

# ROMAN CATHOLICISM

## In the Light of Scripture

by

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### CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

#### THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

SAYS THE JESUIT PRIEST, E. R. Hull:

*The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception simply means that Our Lady, in view of her exalted office, was endowed with God's grace from the first moment of her existence, instead of being conceived and born in original sin. . . . We cannot infer that Mary did not owe her redemption to Christ's death, but only that the grace of redemption was conferred beforehand in view of Christ's future merit— What is the Christian Church? p. 35, Catholic Truth Society.*

Searching for some Scripture to bolster up this doctrine, Rome has this to offer:

**And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women** (Luke 1:28).

The words, “**Thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee,**” contain the hidden meaning, “*Thou art without original sin.*” They also imply that Mary from her birth until her death was entirely free from sin.

All that we can say in reply is that it takes more than unproved assertions to turn fiction into fact.

The fact is that, while our Lord Himself was sinless (II Corinthians 5:21), being conceived of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35), His mother, godly woman though she was, and highly favored to be the mother of the human nature of our Lord, was herself by natural birth a sinner. The words, “**Hail, thou that art highly favored,**” meant just what they said: that she was indeed blessed among women, and there is not the least ground to read into them the “*hidden meaning*” that Rome would put there, that she was without original sin. There is nothing either in Scripture or in history to support such an interpretation. Indeed, it is not even an interpretation, for it bears no relation to the words, but is a bald Romish addition. Not only do the Scriptures avoid attributing sinlessness to Mary, but they point quite the other way:

1. In Mary's song of thanksgiving she said, “**My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.**” Only sinners need a Saviour, and Mary knew her need and expressed it simply and naturally.
2. When Mary went to the temple with Joseph for her purification according to law, she presented a blood offering, by which she recognized herself as a sinner and; in need of atonement.

**And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons (Luke 2:22-24).**

3. Some of the ancestors of our Lord were great and noble; others however, were ignoble, but it was through that line with its variations of light and darkness that our Lord was born into the world. God sent His Son **“in the likeness of sinful flesh”** (Romans 8: 3).

In the line of His genealogy appear the names of three adulteresses: Tamar (Matthew 1:3; Genesis 38:16); Rahab (Matthew 1:5; Joshua 2:1); and Bathsheba (Matthew 1:6; II Samuel 11:4), but they found mercy and grace.

Very few of the ancestors of our Lord of whom any details are given in the Old Testament are without record as having fallen into sin at some point or another. The New Testament record of Mary gives us the picture of a pure-minded maiden, living in the fear of God, but nevertheless needing salvation as did others.

Never was it written of Mary, “who did no sin,” as it was written of the Son she bore. We have no right to speak of Mary as being sinless with so many Bible passages which speak of the universality of human sin.

**Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me** (Psalm 51:5).

**All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all** (Isaiah 53:6).

**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God** (Romans 3:23).

**Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned** (Romans 5:12).

4. We can sympathize with Mary having to live in a home where Jesus' own brethren did not believe in Him.

**For neither did his brethren believe in him** (John 7:5).

But Mary appears to have done wrong when she came with them to restrain our Lord and take Him back home by force if necessary.

**And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself. . . . There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without sent unto him, calling him.**

**And the multitudes sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother** (Mark 3:20, 21, 31-35).

It seems evident that on this occasion, torn by natural anxiety and perhaps under pressure from our Lord's brethren, Mary went with them to stop Him. Her action was not prompted by faith but by fear, and she was evidently not in the will of God in thus coming.

This, then, is the testimony of Scripture, but what about the testimony of later history?

Judging by the writings of the church fathers, it is evident that until the fifth century Mary was regarded as a virtuous woman in the same way that most other women were virtuous. She had original sin, however, and could herself sin.

From the sixth to twelfth centuries, it was held that she had original sin, but by divine protection was preserved from personal sin. It was not until early in the twelfth century that the Roman Church first observed December 8 as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Discussion concerning this continued through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Several of the earlier "infallible" popes maintained that she had original sin, and the names of about two hundred theologians are given, all of whom supported this view. Nevertheless, on December 8, 1854, the pope promulgated the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as an Article of Faith to be received and believed by all. This also, as an official pronouncement, was "infallible"!

Papal infallibility notwithstanding, it is certain from all the evidence available that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is unscriptural and false.

Mary became the mother of our Lord, not because she was immaculate, but because of the wonderful condescension of God toward a woman, weak in herself, but strong in her faith to God, and in her readiness to do the will of God at whatever cost.

**~ end of chapter 24 ~**

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