

ABM Speakers' Corner



Issue Three, August 2014



ABM acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land; and the Elders both past and present, who have contributed to the life journey of all.

Speakers' Prayer

Almighty God, as we engage with our ABM family and friends around Australia, may the gifts that you have taught us give us the confidence to spread your word and bring our work into the hearts of all Australians. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Amen

A WARM WELCOME

A very warm welcome to your third edition of Speakers' Corner for 2014. Your feedback is always most welcome.

Thank you for your hard work, tireless efforts and support of ABM - we really can't do it without you.

Yours in Christ.

Michael Robinson

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IS MARY, REALLY THE MOTHER OF GOD?

Of course! This is quite simply explained. The main puzzle is why any Christian should object to the title of Mother of God. All Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and also IS God, being the second Person of the Trinity, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is also the son of Mary. Now many Protestants are quite prepared to say "Mary, Mother of Jesus," but balk at saying "Mary, Mother of God." Why?

There is probably an element of cultural conditioning here. Giving Mary a title like Mother of God seems too grand to many Protestants. For centuries most Protestants have tried to ignore Mary, and have avoided all talk and avoid discussion of her - except perhaps to condemn Catholic "excesses". But this is a serious matter. To call Mary the "Mother of Jesus" and yet refuse to call her "Mother of God" is to diminish Jesus as well as Mary, for it is a denial that Jesus is truly or fully God.

It was this sort of thinking that led to the formal definition of the title Mother of God at the Council of Ephesus in 431AD. Patriarch Nestorius had preached that Mary was not Mother of God, being only the mother of Jesus's physical body, which was then indwelt by God the Word. This was condemned as Heresy, since the Gospels tell us that the Word did not unite with man, but was made man.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. " (John 1.14). This is a crucial difference. Jesus was not two persons: the Son of God, and the Son of Mary, but one person, the Son of God and Mary. If this were not so, his death could not have saved us.

The canonical gospels of Matthew and Luke describe Mary as a virgin (Greek *παρθένος, parthénos*).^[1] Traditionally, Christians believe that she conceived her son miraculously by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Muslims believe that she conceived her son miraculously by the command of God. This took place when she was already betrothed to Saint Joseph and was awaiting the concluding rite of marriage, the formal home-taking ceremony.^[2] She married Joseph and accompanied him to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born.^[3]

In orthodox Jewish custom, it is possible for marriage to take place at the age of twelve for a girl or thirteen for a boy. In the absence of any direct evidence of Mary's age at betrothal or in pregnancy, New Testament scholar Dale Allison cites this Jewish custom to assert that Mary became pregnant at about 12,^[4] although the minimum age was not compulsory and higher marriage age is recommended by orthodox Jewish tradition in the Talmud.

The Gospel of Luke in the New Testament begins its account of Mary's life with the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and announced her divine selection to be the mother of Jesus. According to gospel accounts, Mary was present at the Crucifixion of Jesus and is depicted as a member of the early Christian community in Jerusalem. According to Apocryphal writings, she never died but was assumed into Heaven; this is known in Christian teaching as the Assumption of Mary.



THE NATURE OF JESUS

1. To be our Saviour, Jesus needed to be both fully God, and fully man, descended from Adam. He could not be a counterfeit, or someone who just looked human
2. God the Word has existed as spirit from the beginning of time.
3. At the Incarnation, through the action of the Holy Spirit, God the Word took flesh and **full humanity** from the Virgin Mary. Both His Human Nature and His human Body came from Mary, These united with His Divine Nature in Jesus.
4. This produced **one person** with one consciousness, both fully God and fully man, who is **truly both Son of God and Son of Mary**.
5. The Virgin Mary is therefore the Mother of ALL of the PERSON of Jesus Christ, and is therefore truly Mother of God the Son.

Nestorius did not recant, and founded his own church - which is no longer with us. In effect, in saying that Mary was the Mother of Jesus, but not the Mother of God, he was denying the reality of the incarnation. Attempts to downgrade Mary seem always lead to a downgrading of the full divinity of Jesus.

BUT DOESN'T CONCENTRATING ON THE VIRGIN MARY DISTRACT US FROM GOD AND FROM JESUS?

This is a common complaint of Protestants, but one I really fail to understand. Does admiring any part of God's creation distract you from God? When you walk through a forest of tall, ancient trees and you admire their beauty, does it distract you from God? When you look at a sunset or a towering mountain, does that turn you away from God? Of course not. For most people such things draw them closer to God.

Similarly when you admire people like St Francis, Mother Theresa, or other Christians who have given up their lives to serve God. Does that make you turn away from God - or is it more likely to make you think of the greatness of the God who inspired such people? So it is also with Mary who is the Mother of God. ~



O blessed Virgin, pray to God for us always, that He may pardon us and give us grace, pray to God for us always, that He may grant us peace in this life pray to God for us always, that He may reward us with paradise at our death. Amen.





SEE THE BLESSED VIRGIN

The artists get it right. When you see the Blessed Virgin holding her Child, you will notice that she tends to be looking either at Him or right at you, and with her hand she gestures toward Him. Mary is not about Mary. Mary is all about your Jesus.

And when the Church puts into her calendar a day to commemorate the Mother of God, it is not in the spirit of Rome or of the East - a glorification of Mary that pushes beyond the bounds of Scripture, announcing the dogma of her bodily assumption into heaven and her enthronement at the right hand of her Son and her taking her place there to manage your prayer requests. Um, no.

As to whether or not Mary was bodily taken to heaven, we have to confess our ignorance. We don't know. Scripture doesn't tell us. Might be - we grant that that would be rather like her Son to do such a thing. But if He wanted us to know about raising his Mother from the dead, He'd have seen fit to have His apostles write it for us in the Sacred Scriptures. Alas, not a word.

As to enthronement at the right hand of her Son, same story. May be. After all, St. Paul says that WE are enthroned with Him in the heavenly places. But it's speculation not firm faith stuff. And as to her handling the prayer requests of all believers, well, there's no promise of her doing any such thing in Scripture, and what would be the need for it? After all, we have revealed in Scripture that both the Eternal Son - the only Mediator between God and Man - and the Holy Spirit directly intercede for us. We readily grant that Mary prays along with the whole body of the Church triumphant for the good of the Church still on pilgrimage; it's a reasonable assumption given the way the Church works and that heaven is the fulfilment of love, and we know from Scripture that the angels intercede for us. Our Confessions even point to 2 Maccabees where the long-dead Jeremiah was seen in a vision, praying for God's people. But beyond that, we're just not going to go.



Contact List

This list only contains people who have given ABM written permission to have their contact details published. To be included, please email your details to Michael Robinson (see address below).

<i>Bendigo</i>	<i>The Ven Michael Hopkins</i>
<i>Brisbane</i>	<i>The Rev'd Ken Spreadborough</i>
<i>Bunbury</i>	<i>The Rev'd Bill Byleveld</i>
<i>Canberra</i>	<i>The Rev'd Rebecca Newland</i>
<i>Grafton</i>	<i>The Rev'd Brian Mueller</i>
<i>Melbourne</i>	<i>Mr Brett Collins</i>
<i>Newcastle</i>	<i>The Rev'd Canon Katherine Bowyer</i>
<i>Perth</i>	<i>The Ven. Lionel Snell</i>
<i>SA Province</i>	<i>The Right Rev'd David McCall</i>
<i>Sydney</i>	<i>Mrs Edwina Waddy</i>
<i>Tasmania</i>	<i>The Rev'd Warwick Cuthbertson</i>

List of Resources

For Education and Publicity

- Prayer Diary
- Project Book
- Partners' Magazine
- Annual Report
- ABM DVDs
- Partner Brochures
- Magnets
- Posters (Marks of Mission, Country overview)
- Banners

For Fundraising

- Duplex (Giving) envelopes
- Purses
- Lanyards
- Bequest Forms
- Crosses

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