

# Mary, the Mother of God

According to Scripture and the Early Church

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*“Virtually every heresy begins with the misconception of the nature of God.”*

– Hank Hanegraaff

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### Preface

Just as virtually every heresy begins with the misconception of the nature of God - *every* attack on Catholicism begins with the misconception of Christ’s Church.

Since its establishment by Jesus Christ 2000 years ago, the Catholic Church has held certain beliefs drawn from the written and oral traditions passed on by Jesus and the Apostles. Some are **explicitly** taught in the written and oral Word and some are *implicitly* taught.

Some *explicitly-taught* beliefs, like the **Eucharist** (*John 6:31-71, Matt. 26: 26-29, Mark 14: 22-25, Luke 22: 7-20, 1 Cor. 11:23–26*) were so passionately believed by the Early Church that many early Christians willingly went to their deaths for this belief. They were persecuted by the Jews and Romans and accused of being **“Cannibals”** for their belief in the **Real Presence** in the Eucharist.

Some of these *implicitly-taught*, yet widely-held beliefs of the Early Church, such as the **Holy Trinity**, **Purgatory**, **Mary’s Perpetual Virginity** or the **Filioque** clause, were declared in Doctrines or Creeds when dissenters and heretics called these beliefs into question or began teaching contrary beliefs. Our Lord and Savior warned of these people who teach another message other than the Gospel:

#### **Matt. 7:15-23**

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves.*

*By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?*

*Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So by their fruits you will know them.*

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”*

*Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?’*

*Then I will declare to them solemnly, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.’*

It is disingenuous and quite frankly, **dishonest** of former and **anti-Catholics** to misrepresent the beliefs on the Church based on either bitterness or their own personal ignorance. These misrepresentations, half-truths and falsehoods make charitable dialogue between Protestants and Catholics impossible.

Each of us will be held accountable before God. As it says in Scripture: “...from everyone who has been given much, **much will be required**; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more” (Luke 12:48)

We are **indeed** responsible for what we know.

## First Things *First* . . .

One of the problems that many Protestants have with Catholic theology is the honor we give Mary, the Mother of God. In fact, they even find the title, “**Mother of God**” offensive. However, a rudimentary knowledge of the Scriptures and history of the Early Church Fathers shows not only the truth of this title, but also the honor given to her in the early Church.

To fully understand why the early Christians (and Catholics today) hold Mary in such high regard, we must begin with the nature of Christ himself. Jesus is both fully human and fully divine and these two natures cannot be separated. This is the doctrine of the **Hypostatic Union**, which was declared at the **Council of Ephesus** in **431**. To say Mary gave birth only to Jesus human nature is to misunderstand this doctrine and speak heresy.

### Mary bore God – not just a man

Another doctrine declared at **Ephesus** was one concerning Mary. This is the doctrine of *Theotokos* (God-bearer). This decree was actually proclaimed in order to define the nature of our Lord Jesus even more so than it was to proclaim Mary’s role. It was to defeat the *Nestorian Heresy*, which held that Jesus was not divine, but merely human and that God only dwelt in Him as in a temple - and *therein* lies the heresy.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Patriarch of Constantinople, **Nestorius**, held that there were two persons in Christ, making Mary *Christotokos* (Mother of Christ), instead of *Theotokos* (Mother of God). Mary gave birth not simply to a human being but to a **divine person** who united to himself a human and divine nature. This must be clearly understood before embarking on a discussion concerning Mary’s role in salvation history. For the Christian of today, to deny the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union is to fall back into the Nestorian heresy.

### God-given Authority of the Church

The anti-Catholic cannot understand the teachings of the Church until they first understand the Authority given her by our Lord Jesus. Jesus told the Apostles that the Church would have the **final** say on matters concerning the Body (**Matt. 18:15-18**), that even the gates of hell wouldn’t prevail against his Church (**Matt. 16:18**), and gave them the power to retain and forgive sins (**Matt. 16:19, 18:18, John 20:23**).

He also assured the Apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide the Church to **ALL** truth about the things that were coming and that the Holy Spirit would take from what was Jesus’ and declare it to the Church (**John 16:13-15**). He never said “*some truth*” or “*only up until the 16<sup>th</sup> century*” He said, “**ALL** truth.”

Paul asserts that the Church is the “*pillar and foundation of truth*” (**1 Tim. 3:15**).

In **Acts 9:4-5**, Jesus equates his Body – the Church - with his **very self**:

*He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, **why are you persecuting me?**" He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "**I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.**"*

Notice that Jesus **DOESN'T** say, “*Why are you persecuting the Church?*” (which is **EXACTLY** what Paul was doing). Jesus chose to equate the church with **himself**.

**Acts 15:28-29** is further proof that this Authority rests on the Church. The early Church didn’t appeal solely to Scripture when making doctrinal decisions. At the Council of Jerusalem, the leaders said in a letter:

**It is the decision of the holy Spirit and of us** not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities,

*namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell."*

The writings of the Early Church Fathers – some of whom *knew* the Apostles – are further proof that the Church has always held these beliefs. We will examine their position on the various topics addressed in this document.

## **The Errors of the Two Pillars of Protestantism**

Lastly, the ecclesiastical divorce that is Protestantism was founded on the false doctrines of **Sola Fide** (faith alone) and **Sola Scriptura** (the Bible alone).

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### **Sola Fide**

Nowhere is all of Scripture is the term "*faith alone*" found to buttress this belief. In fact, the only place in Scripture where this phrase exists is in **James 2:24** where it explicitly says:

*"See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."* The Scriptures are replete with admonitions about cooperating with God's grace in order to be saved:

**Matt. 7:21** - *Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."*

**Luke 9:23** - *"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

**Rom. 11:22** - *"See, then, the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who fell, but God's kindness to you, provided you remain in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off."*

**Heb. 10:26-27** - *"If we sin deliberately after receiving knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains sacrifice for sins but a fearful prospect of judgment and a flaming fire that is going to consume the adversaries."*

**2 Pet. 2:26-27** - *For if they, having escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of (our) Lord and savior Jesus Christ, again become entangled and overcome by them, their last condition is worse than their first.*

*For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment handed down to them.*

Paul speaks of the virtues of faith, hope and love. He says that the greatest virtue is *not* faith – but **LOVE**. **1 Cor. 13:13** - *So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

Paul also speaks of Faith *working* through Love:

**Gal 5:6** - *For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

**Rom. 1:5-6** - *Through him we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles, among whom are you also, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ;*

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### **Sola Scriptura**

Just as with the error of Sola Fide, the doctrine of **Sola Scriptura** is also unsupported by the *context* of Scripture and Early Church teachings. Sola Scripture is simply not found anywhere in the Bible.

Protestants will usually provide the following verses to support this false doctrine:

**John 20:31** - *"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name".*

**2 Timothy 3:16–17** - *“All Scripture is inspired by God and **profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be equipped, prepared for every good work.”*

The Catholic Church agrees that Scripture is profitable for teaching, training and correction but **NOWHERE** do these passages claim that the written word is all you need. In fact the following passages speak of the word of God being passed on orally as well as the written word and that they are equally binding on the believer:

**2 Thess. 2:15** - *Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the **traditions** that you were taught, **either by an oral statement OR by a letter of ours.***

**2 Tim. 2:2** - *“**What you have heard from me** before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”.*

**1 Cor. 11:2** - *“I commend you because you remember me in everything and **maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you**”.*

**2 Tim. 12:14** - *On this account I am suffering these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know him in whom I have believed and am confident that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. Take as your norm **the sound words that you heard from me**, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. **Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.***

**John 21:25** explicitly tells us: *“But Jesus did many other things; if all were written down, the world itself would not hold the books recording them.”*

It is interesting to note that the following verses of the New Testament draw upon words and ideas from the Old Testament – yet they are **not found** in the Old Testament Scriptures: **Matt. 2:23, Matt. 23:1-2, 1 Cor. 10:4, 2 Timothy 3:8.**

### **The Early Church Fathers were Catholic**

The writings of the Early Church Fathers show that the Early Catholic Church interpreted the Scriptures and held the oral and written traditions just as the Catholic Church does to this day:

**Ignatius of Antioch** - on the Catholic Church - *Follow your bishop, every one of you, as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Obey your clergy too as you would the apostles; give your deacons the same reverence that you would to a command of God. Make sure that no step affecting the Church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop’s sanction. **The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is celebrated by the bishop himself, or by some person authorized by him. Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as, wherever Jesus Christ is present, there is the Catholic Church*** (Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8:2 [A.D. 110]).

**Papias** - on Oral Tradition - *Whenever anyone came my way, who had been a follower of my seniors, I would ask for the accounts of our seniors: What did Andrew or Peter say? Or Phillip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any of the Lord’s disciples? I also asked: What did Aristion and John the Presbyter, disciples of the Lord say. **For, as I see it, it is not so much from books as from the living and permanent voice that I must draw profit*** (The Sayings of the Lord [between A.D. 115 and 140] as recorded by Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3:39 [A.D. 325]).

**Irenaeus** - on Church Authority and Tradition - *For even creation reveals Him who formed it, and the very work made suggests Him who made it, and the world manifests Him who ordered it. **The Universal [Catholic] Church, moreover, through the whole world, has received this tradition from the Apostles*** (Against Heresies 2:9 [A.D. 189]).

*True knowledge is the doctrine of the Apostles, and the ancient constitution of the Church throughout all the world, and the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of the bishops, by which they have handed down that Church which exists in every place, and has come even unto us, being guarded and preserved, without any forging of Scriptures, by a very complete system of doctrine, and neither addition nor curtailment ... (ibid. 4:33 [A.D. 189]).*

**Tertullian** - on Tradition - *For wherever both the true Christian rule and faith shall be shown to be, there will be the true Scriptures, and the true expositions, of all the true Christian traditions (The Prescription of Heretics 19 [A.D. 200]).*

**Athanasius** - on Church Authority and Tradition - *Without prefixing Consulate, month, and day, [the Fathers] wrote concerning Easter, "It seemed good as follows," for it did then seem good that there should be a general compliance; but about the faith they wrote not, "It seemed good" but, "Thus believes the Catholic Church"; and thereupon they confessed how they believed, in order to show that their own sentiments were not novel, but Apostolic; and what they wrote down was no discovery of theirs, but is the same as was taught by the Apostles (Letter on the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia [A.D. 359]).*

**Jerome** - on Tradition - *Don't you know that the laying on of hands after baptism and then the invocation of the Holy Spirit is a custom of the Churches? Do you demand Scripture proof? You may find it in the Acts of the Apostles. And even if it did not rest on the authority of Scripture the consensus of the whole world in this respect would have the force of a command. For many other observances of the Churches, which are do to tradition, have acquired the authority of the written law (The Dialogue Against the Luciferians 8 [A.D. 382]).*

**John Chrysostom** - on Oral Tradition - *"So then brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Hence it is manifest, that they did not deliver all things by epistle, but many things also unwritten, and in like manner both the one and the other are worthy of credit. Therefore let us think the tradition of the Church also worthy of credit. It is a tradition, seek no farther (Homilies on Second Thessalonians [circa A.D. 400]).*

**Augustine** - on Church Authority - *"Number the priests even from that seat of Peter. And in that order of fathers see to whom succeeded: that is the rock which the proud gates of hades do not conquer."*

*"You see, there have already been two councils about this matter, and their decisions sent to the Apostolic [Roman] See; from there rescripts have been sent back here. The case is finished; if only the error were finished too, sometime! So, let us all warn them to take notice of this, teach them to learn the lesson of it, pray for them to change their ideas."*

*"For my part, I should not believe the gospel except moved by the authority of the Catholic Church. So when those on whose authority I have consented to believe in the gospel tell me not to believe in Manicheus, how can I but consent?"*

It must also be noted that statements and teachings of the Early Church Fathers on Mary are in **complete** harmony with the Catholic teachings of today, which are in **complete** harmony with Scripture. If these men (*some of whom shed their blood for the faith*), who kept the faith alive after the Apostolic era, were teaching heresy and a fraudulent Christianity, then 21<sup>st</sup> Century Protestants **must** ask themselves: **What** was their motive for doing so? **Why** were they willing to die for these beliefs if they were **not** the truth?" **Didn't** Jesus promise that the gates of hell **wouldn't** prevail against his Church (**Matt. 16:18**)? Simply put, to believe that the Church was apostate until the Reformation is to render our Lord and Savior a **liar**.

## Praying to Mary and the Saints

The ancient Church practice of petitioning those in Heaven to pray for us is one that doesn't sit well with many Protestants. They charge that **"if it isn't explicitly taught in the Bible, we are forbidden to do it."** What they don't understand is that many of the truths of God are taught *implicitly*.

For example, the word, **"Bible"** isn't in the Bible and neither is a list of books that are supposed to comprise the Bible. The **Holy Trinity** isn't even explicitly named in the Bible. These terminologies came from the Church – not the Bible. Using the Protestant rule, they have no business believing in these doctrines because they're not explicitly named. Even the **Bereans**, who studied the Scriptures to insure that Paul's oral teaching (Tradition) was in line with what was written, ultimately believed a truth that was not explicitly there: **The fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Messiah.**

In fact, we first find the word **Trinity** in the writings of Tertullian (c.155-230). The doctrine was decreed by the Catholic Church at the **Council of Nicaea** in **325 AD** because of the **Arian Heresy**, which claimed that saying that Jesus was not of one substance with the Father and that he had not existed in Eternity with the Father.

To prove that we are not to ask those in Heaven for help, Protestants will quote **1 Tim. 2:5**, where Paul writes, *"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* The Catholic Church **agrees** with this verse. Jesus **IS** our only mediator before God in that only **his** sacrifice could atone for our sins and bring peace between us and the Father. However, to say that there are not other intercessors goes against Scripture. We are **ALL** called upon to intercede for one another with prayer and supplications – **2 Cor. 1:10-11, Eph. 6:18-20, 1Tim. 2:1-4, James 5:16.**

Protestants often say that to **"pray"** to somebody in heaven to ask them to for pray for us is idolatry because prayer is reserved for God alone. This is a complete **failure** to understand the word. To pray, *in the most rudimentary definition of the word*, is to **petition** – to ask something of someone. We pray to each other **daily**. Whereas prayers of adoration, worship, confession are reserved for God alone, asking a saint in Heaven to pray for us is **no different** than asking a saint on earth to do the same. To deny this is to deny the reality that is the body of Christ (**1 Cor. 12:12-31**). We are all parts of the Body of Christ and are more **radically** joined together than the finger is to the hand because we are joined in Christ – and **not** by mere flesh.

**Heb. 12:1** tells us that *"we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses"* and that we are to live accordingly. A witness is somebody who sees and hears things (**Acts 1:8, 2:32**) – otherwise they are **not** witnesses. **Rev. 5:8** shows the Elders in heaven bringing our prayers before God and Rev. 8:3-4 speaks of the Angels in heaven doing the same thing.

**Lev. 20:6** – *"Should anyone turn to mediums and fortune-tellers and follow their wanton ways, I will turn against such a one and cut him off from his people."*

**Deut. 18:10-12** *"Let there not be found among you anyone who immolates his son or daughter in the fire, nor a fortune-teller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead.*

*Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the LORD, and because of such abominations the LORD, your God, is driving these nations out of your way."*

**Lev. 20:6** and **Deut. 18:10-12** strictly **prohibit** the practice of fortune-telling, necromancy and seeking oracles from the dead. However – this is **not** what Catholics do by asking for prayers and intercession. The anti-Catholic **misrepresents** the Catholic position by saying that this is the case.

The charge that Mary or others in Heaven would have to be omnipresent and omniscient to hear the petitions of many people at once is to **fail** to understand the reality of Heaven. **2 Pet. 3:8** tells us that *"with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day."* Heaven is outside

of time. There is not yesterday, today and tomorrow – it's all eternal. To indicate that Mary or another saint must be omnipresent and omniscient to hear the petitions of many people at once is to **fail** to understand this fact.

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**Again, intercessory prayer is supported by the writings of the Early Church Fathers:**

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**Origen** - *But not the high priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels... as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep* (On Prayer II [A.D. 233]).

**Pectorius** - *Aschandius, my father, dearly beloved of my heart, with my sweet mother and my brethren, remember your Pectorius in the peace of the Fish [Christ]* (Epitaph [A.D. 250]).

**Cyprian** - *Let us remember one another in concord and unanimity. Let us on both sides always pray for one another. Let us relieve burdens and afflictions by mutual love, that if one of us, by the swiftness of divine condescension, shall go hence the first, our love may continue in the presence of the Lord, and our prayers for our brethren and sisters not cease in the presence of the Father's mercy* (Letters 56[60]:5 [A.D. 252]).

**Cyril of Jerusalem** - *Then [during the Eucharistic prayer] we make mention also of those who have already fallen asleep: first, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that through their prayers and supplications God would receive our petition...* (Catechetical Lectures 23:9 [A.D. 350]).

**Hilary of Poitiers** - *To those who would fain to stand, neither the guardianship of saints nor the defenses of angels are wanting* (Commentary on the Psalms 124:5:6 [A.D. 365]).

**Ephraem of Syria** - *Remember me, you heirs of God, you brethren of Christ; supplicate the Savior earnestly for me, that I may be freed through Christ from him that fights against me day by day* (De Timore, Anim. in fin. [A.D. 370]).

**Liturgy of St. Basil** - *By the command of your only-begotten Son we communicate with the memory of your saints . . . by whose prayers and supplications have mercy upon us all, and deliver us for the sake of your holy name* (Liturgy of St. Basil [A.D. 373]).

**Gregory Nazianzen** - *Yes, I am well assured that [my father's] intercession is of more avail now than was his instruction in former days, since he is closer to God, now that he has shaken off his bodily fetters, and freed his mind from the clay that obscured it, and holds conversation naked with the nakedness of the prime and purest mind . . .* (Orations 18:4 [A.D. 374]).

*May you [Cyprian] look down from above propitiously upon us, and guide our word and life; and shepherd this sacred flock . . . gladden the Holy Trinity, before which you stand* (Orations 17 [24] [A.D. 376]),

**Gregory of Nyssa** - *Do you, [Ephraem] that art standing at the divine altar . . . bear us all in remembrance, petitioning for us the remission of sins, and the fruition of an everlasting kingdom* (Sermon on Ephraem the Syrian [A.D. 380]).

**Ambrose of Milan** - *May Peter, who wept so efficaciously for himself, weep for us and turn towards us Christ's benign countenance* (Hexameron 5:25:90 [A.D. 388]).

**John Chrysostom** - *He that wears the purple . . . stands begging of the saints to be his patrons with God, and he that wears a diadem begs the tent-maker [Paul] and the fisherman [Peter] as patrons, even though they be dead"* (Homilies on 2 Corinthians 26 [A.D. 392]).

*When you perceive that God is chastening you, fly not to his enemies . . . **but to his friends, the martyrs, the saints, and those who were pleasing to him, and who have great power** [in God] (Orations 8:6 [A.D. 396]).*

**Augustine** - *A Christian people celebrate together in religious solemnity the memorials of the martyrs, both to encourage their being imitated and **so that it can share in their merits and be aided by their prayers** (Against Faustus the Manichean [A.D. 400]).*

## Relics and Images

The Protestant charge that Catholics are *idolaters* is a false accusation as is the charge that we **worship** Mary. Catholics see images and relics as *worship aids* – **not** as idols. God’s prohibition on the People of Israel against idols was not the creation of statues. It was against the **worship** of images as gods:

### Ex. 20:2-6

*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;*

***Do not have any other gods before me.***

*You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*

*You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

We must not forget that God **commanded** Moses to make 2 golden Cherubim to place atop the Ark (**Exod. 25:18-20**) and they prostrated themselves before it (**Joshua 7:6**). He also commanded him to fashion a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole so that those who gazed upon it would be healed (**Num. 21:4-9**). Images aren’t necessarily idols and therefore, the Protestant position against images would render **all** statues and paintings created by Catholic **and** Protestant artists over the centuries **idolatrous**. It is simply not a cohesive argument, given the **context** of Scripture.

## Mary-Worship?

As for the charge of **worshipping** Mary, the anti-Catholic is guilty of bearing false witness.

**Dulia** is theological term signifying the honor paid to the saints, while **latria** means worship given to God alone. **Hyperdulia** is the veneration offered to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We adore and worship God **alone**, whereas, we give honor to the great saints of the past and give special honor to Mary, the vessel of Christ.

Whereas the word, **“worship”** can be used more loosely, if applied to all of us, we would **all** be guilty of some form of the word which has several meanings, including:

- 1. The honor given to a person of importance — (such as magistrates and some mayors)***
- 2. Reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power; an act of expressing such reverence***
- 3. A form of religious practice with its creed and ritual***
- 4. Extravagant respect or admiration for or devotion to an object of esteem***

When a person kisses a picture of a loved one, they are guilty of **“worship”** in this sense. However, *anybody* using reason would understand that they do **not** worship them as gods.

Also, contrary to what the anti-Catholic says, the Bible does **not** condemn serving each other, but rather **supports** it (**John 13:14-15, Romans 12:10, 14:19,15:7, Galatians 6:2, I Peter 4:9, 5**).

## Mary is the New Eve

In about 155 AD, Justin Martyr (in his *Dialogue with Trypho*) made the Mary-Eve parallel by saying: “Christ became a man by a virgin to overcome the disobedience caused by the serpent ...For Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the powers of the Most High would overshadow her, for which reason the Holy One being born of her would be called the Son of God. And she replied: ‘Be it done unto me according to thy word.’”

Just as Eve was named this because she became “*the mother of all the living*” (Gen 3:20), it is not a wild jump to then come to the realization that Mary becomes “*the mother of all living in Christ*”. Jesus’ words from the cross “*woman behold thy son*” and “*behold thy mother*” of John’s Gospel can certainly be interpreted in this way. If Jesus spoke these words only to tie up loose ends and make sure that his mother was cared for, they make no sense in the light of the fact that He had plenty of time to make those provision for her. He knew far ahead of time He was to die.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus never refers to his mother as “*mother*” (John 2:4, 19:26). Whenever he addresses his mother, he calls her “*woman*”. The anti-Catholic will point to this as proof that there was nothing special about Mary or that Jesus didn’t hold her in very high regard. This couldn’t be further from the truth. This correlates directly to the **Woman** in Gen. 3:15 and in Rev. 12.

Jesus defeats death on Calvary (*Skull place*) and fulfills the prophecy in Gen. 3:15 about the offspring of the woman. Mary is present at the foot of the cross while this is happening - and *what* does Jesus call her in John 19:26? He calls her “**WOMAN**”, because the prophecy about the head of the serpent being crushed in Genesis is taking place right there on Calvary.

### **Side note - Our Lady of Guadalupe**

The name in the Aztecan dialect (*Nahuatl*) was “*Coatlaxopeuh*”, pronounced “*Quatlaxupe*”. The name was corrupted by the Spanish to “*Guadalupe*”. Coatlxopeuh, means “*crushed serpent*.” Ironically, in the Aztec religion the highest idol and creator of mankind is Quetzalcóatl, which means “*Feather-Serpent*.”

So Our Lady of Guadalupe is “**Our Lady of the crushed serpent**”, which is exactly what we read about her in Gen. 3:15:

“*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*”

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### **The Early Church Fathers knew well Mary’s role as the New Eve:**

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Ireneus, circa 180-199 AD wrote, “*Against Heresies*”. In it, he wrote of Mary:

“*Consequently, then, Mary the Virgin is found to be obedient, saying: “Behold, O Lord, your handmaid; be it done to me according to your word.” Eve, however, was disobedient; and when yet a virgin, she did not obey.... having become disobedient, was made the cause of death for herself and for the whole human race; so also Mary, betrothed to a man but nevertheless still a virgin, being obedient, was made the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.... Thus, the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith.”*

**Tertullian** wrote in his *“The Flesh of Christ”* in about 208-212 AD:

*“For it was while Eve was still a virgin that the word of the devil crept in to erect an edifice of death. Likewise, through a Virgin, the Word of God was introduced to set up a structure of life. Thus, what had been laid waste in ruin by this sex, was by the same sex re-established in salvation. **Eve had believed the serpent; Mary believed Gabriel.** That which the one destroyed by believing, the other, by believing, set straight.”*

From this you can see that the idea of Mary as *“the mother of all living in Christ”* was something that the Church interpreted from the Scriptures from the **very beginning**, and would not have been alien to a First-Century reader at all - *especially* if they had John’s Gospel in front of them.

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## **Mary Was a Perpetual Virgin**

The charge that Mary had other children is ludicrous at best. If Mary had other children, there is no reason to think Jesus was any different from those siblings in His origin, i.e., that He was God the Son become man. So the perpetual virginity safeguards the miraculous birth, which, in turn, safeguards His special conception, which manifests His eternal pre-existence.

In the *Septuagint*, the normal Greek words for “brother(s) **“adelphos”** and **“adelphoi”** were used much more liberally than the normal meaning. It was applied to cousins, uncles, nephews and kinsmen alike. The Aramaic word, **“ach”**, encompasses the meanings for *brother of same parents, half-brother (same father), relative, kinship, same tribe*, and even *a fellow countryman*. The attempt by some Protestants to apply one word for *all* of these meanings in 21<sup>st</sup> century English is ludicrous. Just as languages differ – so do the meanings of different words.

It can be illustrated that Jesus himself and the Apostles studied and quoted from the Septuagint. The fact is that many passages in the New Testament are directly correlated to these 7 books from the Septuagint. Some examples include: **Matt. 27:42/Wis. 2:18-20, Luke 24:4/2 Macc. 3:26, John 10:22/1Macc 4:36 & 52-59, Rom. 11:33/Judith 8:14, 1 Cor. 10:20/4:7 and 1 Pet. 1:6-7/Wis. 3:5-6.**

Furthermore, there was no term for the word **“cousin”** in the Aramaic language that Jesus spoke. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek in the centuries before the birth of Christ (the Septuagint), the words **“adelphos”** and **“adelphoi”** were used in places where **“ach”** was. This is why we have many examples in the Septuagint of the following:

In **Gen. 14:14**, Lot is called Abraham’s *“brother”*, even though he was the son of Haran, Abraham’s brother (**Gen. 11:26–28**). In **Gen. 29:15**, Jacob is referred to as the *“brother”* of his uncle Laban.

Brothers Kish and Eleazar were the sons of Mahli. Kish had sons of his own, but Eleazar’s daughters married their *“brethren”*, the sons of Kish - who were actually their cousins (**1 Chr. 23:21–22**).

There is another quandary for Protestants who attempt to prove that Mary had other children and list the names given in the Bible. They give the names of these *adelphoi*, James, Joseph (Joses), Jude (Judas), and list the passages that mention these *adelphoi*, (**Matt. 12:46; Matt. 13:55; Mark 3:31–34; Mark 6:3; Luke 8:19–20; John 2:12, 7:3, 5, 10; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5**).

According to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century document, *The Protoevangelium of James*, these brothers and sisters of the Lord were Joseph’s children from another marriage. However, there is even stronger Scriptural evidence that would debunk the myth of these “siblings”.

The “other Mary” at the foot of the cross is described as being the mother of James and Joses and Salome. She is also described as being Mary’s (mother of Jesus) *“sister” (adelphē)* (**John 19:25**).

James is elsewhere described as the son of **Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3)**, which would mean this other Mary, **whoever she was**, was the wife of both **Clopas** and Alphaeus. However, Alphaeus and Clopas are the same person, since the Aramaic name for Alphaeus could be rendered in Greek either as Alphaeus or as Clopas. It's also possible that Alphaeus took a Greek name similar to his Jewish name, the same way that Saul took the name Paul. The 2<sup>nd</sup> century historian **Hegesippus** explains that Clopas was the **brother** of Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus. James would thus be Joseph's nephew and a **cousin** of Jesus, who was Joseph's putative son.

What do the Scriptures have to say about the women standing at the cross and their children?

**Matt. 27:56** says, "...among whom were Mary Magdalene, and **Mary the mother of James and Joseph**, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee".

**Mark 15:40** states, "There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and **Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome**").

Finally, **John 19:25** states, "But standing by the cross of Jesus were **his mother**, and his mother's sister, **Mary the wife of Clopas**, and Mary Magdalene".

When you compare the different accounts of the crucifixion, they clearly show the mother of James and Joseph to be the wife of Clopas (also called, Alphaeus) – **not** Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Any attempt to connect these people as **uterine** brothers of Jesus are squashed by the Bible.

Another Protestant "proof" against the idea of Mary's perpetual virginity is the word "**until**".

**Matt. 1:25** says: **but kept her a virgin until** she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Did Mary have other children after Jesus? As we have examined – the Bible does not support this idea. Let's see what the Scriptures say about the use of the word, "**until**".

**2 Samuel 6:23** tells us: *Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child **until the day of her death**.* Are we to assume that Michal had children **after** she died?

Let's also examine **Acts 2:34-35** (also see **Psalms 110:1, Matt 22:44**): *For David did not go up into heaven, but he himself said: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand **until I make your enemies your footstool**."*

Are we to surmise that Jesus will **cease** to sit at the right hand of the Father **after** his enemies are made his footstool? The problem here is that the anti-Catholic attempts to apply 21<sup>st</sup> century English to Hebrew and Greek from a culture thousands of years ago.

Finally, Mary's question to the Angel Gabriel is very telling about her intention to remain a virgin:

**Luke 1:34**: *Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, **since I do not know a man?**"*

Mary was a betrothed girl who knew about marital relations. She didn't say "How can this be, **since I have not known a man?**" She said "How can this be, **since I do not know a man?**"

She was stating her intention to remain a virgin and was puzzled by Gabriel's announcement that she was to have a child. She **knew** that God was aware of her intentions. Her bewilderment and the words "**I do not know**", as opposed to **I have not known**", is clear evidence that she had no intention of having marital relations.

This actually supports the 2<sup>nd</sup> century document, **The Protoevangelium of James**, which said Mary was consecrated a Temple virgin by her parents – much like the prophetess, Anna (**Luke 2:36-38**). She was to marry the older Joseph, a widower, who was to be her protector.

It is also interesting to note that the idea of Mary's perpetual virginity is one that was held by the early Protestant Reformers. Men like **Martin Luther, John Calvin** and **Ulrich Zwingli** all held Mary in high regard venerated her as a sinless perpetual virgin:

*Not only was Mary the mother of him who is born [in Bethlehem], but of him who, before the world, was eternally born of the Father, from a Mother in time and at the same time man and God.*  
**(Weimer's *The Works of Luther*, English translation by Pelikan, Concordia, St. Louis, v. 7, p. 572.)**

*"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."*  
**(Zwingli *Opera*, Corpus Reformatorum, Berlin, 1905, v. 1, p. 424.)**

As a matter of fact, the abandonment of these beliefs has evolved over time by those seeking to further divorce themselves from the only Church established by Christ himself, following instead the precepts and traditions of men that our Lord spoke against (**Mark 7:5-9**).

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Once again, the teachings of Early Church Fathers put the subject of Mary's perpetual virginity to rest:

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**Origen** - *The Book [the Protoevangelium] of James [records] that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary. Now those who say so wish to preserve the honor of Mary in virginity to the end, so that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word . . . might not know intercourse with a man after the Holy Spirit came into her and the power from on high overshadowed her. And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the first fruit among men of the purity which consists in [perpetual] chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the first fruit of virginity (Commentary on Matthew 2:17 [A.D. 248]).*

**Hilary of Poitiers** - *If they [the brethren of the Lord] had been Mary's sons and not those taken from Joseph's former marriage, she would never have been given over in the moment of the passion [crucifixion] to the apostle John as his mother, the Lord saying to each, "Woman, behold your son," and to John, "Behold your mother" ([John 19:26-27], as he bequeathed filial love to a disciple as a consolation to the one desolate (Commentary on Matthew 1:4 [A.D. 354]).*

**Athanasius** - *Let those, therefore, who deny that the Son is by nature from the Father and proper to his essence deny also that He took true human flesh from the ever-virgin Mary (Discourses against the Arians 2:70 [A.D. 360]).*

**Epiphanius** - *We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things, both visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . . who for us men and for our salvation came down and took flesh, that is, was born perfectly of the holy ever-virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit (The Man Well-Anchored 120 [A.D. 374]).*

**Jerome** - *But as regards Victorinus, I assert what has already been proven from the gospel—that he [Victorinus] spoke of the brethren of the Lord not as being sons of Mary but brethren in the sense I have explained, that is to say, brethren in point of kinship, not by nature. (Against Helvidius: The Perpetual Virginity of Mary 19 [A.D. 383]).*

**Didymus the Blind** - *It helps us to understand the terms "firstborn" and "only begotten" when the Evangelist tells that Mary remained a virgin "until she brought forth her firstborn son" [Matt. 1:25]; for neither did Mary, who is to be honored and praised above all others, marry anyone else, nor did she ever become the mother of anyone else, but even after childbirth she remained always and forever an immaculate virgin" (The Trinity 3:4 [A.D. 386]).*

**Ambrose of Milan** - *Imitate her [Mary], holy mothers, who in her only dearly beloved Son set forth so great an example of maternal virtue; for neither have you sweeter children [than Jesus], nor did the virgin seek the consolation of being able to bear another son (Letters 63:111 [A.D. 388])*

**Augustine** - *In being born of a virgin who chose to remain a virgin even before she knew who was to be born other, Christ wanted to approve virginity rather than to impose it. And he wanted virginity to be of free choice even in that woman in whom he took upon himself the form of a slave (Holy Virginity 4:4 [A.D. 401]).*

*It is written [quoting Ez 44:2]: 'This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it. Because the Lord God of Israel hath entered it . . . ' What means this closed gate in the house of the Lord, except that Mary is ever to be inviolate? What does it mean that 'no man shall pass through it,' save Joseph shall not know her? And what is this--'The Lord alone enters in and goeth out by it.' except that the Holy Ghost shall impregnate her, and that the Lord of Angels shall be born of her? And what means this--'It shall be shut for evermore,' but Mary is a Virgin before His birth, a Virgin in His birth, and a Virgin after His birth."*

**Cyril of Alexandria** - *The Word himself, coming into the Blessed Virgin herself, assumed for himself his own temple from the substance of the Virgin and came forth from her a man in all that could be externally discerned, while interiorly He was true God. Therefore he kept his Mother a virgin even after her childbearing (Against Those Who Do Not Wish to Confess That the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God 4 [A.D. 430]).*

**Council of Constantinople II (553 - 554)** twice referred to Mary as "ever-virgin."

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## **Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant (Jesus)**

Whereas the **symbols** of God's word were contained in the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament, Mary actually carried God himself - *the Word* - in her womb in the New Testament. And, whereas the Old Testament Ark had to be made of pure materials and blessed and undefiled, how much *more* pure and undefiled would the vessel that actually carried God have to be?

Non-Catholics charge that it doesn't matter who gave birth to Jesus. They say that Jesus could have been born from *anybody* and still been the Messiah - he could have even been born of a harlot.

Yes, Jesus could have been born of a harlot – but in order to fulfill all righteousness, his coming had to be more glorious than the Old Testament type. He chose Mary out of all of the women in history to be his mother.

New Testament fulfillments of types found in the Old Testament are more glorious and perfect than the type itself. This rule of Scripture is without exception.

**Adam & Jesus**

**Jonah & Jesus**

**Eve & Mary**

**David & Jesus**

**Joseph & Jesus**

**Moses & Jesus**

**Manna & Jesus (the Bread of Life)**

**The Paschal Lamb and Jesus**

**Ark of the Covenant & Mary**

**Jesus & Melchizedek**

The following comparison chart illustrates the Old Testament type, the *Ark* of the Covenant with the New Testament fulfillments of that type, *Mary*:

### COMPARISON CHART – Ark of the Covenant and Mary

<u>OLD TESTAMENT TYPE</u>	<u>NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT</u>
The Word was written by God on Tablets of Stone ( <b>Ex. 25:10</b> ) placed inside the Ark ( <b>Deut. 10:1</b> )	The Word of God became Flesh ( <b>John 1</b> ) conceived inside Mary ( <b>Luke 2:38</b> ) Mary carried the Word of God.
[The New Covenant] will not be like the covenant that... they broke though I was their husband ( <b>Jer. 31:31</b> )	The Holy Spirit (God) is Mary's spouse ( <b>Luke 1:35</b> )
"Who am I that the Ark of my Lord should come to me?" ( <b>2 Sam. 6:9</b> )	"Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" ( <b>Luke 1:43</b> )
When the Ark carrying the Word of God returned "David was leaping and dancing before the Lord" ( <b>2 Sam. 6:14</b> )	When Mary came into Elizabeth's presence carrying the word of God, the baby "leaped for joy" in Elizabeth's womb ( <b>Luke 2 38</b> )
The Ark carrying the Word of God is brought to the house of Obed-Edom for <u>3 months</u> , where it was a blessing. ( <b>2 Sam. 6:11</b> )	Mary (the new Ark) carrying the Word of God goes to Elizabeth's house for <u>3 months</u> , where she is a blessing ( <b>Luke 1:56</b> )
The Ark is captured ( <b>1 Sam 4:11</b> ) and brought to a foreign land and later returns ( <b>1 Sam 6:13</b> )	Mary (the new Ark) is exiled to a foreign land (Egypt) and later returns ( <b>Mat 2:14</b> )

**Augustine**, speaking with the wisdom of the Early Church Fathers, wrote that the "*New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is revealed in the New*". This statement means that unless one understands the Old Testament, one *cannot* understand the New Testament.

## Mary, as Queen Mother

The anti-Catholic misunderstands **Luke 11:27-28**, which says that a "woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him [Jesus], '*Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed.*' But he said, '*Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!*'" This wasn't an insult against his mother. It was a commendation because Mary's example is the fact that she **heard** the word of God and **kept** it by doing His will.

Mary, like Adam and Eve, is born without the stain of original sin by reason of the merits of Jesus Christ, who selected her from all women in history to be His mother.

The charge that Mary's Queenship is based on pagan religions and practices is made very *loosely* by anti-Catholics who have no understanding of the history of Israel. This ridiculous notion and others spread by staunch anti-Catholics like **Alexander Hislop**, **Lorraine Boettner** and **Jack T. Chick** are less rampant today than in the past but are still nonetheless based in ignorance and an anti-Catholic agenda.

For example, Hislop's 19<sup>th</sup> century attack on Christ's Church, "*The Two Babylons*", is an exercise in sloppy historical research, personal vendetta and false accusations. This book has been debunked, not only by informed Catholics but by Protestants and former Hislop devotees such as **Ralph Woodrow** in his book *The Babylon Connection?* Woodrow debunked the false charges by Hislop that the Catholic Church gleaned their practice of pagan idolatry and goddess worship from the Mesopotamian ruler, Nimrod and his mother, *Semiramis* (some sources claim she was also his wife).

The Kingdom of Heaven is modeled after the Davidic Kingdom. We can see this from the references to **Isaiah 22:20-22** when Jesus appointed Peter as the bearer of the "keys to the kingdom" (**Matt. 16:18-19**).

**Isaiah 22:20-22** - In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your girdle on him, and will commit your authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. **And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.**

**Matt. 16:18-19** - And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. **I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."**

In the Davidic Kingdom, the wife of the King was *not* the Queen – but rather, his *mother* was elevated to that station. The title *Gebirah* (*Gebira*), meaning "Great Lady" or "Queen Mother" was a royal title and an office which was bestowed upon the mothers of the Kings of Israel but only to those in the line of David.

Jesus Christ is the heir of David. He is the fulfillment of the covenant promises made to David in **2 Samuel 7:16; 23:5**, and repeated to Mary in **Luke 1:26-36**. Mary's son rules from the Kingdom of the heavenly Jerusalem. It is fitting that His mother should enjoy the same role that other Davidic Queen mothers enjoyed, that is the royal office of the heavenly *Gebirah*. It is in this sense that Catholics call her "the Queen of Heaven" and not in the pagan sense of that title as it is translated in English and found in **Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17, 18, 19, & 25**, which is a designation for an Egyptian goddess.

**1 Kings 2:19-20** tells us: So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him about Adonijah; the king got up to meet her and bowed before her; he then sat down on his throne; a seat was brought for the king's mother, and she sat down on his right.

"There is one small favor I would ask of you," she said. "Do not refuse me." "*Ask it, my mother,*" the king said to her, "*for I will not refuse you.*"

Just as with the Davidic Kingdom, as Jesus is the **King**, Mary is the **Queen Mother**.

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## **Mary was Immaculately Conceived**

The Greek word is *kecharitomene* that Luke used in his Gospel (**v.1:28**), which is the perfect passive participle, indicates a completed action with permanent result. Thus it translates, "completely, perfectly, enduringly endowed with grace." [In comparison, the word used in **Ephesians 1:6** and applied to the saints is *charis*]. **Thomas Aquinas**, a great medieval doctor of the Church, writes, "*The Blessed Virgin Mary is full of grace both with respect to operation and to the avoidance of evil. Second, she was full of grace with respect to the overflow of soul to flesh or body. For it is a great thing for the saints to have enough grace to sanctify their soul; but the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary was so full that from it graces flowed into her body, in order that with it she might conceive the Son of God.*"

The Fathers of the Eastern Church (Orthodox), who shared the same tradition with the Catholic Church until they split in **1054 A.D.**, refer to Mary as "**the All-Holy**" (**Panagia**) and the Church believes she "**remained free of every personal sin her whole life long**" by the grace of God.

Protestants often use **Romans 3** to try to disprove the idea of Mary's sinlessness. They point to the notion that Mary **MUST** have been in need of a Savior because of the words she spoke in the presences of her relative, Elizabeth:

**Luke 1:46-47:**

*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in **God my savior.**"*

This is one place where the Catholic Church **agrees** with the Protestant. We believe that Mary – as do all of us – needed a Savior. However, because of the special role she was about to play in salvation history, the Church teaches that Mary was saved from the time of her conception to be the fitting and proper vessel to carry God. One ancient analogy speaks of a puddle of mud that all believers fall into. God rescues us **out** of the mud, whereas, Mary was rescued **before** she fell in.

In **Romans 3:10, 23**, the idea that Paul was speaking literally about everybody is sometimes pointed to by those who twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (**2 Pet. 3:16**).

Paul says: "*There is no one righteous, not even one; For there is no distinction; **all** have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God.*"

**Is that right?** How about babies or toddlers below the age of reason? What about those who are mentally challenged and may not have full use of their intellect and will? What about Jesus? In this passage, St. Paul is actually quoting **Psalm 14**, where it says, "*The **fool** (the evil) says in his heart, 'There is no God. **They** are corrupt...there is none that does good.'*" Later in the same Psalm, we hear that "*God is present in the company of the **righteous.***"

St. Paul was using **inclusive** language, as was the Psalmist. This would be similar to somebody saying that "**everybody in town**" came to the celebration. The mass of mankind is what is being referred to in these passages – not every individual human being ever born.

The anti-Catholic will also point to **Luke 2:22-24** as proof of Mary's sinfulness:

*"When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord," and to offer the sacrifice of "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord."*

Mary was a faithful, obedient Jewish girl that would have done **everything** that was required by the Law. This would include all of the dietary laws with their restrictions and observance of the Passover – **just as Jesus did**. It's silly to think that she would have done otherwise.

### **Martin Luther on Mary's Immaculate Conception**

It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary's soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God's gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin" (*Sermon: "On the Day of the Conception of the Mother of God," 1527*).

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Once again, the Church Fathers are in accordance with the Catholic Position on Mary:

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**Origen** - *This Virgin Mother of the Only-begotten of God is called Mary, worthy of God, immaculate of the immaculate, one of the one (Homily 1 [A.D. 244]).*

**Hippolytus** - *He [Jesus] was the ark formed of incorruptible wood. For by this is signified that His tabernacle [Mary] was exempt from defilement and corruption (Orat. In Illud, Dominus pascit me, in Gallandi, Bibl. Patrum, II, 496 ante [A.D. 235]).*

**Ephraim the Syrian** - *You alone and your Mother are more beautiful than any others, for there is neither blemish in you nor any stains upon your Mother. Who of my children can compare in beauty to these? (Nisibene Hymns 27:8 [A. D. 361]).*

**Ambrose of Milan** - *Come, then, and search out your sheep, not through your servants or hired men, but do it yourself. Lift me up bodily and in the flesh, which is fallen in Adam. Lift me up not from Sarah but from Mary, a Virgin not only undefiled but a Virgin whom grace had made inviolate, free of every stain of sin (Commentary on Psalm 118:22-30 [A.D. 387]).*

**Gregory Nazianzen** - *He was conceived by the virgin, who had been first purified by the Spirit in soul and body; for, as it was fitting that childbearing should receive its share of honor, so it was necessary that virginity should receive even greater honor (Sermon 38 [d. A.D. 390]).*

**Augustine** - *We must except the Holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins, out of honor to the Lord; for from Him we know what abundance of grace for overcoming sin in every particular was conferred upon her who had the merit to conceive and bear Him who undoubtedly had no sin (Nature and Grace 36:42 [A.D. 415]).*

**Theodotus of Ancrya** - *A virgin, innocent, spotless, free of all defect, untouched, unsullied, holy in soul and body, like a lily sprouting among thorns (Homily 6:11[ante A.D. 446]).*

**Proclus of Constantinople** - *As He formed her without any stain of her own, so He proceeded from her contracting no stain (Homily 1[ante A.D. 446]).*

**Jacob of Sarug** - *[T]he very fact that God has elected her proves that none was ever holier than Mary, if any stain had disfigured her soul, if any other virgin had been purer and holier, God would have selected her and rejected Mary[ante A.D. 521].*

**Romanos the Melodist** - *Then the tribes of Israel heard that Anna had conceived the immaculate one. So everyone took part in the rejoicing. Joachim gave a banquet, and great was the merriment in the garden. He invited the priests and Levites to prayer; then he called Mary into the center of the crowd, that she might be magnified (On the Birth of Mary 1 [d. ca A.D. 560]).*

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## **Conclusion**

The attack on the Church and its alleged “*Mary worship*” is unfounded and unwarranted, given the context of Scripture and historical evidence. As was mentioned earlier, false charges, unfounded attacks and half-truths can only serve to further divide Catholic and Protestants.

It has been shown that these false accusations and ad hominem attacks have no basis in fact and seem to have their roots in poor catechesis, bad hermeneutics and a lack of historical research. The great 19<sup>th</sup> century convert to Catholicism, John Henry Newman, once said, “*To be steeped in history is to cease being Protestant.*” Conversely, it may be said that to refuse knowledge of history is to *continue* being Protestant.

The night before he was crucified for our sins, our Lord Jesus prayed for the **unity** of his Church (**John 17**). He fervently prayed to the Father and asked that his Church remain **ONE** – as he and the Father are **ONE**. This hope for the unity of his Body was breached in **1054** with the **Great Schism** of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It was further splintered during the **Reformation** and continues to splinter to this day – as is evidenced by the tens of thousands of Protestant denominations that exist.

Jesus promised the Church he established 2000 years ago that the Holy Spirit would guide it to **all** truth and that the Holy Spirit would take from what was his declare it to the Church. When other splinter groups part from that truth, it becomes all the more evident that the Catholic Church is the Body of believers that has been there from the beginning. One glaring 20<sup>th</sup> century example of this is the Catholic Church’s position on contraception.

Up until 1930, every Christian denomination was against the idea of artificial contraception. That was the year the Anglican Church parted with the rest of the Christian world at their **Lambeth Conference**, declaring that contraception was acceptable in some circumstances. Soon afterward, they caved in completely and in the years that followed, virtually **every Protestant denomination** also accepted this practice. Since then, some Protestant denominations have reversed their position but the Catholic Church has always remained steadfast in its condemnation of this **unbiblical** practice.

The truth is the truth and to rationalize that truth because of some personal hostility or dispute is nothing short of moral relativism. To be ignorant of the truth is one thing but to misrepresent the truth by promulgating falsehoods about the Church is to bear false witness (**John 9:41**).

As was stated earlier, we are **indeed** responsible for what we know.

Now, a few words from the Reformers *themselves*:

## **The Reformers on *Mary, the Mother of God*:**

### **Martin Luther:**

*"She is rightly called not only the mother of the man, but also the Mother of God ... It is certain that Mary is the Mother of the real and true God."*

*"St. Paul says 'God sent his Son born of a woman, ' These words which I hold for true, really sustain quite firmly that Mary is the Mother of God."*

**(Martin Luther, Martin Luther's Works, vol. 7, pg 592)**

*"This article of faith- that Mary is the Mother of God- is present in the Church from the beginning and is not a new creation of the council but the presentation of the Gospel and the Scriptures."*

**(Martin Luther, Martin Luther's Works, vol. 7, pg 572)**

*"It is certain that Mary is the Mother of the real and true God."*

**(Martin Luther, Martin Luther's Works, vol. 24, pg107)**

### **John Calvin**

*It cannot be denied that God in choosing and destining Mary to be the Mother of his Son, granted her the highest honor. ... Elizabeth called Mary Mother of the Lord, because the unity of the person in the two natures of Christ was such that she could have said that the mortal man engendered in the womb of Mary as at the same time the eternal God.*

**(Calvini Opera, Corpus Reformatorum, Braunschweig-Berlin, 1863-1900, v. 45, p. 348, 35)**

### **John Wycliffe**

*"It seems to me impossible that we should obtain the reward of Heaven without the help of Mary. There is no sex or age, no rank or position, of anyone in the whole human race, which has no need to call for the help of the Holy Virgin." [Sermon on Mary]*

### **Ulrich Zwingli**

*"I esteem immensely the Mother of God".*

*"The more the honor and love of Christ increases among men, so much the esteem and honor given to Mary should grow". [The Works of Zwingli, Corpus Reformatorum, Berlin, 1905].*

### **Heinrich Bullinger, Ulrich Zwingli's successor**

*"Nestorius, the heretic, recognized two natures in Christ, and he understood them as being TWO PERSONS. Indeed he taught that the Word had not been united in ONE PERSON with the flesh, but had only been its habitation in the flesh: that is why he would not admit that the Blessed Virgin Mary was called "Theotokos" or "Mother of God."*

### **Charles Drelicourt, the French Reformed pastor, 1633**

*"On account of this close and unaccountable union (of the natures of Christ), what belonged to one of those natures can be attributed generally to the PERSON. Hence just as the Apostle, St. Paul, said that the Jews crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Cor 2)...we find no difficulty in saying with the Ancients, that the VIRGIN MARY IS THE MOTHER OF GOD; for he whom she bore is GOD above all else, eternally blest (Rom 9)."*