

## **I Believe in the Virgin Mary.**

A Biblical Defence of the Reputation of the Mother of Christ.

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What a man believes about the mother of my Lord is a serious issue. It is serious because it affects his view of the Saviour Himself, and his view of faith and worship. These are fundamental and practical issues and cannot be treated lightly.

Of course, there are many differing views of Mary. Some think very little of her. Others think too highly of her and give her a place that she does not deserve. Some denigrate her. Others venerate her. But what are we to think?

J. G. Machen (Professor of [New Testament](#) at [Princeton Seminary](#) 1906-1929) : “We are indeed as far as possible from accepting the Roman Catholic picture of Mary as the Queen of Heaven. But we also think that Protestants, in their reaction against Mariolatrous excesses, have failed to do justice to Jesus’ mother.”

While many prefer a Mary of their own imagination, the Scriptures tell us about the true Mary. They tell us what she was and how she lived, and give Christians, not a redeemer in her, but an example.

Belief in the Virgin Mary does not imply faith in her for salvation but the acceptance of the Biblical account of her as the only true and Divinely-Inspired account. And it is not heretical to say that Christians should follow her. In so far as holy women and holy men followed Christ they are to be followed. Paul shows us this so clearly in Hebrews 13. V.7+8 say : “Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

Let me say then that I believe in the Virgin Mary – the Mary of the Bible. I believe that God’s view of her should be our view of her and we should distinguish at all times between the true and the counterfeit. We can only do that by the Scriptures.

On an Islamic website I read the following : “No faith or holy book has honoured the Virgin Mary as does Islam and the holy Quran, not even the Bible.”

But the Bible is the Word of the God who cannot lie, and is “profitable for doctrine.” We do not need the Quran anymore than we need the tradition of Rome to tell us what we are to believe.

What the Bible teaches about the reputation of the Virgin Mary:

### **The Declaration of the Doctrine.**

### **First, a person's reputation is of the utmost importance.**

It is more valuable than all the wealth of the world. As Solomon declared in Proverbs 22:1: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches..."

The person whose reputation we are dealing with tonight died many centuries ago. But this is no reason to speak ill of her or treat her history as unimportant. Mary was chosen by God because of her reputation. Her character is important therefore, and we must realise that to treat it lightly is to offend against Him, for He makes His choices not that we might be indifferent or careless but that, as Scripture says, "No flesh should glory in His Presence."

The Lord made Mary what she was – a holy woman. It ill becomes us to think that what God has done is no longer important because it is in the past. So Mary's reputation is important. It is especially important in relation to the Gospel, as we shall see.

### **Second, let's look at what God's Word actually says about her reputation.**

Isaiah 7:14: "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

The Hebrew word for "virgin" in this text is "almah", which means "damsel." The Hebrew for "virgin" (in our technical sense) is "bethulah." Its first occurrence is Genesis 24:16. That verse shows us that while every "bethulah" is an "almah", not every "almah" is a "bethulah."

Having said that, this prophecy does not lose its Messianic character. Turn with me now to Matthew 1:23. The Greek word for "virgin" is "parthenos" which means a *virgin* in the technical sense. That settles the meaning of the word in Isaiah 7:14. The Holy Spirit was very careful to guard the reputation of Mary in the Scriptures.

### **But these are not the only two texts which tell us what Mary was. Matthew 1:18.**

Her reputation is guarded by his telling us that she was expectant before she and Joseph "came together" and that the conception was supernatural – "She was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

It is clear what the expression "before they came together" means (1 Cor.7:5: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and *come together again*, that Satan tempt you not for your [incontinency](#)." Acts 2:1: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place").

Mary and Joseph had not set up home together. They were not co-habiting.

They had no intimate knowledge of each-other.

**Matthew 1:20: “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.”**

The angelic testimony to fulfilled prophecy, V.22: “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...”

**Matthew 1:25.**

Joseph had no knowledge of Mary until after Christ was born. Going back to Matthew 1:19, in Joseph’s reaction to the news of Mary’s pregnancy. He knew that he was not the father of the child. That emphasises what goes before, that the conception was supernatural, and if the conception was supernatural then Mary was a virgin.

**In Luke 1, which is, chronologically, before Matthew 1 the virginity of Mary is clearly taught.**

Luke 1:27. Twice the word “virgin” is used - “To a [virgin](#) espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.”

**Luke 1:34.**

Mary was conscious of her virginity and had she lied then the angel would have rebuked her - “Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”

**So we have a corroborated testimony in Scripture to the reputation of Mary.**

Therefore I believe in the reputation of the Virgin Mary because I am compelled to believe in it. It is proven beyond dispute in the Word of the God who cannot lie. If the whole Bible is Inspired then I can believe all that it says. I have no reason to doubt any Scripture.

### **The Doctrine Denied.**

**While the testimony of the Bible to the reputation of the Virgin Mary is very clear, it is denied and distorted by many.**

Rome has perpetuated the idea of “the perpetual virginity of Mary” for a long time. The doctrine was first stated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Chalcedon in 553. Vatican II continued the myth and declared her “the glorious ever Virgin Mary” and Roman teachers have made belief in her perpetual virginity necessary to salvation. Simon of Cascia stated: “Mary was a Virgin before, during and after

the birth of Jesus. Those who do not believe this will be damned.”

Popery finds support for her notion in the writings of Islam. The following is a statement by Fr Ladis J. Cizik : “In the Koran, Mary is described as virgin, ever virgin. The Islamic belief in the virginity of Mary puts to shame the heretical beliefs of those who call themselves Christian while denying the perpetual virginity of Mary.”

This falsehood is based on another – the idea of celibacy. Vatican II Optatum Totus states, “Virginal consecration to Christ is of greater excellence than Christian marriage.”

**But the perpetual virginity of Mary is an idea which has no foundation in the Bible.**

The New Testament Church never believed in it. Consider Matthew 1:24+25. The word “until” implies that Mary and Joseph had relations after Christ was born.

Luke 2:7. The word “firstborn” implies that Mary had other children. The Bible actually says that Christ had brothers, and sisters - Acts 1:14, Matthew 13:54 +56, Mark 6:3. He had four brothers and at least two sisters (half-brothers and half-sisters – same mother but not the same father). We are told the names of His brothers – James, Joses, Simon, Judas.

**In order to refute what the Bible says, its critics say that the word for “brethren” in these verses really means “cousins.”**

As a matter of fact, the word for “brethren” is “adelphos” in the Greek. The word for “cousins” is “anepsios.” So everything in the Word of God is against the teaching of the perpetual virginity of Mary and we are to take this very seriously!

**History shows that the doctrine comes from paganism.**

In Scandinavia, the priestesses of Freya were bound to perpetual virginity. In Athens, there were virgins maintained at public expense who were pledged to celibacy. In Peru “the virgins of the sun” were dedicated to the service of the deity. They were taken from their homes at an early age and introduced into a kind of convent.

**So-called Protestant churches, ecumenical groupings and cults even go further than popery.**

Lois Wilson, one of the seven presidents of the World Council of Churches (of which COCBI is a member) stated this - “In my view, the fact of Mary’s virginity has nothing to do with her sexual behaviour.”

What else has it to do with?

The Cost of Conscience pressure group surveyed 2000 Anglican clergy in 2002. Only 3 in 10 women priests accepted the Virgin Birth, only 6 in 10 male priests. Where's the discipline? Why aren't they made to recant or why aren't they ex-communicated.

**At least Roman Catholics, though they accept the idea of perpetual virginity, acknowledge the truth of the Virgin Birth. Certain Protestants wouldn't do this. They are further from the truth.**

Like the German theologian P. Soltan who said, "Whoever makes the demand that an evangelical Christian shall believe in the words "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary", wittingly constitutes himself a sharer in a sin against the Holy Spirit of the true Gospel as transmitted to us by the Apostles and their school in the Apostolic Age.'

In 1998, a poll of 7441 Protestant clergy in the U.S. showed a wide variation in belief. The following ministers did not believe in the virgin birth : American Lutherans – 19%; American Baptist – 34%; Episcopalians – 44%; Presbyterians - 49% Methodists – 60%.

**Far worse than offensive to Mary, this is blasphemy against God, for it presents us with a Christ who is not Virgin-born.**

If His conception and birth were natural, rather than supernatural, then He is a man just like any other, and therefore in need of salvation Himself!