

Letter to a Roman Catholic Priest

My Dear Sir:

I desire on this occasion to go briefly into the subject of mediatorship and advocacy. As to this, nothing could possibly be simpler and plainer than the lucid affirmation of holy scripture: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (I Timothy 2:5-6). And if we are to believe the statement found in the homily of Adam and Eve, commonly attributed to St. Chrysostom-- "that may not be considered catholic, which appears contrary to the statements of scripture"--then surely we should have no difficulty in judging whether the doctrines of the Roman church on the matter in question are really catholic or not. "Faith in scripture," says St. Augustine, "is the most catholic of all." Scripture distinctly declares that there is one mediator. Now if the Roman church teaches contrary to this, it cannot be the holy catholic apostolic church.

You yourself say: "Christ is the one mediator, the one possible source of grace and redemption. We can have many advocates and mediators of intercession. In this sense St. Joseph especially a mediator by reason of his great holiness and merit with God." I, however, do not find in the scriptures the distinction that you have drawn. Indeed, which recognizing your honesty of purpose and evident desire to harmonize the teaching of the papal church with the word of God, I cannot but question whether the distinction you make is to be understood even in the doctrinal and devotional works of Roman Catholic theologians.

Certainly the place given the blessed virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord, is that of a mediator of grace and redemption, and that in the fullest, highest sense. What else, for instance, am I to understand from the following expressions, which I quote on the authority of Littlefield, from the Raccolta, a collection of prayers said to be specially indulged by the popes and which you will therefore acknowledge. I presume, to be in the truest sense authoritative:

Hail. Queen, Mother of Mercy, our Life, Sweetness, and Hope, all Hail! To thee we cry, banished sons of Eve; to thee we sigh, groaning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, O our Advocate, thy merciful eye to us, and after this our exile, show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb,

O merciful, O love, O sweet Virgin Mary.

We fly beneath thy shelter, O holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions in our necessity, and deliver us always from all perils, O glorious and Blessed Virgin.

Heart of Mary, Mother of God...worthy of all the veneration of angels and men.... Heart full of goodness, ever compassionate towards our sufferings, vouchsafe to thaw our icy hearts.... In thee let the Holy Church find safe shelter; protect it, and be its sweet Asylum, its tower, its strength.... Be thou our help in need, our comfort in trouble, our strength in temptation, our refuge in persecution, our aid in danger.

Sweet heart of Mary, be my salvation.

Leave me not, my Mother, in my own hands, or I am lost; let me but cling to thee. Save me, my Hope; save me from hell.

And surely no one could dream after reading the following quotations from Liguori's "Glories of Mary" that she was not supposed to be, without any reservation, a mediator of grace and redemption.

Mary is our refuge, help and Asylum. In Judea, in ancient time, there were cities of refuge, wherein criminals who fled there for protection were exempt from the punishment they had deserved. Nowadays these cities of refuge are not so numerous; there is but one, and that is Mary.

God, before the birth of Mary, complained by the mouth of the Prophet Ezekiel that there was no one to rise up and withhold him from chastising sinners, that he could find no one, for this office was reserved for our blessed Lady, who withholds his arm till he is pacified.

Often we seem to be heard more quickly, and be thus preserved, if we have recourse to Mary, and call upon her name, than we should be if we called upon the name of Jesus our Saviour.

Many things are asked from God and are not granted; they are asked from Mary, and are obtained.

At the commandment of the Virgin all things obey, even God.

The salvation of all depends on our being favored and protected by Mary. He who is protected by Mary will be saved; he who is not will be lost.

Mary has only to speak and her Son executes all.

And is it not a fact that the last words which the Roman ritual puts into the mouth of the dying are: "Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, do thou protect me from the foe and receive me in the hour of death?" How different from the last words of the first martyr Stephen: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

And returning to the *Raccolta*, what words could be more unscriptural than these?

I acknowledge thee, and I venerate thee, most Holy Virgin, Queen of Heaven, Lady and Mistress of the Universe, as daughter of the eternal Father, Mother of his well-beloved Son, and most loving Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Kneeling at the feet of thy great Majesty with all humility I pray thee, through thy divine charity wherewith thou wast so bountifully enriched on thine acceptation into Heaven, to vouchsafe me favor and pity, placing me under thy most safe and faithful protection, and receive me into the number of those happy and highly favored servants of thine, whose names thou dost carry graven upon thy virgin breast.

You give St. Joseph as an example of the intercession of which you speak, but what am I to think of the two following quotations likewise from the *Raccolta* prayers, addressed to Joseph by those seeking his advocacy?

Benign Joseph, our guide, protect us and the Holy Church.

Guardian of Virgins, and Holy Father Joseph, to whose faithful keeping Christ Jesus, innocence itself, and Mary, Virgin of virgins, were committed, I pray and beseech thee by those two dear pledges, Jesus and Mary, that being preserved from all uncleanness, I may with spotless mind, pure heart, and chaste body, ever most chastely serve Jesus and Mary. Amen.

One might go on quoting indefinitely from Roman Catholic books of devotion to show that the one mediator of God is completely set aside in favor of a multitude of saints and angels who are evidently supposed to be more approachable than our blessed Lord himself. And yet St. Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 200, wrote: "Since there is only one good God, both we ourselves and the angels supplicate from him alone." St Athanasius, that champion of the truth, A.D. 370, writing against the Arians, ridiculed them for applying such scriptures as "the Lord is the refuge of the poor" to the Lord Jesus Christ, if they denied his Godhead glory. He went on to write: "But if they say that these things are spoken of the Son, which would perhaps be true, let them confess that the saints did not think of calling on a created being to be their helper and their house of refuge." And in this he is evidently fully in accord with the scriptures of truth. John the apostle wrote, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

What need we then of any other? Christ by his bloody sacrifice on the cross settled the question of sin to the satisfaction of God, maintaining the righteousness of his throne and the holiness of his character, so that now God can be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Those who have confided in him as their savior need no other mediator than himself, for he is ever available, his heart is as tender as when here on earth, his love ever flows out to all his own. We need no other intermediary, neither his mother after the flesh, nor any saint or angel to entreat him on our behalf. He himself abides forever, so long as his people have need of his intercession. And he is our great all-compassionate high priest with God, our advocate with the Father, our one mediator, excluding every other.

In your letter you seek to put the prayers of believers on earth, one for another, in the same category as the advocacy of saints in heaven. You write, "You yourself say to me at the end of your most charitable letter, I will not cease to pray earnestly for you, my dear fellow believer in Christ. Oh, Do, I beg of you, be my advocate, my mediator with the Father through your prayers and intercession."

I shall indeed, my dear sir, continue to pray to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ on your behalf, but neither as a mediator nor an advocate in the sense to which these words are applied to our savior and the Holy Spirit of God alone. As a Christian I make intercession on your behalf, and on behalf of all men, not expecting an answer on the ground of my personal merit or holiness, but praying only in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is surely a very different thing from what you had in mind when you preached the sermon on the intercession of Joseph, which you sent me to read.

Scripture itself bears witness to the care with which our blessed Lord guarded against even so much as the using of devotional expressions in regard to his mother. When the woman cried out invoking blessing on his mother, he answered: "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." This is the blessing, dear sir, that I desire, a blessing which I know would be forfeited forever were I to forsake the one true mediator for the host of lesser intermediaries set forth by the Roman Church.

Very sincerely yours,

Dr. Harry Ironside

P.S. I have seen a photograph, taken by a missionary laboring in Central America, of a Roman Catholic church which has over the main entrance a Latin inscription, the plain English of which is: "Come Unto Mary, All Ye Who Labor And Are Burdened, And She Will Refresh You." Is not this meant to show that she is held up to the people as a mediator of grace and redemption? What a fearful perversion of the precious invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded in Matthew 11:28

Closing the mass in Denver, August 1993, John Paul II said, "Mary of the New Advent, we implore your protection on the preparations that will now begin for the next meeting. Mary, full of grace, we entrust the next World Youth Day to you. Mary, assumed into heaven, we entrust the young people of the world...the whole world to you!"

"One of the greatest means of salvation and one of the surest signs of predestination is unquestionably the devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin. All the holy doctors of the Church are unanimous in saying with St. Alphonsus of Liguori: "A devout servant of Mary shall never perish..." I consecrate to Thee [Mary] my heart with all its affections, and beseech Thee to obtain for me from the Most Holy Trinity all the graces necessary for salvation."

(from "Heaven Opened by the Practice of THE THREE HAIL MARYS," Imprimatur: Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of new York.)

The 2nd Commandment

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of *anything* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. Exodus 20:4-5
