

The Discerner

the voice of... **Religion Analysis Service**

A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

Volume 38, Number 4

October • November • December 2018

Eckankar
Confucianism
Hare Krishna
Freemasons
Jehovah's Witnesses
Humanism
Jainism
Judaism
Neopaganism
MOONIES
Universalism
Wicca
Islam
Hinduism
Exposed!
MORMONS
BAHA' I FAITH
Buddhism
Scientology
Satanism

In This Edition:

With This Issue	2
Messages From Readers	3
The Biblical Mary vs. Rome's Counterfeit Mary by Richard Bennett.....	4
Michael Hudson: An Economic Distortion of the New Testament, Part 2 by Steve Lagoon	21
QUIZ:	29



*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*
Copyright © 2006 Religion Analysis Service, Inc.

The Discerner

A Christian Apologetics & counter-cult
Ministry

Volume 38, Number 4
October • November • December 2018

Religion Analysis Service Board Members

Rev. Steve Lagoon: President
Rick Dack, Vice President
Steve Devore: Treasurer, Office Manager
Dave Brittain
Scott Harvath
Cindy Marty
Doug Steiner

The Discerner editorial team is
Steve Lagoon, Steve Devore, and Doug
Steiner

PO Box 206
Chaska, MN 55318
612-331-3342 / 1-800-562-9153
FAX 612-331-3342
info@ras.org <http://www.ras.org>
Published Quarterly
Price \$10.00 for 4 issues
Foreign subscriptions \$14.00

Religion Analysis Service Board of Reference

Dr. Norman Geisler
Dr. James Walker
Don Veinot
Dr. Ron Rhodes
Robert Bowman
M. Kurt Goedelman



WITH THIS ISSUE

Our feature article for this issue is *The Biblical Mary Vs. Rome's Counterfeit Mary* by Richard Bennett of the Berean Beacon Ministries.

Also, we have the conclusion of Steve Lagoon's article on the economist Michael Hudson and his distortion of the Christian message.

MESSAGES FROM READERS

Mrs. Clarice Olson wrote:

In the January–February–March 2017 issue of the Discerner you had an article, *Set Free to Serve Him* by Cindy Marty which impressed me. I would recommend it to be in tract form if possible. It is very good for many to know how God works to save souls through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank-you.

Tom Eynon wrote:

Just read your latest Discerner [Quiz], and haven't laughed so hard in years. Who in the world goth the wild hair to write those? Do it again. 5 pigeons and a badger. Oh my! God bless.

Thanks Tom for the encouragement. Our longtime editor, Larry Sutherland gets the credit for the idea of having a fun, challenging, but informative quiz in each issue. We have continued with that tradition since Larry went home to be with the Lord. I (Steve Lagoon) write most of the quizzes with a little help from my friends. We are glad you enjoy them.

As always, enjoy or quiz, this time on the biblical patriarchs!

We thank you all for your generous gifts that make our ministry possible.

Have a blessed Christmas one an all!

Steve Lagoon

President, Religion Analysis Service

THE BIBLICAL MARY VS. ROME'S COUNTERFEIT MARY

by Richard Bennett

"By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the 'Mother of Mercy,' the All Holy One."¹

Such is the superlative praise and veneration that Catholic teaching gives to their Mary. The whole cycle of feasts of the Catholic Church is permeated with her festivals throughout each year.² Pope John Paul II dedicated himself and his Pontificate to Mary. His personal motto was, "Totus Tuus," for "Totus Tuus sum Maria," meaning in English "I am all yours Mary." On October 8th, 2000, before the image of the Virgin of Fátima, he consecrated the world and the new millennium to "Mary Most Holy."³ She is prominent in all the Pope's teachings and centerpiece to the lives of millions of Catholics.

With the constant charm and fascination of the apparitions, the world itself has become mystified and indeed seems to be becoming mesmerized by the same Mary. It is quite commonplace to find this Mary on the cover of *Life*, *Time*, and *Newsweek* magazines. She is

- 1 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), #2677 Hereafter referred to as *Catechism*.
- 2 1 January Mary, Mother of God, 21 January, Our Lady of Altagrancia, 23 January, Espousal of the Virgin Mary, 24 January Madonna del Pianto (Our Lady of Tears), 2 February Purification of Mary, 11 February Our Lady of Lourdes, 25 March – Annunciation by Saint Gabriel, 25 April – Our Lady of Good Counsel (at Genazzano), 26 April Our Lady of Good Counsel, 13 May Our Lady of Fatima, 13 May – Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament, 24 May, Mary, Help of Christians, 31 May, Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces, 31 May – Visitation, 9 June – Mary, Virgin Mother of Grace, 27 June, Our Lady of Perpetual Help 2 July, Visitation by Mary to Saint Elizabeth, 16 July – Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 17 July – Humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 2 August – Our Lady of the Angels, 5 August – Our Lady of the Snow, 5 August – Our Lady of Copacabana, 13 August – Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners, 15 August – Assumption into Heaven, 21 August Our Lady of Knock, 22 August – Immaculate Heart of Mary, 22 August Queenship of Mary, 8 September – Nativity of Mary, 8 September – Our Lady of Charity, 12 September, Most Holy Name of Mary, 15 September, Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows 24 September, Our Lady of Mercy, 24 September, Our Lady of Walsingham, 1 October, Holy Protection of the Mother of God, 7 October, Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, 11 October, Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 16 October, Purity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 21 November, Presentation of Mary at the Temple, 8 December, Mary's Immaculate Conception, 12 December Our Lady of Guadalupe, 18 December Expectation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. [The] Moveable Feasts are: Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles, Saturday after Ascension, Our Lady, Health of the Sick, Saturday before the last Sunday in August, Our Lady of Consolation – Saturday after the Feast of Saint Augustine (28 August), Mary, Mother of Divine Providence, Saturday before 3rd Sunday of November." www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintbvm.htm 3/20/2003
- 3 "The culminating moment of the Jubilee of Bishops was the Mass concelebrated by the Pope and Bishops in St Peter's Square on Sunday morning, 8 October. Tens of thousands of the faithful gathered for the sacred liturgy, which concluded with the Act of Entrustment to Mary Most Holy." *L'Osservatore Romano* Weekly edition in English 11 October 2000.htm

becoming more and more a focal point of unity between Church of Rome and the Muslims. The famous Archbishop Fulton Sheen stated,

It is our firm belief that the fears some entertain concerning the Moslems are not to be realized, but that Moslemism, instead, will eventually be converted to Christianity—and in a way that even some of our missionaries never suspect. It is our belief that this will happen not through the direct teachings of Christianity, but through a summoning of the Moslems to a veneration of the Mother of God.⁴

The ecumenism of the Papacy with Islam should be of grave concern to the true body of Christ, as recent events have shown. That the apparitions would play a role in this movement toward unity is not to be doubted. Further, the apparitions are becoming more numerous as time goes on, as noted by Cardinal Ratzinger (Who became Pope Benedict XVI and resigned in February of 2013) some time ago,

In 1984 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the head of the Roman Catholic Church's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), declared that, "one of the signs of our times is that the announcements of 'Marian Apparitions' are multiplying all over the world...." He made this observation as a comment on the many reports of the appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to individuals located in a wide variety of countries, cultures and political systems.⁵

Another typical Catholic webpage announces, "The last century-and-a-half has seen numerous accounts of appearances of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Jesus, Himself, is said to speak to a few of the seers. Some of the apparitions have received official approval by the Roman Catholic Church."⁶ A sample of what is happening is the whole host appearances in Medjugorje in Bosnia, Herzegovina,

Since the apparitions began in 1981, millions of people of all faiths, from all over the world, have visited Medjugorje and have left spiritually strengthened and renewed. Countless unbelievers and physically or mentally afflicted, have been converted and healed...Our Lady continues to give messages to six young people from the village of Medjugorje: Ivan, Jakov, Marija, Mirjana, Vicka, and Ivanka. These six young people (referred to as "visionaries") have had apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary since June 24, 1981. In addition to these messages,

4 http://www.oloswestriver.org/mary_koran.htm 3/20/2003

5 <http://members.aol.com/bjw1106/marian1b.htm> 3/20/2003

6 <http://www.apparitions.org/> 3/20/2003

Our Lady is to give each of the six visionaries a total of ten 'secrets' or happenings that will occur on earth in the near future....Only one of the secrets so far has been revealed by the visionaries. Our Lady has promised to leave a supernatural, indestructible, and visible sign on the mountain where she first appeared....When each of the six visionaries has received all ten 'secrets', Our Lady will stop appearing to them on a daily basis. Currently, Marija, Vicka, and Ivan have received nine secrets, and Our Lady still appears to them every day, wherever they are, at 5:40 pm during daylight savings time, and 6:40 pm the rest of the year, Medjugorje time. Mirjana, Jakov, and Ivanka have received all ten secrets, and Our Lady appears to them once per year, and will do so for the rest of their lives.⁷

The adulation surrounding the Catholic Mary has reached such proportions that it is necessary to get back to the bedrock of official teaching of Rome concerning her to see how such dramatic expressions of dedication to her could be part and parcel of the nature of the Catholic Church

Catholic Parallel of Mary to Christ Jesus and to the Holy Spirit

In spite of the Biblical truth, "My glory will I not give to another," (Isa 42:8) the Church of Rome constructs a parallel of Mary to Jesus, and even of Mary to the Holy Spirit. The Catholic teaching consistently declares that attributes and offices of the Lord Christ Jesus are applicable to Mary. The table below shows that the strategies underlying the presentation of the dogmas on Mary as if she were a parallel to the Lord Himself and to the Holy Spirit in some roles.

Biblical Truth

1. Jesus Christ's unique sinlessness
2. Grace and salvation are in Christ alone
3. Christ has ascended into heaven and is King of Kings
4. Jesus Christ is the one Mediator
5. The Holy Spirit is the believer's Helper and Advocate
6. Christ Himself with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is God, the all Holy One

⁷ <http://www.medjugorje.org/> 3/20/2003

Roman Catholic teaching

1. Mary's declared Immaculate Conception
2. Mary's place in grace and salvation
3. Mary's declared assumption into heaven and is declared Queen of Heaven.
4. Mary is declared Mediatrix
5. Mary is declared helper and advocate
6. Mary is also the All Holy One

First Parallel “All have sinned...”

The first parallel that Catholicism attempts to claim is a unique sinlessness, like that of the Lord, for the Catholic Mary. Thus the Catholic Church teaches their dogma regarding Mary's so-called immaculate conception,

Through the centuries the [Catholic] Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.⁸

By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.⁹

The idea of the “Immaculate Conception” assigned to Mary by the Catholic Church is totally unscriptural. The term as used by the Roman system has nothing to do with the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ, but rather means Mary's own conception in the womb of her mother. In this claim, Mary's “Immaculate Conception” is contained in the assertion that she was thus free from original sin and sinlessness her whole life. The Scriptural truth, however, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” (Rom 3:23) applies to Mary, as well as to all believers. Mary's position as a saved sinner is seen also in the following scriptures, “[Joseph and Mary came to Jerusalem] to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord,

⁸ *Catechism*, #491

⁹ *Catechism*, #493

A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons” (Luke 2:24). That was accordance with the law of the Lord, “as a burnt offering, sin offering” (Lev 12:8). Mary’s example teaches us both to give thanks to God for His mercies to us and to acknowledge ourselves as sinners saved by His grace. Then there is the famous praise song of Mary, in which she proclaimed, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior...” (Luke 1:46–47). *God* is called “Savior,” as He saves His people from sin. Even the mother of the Lord had need of her Savior and would have been spiritually lost without Him. She rejoices in that joy which she had in common with all believers—that she had a Savior.

Alleged Perpetual Virginity

The Catholic dogma that Mary was perpetually a virgin is part of the myth of sinlessness that the Roman Catholic Church ascribes to Mary. It is another step in the evolving doctrines that elevate Mary to the place of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The doctrine states that Mary was not only a virgin before the birth of Christ but during the birth and afterward as well. Thus Rome teaches,

The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary’s real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. In fact, Christ’s birth “did not diminish his mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it.” And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the “Ever-virgin”¹⁰

Mary’s Real Marriage and Christ’s Siblings

This “ever Virgin” role allotted to Mary by the Catholic Church is not Scriptural. There are several passages that mention the brothers and sisters of Christ Jesus. An example is found in Mark’s gospel, “Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” (Mark 6:3). Another is found in Matthew’s gospel account, “Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? and His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?” (Mt 13:55–56). From these and other texts, it is clear that Jesus had brothers and sisters. The Holy Spirit as the author of all Scripture used the precise language of Greek in which there is a clear distinction between brother “*adelphos*” (literally, “a” meaning “from,” and “delphus” meaning “womb”) and nephew “*anepsios*” a cousin, or sister’s son. Likewise, the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration Holy Spirit calls James “the Lord’s brother” (Gal 3:16). The word he used

¹⁰ *Catechism*, #499

in the Greek is “*adelphos*” meaning brother rather than “*anepsios*,” signifying cousin. The Holy Spirit again in the Gospel of Mark is utterly precise in using the distinct word for brother, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother [*adelphos*] of James” (Mark 6:3).

While “*adelphos*” is employed on occasion in some writings in the New Testament to refer to the larger company of believers and disciples, the context of the passages in Mark and Matthew are such that anything other than the literal sense would involve an absurdity. “Brothers and sisters” signifying believers and disciples would be bizarre in the context. To claim the concept of “cousins” is equally ruled out; as such meaning is always given as “*anepsioi*” to signify that relationship. The Holy Spirit clearly states not only that Christ Jesus had siblings, but also in the gospel of John, He distinguishes between siblings and disciples, “...He [the Lord], and His mother and His brethren and His disciples...” (John 2:12).

In another and seemingly desperate attempt to preserve the tradition that Mary remained forever a virgin, the Church of Rome proposes that in the Scripture accounts, brothers and sisters of Jesus refer to another Mary. Thus it is stated,

Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus. The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, “brothers of Jesus”, are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls “the other Mary”. They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.¹¹

Another Mary? Why the twisting of Scripture? These verses clearly refer to “...His mother called Mary? and His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?” (Mt 13:55) So why does the Catholic Church deliberately mislead its members? It is to propagate an image of Mary as a quasi-divine creature, who is above having a normal marital relationship with her husband, Joseph, and to establish her as a role model for nuns and priests to live a celibate life.

The doctrine of the virginity of Mary before the birth of Jesus is a doctrine of the Scriptures that is a very important part of Biblical faith. But the Scriptures do not teach the perpetual virginity of Mary; in fact it teaches the opposite. Marriage is commended and called honorable on the pages of Scripture. Who was more highly favored

¹¹ *Catechism*, #500

than Mary was in her marriage? Thus the Scripture teaches, “when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Mt 1:18). The term “came together” includes the idea of sexual intimacy. The implication clearly is that ultimately Mary and Joseph indeed “came together.” Then the Scripture states, “then Joseph... took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus” (Mt 1:24–25). The language here makes it clear that she lived as the virgin wife of Joseph until Christ Jesus was born. Joseph did not know her sexually prior to that birth. Neither the word “till” nor “firstborn” necessarily specifies what happened afterward. However, one would naturally infer that the normal relationship of marriage would follow, unless one is committed to defend the tradition of the perpetual virginity of Mary. The Holy Spirit through the writing of Matthew reveals no such inclination.

Alleged Vow of Virginity

Thomas Aquinas, Rome’s leading authority, asks the question, “Whether the Mother of God took a vow of virginity?” He states, “Christ’s Mother did not do this until she was espoused to Joseph. After her espousals, however, by their common consent she took a vow of virginity together with her spouse.”¹² Likewise in our own day Catholic apologists, in a desperate attempt to justify Catholic teaching regarding Mary, maintain the same tradition. They hold the position that Mary kept her virginity vow and had no other children. This is absolutely absurd. The alleged perpetual celibate state of Joseph and Mary’s relationship is contrary to the divine purpose. Marriage as designed by God is intended to bring a man and woman together as “one flesh.”¹³ Following the initial physical bonding, as the marriage is consummated, the couple has the responsibility not to defraud one another sexually. God appointed this means for the keeping their bodies in sanctification and honor. If there is to be abstinence, it is to be by mutual consent, and that only temporarily.¹⁴

Had Joseph agreed to virginity in their marriage, it would have been a sin against the Lord’s specific command to him, “Thou son of David fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife...” (Mt 1:20). Joseph did exactly what he was directed to do by the Holy Spirit, as the Scripture records, “and knew her not till she had brought forth her first born

12 *Summa Theologica* Third Part q 28 article 4 Reply to Objection <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/402804.htm> 3/20/2003

13 “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?” (Mt 19:4–5)

14 “Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” (1 Cor 7:5)

son...” (Mt 1:25). For Joseph, and all husbands, the Lord’s command is clear and precise, “Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love” (Prov 5:18–19). Had Mary and Joseph made vows of virginity within their marriage, they would have sinned against God in placing virginity as a higher purpose in marriage than that which the Lord God Himself has decreed. The Scriptural principle for husbands stands firm, because they are one flesh “so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (Eph 5:28).

True Blessedness of Mary

The biblical Mary is truly a believer whom all generations should call blessed among women, but she is not above them, and she is not blessed on a par with Christ Jesus Himself. The blessedness of Mary was a demonstration of divine favor toward her, especially in calling her to be the mother of the Lord. This was an act of sovereign choice on God’s part, and prophetically consequential to her lineage in the royal House of David. She, as a believer, and according to God’s Word to her, conceived and brought forth Christ Jesus the Lord, as a virgin. Later in obedience to the Lord’s Word (recorded infallibly for us in the Gospels), she was wife to Joseph and mother of their children. The contrived tradition of Mary’s “perpetual virginity” is held and promoted by the Roman Church to provide a foundation not only for viewing Mary as a special being in her own right, but also by extension to idolize the celibate state as a means to enter a higher plane of personal sanctity and access to God. Thus it is proclaimed, “The Blessed Mother’s decision to commit herself completely to the Lord in virginity was the beginning and inspiration of consecrated virginity in the Church.”¹⁵

The unadorned truth is that like all other genuine believers, Mary of Bethlehem was a sinner saved by God’s grace, through faith, not by any essential righteousness or preserving grace granted in her own birth, nor any elevation of virginity within marriage as a higher call than what the Lord has decreed in His Word. In this way she was and is truly blessed among women!

Second Parallel

According to Scripture, the Lord Jesus Christ completed the work of redemption. Grace and salvation are in Christ Jesus alone. In the tradition of Rome, however, the Catholic Mary is given a place in

¹⁵ <http://www.miraclosarymission.org/960821.htm> 3/20/2000

grace and salvation. Thus under the heading, “she is our Mother in the order of grace,” the Catholic *Catechism* teaches,

Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity goes still further. “In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior’s work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.”¹⁶

Fullness of Grace and Truth is Distinctly Christ’s Own Prerogative

God’s grace and love in salvation does not come to us by means of a mother; rather, it is the high-priestly work of Christ, and of Him alone. Grace, a distinct attribute of His office, is everywhere in Scripture ascribed to Christ Jesus the Lord, “He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). All that went before Christ Jesus was but a type and a representation; grace and truth come only by Christ. All that comes after Him points back to His faithfulness and accomplished work. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” the Apostle John proclaimed, “and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” It is by His graciousness that we are made acceptable before the All Holy God. “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25). “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell” (Col 1:19). From this fullness He abundantly gives all that are His own people “grace for grace” (John 1:16).

Alleged Exaltation of Mary as Having a Saving Office

The Catholic Church, however, continues to state that Mary has a place in the order of grace, and goes even further in her exaltation by declaring,

This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect.¹⁷

“As St. Irenaeus says, ‘Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.’”¹⁸

The claimed “motherhood of Mary in the order of grace” having a “saving office” “to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation” is straight

¹⁶ *Catechism*, #968

¹⁷ *Catechism*, #969

¹⁸ *Catechism*, #494

blasphemy against the person of Christ Jesus, Who alone is full of grace and truth. It is also an insult to the true character of the Mary of Scripture. Likewise is the blasphemy in the citation from Irenaeus where it is absurdly claimed “she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.” This infers a power of influence of her will with God, and actually credits her as being an effective cause in salvation of souls including her own. It is also shows an arrogant disrespect for the love of God as the original cause of the salvation of souls. The Bible teaches that the salvation of men is a divine initiative 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” (John 3:16). Scripture teaches that God is, “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Ex 34:6) and “longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression” (Num 14:18). To direct anyone toward Mary in the hope of finding mercy by her influence with God, or, because of her gentle motherly disposition and willingness to accede requests, is an outright betrayal of a soul’s only hope, which is in Christ Jesus alone. It is also attempted thievery of the glory and honor due to God alone for the provision of the hope of salvation.¹⁹

Third Parallel

In this parallel, the Biblical fact that Christ Jesus has ascended into heaven as King of Kings is matched in the Catholic Church with the claim that Mary has been assumed into heaven and is now the Queen over all things. Thus Rome officially teaches,

Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians: In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death.²⁰

¹⁹ Psalms 42:5, Psalms 61:2, Isaiah 45:22, Micah 7:7

²⁰ *Catechism*, #966

A Biblical Response to the Third Parallel

The Roman Catholic doctrine of the assumption of Mary teaches that she was assumed body and soul into heaven either without dying or shortly after death. It was made a dogma of faith in 1950. To deny this doctrine is a mortal sin according to Rome's teaching. This is truly an absurd dogma since there is no Scriptural mention of it and there was not even any early tradition on the subject. Roman Catholic scholars such as Ludwig Ott admit this when he states,

The idea of the bodily assumption of Mary is first expressed in certain transitus–narratives of the fifth and sixth centuries. Even though these are apocryphal they bear witness to the faith of the generation in which they were written despite their legendary clothing. The first Church author to speak of the bodily ascension of Mary, in association with an apocryphal transitus B.M.V., is St. Gregory of Tours +594.²¹

In the teaching of the assumption of Mary, the Roman Church has embraced and is responsible for promoting teachings that originated with heretical writings, which were officially condemned by the early Church.

Besides the official teaching of the assumption, the same assumed Mary is proclaimed “Queen over all things.” For the Catholics, the popular prayer following the Rosary is the “Hail Holy Queen.” It starts, “Hail Holy Queen, mother of mercy, hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.” This is the offering of one's life and hope to the Queen of Heaven. The official litany of the Roman Mary calls her, “Queen of Angels, Queen of Patriarchs, Queen of Prophets, Queen of Apostles, Queen of Martyrs, Queen of Confessors, Queen of Virgins, Queen of all Saints, Queen conceived without original sin, Queen assumed into heaven, Queen of the most holy Rosary, Queen of Peace.”²²

This is quite similar to what the perverse Israelites did in Old Testament times as recorded by the Prophet Jeremiah, “The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger” (Jer 7:18). It is also reminiscent of the ancient Phoenicians who called the moon Ahstoreth or Astarte, the wife of Baal and the Queen of Heaven. In the same way, the Babylonians worshipped the Queen of Heaven as Mylitta.

21 Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford: Tan, 1974), pp. 209–210

22 <http://www.webdesk.com/catholic/prayers/litany-of-the-blessed-virgin-mary.html> 2/1/2002

In chapters four and five of the Book of Revelation, a quite detailed picture of Heaven is given. God is seated on the throne, surrounded by twenty-four elders and four living creatures. The Lamb, the Lord Christ Jesus, is on the throne. Many thousands of angels circle the throne, singing God's praises. There is no Queen of Heaven, for such would be an abomination to the Lord. The Lord God alone is glorified. "Look to me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa 45:22). Those who promote such worship to the Queen of Heaven "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation." (Rev 14:10)

Fourth Parallel

Over and above all that has been documented here, the Church of Rome constructs Mary as Mediatrix as an equivalent to Christ Jesus as the one Mediator. Thus the Vatican teaches, "...Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the [Roman Catholic] Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix."²³ More details of the fabrication are given in the Vatican Council II Documents,

In the words of the apostle there is but one mediator: "for there is but one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all" (I Tim. 2:5-6). But Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God....²⁴

Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the [Roman Catholic] Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix. This, however, is so understood that it neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator²⁵

A Biblical Response to the Fourth Parallel

The Church of Rome looks upon Mary as having also the role of mediator in the feminine form, mediatrix. The issue of mediation between God and man is very serious, because it is only in the one who is truly the God-man, Christ Jesus, which an individual can be

²³ *Catechism*, #969

²⁴ *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, No. 28, Lumen Gentium, 21 Nov. 1964, Austin Flannery, O.P., Editor, 1981 edition (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1975) Vol. I, Para 60, p.418

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Para. 62, p. 419

brought into relationship with the All Holy God. The Lord Himself said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). The Father is God, and Jesus, the Son, is the only way to the Father. The Apostle Paul also wrote, “there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). The Heavenly Father sent His only Son so that sinners can come to Him directly through “the man Christ Jesus.” To advance the claim that there is another assistant, mediatrix, or go-between, is a bold lie. In the words of the Lord, “he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1).

The Vatican Council II explanation of how it is possible to have Mary in the role of a mediatrix is a classic example of Roman Catholic double talk. While presenting two mediators, the claim is made that Mary does not “obscure or diminish from this unique mediation of Christ.” Rather than upholding the truth of the Scripture, the teaching of Rome is a highly inflated lie. This is proven by the actual practice of ordinary Catholics based on such dogma in catechisms and prayer books. The ordinary Catholic who looks to Mary as feminine mediator is thereby impeded and hindered from putting his trust in Christ Jesus alone. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. The Man Christ Jesus is the one Mediator in heaven, “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). This is solid fact. Yet historically, and at present, the Vatican officially denies this truth by proclaiming Mary as a feminine Mediator, and as the Queen of heaven.

The Apparitions of Mary

The apparitions of “Mary” throughout the world endorse the official teachings of the Vatican and show how such teachings of a feminine Mediator, who is also the Queen of heaven, are lived out. Sometimes these apparitions present Mary as a co-mediator with Christ Himself, and also as a high priestess with Him on behalf of believers. She often appears as the Queen from heaven.

The apparitions preach a message that is always the same. Consider the most popular site of the apparitions, Fátima, in Portugal. In 1917, the apparition of Mary at Fátima stated that the children there needed to increase the level of their sacrifices, because, “...many souls go to hell because they have no one to sacrifice and pray for them.”²⁶ This message stands in direct contradiction to the teaching of Scripture, which plainly states that Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross was

26 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_p.../hf_jp-ii_hom_20000513_beatification-fatima_en.htm 6/1/2000.

the first, last, and only meritorious sacrifice for the remission of sins. Thus the visions of Mary at Fátima serve to contradict directly the message of the Cross and, indeed, to deny altogether its efficacy. The same is true of visions of Mary at Medjugorje; at Denver, Colorado; Phoenix, Arizona; Conyers, Georgia, and across the world. Through His all sufficient offering on the cross, Christ “by Himself purged our sins” and “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:3). The Holy Spirit’s clear instruction is that the Gospel message is of one sacrifice of the one Mediator, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God... For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:12, 14). Clearly, the visions of Mary at Fátima and elsewhere contradict the message of the Cross and, indeed, deny its efficacy. The visions of Mary have shown contempt for the sanctity and purpose of the cross of Christ. They lied about its identity (i.e., Mary) and lied about its origins (i.e., heaven). The authority of the Apostle Paul weighs in on the matter, “...and no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14).

Detailed analyses of the messages of the apparitions of Mary, their demonic origins, and their interactions with Popes, are contained the books *Quite Contrary* and *Graven Bread*.²⁷ Upon further investigation of these issues, one finds the Roman Catholic Church allied with a demon and its messages of establishing one’s own righteousness by self suffering, reparation, and prayer and obedience to one claiming to be co-Mediator, co-High Priestess, and even elevated to the throne of God.

Fifth Parallel

The Holy Spirit is the believer’s Helper and Advocate. The Vatican, however, endeavors to teach that Mary is also the believer’s Advocate and Helper. Thus, it is officially stated, “Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the [Roman Catholic] Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, and Benefactress.”²⁸ What is so serious regarding these titles is the fact that in the Bible the Comforter, the Helper sent to take the Lord’s place on earth for believers and to indwell them, is the Holy Spirit. He abides with believers forever (John 14:16). He brings to mind Christ’s words (John 14:26). He testifies not to Himself but to Christ (John 15:26). He guides believers into all truth (John 16:13). Truly the Holy Spirit is another Advocate, a divine Helper, the Comforter, and the Spirit of Truth. The seriousness of teaching that these divine roles of the Holy Spirit, and that of Christ Jesus as sole

27 Both books by Timothy Kauffman are published by and available from White Horse Publications, c/o Rob Zins, PO Box 6409, Rutland, VT 05802, 1-800-775-3899 Fax

28 *Catechism*, #969

mediator, belong also to “Mary” is that such teaching blasphemes the divine Persons of the Lord Christ Jesus and of the Holy Spirit. This teaching is heresy.

The knowledge of the way of salvation comes by the declaration of the Word of God, and by an individual’s true appreciation of the urgent need to be reconciled to God. This is conveyed to the soul, who hears that Word declared, through the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, and not by some female substitute. The Word of Truth alone is the means of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit alone is the only effective minister in applying it. Pope John Paul II proclaimed the Roman Catholic concept of “Mary” subsuming the role of the Holy Spirit in leading people to God, on May 13, 2000, at Fatima in Portugal. He said,

According to the divine plan, “a woman clothed with the sun” (Rev. 12:1) came down from heaven to this earth to visit the privileged children.... She asks them to offer themselves as victims of reparation, saying that she was ready to lead them safely to God. And behold, they see a light shining from her maternal hands which penetrates them inwardly, so that they feel immersed in God....²⁹

The Pope’s assertive language at Fatima was mystically flavored Marian fanaticism. He, in his position as supreme teacher of the Catholic Church, misused the Word of God itself to arrogate to an ordinary woman the Holy Spirit’s role of leading people to God. No one would be more appalled at this than the true Mary of Bethlehem. The official teaching of Rome, and the appealing words of the Pope, are summarized in the famous Catholic prayer called the “The Memorare,”

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession, was left unaided. Inspired then with confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother! To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer me. Amen

This prayer implies that though God may fail to answer, the “most gracious Virgin Mary” never will. This is the very height of idolatry. Polytheism has always been a besetting sin. The Lord God’s

29 https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2000/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20000513_beatification-fatima.html 6/1/2000. See on our web page our critique of the same in *Fatima: JP II, RCC Contradict Gospel: Where Do Evangelical ECT Signatories Now Stand?*

commandment still stands. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex 20:3).

Sixth Parallel

Attribute That Separates God from All Beings Christ Jesus Himself, of one essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is God, the All Holy One. In Roman Catholicism, an attempt is made to proclaim that Mary also is the All Holy One. The parallels in which the Roman Catholic “Mary” is declared the cause of salvation, Advocate, Helper, Mediatrix, are blasphemous. That is, they are attempts to place on a human person, divine roles. The official teaching of Rome, however, adds insult to blasphemy in attempting to call “Mary” the All Holy One, and the source of holiness. This irreverent teaching is an attempted theft on the very essence of the divine glory. The Vatican teaching declares, “By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the ‘Mother of Mercy,’ the All Holy One.”³⁰ “From the [Roman Catholic] Church he [the Catholic] learns the example of holiness and recognizes its model and source in the all-holy Virgin Mary....”³¹

The Bible clearly teaches that God alone is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He is the All Holy One. His Holiness is the attribute that covers all attributes so that His righteousness is Holy, His truth is Holy, and His justice is Holy. He is each of His attributes, and the overall attribute of holiness is that which separates Him from all beings. He is totally other. The reason why we need to be saved before the All Holy God is because in the words of Scripture, “there is none holy as the Lord there is besides Thee: neither is there any rock like our God” (1 Sam 2:2). And, again the Word of the Lord proclaims, “who shall not fear thee O Lord and glorify Thy name for thou only art holy and all nations shall come and worship before thee” (Rev 15:4). This is of utter seriousness in the words of the Prophet Isaiah, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa 6:3). To attempt to address a creature as the “All Holy One” is consummate blasphemy and high hand idolatry.

Conclusion

The Bible not only establishes who God is, but it excludes all others from that glory. Similarly, the Bible not only teaches who the Lord Jesus Christ is, but it also excludes all others from His roles. And finally, Scripture declares the Person and role of the Holy Spirit, and

³⁰ *Catechism*, #2677

³¹ *Catechism*, #2030

bars all others from His role. These Bible truths exclude all Roman Catholic teaching that parades their “Mary” as “the All Holy One,” one of “Immaculate Conception,” “Mother in the order of grace,” Queen of Heaven, Mediatrix, Advocate, and Heavenly Helper. “I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images” (Isa 42:8).

The false Mary of Roman Catholicism is not parallel to Christ Jesus, nor the Holy Spirit but an abomination to God and His Word. There is, however, a quite revealing parallel between the Roman Catholic false Mary and pagan goddesses. Similar to the Roman Mary, some pagan goddesses, it is claimed, do not need salvation, as they are the ones who cause it. Often goddesses do not have human children and they are often called the “Queen of Heaven” and are invoked to make supernatural things happen through special objects and special verbal formulas. Goddesses do not die and they are prayed to in worship. The Catholic Cult of the ever-virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven, leads one into the occult and, not surprisingly, is found in the occult. The Roman Virgin Mary is included among the goddesses that are listed on, for example, the following web pages: The Spiral Goddess Grove, The White Moon, and Goddess 2000. They consider Mary to be the “Divine Feminine” and say that for centuries, many people have blended their ancient goddesses with Mary.³²

While the Scriptures states that “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light,” (2 Cor 11:14) it still comes as a shock to see the Prince of Darkness, the most alien to the light, misuse the wonderful believer, Mary, until she appears as a goddess. The Lord’s command and promise stand in face of this malicious doctrine and practice,

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor 6:17–18).

The Vatican’s message regarding their manufactured Mary has even attempted to steal the uniqueness and glory of Christ and the unique roles of the Holy Spirit. The Popes makes no secret of where they stand, sincere Catholics must know that to remain loyal to the Pope in exalting the Queen of heaven is to spurn the exclusivity and splendor of Christ and His Gospel. The Word of the Lord speaks clearly to this choice before Catholics, “If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the

32 <http://www.goddess2000.org/Mary.html>
<http://www.thewhitemoon.com/mary/main.html>
<http://www.spiralgoddess.com/Mary.html>

gods which your fathers served...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh 24:15).

Richard Bennett

Berean Beacon Ministries

On the Web at: <https://bereanbeacon.org>

MICHAEL HUDSON: AN ECONOMIC DISTORTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, PART 2

by Steve Lagoon

Luke 4:16–21

The *Renegade* article also refers to a key argument of Michael Hudson in which he suggests that Luke 4:16–21 shows that Jesus came to set men free from *debt* rather than *sin*:

Jesus’ first reported sermon in Luke 4 documents his announcement that he had come to revive the enforcement of the Jubilee Year. The term “gospel” (or ‘good news’) was used specifically to refer to debt cancellation which became the major political fight of the imperial Roman epoch, pitting Jesus against the pro-creditor Pharisees.¹

In his own words, Hudson describes Jesus’ dramatic announcement in Nazareth:

Luke 4:17ff. describes one of Jesus’ first public acts upon his return to Nazareth. Going to the synagogue, he is handed a scroll and unrolls it to the passage in Isaiah 61, where that prophet announces that the Lord has sent him “to proclaim freedom (*deror*) for the prisoners and ... to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Jesus informs his

¹ *Renegade, Debts*, <http://michael-hudson.com/2017/12/he-died-for-our-debt-not-our-sins/>

audience that he has come to fulfill that prophecy. He hardly could have chosen a passage more concerned with the debt burden.²

Commenting further on Luke 4, Hudson suggests that Jesus' announcement concerning His ministry included the concept of the "Clean Slate," a jubilee bringing the forgiveness of debtors in Israel:

We know that in the very first sermon that Jesus gave when he returned to Nazareth, he went out on the Sabbath to the synagogue, and unrolled the scroll to Isaiah 61 and read that Isaiah had been sent to preach the good news to the poor. "Good news" translates literally to "Gospel." And he said it was to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release for the prisoners, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, *deror*, which meant, basically, a Clean Slate.³

Finally, Hudson dramatically suggest that the congregation turned against Jesus when He announced His intentions concerning the clean slate debt release:

In Luke 4, it says it that this was all very good, and they liked him. But then he began talking about debt cancellation, and they tried to push him off a cliff. So basically you have the whole origin of Christianity was a last gasp, a last fight, to try to reimpose this idea of the economic renewal – of a Clean Slate . . . So you have this last attempt to try to get a Clean Slate, and we know what happened to Jesus.⁴

Since Hudson places such an emphasis on this passage, let us examine Luke 4:16–21:

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue

2 Hudson, *Lost Tradition*, 41.

3 Michael Hudson, *The Land Belongs to God*, January 25, 2017, at web address: <http://michael-hudson.com/2017/01/the-land-belongs-to-god/>

4 Hudson, *Land Belongs to God*

were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:16–21).

Jesus quoted a passage from Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1–2) that predicted the messianic kingdom promised to Israel and announced its fulfillment in His ministry. David Payne stated:

It is generally agreed that the imagery of this chapter [Isaiah 61] is based on that of the year of jubilee (see Lev. 25): a year of liberty and restoration is to be proclaimed . . . when the present troubles of Judah will be reversed.⁵

John Martin comments:

The portion of Scripture Jesus read was Isaiah 61:1–2, *a messianic passage*. He concluded His reading with the words, ‘to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor’—stopping in the middle of the verse without reading the next line in Isaiah 61:2 about God’s vengeance. When Jesus added, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing, the implication was clear. Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah who could bring the kingdom of God which had been promised for so long-but His First Advent was not His time for judgment.’⁶

In another place, Martin further explains the passage:

Part of this passage (Isa. 61:1–2a) was read by Jesus (Luke 4:18–19) in reference to Himself . . . When Jesus read from this passage He stopped in the middle of the sentence, after the word ‘favor’ (Luke 4:18–19). By doing this He was showing that His work would be divided into two advents. In His First Advent He did the things mentioned in Isaiah 61:1–2a; in His Second Advent He will do the things in verses 2b–3. When He returns He will bring judgment on unbelievers.⁷

Michael Hudson notes correctly that the language of Isaiah that Jesus quoted was actually about the Jubilee regulations of the Mosaic Law that were to be a part of the promised Kingdom:

5 David F. Payne, *Isaiah*, in *The International Bible Commentary*, F. F. Bruce General Editor, Grand Rapids MI (Zondervan Publishing Company, 1986) 760.

6 John Martin, *Luke* in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by the Dallas Seminary Faculty*, New Testament Edition, Editors John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, Colorado Springs CO (Victor Books, 1983) 214.

7 John Martin, *Isaiah* in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by the Dallas Seminary Faculty*, Old Testament Edition, Editors John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, Colorado Springs CO (Victor Books, 1985) 1116.

Opposing this pro-creditor argument, Jesus announced in his inaugural sermon that he had come to proclaim the Jubilee Year of the Lord cited by Isaiah, whose scroll he unrolled. His congregation is reported to have reacted with fury. (Luke 4 tells the story). Like other populist leaders of his day, Jesus was accused of seeking kingship to enforce his program on creditors.⁸

The hope of a restored Messianic kingdom in Israel

Let us consider the context of Jesus' Messianic claims.

Israel was an independent nation from the time of Moses (circa 1400 B. C.) until the Northern Kingdom was defeated and taken into captivity by the Assyrians (722 B. C.) and the Southern Kingdom of Judah was taken into captivity by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (587–586 B. C.).

Unfortunately Israel struggled for independence in the period following the release from captivity, being under the dominance of one nation following another: the Babylonians, Medo-persians, Greeks, and the Romans.

But a repeated theme of the prophets was a promised golden age with a messiah or anointed one ruling as its king. Consider for instance, Isaiah's prophecy:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders, and he will be called wonderful counselor, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Of the increase of his government, and peace there will be no end. He will reign over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with just and righteousness from that time on and forever (Isaiah 9:6–7).

At the dawning of the first century, the time was ripe with anticipation for the appearance of this messianic golden age. Indeed, the theme of this kingdom was prominent in the ministry of Jesus Christ. There can be little doubt that Jesus offered Israel the kingdom.

The disciples were so filled with the anticipation of the kingdom that they struggled to understand Christ's repeated warnings of his coming death and resurrection. For instance, we recall the disciples

8 Michael Hudson and Charles Goodhart, *Could/Should Jubilee Debt Cancellations be Reintroduced Today?*, January 17, 2018, The Unz Review, at web address: <https://www.unz.com/mhudson/couldshould-jubilee-debt-cancellations-be-reintroduced-today/>

arguing over who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Matthew 18:1–4).

Certainly the apex of this offer was with Christ's Triumphal Entry:

Those who went ahead and those that followed shouted,
“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”
“*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David*” (Mark 11:9–10).

And while the tide was turning against Christ in the nation, yet Christ continued to make kingdom promises to the disciples. At the last supper He said to them:

And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:29–30).

With this promise so recently in their minds, it is quite understandable that the very first question the disciples ask of Jesus after the resurrection (as recorded in the book of Acts) concerns the setting up of this kingdom:

“Then they gathered around him and asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to *restore the kingdom to Israel*?’” (Acts 1:6).

Jesus response: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). This was not a denial of the coming messianic kingdom for Israel, but was rather a call to wait on the Lord's good timing.

This was a theocratic kingdom in which there was no separation of the cultic and political (in modern parlance there was no separation of church and state). The Mosaic Law provided not only spiritual and ethical guidance, but was the basis of the civil laws of the state.

Implications of Jesus' offer of kingdom to Israel

Although national Israel rejected Christ's offer to set up His kingdom, and was consequently judged with the destruction of the nation in A.D. 70, nevertheless, there are interesting implications of that kingdom offer.

Let us recall that an important feature of the Mosaic legislation was the system of Jubilees (i.e. Leviticus 25) and the freedom given to those in debt or servitude every 50 years. It seems quite reasonable

to suppose that had Israel received Christ as its king, He would have instituted the regular observance of the Jubilee cycles.

It is in this sense that Michael Hudson is half correct. But here is where it gets a bit complicated and where Hudson gets it wrong. Yes, hypothetically, if Israel had accepted Christ kingdom offer, he would have likely instituted the Jubilee provisions of the Mosaic Law.

But the hypothetical kingdom at Christ's first coming was only that. For although the offer was real, nevertheless, God in his sovereign foreknowledge knew that Israel would reject the kingdom. God knew that Jesus would be crucified, and indeed that it was all in accord with his divine plan to bring salvation to the world.

The Bible makes it clear that we are living in a time in which the Messianic Kingdom for Israel has been postponed until Christ's second coming (Romans 11:25–26).

In the meantime, we are living in the Church age. One of the features of the church age, which clearly distinguishes it from the kingdom of Israel, is that it is not a theocracy. That is, the church is not under the Mosaic Law. Specifically, this means that the church is not commanded to observe the Jubilee regulations, nor could it since the church does not control the secular state.

This does not mean that Christians should ignore the poor, the needy, or oppressed. Indeed, as salt and light in whatever secular state they live, Christians can advocate for godly principles. This could certainly include advocating for legislation to restrict economic policies that prey on the poor. They can fight those who use predatory lending to entrap the poor. They can work to strengthen bankruptcy laws that protect those who have been hit by tragic economic situations. I am willing to join Michael Hudson in these kinds of noble ethical reforms.

Indeed, the church is already quite active in just such efforts already, helping the meet the needs of the poor and oppressed in a thousand different ways. Nevertheless, these concerns are secondary to the gospel which is primarily concerned with the saving of souls for eternity.

Hudson's Distortion of Evangelical Christianity

We could wish that Hudson was more careful in his assessments of modern American Christianity. In a stereotypical fashion, he fails to distinguish one unfortunate version or movement within Christianity with the whole:

"But that's not what Evangelical Christianity is all about today," says Professor Hudson. "American Fundamentalist Christians say don't share a penny. King Jesus is going to make you rich. Don't tax millionaires. Jesus may help me win the lottery. Tax poor people whom the Lord has left behind—no doubt for their sins. There's nothing about the Jubilee Year here."⁹

We share Hudson's abhorrence for the movement (most active in Charismatic and Pentecostal circles) known as the health and wealth prosperity gospel.¹⁰ This movement, whose adherents are usually well-meaning, has distorted biblical passages to support the idea that because of Jesus' atonement, all Christians should enjoy financial prosperity and perfect health, and general freedom from life's adversity caused by the Devil.

This movement has been thoroughly and ably refuted by many scholars¹¹ (see the footnote). It is disappointing that Hudson either cannot or will not distinguish between this heretical movement and the majority of evangelical Christians who reject these excesses.

Conclusion

While we appreciate the positive aspects of Michael Hudson's work, most particularly his efforts at defending the historical reality of the Jubilee cycles that were a feature of the Mosaic Law, we most strongly object to his portrayal of Jesus as almost exclusively driven by the pursuit of economic reform.

We do not deny Jesus' concern for the poor and oppressed. Indeed, His example has been the paradigm for Christians social concerns for the Church ever since.

But it is a gross error to deny that Jesus' primary mission was about bringing spiritual salvation to the lost. The New Testament record is just too clear to accept Hudson's claim that Jesus was concerned about people's *debts* rather than their *sins*.

In order to make such claims, Hudson is like a man sawing off the branch he is presently perched upon. That is, Hudson happily accepts the gospels when he thinks they support his thesis (i.e. Luke 4) while

9 Renegade, *Debts*, <http://michael-hudson.com/2017/12/he-died-for-our-debt-not-our-sins/>

10 The movement is also known sometimes as the "The Faith Movement" and by the moniker "Name and Claim it."

11 I recommend three excellent works refuting the Health and Wealth prosperity movement including: Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel*, Downers Grove IL (Inter Varsity Press, 1987); D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, Peabody MA (Hendrickson Publishers, 1988); Robert M. Bowman, *The Word-Faith Controversy*, Grand Rapids MI (Baker Books, 2001).

otherwise rejecting their clear testimony of Jesus as the spiritual savior and redeemer of the world (i.e. Mark 10:45).

Hudson's mirror image

Unfortunately, Hudson paints a distorted picture of the ministry of Jesus. He falls into the same trap as many in the long tradition in the quest for the historical Jesus have fallen into. Rejecting the clear personality presented in the Scriptures, and freed of this historical record, the modern scholar is free to introduce a 'new' Jesus more to their liking. Greg Boyd illustrates this recurring problem:

Schweitzer aptly demonstrated that the tendency of the liberal scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was to 'find' a Jesus 'after their own image.' As George Tyrell stated it in a now classic analogy, in gazing into the deep well of the New Testament texts, scholars tend to find their own reflection gazing up. They discover, in other words, what they want to discover.¹²

It seems almost obvious that Michael Hudson is guilty of trying to recreate Jesus in his own image, and sharing his economic ideals.

¹² Gregory A. Boyd, *Cynic Sage or Son of God: Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies*, Wheaton IL (Victor Books, 1995) 38. See also, Gregory A. Boyd, *Jesus Under Siege*, Wheaton IL (Victor Books, 1995) 227–28.

QUIZ: PATRIARCHS

1. Which is *true* of Abraham when God commanded him to slay his son Isaac?
 - a. Abraham couldn't go through with it and returned home in bitterness.
 - b. Abraham was stopped by an angel of the Lord just as he was about to slay Isaac.
 - c. Abraham obeyed by slaying Isaac and God subsequently raised Isaac from the dead.
 - d. Abraham pleaded with God to spare Isaac, sacrificed a bull, and danced before the Lord.

2. Which is *not* true of Isaac?
 - a. He married a relative named Rebekah.
 - b. He had two sons, Jacob and Esau.
 - c. He bore a life-long grudge against his father Abraham for nearly slaying him as a teenager.
 - d. He favored his son Esau.

3. Which is *not* true of Abraham's nephew Lot?
 - a. He rescued Abraham from captivity.
 - b. He lived in Sodom until it was destroyed.
 - c. He was the father of two sons by his own daughters.
 - d. His wife was turned to a pillar of stone in the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

4. Which is *not* true of Abraham?
 - a. He married his half-sister.
 - b. He convinced Sarah to pretend to be only his sister and not his wife.
 - c. He migrated from the Ur of the Chaldeans
 - d. He wrestled all night with the Angel of the Lord.

5. Which is *not* true about Abraham?

- a. He rescued his nephew Lot from a confederation of kings.
- b. He negotiated with the Lord to spare the righteous in the destruction of Sodom and Gommorah.
- c. He placed a banner in honor of Yahweh in the Jebusite city of Jerusalem.
- d. He had a child through his wife's maidservant.

6. How old was Abraham when his soon Isaac was born?

- a. 25
- b. 45
- c. 57
- d. 100

7. Which is *not* true of Jacob?

- a. He rescued enslaved Jews building a pyramid in Egypt.
- b. He disguised himself and stole his brother's blessing.
- c. He was married to two sisters.
- d. Jacob was never able to visit the Promised Land.

8. Which is *not* true of Jacob's family?

- a. Jacob had twelve sons and no daughters.
- b. Jacob's children were born to four different mothers.
- c. Jacob favored his wife Rachael over her sister Leah.
- d. Rachael died giving birth to her son Benjamin.

9. Which is *not* true of Joseph?

- a. He wore a multi-colored robe that his father Jacob had given him.
- b. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him.
- c. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery.
- d. Joseph has a vision of a giant statue of four metals.

10. Which is *not* true of Joseph?

- a. He wanted to be buried in the land of Egypt in honor of the country he helped rule.
- b. He was accused of rape by Potiphar's wife.
- c. He had a God-given gift of dream interpretation.
- d. He planted evidence on his brothers and then falsely accused them of theft.

Answers:

1, b; 2, c; 3, a; 4, d; 5, c; 6, d; 7, a; 8, a; 9, d; 10, a.

Personal Notes on the Articles:

Please feel free to email us at info@ras.org if you have any questions or comments.

SUBSCRIBERS

If your mailing label reads December 2018, your subscription expires with this issue. Please renew your subscription soon. Renewals cost \$10.00 per year in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions cost extra to cover the additional postage.

Come visit Religion Analysis Service on the World Wide Web!
Our URL is: <http://www.ras.org> • Our e-mail address is: info@ras.org

RELIGION ANALYSIS SERVICE, INC.
PO BOX 206
CHASKA, MN 55318-0206
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHASKA, MN
PERMIT NO. 171

Important—If your mailing label
reads December 2018, your subscrip-
tion has expired with this issue.
Please renew now!