

Antichristian Mariology

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1.

December 8 Pope Pius XII concluded the “Marian Year” 1954 with a solemn pontifical high mass in the church of St. Maria Maggiore.

That this year was the “Marian Year” cannot have escaped the notice of anyone who lives within the pale of the Catholic Church, and must have been clear to most of those who are outside it. The press and the radio as well as public notices called attention to it constantly. The Pope himself in his encyclical *Fulgens corona* of December 8, 1953, solemnly observed the 100th anniversary of the pronouncement of the immaculate conception of Mary (in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* of Pope Pius IX in 1854) and dedicated the year 1954 to a Marian action. In accord with the wish of the Pope all the spiritual forces of the Catholic Church were mobilized. With a fervor never seen before, the Virgin Mary was glorified in public gatherings, in prayers, in sermons, and in the liturgy. Unique among the national observances was the crowning of “Maria del Pilar” in Saragossa, Spain, on October 12 in the presence of Spanish officialdom and of the papal legate on the occasion of the “National Marian Congress.” This fanatically revered statue of Mary with the rank of a Spanish general appeared in a golden radiance decorated with 5000 jewels and was crowned with a diadem studded with 10,000 diamonds and pearls. Roman theology throughout the world emphasized more than ever the great themes of Mariology in every possible manner. A climax of the Marian year was reached on All Saints’ Day (November 1), the fourth anniversary of the pronouncement of the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven. On this day the Pope proclaimed in his encyclical *Ad caeli reginam*² that henceforth the Catholic world was to observe the festival of “Mary, Queen of Heaven” each year on May 31.

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² We quote several references to the papal encyclical *Ad caeli reginam* from a report of the noted scholar Kurt Nitzschke of Bensheim, which he published in *Kirche und Zeit*, 1954, p. 274ff. Nitzschke says of the encyclical: “*In einer langen Reihe von Zeugnissen aus alter Zeit soll nun begründet werden, dass das Bewusstsein von Maria als der Himmelskönigin schon von jeher in der Kirche heimisch gewesen sei; diese Zeugnisse beweisen aber eigentlich gerade das Gegenteil. Denn die ältesten Zeugnisse, die Maria als ‘Herrin’ bezeichnen, stammen aus dem Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts; erst im 6. Jahrhundert (allerdings in einer nur unsicher zu datierenden Quelle) wird sie ‘Herrscherin der Sterblichen’ genannt und erst um das Jahr 700 (Andreas von Kreta 660–740) nennt man sie das erste Mal ‘Königin des Menschengeschlechtes’.... Auch die Geschichte der Liturgie gibt nicht mehr her. Das bekannte Gebet ‘Salve Regina’ z.B. ist erst seit dem 11. Jahrhundert nachweisbar. Das ‘Hauptargument’ der Theologie, auf das sich die königliche Würde Mariens gründet, und das aus den Texten der alten Tradition und aus der heiligen Liturgie hervorleuchtet, beruht ohne Zweifel auf ihrer göttlichen Mutterschaft.*”

The following is quoted from the encyclical: “*In der Tat sagt man in den heiligen Büchern über den von der Jungfrau geborenen Sohn: ‘Er wird Sohn des Allerhöchsten heissen und Gott der Herr wird ihm den Thron Davids, seines Vaters geben; er wird herrschen im Hause Jacobs ewiglich und seines Reiches wird kein Ende sein’; und weiterhin wird Maria genannt ‘Mutter des Herrn’. Folgerichtig ergibt sich daraus, dass sie selbst Königin ist, da sie einem Sohne das Leben gab, der seit dem Augenblick seiner Empfängnis, auf Grund der hypostatischen Union der menschlichen Natur mit dem (göttlichen) Wort, selbst als Mensch König und Herr aller Dinge ist.*” Aber nicht nur deshalb muss sie Königin genannt werden, sondern “*auch weil sie nach dem Willen Gottes in dem Werk unseres ewigen Heiles eine besonders hervorragende Rolle spielte.... Bei der Vollendung der Erlösung wurde die allerseligste Jungfrau sicher eng mit Christus verbunden.... Aus diesen Voraussetzungen lässt sich folgender Schluss ziehen: In dem Werk unseres geistlichen Heiles war Maria nach dem Willen Gottes dem Urheber des Heiles, Jesus Christus, beigegeben, und dies auf ähnliche Weise, wie Eva dem Urheber des Todes, Adam, beigegeben war; man kann also von unserer Erlösung sagen, dass sie sich in*

Let us proceed from this more external report to the theological matter! In matters of this kind, in which the world at large sees the pronouncement of new dogmas, the Roman Catholic church ostensibly does nothing else than—in keeping with one of her favorite and so useful principles—“to take cognizance of the divine revelation in a more precise manner” and to unfold the great Marian truths that are contained in it—specifically in so-called tradition. As soon as these truths are sufficiently elaborated and theologically underpinned, the Pope by virtue of his infallibility enjoins the members of the church to believe the revealed truth. This has happened with respect to Mary twice: first at the pronouncement of the dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary (1854) and again at the pronouncement of the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven (1950).

Such statements as that of archbishop John Flynn, president of the Catholic St. John’s University of Brooklyn, USA—although they may constitute a stumbling-block for some—are nevertheless viewed in the present climate of the Roman church, to be considered perfectly normal. Archbishop Flynn announces, that the church will in all probability quite soon proclaim three new dogmas in honor of Mary: Mary, coredemptrix of the human race; Mary, mediatrix of all grace; and finally, Mary, Queen of heaven and earth. The assurance is given, that these dogmas introduce nothing new. In fact, fantasies of this type, which—although unbeknown to some—are nothing short of blasphemies, have for a long time been taught and believed in Catholicism as certain truths. Yes, to be exact, they have been included by the popes of the last and of the present century in their Marian pronouncements and only await a special proclamation.

A Christian, who believes the Word of God and who has the eternal welfare of his brethren at heart, dare not nonchalantly shrug off such aberrations; he must know why he rejects this heresy. More than that, he must resist the development that deforms the faith of millions of immortal souls and surrenders them to paganism.

2.

Before we give further expression to our protest, we must become clear on the causes and the foundations of a development of doctrine, of which the statements of archbishop Flynn give evidence; we must know exactly where the Roman church stands today. Lest we say something untenable, we shall let the most competent interpreters of Catholic thought speak to us personally.

Let us hear first a few statements of the popes, which proceed chiefly from the assent of the Virgin at the time of the annunciation and advance rapidly to her cooperation in the passion.

Through this participation in the passion and the will of Christ Mary justly deserved to become the restorer of lost mankind and therefore also to be made the dispenser of all the gifts of grace which Christ has purchased with his death and his blood. (Plus X.)³

der Form einer gewissen Wiederholung (recapitulatio) vollzog, dergestalt, dass das Menschengeschlecht, dem Tode unterworfen durch eine Jungfrau, durch die Vermittlung einer Jungfrau wieder gerettet wurde.... Wie Christus, der neue Adam, unser König ist, da er nicht allein Gottes Sohn, sondern auch unser Erlöser ist, so kann man in einer gewissen Analogie ebenfalls sagen, dass die heilige Jungfrau Königin (sic!) ist, nicht nur weil sie die Mutter Gottes ist, sondern auch weil sie wie eine neue Eva dem neuen Adam beigegeben war.”

“Und weiter hat die allerseligste Jungfrau nicht allein nach Christus die oberste Stufe der Erhabenheit und Vollkommenheit erlangt, sondern sie nimmt in gewisser Weise auch teil an der mit Recht sogenannten Herrschaft ihres Sohnes, unseres Erlösers, über den Geist und den Willen des Menschen. Wenn das göttliche Wort die Wunder vollbringt und seine Gnade spendet durch das Mittel seiner Menschheit, wenn er die Sakramente und die Heiligen gleichsam als Instrumente für das Heil der Seelen gebraucht, warum kann er sich nicht seiner allerheiligsten Mutter bedienen, um uns die Früchte der Erlösung zu spenden?”

Nitzschke concludes: *“Das Fest soll in jedem Jahre am 31. Mai gefeiert werden. Zugleich wird angeordnet—das hat Bedeutung auch für das Verständnis der Fuldaer Marienweihe: ‘dass man an diesem Tage die Weihe des Menschengeschlechtes an das Unbefleckte Herz der Allerseligsten Jungfrau Maria erneuern soll. In ihr ruhr wahrlich eine lebendige Hoffnung, dass wir eine Aera des Glückes sich erheben sehen, die sich des christlichen Friedens und des Triumphes der Religion erfreuen wird ...’ ”—Die letzten Worte der Enzyklika bei Herder Korrespondenz, Freiburg, 1954, S. 118f., der vollständige Text ab S. 115.*

³ Encyclica: *Ad diem illum laetissimum* of February 2, 1904, published by Herder, Freiburg i. Br. 1909, pp. 42–43. The wording of the Latin original: *“Ex hac autem Mariam inter et Christum communionem dolorum ac voluntatis, promeruit illa ut ‘reparatrix perditionis orbis*

Together with her suffering and dying Son she has suffered and has almost died with Him. Thus for the salvation of mankind and in order to appease the wrath of God, she has waived her maternal claims on her Son; as far as she is concerned, she has sacrificed her Son, so that it can be properly said of her that she together with Christ has redeemed mankind. (Benedict XV)⁴

Free of any personal or inherited guilt and always most intimately united with her Son, she offered Him at Golgotha with the complete surrender of her maternal rights and her mother-love to the Eternal Father as the new Eve for all the children of Adam, who were corrupted by his sad fall into sin. (Plus XII)⁵

The Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* of the present pope, which announced the bodily assumption of Mary, has been interpreted by a prominent member of the College of Cardinals as follows:

The doctrinal pronouncement of November 1, 1950, marks the starting-point and the beginning of a new era, the beginning of a way to greater clarity, which will permit the mariologist to penetrate ever deeper and clearer into the unspeakable ‘mystery of Mary,’ the mystery of a woman, who was elevated to the dizzy heights of the honor of being the mother of God, the mystery of a creature which through its unique and infinite greatness has succeeded in reaching the limits of divinity itself... It will be necessary, e.g. to illuminate more and more the direct cooperation of Mary in the work of redemption, in order to focus attention on her title of ‘coredemptrix of the human race.’ It will be necessary to make ever clearer the nature of the queenship of Mary... Countless votaries of Mary, bishops and believers, ... desire the inauguration of the liturgical festival in honor of Mary, Queen of heaven and earth... It will be necessary, to elucidate ... that the veneration of Mary represents a moral necessity for salvation.⁶

After such encouragement from the highest position the *theologians* speak no less confidently in this matter:

Mary continues her mission as coredemptrix in heaven and now distributes to each soul individually the grace, which she helped to earn for all in general... The little creature, which in

dignissime fieret [Eadmer mon., De excellentia Virg. Mariae, c. 9] atque ideo universorum munerum dispensatrix quae nobis Iesus nece et sanguine comparavit.” (Denz. 1978a)

⁴ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis Num. 5, 1 Mail 1918, III, p. 182: “Scilicet ita cum Filio patiente et moriente passa est et paene commortua, sic materna in Filium iura pro hominum salute abdicavit placandaeque Dei iustitiae, quantum ad se pertinebat, Filium immolavit, ut dici merito queat, Ipsam cum Christo humanum genus redemisse.”* Similarly *Octobri Mense* and *Magnae Dei Matris* and *Fidentem* of Leo XIII (1891, 1892, 1896; Neuner-Roos, No. 326 330) and *Ad Diem Ilium* of Plus X (1904; Neuner-Roos, 331–334); portions of the Latin original in Densinger, 1940a or 1979a.—In all the pronouncements of modern popes three or four points stand out prominently: the absolute sinlessness of the mother of God; her cooperation in the work of redemption; her cooperation in dispensing salvation, particularly her inter. cession for man before her divine Son; her position as the risen and ascended queen of the universe.

⁵ Encyclica: *Mystici Corporis Christi* of June 29, 1943, publ. by Herder, Freiburg i. Br. 1947, p. 114. The wording of the Latin original is: “*Ipsa fuit, quae vel propriae, vel hereditariae labis expers, arctissime semper cum Filio suo coniuncta, eundem in Golgotha, una cum maternorum iurium maternique amoris sui holocausto, nova veluti Eva, pro omnibus Adae filiis, miserando eius lapsu foedatis, Aeterno Patti obtulit.*” (Denz. 2291)

⁶ Excerpts from the address of Cardinal Pizzardo, the legate of Pope Leo XII, at the mariological world council in Rome, translated from the French text of the author.—The wording of the corresponding passage of the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* of Plus VII of Nov. 1, 1950, is the following (Denz. 3033): “*Quapropter, postquam supplices etiam atque etiam ad Deum admovimus preces, ac Veritatis Spiratus lumen invocavimus, ad Omnipotentis Dei gloriam, qui peculiarem benevolentiam suam Mariae Virgini dilargitus est, ad sui Filii honorem, immortalis saeculorum Regis ac peccati mortisque victoris, ad eiusdem augustae Matris augendam gloriam et ad totius Ecclesiae gaudium exultationemque, auctoritate Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, Beatorum Apostorum Petri et Pauli ac Nostra pronuntiamus, declaramus et definimus divinitus revelatum dogma esse: Immaculatam Deiparam semper Virginem Mariam, expleto terrestri vitae cursu, fuisse corpore et anima ad caelestem gloriam assumptam.*”

the water of baptism is changed from a child of wrath into a child of God, - the sinner, who, as soon as the blood of Christ, extended to him by the hand of his father confessor, touches him, is changed from one who is spiritually dead into a child of God, - both, the one as well as the other, are reborn to spiritual life through Mary... Without the grace of the life, which she procures for them they would remain forever dead. No one is reborn to a life in God, who is not born in a supernatural manner through Mary... We can accomplish nothing supernatural without grace, and all grace comes to us from our Mother in heaven... It becomes ever more apparent that the battle must continue under her leadership (*Maria duce!*) ... Thus the explanation of this privilege (the immaculate conception!) was the proclamation of the reign of the Virgin Mary in the present times and the proclamation of the complete Marian apostleship for Mary and under Mary.⁷

A confession made to Mary has its value in itself. She brings grace with her... We need not fear anything from Mary, for she is not offended by anything. She has already atoned for all. That a man ceases to sin, the holy Virgin sometimes accomplishes even where God Himself often fails.⁸

In order that redemption might accomplish its aim completely, it was not only necessary that God became man and died, but also that he included the woman in this incarnation and in this sacrifice. It can indeed be said, that without the merit of the sorrowful Virgin something would be missing in our redemption, since her merit is the most glorious fruit of the merit of Christ.⁹

But between Christ and us there is a tremendous distance, and we are looking for a possibility of reducing it. And here the thought of Mary appears quite naturally.¹⁰

She protects us from all evil, and she protects us also, if we may say so, from her Son, like a mother places herself between her child and an angry father.¹¹

The Marian fact, ... the Marian experience ... characterize modern Catholicism.¹²

3.

By such expressions from the highest ecclesiastical authorities and by theologians who should be taken seriously, as have been cited here, we are, to say the least, perturbed; and we must ask ourselves: What has all this to do with the doctrine of the Gospel? Did not Origen already say: "We must be able to appeal to the Scriptures. Without Scriptural testimony our thoughts and words are not worthy of being believed."¹³ Likewise Jerome: "What is not based on the Scriptures is as easily rejected as accepted."¹⁴ "We must not follow the error of our fathers and forefathers, but the authority of the Scriptures and the commandment of divine doctrine."¹⁵

⁷ E. Neubert, *Marianiste, Doct. D.: Marie dans le Dogme, 2e édition*, Paris, 1946, pp. 69,70,74,147.

⁸ R.P. Dancoeur, S.J.: *La Sainte Vierge dans notre vie d'hommes, Etudes*, 1935, pp. 606,607.

⁹ M.J. Nicolas, O.P., *Revue Thomiste, Janvier—Mars* 1946, p. 187.

¹⁰ J. Guiton: *La Vierge Marie, Paris* 1944, p. 164.

¹¹ R.P. Sertillanges, O.P., *La Vie Catholique, Paris* 1922.

¹² R.P. Congar, O.P., *Le Christ, Marie et l'Eglise, Paris* 1952, p. 42.

¹³ Μάρτυρας δεῖ λαβεῖν τὰς γράφας. Ἀμάρτυροι γὰρ αἱ ἐπιβολαὶ ἡμῶν καὶ αἱ ἐξηγήσεις ἄπιστοι εἰσιν. Cited from: *Patrologiae cursus completus*. J.P. Migne, Paris, (=MPG); *Origenis Opera Omnia*, III 261f, 1862: *In Jeremiam Homilia I*.

¹⁴ "Hoc quia de Scripturis non habet auctoritatem, eadem facilitate contemnitur, qua probatur." MPL: S. Eusebii Hieronymi Opera Omnia VII, 1866: *Commentarii in Evangelium Matthaei Lib. IV, cap. XXIII, p. 180*.

¹⁵ "Nec parentum nec maiorum error sequendus est, sed auctoritas scripturarum et dei docentis imperium." S. Eusebii Hieronymi in *Hieremiam Prophetam libri sex. LXXVII p. 123, I. publ. by G. Freitag, Leipzig, 1913*.

“But also, whatever else they assert and fabricate without Scriptural basis and testimony under the pretext of apostolic tradition, will be smitten by the sword of God.”¹⁶

Certainly, who besides her Son Jesus Christ has received more and has suffered more than Mary? Is not the gift of faith given to her practically without an equal? Did not Mary as a result of her faith, veiled in the veil of evangelical humility, live an exemplary and glorious Christian life? Whoever reads the gospels with her heart and loves Jesus as she did, will also love Mary, the mother of Jesus, and cannot remain indifferent toward her.

It is this feeling of profound respect for Mary, this self-evident feeling of admiration and love for the mother of our Lord, that can explain at least in part the beginnings of the cult of Mary, without thereby justifying it in the least; for that is utterly impossible on the basis of the Gospel. The Lord himself, far from making Mary equal to Himself, has nevertheless assigned the proper place for her in human society. “A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,” the aged Simeon had said to Mary; she will not have a son in Jesus as other mothers have. The bonds of blood must yield to those of the spirit. Only as a member of the Church of Christ will Mary be able to remain united with her Son. When at the marriage at Cana she prematurely wanted to bring about a miracle, she was very definitely put in her place by Jesus (John 2:3–4). When His mother and His brethren desired to speak with Him, while the people thronged about Him, He refused and called those His brethren, sisters and mother, who do the will of His Father in heaven (Matt. 12:46–50). When a voice arose at one time from the people, glorifying Mary, Jesus immediately pointed to the Word of God as the one essential thing (Luke 11:27–28). Even on Golgotha Jesus continued to call Mary “woman” and gave her in the person of John a son, to whom she was to be a mother (John 19:26–27). And among those, who after the ascension were all with one accord in one place awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, Mary is mentioned after the apostles and the other women (Acts 1:14).

St. Paul says only once, that Jesus was “made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4); and this he says, according to the context, only in order to attest the true incarnation and the voluntary submission to the law, which immediately occurred. Otherwise there is, apart from the accounts of the nativity in the gospels and the passages mentioned above, complete silence concerning Mary in the New Testament. The testimony of Mary herself in her Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) is the humble and joyful thanksgiving to the God of all grace, which seeks no worldly greatness, but rather recognizes the “lowliness” (not her “humility” as a virtue, as Catholic expositors would have it!) of His handmaid.

The New Testament can be read again und again, with all possible objectivity: nowhere will you find the least support to justify a cult of Mary.

4.

We find the same situation in the post-apostolic times in church history, comprising almost four centuries. Be it in religious art or in ecclesiastical literature: nowhere is any special attention given to Mary.

Whenever the church fathers in their biblical commentaries are induced by the text to speak of Mary, they always represent her in her human relationship to Jesus; of a special veneration of Mary they know nothing. At times they do indeed speak of her with great respect, but at other times also with certain harshness. Irenaeus says, that at the marriage at Cana “the Lord chided His mother for her precipitate haste.”¹⁷ “What Mary did,” says John Chrysostom, “resulted from inordinate vanity. She wanted to show the people that she had power and authority over her Son, although she did not have the faintest idea of His true greatness. Therefore she approached Him at the wrong time... Note, however, how insistent she and the others were.”¹⁸

Even at the decision of the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) to call Mary the mother of God (θεοτόκος), the fathers of this council were far more interested in resisting the christological heresies, which were so dangerous at that time, than in glorifying Mary. On the one hand it was henceforth to be impossible to say that

¹⁶ “*Sed et aria quae absque auctoritate et testimoniis Scripturarum quasi traditione apostolica sponte reperiunt atque confingunt, percutit gladius Del.*” MPL: Hieronymi Opera Omnia V. Commentarii in Aggaeum Prophetam Liber, cap. I, p. 1465.

¹⁷ Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, Bd. 4; J. Kösel-Verlag, Kempten, 1836: Schriften des heiligen Irenaeus, III, 16/7. S. 19.

¹⁸ loc. cit.: 1916: Des Hl. Chrysostomus ausgewählte Schriften III, S. 18.

Christ had only what seemed to be a human body; for through the acceptance of this term (θεοτόκος) He was designated as a true man with a real body born of a human mother. On the other hand it was henceforth to be impossible to say that He was not the divine *Logos*, the second person of the Trinity; from the very moment of His conception He was confessed to be the Word made flesh, and therefore true God. For the fathers this formulation actually expressed what it was intended to say: it preserved and emphasized the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ. Meanwhile it was not without danger for Christian people, especially in the land of the great Diana. Although it was self-evident for the theologians of this council that the expression θεοτόκος, mother of God, could not refer to the divine nature of Christ this was not forthwith true of the circle of believers. Here the old vestiges of a religious paganism remained, though they may have been ever so slight; and soon the people who had become Christian found the image of the *Bona Dea* again, of the *Magna Mater* (=Cybele) of their fathers, but now “purified” and “sanctified” in the bosom of the Church itself. The actual origin of the adoration of Mary evidently lies in the popular cult of the many heathen female deities of the Mediterranean area, a subject on which we cannot enter further here.

If we wish to find the source in this entire epoch, which prepared the soil in the church from which the cult of Mary sprang, we must penetrate into the luxuriantly rampant jungle of Gnostic heresies. According to the church history of Eusebius they undermined Christianity to such a degree that the representatives of pure doctrine apparently were reduced to a minority, especially in the churches of Asia, which at that time lent an ear to every conceivable fantasy of doctrine.

It was then as it is today: The more a doctrine pretends to satisfy intellectual requirements, mystical curiosity, and old metaphysical dreams, the more boldly it asserts itself and the greater a following it gains. That was true in every respect of Gnosticism. This heresy could change and adapt itself to any place and time, but remained basically the same. It is not based on Scripture alone, but it complements Scripture with tradition, which appears either with the claim of great antiquity or great holiness. Concerning Valentinus and Basilides, who besides Marcion are the most prominent exponents of this movement, we read in Eusebius: “According to these teachers the Lord had entrusted knowledge (τὴν γνῶσιν) to James the Just, John, and Peter, who passed it on to the other disciples, and these in turn to the Seventy, among whom was Barnabas” (Seventh Book of *Hypotyposes* of Clement, cited in Eusebius, Church History II, 1). The aim of the Gnostic doctrine is to lead the soul into the sanctuary of divine wisdom, to let it partake of the highest Being, of the knowledge of the Absolute. It is to lead man, according to the example of Christ, to become deified. Gnosticism wishes to elucidate the revelation of Scripture, yes, more than that, it endeavors to proceed beyond it; all the minor and major problems which remain unanswered in the Scripture, supposedly find their solution here. Greek philosophy, the wisdom of Asia, and the Gospel combine themselves into a complete syncretism, as it were, to the most sublime joy of God and man. Added to this is the practice of a false asceticism, called illuminism, and at times certain cultic practices, which come directly from heathen mysteries or from Judaism.

This entire mystic-theological ferment naturally did not remain without its consequences. It produced a pseudo-literature, which did not hesitate to assume the pseudonym of an apostle in order to gain credence. A whole apocryphal literature came to light, and that with the help of certain Jewish-Christian sects. To be sure, the Gospels of the Hebrews, of the Ebionites, of the Egyptians, and of the Twelve—to mention only the most notable of them—have not come down to us directly; but it suffices to know the Protevangelium of James or the Gospel of Thomas, to see, to what untenable theories and legendary fabrications that conception of the truth could sink in its literary products; for in them there was no longer regard for any doctrinal presentation based on the Scriptures.

But even the errors of Gnosticism do not offer the Mariologist sufficient basis for supporting his thesis. Its historical premises are too isolated, and their origins are too suspect. Mariology is forced to wait until the 5th century, before the actual beginnings of the cult of Mary in the Church are encountered.

In the 5th century the unfortunate time begins, in which the Church could no longer eliminate the poison of heresy. On the one hand the conviction was gaining ground steadily that the apostolic tradition laid down in the canon of the Scriptures is not sufficient in itself: it has to be perfected and accommodated to philosophy, which it dare not contradict. On the other hand the central doctrine of the free grace of God in Christ Jesus was being erased more and more in favor of a legalistic doctrine of salvation. In the East the Neo-Platonic mysticism of deification spread farther than ever, and in the West the Church was unable even with the help of St. Augustine to break through with a pure doctrine of sin and grace. The mystery of grace, which is fundamental for both the person and the work of Christ, became the subject of discussion and revision on the part of a misguided and dissatisfied human reason (*ratio humana*). Thus certain Christological heresies, and particularly Pelagianism, are not only symptomatic signs of the times, but in spite of the decisions of the church councils, in spite of energetic defense against them (as by St. Augustine), they root themselves ever more deeply, gain a footing everywhere, and inflict wounds on still youthful Christian theology—which, hardly covered with a scar, can break open again at any time.

The Church of the West is faced by the world of Roman culture with its legalistic thinking and general view of the world, which not only bears the stamp of its own popular religion, but to which cults of oriental origin have contributed. In its efforts to assimilate this world, the Church proved that it was not in a position to bring about a complete transformation. Now that the Church has become the recognized, even the dominant state Church, it lacks the spirit of uncompromising testimony, which had inspired it in the time of persecution. In accommodating itself to the world, it lost the necessary determination to resist the world and to arm itself against the world. True, it still opposes the idols that were so dear to the people; it still opposes the heathen cults, all the customs so deeply ingrained in the life of the individual, but the struggle becomes too much for the Church. Ancient customs are not so quickly changed; neither in the individual, nor in the populace as a whole, unless a radical change in conviction has preceded. It is much simpler to make miracle-working saints out of gods and goddesses. And on the basis of a doctrinal view that went hand in hand with this development, the mother of God now soon took the place of the deities that protected the hearth, the rustic life, the springs and the woods. Is there not to this very day for every type of place, event and vocation a “Blessed Lady”: Our Lady of the sea, of the field, of the forest, etc.?

But it did not suffice to accommodate the customs and habits of the people and of social life to Christianity by a kind of conversion; the entire Greek and Latin mode of thinking had to be re-baptized and accommodated to Christianity. This might represent in some respects enrichment, a valuable contribution for the presentation of Christian doctrine. But the danger was equally great that this type of new knowledge might break off the point of the Gospel. It was a serious danger that theological investigations and formulations so often proceeded from philosophical ideas, from the logic and the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle.

Theology was too much concerned about the presentation of a logically arranged doctrinal system, which would combine faith and reason and satisfy all demands of the human intellect. The Word of God ceased to be supreme; henceforth it had to bow to the demands of reason and logic. The fully developed scholasticism of medieval times is the complete expression and at the same time the zenith of its development, and the genius of a Thomas Aquinas reared the greatest monument to its honor, which is in no wise inferior to the cathedrals of that time in the perfection of its architecture and in its glorification of man. (The promulgations of Marian doctrine on the part of modern popes are regularly based on the scholastics, particularly Thomas.)

6.

If we wish to understand thoroughly the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward Mary, we must pause at this point in its theological development. Unfortunately we cannot enter in upon every detail, but must content ourselves with a brief summary of its doctrinal position as it is established in its principal features in the Roman Church since the Council of Trent:

The similarity between the human nature and God consists in the faculty of reason. Reason knows God, and through the knowledge of a thing I receive a share in it. Thus there is a common link between the nature

that knows, the human nature, and the nature that is known, the divine nature. Sin has excluded man from the supernatural world; in the natural order of things he is still capable of good. It has been reserved for grace to give reason, i.e. nature (*physis*), access to the supernatural world again, and thus to lead it to perfection. Reason then represents anew an essential connection with God. The function of grace is to deify the soul and with it the entire human nature. Thus grace appears as the necessary *donum superadditum*, which enables man to find the way to God. With its help the good man arrives at his goal, God. Grace thus does nothing more than to utilize the natural good qualities of man, but places them into the service of the supernatural, and thus develops capabilities in man, which had hitherto remained intact, but also unproductive. Man therefore does not merely need to accept his salvation by faith, but must also cooperate in achieving it.

Such an optimistic view of the natural condition of man self-evidently brings it about that man is lulled into a sense of security in his relation to God. More than that: the ineffable mystery of the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus is accommodated to the laws of natural thinking and is determined by that logic of the Old Adam, in the background of which always lurks the deceptive promise of the Tempter: “Ye shall be as God.”

This legalistic religion, which brought its first fruits already in the Jewish-Christian and Gnostic sects, reaches its fullest development in the bosom of the Church itself. Man can now purchase his salvation. On the rungs of perfectionism and work-righteousness he ascends into the very sanctuary of God, seizing holiness by force; the tower of Babel is now finally erected. Of course, the Roman theologian will defend himself against the accusation that he is conceding to man the initiative in obtaining salvation. God is to remain the source and fountain of grace as before. But in practice he places the emphasis on the cooperation of man (*cooperatio humana*), as well as on the deification of the soul in the communion with God (*communio Dei*). What a clever and thoroughly elaborated way of arriving at a revelation, which unites reason and faith (*fides et ratio*) on the same plane to the satisfaction of God and man!

And here Mary appears as the masterpiece of this plan of salvation, as the perfect example of humanity deified by grace, as the perfect embodiment of the human race cooperating in its salvation, as the authentic guarantee for the glory and triumph of man, as the accomplishment of salvation through the Law. From the moment in which Mary gave her consent to the task imposed upon her by Gabriel’s announcement, she becomes the mediatrix of grace: Since then it is thanks to her and to her obedience that Christ could be given to the world as its Redeemer. Through and in Mary humanity participates actively in the work of its redemption. Even at the foot of the cross Mary still stands as coredeptrix, as the representative of humanity cooperating in its salvation. Yes, even in heaven, where Mary reigns and continues her rule, it is always and again humanity, which considers itself assured of its glorious merit as a result of its cooperation with Christ in the work of redemption, which it has earned in the person of Mary. *Thus Mary stands in the Roman Church as the glorious symbol of the victory of the human nature, which has become active through grace. She is truly the prototype of the Church itself and of its mission for the salvation of the world, the prototype of the Christian life of the baptized and of the holiness of the elect.*

7.

Since medieval times the cult of Mary has developed further and further. On the royal road, which the Roman doctrine of grace and salvation had paved for it, it advanced from one triumph to the other. Miraculous healings and attention-arresting apparitions follow in its wake, in a sense as the confirmation of this new revelation of the Marian way of salvation.

Viewed from a psychological standpoint the cult of Mary possessed all the requirements for human success. For some it is the mystery of virginal chastity and of supreme holiness—“it strengthens, it comforts, it inspires devoutness”—and for all it is the guarantee of understanding, love, and concern over against human frailty. Mary is a mother, and at the same time she is the mother of God, who at all times grants her a hearing.¹⁹

¹⁹ “Der Sohn wird seiner Mutter alles zugestehen, was er ihr zugestehen kann, soweit er nicht durch höhere Rücksichten daran gehindert ist.” (Josef Loosen S. J., “Zusammenhang des Dogmas von der leiblichen Aufnahme Mariens in den Himmel fait den übrigen Mariengeheimnissen” in: *Die leibliche Himmelfahrt Mariens, theologische Beiträge zum neuen Dogma im Dienste der*

Certainly, such a doctrine is “beautiful”; it is pleasing to human reason and satisfies the heart. But—always the same question! On what divine testimony is it based? This basis—the church fathers knew it very well—must in any case be present. St. Augustine writes, “All these heretics seek to gloss over their fictions with the pretext of the statement in the gospels, where the Lord says, ‘I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now’ . . . Since the Lord Himself has not revealed it, who of us would dare to say, It is this or that? Or if he would dare to say it, with what would he prove it? For who is so vain or so bold, that he, even when he utters something true, would without any divine testimony claim, that *that* is what the Lord wanted to say?”²⁰ In Tertullian we find the following passage, which could very well be directed to the Church of Rome: “Let the study of Hermogenes instruct us, that that (what he teaches) is in the Scriptures. If it is not written there, let him fear the woe which is pronounced on those who add or detract” (Rev. 22:18ff.).²¹ And John Chrysostom says, “When Abraham was asked to send Lazarus, he answered, ‘They have Moses and the prophets. . . If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.’ Christ lets him speak these words in order to indicate that according to His will the Scriptures are worthy of greater belief than the dead themselves, who rise to eternal life. But Paul places it above the angels of heaven, and that justly. For the angels are only ministers and servants, but the Scriptures were written, not by servants, but by the almighty God Himself.”²²

But where do we find the Scriptural basis for the mariology of the Roman Church? Some believe that they find it in Gen. 3:15, where God says to the serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Isa. 7:14 is also cited: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”—In the interpretation of these passages we agree with Rome to this extent, that we see in them prophecy of the birth of the Savior, His conception by a virgin, and the victory of man over Satan in and through Christ. But to derive the theses for mariolatry from them seems like a bold stroke, in which we have to deal with anything but theology.

For in Gen. 3:15 the term woman (הַאִשָּׁה) designates Eve, and not Mary, as the mariologists insist, cf. vv. 12, 13, and 16. The woman’s Seed, Christ, in the protevangelium is the descendant of Eve, the first woman, who introduced transgression. He (Hebrew: אֶבְרָם), not Eve (Vulgate: *ipsa*), shall bruise the head of the serpent. The seed of Jacob, in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed, Gen. 28:14, was not his immediate descendant, but a distant descendant, Christ. Isaiah 7:14 does not support Roman mariology either, although here the miraculous birth of Christ by a virgin is prophesied most distinctly. Here the prophet is giving the dynasty of David the sign of divine judgment, that not it, but the untouched, unknown virgin shall bear the Messiah. By a miracle of God the prophecy of judgment is changed into a prophecy of grace. The emphasis shifts plainly also from the virgin, who is only God’s maid, to Immanuel, the God-with-us, cf. Isaiah 8:8, 10.

The Roman theologians also appeal to Luke 1:28, which reads: “And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee,” in order to justify at least the Roman doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary. But with the best of good intentions we cannot find any support for that doctrine here. In that case we should have to attribute to Stephen also an immaculate conception, for of him it is said Acts 6:8: “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.”²³

Seelsorge, herausgegeben von Professoren der Philos.-Theol. Hochschule St. Georgen, Frankfurt a.M.; S. 75; Verlag Josef Knecht, Frankfurt, 1950.)

²⁰ *loc. cit.* 1878: *Des Hl. Aurelius Augustinus Erörterungen zum Johannesevangelium (Homilien)*, Bd VI, S. 441 u. 443.

²¹ *Tertullians sämtliche Schriften, aus dem Lateinischen übersetzt, II. gegen Hermogenes, Cap. 22. Verlag DuMont-Schauberg, Köln 1882.* The Latin wording (CSEL Vol. 47, *Adversus Hermogenem, Cap. 22, p. 151, 17–19*) is the following: “*scriptura esse doceat Hermogenis officina, si non est scriptura, timeat vae illud adicientibus aut detrahentibus destinatum.*”—In spite of a confessional and traditional principle, which they maintained together with their emphasis on the Scriptures, all the church fathers would have considered Rome’s Tridentine and Vatican pronouncements as rank heresies, as these testimonies clearly indicate.

²² See footnote 16: “*Des hl. Kirchenvaters Joh. Chrysostomus Kom-mentar zum Brief St. Pauli an die Galater, S. 38.*”

²³ To preserve the sense of the French original as well as the line of thought of the author, these words should be quoted literally from the original Greek: “And Stephen, full of grace (χάριτος) and power . . .”

It is perfectly clear that the Catholic theologian must first inject his own meaning into the sacred text before he can use it to support his thesis. And it is certainly not proper for the Roman church to do that; in doing so the Roman church follows the principle, that the Scriptures are her property; that it is she who has given the Scriptures their present form, that she is the guardian of the Scriptures and can determine their text in the confident assurance of her own infallibility. The Roman Church does not require that its doctrine agree with the Scriptures, for although revelation is concluded, she, the Church, is herself the real revelation. She needs only to become fully conscious of herself and of her treasures to render a new dogma true, and that by virtue of her continual revelation, which consists in this, that man, who has the mastery over God, seeks to gain control of the divine mystery, in order to accommodate it to his own rules of thinking.

8.

What a distance separates us here from the apostolic tradition! What separates Roman catholicism from Buddhism or from Mohammedanism, appears rather insignificant in comparison with the great gulf between it and the Christianity of the Gospel, the message of salvation by grace, for Christ's sake, through the gift of faith.

The doctrine of the Apostles is the very opposite of all legalism. It is something entirely different. First of all it is not human doctrine, but the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, who testifies of the truth revealed in Jesus Christ (John 15:26). If God Himself does not give us faith and the Holy Ghost does not enlighten us, this doctrine will always be disappointing, yes, offensive to the corrupt reason of the old man; through this foolish Gospel, however, the Holy Ghost kindles a new divine light in the heart.

Let us hear what the Apostle Paul says to this: "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men... For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God... The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 1, 2).

Here there is no room for the construction of a theology according to the norms of philosophy and the customary rules of human thinking. According to the express words of the Holy Ghost there remains no initiative for man; no possibility is left open to him, to contribute something to his salvation and to the work of redemption. Here everything is pure compassion and a free gift, everything is resurrection in Jesus Christ and not an attempt of man to save his nature which is dead already. Nothing, whether in man or on man, can reconcile him to God. But what is impossible to man is possible to God. In Jesus Christ it has been accomplished; in Him alone we find forgiveness through faith. Man can do nothing here.

Let us hear God's clear and lucid Word further: "For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one... Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God... For there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his

grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3).²⁴

That original sin and death have come upon all men, therefore also upon Mary, St. Paul testifies Rom. 5:17: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

Grace and works are contrasted very sharply in Rom. 11:6: ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐκέτι γίνεται χάρις. Furthermore it is perfectly evident from the entire context of Romans 9 to 11, that also the chosen vessel of the mercy of God, Mary, together with all believers is elect only in Christ. The peculiar position that Mary occupies in the history of salvation is a position of grace for her Son’s sake. God has also concluded (συνέκλεισεν) her in unbelief, that he might have mercy on her as on all (Rom 11:32). Here one could call attention to the many expressions ἐν Χριστῷ, which occur so frequently in Pauline epistles. This is particularly impressive in II Corinthians 5:17–21 and in the entire Epistle to the Ephesians. Roman exegesis knows this full well. But what does this decisive expression mean besides the security of the believer, whose life has become entirely new, in that Christ, who has accomplished salvation for him, that Christ for us (*pro nobis*), who also cried out for Mary His “It is finished.” Christ leads Mary, as He does every Christian, not to, but under His cross. The preposition (παρὰ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ) in John 19:25 already in its very brevity excludes any cooperation of the mother in the work of redemption.

Of the single, unique position of the Son as mediator between sinful mankind and the Father the repeated ἐφ’ ἅπαξ of the Epistle to the Hebrews bears witness. Besides, this is stated in so many words in the following passages of God’s infallible Word: “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (I Timothy 2:5–6). “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” (I John 2:1–2). “But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:24–25). “For Christ is ... entered ... into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24). “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34).

In view of the clarity of this divine witness the warnings expressed in the Epistle to the Galatians apply to the Roman mariologists: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). We need to add nothing to the clear and emphatic words of the Apostle. Where do we find room here, be it ever so little, for the self-glorification of man or his cooperation in his salvation to assert itself? Not only is there none, but seeking it is most decidedly improper. With that the whole system of mariology is rejected by the Gospel and collapses. Besides, it would be impossible to account for the fact, if Mary actually were to play the role in the work of salvation, which the Roman doctrine ascribes to her, that the called heralds of salvation, the apostles, maintain complete silence concerning so important a subject.

Furthermore, the reality of a position and an activity such as the Roman Catholic Church ascribes to Mary would require the inclusion of her in the bosom of the Holy Trinity. That was—according to Newman—already the dream of the Melchites, the representatives of the Egyptian churches at the 7th ecumenical council at Nicea in 787 A.D., who taught that there were three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Virgin, and the Messiah. That would indeed be the climax of satanic blasphemy.

9.

²⁴ Luther’s translation “*ohne des Gesetzes Werke, allein durch den Glauben*” must stand. For if one of two ways that come into consideration is eliminated, the other *alone* remains. Compare also Luther’s own words in his “*Sendbrief rom Dolmetschen*,” 1530.

What a solemn warning for all churches and for every individual church member lies in this tragedy of a church, which departs from the Word of the Scriptures, in order to be the rule and norm of faith itself, of a church, which wishes to honor Mary, but with Mary will not submit to the Word of the Lord and say with her, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy Word!”

What an appeal to all Christians to continue more than ever in the sure Word of God and with it to arm themselves against all error, mindful of the warnings and the curse of the Apostle: “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lust shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Tim. 4:3–4). “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14). “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

Let us sing a hymn of humble thanks to God for the priceless gift of true faith, which is founded only and alone on God’s Word, the fountain of life. Only let us guard against any Pharisaism in giving thanks! Let us not forget in our joy, that we—both as individuals and as a church body—shoulder a responsibility in respect to this error, into which millions who call themselves Christians have been drawn.

In our Lutheran circles the complaint is often heard from official sources that we, as the church of the Gospel, are not always sufficiently aware of the causes that led to the Lutheran reformation of the church. “If the testimony of Luther and of our fathers had not been stronger than our testimony often is today, what then would have become of the work of the reformation? As praiseworthy as our respect for the bound Roman consciences may be in itself—does it not often serve as a cloak to hide indifference to the truth and a lack of love toward our brethren? Are we always conscious of the fact that the Roman Church has as yet experienced no reformation, and that in her midst there are thousands of souls, who are thirsting for the pure Gospel and are only waiting for a sign, to find their freedom? Do our churches furnish this sign for their seeking eyes? *Ecclesiae semper reformandae sunt!* On the other hand, is that true love, with pious indignation to refuse to cast the first stone upon an adulterous church? Or does this attitude arise from the fact that the ‘sister churches’ are conscious of being in the same condemnation?” Such and similar admonitions are heard in our circles, and we cannot ignore them lightheartedly.

The anthropocentric doctrinal position, as we have exposed it in the cult of Mary in the Roman Church, is capable of assuming the most varied forms, when it is a matter of usurping Christ’s throne. In the future our churches too will be preserved from this constantly threatening danger, if they remain truly repentant, in holy awe before the holy demands of God gaze into the open heavens of His grace, and always faithfully follow the advice of Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechesis 16, No. 2): “The Holy Ghost Himself has spoken in the Scriptures. What He has said must be taught; and let us not dare to teach something, which He has not spoken.”