

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

THE DRAMA, DOGMA AND DISASTER

By Richard Bennett

[We are, again, honored to have insight from Richard Bennett, a former priest in the Roman Catholic Church. He was Jesuit trained in Ireland by the Dominican Order and later at the Angelicum University, Rome, Italy. He finished his studies in 1964. After a life-threatening accident, he spent 14 years contrasting Biblical truth with Catholicism. In 1986 he made the step, by God's grace, to leave the Roman Catholic Church because of what he discovered. He is articulate and a deep thinker, evangelist, writer and apologist, now working at Dayspring Fellowship, Reformed Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. www.bereanbeacon.org; www.the-highway.com]

The Catholic world recently celebrated the promulgation of the dogma of "The Immaculate Conception" of Mary begun one hundred fifty years ago. Besides the Vatican in Rome, the eyes of the Catholic world are focusing on Lourdes in France. It was there, the Vatican claims, on March 25, 1858, that Mary appeared to the young peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, and announced, "I am the Immaculate Conception." The Pope took this as a verification of the dogma he had proclaimed four years earlier in 1854. Much preparation took place, and the climax occurred on December 8, 2004. Superlative worship of Mary is already standard practice; "By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the 'Mother of Mercy,' the All Holy One."^[1] The reason for the enthusiasm and fervor in the further broadcasting this Papal dogma is that most of the other traditional dogmas on Mary are founded on the teaching of "The Immaculate Conception."

Immaculate Conception Presents Mary "Full of Grace" and Completely Sinless

The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was "full of grace" and sinless from the moment of her conception and that she remained sinless throughout her lifetime. The official teaching is:

"Through the centuries the [Catholic] Church has become ever more aware that Mary, 'full of grace' through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin."^[2]

"By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long."^[3]

The dogma of "Immaculate Conception" is not dealing with the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ, but rather Mary's own conception in the womb of her mother. It is asserted that she was "full of grace" and that she was free from original sin and sinless for her whole lifetime. The Papacy asserts that the term "full of grace" is found in Luke 1:28. However, even in the Catholic New American Bible the text reads, "And coming to her, he said, Hail, **favored one**! The Lord is with

you."^[4] In official dogmas "favored one" is erroneously rendered as "full of grace."^[5] In contrast, the central idea of the Scripture text is that Mary had become the recipient of God's favor rather than being herself "full of grace."^[6] The same verb is used only in one other place in the New Testament, Ephesians 1:6, where all the recipients of God's grace are highly favored.

The key attribute that Catholic Church fallaciously assigns to Mary is that she is "full of grace." The official teaching furthermore declares:

"From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. 'Full of grace,' Mary is 'the most excellent fruit of redemption' (SC 103): from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life."^[7]

But in Scripture the moral condition of each believer before conversion is clearly stated, "and you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."^[8] Because of Adam's sin all of mankind, including Mary, is born spiritually dead. The Scripture clearly depicts the moral state of all mankind, "as it is written, 'there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.'"^[9] However, what makes the attribute "full of grace" assigned to Mary so appalling is the biblical truth that the fullness of grace is distinctly Christ's own prerogative. God's grace and love in salvation is the high-priestly work of Christ and of Him alone. "Full of grace" is the distinct attribute of His office. This unique feature in Scripture is ascribed to Christ Jesus the Lord alone. "He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."^[10] all that went before Him was but a type and a representation of Him. All that came after Him points back to Him. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," the Apostle John proclaimed, "and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace."^[11]

It is by His grace that true believers are made acceptable before the All Holy God. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell."^[12] The Father's will was that all fullness should dwell in Him. There is the abundance of grace only in the "Word made flesh." As the source of all grace to His people, He has fullness of merit and righteousness. It delighted the Father that in Him alone as Savior, all fullness should dwell, "the fullness of him that filleth all in all."^[13] He alone abundantly gives to all that are His own people, "grace for grace."^[14]

Alleging that Mary is "full of grace" as a distinctive attribute of hers is blasphemy. It shows an arrogant disregard for the One who alone is the incarnate Son of God, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."^[15] To direct anyone toward Mary as "full of grace" is attempted robbery of the distinctive feature of Christ Jesus the Lord.

To call Mary "full of grace" is also an insult to her person. She rejoiced that she had a Savior. She proclaimed, "my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."^[16] God is called Savior, as He saves His people from sin. Even the mother of the Lord had need of her Savior. The blessedness of Mary was a demonstration of divine favor toward her, especially in calling her to be the physical mother of the Lord. This was an act of sovereign

choice on God's part. She, as a virgin, as a believer and according to God's Word to her, conceived and brought forth Christ Jesus the Lord. Later in obedience to the Lord's Word she was wife to Joseph and mother of their children.[17] Like all other genuine believers, Mary of Bethlehem was a sinner saved by God's grace, through faith, not by any essential righteousness or preserving grace granted in her own birth.

The Attribute that Separates God from All Other Beings

Christ Jesus Himself with the Father and the Holy Spirit is God, **the** all Holy One. In Catholicism an attempt is made to proclaim that Mary also is the All Holy One.

"By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the 'Mother of Mercy,' the All Holy One." [18]

The Bible clearly teaches that God alone is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, justice, goodness and truth. He is **the** all Holy One. His Holiness is the attribute that covers all attributes so that His righteousness is Holy, His truth is Holy, and His justice is Holy. He is each of His attributes, and **the overall attribute of holiness is that which separates Him from all beings**. He is totally other. The reason why we need to be made right before the All Holy God is because in the words of Scripture, "there is none holy as the Lord there is besides Thee: neither is there any rock like our God." [19] And, again the Word of the Lord proclaims, "who shall not fear thee O Lord and glorify Thy name for thou only art holy and all nations shall come and worship before thee." [20] To attempt to address a creature as "the All Holy One" is consummate blasphemy and immoral idolatry.

Alleged Exaltation of Mary as having a Saving Office

The Catholic Church states that the one she addresses as "the All Holy One" is also alleged to be the cause of salvation. Rome declares:

"As St. Irenaeus says, 'Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.'" [21]

This claim is sacrilegious and affects the ordinary person who desires to be saved before God. It assumes Mary's influence with God, and actually credits her as being an effective cause in salvation of souls, including her own. In this it shows an arrogant disdain for the love of God as the original cause of the salvation of souls. The Bible teaches that the salvation of men is a divine initiative because, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." [22] He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." [23] To point anyone toward Mary as the "cause of salvation" is an outright betrayal of a person's only hope, which through the love of God is in Christ Jesus alone.

An Entry Point into the Occult

On an everyday family level, the cult of Mary leads directly into the occult. Pope John Paul II is the prototype of how it is done. On October 8th, 2000, he went so far as to consecrate the

world and the new millennium to "Mary Most Holy."^[24] In giving honor to "Mary Most Holy," the Pope flagrantly sins against the First Commandment, for he encourages the ordinary Catholic likewise to turn away from the true worship of God and to enter into the occult realm of the spirit world. Such behavior brings the judgment of God on nations and families, as His Word declares, "The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands."^[25]

In Catholic countries black madonnas, considered wonder-working, lead easily into a climate of the devils, angels, magic and the occult. There is a revealing parallel between the Roman Catholic false Mary and pagan goddesses. The heartbreaking reality, however, is that such behavior is the entrance into satanism, pornography, suicide, and a general decline in morals. The Catholic Cult of "the Immaculate Conception" and the Queen of Heaven leads one into the occult and is found in the occult. The Roman Catholic Virgin Mary is included among the goddesses that are listed on, for example, the following WebPages, The Spiral Goddess Grove, The White Moon, and Goddess 2000. They consider Mary to be the "Divine Feminine" and say that for centuries, many people have blended their ancient goddesses with Mary.^[26] Thus on the White Moon webpage under the heading of "Mary and Other Goddesses," it is stated that "when you pray to Mary, mother of Jesus, you pray, without knowing it, to the World Mother in one of her many forms."^[27] The snare is not just for adults but is also for children. One webpage has a special kids' coloring page where young children are led into the occult as they color Mary and other goddesses.^[28]

The Consequence

All that has been documented regarding Rome's view of Mary – "the Immaculate Conception," "full of grace," "the All Holy One," and the "the cause of salvation" – is utterly profane and blasphemous before the All Holy God and the exclusive Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The drama that led up to December 8, 2004, was in fact a debacle and a disaster. It endangers the eternal welfare of people across the world. What is essential is distinct faith and trust on the Lord Jesus Christ alone. "He that believeth on him is not condemned."^[29] "He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life."^[30] "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."^[31] Because man is a fallen being, the Gospel is the only way to God and it is through Christ Jesus the Lord alone. To add trust in Mary as the way to believe on Him is a most dangerous and damming barrier to eternal salvation.

While the Scripture states that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light,"^[32] it still comes as a shock to see the Prince of Darkness, the most alien to the light, misuse the wonderful believer, Mary, until she appears as a goddess. The Lord's judgment will come upon all who teach and practice this malicious doctrine. The Lord Christ Jesus Himself declared, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."^[33] All right and power of administrative judgment and correction has been given to Christ Jesus as ruling King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Lord Himself declared, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father."^[34] and "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."^[35] He will be true to His Word, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord."^[36]

Turn to Him in faith alone for the salvation that He alone gives by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and based on his death and resurrection. Believe on Him alone, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." [37] The Pope makes no secret of where he stands. Whether done in ignorance or not, Catholics (even sincere ones) who remain loyal to the Pope in exalting Mary spurn the exclusivity and splendor of Christ and His Gospel. The Word of the Lord speaks clearly to the choice that is before all Catholics. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." [38] When God speaks to men in the Scriptures, the guilt of those who refuse Him is the greater – and their punishment will be more intolerable. He justly expects from them the strictest attention in the Gospel that demands faith on Christ Jesus the Lord, Who alone is full of grace and truth. This is no time to presume on the grace of God, but rather to pray urgently for it! The Lord's glory, Gospel, and promise are at stake! "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." [39]

Prophecy Research Initiative
EndTime Issues..., December 2004

References:

- [1] Catechism of the Catholic Church (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), #2677. Hereafter Catechism.
- [2] Catechism, #491.
- [3] *Ibid.*, #493.
- [4] New American Bible as given on: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_PWK.HTM 9/1/04. Bolding in any quotation indicates our emphasis added.
- [5] Also in the most recited prayer in Catholicism, which begins, Hail Mary full of grace.
- [6] The same thought is express in verse 30, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. In Greek highly favoured is *kecharitomene*. It is the passive participle of *charitoo* and means endowed with grace (*charis*), enriched with grace. This word has the same root as the words for greetings (*chaire*), and favour (*charin*). Mary is highly favoured because she, like all true believers, is the recipient of Gods grace.
- [7] Catechism, # 508.
- [8] Ephesians 2:1
- [9] Romans 3:10-11
- [10] John 1:14
- [11] John 1:16
- [12] Colossians 1:19
- [13] Ephesians 1:23
- [14] John 1:16
- [15] Hebrews 1:3
- [16] Luke 1:46-47
- [17] For example Matthew 13:55, ... His mother called Mary? and His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? So why does the Catholic Church deliberately mislead its members? It is to propagate an image of Mary as a quasi-divine creature who is above having a normal marital

relationship with her husband, Joseph, and to establish her as a role model for nuns and priests to live a celibate life.

[18] Catechism, #2677.

[19] I Samuel 2:2

[20] Revelation 15:4

[21] Catechism, # 494.

[22] John.3:16

[23] Exodus 34:6

[24] L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly edition in English, 11 October 2000.htm

[25] Psalm 9:16

[26] www.goddess2000.org/Mary.html, www.spiralgoddess.com/Mary.html

[27] <http://www.thewhitemoon.com/mary/other.html>, 8/21/04

[28] Pagan Kids Coloring Page, <http://www.goddess2000.org/Coloring.html>, 8/21/04

[29] John 3:18

[30] John 3:36

[31] I John 5:10

[32] II Corinthians 11:14

[33] John 5:22, 27

[34] Matthew 11:27

[35] Matthew 28:18

[36] Hebrews 10:30

[37] Ephesians 1:6

[38] Hebrews 12:25

[39] Hebrews 12:28-29