture that is sometimes used to set

Mary apart from the rest of humanity is Luke 1:28. The verse states that Mary was “highly favored,” which could be translated “full of grace.” Once again, Catholic J.M. Carda makes it clear that the word for grace and favor here, kekharitomene, does not equal the grace bestowed on Christ. Carda states that kekharitomene, “does not indicate itself a fullness of grace, as indicated by, on the other hand, the expression pleres kharitos that is applied to Christ (John 1:14).... The word addressed to her by the angel meant simply blessed.”⁹⁵ In fact, the same word used to describe Mary’s grace in Luke 1:28 is also used to describe Christian’s in Ephesians 1:6. The point being, the grace bestowed on Mary is no greater or lesser than the grace bestowed on other believers. This verse also mentions that Mary is blessed among women. Some take this to mean she is above all women. That is not the case. In Judges 5:24, Jael receives a

similar blessing among women. No one is saying Jael is set apart like Mary.

The idea that Mary was ever-Virgin goes hand in hand with the idea that she was sinless.

Both of these ideas eventually meld as the Catholic Church developed its concept of the “Immaculate Conception” of Mary. For the first couple centuries of Christianity, none of the writers mention that Mary was without sin. The first reference to a sinless conception of Mary is from Julian of Eclanum, during the fifth century A.D.⁹⁶ Julian was a Pelagian and did not believe in Augustine’s concept of “original sin.” Augustine did believe Mary was born with original sin, but her new spiritual birth, due to the grace of God, had freed her from it.⁹⁷ As paradoxical as it seems, close to a millennium later, the Catholic Church would embrace the heretic’s position and reject that of Augustine.⁹⁸ Even Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), another giant in the

Catholic Church, believed Mary had sinned. In the last work written by Aquinas, *Brevis Summa de Fide*, Aquinas states: “Certainly [Mary] was conceived with original sin, as is natural.... If she would not have been born with original sin, she would not have needed to be redeemed by Christ, and this being so, Christ would not be the universal Redeemer of men, which would abolish the dignity of Christ.”⁹⁹

Through the efforts of Duns Scotus, the doctrine that Mary was born without original sin began gaining ground in the heart of Catholicism near the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁰⁰ In the fifteenth century the claims of Mary’s Immaculate Conception were causing division. In 1439, the Council of Basel, which was not considered an ecumenical council, stated that belief in the “Immaculate Conception” was in line with the Catholic faith. The Council of Trent, in 1546,

marked an advancement in immaculatism by affirming: “We do not wish to enclose in the decree in which original sin is dealt with, the blessed and immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God.¹⁰¹ In other words Mary had no original sin. In the same way, it was insisted that in all her life she never committed any sin, not even a trivial one.¹⁰² Two other separate decisions of the Council (Trent 1545-1563) were much more momentous in Mariology, however: that the unwritten traditions of the Church and its members were to be held in equal honor as Scripture; and that the Vulgate Bible was the only canonical text.¹⁰³ Regarding the first of these decisions, Owen Chadwick has pointed out that “It is clear that some of those who framed it were thinking not of an unwritten heritage of doctrine, but of certain practices, like the keeping of Sunday or the baptism of infants.”¹⁰⁴ But whatever the intention of the

councilors, the decree gave traditional beliefs, like the legends and miracles that fleshed out Mary of Nazareth, a claim to canonical authority.¹⁰⁵

The ideas of Duns Scotus were being attacked by those who looked to Scripture as to what to believe in. Scripture makes it clear (Romans 3:23) that all have sinned, and that includes Mary. Only Christ is without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5; Hebrews 4:15). In the sixteenth century in England, men at Oxford actually tore up folios of Duns Scotus and used them as waste paper.¹⁰⁶ Belief in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception “did not crumble, but built new foundations that it formed according to sixteenth century principles, in the Bible, interpreted allegorically in the patristic tradition.”¹⁰⁷ During the eighteenth century the Church was abandoned altogether for the first time by the intellectual elite of Europe. “Belief in the

Immaculate Conception became an act of defiance against rationalism.... [W]hen Pope Pius IX proclaimed *Ineffabilis Deus*, he was announcing that the Pope's authority to command the beliefs of Christendom had not been shattered by the philosophical and political turmoil of the age of skepticism.”¹⁰⁸ The official dogma of the Immaculate Conception (*Ineffabilis Deus*) was proclaimed by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854. Pius defined the dogma by saying: “We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which asserts that the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, was preserved free from every stain of original sin is a doctrine revealed by God and, for this reason, must be firmly and constantly believed by the faithful.”¹⁰⁹ “The intent of the dogma of the Immaculate

Conception...is revealed in the encyclical *Ubi Primum*...that through her are obtained every hope, every grace, and all salvation. For this is His will, that we obtain everything through Mary.”¹¹⁰ With language like that no wonder Mary is such a powerful figure in the Catholic Church. “By proclaiming dogma a belief that had been stormily discussed since the twelfth century, he also asserted the position of the pope as the single, divinely inspired head of the Church and implied that the Church alone was the true spiritual guide and not the individual conscience as the men of the Reformation and their heirs had maintained.... It was only logical that Pius IX followed up the Bull of 1854 with another, in 1870, proclaiming the infallibility of the pope a dogma of the church.”¹¹¹ According to Justo Gonzales, a “respected Church historian...Pius IX was the first pope ever to define a dogma on his own, without the

support of a counsel.” 112

As we can see, the concept that Mary was born without sin and that she lived a sinless life is not based on Scripture. Even the Catholic Encyclopedia makes this clear: “no direct or categorical and stringent proof of the dogma [Immaculate Conception] can be brought forward from Scripture.” 113

Chapter 5

The Assumption of the Virgin Mary

Another major Marian doctrine of the Catholic Church is the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. This doctrine states that Mary ascended into heaven body and soul. This doctrine was officially stated by Pope Pius XII on November 1, 1950 in the Papal Bull *Munificentissimus Deus*. The Orthodox Church does believe in the bodily assumption of Mary, but does not proclaim it as a dogma.

Pope Pius XII cited many ancient texts in support of the belief, but none of them came from the apocryphal stories of the passing of the Virgin.¹¹⁴ He referred the faithful to the eighth-century homilies of Germanus of Constantinople, Modestus of Jerusalem, Andrew of Crete, and John Damascene, who had themselves used the Apocrypha as sources, but he omitted all mention of this or of the legend.¹¹⁵

Some scholars believe that the apocryphal tales of the Virgin's death, in which she is spared mortal decay, originated among the Christian community in Egypt.¹¹⁶ A long tradition existed there that viewed incorruption as a privilege of true greatness.¹¹⁷

For the first few hundred years of Christianity there is no mention on how Mary died. The first mention of her demise comes from Epiphanius, the Bishop of Salamis in the fourth century. He stated that nobody knew

what happened to Mary. By the end of the fifth century an apocryphal gospel called, *The Journeys of the Blessed Mary (Transitus Beatae Mariae)*, had gained popularity.¹¹⁸ This apocryphal Gospel gave rise to a score of *Transitus* accounts in Coptic, Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Armenian.¹¹⁹ Some of the roots of the Assumption doctrine also can be found in the apocryphal Gospel of John (end of the fourth century).¹²⁰ These apocryphal works contain heretical elements. For example, Jesus is seen as an angelic being and not divine. Another example is Paul not being considered an apostle in the same category as the Twelve (pointing again to the Ebionites).¹²¹ Finally, the believer appears subject to complicated rituals designed to free him from the wiles of demons at the moment of his death.¹²² Some scholars believe that the apocryphal tales of the Virgin's death, in which she is spared

mortal decay, sometimes even given a “garment of incorruptibility” by Jesus originated among Christians in Egypt.¹²³ The Catholic and Orthodox tradition around Mary has been to define her as someone of true greatness. But the scriptural record does not back their tradition. In fact, as we saw in the first section of this booklet, Scripture looks at Mary the same as other believers. Evidence for this can be found in Matthew 12:46–50 where Jesus states that only those who do the will of His Father should be considered His brother, sister, or mother. Here Jesus is equating His mother with any other believer.

Gregory of Tours was the first church figure to explicitly state his belief in the Assumption of Mary. He based his belief on the apocryphal work, *The Journeys of the Blessed Mary*. Many serious scholars believe that and the other apocryphal works on Mary’s life were

made up. Contrary to the claim of Pope Pius XII that the Assumption of Mary is a “divinely revealed truth dogma,” the historical reality is that the Catholic Church has developed this teaching on the basis of heretical writings that were officially condemned by the early Church.¹²⁴ Sometime between 494 and 496 A.D. Pope Gelasius issued a decree entitled *Decretum de Libris Canonicis Ecclesiasticis et Apocryphis*, in which he officially set forth the distinction between canonical writings to be accepted and the apocryphal writings to be rejected.¹²⁵ Among the apocryphal writings to be rejected, Gelasius includes *Liber qui appellatur Transitus, id est Assumptio Sanctae Mariae, Apocryphus* (the apocryphal book called *Transitus*, which is the Assumption of Holy Mary).¹²⁶ This entire decree and its condemnation was reaffirmed by Pope Hormisdas in the sixth century, around A.D. 520.¹²⁷

Another issue that arises with the dogma of the Assumption of Mary is the question as to whether or not she died. This is a debated point among Catholics due to the Pope Pius XII statement, “Having completed the course of her earthly life, [she] was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.” Pope Paul VI’s Constitution is equally circumspect: “the immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn.”¹²⁸ Most Catholic theologians would probably admit that Mary had to die before going to heaven, but many Catholics do believe she did not experience death. Once again, these ideas fly in the face of Scripture. Hebrews 9:27 tells us that all men (and women) die. In John 3:13 we read that only Christ has ascended into heaven. Doctrines like the Assumption do a disservice to the Word of God. The doctrine gives Mary a goddess-like position and place. Notice how

the words of St. Bernard on Mary further this goddess-like concept. Addressing Mary, Bernard says: “Since you have heard joyous and glad tidings, let us hear the joyous reply we long for.... The angel is waiting for your reply. It is time for him to return to the one who sent him.... The price of our salvation is being offered you. If you consent, we shall immediately be set free.... Doleful Adam and his unhappy offspring, exiled from Paradise, implore you, kind Virgin, to give this answer.... For it the whole world is waiting, bowed down at your feet.”¹²⁹ Falling at someone’s feet implies we are worshipping them, the Bible is clear we should only worship God (Revelation 19:10).

Furthermore, notice how the Catholic Catechism expands on the meaning of the doctrine, saying: “Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us

the gifts of eternal salvation.... Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress and Mediatrix.”¹³⁰ This dogma is giving Mary god-like status. Scripture makes it clear only Christ can save our souls from death (Acts 4:12). Is there a danger in giving Mary this lofty status? Yes, remember Satan is trying to diminish our relationship with Christ, the only One who can save us. By building up the presence of Mary many sincere Christians are focusing on Mary, who has no power to do anything. What is even more sinister is the deception in focusing on a Mother goddess-like figure.

In his article, “Mary and the Pope: Remarks on the Dogma of the Assumption of Mary,” Professor Hermann Sasses clearly acknowledges that “The Marian cult was the Christian replacement for the cults of the great female deities, which played such a great

role in the life of pre-Christian pagan humanity, the holy virgins and divine mothers, the Babylonian Ishtar, whose cult had already forced its way into Israel, the Syrian Queen of Heaven, the great mother of Asia Minor, the Egyptian Isis, whose favor in the West is testified to by the long use of the name 'Isidor' among Jews and Christians. But unfortunately it was not only a Christian replacement for a pagan religion, it was likewise a pagan religion in Christian guise. The Marian cult is the last of the great cults of a female divinity, which made its way from the Orient into the Roman world, since in the second Punic War Rome had adopted the cult of the Magna Mater of Asia Minor." 131

In closing this section I'd like to reiterate the importance of going to Scripture to determine what we are to believe. As we have already seen the idea that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven comes from sources that are not

biblical. These sources have an unknown author or the given author is false. These sources contain errors in comparison to the Bible, and they were written hundreds of years after Mary died. The Bible gives us no support to put Mary in the position the Catholic and Orthodox churches do.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1 R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2001), 639.

Chapter 2

2 Philip Cary, *The History of Christian Theology*, (Chantilly: The Teaching Company, 2008), p. 267.

3 *Ibid*, p. 270–271.

4 *Ibid*, p. 271.

5 Walter Woodburn Hyde, *Greek Religion and Its Survivals*, (London/Calcutta/Sydney: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. 1924), p. 21–22.

Chapter 3

6 *Ibid*, p. 92.

7 Hyde, p. 98.

8 *Ibid*, p. 56.

9 *Ibid*, p. 42.

10 Stephen Benko, *The Virgin Goddess* (E.J. Brill: Leiden/New York/Koln, 1993), p. 2.

11 Cesar Vidal, *The Myth of Mary* (Chick Publications: China, CA 1995), p. 32.

12 *Ibid*.

13 *Ibid*, p. 33.

- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Vidal, p. 98.
- 17 Hyde, p. 133.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid, p. 220.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Hyde, p. 221.
- 23 Vidal, p. 111.
- 24 Ibid, p. 112.
- 25 Ibid, p. 150.
- 26 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place In The History of Culture* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London 1996), p. 132.
- 27 Pelikan, p. 133.
- 28 Marina Warner, *Alone Of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York 1976), p. 305.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid, p. 306.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid, p. 308.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Warner, p. 193.
- 35 Homer W. Smith, *Man and His Gods* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1953), p. 216.
- 36 Arthur Weigall, *The Paganism in our Christianity* (New York: Putnam Sons, 1928), p. 129.
- 37 Hyde, p. 102.
- 38 Ibid, p. 131-132.
- 39 Ibid, p. 132.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 389.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Sandy Simpson, "Catholic Syncretism Forms the Basis for the Teachings of the World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People Movement (WCGIP)," *deceptioninthechurch.com*. <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/catholicsyncretism.html>. 8/1/13. Accessed 5/11/2020.
- 47 COGWriter, "Assumption of the Goddess Diana is Observed as the Claimed Assumption of Mary," *cogwriter.com*. <https://www.cogwriter.com/news/religious-news/assumption-of-the-goddess-diana-is-observed-as-the-claimed-assumption-of-mary/>. 2009-2013. Accessed 5/11/2020.
- 48 Warner, p. 206.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Warner, p. 320.
- 51 Ibid, p. 321.

- 52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid, p. 206-207.
58 James G. Frazier, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion* (United States: Enhanced Media Publishing, 2015), p. 356 (Chapter 37: Oriental Religions in the West).
59 Charles G. Herbermann et al., *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 15, "Virgin Mary," (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), p. 459.
60 Herbermann et al., p. 460.
61 Ibid.
62 Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), p. 132.
63 Ibid, p. 132, citing Pamela Berger, *The Goddess Obscured: Transformation of the Grain Protectress From Goddess to Saint* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) p. 49.
64 Ibid, p. 133.
65 Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959), p. 20.

Chapter 4

- 66 Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 2008), p. 252.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Bacchiocchi, p.252.
72 Ibid.
73 Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), p. 107.
74 Ibid.
75 Warner, p. 54.
76 Warner, p. 56.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid, p. 58.
79 Ibid, p. 59.
80 Ibid.
81 Pelikan, p. 121.
82 Ibid.
83 Vidal, p. 158.
84 Bacchiocchi, p. 247.
85 Vidal, p. 30.
86 Ibid, p. 28.
87 Ibid.
88 Lawrence Cunningham and Nicolas Sapienza, *Mother of God* (Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1982), P. 30.
89 Vidal, p. 48.

- 90 Ibid, p. 119.
- 91 Bacchiocchi, p. 240.
- 92 Ibid, citing Weimar's *The Works of Luther*, English translation by Pelikan, Concordia, St. Louis, 1958, v. 11, pp. 319-320; v. 6. P. 510.
- 93 Ibid, p. 242, citing *Calvini Opera, Corpus Reformatorum*, Braunschweig-Berlin, 1863-1900, v. 45, p. 348, 35.
- 94 Ibid, citing *Zwingli Opera, Corpus Reformatorum*, 1905, v. 1, p. 424.
- 95 Vidal, p. 119.
- 96 Vidal, p. 119.
- 97 Ibid, p. 120.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 Ibid, p. 120.
- 100 Ibid, p. 121.
- 101 Ibid, p. 138.
- 102 Ibid, p. 138-139.
- 103 Warner, p. 245.
- 104 Ibid, citing Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation*, (London, 1972), p. 277.
- 105 Warner, p. 245-246.
- 106 Ibid, p. 237.
- 107 Ibid.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Bacchiocchi, p. 250, citing Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 1957, paragraph 2803, citing also *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (note 11), p. 124, paragraph 491.
- 110 Ibid, p. 251, citing *Ubi Primum, On the Immaculate Conception*, Encyclical of Pope Pius IX, February 2, 1849, *Papal Encyclical Online*, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9ubipr2.htm>.
- 111 Warner, p. 237.
- 112 Bacchiocchi, p. 255.
- 113 Herbermann et al, Volume 7, "Immaculate Conception," (1910), p. 675.
- 114 Warner, p. 92.

Chapter 5

- 115 Ibid.
- 116 Ibid, p. 98.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 Bacchiocchi, p. 265.
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 Vidal, p. 57.
- 121 Ibid, p. 59.
- 122 Vidal, p. 59.
- 123 Warner, p. 98.
- 124 Bacchiocchi, p. 266.
- 125 Ibid.
- 126 Ibid, citing Pope Gelasius 1, *Epistle 42*, Migne Series, M. P. L. Vol. 59, col. 162.
- 127 Ibid, cited Migne Series, vol.62. cols. 537-542.
- 128 Warner, p. 253, citing Abbott and Gallagher, eds., *Documents of Vatican Two*, "The Role of the

Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church,” ch. 2, para. 59.
129 Sarah Jane Boss ed., *Mary: The Complete Resource* (Chippenham: CPI Antony Rowe, 2009), p. 159.

130 *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Second Edition* (note 510), (United States of America: Doubleday, 1995), p. 275, #969.

131 Bacchiocchi, p. 263 citing www.clai.org.au/articles/sasse/marypopo.htm.