# Marian Doctrine and Devotion

## Chapter 7

Marian devotions are those prayers and acts undertaken to honor Mary and with the intent of seeking her intercession with her Son, Jesus, and his Father. Devotion to the Virgin Mary does not, however, amount to worship - which is reserved for God alone. Catholics view Mary as subordinate to Christ, but uniquely so, in that she is seen as above all other creatures. In 787 the Second Council of Nicaea affirmed a three-level hierarchy of *latria*, *hyperdulia* and *dulia* that applies to God, the Virgin Mary and then to the other saints.

The Roman Catholic Church holds many teachings associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Four of these specific doctrines have been raised to the level of dogma, meaning in technical terms that they must be held by the faithful as essential to participation as Roman Catholics. The four Marian dogmas have been defined by the magisterium over the course of Christian history, using both Scripture and Sacred Tradition, the two elements of the one source of Revelation, as evidence for these proclamations. These four dogmas are: Mary the Mother of God, Perpetual Virginity of Mary, The Immaculate Conception, and The Assumption of Mary into Heaven. The twentieth-century has seen a significant drive to establish a fifth and final Dogma- Mary as Co-Redemptrix.

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## Chapter 7

### Perpetual virginity:

This means virginity before, during, and after the birth of Jesus. The oldest formula for that is aeiparthenos, ever virgin. The expression "brothers and sisters of Jesus" found even in the Gospels rests on the breadth of meaning of the Hebrew words for brother and sister. For that matter, our English words are often used very broadly in fraternities and sororities. Given the linguistic unclarity, we must depend on the Magisterium of the Church.

As to the first element, virginity in conceiving Jesus, even R. Brown, in The Virginal Conception & Bodily Resurrection of Jesus (Paulist, 1973) admits on p. 31. n. 37: "It is lucidly clear that Matthew believed in Mary's bodily virginity before the birth of Jesus (1:25). It is hard to prove the case for Luke; but 3:23 indicates that Luke did not think Joseph begot Jesus after the angel's annunciation to Mary." Now if something is lucidly clear in the Gospel, there should be no doubt if one accepts inspiration and therefore inerrancy. Yet Brown, inconsistently, concludes on p. 66: "My judgment, in conclusion, is that the totality of the scientifically controllable evidence leaves an

Even Meier, so inclined to deny perpetual virginity, admits (pp. 340-41) that there is a strong rabbinic tradition that Moses, after his first contact with God, refrained from knowing his wife. This first appears in Philo, is taken up the by rabbis. Therefore, if Moses with only an external contact with God did that way, what of Our Lady who was filled with the divine presence at the conception of Jesus, and carried divinity itself within her for nine months?

Actually, Luther himself and Calvin, as Meier admits on p. 319 of his book, accepted Our Lady's perpetual virginity. Why then does Meier argue so strongly against it?

Really, Protestants should not, if they were logical, appeal to Scripture at all for anything—for they have no means whatsoever of determining which books are inspired. Luther thought that if a book preached justification by faith strongly, it was inspired, otherwise not. But sadly, he never proved that was the standard—he, or I could write such a book, and it would not be inspired. And many books of Scripture do not even mention justification by faith. Also sadly: Luther did not know what St. Paul meant by the word faith—on that Cf. the standard Protestant reference work, Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplement, p. 333.

<center>End</center>

unresolved problem." [italics his in both quotes]. Part of his problem would seem to be his absolute belief in ignorance in Jesus: (p. 46, italics his) "However, if Joseph and Mary knew that their son had no human father but was begotten of God's holy spirit, if it had been revealed to them from the start that the child was to be the Messiah, and if they had not kept this secret from Jesus, how can he not have affirmed that he was the Messiah or that he was the unique Son of God?"

a)**Creed of St. Epiphanius (DS 44):** "We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, that is, was born perfectly from holy Mary, the ever virgin [aeiparthenos]." Same wording is found in the Athanasian Creed: DS 46.

b) **Ecumenical Council of Constantinople II. Canon 2:** "If anyone does not confess that there were two nativities of the Word of God, one before the ages... the other in the last days... who came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the holy, glorious ever virgin Mother of God Mary, and was born of her, let him be anathema."

c) **Lateran Council of 649 AD (DS 503):** It as not ecumenical, but the Pope was present and approving, and the teaching was given under anathema, so it is equivalent to that of a general council. Vatican II in Lumen Gentium (LG) 57 referred to it in a note. Lateran Council said: "If anyone does not in accord with the Holy Fathers acknowledge the holy and ever virgin and immaculate Mary as really and truly the Mother of God, inasmuch as she, in the fullness of time, and without seed, conceived by the Holy Spirit, God the Word Himself, who before all time was born of God the Father, and without loss of integrity brought Him forth, and after His birth preserved her virginity inviolate, let him be condemned."

d) **Vatican II. LG 57:** "... when the Mother of God showed her first born who did not diminish but consecrated her virginal integrity , to the shepherds and the Magi."

e) **John Paul II, General Audience of Jan. 28, 1988:** "Mary was therefore a virgin before the birth of Jesus and she remained a virgin in giving birth and after the birth. That is the truth presented by the New Testament texts and which was expressed both by the Fifth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 553 [DS 422] which speaks of Mary as 'ever virgin' and by the Lateran Council in 649 [DS 503] which teaches that 'the Mother of God... Mary... conceived (her Son) through the power of the Holy Spirit without human intervention, and in giving birth to him her virginity remained in-corrupted and even after the birth her virginity remained intact."

**Comments:**

1) There are many other magisterium texts, chiefly: DS 299, 368, 491, 547, 571, 619, 681, 801, 852, 1400, 1425, 1880.

2) There was some hesitation among the early Fathers on virginity in and after birth. This is not strange, given the gradual clarification of doctrine over the centuries. For an account , see Marian Studies, VII, 1956.

3) Some would wish to say her virginity is only a theologoumenon, that is, it was spiritual and symbolic but not physical. However, the magisterium excludes this. The Lateran Council, cited above, speaks of her conceiving without seed, and bringing Him forth without loss of integrity. Vatican II also speaks of integrity. Pope Leo the Great, in his Tome to Flavian (DS 291) said: "She brought Him forth without the loss of virginity even as she conceived Him without its loss." The General Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD (cited from Mansi, 7, 452) taught: "... as was fitting for God, He sealed her womb," Cf. also St. Ambrose, De institutione virginis 8. 52. (In PL 16. 320 and RJ or Jurgens 1327).

**Brothers and Sisters of Jesus**

Mt. 13. 55 and Mk 6. 3 name the following as brothers of Jesus: James, Joseph (Joses—the manuscripts vary on the spelling), Simon and Judas.

But Mt 27. 56 says at the cross were Mary the mother of James and Joseph. Mark 15, 40 says Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses was there.

So, although the argument is by no means conclusive, it seems likely that the first two, James and Joseph (Joses) had a mother other than the Mother of Jesus.

Thus we have an indication that the term brother was used for those who were not sons of Mary the Mother of Jesus. So the same easily could be the case with the other two, Simon and Judas.

More important, if Mary had other natural sons and daughters too at the time of the cross, it would be strange for Jesus to ask John to take care of her. Especially, James the "brother of the Lord" was alive in 49 AD (Gal 1:19). He should have taken care of her.

Lot, who was the nephew of Abraham (cf. Gen 11. 27-31) is called his brother in Gen 13. 8 and 14. 14-16.

The Hebrew and Aramaic ah was used for various types of relations: Cf. Michael Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat-Gan, Israel, 1990, p. 45). Hebrew had no word for cousin. They could say

severe enough in morality—he formed his own subsect; (3) Meier also suggests that two passages of St. Irenaeus might imply a denial of virginity—in one Irenaeus works out in detail the parallel between Adam and Christ, for the sake of his favorite "recapitulation" theology; in the other, Irenaeus develops the New Eve theme.—It is hard to see any hint of a denial of virginity in these passages. Even Meier admits the texts are not probative; (4) Helvidius in the 4th century.—But these few texts are little compared to the extensive Patristic support of perpetual virginity. Cf. Marian Studies , VIII, 1956, pp. 47-93. In his summary of conclusions, pp. 331-32, Meier does not even mention these early writers.

Objection 6: Meier, p. 331, says we have the criterion of multiple attestation", namely, Paul, Mark, John, Josephus and perhaps Luke speak of the brothers of Jesus.

Reply 6: He is begging the question. He has not proved that any of them mean true sibling by brother. Meier adds that the natural sense of brother is sibling—but we have shown in reply 2 above that it need not be so. He also says that there is no clear case in the NT where brother means anything but true brother or half-brother. Again he is begging the question: he has not shown that even one of the texts has to mean sibling.

Conclusion: Meier himself admits, on p. 331, that "all of these arguments even when taken together cannot produce absolute certitude." We add: In Mk 3:20-21 his relatives go out to get Him—younger brothers would not have done it in that culture—and He was the firstborn.—And at age 12 in Temple, if there were younger brothers, they would have been along—women did not have to go. So she would have stayed home with the younger ones.

So we can see that there are no solid evidences in Scripture that Our Lady had other children. We have just answered all claims. But the decisive reason is the teaching of the Church. The most ancient creeds all call her aei-parthenos = "Ever-virgin".

Meier seems to have an axe to grind. In his long CBQ article, 1992, pp. 1-28, he says on the last page that we must ask whether the hierarchy of truths should not let us accept Protestants into the Catholic Church without asking them to believe in Our Lady's perpetual virginity. There is a hierarchy of truths, in that some are more basic than others. But this does not at all mean we can countenance denial of even one doctrine taught repeatedly by the Ordinary Magisterium and the most ancient Creeds—and therefore infallible. Really, if some Protestants seemed to enter the Church, but did not accept the teaching authority, they would not be really Catholics, even if they accepted all but one of our teachings. That authority if really accepted leads them to accept all, not all minus one.

**Until:** Most ancient words have a broad span of possible meanings. Sometimes the word for until leaves room for a change after the time point indicated. However not nearly always. In Dt. 34:6 Moses was buried, "and to this day no one knows where the grave is." That was true in the day of the writer of Dt—it is still true even today. In Psalm 110:1, as interpreted by Jesus Himself (Mt. 22-42-46),"The Lord said to my [David's] Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. '" Of course, Jesus was not to stop being at the right hand of the Father at any point. So the word until here does not mean a change of status. Psalm 72:7, a messianic Psalm, says that in his days "peace will abound until the moon is no more." Again, the power of the Messiah is not to stop when the moon no longer gives its light (Mt. 24:29). In 2 Samuel 6:23 that David's wife Michal had no son "until the day of her death." Of course, she did not have one after that! In Mt. 11:23 Our Lord says that if the miracles done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, "it would have lasted until the present day." Had it lasted, Jesus did not intend to destroy it in His time. In Mt 28:20 Jesus promised to be with His Church, His followers until the end of the world—nor would He desert them in eternity. In Romans 8:22 St. Paul says that all creation groans, waiting for there revelation of the sons of God until Paul's day. Nor did it stop then, that will continue until the restoration at the end. In 1 Timothy 4:13 the Apostle tells Timothy to devote himself to reading, exhortation and teaching "until I come." He did not mean Timothy should stop such things when Paul did come.—and there are more, but these should be more than enough to show that not always does until in OT and NT, mean a change of things is to come at the point referred to.

Even J. P. Meier, who works so strenuously to try to show that most probably Jesus had real siblings, admits that the arguments from "until" proves nothing (In CBQ Jan. 1992, pp. 9-11).

**Firstborn:** Jesus is called that in Luke 2:7 (and also in Mt 1:25 if we take the Vulgate addition to the Greek). This reflects Hebrew bekor which chiefly expressed the privileged position of the firstborn among other children. It need not imply there were actually others. We can see this from a Greek tomb inscription at Tel el Yaoudieh (cf. Biblica 11, 1930 369-90) for a mother who died in childbirth: "In the pain of delivering my firstborn child, destiny brought me to the end of life." For another epitaph of the same sort, from Leontopolis, see Biblical Archaeology Review, Sept/Oct, 1992, p. 56.

Objection 5: Some early Christian writers think the brothers were true siblings.

Reply: Meier, who so diligently collects all data against virginity after the birth of Jesus, mentions only four: (1)Hegesippus, in the second century. Yet Meier admits on p. 329: "... the testimony is not without its problems and possible self-contradictions"; (2)Tertullian—yet Meier admits that it was his "fierce opposition to [the] docetic view of Christ's humanity' that caused him to say this. In fact, Tertullian even, in the same vein, argued that the body of Jesus was ugly (On the Flesh of Christ 9)! He was a real extremist, as shown by the fact that even the Montanists were not

ben-dod which means son of a paternal uncle, but for other kinds of cousins they would need a complex phrase, such as "the son of the brother of his mother" or, "the son of the sister of his mother". For complex Aramaic expressions see Sokoloff, p. 111. and 139.

Objection 1: We should not consider the Hebrew—Greek did have a word for cousin and other kinds of relatives also, and the Gospels do not use the other specific words for the relatives of Jesus. They use only Greek adelphos, which means a real brother.

Reply 1: The Septuagint (the old Greek translation of the Hebrew OT—abbreviated LXX) uses Greek adelphos, brother, for Lot—who as mentioned above, was really a nephew.

Furthermore, the writers of the Gospels and Epistles often had Hebrew words in mind when they wrote Greek words. This is specially true with St. Paul. And, as we shall see presently, there is strong evidence that St. Luke at some points was translating Hebrew documents—two kinds of Hebrew—with meticulous care.

The LXX for Mal 1:2-3 has this: "I have loved Jacob and hated Esau." St. Paul in Rom 9:13 quotes it the same way in Greek. Yet the LXX translators knew both Hebrew and Greek and so did Paul, yet they used a very odd, even potentially misleading Hebrew expression. How did it happen? Hebrew and Aramaic lacked the degrees of comparison (such as: good, better, best; clear, clearer, clearest) and so they had to find other ways to express such ideas. Where we would say: "I love one more, the other less", the Hebrew said "I love the one and hate the other." In Luke 14:26 Our Lord tells us that we must hate our parents." Again, it means to love them less than one loves Christ. Similarly, in 1 Cor 1:17 Paul says: "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach"—yet Paul had just said he did baptize some. He really means, in the Hebrew way of speaking: My more important mission was to preach, less important was to baptize.

St. Paul in 1 Thes 4:5 speaks of the gentiles "who do not know God". He uses "know" in the sense of Hebrew yada , a broader word, to know and to love. In fact quite a few times we must think of what Hebrew word was in Paul's mind to fully understand his Greek words.

All scholars admit that St. Luke's Gospel has more Semitisms than the books written by Semites (even though Luke was not a Semite himself, but a Greek Physician). Why? It had been thought that Luke did this to imitate the style of the LXX but a study I made (In my article, "Did St. Luke Imitate the Septuagint?"), published in the international Journal for Study of the New Testament (July 1982, pp. 30-41 from the University of Sheffield, England) showed statistically that Luke did not try to imitate the

Septuagint. I made a study of a very strange Semitism in Luke, the apodotic kai , which reflects Hebrew apodotic wau. Here is an example from Luke 5:1: "And it happened—when the crowds pressed on Him to hear the word of God—and He stood by the Lake. The underlined and would be in place in Hebrew—but not in Greek, not even in Aramaic. By actual count, St. Luke uses it only about 20 to 25% of the times he would use it if he were imitating the Septuagint. Clearly that was not his reason for using it. So why did he do it at all? In his opening lines, St. Luke says he took great care, spoke to eye-witnesses, and read written accounts about Jesus. Now written accounts could have been in Greek (a few Jews grew up speaking Greek), Hebrew, or Aramaic. So it is possible that St. Luke had used written accounts in those languages. Greek on Greek would not show, of course , but if he used Hebrew documents part of the time, and if he translated them with meticulous care—so extreme that he would bring a Hebrew structure into Greek, where it did not belong—then we could explain what he did. The odd stricture was not normal in Aramaic either, so we gather that St. Luke seems to have used, at some points, not at all points, Hebrew documents, and that he translated them with extreme care. Luke knew how to write fine Greek—yet he did this, Why? It was his extreme care to be faithful to the original texts he used.—So again, we need to know the underlying Hebrew to understand (of course in this item, English translations just skip the and—it appears only if we read St. Luke in Greek).

There is an important word in Romans 5:19 which speaks of the many as becoming sinful—original sin. Of course, St. Paul really means all. Yet the Greek he uses is polloi. In normal Greek it always means just many, not all. But if we know the Hebrew in Paul's mind it clears up. There was a strange word rabbim which is first known in Isaiah 53, the prophecy of the passion. By context there we see it is clear that it means all, yet it also means many—to be more exact, it means the all who are many. If I were in a room with 3 others, I could say all, but could not say many. Now if we use a Greek concordance to find every place in St. Paul where polloi is used as a noun, it always, without exception, means all, as we gather from context, such as that of Rom. 5:19. Hence we really need to go back to the Hebrew to understand Paul's Greek here.

Again, St. Paul often uses the Greek dikaiosyne not in the narrow usual Greek sense, but in the broad sense of Hebrew sedaqah.

There are many other times in the New Testament (NT) where we must consider the underlying Hebrew in order to get the right sense of the Greek. We have given only samples, but they should be enough to show how the NT writers worked, and the need to avoid stopping with the Greek and insisting that we should ignore the underlying Hebrew, as those do who point out that Greek had words for cousins and other relatives, even though Hebrew did not.

Objection 2: J. P. Meier, in A Marginal Jew (Doubleday, 1991, pp. 325-26) says that "The New Testament is not translation Greek", and says it would be a "wooden" translation to follow the Hebrew usage on brother.

Reply 2: Many scholars do think part or all of the Gospels were translation Greek. The evidence cited above in Journal for Study of the New Testament seems to show that.

Further we have just given extensive evidence to show that regardless of whether or not the writers were translating, they often used Greek words in such a way that to understand them we must look to the underlying Hebrew. This is specially true of Paul in spite of Meier's claim that Paul was not translating and that he knew "James the brother of the Lord" in person.

Meier also (326-27) asserts that Josephus, a Jew writing in Greek does at times use the special word for cousin, yet he does use brother for the "brothers of Jesus."—We reply that we grant Josephus does this. But, did Josephus have direct information on the real nature of the "brothers' of Jesus. Not very likely. Meier does not even mention this point.

In Col 4:10 the Greek for cousin, anepsios, is used. But this is the only time in all the NT. Otherwise, we have the constant following of Hebrew patterns explained above. Further, Pauline authorship of Col is debated. The external witnesses in favor of his authorship easily outweigh the alleged internal evidence. However it is possible that Paul, like modern Popes, had someone else write the letter for him, then went over it and signed it. In that case, his secretary may be responsible for the anepsios. The usual Greek for brother adelphos, is used 5 times in Col, and not once in the sense of blood brother. It is always in the broad sense.

Objection 3: Meier argues, p. 323, that if we want to say ah could mean cousin, then we should read Mt 12:50 thus: "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my male cousin, my female cousin, and my mother." Similarly, on p. 357 he says that Mk 3:35 should read "not even his cousins believed in him."

Reply 3: Meier seems to be deliberately obtuse here. If ah had the broad meaning, we should keep it in translation, not narrowing it to cousin—it would include cousin, but not be limited to it.

Objection 4, on Mt 1. 25: Protestants like to point to two words here, "until" and "firstborn".