

MARY AND THE HOLY TRINITY

by Raymond G. Munroe, Elder
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Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Was St. Peter not speaking truthfully in Acts 4.12? The following news story appeared in Gannett Suburban Newspapers on August 25, 1997:

CHRISTIANS DEBATE HIGHER STATUS FOR MARY

By Gary Stern

No one doubts that Christian devotion to the Virgin Mary has intensified through the 20th century, with millions continuing to make pilgrimages every year to sites where visions of the mother of Jesus have been reported.

But the idea that a swelling Marian movement within the Roman Catholic Church is asking for a radical redefinition of Mary's status has many within the Christian world -- all devotees of Mary and many, themselves, Roman Catholic -- in a theological tizzy.

A petition drive started in 1993 by a lay theologian at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, is asking Pope John Paul II to use the power of papal infallibility to recognize Mary as "Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces and Advocate for the People of God."

What does this mean?

The theologian, Mark Miravalle, says the petition drive just wants the Vatican to recognize in the strongest way possible Mary's role as the mother of Jesus Christ. He says Mary would be a "Co-Redeemer" in the sense that she was willing to give birth to the Redeemer.

"As Mother Teresa has said, 'Mary gave Jesus his body, and his body redeemed us,'" Miravalle said.

But a cover story in today's edition of Newsweek magazine says the ultimate goals of the petition drive reach to another level. The magazine reports that the petition signatories actually want Mary's status elevated to something like that of Christ -- a change that would, in effect, make Mary part of a "Holy Quartet" supplanting the Holy Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Word of this supposed effort to alter a guiding precept of Christianity has spread fast, dumbfounding many who have spent their lives studying Christ's word and the meaning of the Holy Trinity.

"That is quite terribly wrong, a derogatory idea," said the Rev. Louis Mazza, pastor of Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church in Sleepy Hollow. "It has always been clear that Mary is not God. This has provoked a lot of discussion, but it is only confusing and is certainly erroneous."

The Rev. William Hurst, pastor of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in White Plains, said the change would be impossible for Protestants to comprehend.

"For Lutherans, it's always been that it was Christ alone who was crucified," Hurst said. "Mary looked up at her Lord and ours. She was part of the story, but the core of the matter is that the only one who saves is Christ."

Talk of elevating Mary's status within the Roman Catholic Church has come up periodically throughout the church's history but was apparently put to rest by the Vatican II Council during the 1960s. Vatican II emphasized Mary's roles as "advocate, helper, benefactress, mediatrix" but said they did nothing to change Christ's role as sole Redeemer.

"She has a role, but it is subordinate," said Sister Joan McIver, an Ursuline nun and theologian. "There are people with great devotion to Mary, but this is something the church is not going to change."

Miravalle, a 39-year-old theologian at Franciscan University, said his petition drive is not aiming to have Mary elevated to Godlike status. He said that all he wants, and all the 4.5 million petitioners so far want, is for the pope to fully embrace a cherished belief, that Mary humbly chose to be Christ's mother.

"Mary's participation with Jesus never infers she should be placed on a level with Jesus," Miravalle said. "We're not seeking any new doctrine, not creating a new belief for the faithful. We just want existing church doctrine raised to the level of dogma, the clearest articulation attainable."

The Rev. Joseph Koterski, a Jesuit priest and philosophy professor at Fordham University in the Bronx, knows Miravalle personally and said Miravalle's goals are what he claims them to be.

"He is not proposing any change in the Christian doctrine of God," Koterski said. "What he is urging is for the pope and the church to recognize by an official title the importance of Mary's role in the Redemption. Most of the Marian doctrines in the whole course of the church's history are in some way or another about the nature of Christ."

But Newsweek's religion editor, Kenneth L. Woodward, who wrote the Mary article, said Miravalle and his followers see a much deeper meaning for "Co-Redeemer" as it would be applied to Mary. He said the titles sought for Mary would have her granting all graces that flow from the death of Christ and bringing prayers from the faithful to Christ.

Woodward, who lives in Briarcliff Manor, said he used "Holy Quartet" as a metaphor because Miravalle's plans for Mary's status would "seem to elevate her into the innermost lives of the Godhead."

Woodward also said literature and videos produced by Miravalle's followers show that much of their work is based on private revelations they claim to have had of Mary -- visions not accepted by the church. He said that some claim Mary herself is asking for titles from the church.

"No pious Catholic is going to think of Mary as a woman demanding titles for herself," Woodward said.

Sally Cunneen, author of "In Search of Mary" and a West Nyack resident, said it sounded to her as if a conservative Catholic movement was trying to revive a 19th century idea, one that emphasizes papal power above all else.

"What angers me is that this could turn people against Mary," Cunneen said. "Mary has nothing to do with linguistic definitions. What makes her significant is that she bore a living child. Her emphasis was how we serve God. She wouldn't approve of all this."

The Newsweek article cited Cardinal John J. O'Connor, archbishop of New York, as a supporter of Miravalle's petition drive. But O'Connor spokesman Joseph Zwilling said there was no way O'Connor would support the appearance of raising Mary's status to that of Christ.

In a February 1994 letter to Miravalle, O'Connor wrote that Miravalle's goals were theologically sound but that the church would have to distinguish between "Mary's unique association with the Redemption and the Redemptive power exercised by Christ alone."

"I don't think anybody is advocating a Holy Quartet," Zwilling said.

The spokespersons [spokespeople?] for Roman Catholics state, in one document, that "The co-redemptive role of the Mother of Jesus as Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of all graces, and Advocate for the people of God is already contained in the official and authoritative teachings of the Church's Magisterium. Now, at the summit of the Marian era, what remains is the final proclamation by the Church of this final Marian doctrine as Christian dogma revealed by God."

In this same document they cite as a rationale the words of St. Paul in Heb. 10:10: "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". "Once for all"? Is Jesus' exclamation "It is finished:" in John 19:30 then ignored as well? Then there appears the following two statements.

"It is important to note that the prefix "co-" in the title Co-Redemptrix does not mean "equal to", but rather "with", coming from the Latin word, cum. The Marian title Co-Redemptrix never places Mary on a level of equality with her divine Son, Jesus Christ. Rather it refers to Mary's unique human participation, which is completely secondary and subordinate to the redeeming role of Jesus, who alone is true God and true Man."

"Unfortunately, there are those who unthinkingly reject this Marian title, believing that it bestows too great an honour on Mary. Instead of clarifying the title ('Co' not meaning 'equal to', but rather 'with'), they reject a title that has adorned Mary since the fourteenth century and has been supported by theologians and popes since that time. Jesus is the sole Redeemer of humanity (Timothy 2:5), but, as Pope Pius XII says: Mary "offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father together with the holocaust of her maternal rights and her motherly love like a new Eve for all children of Adam" (Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, 1943) and as the new Eve she is "the sublime associate of our Redeemer" (Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1950)."

I don't know which dictionary supports the contention denying that "co-" from the Latin "cum" in "Co-Redemptrix" and "Co-Mediatrix" means "equal to" but rather "with". Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines "co-", 1. a shortened form of cum-, meaning: (a) together, with, as in co-operation; (b) joint, as in co-owner; (c) equally, as in coextensive. Then why not "cum Redemptrix"? This is obfuscation, and it goes on and on. Numerous passages are cited and quoted but none actually support the claims quoted above. Two verses from John 19 are used in such a manner.

26: When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27: Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

John Gill's Expositor has been described as "...the largest, most detailed commentary ever written on the Bible." His notes may be instructive here [emphasis added].

"V. 26. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, &c...] Standing near him, within the reach of his voice, as well as sight, he took notice of her, and showed a concern for her temporal, as well as for her eternal good: and the disciple standing by; either by his cross, his mother, or both: whom he loved: meaning John, the writer of this Gospel, who for modesty's sake often describes

himself in this manner; he being distinguished by Christ from the rest, by some peculiar marks of affection as man; though as God, and as the Redeemer, he loved his disciples alike, as he does all his true and faithful followers: he saith unto his mother, woman, behold thy son; meaning not himself, but the disciple, who was her son, not by nature, nor adoption; but who would show himself as a son, by his filial affection for, care of, honour and respect unto her. Christ calls her not mother, but woman; not out of disrespect to her, or as ashamed of her; but partly that he might not raise, or add strength to her passions, by a tenderness of speaking; and partly to conceal her from the mob, and lest she should be exposed to their rude insults; as also to let her know that all natural relation was now ceasing between them; though this is a title he sometimes used to give her before."

"Ver. 27. Then saith he to the disciple, &c...] The same disciple John: behold thy mother; take care of her, and provide for her, as if she was thine own mother: this shows the meanness of Christ, who had nothing to leave her, though Lord of all; it is very probable that Joseph was dead, and Mary now a widow; and whereas Christ had taken care of her, and maintained her hitherto, he now, in his dying moments, commits her to the care of this disciple; which is an instance of his humanity, and of his regard to every duty; and this in particular, of honouring parents, and providing for them in distress, and old age:..."

Reminds one of the "Right to Privacy" discovered somehow by the U.S. Supreme Court between the lines in the Constitution. Startling, isn't it, that a pope, while claiming to be the Vicar of Christ on earth by apostolic succession from Peter, places someone such as Mary virtually in the stead of Christ and, in fact, between us and Christ! The popes have claimed infallibility since 1870. I guess the old adage stands here: "The king can do no wrong."

Acts 4:12 [Peter] Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Luke 12: 8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: Luke 12: 9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

The Roman Catholics have a great number of web pages on the Internet, to the extent of being mind-boggling! However, by far the greatest stress is placed upon Mary and then their pope. Statements, encyclicals and dogmas of numerous popes are cited to support the Co-Redemptrix and Co-Mediatrix position. I have seen virtually nothing concerning or relating to Jesus Christ except as He+ relates to Mary!

Question: what is the opposite (antonym) of prochrist?

Soli Deo gloria!