

CATHOLIC TEACHINGS CONCERNING MARY

“Writers of the fourth century were prone to describe many practices as Apostolic Institutions which certainly had no claim to be so regarded.”

-- Catholic Encyclopedia, 3:484.⁴⁵¹

“Yet many see that the original sinlessness of Mary would necessarily involve the sinlessness of her parents and grandparents ad infinitum.”— J. Stafford Wright.⁴⁵²

“A tradition of very doubtful value states that Mary, at the age of three years, was presented in the Temple, and remained there until she attained womanhood. A feast commemorative of this has been observed in various parts of the world since about twelfth century. It was suppressed by Pius V [1566-1572], but was later permitted by Sixtus V in 1585 and has been generally kept since the seventeenth century.” – Externals of the Catholic Church.⁴⁵³

“Substituting of false documents and tampering with genuine ones was quite a trade in the Middle Ages.”— Catholic Encyclopedia, 6:136.⁴⁵⁴

“The monks had to manufacture charters, utterly false as to form, but true to substance, or they would have been ousted from their possessions.”— Catholic Dictionary, p. 338.⁴⁵⁵

What they teach:

That Mary is the “mother of God.”

That Mary is the mediatrix between God and men.

That Mary is to be worshipped.

That Mary is saviour.

That Mary possesses all power.

That Mary remained a virgin perpetually.

That Mary was conceived without sin.

That Mary ascended to heaven.

A. They teach that Mary is the “the mother of God.”

(1) The phrase “mother of God” originated only in the 4th century. “During the 4th-century controversies concerning the divine and human natures of Jesus, the Greek title Theotokos (“Mother of God”) came to be used for Mary in devotional and theological writing. The Syrian monk Nestorius (died about 451) contested this usage, insisting that Mary was

⁴⁵¹ *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc., 1913), 3:484. Fifteen volumes. Special edition published under the auspices of Knights of Columbus Catholic Truth Committee. Quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:18.

⁴⁵² Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of new Testament theology*, 3:663.

⁴⁵³ *Externals of the Catholic Church*, p. 131.

⁴⁵⁴ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 6:136.

⁴⁵⁵ *Catholic Dictionary*, 338.

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mother of Christ, not of God. The Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius's teaching and solemnly affirmed that Mary is to be called Theotokos, a title that has been used since that time in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.”⁴⁵⁶

(2) The Council “was summoned by Theodosius II, emperor of the East, and Valentinian III, emperor of the West, to resolve the controversy caused by the heresy known as Nestorianism. The controversy began when Nestorius (died about 451),⁴⁵⁷ the patriarch of Constantinople, refused to accord the title ‘mother of God’ to Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. Proponents of his view emphasized the separateness of the human and divine in Christ, claiming in effect that he was actually two separate people, the one divine and the other human, who acted in agreement with each other. Accordingly, Mary was considered the mother of the man Jesus, not of the divine Jesus. This was opposed to the accepted doctrine that Christ was a single person, at once God and man. Under the leadership of St Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria, the council deposed Nestorius and condemned his doctrine. It declared that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, that he has two natures (human and divine) joined in one person. As a logical extension of that view, the council approved the title ‘mother of God’ (Greek theotokos, ‘God-bearer’) for Mary.”⁴⁵⁸

REFUTATION:

(1) The phrase “Mother of God” has a 4th century origin (A.D. 431, at the Council of Ephesus). The phrase is not found in the Scriptures. It was a council of men—people who did not have authority to legislate for the church at large—who decided that Mary should be called God’s mother. But those who love God, and Jesus, and characters like Mary, should also express their love and respect for the Word of God. The Bible never calls Mary the “mother of God.”

(2) In the New Testament, Mary is called “the mother of Jesus” (John 2:1; 19:26; Acts 1:14). That which was begotten by her is what she was the mother of. The only part of Jesus that needed a human mother was his body (Philippians 2:5-8).

(3) God, being eternal, immortal, and invisible (1 Timothy 1:17), not having any beginning or end, does not have a mother, and does not need any.

⁴⁵⁶ MEPS 2005, art. “Mary (Virgin Mary).”

⁴⁵⁷ “Nestorianism, historical doctrine espoused by Nestorius, archbishop of Constantinople from ad 428 to 431. Nestorius preached a variant of the orthodox doctrine concerning the nature of Jesus Christ. The orthodox doctrine is that Christ has two natures, one divine and one human, which although distinct are joined in one Person and Substance; Nestorius claimed that in Christ a divine and a human Person acted as one, but did not join to compose the unity of a single individual. Also, according to Nestorius, the Virgin Mary could not be called Mother of God, as she was termed by more orthodox Christians, because her son, Jesus, was born as a man, his divine nature being derived not from her but from the Father who begot him. The doctrines of Nestorius spread throughout the Byzantine Empire during the early 5th century and caused much argument. In 431 the Council of Ephesus declared the Nestorian beliefs to be a heresy, deposed Nestorius and drove him out of the empire, and persecuted his followers. The Nestorians sought refuge in Persia, India, China, and Mongolia where in early medieval times the Nestorian Church was powerful, although it was greatly reduced by later persecution” (MEPS 2005, art. “Nestorianism”).

⁴⁵⁸ MEPS 2005, art. “Council of Ephesus.”

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B. That Mary is the mediatrix between sinners and God.

(1) Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787),⁴⁵⁹ in his book *The Glories of Mary*, says: “And she [Mary] is truly a mediatrix of peace between sinners and God. Sinners receive pardon by... Mary alone.”⁴⁶⁰

(2) “In response [to the Arian teaching that denies the divinity of Christ], preaching and the arts of this period [i.e. the Middle Ages] particularly stressed Christ's divinity, as in the Byzantine depictions of Christ as Pantokrator (‘universal and all-powerful ruler’) and in the western images of Christ as the supreme and universal judge. As Christ became an awe-inspiring, judgemental figure, Mary came to be depicted as the one who interceded for sinners. As the fear of death and the Last Judgement intensified following the Black Plague in the 14th century, Mary was increasingly venerated in popular piety as mediator of the mercy of Christ. Her prayers and pleas were seen as the agency that tempered the stern justice of Christ. Among the popular devotions that came into being at this time were the rosary; (a chaplet originally consisting of 150 Hail Marys in imitation of the 150 Psalms in the psalter, later augmented by 15 interspersed Our Fathers as penance for daily sins); the angelus recited at sunrise, noon, and sunset; and litanies, invocations of Mary using such biblical titles as Mystical Rose, Tower of David, and Refuge of Sinners (see Litany). Hymns, psalms, and prayers were incorporated into the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, in imitation of the longer divine office recited or chanted by monks and priests.”⁴⁶¹

REFUTATION:

(1) The Confraternity Version of the Bible published by the Roman Catholic Church teaches that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). The word “**one**” limits the number of mediators.

(2) The Bible does not teach Mary’s mediatorial role; too, there is one sense in which she cannot be mediator, mediatrix, or mediatrix:

(a) Firstly, the mediator is one who puts himself in the middle, seeing that he understands and has sympathy for both parties.⁴⁶² Jesus partakes of both human and godly natures; Mary does not.

⁴⁵⁹ Alphonsus Liguori, (1696-1787), Italian prelate and theologian, born in Naples. “In 1732 he founded the missionary congregation of Liguorians, or Redemptorists, in order to spread religion among the poor. He was appointed bishop of Sant’ Agata dei Goti, near Naples, in 1792. Liguori wrote on almost all theological subjects, and his *Theologia Moralis* (Moral Theology, 1753) has been reprinted many times. *Le Glorie di Maria* (The Glories of Mary, 1750) is the best known of his popular works. Liguori developed a principle in casuistry known as equiprobabilism, whereby in matters of conscience the laxer course may be followed when opinions on both sides are equally probable. He was canonized in 1839, designated a Doctor of the Church in 1871, and declared a patron of confessors and moralists in 1950. His feast day is August 2.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Alphonsus Liguori”).

⁴⁶⁰ Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary* (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1902), p. 83. A new edition has been published which differs substantially from the original.

⁴⁶¹ MEPS 2005, art. “Mary (Virgin Mary).”

⁴⁶² Mediator (Gr. *mesites*) “means one who finds himself between two bodies or parties.” “He could be the conciliator or arbitrator in cases that had not yet come before the court, so as to prevent this from happening.

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(b) Secondly, the mediator is also one who puts himself as the guarantee in place of another. Jesus has made that substitutionary sacrifice for us on the cross; Mary has not.

(3) The rosary devotion to Mary originated in the 14th century. Jesus never taught his disciples to pray to Mary. He told them to pray to God, saying, “*Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.*” (Matthew 6:9-13, RSV).

(4) Concerning how we should pray, see also Matthew 6:5-7.

(5) The rosary came to be used by Catholics in the 13th century AD; other religions such as Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Orthodox Church and Anglicans also use it in their prayers.⁴⁶³

C. They teach that Mary is to be worshipped.

(1) The Church of Rome technically divides worship into three kinds: (a) *Latria*, which they say is the worship offered to God alone. (b) *Dulia*, the veneration offered to saints and angels. (c) *Hyperdulia*, a higher kind of veneration offered to Mary.

(2) “Marian shrines and places of pilgrimage are found throughout the world. At Monserrat in Spain the Black Virgin has been venerated since the 12th century. The icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa has been venerated in Poland since the early 14th century. The picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe commemorates an alleged apparition of Mary to Juan Diego in Mexico in 1531. In the 19th century a number of apparitions of Mary were reported that inspired the development of shrines, devotions, and pilgrimages—for instance, in Paris (1830, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal), Lourdes (1858, Our Lady of Lourdes), Knock, in Ireland (1879, Our Lady of Knock), and Fatima, in Portugal (1917, Our Lady of Fatima).”⁴⁶⁴

(3) “Ave Maria or Hail Mary is name given by Roman Catholics to a form of address to the Virgin Mary, included in the divine office and in a few antiphons of the Mass. Ave Maria are the first two words of the prayer that is taken from the salutation (see Luke 1:28) of the angel Gabriel, traditionally worded: “Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;

He could be the administrator or trustee for something in dispute. He was also the witness to legal business that had been settled with the responsibility of guaranteeing that the decision would be carried out. He could be a pawnbroker and sometimes a guarantor, who guarantees the liabilities of another with his own property” (Colin Brown, 1:373).

⁴⁶³ The “Rosary” is “a string of beads or a knotted cord used to count prayers. The term is also applied to the prayers themselves. Rosaries are used in many religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. Most often associated with the Roman Catholic Church in Christianity, the rosary is also used by the Orthodox Church, for whom it is almost exclusively a monastic devotion, and by some Anglicans” (MEPS 2005, art. “Rosary”)

⁴⁶⁴ MEPS 2005, art. “Mary [Virgin Mary]”.

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blessed art thou among women”. Appearing in various forms as early as the 6th century in the Liturgy of St James and others, the Ave Maria was finally adopted as a popular devotion in the 11th century. The present form was fixed by Pope Pius V in 1568 and has been used by the Roman Catholic laity as widely as the Our Father, or Lord's Prayer.”⁴⁶⁵

REFUTATION:

(1) The above-mentioned classification the Roman Catholic Church makes of worship is just arbitrary, to say the least.

(a) *Latria*, which the Roman Catholic Church says is a form of worship offered to God alone, is also a form of worship offered to idols (1 Maccabees 1:45).⁴⁶⁶

(b) *Dulia*, which the Roman Catholic Church is a form of worship offered dead saints and angels, is actually the service offered to idols (which are by nature no gods) (Galatians 4:8).

(c) *Hyperdulia*, which the Roman Catholic Church is the form of worship offered to Mary, is a word not found in the Scriptures. This could have been a Romanist invention.

(2) *Proskuneo* is the more frequent word for worship in the Scriptures and is used for the worship offered to God (Matthew 4:10; Rev. 22:9); to Jesus (Matthew 2:2, 8, 11; 20:20); to Peter by Cornelius (Acts 10:25); to an angel by John (Revelation 22:8); to Satan (Matthew 4:9).

(3) Mary, while alive, was never the object of worship (cf. Acts 1:14, 24). Catholic history records the stages of her exaltation which finally led to her being worshipped:

A. MARY IS EXALTED BUT NOT YET VENERATED:

(i) The first mention of Mary outside of the Scriptures was near the end of the second century, in the apocryphal *Protevangelium of James* (Proto-Gospel of James), and presents a fantastic story about her birth. The book also says that Mary remained a virgin all her life. This was the beginning of her exaltation.⁴⁶⁷

(ii) Justin Martyr (died in 165 A.D.) assumed that Eve's disobedience has been atoned by the obedience of Mary. She was exalted but not venerated.

(iii) The first known picture of Mary was found in the Priscilla catacomb in Rome and dates to about the 2nd century A.D. During this period (2nd century AD), she was not yet the object of worship.

⁴⁶⁵ MEPS 2005, art. "Ave Maria").

⁴⁶⁶ The book of 1 Machabees 1:45, "And many of Israel consented to his service, and they sacrificed to idols, and profaned the sabbath." (The Holy Bible, New Catholic Edition).

⁴⁶⁷ "In both the Eastern and Western Churches, feast days in honour of the events of Mary's life came into existence between the 4th and 7th centuries. They celebrate her miraculous conception and her birth, narrated in the apocryphal protogospel of James (September 8), the Annunciation (March 25), her purification in the Temple (February 2), and her death (called the Dormition in the Eastern Church) and bodily assumption into heaven (August 15; see Assumption of the Virgin)." (MEPS 2005, art. "Mary [Virgin Mary]").

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B. MARY IS HIGHLY EXALTED AND VENERATED:

- (i) “The mother of God” concept was affirmed by the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431. This highly exalted Mary.
- (ii) In 610 A.D. the pope dedicated a heathen pantheon to “Virgin Mary,” which is now converted as a place of worship by Catholics.⁴⁶⁸
- (iii) Pius V approved the singing of Ave Maria in praise of Mary in 1568.⁴⁶⁹
- (iv) The dogma of the immaculate conception was proclaimed by Pius IX in 1854.⁴⁷⁰
- (v) The bodily assumption of Mary was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII in 1950.⁴⁷¹

D. They teach that Mary is saviour.

Listen to these statements from Alphonsus Liguori:

- (1) *“Mary is called... the gate of heaven because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through her.”*⁴⁷²
- (2) *“The way of salvation is to open to none otherwise than through Mary... Our salvation is in the hands of Mary... He who is protected by Mary will be saved, he who is not will be lost.”*⁴⁷³

REFUTATION:

- (1) God alone is our Saviour (Isaiah 43:11; 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:10).
- (2) Jesus, being God (John 1:1; Titus 2:13; Philippians 2:5-6), is acknowledged too as Saviour (Acts 13:23; Luke 2:11; John 4:42; Ephesians 5:23).

⁴⁶⁸ Lorraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 137. The pope at that time was Boniface IV. See MEPS 2005, art. “Popes.”

⁴⁶⁹ “Ave Maria or Hail Mary, name given by Roman Catholics to a form of address to the Virgin Mary, included in the divine office and in a few antiphons of the Mass. Ave Maria are the first two words of the prayer that is taken from the salutation (see Luke 1:28) of the angel Gabriel, traditionally worded: “Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women”. Appearing in various forms as early as the 6th century in the Liturgy of St James and others, the Ave Maria was finally adopted as a popular devotion in the 11th century. The present form was fixed by Pope Pius V in 1568 and has been used by the Roman Catholic laity as widely as the Our Father, or Lord's Prayer.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Ave Maria”).

⁴⁷⁰ “Opposition to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was conducted in the 12th century by St Bernard of Clairvaux and in the 13th century by the famous philosopher St Thomas Aquinas. Among those who supported the doctrine was the 13th-century Scottish theologian John Duns Scotus. The theological controversy over the Immaculate Conception gained momentum in the 19th century. Finally in 1854, Pope Pius IX issued a solemn decree declaring the Immaculate Conception to be a dogma essential for the belief of the universal Church.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Immaculate Conception”).

⁴⁷¹ “Assumption of the Virgin, in the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, the doctrine that after her death the body of Mary, the mother of Christ, was taken into heaven and reunited with her soul. Defined as an article of faith by Pope Pius XII in 1950, the assumption was first commemorated as the Feast of the Dormition (falling asleep) of Mary in the 6th century; this feast later developed into the Feast of the Assumption, now celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church on August 15.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Assumption of the Virgin”).

⁴⁷² Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, p. 160.

⁴⁷³ Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, p. 169, 170.

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(3) Mary needed a Saviour! (Luke 1:46-47). Don't Catholics realize that they have exalted and honored a person who was so humble to admit she needed God's saving grace? She also offered a sacrifice for sins (Luke 2:22-24; cf. Leviticus 12:6). (Note that turtledoves and the pigeons were for sin offerings).

(4) Is Mary the way to Heaven? Jesus refers to Himself as the way (John 14:6). God now speaks to us through Him (Hebrews 1:1-2). The Father commands all to listen to Him (Matthew 17:5). There is no command, example or inference in the Scripture that teaches Mary's mediatorial ministry.

E. They teach that Mary possesses all power.

Again from Liguori:

(1) *"All power is given to thee (that is, Mary) in heaven and on earth."*⁴⁷⁴

(2) *"At the command of Mary, all obey -- even God --...and thus... God has placed the whole church ... under the domination of Mary."*⁴⁷⁵

(3) Mary *"is also the advocate of the whole human race... for she can do what she wills with God."*⁴⁷⁶

REFUTATION:

Jesus possesses ALL power in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). God has highly exalted Jesus (not Mary), giving him power over both heaven and earth (Philippians 2:9, 10). Is there any power left for Mary? Jesus even has power over those in the spiritual realm (Matthew 8:16, 28-32). Ask a Catholic what power does Mary have. If it can be shown that Jesus does have such power, and if it can be shown that Mary was never promised that power, then they have anchored their hope on a powerless mediatrix, someone who cannot save them.

F. They teach that Mary remained a perpetual virgin.

"Closely allied with the title Mother of God is the title Virgin Mary, affirming the virginal conception of Jesus (see Luke 1:35). Initially, this title stressed the belief that God, not Joseph, was the true Father of Jesus. In the Marian devotion that developed in the East in the 4th century Mary was venerated not only in the conception, but also in the birth of Jesus. This conviction was expressed clearly in the 4th century baptismal creeds of Cyprus, Syria, Palestine, and Armenia (373-374). The title used was Aieiparthenos ("ever-virgin"), and by the middle of the 7th century the understanding of the title came to include the conviction that Mary remained a virgin for the whole of her life. The passages in the New Testament referring to the brothers of Jesus (for instance, Mark 6:3, which also mentions sisters; see 1 Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19) have been accordingly explained as

⁴⁷⁴ Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, p. 180.

⁴⁷⁵ Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, p. 181.

⁴⁷⁶ Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, p. 193.

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references to relatives of Jesus or to children of Joseph by a previous marriage, although no textual evidence supports these interpretations.”⁴⁷⁷

REFUTATION:

(1) A virgin is a woman who has not had any sexual relations with a man (cf. Luke 1:34). Mary had to be a virgin before giving birth to Jesus for the following reasons:

(a) In fulfill the prophecy (Isaiah 7:14; cf. Matthew 1:23).

(b) In obedience to God’s plan for Jesus (Luke 1:38). The plan of redemption necessitates Jesus’ becoming man (cf. Philippians 2:5-8; Luke 1:35). He had to be God to be our Saviour, and God alone is savior (cf. Isaiah 43:11). Man cannot save man from sins, since all men have sinned (Romans 3:23). But Jesus has to be man to be able to shed his blood, since without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22). To fulfill His mission of saving man, God had prepared for him a body (Hebrews 10:5).

(c) Jesus’ being born of a woman who is no longer a virgin would cast doubt on his true origin and on his claim of being from above (John 8:23; 3:31).

(2) The Catholic teaching of Mary’s perpetual virginity is a lie. The Bible says Joseph had no sexual relations with her TILL she gave birth to her firstborn son (Matthew 1:25). What happened after that? If Mary remained a perpetual virgin after Jesus was born, she was not acting as a good wife, since she would have defrauded Joseph of his sexual rights (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5).

(3) Jesus is God’s only begotten Son (Gr. *monogenes huios*, John 3:16), but also Mary’s firstborn (Matthew 1:25). Mary had other children by Joseph (Matthew 13:55, 56; 12:46; Mark 6:3; 3:31; Luke 8:19; John 2:12; Gal. 1:19; 1 Corinthians 9:5).

G. They teach that Mary was conceived without sin.

(1) The doctrine of the “immaculate conception” teaches that Mary herself was born without sin, that from the first moment of her existence she was free from the taint of original sin. It holds that while the rest of us are born into an inheritance of original sin, only Mary was exempted, by a special miracle from God. The original decree setting forth this doctrine was issued by pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854,⁴⁷⁸ and reads as follows:

⁴⁷⁷ MEPS 2005, art. “Mary (Virgin Mary).”

⁴⁷⁸ The principal theological development concerning Mary in the Middle Ages was the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This doctrine, defended and preached by the Franciscan friars under the inspiration of the 13th-century Scottish theologian John Duns Scotus, maintains that Mary was conceived without original sin. Dominican teachers and preachers vigorously opposed the doctrine, maintaining that it detracted from Christ’s role as universal saviour. Pope Sixtus IV, however, defended it, establishing (1477) a feast of the Immaculate Conception with a proper mass and office to be celebrated on December 8. This feast was extended to the whole Western Church by Pope Clement XI in 1708. In 1854 Pope Pius IX issued a solemn decree defining the Immaculate Conception for all Roman Catholics, but the doctrine has not been accepted by Protestants or by the Orthodox Churches.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Mary [Virgin Mary]”).

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*“We declare, pronounce and define that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, by the singular grace and privilege of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, and that this doctrine was revealed by God, and therefore must be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful.”*⁴⁷⁹

(2) “Beginning in the 2nd and 3rd centuries Mary was called Holy or Blessed Virgin to express the belief that, because of her intimate union with God through the Holy Spirit in the conception of Jesus (see Luke 1:35), Mary was completely free from any taint of sin. A Roman Catholic Council in 680 spoke of her as the “blessed, immaculate ever-virgin.”⁴⁸⁰

(3) “Immaculate Conception” is the Roman Catholic dogma that holds that “from the first instant of its creation, the soul of the Virgin Mary was free from original sin; this doctrine is not to be confused with that of the Virgin Birth, which holds that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin mother. Despite divergent scholarly opinions, the Roman Catholic Church has consistently favoured belief in the Immaculate Conception; a festival of that name, the significance of which is now indefinite, was celebrated in the Eastern Church as early as the 5th century and in the Western Church from the 7th century.

Opposition to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was conducted in the 12th century by St Bernard of Clairvaux and in the 13th century by the famous philosopher St Thomas Aquinas. Among those who supported the doctrine was the 13th-century Scottish theologian John Duns Scotus. The theological controversy over the Immaculate Conception gained momentum in the 19th century. Finally in 1854, Pope Pius IX issued a solemn decree declaring the Immaculate Conception to be a dogma essential for the belief of the universal Church.”⁴⁸¹

REFUTATION:

(1) The theory that the immaculate conception of Mary in itself would secure Christ’s freedom from “original sin” raises more problems than it solves. Says E. C. Messenger, in his book, “She [that is, Mary] as a child of Adam, incurred the debt of original sin, and was exempted from the stain of original sin only by a special privilege, granted her in virtue of the merits of her Divine Son.”⁴⁸²

This view reflects Pius IX’s definition of the dogma of immaculate conception: “That the most blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception, by a unique grace and privilege of the omnipotent God and in consideration of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore must be firmly and constantly held by all the faithful” (extract from the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, 8th December 1854).

⁴⁷⁹ From the papal bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, quoted in The Tablet, December 12, 1953; cf. Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 158.

⁴⁸⁰ MEPS 2005, art. “Mary (Virgin Mary).”

⁴⁸¹ MEPS 2005, art. “Immaculate Conception.”

⁴⁸² *The Mystery of Sex and Marriage*, 2:84, quoted by J. Stafford Wright (Colin Brown, 3:663).

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But J. Stafford Wright says, “Yet many see that the original sinlessness of Mary would necessarily involve the sinlessness of her parents and grandparents *ad infinitum*.”⁴⁸³

(2) The dogma is based on a forgery, as the Catholic Encyclopedia shows: “Apocryphal Gospels of Catholic Origin.-*The Prote-evangelium Jacobi*, or *Infancy Gospel of James*, purports to have been written by ‘James the brother of the Lord,’ that is, the apostle James the Less. It is based on the canonical gospels which it expands with legendary and imaginative elements, which are sometimes puerile and fantastic. The birth, education, and marriage of the Blessed Virgin are described in the first eleven chapters and these are the source of various traditions current among the faithful.”⁴⁸⁴

(3) “A tradition of very doubtful value states that Mary, at the age of three years, was presented in the Temple, and remained there until she attained womanhood. A feast commemorative of this has been observed in various parts of the world since about twelfth century. It was suppressed by Pius V [1566-1572], but was later permitted by Sixtus V in 1585 and has been generally kept since the seventeenth century.”⁴⁸⁵

(4) The “immaculate conception” doctrine was decreed only on December 8, 1854, by Pius IX; it was declared too late, and by a mere human being, who is not an apostle, hence the doctrine is not an apostolic teaching.

(5) “St.” Bernard of Clairvaux, “St.” Thomas Aquinas, and “St.” Augustine did not believe in the doctrine of the “immaculate conception.”⁴⁸⁶

(6) Concerning the little children, Jesus says, “Let them come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:19). The “unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). But the little children can inherit the kingdom of God; it follows therefore that the little children are righteous. It follows too that all little children, not only Mary the little child, are “immaculately conceived”!

(7) Luke says Mary offered a sin offering for herself (Luke 2:22-24; cf. Leviticus 12:6, 8). What does this mean? Either Mary was a sinner too like the rest of us are, or that she did not remain sinless! (Luke 1:46-47; cf. Romans 3:10, 23).

H. That Mary went to heaven and was enthroned as “Queen.”

(1) The doctrine of the assumption, according to the Roman Catholic Church, is “the taking up of the body and soul of Virgin Mary into heaven after her death.”⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸³ Colin Brown, 3:663.

⁴⁸⁴ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1:607. This apocryphal book is dated “probably late 2nd century” (Colin Brown, 3:660).

⁴⁸⁵ *Externals of the Catholic Church*, p. 131.

⁴⁸⁶ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1:428, 431; cf. MEPS 2005, art. “Immaculate Conception.”

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(2) The pronouncement of the doctrine came on November 1, 1950, with the ex-cathedra declaration of pope Pius XII.⁴⁸⁸ The added warning was that “anyone who may henceforth doubt or deny this doctrine is utterly fallen away from the divine and Catholic faith.”⁴⁸⁹

REFUTATION:

(1) The Catholic Encyclopedia says the doctrine of “the assumption of the Virgin” was largely based on the work of Dionysius the Areopagite.⁴⁹⁰ Dionysius “was supposed to have been a disciple of the Apostles.”⁴⁹¹ But the work of Dionysius is now admitted to be a forgery;⁴⁹² it was “intended to create the impression that the author belonged to the time of the Apostles.”⁴⁹³ It was done “plainly for the purpose of deceiving.”⁴⁹⁴

(2) The doctrine of the “assumption of Mary” is just an assumption, a presumption, and a product of forgery! It is well to remember this Catholic admission that “substituting of false documents and tampering with genuine ones was quite a trade in the Middle Ages.”⁴⁹⁵ Also, “The monks had to manufacture charters, utterly false as to form, but true to substance, or they would have been ousted from their possessions.”⁴⁹⁶

(3) No man or woman (this includes Mary!) has yet ascended to heaven (John 3:13).⁴⁹⁷ Jesus’ ascension to heaven had been witnessed by many. (Acts 1:9-11; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-7). If Mary had gone to heaven, who had witnessed her ascension? A dogma pronouncement from a pope (Pius XII) is no proof at all! The doctrine, aside from being false, is unapostolic, having been decreed only on November 1, 1950 by one who is not an apostle nor a prophet of God.

(4) The Catholic Bible says mortal “flesh and blood” cannot enter heaven (I Corinthians 15:50). Mortal bodies shall be changed, and mortality shall put on immortality, before they can go to heaven (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:42-55).

⁴⁸⁷ Victoria Neufeldt, editor in chief. *Webster’s New World Dictionary of American English* (New York: Prentice Hall/ Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1994).

⁴⁸⁸ In 1854 Pope Pius IX issued a solemn decree defining the Immaculate Conception for all Roman Catholics, but the doctrine has not been accepted by Protestants or by the Orthodox Churches. In 1950, Pope Pius XII solemnly defined as an article of faith for all Roman Catholics the doctrine of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Mary [Virgin Mary]”).

⁴⁸⁹ Lorraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 162. See also MEPS 2005, art. “Assumption of the Virgin.”

⁴⁹⁰ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1:608.

⁴⁹¹ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 14:589.

⁴⁹² *Outline of Dogmatic Theology*, 2:279.

⁴⁹³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 5:14.

⁴⁹⁴ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 5:13.

⁴⁹⁵ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 6:136.

⁴⁹⁶ *Catholic Dictionary*, 338.

⁴⁹⁷ John 3:13, “And no one has ascended into heaven except him who has descended from heaven: the Son of Man who is in heaven” (The Holy Bible, New Catholic Edition).