



THE
MYTH
OF
MARY

César Vidal

The
MYTH
of
MARY

César Vidal

CHICK PUBLICATIONS

P.O. Box 662 • Chino, CA 91708-0662
Phone: (909) 987-0771 • Fax: (909) 941-8128

Printed in the United States of America

INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTORS

CHICK-TRAKTATE-VERSAND

Postfach 3009
D-42916 Wermelskirchen • Germany
Tel. 02174/63815 Fax: 02174/2799

B. McCALL BARBOUR

28 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh
EH1 1ES Scotland/UK
Tel: 031-225 4816

CHRIST THE WAY PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Box 43120, Eastwood Sq.
Kitchener, Ont. N2H 6S9, Canada
Tel. (519) 576-2600

NEW ZEALAND EVANGELISTIC SOCIETY

P.O. Box 50096
Porirua, Wellington, New Zealand

EVANGELISTIC LITERATURE ENTERPRISE

P.O. Box 5010
Brendale, Q'ld., 4500 Australia
Tel: (07) 205-7100

GOSPEL PUBLISHERS

P. O. Box 1, Westhoven 2142
South Africa
Tel: 27-11-673-2623

Copyright © 1995
César Vidal

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

ISBN: 0-937958-47-6

161/A

The person of Mary has been a constant source of controversy throughout the history of the church since at least the fourth century. Millions of people prefer to do homage to Mary, believing that what cannot be obtained from the Father can more readily be received through the Mother. Churches like the Catholic and Eastern churches base much of their theology and practice on this character.

The Myth of Mary is a complete and documented analysis of the evolution of beliefs about Mary from the first to the twentieth century. Taken from scriptural, documentary and archeological sources, the author reveals the origin of titles such as the "Mother of God," the "Immaculate Conception," the "Assumption into heaven."

The author discusses practices like the Rosary, processions and Marian sanctuaries. He also describes the influence of first century heretical thinkers, and pre-Christian pagan myths regarding Mary.

Throughout the pages of this book, we will discover, in historical and documentary form, how, over the centuries, a simple woman from Nazareth has become a myth that has supplanted Christ from the center of certain religious systems.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

César Vidal is professor of history at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia in Spain and a member of various academic institutions, like the American Society of Oriental Research (ASOR), and the Oriental Institute of Chicago.

He obtained a doctorate in History, earning highest academic grades as a result of a thesis on the Jewish-Christianity Palestine of the first century after Christ. He also has a bachelor's degree in Law and Theology, and specializes in investigations relating to the Ancient East and the history of religions.

He has had approximately thirty books published, including: *Recuerdos de un Testigo de Jehová* (Memoirs of a Jehovah's Witness), Miami, 1987; *Los evangelios gnósticos* (The Gnostic Gospels), Barcelona, 1991; *Lo que usted debe saber sobre la Nueva Era* (What You Should Know About The New Age), Miami, 1992; *Diccionario de las tres religiones monoteístas: judaísmo, cristianismo e islam* (Dictionary of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam), Miami, 1992; *El Primer Evangelio: El Documento Q* (The First Gospel: The Q document), Barcelona, 1993; *Los documentos del Mar Muerto* (The Dead Sea Scrolls), Madrid, 1993; and *La otra cara del Paraíso: la verdad de las grandes sectas* (The Other Side of Paradise: the Truth About the Great Sects), Miami, 1994.

Contents

Introduction 9

PART 1

THE HISTORICAL TRUTH ABOUT MARY

Chapter 1 Mary in the New Testament 14

Mary Before Christ's Public Ministry. Mary During Christ's Public Ministry. Mary after the death of Jesus. Conclusion.

Chapter 2 Mary After Pentecost 27

Mary's Family. Jesus' Brothers. Death and Burial of Mary. Conclusion.

PART 2

THE "OTHER" MARY

Chapter 3 Mary, the Perpetual Virgin 42

The First Focus. Conclusion.

Chapter 4 The Assumption of Mary 55

The Doctrine's Origin. The First Focus. Conclusion.

PART 3

MARY AND PAGAN INFLUENCE

Chapter 5 Paganism Enters the Church 64

The Crisis in the Third Century A.D. Constantine and the Pagan Invasion.

Chapter 6 The Mother Goddess 74

Isis, Demeter, Cybele, Mary. Conclusion.

Chapter 7 The Mother of God 90

Mothers of Gods. Great is Diana of the Ephesians! Mary.

PART 4

THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE NEW CONTACT WITH THE EAST

Chapter 8 The Crusades and the March Eastward 101

The Crusades. The Military Orders. The Myth of Mary and the Contribution of the Crusades.

Chapter 9 The Influence of the East 110

The Rosary. The Processions. The Flagellants. Conclusion.

Chapter 10 Mary in the Lower Middle Ages.. 118

Mary the Immaculate. The Role of Mary in Salvation. Popular Piety. Conclusion.

PART 5

FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE 20TH CENTURY

Chapter 11 The Counter Reformation and Mary 134

The Reformation. Mary and the Counter-reformation. Conclusion.

Chapter 12 The Modern Age 142

The Marian Movement. The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Between Dogmas. The Dogma of the Assumption. Vatican II. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992). Conclusion.

Conclusion 155

Postscript: 163

Footnotes 167

Index of Abbreviations 178

Bibliography 184

Chronology of the Myth of Mary 186

INTRODUCTION

Mary is still in style. Note the number of pilgrims that flock to shrines like Fatima, Lourdes and Garabandal, or the sales of statues that represent her. People are trying to convince themselves that Mary is really like the myth that has been created.

Recent popes (especially the current one, John Paul II) have placed a special emphasis on the homage of Mary. As a matter of fact, thousands of people believe, without a shadow of doubt, that the unification of all Christians will be brought about "through Mary."

An ongoing series of apparitions continues to develop all over the world, demonstrating the hunger of the multitudes regarding this character.

Every attempt to describe her falls short. She is known as the Queen of Heaven, Mother of God, Immaculate Conception, our Mother, Co-mediatrix, Lady of the Good Death, etc. Many are convinced that her power extends from this world to the next, with a tender mercy that God lacks. Therefore, it is not strange that many souls are heading for her supposed lap of love.

Is there any Christian basis for all this devotion? Is it based on reality or a combination of rituals that have nothing to do with the Gospel message?

For years I have been dedicated to historical investigation, especially of the Ancient East and the history of religions. Therefore, the study of documents, archeological monuments and the development and interweaving of pagan myths constitute my everyday work.

This book is a summary of my conclusions, based on years of rigorous scientific study of the phenomenon of Mary homage found in the Catholic and Eastern churches.¹

To arrive at these conclusions, I have followed three basic steps. The first was to utilize all the historical sources at my disposal. The logical starting place is the New Testament because it represents the only written source directly related to Mary that is blessed with enough antiquity and trustworthiness to reconstruct a small portrait of her.

Then I analyzed the first century writers. I also directed my attention to archaeological sources from antiquity to medieval times. Finally, I did an exhaustive study of official and non-official documents related to Mary homage inside and outside the Catholic Church.

The second step consisted of applying the scientific method used for historical investigation. For the layman, this reading and comparison,

analysis and discovery of interrelations, may appear boring. However, for the historian, it constitutes, for the most part, the spice of his work. What's more, a case such as this one lends itself exceptionally well to this type of labor.

The third step was properly editing this fundamentally historical investigation for publication.

Without a doubt, many will find that what is said in the following pages goes beyond the historic and invades the world of extremely personal decisions. But we should never forget that history should be a clarifying element when determining the truth among different political, social and spiritual positions. Like a mirror, solid historical work reveals whether that which we have placed our trust in is trustworthy or a dark lie transmitted through the ages. In this sense, this book will serve as a source of light for many.

I should finally make a reference to the title. It is not intended to be offensive, but to simply represent the reality of the historical development of beliefs about Mary. Myths in antiquity formed belief systems that had evolved throughout time, often through the absorption of elements from other myths and identification with other mythological characters.

Although these myths may have a dubious history, at their nucleus were teachings that warned of the undeniable presence of spiritual powers. I sincerely believe that this is true in the case of Mary, not as she appears in the New

Testament, but as she is presented by the Catholic and Eastern Churches.

Naturally, the following chapters are intended prove the truth of this thesis. Whether I have succeeded or not will be the reader's decision.

Part I

THE HISTORICAL TRUTH ABOUT MARY

1

Mary In The New Testament

The sources we have to reconstruct the historical existence of Mary are limited. First are the Gospels and the scant references in the book of Acts. No other sources are comparable to these records.

Second are some archaeological remains supposedly connected with Mary, which are, to say the least, problematic.

Finally, there are some apocryphal writings, now datable to the middle ages, whose historical value is null, but we will deal with them in the second part of this book.

In this chapter we will refer exclusively to the most reliable sources on Mary, the first writings of

the New Testament. We cannot stop here for a detailed analysis of the Gospels as historical sources, but we have come to the conclusion that they were written before 70 A.D. (including the Gospel of John) and contain a dependable account of first century Palestine and also the life and teaching of Jesus.

MARY BEFORE CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY

References to Mary in these writings are always indirect and related in a general way to Jesus. In other words, Mary, on her own, lacks importance and is only mentioned to clarify concrete moments in the life of her Son.

The first facts dealing with her are found in the accounts of the conception and birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:2, Luke 1:2). From them we gather that Mary was "a virgin espoused to a man named Joseph, of the house of David," (Luke 1:27) and that she lived in a "city of Galilee, named Nazareth," (Luke 1:26).

It is possible that part of Mary's family was of the priestly line, since her cousin Elizabeth was married to a priest of the class of Abijah and she herself was of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1:5).

Jewish matrimony was characterized by two stages. In the first, called *erusim* or *kidushim*, the couple was formally engaged before witnesses but did not live together. Although there were cases of sexual relations during this period, they were frowned upon because the nuptials had not yet been concluded. If the sexual relations were with

someone other than the fiancée, they were considered adulterous and were punishable by stoning.

After a period of time that could last up to a year, the couple would celebrate the final matrimonial ceremony known as *nisuim* or *khupah*. After this, the couple could live together and have sexual relations. It was not until the Middle Ages that these two phases of the matrimonial rites were united into one ceremony.¹

Both Matthew and Luke note that it was after the first marital rite, but before the second, that Mary became pregnant (Luke 1:26-38). Since they had not had sexual relations, Joseph immediately thought that this was a case of adultery and decided to secretly renounce her, possibly to prevent her from being stoned (Matthew 1:18-19).

He would surely have done this had he not had a dream in which an angel announced to him that the child that was forming in Mary's womb was not the fruit of an illicit relationship, but by the direct action of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20).

What's more, the angel informed Joseph that the child's mission would be to "save his people from their sins" (1:21) and that this was the fulfillment of the prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14, that the Messiah would be conceived by a virgin (1:22-23). Upon waking, Joseph chose to receive Mary into his home (1:24), yet he did not have sexual relations with her "till she had brought forth her firstborn son..." (1:25).

Mary's experience is described in the third Gospel, Luke. According to this account, after the angel's announcement that she would have a child without having sexual relations (1:34-38), Mary headed toward Juda to see Elizabeth (1:39-40). Their encounter, preceded by the leap of the child in Elizabeth's womb (1:41-45), led Mary's cousin to point out the gift that she was receiving, that of carrying the Messiah. Her response to Elizabeth's words are the most extensive reference we have regarding Mary's thoughts.

The study of this literary fragment known as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) exceeds the limits of our investigation, but it would be fitting to analyze the master plan that appears in it since it offers an outline for Mary's theological vision:

v. 46-47. Mary magnifies God and rejoices in Him, the One whom she calls Savior.

v. 48-49. God's actions are praiseworthy since He has regarded the "low estate of his handmaiden," but has instead done great things and through them caused that in the future all will deem Mary blessed for being the mother of Christ.

v. 50-55. All of this harmonizes with God's character because His mercy is eternal for those who fear Him and He is continually willing to change the existing order in favor of His own. But above all it is logical because it deals with the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and his descendants regarding the Messiah.

After her arrival, Mary stayed with her cousin

for three months, then returned to her home. It is very possible that she was received by Joseph at this time (Luke 1:56).

We know nothing about Mary and her husband in the following months. However, being close to childbirth, both had to move to Bethlehem due to a census (Luke 2:1-4). The fact that this census took place before the death of Herod indicates that Jesus was born before 6 B.C., but we cannot be more precise.

The circumstances of His birth are established with more details: in a manger in Bethlehem because there was no room in the inn (Luke 2:7). That same day, a group of shepherds approached His birthplace, glorifying and praising God (Luke 2:8-20).

Eight days later, the child was circumcised and received the name Jesus (2:21). After the days of purification, He was taken to Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord. His family presented the customary offering made by poor people: a pair of turtledoves and two young pigeons (Luke 2:22-23; Leviticus 12:6-8).

There, Mary witnessed Simeon and Anna's proclamation of the child as the Messiah of Israel and the Gentiles (Luke 2:25-38). After satisfying what was required in the law of Moses, she returned to Nazareth with Jesus and Joseph (Luke 2:39).

The Gospel of Matthew places the worship of Jesus by the Magi at this point (Matthew 2:1-12),

along with the slaughter of the innocents (Matthew 2:13-18). The child was saved from this, thanks to a dream in which an angel warned Joseph to flee to Egypt.

It was through another dream that Joseph later decided to return to Israel after the death of Herod (2:19-21), and also how he decided to head toward Galilee instead of Judea (Matthew 2:22).

Once established in Nazareth, Joseph, Mary and Jesus seem to have lived a tranquil life in which "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).

Of these years that preceded the public ministry of Jesus, we have only the episode in which Jesus was lost in the temple recounted in the Gospel of Luke (2:21-40). The tale is important for various reasons, one of which is that, for the first time, Jesus confronts his well-intentioned but mistaken mother with His point of view.

Mary asked, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Jesus answered, "How is it that ye have sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (2:48-49). Neither Mary nor Joseph were able to grasp the depth of that answer. Luke notes, "And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them" (Luke 2:50). Like the shepherds (Luke 2:19), Mary kept those words and meditated on them in her heart (Luke 2:51).

These passages offer us a brief but substantial

portrait of Mary. She was a Jewish woman, engaged to Joseph, who, without having sexual relations with Him, became pregnant with the Messiah by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her spiritual hope was the same as that of Israel: that God would keep His promises to Abraham and would send the Messiah.

Mary rejoiced that God was faithful to His Word and a worker of wonders. First, because He was her Savior, which showed that she saw herself as a sinner. Secondly, she rejoiced because when God chose someone to be mother of the Messiah, He had set His eyes on her.

Despite everything, including her unconditional obedience, Mary was not perfect. She did not fully understand why the shepherds had visited her newborn son and understood even less the answer Jesus gave her and Joseph when they found Him in the temple.

MARY DURING CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY

In the passages that refer to the public ministry of Jesus, we see these characteristics of Mary even more clearly: a woman faithful to God, but imperfect, unable to fully understand her son's ministry.

The first reference to Mary is related to the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11). We see Mary at the wedding (2:1), with Jesus and his disciples, who were also invited (2:2). The fact that the wine had run out aroused a quick reaction in Mary, who alerted Jesus to the problem (2:3).

Although some church fathers, like John Chrysostom, contend that only the desire for preeminence guided her, Mary was surely well-intentioned. But she misunderstood how the mission of Jesus should develop. His answer to her could not have been more clear:

"Woman, what have I to do with thee?
mine hour is not yet come." John 2:4

When we shift the Greek text over to what it should be in its original Aramaic, there is not the slightest doubt that Jesus was rejecting any kind of "mediation" from his mother. Not only did he call her "woman," clearly implying that she had no privileges because she had given birth to Him, but He also affirmed that her request was out of place.

The Jerusalem Bible², a Catholic translation, has a footnote regarding Jesus' answer that calls it a "semitism that rejects an intervention." Mary must have understood His response, since she did not insist, but rather instructed the servants to do whatever Jesus said. It was then, when Mary accepted her proper place by not interfering in Jesus' actions, that He worked the miracle.

This same tendency to interfere in the ministry of Jesus, which He directly rejected, appears again and again in the gospels. When Mary and Jesus' brothers tried to interrupt His preaching to speak with Him, His response could not have been clearer:

"And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold

my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Matthew 12:46-50

(See also Mark 3:31-36 and Luke 8:19-21.)

Jesus never gave Mary any special consideration just because she was His mother. In fact, He gave equal value to anyone who did the will of God. Although Jesus recognized the blessedness of her having given birth to Him, He knew there were greater spiritual blessings. A passage such as Luke 11:27-28 is extremely revealing:

"And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

Without a doubt, being the mother of Jesus was a sign of spiritual blessedness. But in the eyes of Jesus, those who heard and kept God's Word were much more blessed. Through all this, there is no indication that Jesus lacked natural affection for His mother, as some historians have suggested.

On the contrary, this shows that Jesus knew how to establish His priorities moment by moment. He did not allow His priorities to be warped because His mother and brothers did not yet grasp the direction He was heading.

In the same way, Jesus knew that Mary, despite the blessedness of being His mother, was not granted a spiritual superiority over other believers. Anyone who listens to the Word and obeys it is as worthy as His mother, and whoever does God's will is more blessed than Mary.

This personal balance in Jesus' attitude also explains why one of His last acts was to procure shelter and support for His mother after His death. As John 19:25-27 relates, while He suffered the terrible agony of execution on the cross, Jesus left Mary in the care of His beloved disciple. This was a logical action when we consider that His brothers did not "believe in him" (John 7:5) and would have been little help for their mother's pain. *JAMES BELIEVED AFTER THE RESURRECTION.* In the past, this passage has been used as a reference to the universal motherhood of Mary. However, such an interpretation is not accepted today, even by many Catholic authors. For example, L. Ott, a Catholic theologian known for his conservatism, notes in relation to the supposed maternity of Mary over all believers:

"Specific scriptural proof does not exist. Theologians look for biblical support in Christ's words in John 19:26: 'Woman, behold thy son!' but according to its literal meaning, these words only refer to those to whom they were directed: Mary and John."³

These sources show the various aspects of the relationship between Jesus and Mary. He loved His

mother and, even at the moment of His death, took care of her, but He never gave her the right to interfere in His ministry, even if she had the best intentions. He also knew that she deserved no special privileges just because she was His mother.

MARY AFTER THE DEATH OF JESUS

The historical information available regarding Mary after the death of Jesus is very scarce. This indirectly indicates that she did not play a relevant role in the primitive community. We have no record of her being present at any of the appearances of Jesus. The only possibility (slight, at that) would be if she was one of the more than 500 brothers that Paul mentions in 1 Cor. 15:6.

We do know that she was present in the meetings of the Christian community of Jerusalem (Acts 1:14). Therefore it is possible that she was at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Yet we cannot be sure of this. After Acts 1:14, we lose her trail in Scripture.

CONCLUSION

From the Gospels and the book of Acts, we see a general picture of the historical Mary and how she was viewed by Jesus and the first Christians. These sources lead us to the following conclusions:

1. She was from Nazareth and had family in the priestly line.
2. She was engaged to Joseph and, while still a virgin, became pregnant with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. For three months she lived with her cousin Elizabeth, after which she returned to Nazareth.

4. She went to her cousin Elizabeth, and shared her special joy with Elizabeth in the passage known as the Magnificat. According to this passage, Mary believed God to be her Savior, which demonstrates that she considered herself to be in need of salvation, and therefore, a sinner. She was grateful to Him for choosing her to be the mother of the Messiah and described the Lord as a worker of miracles —and faithful to His promises, especially the one made to Abraham.

5. Her husband, Joseph, with whom she had not had sexual relations, considered repudiating her secretly, but decided to receive her into his home after an angelic warning in a dream.

6. She gave birth to Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem. That same night, some shepherds came to glorify the child, something that Mary treasured in her heart.

7. After Jesus' circumcision, and the days of purification, they made an offering in the temple. The amount of their offering indicates that Joseph and Mary were of a humble class. During this visit, Simeon and Anna recognize the child as the Messiah.

8. Later, Joseph, Mary and Jesus received a visit from some Magi who came to worship the newborn child. Only the warning from an angel, that Joseph received through a dream, allowed the child to be saved from Herod's assassination plan.

2-3
YEARS
OLD

Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, taking the child with them.

9. After Herod's death, the family returned and settled in Nazareth.

10. At the age of twelve, Jesus was lost in the temple, but neither Mary nor Joseph understood His answer when He was located.

11. During the public ministry of Jesus, Mary tried to intervene on various occasions, but her plans were rejected by her son.

12. In like manner, Jesus did not allow anyone to receive the impression that His mother had special privileges. On the contrary, Mary was aware that anyone who did the will of the Lord was more blessed than her.

13. At His moment of death, Jesus committed the care of His mother to His beloved disciple.

14. We have no writing which permits us to assume that Mary saw the resurrected Jesus.

15. In the year 30 A.D., Mary, along with Jesus' brothers, was part of the Christian community of Jerusalem. The New Testament says nothing about what became of her after that, which indicates that her importance within the primitive church was probably limited or nonexistent.

2

Mary After Pentecost

Through the centuries the Catholic Church and some Eastern churches have been weaving a complex web of traditions regarding Mary's life after Pentecost.

Some of these traditions have been crystallized into clear, dogmatic teachings like those concerning her perpetual virginity or her assumption into heaven. Others, without becoming dogmas, have equal or greater influence on the faith and practice of the faithful than actual dogmas. Finally, others are legends which lack a historical base, like the story of her stay at Ephesus with the apostle John. These have not had any special effect on the evolution of the myth of Mary.

JN19:
27

In this chapter we will look at the life of Mary

after Pentecost. We will carefully examine the witness of history in relation to her family, the so-called "brethren" of Jesus and the circumstances of her death and burial.

MARY'S FAMILY

Tradition states that Mary was born of the marriage between Joachim and Anne. Their existence became so undisputed by the time of the medieval church that both were canonized and to this day the Catholic church celebrates their feast on July 26. As canonized saints, Joachim and Anne can be worshiped by the faithful. ~~They are presumed to be intercessors before God in favor of those who turn to them in prayer.~~ *1 Tim 2:5*

Despite the seriousness of this position, we have no reference to these people before the apocryphal writings known as the *Prot evangelium of James* (fourth century), the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (sixth century) and the *Book of the Birth of Mary* (ninth century).

The trustworthiness of these writings is disputable. To begin with, their time of writing is too far removed from the events to which they relate to have credibility. Secondly, it is obvious that, at least in the first two cases, the authors tried to deceive the reader, falsely attributing the work to Matthew and James, important figures in the primitive church.

Finally, the link between these works and heretical circles is clearly established. In the *Prot evangelium of James*, Ebionite¹ influence is obvious,

and possibly Docetist.² The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* was utilized profusely by Manichaeans and Priscillianists.³

As we have seen, these traditions lack a documented base and cannot be sufficiently corroborated by archaeological sources. This is obvious as we examine the most significant archaeological sites. Excavations were discovered in the enclave of Nazareth (known as the "house of Mary"⁴) from 1955-56 and 1959-60.

Diverse evidence points to the existence of a group of Christians that worshiped in Nazareth. The assembly centered in a house church (like many Christians in those centuries) (Acts 2:46; 20:7; etc.). This group of Christians had the records of the remains of the house that supposedly had been Mary's home. It was formed by a grotto, silos, a ladder and rocky walls. These walls were painted with numerous writings that allude to Mary.

The places mentioned must have held a special attraction for Judeo-Christians who, with time, changed the structure of the building, giving it the necessary facilities for baptizing converts.⁵ Unlike later traditions in diverse churches, the baptismal model in the primitive church of Nazareth demonstrates that they practiced baptism by immersion and that the person walked down into the water. Therefore, they followed the example given in the New Testament of baptizing only converted adults and by total immersion.

Towards the end of the second century or the

beginning of the third, faithful Judeo-Christians built over the spot a "maqom qadosh," a holy place, following the style of the Galilean synagogue. The site was not a Jewish synagogue but a Christian one because it had a baptistry and an altar for presiding, among other architectural elements that correspond to those of a Christian church. Because it was Christian, the synagogue contained numerous writings with the symbols of the faith: the ship with the ograd, crosses of several kinds, etc.

We do not find reference to Mary or her family in the first two centuries. Only in the third do we find archaeological remains that might refer to a Marian cult. The first is a "XE MAPIA." It deals with a first part of the Ave Maria that does not correspond to the text of Luke's Gospel. Was it an invocation to worship of that third century community? Possibly, but it cannot be solidly established.

The second inscription, written by a woman, is much broader and more significant. It speaks of the worship of Mary and having fulfilled the rites owed to Her. I believe it is worthwhile to reproduce the translation of the inscription:

I N kn) elt under the Holy place of M (ary?) immediately wrote there (the name?) the ornated face of Her."

It is not clear who the inscription refers to but it is not difficult to accept that it deals with Mary and that she was receiving worship in the third century.

Before that date, no Marian cult existed in Nazareth, nor is there mention of any Anne or Joachim as her parents.

Another illuminating enclave in regards to Mary's supposed family is "Ain Karem:" In the sixth century, Theodosius (Geyer 140,6) noted the possibility that Ain Karem was the place where Mary's family originated. There is similar information in the Jerusalem calendar (seventh and eighth centuries) in relation to the festivities of August 28th, as well as in the writings of the monk Epiphanius (ninth century) (PG 120 and 264) and of pseudo Peter of Sebaste (ninth and tenth centuries).

It is obvious that all these testimonies are from too late a date. Archaeological evidence is no more positive. Certainly, excavations have brought light to various enclaves of the first century. Two of them have been identified as the supposed remains of Elizabeth⁷ and Zechariah.⁸ Yet there is no objective reason to arrive at that conclusion. If that is not enough, many of the excavations are nothing more than centers of pagan worship for the area.⁹

To be fair with the known evidence, there is no certainty that there were any Christian worship services in these sites during the first century, but it is indisputable that the archaeological remains are connected with pagan worship. As for Anne and Joachim, the absence of references is absolute.

In light of this, the professional historian cannot avoid a certain discomfort when contemplating the

lack of trustworthy facts regarding Mary's parents. Nevertheless, such absence has not prevented the creation of a series of legends with profound repercussions.

For example, Anne, Mary's mother, has become a saint that enjoys many faithful followers in many countries. Since a temple was built to her in the fourth century, her popularity has continued to increase. In 550 A.D., the emperor Justinian erected a church in her honor in Constantinople, and since then, feasts have been dedicated to her on July 25, September 9 and December 9.

By the 8th century, her cult had extended across the West. In 1584, Pope Gregory XIII sent out a papal brief, setting her feast on July 26.

But if there is no written or archaeological proof that Anne existed, how did this character come to enjoy such notoriety? The reason is found in the principal characteristic of the myth of Mary, the absorbing with ease of myths that stem from paganism.

Sure enough, pagans of the first century knew of a goddess named Anne. As Ana Perenna, sister of Dido the Phoenician, she is mentioned by the Roman poet, Ovid,¹⁰ as a provider of provisions. Romans also associated her with the figure of a water nymph in whose honor cups were emptied. She appears in celtic pagan traditions as Dana. In this last case, she is presented as the goddess of a people of demi-gods that defeated the Fir-Bolg.

All these pagan traditions have been added to

the cult of St. Anne in various Catholic countries. For example, in Tudela, Spain, the feast of St. Anne is celebrated with a concentration of giants, a possible echo of the celtic myths we have already mentioned. As far as the aquatic element, it is seen in the maritime celebrations of the saint in Spain.

When one closely examines all the written, archaeological and anthropological sources, the resulting evidence can be discomfoting for the Catholic who strongly believes in his church. Anne and Joachim are canonized as Mary's parents, making them objects of worship and receivers of prayer. Yet we have absolutely no proof that they ever existed.

Those who worship in the many festivals for St. Anne are not aware that they participate in rites much more ancient than Christianity, ceremonies with pagan origins in which Anne, a Roman goddess, was religiously venerated, or Dana, the goddess of the celts. Neither the name nor the development of the festival has changed much through the centuries.

THE BROTHERS OF JESUS

If the Catholic church and others that promote the worship of Mary have created a fictional family for her, they have also removed her real one. The New Testament indicates that Jesus had four brothers, James, Joses, Simon and Juda (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3) and at least two sisters.¹¹

We know that his brothers did not believe in his ministry at first (John 7:5). This is possibly why

Jesus did not want Mary to remain in their care and preferred to commit her to a disciple.

After His resurrection, that situation changed radically. Jesus appeared to his brother James (1 Corinthians 15:7) and this may have helped them all to convert, because by Pentecost they, along with Mary, formed part of the first Christian congregation (Acts 1:14).

In the following years, James was one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:9) and other brothers developed a kind of missionary activity in which they were accompanied by their wives (1 Corinthians 9:5). Only from testimony of the New Testament, which is corroborated by other historical sources, is it clear that Jesus had brothers and sisters.

To precisely establish what kind of relationship is implied by the term "brothers" has historically provoked a series of problems based more on theology and dogma than history. It is therefore important to know how various ancient authors viewed this subject.

The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, understood without a doubt that the brothers of Jesus were genuine brothers, not cousins, as the Catholic church, in general, has interpreted. He mentions James, the "brother of Jesus, called the Christ." (Antiquities XX, 200). "Adelphos," the term used by the Jewish authors to describe the brothers of Jesus, was subsequently understood in the same sense.¹² According to the testimony of

Judaism and the testimony of the first two centuries, Jesus' brothers were precisely that, "brothers," not cousins or relatives.

The church Fathers, who we have known of through Eusebius of Caesarea, Hegesippus Tertullian¹³ and John Chrysostom¹⁴, held the same opinion. Chrysostom did not seem to have a high (although not negative) view of the mother of Jesus, and considered James to be the brother of Jesus and the son of Mary. For them, "adelphos" and "adelphe" also meant "brother" and "sister," believing that those so named in the Gospels and Acts were none other than full brothers of Jesus and sons of Mary.

In some cases, Greek was their native tongue. Therefore, they knew that if these were relatives and not brothers, the gospels would have utilized the word "synguenis" (Luke 14:12). If they were cousins, the proper term would have been "anepsios" (Colossians 4:10). Consequently, from the perspective of the Greek language and some of the first church Fathers, there can be only one interpretation.

Despite all these undeniably conclusive aspects, Catholic authors¹⁵, trying to avoid a collision with the perpetual virginity of Mary, have insisted that the word "brother" in Hebrew and Aramaic has a broader meaning than in English. They insist that it is in this broader sense that the gospels refer to James and the other brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Such an explanation is not impossible, but, as we have noted, it is hard to believe that the authors of Acts, Mark, Matthew and John, writing in Greek for a mostly hellenic audience, would use the word "adelphos" to refer to James and the other brothers of Jesus, giving it a meaning different from its common one, and even more so when they had other words for "cousin" or "relative."

It is also incredible that theologians like John Chrysostom or Tertullian would believe that the brothers of Jesus were sons of Mary, if such a doctrine was denied by the majority of Christians. No less startling is the confusion generalized by the Jewish authors regarding the significance of "brother" in Jewish culture in the first century after Christ.

In fact, the linguistic argument was so weak from the outset to the defenders of Mary's perpetual virginity that, in the fourth century, Jerome noted that, in essence, Jesus' brothers were really brothers, but he assigned them to an earlier marriage of Joseph, saving the idea of Mary's perpetual virginity. Jerome was subsequently followed by some Eastern churches in this belief.

To Jerome's shame, no interpretation like his exists in the first three centuries. When it does appear, it is by the hand of a heretic writing with a false name.

For the historian that is not worried about defending a previously assumed dogma, as is the case with Catholic authors, the most natural option

is to accept that Jesus' brothers were literal brothers and sons of Mary. Unfortunately, once again the Catholic dogma has done away with the historical evidence in order to build over much less legitimate terrain.

DEATH AND BURIAL OF MARY

After the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D., we know nothing of Mary. It is possible that she died shortly after, seeing that Luke does not mention her again in Acts, nor do we find any reference to her in the rest of the apostolic New Testament writings.

Although legend has tried to place her in Ephesus with John (in fact, tourists view her alleged tomb there), such a tradition is entirely unfounded. This legend was furthered by Ana Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824), who was born in Westfalia. This Augustine nun claimed to have visions of events related to biblical characters and insisted that Mary had gone to Ephesus with the apostle John and died in Panagagui Kapuli, to the south of the city.¹⁶

Although tens of thousands of Catholics still accept Ana Catherine Emmerich's visions as authentic, authors who are not suspected of anti-Catholicism, like the Franciscan priest Eugen Hoade, admit that the majority of scholars consider them to be "pure fantasy."¹⁷

Yet the facts regarding the final resting place of Mary's body in Jerusalem are uncertain. The first written source regarding the location of Mary's sepulchre is, possibly, the Transitu Mariae. We have

later reports from Modest, (PG 86, 3288, 3299) and Sophronius, (PG 87,3821), (both patriarchs of Jerusalem and seventh century authors), and later from Bede the Venerable (Liber de Locis Sanctis, 306), Hippolytus of Thebes, Andrew of Crete (PG 97,1074) and John of Damascus, among others (PG 96, 729).

All sources related to the death of Mary agree that she was buried in a new grave in Cedron, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, on the Mt. of Olives side, in a garden known as Gethsemane. In other words, Mary did not die in Ephesus, but in Jerusalem, where we last read of her in the New Testament. Contrary to Catholic dogma, her body did not ascend to heaven, but was buried.

A flood in February, 1972, filled Mary's alleged tomb in Gethsemane with water and mud, and forced the Greek and Armenian community who controlled the site to restore the enclave. That permitted B. Bagatti to perform an archaeological analysis of the site. His conclusions identified the place as the location of Mary's grave.¹⁸ It was discovered in a first century funeral complex that was preserved intact until the time of Theodosius I (379-395 A.D.). Although the evidence is not totally undisputable, it does offer reasonable certainty regarding the death and burial of Mary in Jerusalem.

Since the fifth century after Christ, various temples have been built in this place in honor of Mary, but the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary

to heaven was not associated with it until at least the fourteenth century. When the crusaders rebuilt the tomb in 1130 A.D. (which was probably destroyed by Hakem in 1099) they associated the place with Mary's death and burial only, not with her assumption. Once again, the historical record seems predestined to clash with the later myth of Mary.

CONCLUSION

The available historical information regarding Mary's last days is extremely limited. From the book of Acts we know that she was part of the primitive church of Jerusalem, but we have no information about her after Pentecost. Ancient writings and archaeological evidence suggest that she most likely died and was buried in Jerusalem. The idea that Mary travelled to Ephesus with the apostle John is nothing more than a legend.

Historical sources also offer no reliable evidence in the first centuries of Christianity in relation to the perpetual virginity of Mary, the doctrine of the Assumption into heaven or the identification of her parents, supposedly called Joachin and Anne. Much less do we find signs of worship centered around Mary.

Contrary to what millions of people believe today, the New Testament and many church Fathers clearly indicate that Mary had more children. Furthermore, archaeological sources indicate that Christians knew that she had died and actually identified a grave in Jerusalem as her

tomb, but without making any reference to her assumption into heaven, or at least not before the Middle Ages.

Despite the canonization of Joachin and Anne by the Catholic church, there is no historical proof that they ever existed. And the way in which St. Anne, the alleged mother of Mary, is still honored in certain parts of the world makes us think that this is only a Catholization of the worship of pagan goddesses like Anne or Dana.

If we want to be honorable with what the historical, written and archaeological sources have given us, both biblical and extra-biblical; if we intend to act with sincere integrity before the weight of evidence; if we seek to establish the truth using trustworthy criteria, we ought to recognize that there is a great gulf fixed between what they reveal and what is believed by millions, possibly in good faith but without solid evidence.

In the third part of this book we will examine in greater depth how the myth of Mary increasingly distorted the biblical and historical Mary, substituting adornments that proceeded from different pagan deities. But before we get into this aspect, we will look at the origin of two essential aspects of the myth of Mary: her perpetual virginity and the assumption into heaven of her body and soul.

Part II

THE "OTHER" MARY

3

Mary, The Perpetual Virgin

Without a doubt, the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary is one of the hubs of Catholic and eastern Mariology. As we saw in the last chapter, such a belief clashes with the New Testament—in which repeated references to the brothers and sisters of Jesus are made—and with diverse Christian sources not contained in the Bible.

Catholic writers specializing in Mariology must admit that such a doctrine is rooted in a later tradition, not Scripture. J.M. Carda Pitarch, in a work that has the express approval of Pope John Paul II¹, has noted:

“Unlike the aspect of the virgin birth, there is no scriptural testimony whatsoever implying that she experienced a

virginal childbirth. This other aspect of the virginity of Mary must be sought out in a later reflection of faith.”²

The affirmation of the cited Mariologist is, from our point of view, totally correct. Scripture does not make reference to the perpetual virginity of Mary. To understand it we must accept its later theological creation.

Although ancient, this belief does not seem to have been held before the fourth century. One of the first witnesses we have in relation to this doctrine is from Pope Leo the Great, who, in the mid-fifth century, affirmed that Mary “gave birth while maintaining her virginity, as she kept it when she conceived him” (DS 291).

Another Pope, Hormisdas, in 521 A.D., noted that the Son of God was born “leaving intact, by divine power, his mother’s virginity” (DS 368). The Synod of Rome in 649 A.D., presided over by Pope Martin I, explicitly condemned whoever denied that Mary “gave birth incorruptibly, keeping her virginity intact even after giving birth” (DS 503).

Beginning about that time, the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary was generalized and references to it in conciliar documents were common. In the Council of Toledo, 693 A.D., it was written that Mary “conceived as a virgin, gave birth as a virgin, and after childbirth, conserved without losing the modesty of integrity” (DS 571).

However, the doctrine was particularly emphasized during the Middle Ages and the

Counter-Reformation³, extending to our time. It has already been stressed by the second Vatican Council, which referred to the "virginal integrity" of Mary (LG 57) and to the fact she is "forever a virgin."

In strictly historical terms, it is evident that Christianity did not believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary, at least during the first three centuries. As was revealed in the New Testament, it was common to believe that Mary had more sons. Only at the dawn of the fourth century were doors opened to the idea of Mary's perpetual virginity, confirming it in a generalized manner towards the beginning of the Middle Ages.

To what do we owe this substantial change that brought Christianity so many future consequences? In the following pages, we will analyze the origin of this peculiar doctrine.

THE FIRST FOCUS

Surely one of the most important texts in the study of Mariology subsequent to the New Testament is the *Prot evangelium of James*.⁴ Presented as an account of Mary's life until the birth of Christ (I-XVI), of the miraculous birth of Jesus (XVII-XXI) and the death of the innocents and of Zachariah (XXII-XXV), this work owes its name to the Jesuit Guillaume Postel. He translated it to Latin with the following title:

The Proto gospel or historical tale of Saint James, the lesser about the births of Jesus Christ and His mother virgin

Mary. Evangelical tale written by B. Marcus. Life of Mark, the Evangelist, told by Theodore Billiandre, Basel, 1552.

So it was made known to the West.

Postel presented it erroneously, although we do not know if innocently, as a canonical gospel of the eastern churches. He even contended that it was the prologue to the Gospel of Mark.⁵ The actual text was fixed by Tischendorf⁶ with regard to more than fifteen manuscripts. All the later editions of this "gospel" are substantially derived from that study.

It is difficult to establish a date for its writing. It has been noted that Justin (m. 165) could have used it to refer to the circumstances of Jesus' birth in a cave⁷, or in using the phrase "jara labusa."⁸ Nonetheless, the possibility is slim. More likely is the relationship between the *Prot evangelium* and Clement of Alexandria's (m. 215) reference to the confirmation of Mary's virginity by the midwife,⁹ but this is not proof that the theologian knew the work, but that he knew of a similar tradition.

The *Prot evangelium* was well known by the end of the third century, since Peter of Alexandria (m. 311) used it¹⁰ to refer to the slaughter of the innocents. Origen may have used it (m. 253-4)¹¹, since he interprets the "brothers of Jesus" to be sons of a former marriage of Joseph.¹²

It was undisputably used by Gregory of Nissa (m. 394)¹³ as well as Epiphanius of Salamina (m.

403).¹⁴ Since the *Prot evangelium* was widely known and utilized by the third and fourth centuries, at least the parts referring to the midwife that confirms Mary's virginity and the brothers of Jesus, it certainly existed.

It is evident that James, the brother of Jesus and pillar of the Jerusalem church, was not the work's author. Notwithstanding, its background is Judeo-Christian.¹⁵ This work not only purports, as in the canonical Gospels of Matthew and Luke, to acknowledge that Mary was a virgin before giving birth, but also creates a protective barrier before the possible allegations of impurity regarding her character and a subtle hint towards the superiority of virginity over other sexual behaviors.

Mary is viewed from the onset as having an exceptional nature. Her conception, produced in a sterile marriage, is presented with certain analogies between biblical characters like Isaac, Samson, and John the Baptist. Her childhood, described in terms that are historically difficult to accept, appears surrounded by all kinds of means to insure her purity.

Finally, the thesis is articulated, for the first time in a writing, that Mary was a virgin before, during, and after giving birth, so as to reinforce the virginal nature of the conception of the Messiah and the chastity of His mother. Chapter XVI describes the water test that Mary happily passed that proved her innocent of adultery,¹⁶ a fact that is uncorroborated by any historical source or in the

NU 5:14

Gospels and that even seems denied by passages like Matthew 1:18-19. The text reads:

"And taking it (the water of the ordeal) he made Joseph drink it and later sent him to the mountain from which he returned completely well. He gave Mary some to drink and sent her to the mountain from which she returned completely well. And all the people marvelled because no sin was revealed in them."¹⁷

In chapters 19-20, her virginity during childbirth is also insisted upon, in a way that is disturbing to our sensibilities, although it has passed on to later popular religiousness.

"And the midwife came out of the cave and met up with Salome and said: 'Salome, Salome, I have a never before seen wonder to tell you. A virgin has given birth, which is contrary to her nature'.¹⁸ And Salome said: 'As sure as the Lord my God lives, if I do not insert my finger and examine her nature, I will not believe that a virgin has given birth'... Salome inserted, therefore, her finger in her nature, and said with a cry: Woe is me for my injustice and lack of faith, for I tempted the living God and my hand, burned by fire, is falling off."

The episode, too vulgar for our taste, concludes

with Salome's forgiveness and her worship of Jesus. The author has succeeded in his objective: not one, but two witnesses (as the Law of Moses declares) can testify that Jesus' was born of a virgin and this because she is proven in a physical way to continue to be one after giving birth.

The author carries it further. That virginity did not end with the birth of Mary's other children. Jesus' brothers were nothing but sons of a former marriage of Joseph¹⁹. Such an explanation regarding who the brothers of Jesus were would subsequently be supported by the worthy pens of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hilary, Ambrose and Augustine, although it would end up surrendering to Jerome, who interpreted the word "brothers" as blood relatives.²⁰

But why this rigorous defense of Mary's perpetual virginity to the point of going beyond the truth revealed in the gospel and inventing scenes, like the water trial, that contradict Matthew's account?

There are several reasons. The first is the heretical origin of the text. Today we know that this work possibly originated in Ebionite circles. These were Jews willing to believe in the Messiahship of Jesus but not his divinity. Strict regarding food laws, they also fell occasionally into a praise of sexual asceticism, to the point of considering virginity to be something morally superior to matrimony. To them, it would be especially tempting to be able to present an

account that related the mother of Jesus with the ideal of perpetual virginity. If Mary had always been a virgin, that could be interpreted as proof that God Himself had not wanted to shatter a state so supposedly blessed, not even for the birth of the Messiah.

Secondly, it is very possible that his work also served the purpose of defending the person of Mary against the injurious accusations that were hurled at her by several Jews that did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. Among their best weapons were the irregular circumstances of the birth of Jesus.²¹ We find traces of this in the New Testament,²² but the broadest data appears in apocryphal, patristic and Jewish writings.

In the *Acts of Pilate* II.3, a second century writing, the accusation directed toward Jesus is, in the first place, clearly explicit: "What do we see? First, that you have been born of fornication." Tertullian has equally stated (*De Spectaculis* XXX, 3) that among the Jews of his time, it was common to note that Jesus was the son of a prostitute (*quaestuiaria*).

The actual Jewish sources are even more rudely insulting. In the Talmud, Jesus is called "son of Panthera," so indicating that he was the bastard of Mary and a soldier by that name. This affirmation is linked to rabbis of the tannaitic period, that is, the beginning of the second century.²³

The *Mishnah Yebamot* 4,13 also mentions how, at the onset of the second century after Christ,

Simeon ben Azzai found a genealogy prior to 70 A.D. that affirmed that Jesus was "illegitimate, born of a married woman."²⁴ That denigrating tradition persisted throughout the Amoraitic period (200-500 A.D.) and in the medieval legends of *Toledot Yeshu*, possibly originating at the turn of the fourth century.²⁵

The false accusation of several incredulous Jews insisted that Jesus was the son of an adulteress who, on top of it all, had maintained relations with a Gentile (Panthera), a member of the legions of the oppressive Romans.

Such a clash was not only set in Palestine but also in Gentile territory. The pagan philosopher Celsus, writing against Christians around 177-180 AD, simply took inspiration from the Jewish sources²⁶ when he affirmed that Jesus was a bastard and his mother was a prostitute. The *Prot evangelium of James* sought to not only defend its acetic thesis, but also the figure of Mary. It accomplished what De Strycker has labeled "creative hagiography."

Nonetheless, although its intentions could be noble, its author forgot that the most noble ends can never justify the means. One cannot fight the father of lies (John 8:44), by appealing precisely to falsehood.

As painful as it may be to some, the sincere historian must recognize that the origin of the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary is not found in the New Testament, nor in trustworthy

historical sources, whether they be written or archaeological.

The roots of this belief are buried in a work written in the third century after Christ, falsely presented under the name of James, brother of Jesus, who died in 62 A.D. and emerged from the bosom of the heretical Ebionite sect. It was born with the pretense of inoculating the heart of Christianity with an acetic vision contrary to the blasphemy of Mary's unfaithfulness. But, in an effort to defend the good name of Jesus and Mary, it turned, not to historical reality but to the invention of stories that never happened.

From a moral point of view, it is lamentable that through the centuries, millions of people have set aside the evidence found in the gospels to present, as good information, what appears in a document lacking the slightest guarantees. Even sadder is the ecclesiastical condemnation of those who, for more than justifiable reasons, will not accept it.

CONCLUSION

Although the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is an indissoluble part of Mariology, what is certain is that it lacks the slightest biblical, and even historical, base. Today, even Catholic scholars tend to admit that no statement exists of this doctrine in Scripture and that to accept it, one must turn to a later theological development.

This development had no real importance until the fourth century, and does not extend into the

Simeon ben Azzai found a genealogy prior to 70 A.D. that affirmed that Jesus was "illegitimate, born of a married woman."²⁴ That denigrating tradition persisted throughout the Amoraitic period (200-500 A.D.) and in the medieval legends of *Toledot Yeshu*, possibly originating at the turn of the fourth century.²⁵

The false accusation of several incredulous Jews insisted that Jesus was the son of an adulteress who, on top of it all, had maintained relations with a Gentile (Panthera), a member of the legions of the oppressive Romans.

Such a clash was not only set in Palestine but also in Gentile territory. The pagan philosopher Celsus, writing against Christians around 177-180 AD, simply took inspiration from the Jewish sources²⁶ when he affirmed that Jesus was a bastard and his mother was a prostitute. The *Prot evangelium of James* sought to not only defend its acetic thesis, but also the figure of Mary. It accomplished what De Strycker has labeled "creative hagiography."

Nonetheless, although its intentions could be noble, its author forgot that the most noble ends can never justify the means. One cannot fight the father of lies (John 8:44), by appealing precisely to falsehood.

As painful as it may be to some, the sincere historian must recognize that the origin of the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary is not found in the New Testament, nor in trustworthy

historical sources, whether they be written or archaeological.

The roots of this belief are buried in a work written in the third century after Christ, falsely presented under the name of James, brother of Jesus, who died in 62 A.D. and emerged from the bosom of the heretical Ebionite sect. It was born with the pretense of inoculating the heart of Christianity with an acetic vision contrary to the blasphemy of Mary's unfaithfulness. But, in an effort to defend the good name of Jesus and Mary, it turned, not to historical reality but to the invention of stories that never happened.

From a moral point of view, it is lamentable that through the centuries, millions of people have set aside the evidence found in the gospels to present, as good information, what appears in a document lacking the slightest guarantees. Even sadder is the ecclesiastical condemnation of those who, for more than justifiable reasons, will not accept it.

CONCLUSION

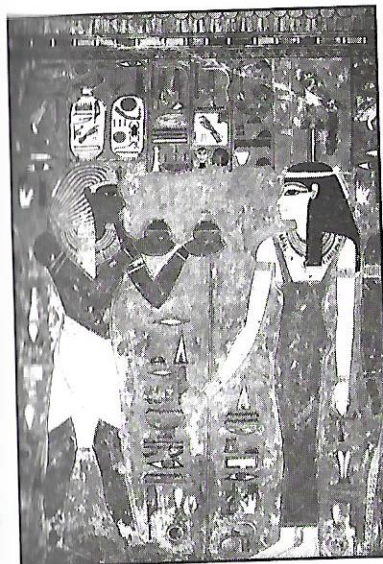
Although the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is an indissoluble part of Mariology, what is certain is that it lacks the slightest biblical, and even historical, base. Today, even Catholic scholars tend to admit that no statement exists of this doctrine in Scripture and that to accept it, one must turn to a later theological development.

This development had no real importance until the fourth century, and does not extend into the

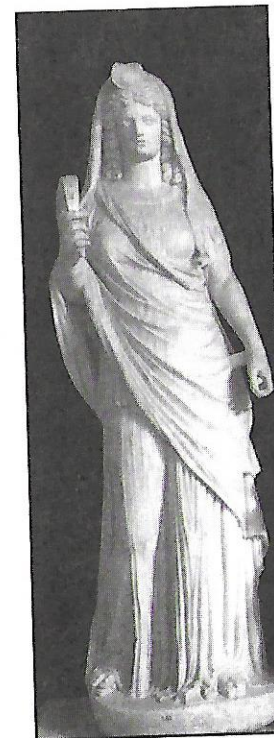
heart of Christianity until the Middle Ages. Its origin, nonetheless, can be found in the heretical sect of the Ebionites (with more difficulty in some gnostic movements) in the third century.

Although part of the purpose of the *Prot evangelium of James* was to a positive end, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that its roots were heterodox, its author false, its theology unbiblical and its content contrary to Scripture and historical sources.

Unfortunately, it is from a fallacy of such magnitude that one of the basic pillars of the "myth of Mary" has been built. It may be stated that without the *Prot evangelium of James*, the further development of mariology would surely not have been the same.



Goddess mother, Isis, frequently seen with her divine son, or adorned with the moon, greatly influenced the aesthetic and artistic configuration of the myth of Mary.



In Greek mythology, the goddess mother Persephone had power to reach the spirits of the dead. This pagan figure is echoed in the myth of Mary, who theoretically had authority over the souls of the dead.

4

The Assumption of Mary

If they believe RE 12:1-6, 14, 17 is about Mary. How can they believe in her Virginity?

On the 15th of August, the Catholic world celebrates the Assumption of Mary into heaven. Although in the past some Catholic writers have claimed that such an event is found in Revelation 12:1-6, 14, 17, today few Catholic specialists¹ hold such an interpretation. They admit that the revelation of this doctrine "is not expressly or clearly evident in the Holy Scriptures."²

THE ORIGIN OF THE DOCTRINE

To be honest with the historical sources, there is not only an absence of references to the Assumption of Mary in the New Testament, but also in the Christian writings of the first centuries. In fact, in the East, the festival related to this event was not established until the sixth century. Moreover, it

took at least another century to be accepted in the West. Even then, the theme was an object of controversy until the ninth century in which a work, falsely presented under the name of Augustine of Hippo,³ resolved the discussion in favor of the celebration.

Although since that date the assumption was no longer debated in the heart of either the Catholic nor the Eastern Churches, it was not until November 1, 1950 that Pope Pius XII defined this belief as a dogma. According to the Catholic definition, it is "a dogma, divinely revealed, that the immaculate Mother of God, the perpetual virgin Mary, having ended the course of her earthly life, ascended in body and soul to the celestial glory" (DS 3903).

As with the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary, the historian always encounters insoluble problems when scientifically studying the doctrine of Mary's assumption. Even knowledgeable Catholics will agree that there is not the slightest trace of this dogma in the Bible. Moreover, we never hear of it until the beginning of the Middle Ages.

Once again it is necessary to ask a logical question: How can a teaching, considered essential by Catholic and Eastern theology, be absent from Scripture and historical sources related to primitive Christianity in the first centuries? What's more, how can it harmonize with statements like that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:23, where he says that

believers in Christ, among whom we can surely include Mary, will not resurrect until His Second Coming?

Again, the origin of this doctrine must be discovered in places that, for many, may be unexpected but are fully reliable historical sources.

THE FIRST FOCUS

The celebration of the Assumption of Mary has its roots in the apocryphal gospel of John and the book called *The Passing of Mary* or *The Holiest Mother of God Rests*. The first of the cited works ought to be dated between the end of the fourth century⁴ and the years 550-80 (Jugie), the second around the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Its most ancient precedent is found in a writing from the end of the second or beginning of the third century.

This work, published by Wright in the nineteenth century,⁵ was considered by Cecchelli⁶ to be the first part of the apocryphal *Acts of John*, attributed to Leucius. It is also the first edition we have of the *Dormitio Mariae*⁷.

Leucius was labeled a heretic by the later Greek fathers.⁸ Such an opinion is far from exact. As we will see, the account that the *Dormitio Mariae* has transmitted is distinctly Ebionite in form, and in summary, notes that: Mary, who was in Jerusalem, receives the news of her impending death in a way similar to the mystery books in which the secrets of the history of salvation are found. These are explained to her on the Mount of Olives by the "great angel" who has become, thanks to his

took at least another century to be accepted in the West. Even then, the theme was an object of controversy until the ninth century in which a work, falsely presented under the name of Augustine of Hippo,³ resolved the discussion in favor of the celebration.

Although since that date the assumption was no longer debated in the heart of either the Catholic nor the Eastern Churches, it was not until November 1, 1950 that Pope Pius XII defined this belief as a dogma. According to the Catholic definition, it is "a dogma, divinely revealed, that the immaculate Mother of God, the perpetual virgin Mary, having ended the course of her earthly life, ascended in body and soul to the celestial glory" (DS 3903).

As with the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary, the historian always encounters insoluble problems when scientifically studying the doctrine of Mary's assumption. Even knowledgeable Catholics will agree that there is not the slightest trace of this dogma in the Bible. Moreover, we never hear of it until the beginning of the Middle Ages.

Once again it is necessary to ask a logical question: How can a teaching, considered essential by Catholic and Eastern theology, be absent from Scripture and historical sources related to primitive Christianity in the first centuries? What's more, how can it harmonize with statements like that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:23, where he says that

believers in Christ, among whom we can surely include Mary, will not resurrect until His Second Coming?

Again, the origin of this doctrine must be discovered in places that, for many, may be unexpected but are fully reliable historical sources.

THE FIRST FOCUS

The celebration of the Assumption of Mary has its roots in the apocryphal gospel of John and the book called *The Passing of Mary* or *The Holiest Mother of God Rests*. The first of the cited works ought to be dated between the end of the fourth century⁴ and the years 550-80 (Jugie), the second around the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Its most ancient precedent is found in a writing from the end of the second or beginning of the third century.

This work, published by Wright in the nineteenth century,⁵ was considered by Cecchelli⁶ to be the first part of the apocryphal *Acts of John*, attributed to Leucius. It is also the first edition we have of the *Dormitio Mariae*⁷.

Leucius was labeled a heretic by the later Greek fathers.⁸ Such an opinion is far from exact. As we will see, the account that the *Dormitio Mariae* has transmitted is distinctly Ebionite in form, and in summary, notes that: Mary, who was in Jerusalem, receives the news of her impending death in a way similar to the mystery books in which the secrets of the history of salvation are found. These are explained to her on the Mount of Olives by the "great angel" who has become, thanks to his

virtue, the Son of God. Returning to her home, Mary performs the ritual ablutions destined to purify her body and clothing, continually reciting a prayer to free her of the wiles of the diabolical powers during her journey up the cosmic ladder.

Later, the apostles arrive from various parts of the world where they have discharged their missionary ministry. The first to arrive is John. Mary initiates a dissertation regarding the "two ways." In her speech, she maintains that the death of each individual produces a spiritual battle between angels to claim the body of the deceased person and that the final result of the combat depends on the former life of the one who died.

After Mary's death (her soul protected by Jesus and Michael), Peter, along with the other apostles, take Mary's remains to the Kidron valley, where there is a new grave. On the way, Jesus and the angels protect the body from desecration by some Jewish adversaries until it is finally buried. The apostles remain there for three days and then Paul arrives, wanting to gain access to the mysteries taught to the apostles on the Mount of Olives. Peter is totally opposed to Paul's wishes.

Then Christ, Michael and Gabriel take Mary's body to paradise in a chariot (merkabah), a celestial voyage in which she sees the heavens, as well as the suffering of those who are condemned and the blessings of those who are saved. Finally, the apostles return to the missionary sites from which they came.

The account contains heretical elements whose fingerprints cannot be denied. To begin with, Jesus is seen as an angelic being, not divine.⁹ Also it clearly denies Paul as an apostle in the same category as the Twelve (pointing again to the Ebionites).

Lastly, a salvation model based on various rites, which is completely contrary to the New Testament, is presented. There are extensive references to the ritual ablutions of Mary, the cosmic ladder and, most of all, the angelic fight for her corpse. The believer, far from dying and being with Christ (Philippians 1:21-23) due to faith in Him (Romans 5:1), appears subject to complicated rituals designed to free him from the wiles of demons at the moment of his death.

Given the possible date this account was written, it seems that one of the reasons that motivated it was the desire to pacify the Ebionites, who gave such importance to the body of Mary, in regards to her final destiny. Diverse sites related to her (which were Judeo-Christian meeting and worship places) had been profaned by the Emperor Hadrian during the war against the Jews in the beginning of the second century after Christ.

Did the same happen to her tomb and to the body that had carried Christ on its bosom? We really do not know, but the account seems to insist that nothing happened to Mary's body. According to its report, in the exact moment following her death, some tried to blemish her body but were not

successful. As Moses' body was saved by God, Mary's was taken to paradise which permits the author to stretch out into apocryphal and apocalyptic styles regarding the sites of mankind's final destiny and there obtained rest. Hadrian never desecrated it.

There is no doubt that the account, which screeched loudly when it came time to confront it with numerous aspects of biblical Christianity, fitted easily into the Ebionite heresy.¹⁰ However, as we saw in the previous chapter, they had to turn to historical falsehood. Once again, the Ebionite heresies are defended through historical lies.

CONCLUSION

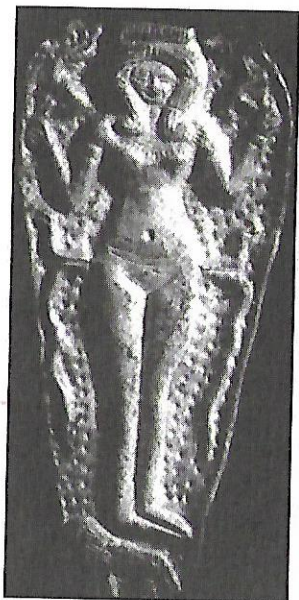
The analysis of historical sources relating to the belief in the Assumption of Mary is especially revealing. Far from being a doctrine based on Scripture, even Catholic authorities must admit that its origin is foreign to the Bible.

Neither can it be said that it deals with a common belief among the first Christians. The first references to this doctrine are from the start of the Middle Ages and did not affect Christian liturgy for many centuries. Also, the discussion was only resolved in the eleventh century by virtue of a writing falsely attributed to Augustine of Hippo.

Historically, the belief was born in the bosom of a sect of the heretical Ebionites and crystallized in a work not only impregnated with the pallid shades of legends, but also containing a theology directly opposed to that of the New Testament.

Once again, the irrefutable evidence of the historical sources is bitingly painful but rigorously precise. ~~The dogma of the Assumption of Mary was taken from a heretical sect. It was initially transmitted, thanks to the heretic Leucius, and was popularized through the writings deceptively protected by apostolic names that did not support them. It was finally imposed, thanks to a falsification in the ninth century, and was consecrated by a pope especially weak in regards to some ethical challenges, like the repulsion of movements such as German Nazism.~~

Without a doubt, this is not the background one expects of a teaching revealed by God.



Goddess Astarte, confronted over and over by the Hebrew prophets, was believed to have power over the harvests and fertility, and her followers took her in processions, or self inflicted wounds in her honor. Every aspect, like her title of Queen of Heaven, was transferred after some centuries to the myth of Mary in rituals like the prayers for rain or the flagellants.

Many aspects of the Greek goddess Athena - wise, virgin, mother, intercessor before the father of the gods, and even having warrior characteristics, were reproduced in the later appearances of Mary as a mediator in front of the Father and possessing military virtues.



Part III

MARY AND PAGAN INFLUENCE

5

Paganism Enters The Church

In Part II, we saw the authentic references that we have regarding Mary, derived first from the New Testament and later from historical, written, and archaeological sources. We also saw how these have been spoiled by the dogma of the Catholic Church and Eastern churches.

Although disturbing to some, honest historical analysis shows that the important doctrines of Mary's perpetual virginity and assumption into heaven developed in the heretical circles of primitive Christianity. They were then expanded through dishonest means, attributing false identities or utilizing works fraudulently credited to church Fathers of the stature of Augustine.

Although this heretical influence was important

in understanding the true origins of the myth of Mary, it was not the most influential characteristic in its development. Today's popular Marian celebrations find their most powerful roots in the paganism which existed in the first centuries of our Common Era. Only a profound knowledge of this reality allows us, in our judgment, to get to the bottom in the analysis of this book's theme.

Because of this, in Part III we will center upon four principal aspects related to the myth of Mary and its origin in pre-Christian myths. But before entering this subject, we should briefly refer to the historical background of the fourth century after Christ.

THE CRISIS OF THE THIRD CENTURY A.D. ¹

For Rome, the third century after Christ was an unprecedented period of crisis. Following the tranquil government of the Automines, the dynasty of Severus rose to power, characterized by a policy of forced egalitarianism. The imperial administration progressively changed into an omnipotent and omnipresent regime, with very few limitations. The army was professionalized and the bureaucracy grew to unexpected limits. A policy of handing out free bread and entertainment as a means of obtaining popularity provoked a dizzying rise in taxes and a frontal attack against the most well-to-do sectors of the population.

Although it may be that, in the beginning, it was thought that this form of government would bring more happiness, more justice, and more

SOUNDS LIKE AMERICA & MOST COUNTRIES GOVERNMENTS TODAY!

liberty, the results were very different. First, terror was used to repress the landowners. Later, it became the instrument of an attempt at imperial unification with higher taxes, unusual laws and the project of establishing a single religion. Regarding the ancient rich, they only disappeared to make way for new ones.

As noted by the Christian author, Cyprian, in the third century, "The rich add domains to their domains, cast out the poor from their boundaries, and their lands extend without measure or limits." When the emperor, Alexander Severus, died in the year 235, chaos overtook them.

We cannot examine all the details of that period but it is enough to say that between 235 and 297 there was not the slightest glimpse of peace or tranquility in the Roman Empire. The emperors succeeded one another in extremely short periods of time, generally concluding with bloodshed. The barbarian invasions, basically Persian and Germanic, were repeated and hard to contain. To cite only a few examples, in 238 the Carps and the Goths crossed the Danube, the latter obtaining tribute from Rome.

In 244, M. Julius Philipus was obliged to also buy peace from the Persians, in exchange for a surrender of territories. In 250, the Goths again crossed the Danube and two years later sacked Asia Minor. Three years later, the Germans were razing Auvergne and the Franks were reaching Spain. To top it off, an epidemic of the plague that

started in 250 would extend over 15 years. Starting in 256, inflation would gallop out of control.

It is almost impossible to imagine what that chaos would signify to the people of the empire. The slaves would run away and become highway robbers. Common people would turn to banditry and prostitution. The lack of safety in the country forced the populace to hole up in the cities, and from 280 prices rose a thousand percent. Anguished, prisoners to the present hysteria, the followers of the mystery cults and the various forms of witchcraft multiplied rapidly. In the face of such a desperate situation, the idea began to gain ground that the only way to save the empire was through a military dictatorship.

This was created under the patronage of a group of military men called the "Illyrian emperors" (268-311). These were partisans of a system which A. Piganiol classifies as "state socialism"² and which found its maximum expression in the political and social reforms of Diocletian, the founder of the "tetrarchy" or "government by four." According to the emperor's concept, the government of the empire was divided between two Augusti that, in his turn, depended on the support of one Caesar each. Until 297, this institutional creation had brought back stability.

CONSTANTINE AND THE PAGAN INVASION³

The second tetrarchy (305-306) was able to maintain stability for a very short time, but it was only the calm before the storm. Upon the naming

of the third (306), a civil war erupted to bloody the empire until 312 when Constantine and Licinius arose as conquerors. Twelve years later, Constantine defeated Licinius as well and became exclusive master of the Roman Empire, which once again was subject to the will of a single man.

Constantine was conscious from the beginning of the enormous value that religion could have as a unifying element in an empire hounded by grave external and internal problems. His Illyian predecessors had dreamed of the possibility of implanting sun worship as the unifying religion and, at least at the beginning, Constantine seemed to have had the same goal.

As A. Kee recently demonstrated,⁴ Constantine was conscious of the importance of forcing a new religion that was monotheistic and that would integrate all of the subjects of the empire. Precisely because of this, he moved from polytheism to solar monotheism with hardly any difficulty.

The problem is that there were other religious forces in the empire that had endured adversity with considerable resistance and could not be ignored. The main one, Christianity, had survived since the first century the partial persecutions that cost hundreds of the faithful their lives. The new emperor was conscious of the importance of having good relations with Christianity. He knew as well how fruitless it was to persecute them directly. Over a short period of time, beginning around 312, Constantine concluded that the

cement he needed to build his empire was not so much the solar religion as it was Christianity. Nonetheless, it could not be just any Christianity, but a Christianity that would lend itself to political purposes.

He needed a Christianity that contained a hierarchical and monolithic structure. Because of this, Constantine repressed all efforts at division at the heart of Christianity. That attitude established the consequential precedent of a political power intervening in religious matters. The fruit of this principal would later be the inquisitional fires lit by the king to aid the Catholic church in its hunt for heretics.

Moreover, Constantine does not seem to have experienced at any point a sincere conversion to Christ or even a minimal understanding of the Christian faith. His interest was merely political. In that way, he unleashed a repression against the African Donatists simply because they split ecclesiastical unity. He tried to fuse Christianity with pagan cults (c. 312) and, although he supported the Trinitarians in 325, he went on to support their Arian enemies.

From 333 onward, Constantine openly declared himself to be an Arian and it would likewise be an Arian bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia, who would baptize him shortly before his death (337).

Despite it all, for many Christians like Eusebius of Caesarea, author of the *Ecclesiastical History*,⁵ Constantine would be seen in a completely

positive light. He was the one who ended the imperial persecutions and brought them out of hiding. He even brought them to the palace to ask their advice, as was the case of the Spanish Christian Hosius. All these aspects dazzled many Christians of that period in such a way that they were not conscious of the mutation that was about to happen at the heart of their faith. *Remain - Catholicism*

In an attempt to convert Christianity into the ideological base of his empire, Constantine was able to introduce ceremonies, viewpoints, beliefs, and practices into its heart which originated in paganism. His concern was not to maintain the purity of something which he did not care for, but to adapt that organism to receive all kinds of strange bodies, bodies which, for him, proved indispensable if he desired to maintain the unity of the empire.

In a short time, to be Christian, at least in external appearances, became something "chic," elegant and attractive. Multitudes proceeding from paganism filled the rows of the church. As a general rule, it had never had people of such a status among its members. Little by little the church was seduced by the glitter of human glory, forgetting the counsel of James against making exceptions of persons (James 2.1-9).

In the blink of an eye, Christians that had never associated with the government started to fill important political offices. Those who had never fit into the ranks of the army were given military

commands. Those who had been outlawed by the emperors now sat at his table. It seemed a triumph of the Spirit over the former enemy empire. Without a doubt, many would have seen all that as God's blessing. But this was only how it appeared. Reality was a whole different story.

Few authors have expressed with such obvious clarity this process of the absorption of pagan values as J. H. Newman. His testimony has a special value in that he was born in the bosom of the Anglican church, converted to Catholicism, and was made a cardinal. In what may be his principal work in regards to Catholic apologetics, Cardinal Newman wrote:

"In the course of the fourth century, two movements or developments extended across the face of Christianity, with a speed characteristic of the church; one ascetic, the other, ritual or ceremonial. We are told in various ways by Eusebius (see Const. iii, 1, iv, 23 @c.), that Constantine, with the purpose of recommending the new religion⁶ to the pagans, transferred to it the same external ornaments to which they had been accustomed. It is not necessary to enter into a theme with which the diligence of Protestant writers has familiarized most of us. The use of temples, especially those dedicated to concrete saints, and

adorned on occasion with tree branches; incense, lamps and candles; votive offerings upon the healing of a sickness; holy water; orphanages; holy days and periods; the use of calendars, processions, and the blessing of fields; priestly vestments, tonsures, the wedding ring, facing the East, later statues, possibly the ecclesiastical song, the Kyrie Eleison, are all of pagan origins, sanctified by their adoption into the church."⁷

This account is so meticulous, detailed and exact that little can be added to it. Nonetheless, the fact that a multitude of aspects that are regarded as Christian by millions of people have their origins in paganism does not cease to be amazing.

On the other hand, it is even more terrifying to see the spectacle of a church that, having been seduced by the brilliance of human grandeur, gave itself practically en masse to the most obvious religious mixture.

In historical terms, it cannot be denied today that Constantine's drawing near to the church, although signifying enormous economic, social and political benefits, also implied the beginning of its corruption due to the multiple pagan seeds sowed in her at that point.

The purpose of this present work does not permit us to be detained by the diverse aspects mentioned by Newman. But in the following four

chapters we will make reference, although in summary form, to the way in which this pagan invasion had a decisive influence in the formation of the "myth of Mary."

*Roman Catholicism is
Paganism -*

6

The Mother Goddess

The importance of mother goddesses in the various mythologies of paganism is so evident that even a shallow description could easily fill entire volumes. The novelist, poet, and mythologist, Robert Graves, dedicated one of his most extensive and well known works, *The White Goddess*, to only one of these divinities, known as the "Great White Goddess."

In his study, which is debatable at times but otherwise extremely interesting, Graves sorts out the way in which the beliefs associated with this deity penetrated the diverse mythologies of the Mediterranean. As far as this author knows, Graves never became familiar with the beginnings of the New Age movement. If he had, he surely

would have seen how this same mythology is present in the references this spiritual phenomenon makes to the Earth goddess or the Earth-mother.

It is certain that traces of a mother goddess cult are present in the history of humanity from its most remote times. Experts in prehistory confirm this with figurines known as "Venus," fashioned out of stone or ivory. These are some of the first manifestations of this kind of worship.

In neolithic enclaves like Catal Hüyük, we again find signs of this veneration of the mother goddess. In statuettes and on wall drawings, the image of this feminine divinity appears as proof that this spiritual power was present in various cultures thousands of years before Christ.

The mother goddess received different names and external appearances, but, in substance, she was always the same. In Egypt, she was called Isis. In Crete, she was represented as a mother who made friendly contact with snakes. In Greece she was known as Demeter, and in Rome she was worshipped as Cybele, the Magna Mater (Great Mother), a mother goddess of Phrygian origin. There is practically no ancient culture that did not worship this type of deity.

We cannot describe here all the mother goddesses that contributed to the configuration of the myth of Mary. Nonetheless, we make reference to the three that we consider to be most significant, being careful to demonstrate the connection between the assorted mythologies.

ISIS¹

The goddess Isis—in Egypt, Eset (seat)—had an extraordinary importance in the ancient world. Although her cult originated, it seems, in the Nile River Delta, it grew to enjoy a wide popularity during the Ptolemaic (IV-I B.C.) and Roman (I B.C. - VII A.D.) periods, lasting until the reign of the emperor Justinian.

The veneration of this goddess was primarily associated with the idea that she could work miracles, as well as being a mother. This explains why she was commonly known by names like Weret-Hekau (the great magician) and Mut-netjer (the mother of the gods). It is believed that along with Osiris, her husband in Egyptian mythology, Isis had initiated the Egyptian civilization, teaching agriculture and medicine to the people.

According to Egyptian mythology, when Osiris was killed by the god Set, Isis initiated a voyage in search of his remains. In the course of this journey, Isis cared for her son Horus, protecting him from all kinds of dangers. This part of the legend had considerable importance in the iconography of the goddess. She is represented in images with the god-child Horus, as well as the sun-disc between the horns of a cow. In this last case, she was occasionally associated with the goddess, Hathor.

DEMETER²

Demeter, or in the Dorian and Aeolic dialects, Damater, was, as her name indicates, a goddess whose fundamental characteristic is motherhood.

The Greeks associated her with the fertility of the fields and the harvest (in Cyprus, the wheat harvest is described with the word "*dematrizein*") and with the enacting of occultic rituals called "mysteries."

Curiously, the myth of Demeter noted that she enjoyed a truly spectacular power; that of removing her own daughter, Persephone from Hades. Far from having her powers limited to the earth, her potency extended to the subterranean world of the dead, to the point that the deceased were known as "the people of Demeter."

CYBELE³

The origin of Cybele worship is usually associated with Anatolia. Her most important temple was located in Pesino, Phrygia. There she was worshipped around a rock (litholatry) supposedly associated with the goddess. Her worshippers connected this divinity with the mountains and portrayed her wrapped in ample robes, with a crown and, sometimes, flanked by lions.

As with Demeter, with whom she was identified in Greece since ancient times, powers related to the world of the dead were attributed to Cybele.

Her cult reached Rome around 205-204 B.C. and eventually extended throughout the empire, especially Gaul and Africa. Although her followers found it attractive that the cult let them influence the great beyond, some of its peculiarities were terrible. An example is that her priests would

completely sacrifice their sexuality to the mother goddess. This decision was made permanent through castration.

MARY

If a study of the various mother goddesses reveal notable similarities, it is no less certain that there are also differences. For example, not all the mother goddesses were worshipped through rocks, nor were they all associated with a specific son or the power to influence the world of the dead. Nonetheless, in every case we see divinities that received the worship and sacrifices of their faithful.

The attitude of the first Christians in relation to these types of cults was actually very strict. In fact, it was precisely these types of rites that the apostle Paul referred to when he wrote:

"What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?"
1 Corinthians 10:19-22

According to the apostle, what went on in these ceremonies was not a question of mere superstition

or fantasy. It was rather one of worship offered directly to demonic forces. Far from finding certain moral values in pagan cults, Paul of Tarsus, and like him first century Christians, affirmed that hidden behind these gods were authentic supernatural forces, whose symbol was not benevolent, as its worshippers believed, but demonic.

Viewing the phenomenon of pagan god worship from this perspective, it is troublesome that the most relevant characteristics of the different mother goddesses have been joined to Mary in the heart of the Catholic and Eastern churches.

In relation to the aforementioned goddesses, we can see at least ten similarities between the myth of Mary and pagan myths. In the following pages we will describe them in order to later compare them to Scripture.

I. Represented in images: The first attribute common to all the deities we have mentioned is their method of presentation. In each and every case, the mother goddess was worshipped through her visual form in sculpture or paintings.

This is clearly true with the worship of Mary. In fact, the use of images is so intimately linked with Mary that these icons are a perfect symbol of concrete Marian worship. Whether it is the black virgin of Montserrat (popularly known as "la moreneta"), patron of Spain's Catalonia region, the virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico, or the virgin of Czestochowa in Poland, to cite only a few examples, in each case the identification of the specific Mary

comes through a physical, painted or sculpted, concrete representation.

II. The Mother of all: Another common characteristic is the fact that she is thought of as not only the mother of another divinity but her maternal influence also extends to the faithful that turn to her in search of help.

This element is equally present in the myth of Mary. Although until the end of the 11th century we find no references to Mary as the mother of all believers,⁴ it is certain that, since that time, continual and uninterrupted reference is made to this.

As a biblical base for this thesis, John 19:26-27 has been primarily suggested. In this passage we read how Jesus committed his mother to his beloved disciple. However, such an interpretation is so unconvincing and so lacking in support from the first thousand years of Christianity that not even the Vatican II Council dared use it as a base for teaching the motherhood of Mary in regards to believers.

III. Union with the child: In a good number of cases, the mother goddess counted on a son, or sometimes a daughter, with whom she received worship. The image of the goddess holding the baby or feeding it is common in this type of rite.

The image of Mary, with the divine child in her arms, is very late. In fact, we find no signs of it until the Middle Ages, and then more in the east than the west. Moreover, all the iconography of

Mary associated with a child whom she feeds (*galactotrifusa*) or whom she holds, originated in the Byzantine Empire and from there moved on well into the Middle Ages. Today, however, icons of this kind are common in the Catholic and Eastern churches.

IV. Sun and horns of a cow: Another one of the representative motifs with which some of the mother goddesses are associated, as in the case of Isis, is the solar disc between two cow's horns.

Although there is no biblical reference that connects Mary with the sun, it is common, at least since the Lower Middle Ages, to represent her with the sun and horns (which are interpreted as representing the moon) situated at her feet or over her head. From our point of view, it is possible that we are simply encountering a transference of some of the elements representative of Isis in the person of Mary.

V. Harvest: The powers of the mother goddess usually had a clear relation to the agrarian cults. Prayers were offered to the feminine divinity in order to guarantee the harvest, and at the same time, she was offered part of it to demonstrate gratitude and to obtain propitiation.

In the same way, in our day it is still very common to associate the agricultural work in Catholic countries with some particular "virgin" who is seen as the "patron" of that specific people.

VI. Power over the great beyond: One significant characteristic of some of the most im-

portant mother goddesses was their power over the great beyond. Far from limiting her spiritual influence to the daily and earthly realm, her followers sincerely believed that her power reached to the world of the dead. In the hands of these divinities, supposedly, was the capacity to impede the otherworldly suffering of her followers and give them a happier existence after death.

It can hardly be doubted that this impressive characteristic is also present in the myth of Mary. Whether it be through traditions like those related to the scapulary of the Virgin of Carmen, or with the prayers on behalf of souls in Purgatory, the person of Mary has been associated with the possibility of influencing the destiny of human lives beyond the grave. As we study the Middle Ages, we will be able to see how, during this period, a whole set of literature was created and devoted to reveal Mary's power over the afterlife. For now it is enough simply to note this fact.

VII. The worship of stones or litholatry: Although it was common for these goddesses to be venerated through images, it was not unusual for their sanctuaries to possess some sacred stone with which the deity was related.

It is also common to associate Mary with the worship of certain stones. Possibly the most famous case would be the Pilar Basilica in Zaragoza, Spain. According to tradition, Mary appeared to James on this stone. The legend lacks even minimal historical base. Most likely, the place

was primitively an enclave in which the stone itself was worshiped. In any case, it becomes obvious that Mary has been once again associated with an element belonging to the pagan cults of the mother goddesses.

VIII. Sanctuaries in caves: It was also common for the mother goddess to receive worship in caves or grottos, in addition to the temples specifically dedicated to her. Worshipers believed that the mother goddess manifested (or had manifested) herself in these natural scenes, and they thought them to be ideal places for worship in honor of her.

Possibly, this is one of the characteristics which is most easily identifiable with the myth of Mary's absorption of paganism. The Marian sanctuary in Lourdes, France, one of the most famous in the world, is situated in a grotto and it is not an exception. Citing only Spanish examples, the same could be said of the worship centers like Our Lady of Colobor in Lerida, Our Lady of the Holy Cove between Segorbe and Altura, Our Lady of Alba in Luna, Zaragoza, Our Lady of the Feixa in Serraduy, Huesca, or Our Lady of the Olletas in Sant Privat de Bas, Gerona.

IX. Mountains: It is also normal in pagan towns to see a connection between the mother goddess and certain mountains. It is actually not strange that the persons of the mother goddesses should be identified with the lady goddesses of the mountains.

We also discover this aspect in relation to the

myth of Mary. The examples are diverse and, once again, to cite only a few: the Virgin of Montserrat, Our Lady of the Moncayo, Our Lady of the Bull, Our Lady of the Rock, etc. In each and every one of these cases, the person of Mary, just like the mother goddesses, appears to be related to a mountain or a mountain range.

X. Sacrifice of sexuality: Although this characteristic does not appear to be generalized, some mother goddesses demanded of their closest servants the sacrifice of their sex lives, something which could even include the mutilation of the genitals.

This final aspect has parallels, although not as crude, in the insistence that we find in Catholicism and in the Eastern churches of identifying celibacy and virginity as a special form of godliness. The spiritual model of a perpetually virginal Mary has had a considerable influence on the configuration of a mentality in which sex is conceived of as something worthy of being sacrificed.

As we can see, all these aspects are common to the pagan worship of the mother goddesses and to that of Mary. As paradoxical as it may appear to many, we find, however, that the spiritual vision that is reflected in the pages of Bible is absent.

The first obvious example of this is found in the worship of images. In the ten commandments given by God to Moses, it is specifically established that images should not even be made, much less worshiped (Exodus 20:4-5; Deuteronomy 5:8-10).

That is not all. Whoever trusts in images is considered a fool by the prophets. As Isaiah 44:9 notes, their spiritual blindness did not even allow them to see that the same wood that served to heat their food was that which later would be used to carve out an image to which they bowed.

The Bible unequivocally condemns the worship of images and the relation of this to Mary can only be explained as a direct consequence of the assimilation of pagan practices into the bosom of Christianity. Thus, it should not surprise us that even Cardinal Newman recognized that this practice entered Christianity at a later date.

This strict monotheism, that does not allow the worship of images or any other beings, also explains why the idea of Mary as the mother of all the faithful lacks the slightest biblical base. There are no references in its pages to a spiritual mother, although it does affirm that there is a spiritual Father, God, who does not claim all creatures as His sons, but only those who have received His son Jesus Christ (John 1:12).

Regarding the motherhood of Mary, it was Jesus himself who refused to elevate it to the character of a title. When someone claimed that the womb that had carried him and the paps that he had sucked were blessed, Christ answered:

“Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it,”

Luke 11:28

When someone indicated that his mother and

brothers were looking for him, he responded, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," (Matthew 12:48-50. See also Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21).

The idea of the universal motherhood of Mary, which does not appear historically until the 11th century, has a much greater connection with paganism than with Scripture. The same can be said of the representation of Mary with the divine child. This concept was also unknown, as we have already noted, in the first centuries of Christianity.

Also, the supposed powers of Mary in relation to this world and the next are impossible to reconcile with what is revealed in Scripture. Regarding the harvest, there are a number of biblical texts that attribute its abundance to God's love and to obedience (Deuteronomy 28:1-14; Proverbs 3:9-19; etc.).

Requests related to the harvest were directed specifically to God (Psalm 144:13) and God is also the one honored in ancient Israel's harvest festivals (Exodus 23:34). Certainly, the pagan nations attributed their prosperity to diverse divinities, among them the mother goddesses, but that was not so with God's people.

Something similar can be said of the power over the next world that Catholic theology

attributes to Mary, just like the pagan mythologies attribute them to Demeter or similar goddesses. Also here, the message of Scripture is clear. God is the one who can remove someone from the place of the dead (Psalm 16:10; 49:15; Hosea 13:14, etc.). It is Christ, The Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who has the keys to death and Hades (Revelation 1:11-18). But these powers are out of reach of any other being, even, Mary.

What determines the eternal destiny of a man, according to the testimony of the New Testament, is not a conjunction of rites or ceremonies related to feminine divinities. The decisive factor is whether or not a person is born again (John 3:3-5), if he believed in Christ and passed from death to life (John 5:24), if he was saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

According to the words of Jesus in John 3:36, he who believes in the Son receives salvation, but God's wrath remains on those who refuse to do so. Therefore, to think that Mary can alter the New Testament plan of salvation harmonizes well with pagan mother goddess worship, but clashes head on with the teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

Because of this, it is not surprising that the elements often related with Mary worship (sacred stones, caves, mountains) are also closer to pagan ceremonies than to the teaching of Jesus. As the Gospel of John records (4:23-24) the very Temple of Jerusalem had its days numbered in the time of Jesus, because God is Spirit and wants His

worshippers to worship Him without spiritual crutches, but in spirit and in truth.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that an example of idolatry most often condemned in the Scriptures is that of worship in high places (1 Kings 12:31; 2 Kings 14:4; etc.), related not a few times with another mother goddess, Asherah, and in its plural form, Ashtaroth (Judges 2:13; 1 Samuel 7:3; 12:10; 31:10; 1 Kings 11:5, etc.).

Regarding the sacrifice of sexuality in order to serve the deity, this also appears to be unknown in Scripture. There are certainly persons that would opt for that route, but what historical sources show us is that both the apostles and the brothers of the Lord were married and traveled with their wives (1 Corinthians 9:5); that the bishops ought to be married (1 Timothy 3:2ff; Titus 1:5ff); and that the one who decided to live in celibacy without counting on that specific gift from the Lord was only risking himself to burn and fall into fornication (1 Corinthians 7:7-9).

CONCLUSION

The worship of the mother goddesses has an extraordinary importance in the scientific study of religion. We find traces of this worship from prehistoric times in diverse cultures, always linked to well defined characteristics like fertility, the worship of images, the location of sanctuaries in caves or on mountains, the reference to a power over the great beyond, etc.

This spiritual, vigorous and well articulated

worship of goddesses has historically developed contrary to the spiritual vision of ancient Israel and primitive Christianity. For example, if we believe the testimony of the prophets or Paul, the pagan rites are not only intrinsically evil, but also serve as a shelter for demonic beings.

Because both spiritual visions are so opposed, it is especially significant that Mary worship, which we find in Catholicism and in the Eastern churches, does not stem at any point from biblical concepts, but from the absorption of pagan theologies like those present in the myths of Isis, Demeter and Cybele.

Far from being compatible with the spirit of Christianity, the myth of Mary constitutes an intrusion of paganism into its heart, the survival of pagan ceremonies, and implies the elaboration of a theological system that ends up being anti-biblical and pro-pagan.

7

The Mother of God

If the idea of the mother goddess was incorporated from the pagan myths into the figure of Mary, something similar should be said regarding her title as the "Mother of God."

This title, used to refer to Mary, is so important in the heart of the Catholic and Eastern churches that it can almost be considered to be the favorite name for calling on her. In fact, the second part of the Ave Maria begins with a clear invocation, "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners..."

Although it is obvious that Scripture refers to Mary as the mother of Jesus on various occasions, it does not use the term "mother of God" in any of them. Neither is it found in any writings of the first Christians until the third century after Christ.

Not until the fourth century, and only in the East, does the custom of calling Mary by the epithet "Theotokos" (literally: One who gives birth to God) arise. Even then, the acceptance of this title would be far from peaceful.

Well into the fifth century, Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, insisted that, while it was correct to call Mary "Christotokos" (the one who gave birth to Christ), it was not correct to apply the term "Theotokos." Unfortunately, the christology of Nestorius¹ was incorrect when it came time to define the relationship between the humanity and divinity of Christ. This generated a series of disputes which, paradoxically, resulted not only in the condemnation of the heterodox elements of his teachings, but also in the acceptance of the term "Theotokos."

The initial promotion of the title was produced in the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D., although it was not declared a dogma for another 20 years by the Council of Chalcedon. Even then, at least in its beginning, the term "Theotokos" was not used to attribute honors to Mary, but to underline the full divinity of Christ.

In fact, in Cyril of Alexandria's² letter, directed to Nestorius and read and approved by the Council of Ephesus, it was affirmed that, "the Fathers did not doubt in calling the holy Virgin 'Theotokos,' not because the nature or divinity of the Word owes its origin to the holy Virgin, but because He took from her that holy body gifted

7

The Mother of God

If the idea of the mother goddess was incorporated from the pagan myths into the figure of Mary, something similar should be said regarding her title as the "Mother of God."

This title, used to refer to Mary, is so important in the heart of the Catholic and Eastern churches that it can almost be considered to be the favorite name for calling on her. In fact, the second part of the Ave Maria begins with a clear invocation, "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners..."

Although it is obvious that Scripture refers to Mary as the mother of Jesus on various occasions, it does not use the term "mother of God" in any of them. Neither is it found in any writings of the first Christians until the third century after Christ.

Not until the fourth century, and only in the East, does the custom of calling Mary by the epithet "Theotokos" (literally: One who gives birth to God) arise. Even then, the acceptance of this title would be far from peaceful.

Well into the fifth century, Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, insisted that, while it was correct to call Mary "Christotokos" (the one who gave birth to Christ), it was not correct to apply the term "Theotokos." Unfortunately, the christology of Nestorius¹ was incorrect when it came time to define the relationship between the humanity and divinity of Christ. This generated a series of disputes which, paradoxically, resulted not only in the condemnation of the heterodox elements of his teachings, but also in the acceptance of the term "Theotokos."

The initial promotion of the title was produced in the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D., although it was not declared a dogma for another 20 years by the Council of Chalcedon. Even then, at least in its beginning, the term "Theotokos" was not used to attribute honors to Mary, but to underline the full divinity of Christ.

In fact, in Cyril of Alexandria's² letter, directed to Nestorius and read and approved by the Council of Ephesus, it was affirmed that, "the Fathers did not doubt in calling the holy Virgin 'Theotokos,' not because the nature or divinity of the Word owes its origin to the holy Virgin, but because He took from her that holy body gifted

with an intelligent soul, joined to it by a hypostatic union with which it is truthfully said that the Word was born of God according to the flesh" (DS 250-1).

While the intention of the bishops who met in the council was correct, that of defending the full divinity of Christ, the means chosen to do so, calling Mary "Theotokos," was a mistake that brought unexpected consequences. By displacing the christological character of the phrase they converted it into a mariological term.

In fact, the Vatican II council simply picked up this twisted interpretation from the Council of Ephesus after it already had centuries of life: "The Virgin Mary... is recognized and honored as the true Mother of God and the Redeemer" (LG 53). In other words, what was a concept designed to unmistakably affirm the glory of Christ has become an expression that recognizes and honors Mary.

Such a theological mutation should not surprise us. It was produced in a city characterized by the worship of a goddess that we did not refer to in the last chapter, but which we will now discuss. Before doing so, however, we should mention, although briefly, the phenomenon of the goddesses, mothers of gods in the history of the religions.

MOTHERS OF GODS

The existence of mother goddesses that had sons gifted with divinity is common in practically the entirety of the pre-Christian mythologies. In Egyptian mythology, Isis had a son, Horus, one of

the country's principal deities; Demeter was the mother of Persephone, a circumstance in the myth which gave the goddess powers in the world of the dead; Hera, the wife of Zeus, was the mother of the goddess Hebe, of the god Ares and the goddess Ilithyia; Rhea, goddess linked to Chronos, whose daughter was the aforementioned Demeter; Dione gave birth by Zeus to the goddess Aphrodite, etc.

In Greek mythology alone, in classic works like the Homeric epics or Hesiod's "Works and Days" we find a concert of myths in which the goddesses are, in their turn, mothers of gods. And in some cases like that of the goddess Hera, wife and sister of Zeus, such a circumstance did not stop her, as in the myth of Mary, from keeping her virginity perpetually. Every year, according to mythology, Hera bathed in the fountain of Canatos, near Nauplia, thereby recovering her virginity.

The fact that all these goddesses had been venerated for centuries before Christianity and even continued being honored during the centuries following its appearance played a decisive role in the incorporation of many of their characteristics into the myth of Mary. Nonetheless, the prime factor that influenced the configuration of Mary as mother of God in the city of Ephesus was precisely its worship of a mother goddess whose center of worship was in that very city.

GREAT IS DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS!³

Few divinities enjoyed greater popularity in hellenic mythology than the one known as

AC 19.243

Artemis, renamed Diana by the Romans. Considered to be the twin sister of Apollo and the daughter of the gods Zeus and Leto, she was described as a virgin goddess, who refused sexual relations and exercised her authority over mountains and beasts. This is why references to her as "agne" (pure, chaste) are very abundant.

Despite her virginal condition, she was associated with motherhood, especially in Ephesus, where she was known by the title Loquia (the one of child-birth), Curotrofos and Paidotrofos (the one who nourishes children).

Like her brother, Apollo, Diana had the power to send death to men which, in such a case, would be a good death.

Her temple in Ephesus was begun in the sixth century B.C. and, according to the dates taken from classical sources, we know that it enjoyed an immense popularity, up to the point of being considered one of the wonders of the world. The high priest that officiated in it was a eunuch and had the title Megabyzos.

In some historical periods, Artemis was identified with Hecate, a goddess that was possibly pre-hellenic and was associated with the spirits of the dead, customarily worshiped at crossroads. This divinity was also linked with black magic and was the object of monthly sacrifices.

The 19th chapter of the book of Acts contains explicit references to Paul's missionary visit to the city of Ephesus. In general terms, the picture was

devastating if viewed from a Christian perspective. With the initial ignorance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the part of some disciples (vv. 1-6), we would have to assume the rejection of the gospel on the part of some Ephesian Jews (vv. 8-9).

Nevertheless, Paul's labor had a wide effect and for two years he preached the Gospel daily in the school of Tyrannus (v. 9), to the end that the whole area of Asia was able to hear the message of salvation (v.10).

The presence of the Holy Spirit accompanied the ministry of Paul, accomplishing miracles (vv. 11-12). When some Jews, who were working as traveling exorcists, invoked the name of Jesus they were unmasked as people lacking a relationship with the Messiah preached by the apostle (vv. 13-16).

As a result of Paul's preaching, many believed the Gospel, abandoned the practice of occultism (v. 19), and the worship of gods (v. 26). As expected, the conflict erupted when those who obtained economic benefits from idolatry associated with the virgin mother began to lose clients (vv. 23-41). Here the words of the silversmith, Demetrius, cannot be more revealing:

"Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no

gods, which are made with hands; so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" (v. 25-28).

Luke records the episode with such clarity that it is very easy to reconstruct historically. Paul's preaching was centered on the good news of God's grace, which he refers to in his epistles. According to Paul "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16). To Paul, this was not just another way of salvation but the only way, "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

This message clashed with the theology centered on the worship of Artemis. According to this theology, as it generally occurred with all the religious emphases of paganism, there were not only many gods, but it was, moreover, logical and advisable to worship them through idols.

Of course, the most loved divinity would be the mother goddess and perpetual virgin, who had power over the dead, to whom worship was offered in Ephesus. From her temple and from the

fabrication of images of the goddess stemmed the livelihood of many craftsmen. Thus the religious vision was tightly interwoven with economic interests.

When Paul opposed the making of idols (v. 26) and preached an exclusive message of salvation, he endangered not only a spiritual vision, but also a lucrative system of earnings. The confrontation, as it would happen centuries later, was between the God of Christianity and the perpetually-virgin mother goddess. It concerned two incompatible viewpoints, despite the fact that the second has been incorporated into the myth of Mary.

MARY

Anyone even superficially familiar with the description of Mary in the heart of the Catholic and Eastern churches can understand the degree to which the mother goddesses of gods and, especially, the virgin goddess, Artemis, venerated in Ephesus, has influenced it.

- As in the myth of Mary, Artemis was the mother par excellence.
- As in the myth of Mary, Artemis was a perpetual virgin, a quality shared with the mother of gods, Hera, whose virginity was restored annually.
- As in the myth of Mary, who is occasionally called "Our Lady of the Good Death," Artemis had the power to send her faithful a good death.
- As in the myth of Mary, the high priest of the

cult of Artemis was deprived of a sexual life, although, unlike Catholicism or the Eastern churches, but similar to the cult of Cybele, this was ensured by castration.

- As in the myth of Mary, Artemis had become the center of an impressive system of earnings that basically stemmed from the making of images related to the goddess and the pilgrimages to her Ephesian sanctuary. Such circumstances contributed powerfully to link the inhabitants of the city to the virgin goddess, since financial interests were involved.

- As in the myth of Mary, Artemis also, at least in her identification with Hecate, had control over the world of the dead (something we have already observed in other mother goddesses like Demeter or Cybele).

Artemis, also in her assimilation with Hecate, was venerated at crossroads. This tradition is obvious in the case of Mary worship in countries such as Spain or Greece, where it is easy to find hermitages and shrines where roads cross each other.

Finally, it can hardly be doubted that the myth of the mother of God is rooted in the mythology of the goddesses, mothers of gods, and particularly, in the cult of Artemis of the Ephesians. It is not found in the gospel preached by Paul or the apostles.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen in prior chapters, history abundantly testifies that the myth of Mary is not based on scripture or even in part on the conduct

of the first century Christians. On the contrary, she has been shaped by assorted pagan mythologies that were absorbed, mainly in the fourth century, into the heart of churches.

An especially enlightening example is the divinity known as Artemis, whom the Romans called Diana, and who was occasionally identified with Hecate. Mother, perpetual virgin, with power over the world of the dead, worshiped in a center of pilgrimage, venerated at crossroads, creatress of abundant benefits thanks to the sale of her images, able to give a good death, served by a high priest that had completely renounced his sexuality, the Artemis of Ephesus sounds more like the mythic Mary than the Mary of the New Testament.

It should not surprise us that it was in the city, which for centuries worshiped Artemis, mother and perpetual virgin, that Mary was first proclaimed "Theotokos," mother of God.

Part IV

THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE NEW CONTACT WITH THE EAST

8

The Crusades and the March Eastward

The seventh century had an undeniable importance in the history of humanity. The western Roman Empire was still fragmented into different kingdoms governed by the barbarian invaders. The eastern empire could not reunite what had once been a stable and efficient political system. But a religion called Islam,¹ which now has over eight hundred million faithful spread throughout the world, arose in Arabia.

In barely a few decades Islam extended from Gibraltar to Saudi Arabia. This brought about the collapse of political, economic and cultural relations between the eastern and western zones of the Mediterranean. The area of Europe that extends from Portugal to Italy, including Spain, France,

Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and Germany, was bottled up by an aggressive Islam to the south and an unfriendly Byzantium in the east.

This paralyzed the expansion of the myth of Mary into western Europe. Although she received worship and was enormously important, her liturgy, her idols and her veneration were greater in the East. There the mother goddesses carried much more influence and terms like "Zeotokos" arose. Ideas like the assumption of Mary were unknown at the onset of the Middle Ages.

However, this situation would not last. A conjunction of events known as the Crusades would catapult millions of westerners into the eastern zone of the Mediterranean dominated by Islam. This would once again open the channels of communication, decisively influencing the configuration of the myth of Mary.

THE CRUSADES²

There are many reasons why the West launched a series of military expeditions against Islam, known as the Crusades. Idealism played no small part. Each side considered the other to be infidel. Both taught that if they died in combat against the infidel, they would obtain a generous reception in heaven.

This explains why thousands of unarmed and militarily untrained people —like the popular "children's crusade" —abandoned all to undertake the recovery of the so called Holy Places, those related to the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

But idealism was not the only, or even the most important, element that influenced the Crusades. For the papacy, this conjunction of expeditions meant the pursuit of pragmatic, but not very confessable objectives. By sending out the Crusaders against the East, the pope secured his role as spiritual leader of the West. The Crusades subjected the western monarchs (except, for the moment, those of Spain) to his will, and set a machine into motion that would allow him to gain for himself dioceses (like those of Palestine) that had never been subject to the pope of Rome.

To realize all these purposes, the papacy had to accept the idea of a "Holy War." Until then, this concept had been limited to Islam and only used as an exception in the West. But far from constituting something detrimental to the popes, it turned out to be the source of future political triumphs.

For a good number of fortuneless soldiers, from second sons of important noble families, to unscrupulous and fortune hunting adventurers, the Crusades were an enviable opportunity. In fact, even before leaving Europe, they could not resist the desire to pillage and kill innocents.

The idea of a Crusade was toyed with in 1074 by pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), a pontiff known for his desire to submit all Christianity to the dictates of Rome. But it was not until 1095, at the council of Clermont, that Pope Urban II officially proclaimed a Crusade.

The first Crusade had two expeditionary

waves. The so-called Popular Crusade, led by Peter the Hermit in May of 1096, unleashed massacres and sackings against the Jewish communities of Espira, Worms, Maguncia and Tréveris. From that moment until our century, to the Jew the Crusaders and the cross stood for little more than thieves, assassins and rapists. The second expedition, called the Crusade of the Knights, began in August of the same year.

After a period of practically uninterrupted combat, the Crusaders finally took the city of Jerusalem on July 14, 1099. Convinced that the right of conquest assisted them, they indiscriminately slaughtered Jews, non-Catholic Christians and Muslims in an impressive orgy of violence.

According to the records of the Crusaders themselves, their action caused the blood of the dead to flow ankle deep through the streets of Jerusalem. By the year 1100, Count Baldwin of Edessa assumed the title of King of Jerusalem. But the Crusader kingdom would impose on its subjects living conditions much worse than what they experienced under the Muslim rulers.

The conduct of the Crusaders in the Holy Land was so abominable that calls for new Crusades by Pope Eugene III (1145) and Louis VII, the king of France (1145), were ignored. Only in the following year was Bernard of Clairval or Clairvaux able to raise a new expedition.

However, it ended disastrously in 1148. From then until 1187, the kingdoms of the crusaders in

Palestine not only maintained themselves but also widened their influence on various occasions. Their major problem, though, was not the external enemy, but the ambitions and internal struggles of the knights. The situation would radically change in 1187.

On the 14th of July, 1187, the Muslim, Saladin, completely crushed the crusader army at the Horns of Hattin. Amidst a continuous succession of victories, the Islamic army took control of 52 cities situated in the Holy Land and on October 2 of that same year, Jerusalem fell into their hands. From then until 1917 the Muslim dominion over Palestine was practically continuous. The only exceptions were in 1229 and 1244 when Jerusalem was briefly in crusader hands, and other minor crusader possessions, the last of which, Acre, was lost in 1291.

The many crusades initiated during this period failed completely, with the exception of the sixth, directed by the German Emperor Frederick II. The fourth crusade, for example, never even set foot on the Holy Land and was limited to a bath of blood and fire in the city of Constantinople in the Byzantine Empire.

Except for feeding the covetousness of the adventurers, the crusades brought little to either Eastern or Western lands. In the East, they only meant oppression, misery, violence and hunger, and sowed hatred against Catholicism that still exists today in the Eastern churches. In Judaism

and Islam, this animosity is not only towards Catholicism but Christianity in general.

As for the West, everything positive that could be received from the Arab world had already come through the Moorish kingdoms in Spain.³ The message that would result from the crusades would be, essentially, spiritual: the ideas of the Holy War, the primacy of Rome, the right and duty of exterminating the infidels, etc. In no small part, this contributed to the myth of Mary.

However, before entering into this aspect we should look at the principal vehicle of contribution: the so-called Military Orders.

THE MILITARY ORDERS⁴

As we have already indicated, in 1099 the crusader troops recovered Jerusalem and other holy sites. That moment implied for many the end of their adventure and the return to their homeland. However, some knights, conscious of the dangers that could arise in the future for the crusader positions, opted to remain in the Holy Land to defend the pilgrims.

In 1118 or 1119, one of them, known as Hugue de Payens, gathered various knights and created the order of the "Poor Knights of Christ." In the fall of 1127, Hugue de Payens arrived in Rome and asked Pope Honorius II for official recognition. A council that convened in Troyes on January 13, 1128, regulated the details of the organization of knights. Established on the remains of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, they received from then on

the title of Templars. The *Omne Datum Optimum* bull (1139) from Pope Innocent II would lay the foundations for the privileges of the Military Orders.

About that time another order related to the crusades was born. Around 1048, some merchants from Amalfi had established a monastery in Jerusalem whose monks were subject to Benedictine rule. Towards the end of the 11th century, this order became independent and went on to be called the Knights of St. John or the Knights Hospitallers, since they serviced a hospital for pilgrims. In 1113, Pope Pascual II extended Rome's protection of the order.

Although the military role of the Orders was limited, the same cannot be said of their accumulation of wealth. In a few short years, the Hospitallers had possessions in Palestine, Syria, England, France, Italy and Spain.

As for the Templars, not only did they surpass the Hospitallers but they eventually started one of the most important financial institutions in the West. This prosperity came to be, paradoxically, the source of their downfall, because to obtain it, Philip IV the Beautiful, King of France, and Pope Clement V decided to eliminate the order in 1307.

Hundreds of knights were tortured and then executed. The survivors were divided among the various religious institutions. By then, however, their spiritual influence in the heart of Catholicism had become permanent.

THE MYTH OF MARY AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CRUSADES

Unlike the other crusader knights whose contact with the East was brief and superficial, those who belonged to orders like the Hospitallers and the Templars had time, and the desire, to soak up the various cultures present in the Middle East.

On one hand, they were able to capture many of the religious elements of eastern paganism that, through Islam, had settled in Palestine. The occultism⁵ of the Sufis and the sect of the assassins, the use of the rosary and processions were only some of these aspects. On the other hand, they assimilated a good part of the Eastern churches profuse veneration of Mary.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of the Crusades (and the Military Orders related to them) on the expansion of Marian worship in the West. Some of the images of Mary venerated in parts of Europe which are linked to this historical episode include: Lukasbild (the portrait of Luke) in Freising, Bavaria, Germany; Our Lady of Hal, venerated in Brabant, Belgium; the images of Mary in Gravesande, Haarlem and Vilvoorde, also in Belgium; Notre Dame des Croissades in Champdieu, France; Notre Dame la Negrette of Epalion, France, which was brought by the Lord of Calmont; Notre Dame of Mende, France, brought by the crusaders of Gévaudan; Notre Dame of Vauclair, France, originally of Antioch; Notre Dame du Puy, France, possession of the Order of the

Temple; the Virgin of Ebano de Liesse, France, brought by three Knights Hospitallers, etc.

But this influx of Mary worship was not limited to north and central European countries. Spain, whose participation in the Crusades was limited to a few isolated knights, since it had been fighting from the onset of the 7th century against Muslims that had invaded it, also has in its bosom "crusader virgins."

Possibly the most important one is Our Lady of Jerusalem, worshiped in Artajona, in a shrine built in the 13th century and rebuilt in the 17th. But she is not the only one. Another is Our Lady of the Pool, near San Vicente de la Sonsierra, in Rioja.

However, the role of the crusaders, and especially that of the Military Orders, in the growth of the myth of Mary is not limited to bringing a series of Marian images that would receive special worship. Their work laid the foundation for the Mariological development of the Lower Middle Ages and the period of the Counter Reformation.

We will deal with this in the following chapter.

9

The Influence of the East

As we have already noted, the influence of the Crusades upon the development of the myth of Mary was not limited to moving a large number of images of the virgin to various places in Europe.

On the contrary, they also imported a series of rituals that, to this day, have a special connection to Mariology throughout the world. The most significant examples are the rosary, processions and flagellants.

THE ROSARY¹

The prayer of the rosary is considered, even now, to be Marian devotion par excellence. It carries a favorable recommendation from the full spectrum of the Catholic hierarchy, from the most humble parish priest up to the Pope. It is a key

element in the supposed appearances of Mary in which she teaches that praying the rosary can save the world from its present catastrophic condition.

In fact, the Catholic church has included a celebration in its liturgical calendar dedicated specifically to the rosary, observed on October 7th. A study on Mariology without at least a few pages to the rosary would therefore be incomprehensible.

The rosary consists of 165, or in other cases 55, beads fixed on a string that serves to follow a sequence of Hail Marys, preceded by the Lord's Prayer, and followed by the gloria. This type of worship does not appear until well into the Middle Ages. Its name is due to the fact that Mary was represented in that time period by the sign of the rose. The origin of such a connection has been sought out in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus (24:14) where it says, "I was exalted like the rose of Jericho," although the passage obviously has nothing to do with her.

Although Catholic tradition has tried to explain the introduction of this practice by surrounding its origin with a halo of legends, the true story is much more simple. The use of rosaries, that is, strings of beads or grains that help keep in mind the sequence of the repetition of divine names, has eastern, not Christian roots.

The first report that we have of them is related to Brahmanist Hinduism, in which they were used to worship the gods Vishnu and Shiva. From Hinduism, the use of the rosary passed to the

many Buddhist groups and the Sikhs. Due to their advances into Hindustan, the Muslims also borrowed it from Hinduism.

Within Islam, the rosary spread initially in the 9th century only within the mystical-occultic Sufis. Despite these limited beginnings, and the attack by some Islamic theologians, the practice soon expanded, becoming related to a series of prayers for the wellbeing of the deceased. In all the cases mentioned, the rosary served as an instrument to exalt the respective divinities of each religion through a constant repetition of the divine name.

The fact that this practice was not associated with Mary until more than a millennium after Christ, illustrated the rosary's invalid relationship to Christianity. Nevertheless, there are other important aspects, apart from its pagan origin, to discredit the rosary as a type of Christian prayer.

The first one is that of resorting to continuous repetition. In the part of the Sermon on the Mount dedicated by Jesus to prayer, this type of prayer is explicitly prohibited. It says:

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."
Matthew 6:7-8

Here Jesus taught that any prayer which contains the continuous repetition characterized in

pagan rituals is useless. This is precisely what happens with Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim rosaries when the litany is repeated over and over again.

Secondly, it becomes obvious from reading the Bible that prayers can never be directed to another being other than God. Any other type of conduct would be a form of idolatry. Paul himself could not have been more explicit when he was writing from prison to the Philippians teaching them how to conduct themselves through difficult times:

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

Thirdly, the rosary consecrates the idea, certainly much cherished by the Catholic and Eastern churches, that Mary is a mediator between God and men. Yet this contradicts the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, who never mentioned such a possibility. The words of Christ could not be more clear regarding who is the only mediator:

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."
John 14:13-14

The same can be said of the Apostle Paul's testimony:

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5

When historical sources are studied coldly and dispassionately, it is obvious that the rosary is thoroughly pagan in its origin, structure, use, conception and direction. It is much closer to Hindu or Buddhist theology than to Christianity, and clashes with some of the essential aspects of Christianity.

PROCESSIONS

Like the rosary, processions were also part of the pagan invasion into Christianity. In fact, the use of vestments, drums, the procession of images, the litanies related to them, etc., find abundant parallels in diverse pagan ceremonies like the worship of Isis, Cybele, Attis and Tammuz.

Processions were first used in the 4th century but did not become widely popular until the time of the Crusades. In fact, this popularity became so intense that it actually forced the architectural structure of the church to be altered.²

In medieval Europe, Romanesque art is followed by Cistercian and later Gothic, in which the concept of the procession already formed an indissoluble part of the edifice. Until then the procession had been an important part of outdoor worship. As its relevance increased, it was provided for by the interior design of cathedrals and churches.

In some cases, the historical roots of these forms of worship can be followed with enormous clarity, connecting us again with the influence of the east. An example is the Holy Week processions in Aragon, Spain, which, on various occasions have been shown in the movies and still draw thousands of tourists. Their instigators were, in this case, knights of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher and of the Templars. Once again, the connection with the East is palpable.

THE FLAGELLANTS³

Likewise, the pagan-eastern character is no less evident in another type of ritual that is still performed, despite its bloody character, in parts of Spain, Mexico and the Philippines. Flagellants are people who whip themselves during a ceremony related to the worship of Mary. Although the phenomenon is presently limited geographically, during the Middle Ages it was widely practiced.

For example, Perugia in 1259 produced a chain reaction of public flagellations. In Germany in 1349, faced with the plague, a similar reaction took place. People joined a guild of flagellants that affirmed that after thirty three days and through self-flagellation a person was cleansed of sin.

The root of this ceremony can be detected with relative ease when we examine some concrete examples. One would be *The Disciplining of the True Cross of Saint Vincent of the Sonsierra* (pg. 142) in Spain. These, known commonly as "picaos,"⁴ still accompany the Holy Week processions as they

whip themselves until the blood runs down their backs.

Historically, this guild was joined to the *Virgen de la Piscina* (Virgin of the Pool) whom we referred to in the last chapter as one brought to Europe by the crusader knights. Again, we see the Eastern connection that has been so fruitful during the centuries for the development of the myth of Mary.

Certainly the roots of these self-flagellating practices cannot be found in Christianity, but do have parallels in pagan cults like that of Cybele, or Baal, whose priests wounded themselves as a way of winning favor with their deity (1 Kings 18:27-29).

CONCLUSION

The expansion of Islam partly paralyzed relations between East and West for many centuries. Consequently, there was a lack of growth of the myth of Mary during that time in the western Mediterranean. This came to an end with the beginnings of the Crusades.

The Crusades were full of theological consequences that, in general, cannot be considered positive. Not only did they cause spectacular growth of the Roman See, but they also caused the animosity of the Jews and Muslims towards Christianity. This is understandable when we consider the bloody and covetous conduct of the crusaders.

On the other hand, the crusader knights, and

especially those who were part of the Military Orders, became vehicles for a mariological rebirth in the West. Eastern ceremonies such as the use of the rosary, the processions, and the flagellations, became an inseparable part of the myth of Mary.

This laid the foundation for a spectacular rise in ~~mariology that would alter even more the view of salvation during the Middle Ages. Another of its most direct fruits would be the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.~~

We will cover these two themes in the following chapter.

10

Mary in the Lower Middle Ages

We have seen how Eastern beliefs influenced the growth of Marian devotion and inspired the ritual forms of worship related to Mary. The full growth of these seeds would not be evident until the last centuries of the Medieval period.

It was then that the myth of Mary began to develop three concepts of enormous significance: Mary as immaculate; the growth of Mary's role in the Catholic scheme of salvation; and the so-called popular piety.

MARY AS IMMACULATE

The average Catholic is usually convinced of the antiquity and veracity of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. However, in his-

torical terms, it is clearly a late development. In biblical terms, it simply does not exist. As the Catholic priest, J.M. Carda has noted:

"The Holy Scriptures do not mention the historical origin of Mary nor do they expressly allude to any privilege in her conception."¹

This same author recognizes that the word *kekharitomene* which, according to Luke 1:28, the angel addressed to Mary,

"does not indicate itself a fullness of grace, as indicated by, on the other hand, the expression *pleres kharitos* that is applied to Christ (cf. John 1:14)... The word addressed to her by the angel meant simply blessed."²

Therefore, it is not strange that the idea that Mary committed no sin would be absent from the first centuries of Christianity. The New Testament expresses that human beings "are all under sin". As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:9-10). Christ is the only exception. He was "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

The first reference to a sinless conception of Mary is from Julian of Eclanum, during the 5th century A.D. However, this author belongs to the heretical sect of the Pelagians who denied the effects of the Fall in the descendants of Adam.

During the controversy between the Pelagians and Augustine of Hippo, Augustine, while dealing

with the universal condition of sin to which all men are subject, criticized Julian of Eclanum's position regarding Mary. Augustine contended that if she had been free from the power of the demon it was not "through the condition that derived from her birth, but because that condition was dissolved by the grace of her rebirth."

In other words, Augustine said that if Mary was not under the power of the Devil, it was not because she was born without sin, as the Pelagian Julian of Eclanum claimed. Rather, it was because her new spiritual birth, due to the grace of God, had freed her from it (a clear reference to John 3). As paradoxical as it seems, close to a millennium later, the Catholic church would embrace the heretic's position and reject that of Augustine.

During the 13th century, scholastic theologians like the famous Thomas Aquinas, who was later consecrated as Doctor of the Catholic Church, believed that Mary had sinned. In the last work written by Aquinas, *Brevis Summa de Fide*, dedicated to his companion Fray Reinaldo, Thomas Aquinas specifically states:

"Certainly (Mary) was conceived with original sin, as is natural... If she would not have been born with original sin, she would not have needed to be redeemed by Christ, and, this being so, Christ would not be the universal Redeemer of men, which would abolish the dignity of Christ."³

Lk 1:47. Why would she need a "SAVIOR" if she was w/o sin?!

Although Thomas Aquinas was influenced by the previous developments of the myth of Mary and believed that she had always been a virgin, he could not accept that she did not need redemption nor that she was free from original sin.

Without a doubt, such statements have been troublesome during the centuries for the Catholic hierarchy. When the aforementioned work was translated into Spanish by Carbonero del Sol in 1862, the translator decided to suppress the paragraph that was so mismatched with the teaching of the Catholic church. Fortunately, thanks to documentary sources, historical truth cannot be kept hidden for very long.

Through the efforts of Duns Scotus, the doctrine that Mary was born without original sin began gaining ground in the heart of Catholicism near the end of the 13th century. But, despite the deliberate support of the Franciscan Order, it was not imposed in a general way.

Even Pope Sixtus IV, who belonged to the same Order, preferred to keep a prudent distance from the dispute and insisted that "nothing has yet been decided by the Roman Church and the Apostolic See" (DS 1426). In other words, almost a millennium and a half after Mary's birth, no certainty existed that her conception was immaculate.

Finally, in 1439, a council meeting in Basle defined the immaculate conception of Mary as a dogma. ~~The fact that the council broke off relations with the Roman See prevented the dogma from~~

being accepted as such. However, this new mythical seed had already been planted. It would grow during the Counter-Reformation, appearing as a dogma in the Modern Age. By then, an impenetrable veil had been cast over its heretical origins and over the fact that the most brilliant Catholic theologian of the Middle Ages had refused to accept such a thesis.

THE ROLE OF MARY IN SALVATION

Along with the tendency to believe that Mary never sinned, a path gradually opened linking her to the road between this life and the next. If Mary had previously been seen as a helper at the moment of death, such a mission became one of the most important.

The 13th century Spanish monk, Gonzalo de Berceo, wrote in his book, *"Miracles of our Lady"* some stories that display the saving powers that were attributed to Mary. Since this book had such an enormous influence in later European literature, we should look at some of the "miracles" it records. For example, in miracle II he relates the story of the "shameless sacristan." According to Berceo:

"A holy monk was he - that lived within a convent who loved with all his heart - very much holy Mary, and reverence to her statue - daily he did give."

Besides this characteristic, nothing stood out in the conduct of this monk save his assiduousness in the sin of fornication. While crossing a river, he fell in and drowned, and the demons launched out to

capture his soul. The shameless monk would have ended up in hell had Mary not interceded before Christ to obtain the monk's resurrection. When he related the miracle to his companions at the monastery, he underlined the cause of his salvation:

"Thanks to the Glorious One - who saves her servants, who freed me from the hands - of the evil warriors!"

Miracle VII contains a similar story. The monk, also a fornicator, is a worshipper of St. Peter, not Mary. When he dies, he is cast into hell, where he pleads to his saint, who is powerless in convincing Christ to save him. Finally, the intercession of Mary, close to her son, succeeds in resurrecting the monk and giving him a new chance.

Miracle XI was related to a laborer that "loved the land more - than loved he his Creator." A bitter thief, he is accustomed to displace the boundaries of his land to take them for himself. He had, however, one "virtue":

"He loved, though he was evil - very much Holy Mary. He would hear of her miracles - and all did he believe."

That conduct had its compensation. When the peasant died and called on Mary, the demons that wanted to capture his soul fled and angels lead him to heaven.

Let us not forget that these examples give a good idea of the theology expressed in this type of work and were written by church men. One could

be a sinner of the worst kind, but, according to this theory, receive a new opportunity in this life or salvation directly if he was devoted to Mary.

Such a teaching appears in scandalous examples like that of miracle VI. This one contains the story of a thief, greatly devoted to Mary. Captured and condemned to the gallows for his villainy, Mary places her hands below the feet of the thief so that he will not die. When they try to behead him, the execution fails because the virgin places her hands between his neck and the blade.

The message is obvious. Being sacrilegious, an assassin, fornicator, thief, unjust and a long list of similar things is not an obstacle to salvation. It was enough to simply call on the name of Mary to change the condition of eternal condemnation.

The work of Gonzalo de Berceo, magnificent in artistic terms, yet abominable in theology, had infinite parallels immediately before and after. As in the legend of Theophilus written around 1200 in Magdeburg by Brun von Schonenbeck, Mary descends to hell, where she wrests the soul of Theophilus from the hands of the devil.

On other occasions, they went much farther in the description of the Marian powers. In the story of Theofle, developed in the diocese of Durham, in northern England, Mary not only descends into hell in search of her worshipper, but also snatches from the hands of the devil the pact that her devoted one had signed.

Siciliano, in a study of medieval poetry, has

masterfully expressed the concept of savior that was attributed to Mary in this historical period:

"Without her, no one in that very sinful epoch would have dared to lift his eyes to heaven nor present himself before God's threshold. Because she is the Advocate, she is the Holy Ladder. Of the ten kings that divide up the universe, all direct themselves to her to obtain mercy and remission of sins."⁴

Towards the middle of the 14th century, a lower-Norman poet would even defend in versified form the role of Mary as Advocate of all believers. According to this description, Jesus presides over the judgment of souls, Satan is the prosecutor and Mary the defense attorney.

This concept is also present in the most important prayer, after the Hail Mary, dedicated to the mythical image of the mother of Jesus. We are referring to the *Salve*, in which Mary is explicitly designated as "our advocate." We will return to this later, but first, we should briefly refer to the so-called popular piety.

POPULAR PIETY

If the Middle Ages represented an elevation of Mary (conceived immaculately) and of her powers (advocate of all believers, determinant in the process of salvation, etc.), then her most popular contributions were possibly related to the worship that should be rendered to the Marian myth.

Practically for the first time in the history of the West, the faithful began to go by the multitude to Marian sanctuaries, at times even traveling from far away countries. Such was the case in the Holy House of Loreto in France, although this is nothing more than an example among many.

At the same time, the worship that was offered to Mary began to extend to her supposed family (see chapter 2). First, veneration was offered to Joachim and St. Anne. It later passed on to Mary's sisters, in-laws, cousins and finally her husband, Joseph. These practices, stimulated by Gersom and the Franciscans, would endure for centuries.

Many songs and rituals related directly or indirectly to Mary were also incorporated into liturgy. For the first time, the "Via Crucis" (Way of the Cross) began to be performed and hymns like the *Stabat Mater* acquired canonical status. Starting in 1456, the repetition of the Angelus, dedicated to Mary, was established for every morning and evening.

New doctrines, like that of purgatory, practices directed towards the securing of indulgences; or objects related to contact of the faithful with the supernatural world (relics, candles, medals, images, holy water, etc.) were some of the most representative characteristics of an epoch in which the swelling of saints bordered on the ridiculous. As medievalist F. Rapp has noted:

"In that way St. Roque reinforced St. Sebastian to detain the plague. The

Fourteen Intercessors, put together for the first time in the vision of a pastor of Franconia in 1445, formed a team of miracle-workers. Frequently, the faithful in dire straits sought help from the greatest battalions: the Ten Thousand Martyrs of Mt. Ararat, the Eleven Thousand Virgins led by St. Ursula, the stirring troop of the Innocents."⁵

When one considers the process of decline that afflicted medieval Christianity, one cannot be surprised by the evils that scourged Europe during that epoch, not the least of which were the scandalous corruption of the clergy or the division of the Catholic church through simultaneous obedience to four popes.

Without a doubt, strong windstorms were blowing that presaged the need for a spiritual reformation to correct so much abuse, an abuse that had decisively contributed to the development of the myth of Mary.

CONCLUSION

As we have been able to prove in the preceding pages, the figure of Mary received a progressive valuation during the final centuries of the Middle Ages. Along with the disputed thesis of her immaculate conception, which was not yet established and had heretical origins, she came to be perceived as gifted with a special power related to the salvation of men.

In this manner, she was given a name that

saved, in practice much superior to that of Christ. She was considered to be such an efficient defender of her worshippers that she could twist divine justice and grant eternal life to people whose existence were characterized by conscious, repetitive sin.

It was affirmed that she was the divine ladder to ascend to heaven and through her being present in sanctuaries, medals, images, etc., the faithful believed that they had a good death assured and an eternal life whose loss was impossible.

When we calmly go over the conjunction of powers and characteristics that were linked to Mary during the lower Middle Ages, we cannot avoid having the feeling that the character kept absorbing features that appear in the Bible in exclusive relation to Christ. In other words, in the heart of Catholicism and the Eastern churches, God was being displaced, possibly in an unwitting but undeniable manner, by the myth of Mary.

We have already seen how the New Testament teaching that all men except Christ are sinners was, little by little, discarded in order to include Mary in the category of the sinless. But there are even more illuminating facts.

The name of Mary, for example, was considered to be a name that saved. Certainly that was not the position maintained by primitive Christianity. In his defense before the Jewish authorities, Peter established without room for doubt that the only name that saves is Jesus. We read in Acts 4:11-12:

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

We see something similar in the reference to Mary as Advocate and Holy Ladder. Certainly both titles have biblical origins, but in the Scriptures they never appear in reference to Mary, but to Christ. We read in 1 John 2:1-2:

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

This same author also indicates in his Gospel who is the person by whom, as a Ladder, the believers may reach heaven:

"And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."
John 1:51

The development of the myth of Mary during the Lower Middle Ages constituted, for reasons like the ones cited, a new gospel of salvation based, fundamentally, on the belief in the saving power of

Mary and the fulfillment of rites related to her. The New Testament doctrine stating that salvation can only be received by faith in the sacrifice of Christ (Romans 5.1; Galatians 2.16-17; 3.11-14; Ephesians 2.8-9, etc.) was substituted by the thesis that ritual faithfulness to Mary had saving effects.

In the same way, if the New Testament insisted upon the need for holiness after conversion (Ephesians 2.10), the myth of Mary replaced the biblical idea of sanctification with the practice of rituals related to Mary, although these were not accompanied by a life conformed to the principles of the gospel. Accounts like those collected in the "*Miracles of Our Lady*" by Gonzalo de Berceo ignore such cutting affirmations as those made by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10:

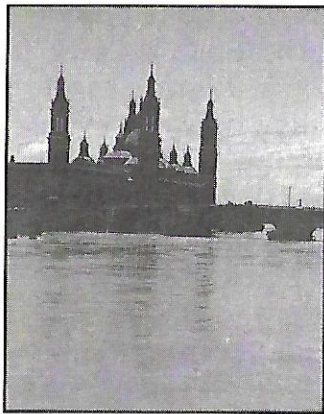
"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

If we analyze the historical record of the Lower-Medieval spirituality, we can only arrive at one conclusion: what was presented as Christianity had little to do with the Christian life described in the New Testament.

In regards to the myth of Mary in its Lower-

Medieval definition, it had become a substitute, perhaps imperceptible but certainly undeniable, for the evangelical message of salvation proclaimed by Jesus and the apostles. Their confrontation was, as later developments demonstrated, inevitable.

The goddess Artemis or Diana, whose image makers faced the apostle Paul, was an essential figure in the development of the myth of Mary. She was considered a perpetual virgin and mother of her faithful, receiving a special worship in Ephesus. In this same town, Mary would be declared "Mother of God" in the 4th century.



In many occasions, places of Mary worship were superimposed over sacred centers of pagan religions. This picture shows the Pilar Basilica in Zaragoza (Spain). In this enclave was practiced a worship of a stone (litholatry) that, centuries later, would be related to an assumed apparition of Mary.

Part V

FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE 20TH CENTURY

11

The Counter-Reformation and Mary

The continuous deterioration experienced by medieval Christianity caused the rise, here and there in the West, of various Reformation movements that tried to return to the purity of the gospel.

The Waldenses in the 13th century, the Lollards of Wycliffe in the 14th century, the Hussites and the Czech Brethren in the 15th century were, possibly, the most well known and, because of it, the most repressed. Nonetheless, they were not the only ones.

At the start of the 16th century, and in advance of Luther, authors like Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas More insisted on the necessity of returning to the principles of the New Testament. The Spanish brothers Alfonso and Juan Valdés, who were also

before the Lutheran revolution, even defended the doctrine of justification by faith. Viewed from a contemporary perspective, many of these attempts appear immature, timid, and even partially mistaken.

Nonetheless, they had the honor of laying the groundwork for a new spiritual phenomenon. One of its functions would be to confront the validity of the myth of Mary. This would provoke a harsh Catholic reaction destined to strengthen and enrich the myth even more.

THE REFORMATION¹

Although the Reformation's chronology is well defined, its geographic expansion and the multiplicity of its approaches are highly complex. Not all the reformers were equally audacious in their study of Scripture. On some occasions, it was not until later centuries that the processes started by them were fully carried out.

It is also fitting to note that themes related to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, baptism, or the doctrine of grace considerably fragmented the thrust of the reformation. Nevertheless, the common denominator in all the Reformation's movements was the return to Scripture as the basis of analyzing contemporary theology and planning for the future.

This return to the Bible led the reformers to at least three common conclusions that questioned the very heart of the Catholic theological system.

SOLUS CHRISTUS (ONLY CHRIST)

With the center of popular theology drastically skewed towards the Holy See, Mary, and the saints, the Reformation set forth the necessity of returning Christ to the place where he belonged within the Christian view. For the myth of Mary, this negated her mediation (only Christ is the mediator between God and men), her saving role (only Christ saves), and her assumption (only Christ ascended physically into heaven), etc. In short, the Reformation intended for Christianity to again be centered in Christ.

SOLA FIDE (ONLY BY FAITH)

Secondly, the Reformation faced a distorted salvation system developed by the church in the Middle Ages. It is often labeled as a system of salvation by works, but such a definition is only somewhat precise. In place of a system of salvation through good works (such is the case in Judaism or theism in some of its manifestations), Catholicism had articulated instead what technically is called a magical concept of religion.

Salvation was derived mainly by performing a series of acts of supposed magical efficacy such as the sacraments which, during the Middle Ages, were fixed at seven. The accomplishment of a rite (confession, going to mass, obtaining indulgences, praying the rosary, etc.) placed the faithful one in a position to be saved.

The reformers confronted this system with its roots in the religious world of paganism, defending

the return to the plan of salvation that we find in the New Testament. All men are sinners (Romans 3:10-11), no one can be justified before God by his own works (Romans 3:20), and the only way that someone can be declared just before God is through faith in the expiatory sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Romans 3:21-26).

SOLA SCRIPTURA (ONLY SCRIPTURE)

The theological thinking of Medieval Christianity progressively discarded Scripture in favor of tradition. When we examined the historical sources of the Myth of Mary in the preceding pages, we did not find a uniform development of this tradition. There was, in fact, no genuine basis for these Catholic dogmas.

On the contrary, beliefs like Mary's bodily assumption, her perpetual virginity or immaculate conception often emanated from heretical circles. Centuries of time and unmentionable methods were sometimes required to impose them. In the later stages of this evolution, the belief was absorbed without checking the authenticity of its origin.

In contrast, the reformers insisted on referring exclusively to Scripture as the sole guide for faith and life.² In one blow, this eliminated the myth of Mary due to its lack of a biblical foundation.

MARY AND THE COUNTER-REFORMATION³

The Catholic Church reacted to this attack by the Reformers, not by revising its dogma but by backing it with force. To do this, it called upon the monarchies like those of Spain and Portugal. They

became the strong arm of the Holy See in Europe and vehicles of Catholic expansion in America, Asia and Oceania. Inquisitional tribunals and new religious orders were forged into an apparatus of formidable investigation and repression. Possibly the most important of these destined to strengthen Catholic influence were the Jesuits.

A period of religious repression began that was even harsher than the Medieval period. For close to two centuries, religious wars raged, ruining whole empires like those of Germany and Spain. During this period the myth of Mary grew to become one of the standards used by the Catholic church to directly oppose the Reformation.

The dispute over the belief in the immaculate conception of Mary was not settled during the Middle Ages, but the so-called party of the immaculists had been progressively gaining ground. Even towards the end of the 17th century, not all Catholics adhered to this doctrine.

Nevertheless, extensive measures were taken by the Catholic hierarchy to establish the belief. Thus, the Council of Trent, in 1546, marked an advancement for immaculatism by affirming that: "We do not wish to enclose in the decree in which original sin is dealt with, the blessed and immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God" (DS 1516). Wow

In other words, Mary was, indirectly, excluded from the possibility of having had original sin. In the same way, it was insisted that in all her life she

never committed any sin, not even a trivial one (DS 1573). BLASPHEMY!

In 1617, Pope Paul V took another step in prohibiting anyone from publicly arguing that Mary could have had original sin. Five years later, Pope Gregory XV extended the prohibition to private conversations. The only exceptions to this norm applied to Dominicans, provided that they did it within their order and never before others.

When one examines these facts, it is difficult to avoid the feeling that the doctrine was being imposed on the community of the faithful against their wishes and at the expense of silencing practically the majority of Catholics.

Even so, towards the end of the 17th century, there were still some who, despite their obedience to the Holy See, resisted accepting that Mary had been born immaculate. In 1661, Pope Alexander VII, as he again insisted upon the immaculist theory, noted that "now almost all Catholics embrace it" (DS 2015), a conspicuous sign that the controversy had not ended.

In regards to the worship of Mary, the Council of Trent placed a special emphasis on maintaining the worship of images. Although such a measure would provoke artistic currents of immeasurable aesthetic value, especially during the Baroque period, it was a direct challenge to the divine prohibition, expressly given in Scripture (Exodus 20:4-5).

In 1563 the aforementioned council required in regards to images:

"They shall be acquired and conserved, especially in temples... and they shall be given the honor and veneration due them... because the honor tributed to them refers to those whom they represent" (DS 1823).

But the most revealing demonstration that the myth of Mary had not stopped developing was the naming of Mary as "co-redeemer", beginning in the 15th century. "What was professed about Christ was applied in proportion to Mary."⁴ When referring to the expiation offered to God for the sins of men and the merit acquired before Him for the salvation of the human race, it was affirmed that Mary had expiated and merited with Christ during her whole life, especially at Calvary.

Mary's supposed cooperation gradually expanded to various areas related to the saving work of Christ. It was thought that Mary had even participated in Christ's sacrifice since she was His mother and moreover had suffered with Him at Calvary.

In relation to the atonement obtained by Christ, it was affirmed that Mary had made a contribution, made up of her Son's goods, which belonged to her by virtue of being His mother, and of her own goods, which she would have presented to the Father in union with the Son, etc.

The myth of Mary continued to grow, experiencing an addition of attributes specifically related to the exclusive work of Jesus.

CONCLUSION

The decline of the medieval church resulted in a series of reactions, generically known as The Reformation. Its goal was to center Christianity around the three-part affirmation of "Only Christ," "Only by faith" and "Only Scripture." The Catholic reaction to this spiritual phenomenon is called the Counter-Reformation. Despite its intention to correct some moral abuses, it constituted a gigantic effort to consolidate all the Catholic theological developments of the Middle Ages.

Concerning the myth of Mary, it helped to consecrate the practices and theories already studied in the preceding pages. It also contributed to the advance of three very concrete areas: the worship of Mary, especially through images; the gradual imposition of the doctrine of the immaculate conception; and finally, the association of Mary with the work of Christ on the cross as co-redeemer.

Although the doctrines of the immaculate conception and co-redeemer had precedents in the lower Middle Ages, they would not be consecrated into dogmas before the Modern Age. However, there is no doubt that the final push was generated during the Counter-Reformation. Far from revising the theology forged in the Medieval period, the Catholic church responded by making it more rigid and inflexible.

12

The Modern Age

After the Counter-Reformation's emphasis on Marian titles and its effect on medieval worship, growth of the myth of Mary stagnated during the 18th century. In no way did interest wane. It was only the calm before the storm. The myth would be carried forward in the Modern Age by the "Marianist movement" which emerged towards the end of the 18th century. It would be further crystallized in the final establishment of the two Marian dogmas: the immaculate conception and the assumption.

THE MARIANIST MOVEMENT

As we have seen, the configuration of the myth of Mary greatly exceeded the true character of Mary given in the New Testament and in the

writings of the first Christians. In spite of this, during the 18th century, a movement was born in the heart of the Catholic Church that perceived that the veneration of Mary was insufficiently expressed. With the motto "*Nunquam satis*" (never enough), this movement, led by Alfonso Maria de Ligorio (or Liguori) (m. 1787), greatly influenced popular Catholicism, as well as the contents of pontifical documents.

According to Liguori, who was later canonized by the Catholic Church, "there are things that one requests of Jesus and are not received, but if one requests them of Mary, they are granted." As a basis for such a statement, Alfonso would cite one of the legends recorded in the "*Floreccillas*" (Little Flowers) of Saint Francis.

According to the story, brother Leon supposedly saw a red ladder that led to heaven with Christ at the top. Many monks attempted to climb it but were unsuccessful. It was then that brother Leon caught a glimpse of Mary, who was on a white ladder. This ladder was easier to climb because Mary took her worshippers by the hand to lead them to heaven.

So we see Liguori accepting the possibility of being saved by two parallel paths, with Mary's being the smoother. This led him to say in his classic work, *The Glories of Mary*,¹ "If my redeemer should reject me, I will throw myself at Mary's feet."
+ GO STRAIGHT TO HEAVEN.

Liguori insisted likewise upon Mary as Queen

of Heaven,² whom he described as being crowned by the Holy Trinity: "The Father... giving her His power, the Son, His wisdom, the Holy Spirit, His love..." In this way, he gave the same title to Mary that appears in the Lauretarian Litany, and in the Roman hymns dedicated to the goddess Vesta. The title, Queen of Heaven, also appears in the Bible. Israel was sacrificing to the demon power under the names of Astarte and the queen of heaven, and was soundly condemned by the prophet Jeremiah (44:15-19,25).³

Saint Liguori's statements implied, without any qualification, that there were two paths to salvation (through Christ or through Mary). Mary's path was better, and she was more loving and merciful than her Son, having the ability to impose her decisions upon Him. Such a view is blasphemous, implying a blemish on God's love expressed on Calvary's cross. It also desecrates the biblical view that the only name that saves is Christ's (Acts 4:11-12).

Nevertheless, Alfonso Liguori's theories were accepted and repeated by several popes. Leo XIII, for example, stated that "just as no one can draw close to the Father except through the Son, no one can draw near to Christ except through His Mother" (*Octobri mense*, DS 3274).

Pius X, in his *Enciclica Ad Diem Illum*, noted something similar regarding Mary, that "she is the principal party in the distribution of graces" (DS 3370). Benedict XV affirmed that "Mary... is the mediator with God of all the graces." Such

forthright statements officially confirmed what had been, until then, mostly obscure writings of a private author.

THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Consequently, this stream of thought led to the establishment of the belief in the immaculate conception as a dogma on the 8th of December, 1854. It is a logical result of channeling to Mary the greatest possible honors. The dogma, included in the papal bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, was formulated in the following way:

"The doctrine that sustains that the most blessed virgin Mary was preserved immune from any stain of original sin in the first moment of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in foresight of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, this doctrine revealed by God should be, therefore, firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful" (DS 2803).

Through such a declaration the process initiated by the Pelagian heretic Julian of Eclanum, and so vigorously opposed by Augustine of Hippo, was complete. The opinions of practically all the Catholic theologians through the 13th century, including Thomas Aquinas, were swept aside. In a short time, the alleged appearances of Mary in the French enclave of Lourdes would begin.

BETWEEN DOGMAS

During the hundred years after the declaration of Mary's immaculate conception in 1854 there was a constant succession of papal statements destined to strengthen the role of the myth of Mary in the mind of the faithful.

Mary's supposed function as co-redeemer, for example, was affirmed over and over again. In 1894, Pope Leo XIII wrote that when Mary, "offered herself to God as a servant for the office of Mother, and when she made a complete surrender of herself with the Son in the temple, she became associated already with Him in the painful expiation on behalf of the human race."

Ten years later, Pope Pius X noted that Mary "was associated with Christ in the work of human salvation," In 1918, Benedict XV said regarding Mary:

"Not without divine design, she was present, suffered and almost died with her Son who was suffering and dying, she abdicated her maternal rights over the Son for the salvation of men and, as far as she could, immolated Him to satisfy the justice of God; therefore, it can be said with good reason that she redeemed, with Christ, the human race."

Pius XI, as he brought the celebration of the redemption to a close in 1935, called on Mary in the same manner, remembering her at the foot of the cross "suffering as co-redeemer."

It becomes obvious to the historian that this began a new phase in the development of the myth of Mary that would result in the establishment of another dogma with dark origins.

THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION

Papal power decreased considerably towards the end of the 19th century, caused to a great extent by the Italian unification and the disappearance of the so-called Pontifical States.

This caused the pontiffs to accentuate even more the obligation of the faithful to submit to the Catholic system. Without a doubt, the clearest manifestation of this reaction was the defining of the dogma of the infallibility of the pope in the Vatican Council of 1870.⁴

The boldness of this declaration invigorated many of the Catholic bishops present in the council to advocate also the immediate pronouncement as dogma the bodily assumption of Mary into the heavens. However, such a decision would have to wait a few decades. But during that time, as we have seen, the Marianism of the different popes could not have been more explicit.

Finally, in 1950, through the *Bula Munificentissimus Deus*, Pius XII defined "that it was a dogma revealed by God that the Immaculate Mother of God, forever Virgin Mary, finishing the course of her earthly life, was taken up body and soul into the celestial glory" (DS 3903).

In this way, Pope Pius XII concluded another

historical process linked to Mary. It had been initiated in antiquity in the heart of a heretical circle. It had been reintroduced, by doubtfully legitimate means, in the East during the Middle Ages. Now it was reaching its definitive canonical confirmation.

VATICAN II

The myth of Mary grew substantially, as it evolved from the Counter-Reformation to Pius XII. Aspects such as the immaculate conception and the belief in her bodily assumption had been initiated centuries earlier in heretical circles. During this period they were consolidated into foundation dogmas of Catholicism.

The advance of the ecumenical movement has led many people to think that this mythical view of Mary experienced a clear retreat with the celebration of the Vatican II council. Without a doubt, Vatican II had a positive effect in some areas.

For example, suppressing the use of Latin in the worship services allowed the faithful to read the Scriptures in their own language. Nonetheless, the council only served to confirm the theological evolution of the essential structures of Catholicism.

This is especially clear in the case of Mary. The first problem confronting the bishops in October 1963, regarding Mary, was whether the subject should be tackled in a separate document or incorporated into the document regarding the church. The voting on October 29, 1963 resulted in 1074 votes in favor of a separate discussion and

1174 in favor of incorporation. Only by a narrow margin was Mariology excluded from such a level of importance that it would require a separate document.

However, the Dogmatic Constitution Concerning the Church, approved in the closing of the third session on the 21st of November, 1964, dedicates the entire eighth chapter to Mary. In the closing speech, Pope Paul VI solemnly proclaimed, "the most holy Virgin Mary as Mother of the Church, that is, Mother of all the people of God, both the faithful as well as the pastors," emphasizing that, "the knowledge of the true Catholic doctrine regarding Mary would always be the key to the precise understanding of the mystery of Christ and the Church."

By examining the references of the Vatican II Council to Mary, it is obvious that the Catholic Church has defaulted on nothing that it has affirmed in the last centuries regarding her, but has worked hard to clearly and conclusively establish it. Proof of this can be found in the following examples:

In relation to the immaculate conception, the council declares that Mary was "preserved immune from every stain of original sin" (LG 59).

Referring to her divine motherhood, it states that "the virgin Mary... is recognized and honored as the true Mother of God and the Redeemer" (LG 53).

In regard to her perpetual virginity, it declares

that the Catholic church, in its liturgy, venerates "the memory, before all, of the glorious, forever-virgin Mary" (LG 52).

Regarding her role in redemption, it reveals that "Mary, the Mother of God... is united with indissoluble bonds to the saving work of her Son" (SC 103) and that Mary "suffered intensely with her only begotten Son and, giving her loving consent to the immolation of the victim to whom she had given birth, she connected with a mother's heart to His sacrifice" (LG 58).

As to her quality as mother of all believers, it is insisted that, "this motherhood of Mary in the order of grace is everlasting, from the faith filled consent she gave at the annunciation and that she maintained without wavering at the foot of the cross until the eternal culmination of all the elect."

"Because after her assumption into heaven she has not set aside this saving function, but continues to obtain for us, with her multiple intercession, the gifts relative to eternal salvation. With her maternal love, she cares for the brothers of her Son that still journey and move among dangers and distresses until they reach the happy homeland" (LG 62, a).

Because of this, Mary is "called on in the Church with the titles of Advocate, Assistant, Helper, Mediator" (LG 62, a).

It should not surprise us that these documents of Vatican II also affirm that Mary was "exalted by the Lord as Queen of the Universe so that she

could more fully resemble her Son, the Lord of lords" (LG 59), or that she obtains for men "with her multiple intercessions, the gifts relative to eternal salvation" (LG 62 a), or that reference is even made to the "saving influence of the blessed Virgin on behalf of mankind" (LG 60).

When all this has been examined, it is consistent with the theological view that Vatican II "asks all the sons of the Church to enthusiastically promote the worship of the blessed Virgin, especially liturgical worship; that they should hold the practice in great esteem and exercise devotion to her, recommended by teaching throughout the centuries, and that they fulfill religiously what was established in times passed regarding the worship of images." (LG 67).

Nothing, absolutely nothing, of the essential elements in the myth of Mary has been questioned by the Vatican II council. One after another, all the elements taken from the heretical circles of Christianity in the first centuries or from pagan religions have been confirmed as an important part of the Catholic faith. At least in regards to Mary, the Vatican II council changed nothing in the Catholic Church.

THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (1992)

Proof of the truthfulness of all this is found in the recent Catholic Catechism written under the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. The references to Mary appear grouped around two points of

attention: the phrase of the Apostle's Creed in which it says that Christ was "born of the virgin Mary" and a section specifically dedicated to Mary as the "mother of Christ, mother of the Church."

In the first section, reference is made, among other aspects, to the predestination of Mary, to the Immaculate Conception, to the divine motherhood of Mary and her perpetual virginity.

In the second, it is noted that Mary was united to the Son "in the work of salvation... from the moment of the virginal conception of Christ until his death" (964); and in her assumption, when "she was taken up into the glory of heaven and elevated to the throne by the Lord as Queen of the Universe" (966).

In the same way, it is insisted that she is the Mother of all believers "in the order of the grace" in which she "collaborated in a completely singular way with the work of the Savior by her faith, hope, and burning love, to reestablish the supernatural life of men" (968).

Finally, the new Catechism underlines the importance of the worship that is to be given to Mary by declaring that, "the piety of the Church towards the most holy Virgin is an intrinsic element of Christian worship" (971), and that "the most holy Virgin is honored with reason by the Church with a special worship."

This worship "finds its expression in the liturgical celebrations dedicated to the Mother of God (cf. SC 103), and in the Marian prayer like the

Holy Rosary, a synthesis of the whole Gospel" (971).

Again, we find that the New Catechism, far from questioning or analyzing the role of Mary in Catholic theology, confirms it in total harmony with the practice of the last centuries. This practice is totally contrary to the testimony of the New Testament and the historical sources derived from primitive Christianity.

Honest historical analysis of the myth of Mary, confirms that there has been no weakening of it by recent events but instead it has enjoyed excellent health.

CONCLUSION

The Modern Age, far from paralyzing the growth of the myth of Mary, did just the opposite. With the exception of a brief pause during the 18th century, the myth of Mary experienced an increase most clearly manifested by the defining of the dogmas of the immaculate conception and the assumption of Mary.

However, the development of the myth in this age is not limited to those two aspects. The myth has been further expanded by papal declarations, the documents of Vatican II, and in the recent Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992). These could possibly lead to the defining of new dogmas in the future. Possibilities include officially placing Mary as co-redeemer with Christ or declaring her universal mediation. Both beliefs, in fact, are expressly taught as truths in pontifical documents.

Catholicism of recent decades has used a series of historically illegitimate constructions to more firmly establish a mythical system around the character of Mary. In it neither the work of Christ nor the message of salvation described in the New Testament have significant influence.

It deals, in short, with "another gospel" (Galatians 1:8-9).

2 COR 11:4-14 DT 4:2; 12:32
 RE 22:18-19 DT 13:1-11
 1 SAM 26:19
 2 PE 2:14

CONCLUSION

The "myth of Mary" is one of the most interesting phenomenon in the history of religions. If I had to define it, I would use two words: "evolution" and "spiritual conflict."

Let us first look at the evolution. This myth, like those in the different mythologies of paganism, has been enriched with the passage of centuries. It has absorbed influences from other mythologies, fusing them into itself. Meanwhile, it maintains an open door to future development, some difficult to predict, others appear to be forming along obvious lines.

As we saw in the first two chapters, the only written history we possess about the real life of Mary is found in the canonical gospels and the book of Acts. That portrait of Mary is brief, but sufficient. Beside them we cannot confirm anything with the slightest historical certainty.

From Luke's account, one gathers that she was a Jewish youth, a virgin, conscious that her only salvation was found in a God in whom she rejoiced. Being engaged to Joseph (Matthew 1 and Luke 2), she became pregnant. As her pregnancy

advanced, she went to spend some time with her cousin Elizabeth, in part to help her, and possibly in part to escape from the gossip that may have existed regarding her condition.

Whatever malicious people may have thought, the Gospel of Matthew points out how that episode was the fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah 7:14 predicted that a virgin that would give birth to the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us. The child's place of birth (Bethlehem) was predicted as well as other essential Messianic prophecies in Micah 5.

With humble origins, Joseph and Mary offered the purification sacrifice of the poor. Then we know nothing of them until Jesus was twelve years old, the date of his "bar mitzvah" in Judaism.

The public ministry of Jesus should have troubled Mary. On one hand, she knew who her son, Jesus, was. On the other hand, she could not avoid the temptation that many mothers have in regard to their sons. She tried to provoke his participation in the wedding of Cana, something which Jesus rejected and which she understood. Later, she possibly feared for the destiny of her son which she guessed to be tragic (Mark 3:31-35).

The brothers of Jesus (John 7:5) did not believe in Him and when His death arrived, Mary was committed to the care of a disciple (John 19). That separation between Mary and her sons would be short-lived. In Acts 1 they all find them reunited and believing in Jesus, something possibly related to the appearance of the Resurrected One to James

(1 Corinthians 15.) Mary experienced the episode of the filling with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, but at that point we lose her historical trail.

Archaeology can help us, at least in part, to draw near to the last days of the mother of Jesus. She died and was buried in Jerusalem, where the remains of her tomb can still be seen. Her mortal remains rested there until the Jewish war of Bar-Kokhba, when a lamentable event occurred. Hadrian's Roman troops profaned the holy places of Judeo-Christianity and, among them, the tomb of Mary. Her body was possibly destroyed in the midst of this barbaric current.

Surely that was secondary because, like other believers in the first century, the hope of Mary was in being with Christ (Philippians 1:21-23).

However, some believers with Jewish backgrounds could not support the weight of the pressure to which some of their racial brothers submitted them. Various Jewish adversaries mentioned in the New Testament (John 8:41), and later in the Talmud,¹ falsely accused Mary of adultery.

On the other hand, it seems that they enjoyed relating that the body that had born Jesus had been profaned by Hadrian's legions.² The response given by some Judeo-Christians was, perhaps, motivated by good faith, but would have disastrous consequences. In various apocryphal writings it is affirmed that Mary had been a virgin after childbirth and also that her body had been saved

from desecration, as in the past with the body of Moses, and taken up into heaven.

Naturally, those theories were rejected by the overwhelming majority of Christians in the first centuries. Tertullian, Hegesippus, John Crysostom, among other Fathers of the Church, denied the perpetual virginity of Mary and affirmed that the "brothers and sisters" of Jesus which the gospels mention (Matthew 13:54-55; Mark 6:3ss) were Mary's children.

The belief about her bodily ascension into the heavens was originated by some heretics who also thought that others had experienced the same phenomenon. But the seed of the myth had been sown and would eventually bear much bad fruit since the seed was bad from the start.

The myth received its first great boost starting in the 4th century A.D. with the conversion of Constantine. As Cardinal J.H. Newman recognized in his day, Constantine's "conversion" had among its consequences the assimilation of pagan rites, practices and beliefs that the church took to heart without any critical analysis.

Among them were all the pagan mythologies related to the mother-goddesses. In Ephesus, the city of Artemis/Diana, the Great Mother Goddess, Mary was first proclaimed "Mother of God." This placed a golden seal upon a whole process that transformed her into the Suffering Mother and the Mother of those who believe.

Almost without warning, the suffering of the

Servant was obscured by that of His mother. The love of God the Father was eclipsed by that of the Virgin Mother. Soon, Mary uprooted Jesus as the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), placing herself in His position.

Sadly, the Mary that came out of that absorption of pagan beliefs hardly looked like the Mary of the Scriptures. Instead she possessed enormous parallels to Isis, Aphrodite, Cybele, Demeter or the Great White Goddess.

In a few short years, she was represented by images and paintings, which often occupied their very temples and received the same worship and ceremonies of the ancient goddesses of paganism. She was served by a priestly class whose origin was not the Levitical priesthood nor the writings of the New Testament, but pagan rituals. To this day it is easy to see, under the robes of the Marian ceremonies, the glitter of the pre-Christian rituals from which they originated.

After almost half a millennium, the myth of Mary seemed to have reached its peak. But it hadn't. During the Middle Ages, the European Crusaders again came in contact with an East from which they had been separated by Islam. The Eastern Mariology they found dazzled them and they resolved to take it back when they returned home. The Mary that was already Mother now became Lady and Queen, both titles originally linked to God in their masculine form. Soon artists illustrated her coronation by the Creator Himself.

In a short time, Mary was given power over the great beyond and to decide between the salvation or condemnation of human beings. She was given rituals of pagan origins like the rosary, a ceremony with roots in India that the crusaders had met in its Islamic version. Finally, she was denied her condition as a sinner in order to ascribe to her an immaculate conception which even freed her from original sin.

The whole system of salvation, as described by Paul in Romans 1-3, was thrown out the window. Not all men were sinners, not all need to be saved, and Christ was not Lord alone. Neither was He the cause of salvation or the only Way.

By the Middle Ages, the myth of Mary had reached such proportions and taken on so much of the demonic power present in the pagan mythologies that it seemed its mythological evolution would be complete. But there was more to come.

The period from the Counter-Reformation until the end of the 19th century did not add anything substantial to the three phases of the evolution already noted. The terrain won was strengthened by the practices of "popular religiosity," the fomenting of the worship of images and other beings that were not God, especially Mary and some saints. Such practices were expressly prohibited in Exodus 20, but few people noticed.

The Council of Trent had declared the Latin Vulgate to be the official Catholic Bible and prohibited the reading of those editions of the

Scriptures which did not contain explanatory notes agreeing with Catholic dogma.

The birth of the "Marianist Movement" began a new evolutionary phase for the myth of Mary. Their divisive motto, "Nunquam satis" (It is never enough) was highly successful. In less than a century, Mary was declared to be dogmatically immaculate and it was affirmed that she had ascended to the heavens. She was linked to papal infallibility and, finally, was named co-redeemer, associating her with the work of salvation which the Bible attributed exclusively to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

In the middle of the 20th century, it seemed again that the myth of Mary had arrived at its maximum expression. However, at this point we will consider the second characteristic of the myth of Mary: the "spiritual conflict."

Through the centuries, the evolution of the myth of Mary has been more than just a topic of historical and archaeological studies. It has represented a very real battlefield between the Christ-centered view of the Bible and the pagan system centered on the great goddesses.

In the evolution of this myth, Mary has ceased a thousand years ago being the person spoken of in the gospels and the book of Acts, the only documents that contain historical facts about her. She is no longer the mother of Jesus and his brothers, a sinner who trusted in God for her salvation, and who believed in His Son to obtain it.

On the contrary, like the cuckoo that kicks the legitimate owners out of their nest, the myth of Mary has attempted to deprive Jesus of all that the New Testament attributes to Him.

He is no longer the only sinless person. Mary is too. He is no longer the only one who ascended to heaven. So has Mary. He is no longer the only mediator. Mary intercedes as well. He is no longer the only Savior. Mary is co-redeemer. He is no longer the only Lord. Mary is the Lady. He is no longer the only King. Mary is the Queen. He is no longer the one who holds the keys to death and Hades. Mary also has them.

From the historical evidence, we see a process of imitation which robs Christ of His most important characteristics and fixes them in Mary. It is a historical evolution of plunder and mythologization. It removes Jesus from His central place in Scripture and replaces him with a Mary entirely different from the biblical figure.

To do this, they have resorted, sometimes without any shame, to the absorption of the demonic myths of paganism. Mary is a mother-goddess, often presented as subordinate, but many times opposed to an angry God.

Has the myth of Mary stopped developing? Of course, we cannot analyze what has not yet happened. However, to that question we will dedicate the postscript.

Postscript

What does the future hold for the Myth of Mary?

For close to a millennium and a half, the "Myth of Mary" has experienced an astounding growth in the Roman Catholic church, as well as the Eastern churches. Each time the evolution appeared to have peaked, additional pagan characteristics were assimilated, further magnifying the myth.

Have we reached the end of this evolution? Can we hope that Mary has already received so much honor by replacing Christ in the hearts of millions of men that the process has run its course?

Maybe. But if we believe history's lessons, we can only conclude that it will continue to stray farther from the Bible and closer to the descriptions of pagan religions contained in historical sources.

What I am about to describe is a probability, not a prophecy. It simply extends down the path the myth of Mary has traveled in past centuries.

In the coming years, the myth of Mary may develop in four areas. The first two, linked to redemption and the sacraments, are derived from a biological fact: the blood that Jesus received in Mary's womb was the blood of his own mother. It is not far fetched speculation that this could

develop into dogmatic teachings. Some works dedicated to exalting Mary already affirm that the blood shed on the cross and received in the eucharist is Mary's.

The rise of the myth of Mary has progressively eclipsed Jesus in Roman Catholic and Orthodox theology in regards to mediation, salvation and lordship. It is entirely possible that in the future the myth of Mary will demand credit in the areas of the sacraments and redemption.

Thirdly, it is probable that in the future the myth of Mary also will absorb the beliefs related to other pagan goddesses that as yet have not been linked to her. If during the Lower Empire and the Middle Ages, she became a twin sister of Isis or Artemis, it is not impossible that in the following decades she will also go on to be Kali or Saravasti.

In recent decades the Catholic Church has been careful to hide a curious phenomenon. While "Mary" was appearing in Medudgorje (Yugoslavia) or El Escorial (Spain), the Hindu and Ceylonese goddesses made similar showings in India and Ceylon. Their external appearance and their message are both the same. Because of this it is not surprising that it never coincides with the message of the Gospel of salvation that appears in the New Testament.

Something similar may also happen in relation to the worship of Gaia and the mother-goddesses linked to the New Age movement. The possibility that these lines of spirituality be integrated in the

Catholic system through the figure of Mary is much greater than what may appear at first glance.

Finally, Mary will be presented in the ensuing years as the beacon in the midst of chaos and a refuge in the midst of tribulation. Anyone familiar with the Scriptures knows that such attributes belong exclusively to God. But replacing God with the myth of Mary began long ago.

The "Mary of the poor" of Liberation Theology is just the other side of the coin of the Mary that would conquer Russia, the Mary of Fatima and of John Paul II. In a time of increasing economic difficulties, when there seems to be no way out, humanly speaking, of the political or social crises we experience, the myth of Mary will be enhanced as it was in centuries past. We will no doubt continue to witness the same struggle that took place in the past, in Babel, in Egypt, in Israel or in the Rome of the Caesars.

As always that struggle is between the only God of the Scriptures and the concept of divinity whose origin is linked historically to various forms of paganism. In one case, the focus is on the "myth of Mary," the "mother-goddess," on which one must call to be saved, consoled and helped, through performance of specific rituals.

The other case deals with the just and loving God, from whom man has separated himself by his sins, but whom he can draw near to and become His child, through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Obviously we deal with two spiritual views that are not only different but incompatible. The Bible declares that what is at risk goes beyond mere academic discussion of a philosophical or historical nature. It is about accepting "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) or rejecting Him, in exchange for pagan myths.

It is a question of turning for rest to the One who invited all who "labour or are heavy laden," (Matthew 11:28-9) or of seeking rest in another being described in the image and appearance of Isis, Demeter or Aphrodite.

It is about giving worship to the only One worthy of it (Luke 4:4), or offering it to a spiritual force parallel in its actions and form to Cybele, Hera or Artemis. It is about seeking salvation in the only "name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12), or turning to one who in her supposed appearances presents herself as one gifted with powers over the final destiny of the dead.

It is a clear black and white, hot or cold decision. The destiny of many societies hinges on that decision between the God of the Scriptures or the rejuvenated myth concocted from various versions of the gods of paganism.

However, in the realm of the purely personal there is something more important. If the message contained in the Bible is taken seriously, then what is at risk in such a decision is one's eternal destiny, to be saved or to be damned forever.

Footnotes

Introduction

1. That is, those churches whose origins go back to the first centuries and did not experience the effects of the Reformation. Examples include the orthodox churches (Greek, Russian, etc), the Coptic Church, the Armenian Church, etc.

Chapter 1

1. On matrimony in Judaism, see: C. Vidal Manzanares, *Diccionario de las tres religiones monoteístas* (Dictionary of the Three Monotheistic Religions), Madrid, Alianza, 1993.
2. *Biblia de Jerusalén, Bilbao*, February edition of 1972.
3. L. Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, Cork, 1966, p. 214.

Chapter 2

1. A Judeo-Christian sect with 2nd century roots that was characterized by a denial of the divinity of Christ, insisting that Christians were still under the Law and practicing rigorous ascetical norms related to sex and food. Epiphanius (Adv. Haer, 30,2) notes that they insisted on the teaching of the virginity.
2. A gnostic-like heretical sect of the first centuries that denied the real incarnation of the Son of God. It is very possible that John referred to them in 1 John 4:1-3.
3. Both were gnostic sects that, under the umbrella of revealing true Christianity, practiced occult-like rites. Regarding these sects, see: C. Vidal Manzanares, *Diccionario de patristica*, Estella, 1992. Regarding gnosis,

- see, with bibliography, C. Vidal Manzanares, *Los evangelios gnósticos*, Barcelona, Martinez-Roca, 1991 e Idem, *El desafío gnóstico*, in press.
4. See E. Testa, "Le Grotte dei Misteri giudeo-cristiane" in *LA*, 14, 1963-4, pp. 65-114; Idem, "Le Grotte dei Misteri giudeo-cristiane", 1969, pp. 79-110; C. Vidal, "Le Grotte dei Misteri giudeo-cristiane", Madrid, Trotta, 1994.
 5. E. Testa, "Le Grotte mistiche dei Nazareni e i loro riti battesimali" in *LA*, 12, 1961-2, pp. 5-45.
 6. The text may be consulted in E. Testa, "Le Grotte dei Misteri giudeo-cristiane", vol. II, Jerusalem, 1985, p. 28. See also: B. Bagatti, *The Church of the Circumcision*, Jerusalem, 1984, p. 62 ss.
 7. B. Bagatti, *Il Santuario della Visitazione ad `Ain Karim (Montana Judaea). Esplorazione archeologica e ripristino*, Jerusalem, 1948, pp. 45-55; 84 ss and 89-97.
 8. The first excavations were in 1885, but a systematic study was not realized until that of S. Saller in 1941-2. See: S. Saller, *Discoveries at St. John's `Ein Karim, 1941-2*, Jerusalem, 1946, pp. 69,92 ss.
 9. Idem, pp.101-3; 169-71; 115-6; 108-115.
 10. Fasti III
 11. Their names are unknown, yet, Hegesippus notes their names as Susana and Salome.
 12. See: J. Klausner, *Jesus de Nazaret*, Buenos Aires, 1971, p. 368; H. Schonfield, *El partido de Jesus*, Barcelona, 1988, p. 134; D. Flusser, *Jesus*, Madrid, 1975, p. 136 ss.
 13. De carne Christi VII; Adv. Marc. IV, 19; De monog. VIII De virg. vel. VI.
 14. Homilia 44 on Matthew 1.
 15. A brilliant exposition of the Catholic thesis can be found in M.J. Lagrange, *Evangelie selon Marc*, 1929, pp. 79-93. Another interesting contribution to the theme is by G.M. de la Garenne, *Le probleme des Freres du Seigneur*, Paris, 1928, which was answered by M. Gogvel the same

- year in *Revue de l'histoire des religion*, 98, 1928, pp. 120-5. A more recent interpretation —and a much more impartial one— by a Catholic author is R. Brown, *El nacimiento del Mesias*, Madrid, 1982, pp. 527 and 531 ss.
16. St. Brigitte of Sweden had another vision in which Mary revealed to her that she had been buried in Jerusalem and from there had ascended to heaven.
 17. E. Hoade, *Guide to the Holy Land*, Jerusalem, 1984, p. 221.
 18. B. Bagatti, "Nuove scoperte alla tomba della Vergina a Getsemani" in *LA*, 22, 1972, p. 236ss; and Idem, "L'apertura della tomba della Vergine a Getsemani" in *LA*, 23, 1973, pp. 318-321.
- ### Chapter 3
1. See the letter from the Vatican Secretary of State, reproduced in the page before the index of J.M. Carda Pitarch, *El misterio de María*, Madrid, Atenas, 1986.
 2. Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 81.
 3. For example, the 1555 declaration pronounced by Paul IV (DS 1880).
 4. For further study, see: E. Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques*, Brussels, 1961, Idem. *Le Protévangile de Jacques: Problemes critiques et exégétiques*, *Studia Evangelica* III. Berlin. 1964, pp. 339-359. J. A. de Aldama, *Fragmentos de una versión latina del Protoevangelio de Santiago y una nueva adaptación de sus primeros capítulos*: *Bi* 43, 1962, pp. 129-157; Idem, *El protoevangelio de Santiago y sus problemas. Ephemerides Mariologicae* 12. Madrid. 1962, pp. 107-130; J.M. Canal Sánchez. *Antiguas versiones latinas del Protoevangelio de Santiago. Eph. Mariologicae* 18. Madrid. 1968, pp. 431-473.
 5. Hence the name "Proto-evangelium". Origen knew it as the "Book of James" vg: PG 13, 876-877, and, despite the pseudonym, that title seems more adequate.

6. *Evangelia Apocrypha*, Lipsiae, 1853, 21876, pp. 1-48.
7. PG 6, 660.
8. PG 6, 712. This is the precise phrase used in XII, 2 of the Proto-Evangelion of James.
9. PG 9, 529.
10. Ep. canonica cn. 13; PG 18, 504.
11. PG: 13, 1629-1633
12. PG 13, 876-77.
13. PG 46, 1136.
14. PG 42, 708-714.
15. We cannot accept the objection that suggests that it cannot belong to a Jewish background because its knowledge of the workings of the Temple is imprecise. vg: A. Santos Otero, *Oc*, p. 125, and, therefore, must be attributed to a hellenist. The object of this work lacks meaning in a hellenistic context of the second century, but is completely logical in a Jewish one.
16. Regarding the realization of this ordeal in Judaism, see: Num. R. 9, 11 regarding 5, 16 (50a 19), Sota I 15, Sifra Lv 14, 11 (35b 148, 21). Regarding the origin of the rule in the Torah, see: Numbers 5:16 ss.
17. In this case, as in all the following, the translation of the text from the original language is mine.
18. Referring to Mary's private parts, as one can deduce from the context.
19. For a scientific discussion of the theme, see p. 33 ff.
20. PL 23, 192.
21. It is difficult to deny that the controversy should start with a factual base that obliged one to consider the Infancy Gospels as something more than exemplary accounts or fragments of Old Testament texts sewn together with an evangelistic purpose. Historically, there is evidence that Jesus was born "ahead of time" (something taken for granted in Matthew and Luke), that doubts arose as to his legitimacy and that Joseph

- did not reject Mary but took her to be his wife. The opposite would have meant the death of Mary since the abolition of the law that ordered the execution of adulteresses was not effected until the time of R. Yohanan ben Zakkay, subsequent to the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. See: Sota 9, 9 and T. Sota 14, 1. We depend, as well, on witnesses as to how the death penalty against an adulteress was not avoidable by even woman of the upper class. See: Sanh VII 2; b Sanh. 52 b.
22. There is a clear accusation, cast by the Jewish adversaries of Jesus, that he was a son of fornication in John 8.41 (See: D. W. Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel*, Basilea, 1970, pp. 61-62) but it is more debatable whether that was the reason for the name "son of Mary" in Mark 6.3 (See: R. E. Brown, *El nacimiento del Mesías*, Madrid, 1982, pp. 561 ss).
23. See: Tosefta Hullin II, 22-23, as well as the treatises of the Talmud of Jerusalem. Aboda Zara 40d and Sabbath 14d. The name Panthera also appears as Pantira, Pandera, Pantiri and Panteri.
24. S. Kraus has noted in his article, *Jesus of Nazareth. The Jewish Encyclopedia VII*, New York, 1904, p. 170 that deals with "the first known text that accuses Jesus of an illegitimate birth."
25. Jesus is called in some passages Ben Stada. Sabbath 104 b clarifies that Stada was the husband of Mary while Pantera was her lover. Therefore, Jesus was converted into a son of adultery. According to the legend, he subsequently learned magic (an implicit recognition of his miraculous powers) and, finally, was hung the evening before passover as a blasphemer (a clear confession of Jewish responsibility in the death of Jesus).
26. See: Contra Celso F, 2.32.69.

Chapter 4

1. See J. M. Carda Pitarch, *Oc*, p. 111: "This text

undoubtedly refers to the Church."

2. Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 113.

3. Regarding the assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary, PL 40, 1141-148.

4. This was the view of Tischendorf, Apocal. Apocr. p. XLIII, who edited the work with five different codices.

5. Contributions to the apocryphal literature of the N.T., London, pp. 11-16, 42-51 and 55-65.

6. Mater Christi III, Rome, 1954, p. 397.

7. For this opinion, see: E. Testa, *Maria Terra Vergine*, vol. I, Jerusalem, 1984, p. 49 ss.

8. Epiphanius, Haer., LI, 6, PG 41, 897.

9. Compare with the affirmation of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventist in the sense that Christ is the archangel Michael.

10. Before crossing over to mainstream Christianity the account passed through filters for fine-tuning. The first was the heretical Severian monophysites of the mount of Olives who were closer to the Ebionites due to the heterodox Christology. This report has been kept in documents that go from the IV to the V centuries. See: M. Haibach-Reinisch, *Ein neuer Transitus Mariae des Pseudo-Melito*, Rome, 1963; B. Capelle, "Vestiges grecs et latins d'un antique transitus de la Vierge" in *Analecta Bolland*, 67, 1949, pp. 21-48, and M. Jugie, "Homélies mariales byzantines", PO, 19, 1925, pp. 344-438. The second proceeds from the irenaeic tradition of the Patriarch of Jerusalem. See: A. Smith Lewis, "Apocrypha Syriaca" in *Studia Sinaitica* XI, London, 1902, and C. Tischendorf, *Apocalypses Apocryphae*, Lipsiae, 1886, pp. 95-112.

Chapter 5

1. Regarding this historical period, see: F. Altheim, *Die Soldatenkaiser*, Frankfurt, 1939; Idem, *El Imperio hacia la medianoche*, Buenos Aires, 1971; J. Fernández Ubiña, *La*

crisis del siglo III y el fin del mundo antiguo, Madrid, 1982; A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1964; F. Lot, *El fin del imperio antiguo y el comienzo de la Edad Media*, Mexico, 1956; R. Remondon, *La crisis del Imperio Romano de Marco Aurelio a Anastasio*, Barcelona, 1967.

2. A. Piganiol, *Historia de Roma*, Buenos Aires, 1981, p. 411.

3. The bibliography for this period is extensive. Here we cite only some of the works that might be of interest due to their general or recent scope: G. Alföldy, *Die romische Gesellschaft*, Stuttgart, 1986; G. P. Baker, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Revolution*, London, 1935; J. B. Firth, *Constantine the Great*, London, 1905; E. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London 1896; A. H. M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*, New York, 1962; Idem, *The Decline of the Ancient World*, London, 1966; J. Maurice, *Constantin le grand et l'origine de la civilisation chrétienne*, Paris, 1925; R. Macmullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, Yale, 1988; A. Piganiol, *L'empereur Constantin*, Paris, 1932; Idem, *L'Empire chrétien (325-395)*, Paris, 1972; M. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, (2 ed), 1957; E. A. Thompson, *Romans and Barbarians*, Madison, 1982; C. Wells, *The Roman Empire*, Glasgow, 1984. For quick reference work regarding ecclesiastical history, see: C. Vidal Manzanares, *Diccionario de Patrística*, Estella, 1992.

4. A. Kee, *Constantine versus Christ*, London, 1982.

5. Regarding Eusebius of Caesarea, see: C. Vidal Manzanares, *Diccionario de Patrística*, Estella, 1992, and Idem, *El judeo-cristianismo palestino en el s. I: de Pentecostés a Jamnia*, Madrid, Trotta, 1994.

6. Referring to Christianity.

7. J. H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, London, 1890, p. 373.

Chapter 6

1. For a detailed study, C. Vidal, *Diccionario del Antiguo Egipto*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1994.
2. Regarding this goddess, see: W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Harvard, 1985, pp. 159 ss; G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, 1961, pp. 14 ss; G. Méautis, *Les dieux de la Grece*, 1959; H. J. Rose, *Handbook of Greek Mythology*, 1928, pp. 91 ss.
3. Concerning Cybele, see: J. Bayet, *La religion romana*, 1984; J. Carcopino, *Aspects mystiques de la Rome paienne*, 1943, pp. 49 ss; R. Duthoy, *The Taurobolium*, 1969.
4. In regards to this, J. Carda Pitarch, Oc, p. 122.

Chapter 7

1. Regarding Nestorius, see: C. Vidal Manzanares, *Diccionario de Patrística*, Estella, 1992.
2. Regarding Cyril of Alexandria, see: C. Vidal Manzanares, *Diccionario de Patrística*, Estella, 1992.
3. Concerning Artemis or Diana, see: W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods*, 1950, p. 99; J. García López, *La religión griega*, Madrid, 1975, pp. 51 ss; L. R. Taylor, *Artemis of Ephesus*, in BC V, pp. 251 ss; H. Gressmann, *OR*, pp. 78 ss.

Chapter 8

1. The bibliography regarding Islam is extensive. For a deeper study, see: C. Vidal Manzanares, *Diccionario de las tres religiones monoteístas: judaísmo, cristianismo e islam*, Madrid, Alianza editorial, 1993.
2. Regarding the crusades, with various perspectives, see: A. S. Atiya, *Kreuzfahrer und Kaufleute - die Begegnung von Christentum und Islam*, Stuttgart, 1964; K. Frischler, *Das Abenteuer der Kreuzzüge*, Herbig, Munich and Berlin, 1973; F. Gabrieli, *Die Kreuzzüge aus arabischer Sicht*, Munich, 1975; J. Lehmann, *Las cruzadas*, Barcelona, 1989; S. Runciman, *Historia de las Cruzadas*, Madrid, 1973; P. Willemart, *Les croisades*, Paris, 1972.

3. See: J. Lehmann, Oc, p. 320.
4. Regarding the diverse military orders, see: P. Bertrand de la Grassiere, *L'ordre militaire et hospitalier de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem*, Paris, 1960; L. Dailliez, *Les chevaliers teutoniques*, Paris, 1979; A. Demurger, *Auge y caída de los Templarios*, Barcelona, 1986; D. M. Lomax, *Las órdenes militares en la Península Ibérica durante la Edad Media*, Salamanca, 1976; A. Ollivier, *Les templiers*, Paris, 1958; R. Pernoud, *Les templiers*, Paris, 1974; J. Riley-Smith, *The Knights of Saint John in Jerusalem and Cyprus, c. 1050-1310. A History of the Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem*, London, 1967; D. Seward, *The Monks of War. The Military Religious Orders*, London, 1972.
5. The main reasons cited in the termination process of the Templar Order was that they secretly practiced occultic and satanic ceremonies. Many of the confessions obtained regarding this were undoubtedly false since they were acquired by torture. However, it is less certain that, at least part of the Order had given in to these kinds of rites. Beside the aforementioned bibliography, see: M. Barber, *The Trial of the Templars*, Cambridge, 1978; N. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, St. Albans, 1976; P. Partner, *The Murdered Magicians*, Oxford, 1982.

Chapter 9

1. Regarding the historical origins of the rosary in other religions, see: *ERE* X, s. v.; *DCC* s. v.; *RGG* V, 1184-85; *EI* IV, p. 492; Hughes, p. 546; Mishkat, p. 196-198; Goldziher, "Le roaire das l'Islam" in *RHR*, p. 21 and 295 ss; Lane, *Egyptians*, p. 80 ss, 443 and 531 ss.
2. For a magnificent study of the subject, see G. Duby, *San Bernardo y el arte cisterciense*, Madrid, Taurus, 1989.
3. See: *ERE* VI, s.v.; J. A. MacCulloch, *Medieval Faith and Fable*, 1932, pp. 251 ss; *RGG* II, pp. 971-2; J. Nohl, *The Black Death*, 1961, c. 10; F. Rapp, *La iglesia y la vida*

religiosa en Occidente a fines de la Edad Media, Barcelona, 1973, pp. 112 y 227.

4. This name comes from the Spanish word "picar," or "to cut." The penitents would cut or pierce the bruises that would form as they flagellated themselves to avoid later medical complications.

Chapter 10

1. J.M. Carda Pitarch, *Oc*, p. 55.

2. *Idem*, p. 56.

3. Chapter CCXXXII bis. Thomas Aquinas, *Compendio de Teología*, Barcelona, 1985.

4. I. Siciliano, Francois Villon et les themes poetiques du Moyen Age, Paris, 1934, pp. 211-213.

5. F. Rapp, *O.c.*, p. 106.

Chapter 11

1. Regarding the Reformation, from various perspectives, see: W. Artus, *Los Reformados españoles del siglo XVI y las bases bíblicas de su polémica antirromanista*, Mexico, 1949; R.H. Bainton, *The Age of Reformation*, Boston, 1956; M. Bataillon, *Erasmus y España*, Mexico, 1966; G. Culkin, *The English Reformation*, London, 1954; F.C. Church, *I riformatori italiani*, Florencia, 1935; G. Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation*, Cambridge, 1960; H. J. Grimm, *The Reformation Era*, New York, 1954; J. Mackinnon, *The Origins of the Reformation*, London and Toronto, 1939; *Idem*, *Luther and Reformation*, 4 vols.

2. Some Reformers affirmed the possibility of receiving new revelations from the Holy Spirit in virtue of gifts like prophecy. Still, the feeling seems to have prevailed that, to be accepted, these revelations could not contradict the testimony of the Scriptures.

3. Regarding the diverse aspects related to the Counter-Reformation, see: W.V. Bangert, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús*, Santander, 1981; J. Caro Baroja, *Las formas complejas de la vida religiosa* (siglos XVI y XVII), Madrid,

1985; B. Bennassar, *L'Inquisition espagnole, XV-XIX siècle*, Paris, 1979; J. Deleito Piñuela, *La vida religiosa española bajo el cuarto Felipe*, Madrid, 1967; L. Febvre, *Erasmus, la Contrarreforma y el espíritu moderno*, Barcelona, 1985; F.J. García Rodrigo, *Historia verdadera de la Inquisición*, 2 vols, Madrid, 1876; J.A. Llorente, *Historia crítica de la Inquisición en España*, Madrid, 1980; M. Menéndez y Pelayo, *O.c.*

4. J. Carda Pitarch, *Oc*, p. 103.

Chapter 12

1. S. Alfonso de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, Baltimore and Dublin, 1962.

2. *O.c.*, pp. 95-96.

3. When one considers this last fact, it is not surprising that the saint in question also placed his Mary over legions of demons: "The most holy Virgin rules over the infernal regions... the sovereign Lady over demons." Surely, many who do not embrace Catholic theology in regards to Mary would gladly accept the veracity of that declaration.

4. Regarding this concrete historical episode, see: G. Denzler, *Das Papsttum in der Diskussion*, Ratisbona, 1974; A.B. Hasler, *Cómo llegó el papa a ser infalible*, Barcelona, 1980; H. Küng, *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage*, Colonia, 1970; *Idem*, *Fehlbar? Eine Bilanz*, Conlonia, 1973.

Conclusion

1. Tosefta Hullin II, 22-23; TJ Av. Zar 40d and Shabat 41d.

2. C. Vidal Manzanares, "María en la arqueología judeo-cristiana de los tres primeros siglos" in *EphMar*, 1991, pp. 353-364.

Index of Abbreviations

- AB: Anchor Bible
ABQ: American Baptist Quarterly
AGJU: Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AGSU: Arbeiten sur Geschichte del Spätjudentums und Urchristentums
AJBI: Annual of Japanese Biblical Institute
AJSL: American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
AJT: American Journal of Theology
ALBO: Analecta lovaniensia biblica et orientalia
ALGHJ: Arbeiten sur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
ALUOS: Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society
An Bib: Analecta Biblica
An Greg: Analecta Gregoriana
An Or: Analecta Orientalia
ANRW: Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, W. Haase and H. Temporini (eds.), Berlin, 1979-84.
ASNU: Acta seminarii neotestamentici upsaliensis
ASTI: Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute
ATANT: Abhandlungen sur Theologie del Alten und

- Neuen Testaments
ATR: Anglican Theological Review
BA: Biblical Archaeologist
BAC: Biblioteca de Autores cristianos
BAR: Biblical Archaeological Reader
BARev: Biblical Archaeologist Review
BASOR: Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BeO: Bibbia e Oriente
Bib: Biblical
BibO: Biblica et Orientalia
BibRes: Biblical Research
BIOSCS: Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies
BIZ: Biblische Zeitschrift
BJRL: Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester
BO: Bibliotheca Orientalis
B Rev: Bible Review
BSac: Bibliotheca Sacra
BTB: Biblical Theology Bulletin
BZ: Biblische Zeitschrift
BZNW: Beihefte sur Zeitschrift fur die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ: Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CCWJCW: Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 B.C to A. D. 200
CGTC: Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
CII: Corpus Inscriptionum iudaicarum (1936-52)
CQR: Church Quarterly Review
CRINT: Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad novum

- testamentum
 CSCO: Corpus scriptorum christianorum
 orientalium
 DAL: Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de
 Liturgie, E. Cabrol and H. Leclercq (eds.), Paris,
 1907–1953.
 DJG: Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel, J.B.
 Green, S. McKnight and I.H. Marshall (eds.),
 Downers Grove and Leicester, 1992.
 DRev: Downside Review
 DSP: Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité, M. Viller (ed.),
 Paris, 1932 ss.
 DTR: Diccionario de las tres religiones, César Vidal
 Manzanares, Madrid, 1993.
 EB: Études Bibliques
 EBT: Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology
 EDNT: Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
 EGT: Expositors Greek Testament
 EHPR: Études d'Histoire et de Philosophie
 Religieuse
 EKK: Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar sum
 Neuen Testament
 EncB: Encyclopedia Judaica
 EvQ: Evangelical Quarterly
 ENTT: E. Käsemann, Essays on New Testament
 Themes, London, 1964
 Eph Ma: Ephemerides Mariologicae
 Ephem Théolo: Ephemerides Theologicae
 ExpT: Expository Times
 Greg: Gregorianum
 GTJ: Grace Theological Journal
 Herm: Hermeneia

- HeyJ: Heythrop Journal
 HNT: Handbuch sum Neuen Testament
 HSS: Harvard Semitic Studies
 HUCA: Hebrew Union College Annual
 HZ: Historische Zeitschrift
 IBC: Interpretation Bible Commentary
 IBS: Irish Biblical Studies
 IEJ: Israel Exploration Journal
 Int: Interpretation
 IRT: Issues in Religion and Theology
 JAOS: Journal of the American Oriental Society
 JBL: Journal of Biblical Literature
 JBR: Journal of Bible and Religion
 JCSR: Journal of Comparative Sociology and
 Religion
 JETS: Journal of the Evangelical Theological
 Society
 JJS: Journal of Jewish Studies
 JNES: Journal of Near Eastern Studies
 JPOS: Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society
 JQR: Jewish Quarterly Review
 JR: Journal of Religion
 JRE: Journal of Religious Ethics
 JRS: Journal of Roman Studies
 JSJ: Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian,
 Hellenistic and Roman Period
 JSNT: Journal for the Study of the New Testament
 JSP: Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
 and Related Literature
 JSS: Journal of Semitic Studies
 JTS: Journal of Theological Studies
 LB: Liber Annus

LTS: La Terra Santa
 MGWJ: Monatschrift für Geschichte und
 Wissenschaft des Judentums
 MBTh: Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie
 NCB: New Clarendon Bible
 NJCB: New Jerome Biblical Commentary,
 Englewood Cliffs, 1992
 NovT: Novum Testamentum
 NRT: Nouvelle Revue Théologique
 NT: New Testament
 NTOA: Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
 NTS: New Testament Studies
 OT: Old Testament
 PBSR: Papers of the British School at Rome
 PCB: Peake's Commentary on the Bible
 PEQ: Palestine Exploration Quarterly
 PTR: Princeton Theological Review
 RACH: Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum
 RB: Revue Biblique
 RE: Real Encyclopädie der Klassischen
 Altertumswissenschaft
 RevQ: Revue de Qumran
 Rev.Sc.Ph.Th: Revue des Sciences Philosophiques
 et Théologiques
 RGG: Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
 RHPR: Revue d'histoire et de philosophie
 religieuse
 PHR: Revue d'histoire del Religions
 RSR: Recherches de Science Religieuse
 RST: Regensburger Studien zur Theologie
 SAJ: Studies in Ancient Judaism
 SANT: Studiem zum Alten und Neuen Testament

SBEC: Studies in the the Bible and Early Christian
 Literature
 SBLASP: Society of Biblical Literature Abstracts
 and Seminar Papers
 SBT: Studies in Biblical Theology
 ScrHier: Scripta hierosylimitana
 SCJ: Studies in Christianity and Judaism
 SE: Studia Evangelica
 SJ: Studia Judaica
 SJLA: Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
 SNTSMS: Society for New Testament Sudies
 Monograph Series
 SJT: Scottish Journal of Theology
 StudLit: Studia Liturgica
 Th St Kr: Theologische Studien und Kitiken
 THR: Theologische Rundschau
 TI: Theological Inquiries
 TJ: Trinity Journal
 TLZ: Theologische Literaturzeitung
 TR: Theologische Rundschau
 TS: Theological Studies
 TSFBul: Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin
 TU: Text und Untersuchungen
 TynB: Tyndale Bulletin
 TZ: Thologische Zeitschrift
 ZNW: Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche
 Wissenschaft
 ZRG: Zeitschrift für Religionsund
 Geistesgeschichte
 ZTK: Zeitschrift für Theologie un Kirche
 ZWT: Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie

Bibliography

- Algermissen, K. *Lexikon de Marenkunde*, Rengensburg, 1957.
- Ashe, G. *The Virgin*, London, 1976
- Ahsmann, U.P.J.M. *Le Culte de la Sainte Vierge et la Littérature Française Profane de Moyen Age*, Paris and Utrecht, 1930.
- Attwater, D. *A Dictionary of Mary*, New York, 1955.
- Begg, E. *Las Vírgenes negras*, Barcelona, 1985.
Catholic Encyclopedia, 15 vol., London and New York, 1907-14
- Brown, R.E., Donfried, K.P., Fitzmyer, J.A., Reumann, J. *María en el Nuevo Testamento*, Salamanca, 1986.
- Carda Pitarch, J.M. *El misterio de María*, Madrid, 1986.
- Douglas, J.D., *The Concise Dictionary of the Christian Tradition*, Michigan, 1989.
- Graves, R. *La diosa blanca*, 2 vol. Madrid, 1983.
- Hall, N. *The Moon and the Virgin*, London, 1980.
- Huizinga, J. *El Otoño de la Edad Media*, Madrid, 1989.
- Lacueva, F. *Catolicismo romano*, Tarrasa, 1979.
- Müller, A. *Reflexiones teológicas sobre María, madre de Jesús: la mariología en perspectiva actual*, Madrid, 1985.

- Neumann, E. *The Great Mother*, New York, 1955.
- Regamey, P. *Los mejores textos sobre la Virgen María*
- Sánchez Vaquero, J. *España, tierra de María*, Salamanca, 1987.
- Vidal Manzanares, C. *Los evangelios gnósticos*, Barcelona, 1991.
Diccionario de Patrística, Estella, 1992.
Diccionario de las tres religiones monoteístas: judaísmo, cristianismo e islam, Madrid, 1993.
El judeo-cristianismo palestino en el s. I: de Pentecostés a Jamnia, Madrid, 1994.
Diccionario de Jesús y los Evangelios, Estella, 1995.
- Vorágine, Jacobo de la, *La leyenda Dorada*, Madrid, 1986.
- VVAA, *Enciclopedia mariana*, Madrid, 1960.
- Warner, M. *Tú sola entre las mujeres: el mito y el culto de la Virgen María*, Madrid, 1960.

Chronology of the Myth of Mary

3rd CENTURY

- First (possible) archaeological reference to Mary in Nazareth.
- First written reference to the perpetual virginity of Mary in the Protoevangelium of James, an apocryphal writing that appeared in heretical circles.
- First reference to the Assumption of Mary into heaven in an apocryphal writing transmitted by the heretic Leucio.

4th CENTURY

- Protoevangelium of James
- First temple built in honor of St. Anne.
- First reference (in the east) to Mary as "the mother of God."
- First documented invocation that is directed to Mary (Saint Justine, c. 350).
- First liturgy for the Virgin. It is performed in Syria (c. 370).

5th CENTURY

- 451. The Council of Chalcedon dogmatically declares that Mary is "Zeotokos" (Mother of God).
- First papal references (Leo the Great) to the perpetual virginity of Mary.
- The pelagian heretic Julian of Eclana defends for

the first time the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary. He is opposed by the Christian theologian, Augustine of Hippo.

- The temple of the goddess Isis in Soissons is consecrated to Mary.

6th CENTURY

- The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew.
- In the east, a feast is dedicated to celebrate the Assumption of Mary.
- The Parthenon, a temple in Athens dedicated to the goddess Athena Palas, is now dedicated to Mary.

8th CENTURY

- A festivity begins to be celebrated in the east in honor of the birth of Mary. In this celebration, there is no reference to the immaculate conception.
- Pope Sergio I introduces the feasts of the Annunciation, the Dormición, the Purification and the Nativity of Mary.

9th CENTURY

- Book of the Nativity of Mary.
- In the east, the feast of the conception of St. Anne begins to be celebrated.

10th CENTURY

- Saturdays are dedicated to Mary (c. 975).
- The antiphony Regina Coeli is composed.

11th CENTURY

- In the east, the assumption of Mary is celebrated. The fundamental reason for the decision is the

acceptance as authentic of a work falsely attributed to Augustine in which this teaching is defended.

- The antiphonies *Alma redemptoris mater* and *Salve Regina* are composed.

12th CENTURY

- In the east a festivity begins to be celebrated in honor of the birth of Mary. In it, there is not a single reference to the immaculate conception.
- Isabel of Schonau affirms having had visions of the assumption of Mary.

13th CENTURY

- First episodes of public flagellation in honor of Mary.
- The rosary "brought from the East" starts to be used as an instrument of devotion to Mary.
- In his last work, *Brevis Summa de fide*, Thomas Aquinas emphatically opposes belief in the immaculate conception of Mary.
- Diverse literary works (eg. *The Miracles of Our Lady* by the Spanish monk Gonzalo de Berceo) popularize the belief that Mary has power to bestow salvation to her faithful, despite their behavior, and she has power over demonic hosts.
- Duns Scotus, followed by the franciscans, defend the immaculate conception of Mary.

14th CENTURY

- Mary is presented for the first time as the believer's "Advocate" by a lower-Norman poet.
- 1372. In the east, the feast of the presentation of the Virgin is instituted.

- c. 1386. The feast of the scapulary of the Virgin is established.

15th CENTURY

- 1423. The feast of the Pains of Our Lady is established.
- 1439. The council of Basilea defines the immaculate conception of Mary as a dogma. The decision lacked canonical validity because the council broke its submission to the Roman See.
- 1456. The Angelus becomes a required daily prayer to demonstrate veneration of Mary.
- 1457. First brotherhood of the Rosary.

16th CENTURY

- 1507. The pilgrimage to Loreto is approved.
- 1531. First appearances of the Virgin in Guadalupe, Mexico.
- 1558. The litany of Loreto is published.
- 1563. The council of Trent insists on the veneration that should be rendered to religious images. It is based on the sodality of Our Lady.
- 1568. The Ave Maria is introduced into the breviary in its present official form.
- 1573. The feasts of the Expectation of the Virgin and Our Lady of the Victory and the Rosary are established.
- 1584. Pope Gregory XIII fixes the festivity of St. Anne on July 26.

17th CENTURY

- Mary begins to be seen as Co-redemptress.
- 1617. Pope Paul V prohibits public discussion in

regards to the original sin of Mary. Only the Dominicans could discuss the issue, but in private and in the See of his Order.

- 1622. Pope Gregory XV
- 1644. The feast of the divine heart of Mary is established.
- 1661. Pope Alexander VII affirms, in regard to the belief in the immaculate conception of Mary, that "now almost all catholics embrace it."
- 1683. The feast of the sacred name of Mary is extended to the whole church.

18th CENTURY

- 1716. The feast of the rosary is extended to all the church.
- Marianist Movement. Its principal exponent, Alfonso Maria de Ligorio writes "The Glories of Mary" (1750), in which she appears as "Lady sovereign over demons," Queen of heaven and possessor of a way of salvation that is easier than the one opened by Christ. Ligorio's thesis would have an enormous influence upon popes such as Leo XIII, Pius X and Benedict XV.
- 1754. The Virgin of Guadalupe is proclaimed patron of Mexico.

19th CENTURY

- c. 1824. Visions of Anna Catherine of Emmerich. The majority of modern day specialist, "Catholics included" tend to regard them as pure fantasy.
- 1830. The miraculous medal appears to Catalina Laboure.
- 1846. Mary immaculate is proclaimed patron of

the United States.

- c. 1850. The Society of Mary is founded.
- 1854. Belief in the immaculate conception of Mary is defined as dogma.
- 1858. Appearances in Lourdes.
- 1870. Belief in the infalibility of the pope is defined as dogma.
- 1871. Appearances in Pantmain.
- 1900. Our Lady of Guadalupe is proclaimed patron of the Americas.

20th CENTURY

- 1917. Appearances of Fatima.
- 1921. Foundation of the legion of Mary in Dublin.
- 1931. The feast of the Divine Maternity is established.
- 1932-33. Appearances in Beauraing.
- 1933. Appearances in Banneux.
- 1942. The world is consecrated to the immaculate heart of Mary.
- 1950. Pope Pius XII defines the corporeal assumption of Mary into heaven as dogma.
- 1958. The royalty of Mary is proclaimed and her feast is established.
- 1961-65. Appearances in Garabandal.
- 1964. Mary is proclaimed Mater Ecclesiae.
- 1962-65. The Vatican II council reaffirms the Mariological theology of the last centuries and Paul VII declares that the Gospel is incomprehensible without accepting the Catholic Mariology.
- 1974. Encyclical Cultus Marialis

- 1992. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* dedicates various sections to the teaching of the traditional Catholic Mariology.

Mary...

- Hundreds of millions adore her.
- Millions flock to her shrines each year.
- When all else fails, the faithful turn to *her* for help.

But is the Mary of Roman Catholicism also the Mary of the Bible?

Or is she an imposter?

After years of extensive research, César Vidal proves in this scholarly book that Roman Catholicism's Mary and the Mary of the Bible are *not* the same person.

Readers will discover that Catholicism's Mary is just a myth, whose origins trace back to ancient pagan goddess worship.

After a thorough examination of the scriptures, you will also learn much about the real Mary of the Bible.

Crammed with documented facts, this book proves that those who worship Mary and look to her for salvation are in for a horrible shock when they stand before God.

Proof that the Roman Catholic Mary is NOT the Mary of the Bible.