

ROMANISM

In the Light of Scripture

by

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CHAPTER THREE

IS MARY CO-REDEMPTRIX?

THERE IS NO MORE IMPORTANT QUESTION for the human mind to consider than the question of salvation. How can one who is lost be found? How can one who is dead be made alive? How can one who has been separated from God by the great gulf of sin be brought back into the family of God? How can one who is an enemy of God be brought into amity with God? Down through the ages men have sought for the answer to give assurance to the heart, comfort to the soul and peace to the mind.

When we ask the question, “Is Mary Co-Redemptrix?” or, “Is salvation dependent on the work of Mary?” we are considering a teaching that professes to be based upon the revealed Word of God, which offers man salvation through the work of Christ together with the work of His earthly mother; a salvation that depends not upon the Cross of Christ alone, nor upon the death of Christ, nor the saving grace in the blood of Christ, but depends upon that which is added to the work of Christ by the one through whom Jesus Christ came into this world. We want to examine the Scriptures and the teachings of Rome in the light of Scripture to satisfy ourselves as to the way of salvation.

Previously we faced the question, “Is Mary the mother of God?” We sought to trace the development of Mariolatry from the time of the New Testament down to the most recent pronouncements of the popes.

First of all, the perpetual virginity of Mary was declared. If Mary had been born without sin, her other children, no less than Jesus Christ, would have been born without sin. To prevent the doctrine that there were many sinless beings, brought into existence through Mary, the perpetual virginity of Mary was proclaimed.

Next Mary was given the title “Mother of God.” The error was not so much in the ascription of the title Mother of God as it was in the concept that Mary was responsible for the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ because she herself was immaculately born and preserved from all original sin. Following this, Mary was crowned “Queen of Heaven,” and elevated to a position at the throne of God. As Jesus Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father, so Mary took her position standing at the right hand of the Son of God in Glory.

The next logical step was to proclaim the teaching of the “Immaculate Conception,” for how could one be brought into the glory of Heaven if she were a sinner and needed to pass under the sentence of death because of sin as the rest of men? Thus, after declaring that Mary had been enthroned in Heaven, it was necessary to take another step and to claim that Mary was not born a sinner as all the rest of the human race, but was immaculately conceived and was delivered from any taint of Adam’s fall or original sin. If one were born without sin there would be no reason for one to die, no reason for one to be held in the grip of death, and the body need not continue in the grave to see corruption. Therefore the pronouncement was made that Mary was assumed into Heaven without seeing corruption because she was immaculately conceived and there was not taint of sin in her.

This has led to the further step, the affirmation of the Roman Church that Mary is the Co-Redemptrix, that Mary is the mediator between God and the Son of God, that Mary is a redemptrix upon whose work and through whose work the salvation of the world rests.

Roman theology uses two passages of Scripture to support the doctrine that Mary is Co-Redemptrix. In Luke 1:28 in our English text, we read, “**The angel came in unto her and said, Hail thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee.**” The Latin version, which is the basis of Romanist theology, translates this from the Greek: “Ave Maria, plena gracia [Hail Mary, full of Grace].” This false translation of the Greek text has given rise to a great deal of the false doctrine of Mariology. The text, as it was given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and recorded by Luke, does not attribute a fullness of grace to Mary but rather affirms that Mary was highly graced of the Lord. Mary was given the privilege of bringing the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world. Had the doctrine been based upon the text instead of a translation, we might have been delivered from a great deal of perversion of the truth of the Gospel. This passage cannot be used to support the doctrine that Mary can dispense grace or merit.

A second passage to which the Romanist appeals for his doctrine that salvation depends on Mary is found in Genesis 3:15. After the fall of man God spoke to the serpent, the instrument through which the fall had been perpetrated, and said, “**I will put enmity between thee [that is, Satan] and the woman [that is, Eve], and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.**”

You will observe that the first “**it**” of verse 15 refers to the words “**her seed.**” God did not say, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed and she shall bruise thy head,” but rather **it** shall bruise thy head. The seed that came from the woman, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, was to be the Satan-bruiser.

The doctrine presented by Romanist theologians, dogmatized by papal decree, is that Mary bruised Satan’s head and crushed the serpent. Because Mary is the serpent-crusher and the head-bruiser, she has the right to be the Redemptrix of the world. We have to conclude that this passage does not support the Roman doctrine that Mary is a redemptrix.

Rome builds its doctrine upon a logical proposition. A Catholic book of catechetical instruction for young people says,

“By Mary we may receive all the assistance which is necessary for us. She is most powerful with God to obtain from Him all that she shall ask from Him. She is all goodness in regard of us by applying to God for us, and, being Mother of God, He cannot refuse her request.”

A son will do anything within the realm of possibility to grant the request of his mother. Upon that concept, so true in the natural realm, is based the affirmation that, because Jesus Christ is a loving and obedient son, Mary can have an influence over Him that no other individual can possibly have.

This pictures the Lord Jesus Christ as unwilling to grant the petitions that are addressed to Him, portrays Him as unwilling to save whosoever will come to Him to receive salvation, and suggests we need another intermediary who would soften His animosity against us, and who would change His will toward us. It is claimed we need mother love to melt and move the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that He might grant us the benefits of His salvation.

On the basis of these Scriptures, but more upon this hypothesis that the Lord Jesus Christ’s face is turned away from us and needs someone to turn Him back toward us is built the doctrine that the death of Christ is not sufficient for our salvation, but that we need the work of Mary to make His death available to us.

The teaching of the Church of Rome, as it is officially presented in the papal decrees, portrays Mary as performing a priestly work.

Mary, as she stood at the foot of the Cross and saw her Son lifted up between Heaven and earth to die as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, was performing a priestly act. In the Old Testament the victim, the lamb, was brought to the priest by the offerer. The priest took that lamb and slew it and placed that sacrifice upon the altar as an offering to God.

So in the New Testament, Rome asserts, it was also necessary for us to have a priest to offer the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, as a sacrifice on the Cross. Rome contends that Mary took her position at the foot of the Cross to do the priestly work of offering her son on the Cross for the sin of the world.

Benedict XV in the Papal decree of 1918, *Inter Sodalicia*, said,

“Thus Mary suffered and all but died along with her Son, suffering and dying; thus, for the salvation of men she abdicated the rights of a mother toward her Son and in so far as it was hers to do, she immolated her Son to placate God’s justice so that she, herself, may justly be said to have redeemed together with Christ, the human race.”

The decree of Benedict XV promulgates the teaching that Mary offered her Son as a sacrifice and that it was by her suffering and offering that God’s justice was placated.

Pius XI in a Papal Bull in 1928, entitled *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, said:

“May the most gracious mother of God be propitious to these our wishes and these our undertaking; she who, by giving us Christ, the Redeemer, and by offering Him at the foot of the cross as victim for our sins, by such intimate association with Christ, and by her own most singular grace, becomes and is affectionately known as Repairatrix. Confident of her intercession with Christ, who alone is Mediator of God and men, and who willed to associate His Mother with Himself as the Advocate of sinners, as the Dispenser and Mediatrix of grace, we impart the apostolic blessing.”

Pius XI said that we have a redemption, not simply because Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, but because Mary was made the advocate of sinners. When we turn to I John 2:1, we read that we have an advocate who takes the place of sinners and offers Himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the world.

John said, **“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.”** Now who is the advocate? **“Jesus Christ the righteous.”**

In no place in all the Word of God is Mary ever presented as doing the work of an advocate for sinners. Yet, by papal decree, it is established that Mary is the advocate of sinners, dispenser and mediatrix of grace.

Gabriele M. Roschini is recognized among Romanists as the greatest student of Mariology in Italy today. He has written,

“Mary stood at the foot of the cross (John 19:25-27). Why? To comfort her son? To help Him in that dark hour? She knew she could be of no help to Him. Yet she stood, impelled by the duty of offering her Son for the salvation of the world. The very manner of her presence confirms it. She stood on her feet, ‘stabat,’ like a priest offering His sacrifice to God for all humanity.

“As St. Anthony says, she stood conforming to the will of God so that one can say of her that she, the earthly mother of Jesus, like the heavenly Father, did not spare His own son but gave Him up for us. (Romans 8:32).”

This presents to us that which is a cardinal doctrine as related to salvation in the Roman Church: we are saved because Mary took the place of a priest and did a priestly act of offering her Son to be a sacrifice and, on the basis of her priestly work, she can be a priestly intermediary, the Mediatrix of all graces between God and man.

The same writer says again,

“In the victim that was offered for the salvation of the whole world, there was something of the Virgin herself. The blood that was shed for the remission of sins has flowed from her purest heart. The blessed virgin, then standing by the cross as mother of the Victim, and giving up her maternal claims upon Him for the salvation of the human race, sacrificed her Son and in consequence became the co-redemptrix of the human race.”

This theologian says that when the body of the Lord Jesus Christ was conceived within the body of Mary, He received the life principle, His blood, from His mother, and the blood that was shed on the cross was the blood that was given to Him from His mother. Therefore, it was Mary's blood that was poured out, through Christ, for the salvation of the world.

Dr. R. P. Nichols, in the work *Maria, Co-Redemptrix*, gives us this word:

“What does the suffering of Mary add to that of Jesus? It integrates the suffering of humanity more completely. The satisfaction completed by these two efforts is not a bit more meritorious—the second, on the other hand, not being meritorious except by virtue of the first, but is richer in humanity. Mary's presence and grief give to Christ's passion an added intensity and a human quality especially that otherwise would be profoundly lacking.”

When we translate this theological language into common language this theologian is saying that there was an imperfection in the offering of Christ; that Christ, the Son of God, represented the claim of God but that true humanity was lacking in Christ so that Christ had to associate His mother with Himself so that humanity would have a representative at the Cross.

The scriptural doctrine of the virgin birth states that true deity and true humanity were inseparably united in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in what we call the “*Theanthropic Person*.” Jesus Christ was the eternal Son of God and could represent all the claims of God in His death on the Cross, so that God was satisfied. An infinite and eternal sacrifice was made for the sins of the world. Jesus Christ, because of the virgin birth, also possessed a true and complete humanity and as the representative of all humanity He could give Himself on the Cross to die for the sins of the world. No other sacrifice was needed because on the Cross God-man was offered as the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

But Nichols says,

“No, that is not true; that was God who died at the cross. Humanity is represented, not in the Person of Jesus Christ, for in Him true humanity was lacking, but in Mary who stood at the cross and identified herself with Him in suffering. Not in Christ alone is there redemption for the sins of the world, but in Mary and Christ who suffered together.”

We are asked to believe that Jesus Christ could not make a complete sacrifice Himself because He could not really represent the human race; He had to associate with Him, in the act of redemption, His own mother so that humanity might have a representative. Such a teaching is without scriptural foundation.

Not only is Mary co-redemptrix:

- 1) because she offered her Son and
- 2) because she was the representative of the human race at the Cross, but
- 3) because Mary is the dispenser of all the gifts that God has to give to sinful man.

Read the words of Pius X in his Papal pronouncement of 1905, *Acta*, where he states that Mary is the dispenser of all gifts.

“Surely we do not deny that the distribution of these gifts belongs by strict right to Christ personally. After all, they have been acquired for us by His death alone, and He is in His own right the Mediator between God and man. And yet out of regard for a community of pain and suffering between Mother and Son, already mentioned, the august Virgin was privileged to be the most influential Mediatrix and Conciliatrix of the whole world with her only begotten Son. This Christ is the fountainhead and ‘of His fullness we have all received’; ‘from Him the whole body derives its increase to the building up of itself in love, (Ephesians 4:16).’ But Mary is the aqueduct, or even the neck by which the body is joined to the head and by which the head communicates force and power to the body.

“It is clear, then, that we are very far from attributing to the Mother of God the power producing supernatural grace; the power which belongs to God, alone. However, because she transcends all others in holiness and in the intimacy of her union with Christ and because she has been drawn by Christ into association with the work of human salvation, she merits for us what Christ merited for us and she is the principal minister of the graces to be distributed. He has taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, but Mary stands as Queen at His right hand, the safest refuge, the most reliable helper of all who are in danger, so that nothing need be feared, nothing need be despaired of so long as she is our guide, she is our patroness; so long as she is propitious, she our protector.”

St. Louis DeMontfort, in his book *The Secret of Mary* says,

“God has entrusted Mary with the keeping, the administration and distribution of all His graces, so that His graces and gifts pass through her hands.”

Bernardine of Sienna said,

“All the gifts, graces, and virtues of the Holy Ghost are by her hands administered to whom she pleaseth, when she pleaseth, how she pleaseth and as much as she pleaseth; and this because she is the mother of the Son from whom the Spirit proceedeth.”

This is to say that the Holy Spirit can carry on His work of sanctification and blessing only through the Virgin Mary. Thus, though Jesus Christ through His death has gained for sinners the infinite treasure of the grace of God, Mary has been placed as the sole channel of the salvation that was provided by Jesus Christ, so that Mary has absolute control and authority over the dispensing of all the treasure of grace that an infinite God has to give to men through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Papal Bull of Leo XIII, *Magni Dea Matris*, issued September 8, 1892, says:

“When we have recourse to Mary in prayer, we are having recourse to the Mother of mercy, who is so well disposed toward us that, whatever the necessity that presses upon us, especially in attaining eternal life, she is instantly on our side.

“She dispenses grace with a generous hand from that treasure with which from the beginning she was divinely endowed with fullest abundance that she might be worthy to be the Mother of God by the fullness of grace which confers on her the most illustrious of her many titles. The Blessed Virgin is infinitely superior to all the hierarchies of men and angels, the one creature who is closest of all to Christ. It is a great thing in any saint to have grace sufficient for the salvation of many souls; but to have enough grace to suffice for the salvation of everybody in the world is the greatest of all and this is found in Christ and in the blessed virgin.”

We are told by this pronouncement of Leo XIII that Mary, by virtue of the grace that was hers before the conception of Jesus Christ, has the right and the ability to dispense eternal life to whomsoever she will, and that her grace was sufficient to dispense eternal life to the whole world, if the whole world would but turn to her.

Leo XIII, in *Iucunda Semper*, dated September 18, 1894, tells us,

“It is impossible to measure the power and scope of her offices since the day she was taken up to that height of heavenly glory in the company of her Son, to which the dignity and luster of her merits entitle her. From her heavenly abode she began by God’s decree, to watch over the Church, to assist and befriend us as our Mother, so that she who is so intimately associated with the mystery of human salvation is just as closely associated with the distribution of the graces which for all time will flow from redemption.”

The pronouncement of Pius X, in his Papal Bull, *Ad Diem Ilium* of February 2, 1904, says,

“‘Now this is eternal life that they may know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent,’ and since it is through Mary that we attain to the knowledge of Christ, through Mary also we most easily obtain that life of which Christ is the source and the origin.”

Thus it is taught that Mary not only has ministered in giving Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, but Mary is the sole channel through which any benefit that comes from her priestly work and Christ’s death can come to a human individual. It is on the basis of this theological concept that Mary is revered, adored and addressed as Co-Redemptrix by Rome.

On July 16, 1251, Mary is said to have appeared to St. Simon Stock. To attribute to Mary this power to appear to any individual is to claim for Mary the prerogatives that belong solely to God Himself.

In the Word we find the Son of God in His pre-incarnate state manifesting Himself in the realm of the flesh. When it is affirmed that Mary has made an appearance on this earth after death and her supposed assumption, it is claiming for her the prerogative of deity. But Mary is said to have appeared to St. Simon Stock and to have given to him what was called the “brown scapular,” a small piece of cloth bearing pictures of herself. She is said to have revealed to Simon Stock that the one who wore this scapular was showing special veneration for her, putting himself under her protection.

In a pamphlet that bears the Imprimatur of Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, entitled *Our Lady's Promises*, it is said,

“For seven hundred years, the brown scapular of Our Lady has been the principal symbol of personal consecration to her immaculate heart; the scapular is the mantle of Mary, thrown about the shoulders of those she loves with a special love, for the rosary and the scapular are her special and most favored devotions. The scapular after the rosary is the most highly indulgenced sacramental in the church. Five hundred days' indulgence is gained each time the scapular is reverently kissed; no other act so simple is so highly indulgenced; the scapular has been called 'Mary's sacrament.'”

In the Word of God we are told that when we accept Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour, we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. God offers to believers this righteousness as a covering that assures him entrance and access to the presence of God. The teaching concerning the scapular says that the robe of the righteousness of Christ is insufficient protection and unable to bring one into the presence of God. The mantle of Mary is needed.

At the time this scapular was revealed to Simon Stock, certain promises were made by Mary. Over the Imprimatur of Francis Cardinal Spellman, we read:

“Our lady's promises:

- (1) Whosoever dies, clothed in this scapular shall not suffer eternal fire.
- (2) So that with hasted step they shall pass over purgatory I, the mother of grace, shall descend into purgatory on the first Saturday after their death and whosoever I shall find in purgatory clothed with this scapular, I shall free; wear the scapular always—never be without it. Kiss the scapular frequently and five hundred days' indulgence will be granted for each time.”

It is a part of the work of Mary as Co-Redemptrix to bring out of purgatory one who has taken refuge in her as a dispenser of grace and to grant eternal life because one has attached the scapular to his person.

This teaching reduces the doctrine of salvation to the level of witchcraft and fetishism, as though one could be protected from the wrath of God and the just judgment of God upon sinners because he wears a little piece of brown cloth around his neck or attached to his person.

There are serious scriptural errors in this teaching that Mary is a Co-Redemptrix. First of all, the teaching as it has been promulgated in the Roman Church denies that God the Father gave God the Son for the salvation of the world. It borders on the blasphemous to say that salvation was made possible, not because **“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** but to say that salvation was made possible for the world because Mary the mother stood as a priestess and offered her Son to God, so that the world looks to her priestly work and counts her as a Co-Redemptrix because she gave her Son.

A second area of error is that it denies the scriptural teaching that the way into the presence of God is now open to anyone who will come on the basis of the shed blood of Christ.

There are several New Testament passages from among many to which we could turn. I turn to the word of the Apostle in Hebrews 4:14: **“Seeing that we have a great high priest, that passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”**

The Word of God did not say, “seeing we have a priestess who offered her son for the sins of the world,” but **“seeing that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”**

God is the one divine channel of all blessing and grace is not channeled through any individual, however honored, however privileged to be the mother of our Lord. Jesus Christ Himself is the source of all grace.

In Hebrews 10:19-22 we read: **“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, [not through the offering up of the Son by the mother] through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he [not she] is faithful that promised.”**

The way into the holiest has been made open and any individual who will accept Jesus Christ as the Saviour and trust in Him has been brought into the very presence of God and needs no mediatrix; he has salvation, a position in the family, refuge, safety, and security through the finished work of Christ.

I shudder when I read the Papal Bull of Leo XIII, *Fidentum Piumque*, issued on September 20, 1896:

“There is no reason why certain others should not be called, in a certain way, mediators between God and man . . . especially has the blessed virgin acclaimed to the glory of this title. For no single individual can ever be imagined who has ever contributed, or ever will contribute, so much toward reconciling God to man . . . she it is from whom Jesus is born; she is, therefore, truly His mother and for this reason is worthy and an acceptable mediatrix of the Mediator.”

Leo XIII says that Jesus Christ Himself is unapproachable; that the gulf between God and man still exists and has never been taken away. But in Mary we can find a mediatrix; a bridge over the gulf to the Mediator.

There is a third great area of error.

This dogma denies that salvation is a once-and-for-all gift of God.

To the Romanist, all that can be offered the sinner is a chance for salvation some day; a hope that he may receive salvation through the ministry of Mary and the prayers of saints to relieve him from purgatory. But a chance at salvation is far different from the gift of eternal life, received by faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The fourth great area of error of this doctrine is that it denies that the individual who accepts Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour possesses eternal life now as God's free gift of His grace.

The Word of God says that **“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”**

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour you have that gift of God's grace; you do not need someone to dispense God's grace to you; you do not need someone to give you eternal life; you do not need Mary to connect you with the Mediator so that you may be brought to God. God gives you eternal life.

But the Romanist states that God gives eternal life only to those who come through Mary.

I stand upon the authority of the Word of God that there is none other name under Heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Lord Jesus Christ.

While we revere the one who was graced by God to be the mother of our Lord, we do not look to her as a co-redemptrix, for God will not share His glory with another—not even with Mary.

We trust in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one name that is above every name, for at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

May God give you grace and the faith to see that salvation is settled forever the moment one accepts Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour and there is nothing that need be added, there is nothing that can be added to the work of our Lord Jesus Christ when He said, **“It is finished.”**

In the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ we stand forever.

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