



Responding to Objections against Mary

Introduction

After reading these beautiful talks about Our Lady, how could anyone go against her? Yet, those who study apologetics, the art of defending the Catholic Faith, tell us that in the area of doctrine, many most viciously attack the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Why? Could it be that the devil, knowing her power over souls and her influence in bringing persons to Jesus, incite the most temptations against her?

Due in large part to sheer ignorance, attacks against our Blessed Mother seem to come from two kinds of people: **anti-Catholics and fallen-away Catholics**. This article will briefly survey causes of their hatred, and then refute two of the many objections. (The word “refute” means to “show the error in the position”) St. Thomas Aquinas’ method of proving Catholic truth is to give the best arguments for the opponent’s position, and then show the correct position. I shall strive humbly to imitate this giant apologist.

Today many “fundamentalists” abound -- some Christians who live morally but reject what they consider additions to the true Christian Faith, namely, the sacraments and liturgy, and doctrines such as the papacy,

Tradition, purgatory and, (in their eyes) God forbid, that idolatrous worship of Mary. As much as we may look upon Fundamentalists as contradictory in their beliefs, many Catholics have left to join them. One reliable source states that one out of every six Hispanics belongs to the anti-Catholic sects, and the majority of the Fundamentalists in the Midwest (the ‘Bible Belt’) are made up of fallen away Catholics. Statistics located on the FOCUS web page state that only 15% of Catholics ages 18-25 attend Church on a weekly basis. (By the way, “FOCUS” stands for **Fellowship of Catholic University Students**)

A little story to inject a bit of irony:

The children at an orphanage were reciting their prayers for a visiting Sunday school teacher. One boy, previously taught at a Catholic school, finished the Our Father and began the Hail Mary. “No, no”, said the visitor. We don’t have to hear about her. Go on to the Creed. The child went on and soon came to “born of the....” “Here she comes again, sir,” he said politely. “What shall I do?”

Before we classify the two groups of people, a quote from Venerable Fulton Sheen will help us



understand their viewpoints: “99% of people are not against the Catholic Faith, but against misconceptions against the Catholic Faith.”

Two Kinds of People against Mary

Anti-Catholic Christians

Most non-Catholic Christians regard Catholic devotion to Mary as excessive and an addition to the early Christian Faith. The brilliant Blessed John Henry Newman, as a young man, held to this position. However, as an Anglican, before his conversion to the Catholic Faith, he still honored Mary. However, anti-Catholics hold the Catholic teaching on Mary as a moral infection, representing what is most wrong with Catholicism. Why do allegedly good people hold this viewpoint? In their eyes, it undermines the perfect work of Christ and robs Him of His glory. Even as an Anglican Newman regarded Catholic devotion as form of idolatry. Catholics look upon Mary as a goddess, they maintain.

Bill Jackson, an anti-Catholic, explains that the “rise in devotion to Mary came when a backslidden church, having lost the reality of Christ, was presented with the pagan concept of a female deity and she was deemed able to mediate between them and a God Who was too far away.” The former anti-Catholic Scott Hahn, as a teenager, loved his gentle Catholic grandmother. Nonetheless, after her death, when he saw a rosary among her personal items, he shred them apart, considering them an imprisoning superstition.

Fallen-away Catholics make up the second and perhaps largest group.

Curtis Martin, Founder and President of *Focus*, relates the following story:

“‘The Night I Left the Catholic Church’....I was sitting in a room with some Christian friends of mine having an enjoyable discussion and I remembered a joke that I thought I would share with them: one day Our Lord was confronted by the Pharisees with a woman caught in adultery. Testing Jesus, they asked, ‘Teacher, what should we do with her? The Law of Moses says she should be stoned. What do you say?’ Jesus looked at the crowd, looked mercifully at the woman and then said, ‘Let the one among you who has no sin cast the first stone.’ As he turned back to the woman, a rock flew over His shoulder and hit the woman. Startled, Our Lord said, ‘Mother, did I not say to stay out of my business?’”

Mr. Martin vividly recalls the response: instead of the usual laughs, he received a long silence. Then someone said, “Curtis, where in the Bible does it say that Mary has no sin?” Curtis, not well trained in Scripture, could not remember exact passages. He responded, “Gee, I don’t know. Do you?” One after the other, his friends assured Curtis that nowhere does the Bible say Mary is without sin. They then began to shower the poor ignorant young man with all kinds of questions: “Where in the Bible does it say she was assumed into heaven? Don’t you know that Scriptures clearly teach there is only



one mediator? Why do Catholics say that Mary can hear prayers? Jesus had brothers yet Catholics say Mary was a virgin....etc.”

Curtis’ head was spinning. He did not know how to respond. Here were some of the most consistent Christian friends he had ever met, and all of them flatly rejected Catholic teaching on Mary. His Catholic friends were struggling with living moral lives, had stopped going to Mass, and did not know any of the answers to the questions Curtis had encountered regarding Mary. The young Curtis Martin subsequently left the Faith in which he was raised. Now to answer two objections:

Objection 1: Does Mary upstage God?

Christ Himself answers this objection, as He, a devout Jew, followed the Ten Commandments and honored His Mother. We do not adore Mary as a goddess---this is a heresy---but we venerate her, just as Jesus did. The Hebrew word for honor, *kabbed*, literally means “to glorify”. The fourth commandment tells us to honor our father and mother, and who but Jesus did this perfectly? Therefore, in honoring Mary, we are simply imitating Christ.

In fact, if we look at the very Bible Protestants claim only to rely, we have evidence that the inspired Scriptures (including the Protestant translations) proves God honored Mary. In **Lk 1:25-26**, the archangel Gabriel, representing God, calls her in the Latin vulgate “*gratia plena*”, *full of grace*, which is a translation from the Greek in which St. Luke wrote “*kecharitomene*”, *an overflowing of grace, being transformed constantly by this*

favor. Thus, Mary is not merely highly favored, but overflowing with grace. (Our contemporary translations use the phrase ‘highly favored’; this phrase is translated from the Latin which “*gratia plena*”, which literally means, “full of grace’. The Latin is translated from the original Greek, which uses the word, “*kecharitomene*”.

Luke 1:41-42 also records “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, ‘Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb’. ” In just four short verses, Elizabeth calls Mary blessed two times.

Furthermore, guided by the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth identifies Mary saying, “Why is this granted me, that the *mother of my Lord* should come to me?” “Lord” is the word for God; as you may know, Jews may not utter the sacred word “Yahweh”. Therefore, they substitute ‘Lord’, capitalized, to indicate God. A side note: once, when I was teaching RCIA, the son of a Baptist minister came to the class. He had difficulties with, of course, Mary. I had him read, from a Protestant Bible, this passage. He was shocked. I believe it was a turning point for him as he explained, “I never noted that before!” He went on and became a Catholic.

As we can surmise, we have just gone over the first part of the “Hail Mary”, a most biblical prayer that many non-Catholic Christians reject. In verse 48 of Lk 1,



Mary prophesies that *all ages* will call her blessed. Ask non-Catholics why they don't call her the Blessed Virgin Mary as Catholics do. It is Catholics who are being biblical here!

Before we go on to the second major objection to Marian teachings, here is a fun fact:

Each of the three great pillars of the Reformation---Martin Luther, John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, accepted this doctrine of Mary's Divine Motherhood wholeheartedly. Why do not their followers?

Objection 2: Catholics go against the Bible in praying to Mary: 1 Tim 2:5 asserts that Jesus is the 'one mediator between God and men'.

Although Jesus is our Mediator, 1 Tim 2:5 is taken out of context. Please read carefully to the entire passage from 1 Tim 2:

First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come the knowledge of truth. For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as ransom for all. For this I was appointed preacher and apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. It is my wish, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument.

In this passage, Paul commands Christians to intercede for one another. This intercession

does not circumvent Christ's mediatorship, but goes through it. The Church, the Body of Christ, does not exist independently from Christ. Remember when Christ struck down Saul the persecutor of Christians, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" As members of Christ's Body, God calls us to intercede for each other, and "complete what is lacking for the sake of His Body, the Church." (Col 1:24) Jesus taught us, as recorded in John, at the Last Supper, "I am the vine, and you are the branches." (JN 15:5) We belong to Christ and to each other.

By the way, if you ask a non-Catholic Christian friend to pray for you, would she snarl and say "No!...go directly to Jesus!" I have never heard of this, and I do know many non-Catholic Christians. Then why not our friends in heaven, who, as the author of Hebrews tells us, surround us like a cloud of witnesses? (Heb. 12:1)

How often we cradle Catholics, when growing up, were told to "offer it up" for a sinner, for a special intention, for someone dying. I vividly remember a Catholic doctor, when I was sick at the age of nine, telling me to offer up his future needle and say a "Hail Mary". We fell down with a scraped knee, failed to make the team, nursed a broken heart...and our good parents/ mentors told us, "offer it up" for sinners.

If we can do this, and we do, how much more effective is Mary's intercession, she who stood at Calvary watching her Son



die, she who loves us tenderly with a Mother's Heart! As St. James writes, "The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful indeed." (James 5:16)) St. James then describes the power of Elijah's prayers, the great prophet whose petitions were fulfilled for both a drought and for rain. How much more efficacious the petitions of Jesus' Mother?

Scott Hahn, the virulent anti-Catholic became today's leading Catholic apologist; Curtis Martin, the fallen away Catholic, founded and presides at the national FOCUS group, which yearly grows, attracting more members. (By the way, the Focus group aims to answer the call for the new evangelization, especially for those Catholics who have fallen away.) The doubtful young Newman became Blessed John Henry Newman, who defended Mary and wrote effusively of the Our Lady. In short, with some study and prayer, we all can help remove the obstacles to accepting Mary and thus vitally contribute to the 'new evangelization.'

At this point you may say, "Sister, I am no Scott Hahn, Curtis Martin and certainly not a Blessed Newman"....however, you have the sense of the Faith, you most likely have God Indwelling within you through sanctifying grace, and you can start with what you do know. If you pray and study earnestly, as well as sincerely love the person whom you are evangelizing, through Our Lady's intercession, God will bless your efforts. May it be so!

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