

A Few Things...

Barry O'Dell

For thirty years the church in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas was served by one secretary – Claudia Willison. She did many things throughout her time with this congregation. Perhaps her favorite role was her work with Fulton County Gospel News. Claudia worked with four editors of FCGN over the years – Eddy Gilpin (1989-1991), Ted Clarke (1991-2004), Lee Moses (2004-2014), and Barry O'Dell (2014 to present). She loved the church, “her preachers,” and her work with the paper. Sadly, she lost her battle with cancer on March 9.

Claudia worked very hard on preparing all the envelopes and postage for each mailing of the paper. She would help with proof-reading too. She had help from a few of her very close friends in the congregation to get this work done for each mailing. She is greatly missed by her family, friends, and this congregation. My wife, Gail O'Dell, is now serving as the secretary.

On foreign mailing. We send around 3,000 copies of FCGN to several foreign countries. However, because of the pandemic, we are going to have to stop this for the time being. The March/April edition of the paper was sent out as normal, but we have received about seventy-five percent of them back. Mail service has been suspended to many of the countries to which we send the paper. Hopefully, this difficulty will be over soon! Please, be praying for our leaders in this country – and around the world (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

If you are currently receiving the hard copy of the paper and would prefer to receive it via email, please let us know. I keep a Google contact list up-to-date and can easily add anyone who would prefer that method.

Our website. If you are interested you can visit www.mammothspringchurchofchrist.com to learn more about our congregation. You can also access PDF copies of all extant editions of FCGN – all the way back to its beginning in 1953! There is also an author/article index to help you navigate through all the documents.

Our Facebook pages. The internet has given us wonderful opportunities to share the gospel all around the world. If you are on FB, “like” our public pages – Church of Christ at Mammoth Spring and Fulton County Gospel News. I do a live stream on the church’s page from my office Monday-Thursday at 11:00 CDT. You can send questions and join in the discussion as we study God’s word together! If you are not on Facebook, we also now have a YouTube channel. While we do not “go live” on YouTube, all the content we create on FB is then uploaded to our YT channel – Mammoth Spring Church of Christ.

God’s Two Revelations

Psalm 19:1-6 informs us that there is an intelligent, powerful Designer. Paul wrote that mankind is “without excuse” in terms of believing in the existence of God. His “eternal power and Godhead (what makes God, God)” are clearly seen in physical creation (Rom. 1:19-20). God did not leave Himself without witness (Acts 14:17). In a very real sense, God “speaks” through nature (Ps. 19:1-2).

However, the creation cannot tell us *about* God. We can know that He is, but there is a specific revelation of God that tells us *who He is* and *what He desires and demands* from His creation. God’s word – not nature – converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, and endures forever (Ps. 19:7-11). God, through the Holy Spirit, has revealed His mind to various humans and they have written it down inerrantly for us (1 Cor. 2:9-13). According to the Psalm 19:7-11, God’s word is...

- *Perfect* or complete.
- *Sure* – it provides stability (Matt. 7:24-25).
- *Right* – ethically straight.
- *Pure* or radiant (enlightening).
- *Clean* or genuine.
- *True* – faithful.
- *Righteous* – just. God is always right!

When we allow God’s word to *warn* us and when we *keep it*, there is “great reward” (Ps. 19:11). We must allow Scripture to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105).

Catholic people are some of the kindest people you will ever meet. Their church is involved in many benevolent works, from orphanages to hospitals, from pantries for the poor to homes for unwed mothers. One cannot deny that they have done many works to provide for the needs of our society. If you have Catholic friends, you may have wondered about their religious practices. If you are a Catholic, you may wonder about the origin of your church's practices. In fact, you may have wondered about this particular doctrine, the veneration of Mary. We've seen statues of Mary in churches, and even neighbors' yards. You may even own one! Perhaps you have seen someone praying to Mary, or, heard their "Rosary Prayer" that concludes with an appeal for Mary to intercede with King Jesus. We shall endeavor to take a brief look at the peculiar doctrine of the veneration of Mary, and, make note of whether we should consider it a false - or unbiblical - doctrine, or true to the word of God.

"...the Roman Catholic Church has manufactured far too much doctrine concerning Mary..."

What does it mean to venerate something or someone? Vocabulary.com states that it "is similar to worship or respect: we feel veneration for things and people we adore and are devoted to completely. This is a strong word. The main meaning is for a type of religious zeal: if you unquestionably believe in your religion, then you feel and show veneration for your god and beliefs."¹ The Catholic Church teaches, and popes promote, the veneration (reverencing) of Mary. This reverence of Mary encompasses various devotions which would include prayer to her, pious acts for her, paintings and sculptures of her.² There are, in fact, many clubs and social societies within the Catholic church that are devoted to Mary. Officially, the church takes the position that veneration of Mary is not worship of Mary.³ However, many ordinary Catholic Church members cannot distinguish a difference between the two.

Much of the veneration of Mary is tied to a parchment from AD 250 called "Parchment 470."⁴ This parchment references Mary as "the God-bearer." The translation is: "Beneath your compassion we take refuge God-bearer, our petitions do not despise in time of trouble rescue us only holy blessed." Two things to note here: (1) This parchment is not sacred Scripture; (2) This parchment simply describes what some in the third century church were doing. It does not mean all churches in the third century church were petitioning Mary for aid. The use of the phrase, "Mother of God," is derived from this parchment. However, the term is actually and accurately translated "God-bearer," not "Mother of God." The Greek

word *Theotokos* means "God-bearer." Translating it "Mother of God" is textual dishonesty at best. The tradition of calling Mary the "Mother of God" was officially declared dogma at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431.⁵ While there is absolutely no biblical example of any Christian referring to Mary as the "Mother of God," nor any Biblical passage that commands Christians to refer to her as such, Catholic leadership continues to compel its membership to do so! In addition to Parchment 470, Catholic leadership often uses Luke 1:28 as the passage which allows for the veneration of Mary. Luke tells us: "And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!'" The official Catholic Bible, the Douay-Rheims Version translates the verse: "And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." The Catholic scholars state the term "Hail," as used in Luke's text, is only ever used of royalty.⁶ Royalty, however, is a term true of every Christian. Inspiration (God) speaks of the everyday Christian, as a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9). If God had intended for Mary's veneration to be clearly understood, would He have not done so by simply calling her such? There is not a single reference in the Bible to Mary being called royal. Although it is true that the word hail as used here was used of Jesus and other dignitaries, its many other various translations are also greeting, glad, rejoice, and joyful.⁷ Then there is the use of the statement "full of grace." Matt Slick has some important observations here: What does the Greek say here for "highly favored one?" It is the single Greek word *kexaritomena* and means highly favored, make accepted, make graceful, etc. It does not mean "full of grace" which is "*plarakaritos*" (*plarakar* = full and *karitos* = grace) in the Greek ... Therefore, we conclude that the Roman Catholic Church has manufactured far too much doctrine concerning Mary out of the erroneous translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible, and that the RCC needs to recant its false teaching concerning Mary.⁸ With this assessment we firmly agree. To teach that Mary is to be venerated exalts her to a position God has not authorized and opens the door to many other falsehoods and unbiblical dogma which serves only to confuse and lead men further from the Christ, God's only Son and our only Mediator (2 Jn. 9-11; 1 Tim. 2:5-7).

References

1. Source: <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/veneration>
2. Source: <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,730158,00.html>
3. Source: <http://www.catholic365.com/article/8486/catholics-dont-worship-mary-and-the-saints-we-venerate-them.html>
4. Source: <https://evidenceforchristianity.org/was-mary-worshipped-by-the-early-christian-church-in-250-ad-as-my-catholic-friend-claims/>
5. Source: <http://www.catholictradition.org/Mary/council-ephesus.htm>
6. Source: <https://catholicexchange.com/mary-is-venerated-in-the-bible>
7. Source: <https://biblehub.com/greek/5463.htm>
8. Source: <https://carm.org/catholic/mary-full-grace-and-luke-128>

The Bible is divided into two sections: the Old and New Testaments. However, someone has said that the Bible can be divided into three sections: 1) Genesis to Malachi - Jesus is Coming; 2) Matthew to John - Jesus is Here; 3) Acts to Revelation - Jesus is Coming Again. The late Donnie Barnes, www.biblecharts.com, tells us that Isaiah is the most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament, 419 references. It is not surprising that many of these references are about Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.

Please notice our text, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7). Isaiah, by inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16-17), speaks about the coming Christ:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: Isaiah had written of this in Isaiah 7:14 “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.” An angel spoke to Joseph in a dream concerning Mary being with child. Joseph was trying to sort out in his mind some things. The angel told him, “fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Matt. 1:18-23). Luke 1:35 reads, “And the angel answered (Mary, the mother of Jesus) and said unto her, “that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” John 1:14 states, “And the Word (Jesus) was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

“...the government shall be upon his shoulder.” The word government (mis-raw) is used only twice in our Bible here in verses 6 and 7. Jesus didn't come to set up an earthly kingdom. Herod was afraid and had the (male, ASV) children two years old and under, murdered (Matt. 2:16). Remember when Jesus was arrested how Peter drew his sword getting ready to fight? Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world (Jn. 18:36). The church and the kingdom are the same institution (Matt. 16:13-19). Jesus came to die on the cross so the church could be established. It shall ever be destroyed (Dan. 2:44). It began on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 and continues till the end of time. As New Testament Christians we've been translated from darkness into the kingdom of His dear son (Col. 1:12-14). Isaiah then speaks of the names that Jesus would be called:

Wonderful (peh-leh). He was wonderful in His nature as God and man. His teaching astonished those who heard Him, along with the miracles He performed. Truly His life was wonderful and even His death as well. **Counsellor** (yawats). Paul said that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). He was and is reliable in giving advice. People came to Jesus seeking advice and left with the correct answer. Today, “talk radio” gives much advice regarding a certain position or a political candidate, but that is not what Jesus did. He spoke God's truth. **The mighty God**. The ASV leaves off the article “the” (mighty God). David penned in Psalm 45:6 “...the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right scepter.” God is triune: God the Father; God the Son; God the Holy Spirit. (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1-14; Acts 5:1-4) One God and three distinct beings (Col. 1:9-20). **The everlasting Father**. Isaiah wrote, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:10). Sometimes a wise man is called the father of wisdom and a foolish man the father of folly. Adam is often called the father of all living. He was the representative. In like manner Jesus is Father. He is called second Adam (1 Cor. 15:47). Christ is the head of the new covenant and the church. Could this be a reference (Father) to life giver? **The Prince of Peace**. The world seeks peace by drugs, alcohol, or the works of the flesh. True peace can only come from Jesus. Obeying the gospel and living a faithful life leads to having peace (Jn. 14:27; Acts 10:36). **Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end**. The great commission given to you and me, through the apostles, helps to keep the church growing and glowing (Matt. 28:18-20). People will come and go and they will pass into eternity, but the institution of the church will stand forever. Being a Christian is the highest attainment in this life. Man can gain knowledge and wisdom by growing in faith and knowing the peace that is only found in Christ and His church. Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever (Dan. 2:44; Lk. 1:32-33). The kingdom, the church, began on Pentecost (Acts 2). When one obeys the gospel he is translated from darkness into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13).

*“True peace can only come from Jesus.
Obeying the gospel and living a faithful life
leads to having peace.”*

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The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3)
- Name of Christ (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
- Promised by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Married to Christ (Rom. 7:4)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Jesus is the Head of the one body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23)
- Added by God to the church (Acts 2:41, 47)

Salvation

- Saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9)
- Not by faith alone (Jas. 2:20-26)
- Not by grace alone (Matt. 7:21)
- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
- Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
- Buried and raised to new life (Rom. 6:3-5)
- Faith in the operation of God (Col. 2:12)
- Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
- Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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Facebook - Church of Christ at Mammoth Spring
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