

The Worship of Mary *

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Editor's Introduction

Towards the end of his life Brownson's good friend Fr. Edward Sorin, C.S.C., the founder of Notre Dame University, persuaded him to write a series of articles on Our Lady for his *Ave Maria* magazine. Father Sorin wrote to Brownson:

“With regard to your course in the *Ave Maria*, of which by the bye, the Most Reverend Archbishop of St. Louis was good enough to say that he considered it the best paper in the States. I wish to say that you must consider yourself the representative of the American Catholics, speaking to his own people of the Mother of God, as you think that they should be talked to. It cannot be without a design that our New World has been dedicated to the Blessed Virgin by Columbus, and lately by our American hierarchy. [The United States was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception in 1846 by the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore.] Were Americans once convinced that she is the Mother of God and not only the Mother of Christ, even Protestants would acknowledge that it is right to honor her. It seems to me that none better than yourself could tell the American people what our country has to gain by spreading such a devotion, were it only for the atmosphere of purity in which it will enable the present generation, which is bad enough to raise the succeeding one, which I trust will be better. Shall I tell you, and why not? that the beautiful statue we erected last May, on the dome of our new college is doing wonders among our 400 students? Would to God such a type of modesty and pure love would meet the eye of our youth everywhere! Ah, if pains were taken it might be soon effected to a great extent, and wherever it will be properly explained it will be loved by Americans as readily (and more efficiently, perhaps), as by any other nation in the world. I never saw either in France or in Italy warmer feelings of devotion towards the Mother of God than here among our American converts. I thought at a time that I loved her; they literally shame me, and my confusion helps me in my little task. I would get on my knees before anyone who can speak to those honest-minded people whose misfortune is their ignorance of the truth, to aid me to open their eyes to the light and to reveal to them the grace, the beauties and the perfection of her who is the Gate of Heaven for them as well as for ourselves.

“Americans, as a nation, are a sensible one, they cannot remain long blind to their interests. They will bless the hand that tore off, however much against their wishes, the veil that hid the light from their sight. As a nation they cannot remain much longer estranged from a mother so lovely and so loving. My dear Doctor, I do not know either for yourself or for me, any subject more worthy of our efforts on the decline of our life, or anything that will give us as much consolation on our death-bed, as to have tried our best to make her known, to present her as she is, and to give her the place she ought to occupy among us.”¹

Here then is Brownson trying to explain to his fellow Americans the Catholic doctrine on the “worship” of Mary.

We propose to consider the worship of Mary in its foundation, the principles or reasons on which it rests, and to defend the strong expressions used by Catholic writers when speaking of her in connection with our salvation. As Catholics we worship, that is honor, Mary in common with all the saints, and we also offer her a peculiar worship, as Mother of God, to the mystery of the Incarnation.

In the *cultus sanctorum*, or worship of the saints, we must distinguish between the honor tended to the saints and the invocation of the saints. We honor the saints, offer them a religious worship; and we pray to the saints, or invoke their interposition for us.

We do not know from reason alone what is the honor we render to God, but we do know from simple, natural reason that we are to love and honor him supremely, with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Yet we cannot do this without honoring him in his works. To despise or to refuse to honor the work is to dishonor the workman, and nothing is more natural or more proper, when our hearts are filled with the honor and glory of the workman, than that they should overflow and honor to the work. It is a high honor to have been the work of God, for if we rightly consider who and what God is, we must conclude that he can do, or even touch, nothing, without imparting to it, in some sense an infinite value. Rightly considered, God is no less worthy of honor in his doing than in his being; for since he is, as the theologians say, *pure act*, his doing and his being are inseparable. Consequently, he is infinitely adorable in all his works; and whoso despises the meanest of his creatures, even the veriest clod of senseless earth, despises God, and who honors the meanest, because the work of God, honors God himself.

Because the work of God, we say; and this must not be forgotten. The worship of the saints is not the worship of the works of God as abstracted from him, but the worship of God *in* his works. If we honor the creature for any other reason than that it is God’s creature, we do not honor it as the work of God, but as God, and the honor is idolatrous, and gives to the creature what is due only to the Creator. But to love and honor the works of God is to love an honor him in them, and is not only not idolatry, but one of the most effectual

¹ Brownson, Henry F., *Brownson's Latter Life*, H.F. Brownson, Detroit, 1898-1900, pp.449,450.

preservatives against idolatry, because even in the creature it keeps the mind and heart fixed on the Creator. The principle here is analogous to the principle on which we discharge our duty to God by discharging it to our neighbor. We owe a duty to our neighbor only in God, and we pay it to God in paying it for our neighbor, if we pay it for God's sake.

As the work of God, all nature is lovely and worthy of honor, and the true worshipper of God loves to honor it, from the highest to the lowest. To him the crawling worm, the insect of an hour, the mote in the sunbeam, has an untold worth, and becomes an object of affection, as we see in the lives of many of the saints, especially of Saint Francis of Assisi. He who cannot, in a degree at least, sympathize with this seraphic saint in his love of all created things, even the lower orders of creation, has as yet comprehended very little of the mystery of the love of God; and he to whom the saint's love seems ridiculous or unwarranted has as little reason to boast of his progress in true science as in true piety.

Now, all the arguments which prove that God may and should be honored in his works [of nature] prove *a fortiori* that he may and should be honored in his works of grace, which are incomparably superior. Of the works of grace, the saints are the greatest, and therefore it is especially in his saints that we are to honor God in his works. The saint is a saint only by what he receives from God. [When] we honor these gifts, we do but imitate, in our feeble manner, God himself, who also honors them, and with a crown of glory that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens. The honor we give redounds to his glory, for it is always *his* works, *his* gifts, that we honor. Wherefore the prophet-king breaks forth: "Praise ye the Lord in his saints; praise ye him in the firmament of his power."

The principle, then, on which rests the worship of the saints is solid and unobjectionable. Consequently the worship of Mary as a saint is fully warranted, and there is nothing to be said against it; for certainly Mary was a saint, and the greatest of saints. We see her sanctity in her perfect humility. Who of mortal maidens was ever so highly honored, and yet so lowly? Never does she once obtrude herself upon our notice; she lives all for God, and breaks her silence only for his glory. In perfect humility is perfect love, and in perfect love is every virtue. Not to honor her as a saint, not to thank God for her spotless virtue, not to call her blessed among women, not to hold her character up for universal love and imitation, would argue on our part hearts cold and depraved, and minds incapable of appreciating true heroic virtue.

The second part of the *cultus sanctorum* is the invocation of saints. The principle of intercession rests on the fact that God carries on, so to speak, his words of providence and grace by the agency of ministers. God, could of course, if it seemed to him good, accomplish the ends of his providence immediately. Ministers are not necessary to him; he needs no instruments; can will, and it is done; speak, and it stands fast. He could by the direct operation of the Holy Ghost convert the soul, and make us his faithful servants, without the ministry of the Church, or the agency of teachers to instruct, or pastors to rule, feed, and defend us. That is, we see no abstract reason why he could not if he chose. But he evidently does not so choose. He employs the ministry of angels, and also of men. This, it is evident from Scripture and Tradition, is a part of his plan. In his works of providence, especially in the supernatural order, he admits the faithful, whether angels or men, to a

share, employs them on his errands of love and mercy, and permits them to co-operate with him in the work of converting and perfecting souls. He does this, not because he needs them, not because he would impose upon them a task; but because he loves them, and delights to honor them.

Even to be employed by a temporal prince in the administration of his government is counted as a great honor; men covet it, and to obtain it shrink from no exertion, and sometimes even from no crime. But the honor of being employed by God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, is infinitely greater than that of being employed by even the greatest and best of temporal sovereigns. It is a favor which God shows to those who love him. As he delights to honor them, and to give them, so to speak, a part in his glory as the Friend, the Ruler, the Redeemer and Savior of men he permits them to be agents for obtaining and communicating his favors and graces to others. This evidently, from the whole of our religion, is the principle on which he conducts his gracious providence, and we need spend no time in proving it.

Now, this premised, we can understand why intercession may and does have place. God does not need the intercession of anyone to placate him, and render him disposed to confer graces on mankind, for the charity that intercedes comes from him, as its fountain, as its origin and cause; but he [approves] it for the honor and reward of his saints, so that the intercessor will be blessed at the same time as the one for whom he intercedes. All concede the propriety of praying for another, and of asking another to pray for us. The priest makes intercession for the people when he prays for them. The Protestant solicits intercession when he asks his minister and the congregation to pray for him, for his family, for health, for recovery from sickness, for the sanctification to him of his sorrows or afflictions; that he may be protected in his journeying by sea or by land, or that he may be delivered from dangers which threaten, and blessed with seedtime and harvest, rain and sunshine. Everyone admits the principle when he says to another, "Pray for me," or "Let me have an interest in your prayers." Here is the principle of the invocation of saints. Shall we ask a weak and fallible mortal, still affected by the infirmities of the flesh, to pray for us, and yet shrink from asking the same thing of a saint in heaven, who sees God face to face?

Is it that the saint is less alive? To suppose it were to doubt immortality. The Church teaches us better, in calling the day of the death or departure of a saint his birthday, because it is only then that the saint truly begins to live. All before had been, as it were, only a promise of life, upon the reality of which he now enters. It is the blessed privilege of the Christian to have the full assurance of a future life, and to look back on the world after death as more truly real than the present. He has faith, not a simple conjecture, opinion, or persuasion, but faith, which is no less certain than actual personal knowledge. The saints who have thrown off the flesh are to him as near, as dear, as living, as before, and far more so. We do not lose our friends when they die; we gain them, if they die in the Lord. Not for us does the glorious army of saints and martyrs, the bright choir of virgins and purified souls – who honored their Lord in the flesh, exalted the aspirations and hopes of mankind, glorified human nature through divine grace, and consecrated the whole earth – sleep in the cold grave, or lie torpid in some undefined region, awaiting the return of a warm spring

morning to await anew into life and activity. They are now living, full of life, a sweet joyous life, in comparison with which what we call our life is but death.

Is it that the saints have ceased to love us? To suppose it were to deny or forget that saints on earth and saints in heaven make but one communion, are all members of one body, members of one head, Christ our Lord, and through members one of another. The glory of the saints when in this world was in this holy intercommunion of life between the member and the body, and between the body and the head. They loved their brethren, and knew that they had passed from death to life because they loved them. They lived in and for this communion when here, and were ready at any moment to pour out their life to obtain blessings for it, or to bring new souls within it. Has all this changed with them now? Do they cease to be members of the Church, which Christ so loved, and which he purchased with his own blood? In being made more like God, in being raised to a participation to a still higher degree of the divine nature, in being assimilated to their head, because seeing him as he is – do they become all at once indifferent to those whom he loves, and without interest in the great end of the Incarnation, the highest glory of God?

Is it that they have lost their power, and that, now they are perfected in glory, God will no longer hear their prayers or suffer their intercession? What more absurd! We know that he employs the ministry of angels; and the intercession of the saint must be more acceptable to him, and more effectual with him, than the intercession of the ungodly, or even the imperfect; and therefore the more holy one is, the more pleasing and effectual must be his intercession. Nor can we suppose that they are incapable of hearing and presenting our petitions. It is not *dead* men we invoke. They are living men shorn of none of their powers by being beatified in heaven. They see God face to face, and they may see all that concerns us, and all that we do, in him, as in a mirror which reflects all. Moreover, beatified spirits are no longer affected by the accidents of space and time which affect us, and which render our communion with one another and with the external world so imperfect. Nothing prevents them from being present to the heart that invokes them, ready to receive our petitions as soon as formed in our minds and hearts, and to present them to our Lord. They see and hear all in God. We do not see all in God as they do. We see all, indeed, by his uncreated light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, but much by that light only as reflected to us from sensible things. Granting, then, the principle of intercession, as we must if we ever allow one man to ask the prayers of another, we must concede the propriety of the invocation of saints, and then, evidently, the propriety of invoking Mary, and begging her intercession for us. Hence we find wholly justifiable the worship of Mary as a saint.

But we worship Mary, not only as Saint Mary, in common with all the saints; we render her also a peculiar and much higher worship. This worship is authorized by her peculiar relation to the mystery of the Incarnation, therefore to our salvation, and is rendered in honor of that mystery itself; that is, in honor of God in his human as well as his divine nature. Those who reject the Incarnation can understand nothing of this worship, and have no lot or part in it; for they can neither worship God in his human nature, nor admit that he really assumed flesh from the flesh of Mary. To them Mary is only an ordinary woman, and holds no peculiar relation to the mystery of redemption. She has, in their view, nothing to do with our salvation, and is related to the faithful not otherwise than is any other woman.

They assign her no peculiar position or office in the economy of God's gracious providence. They are offended when they hear us call her the mother of God, and sneer at us when they hear us address her as our own dear mother. We have nothing here to say to them. The worship of Mary presupposes the Incarnation, and they who shrink from it show by that fact that they do not really believe in the mystery, and therefore do not really embrace the Christian religion, and at best make only a hollow profession of it. There is and can be no truer test of one's active, living faith in our holy religion, in the redemption and salvation of sinners through the cross, than a firm attachment to the worship of Mary. This is probably, [why] devotion to Mary is commonly regarded by the saints as a sign of election.

The peculiar honor we render to Mary is called by our writers *hyperdulia* – as distinguished from simple *dulia*, or the worship we pay to all the saints – presupposes the real Incarnation of Our Lord in her chaste womb, and her real and subsisting maternal relation to God made man. If you concede the Incarnation, you must concede that Mary is the mother of God; if you deny that she is the mother of God, you must deny the Incarnation. There is no middle course possible. If Mary is the mother of her son then the relations between mother and son and all that those relations imply subsist and must forever subsist between them, and she must be honored as the mother of God, and therefore of grace, the grace through which we are redeemed and saved.

In the Incarnation, God becomes man, without ceasing to be God, and so assumes human nature that he becomes from the moment of the incarnation as truly human as he is divine – perfect man as well as perfect God. It is not that a perfect man is united to perfect God, but that perfect God becomes himself really perfect man, in such sort that the human nature is as truly the nature of the divine Person, or Word, as is the divine nature itself. The two natures are united in one Person, or the one Person is the hypostasis or the one *suppositum* of two distinct natures, one divine, the other human.

The tendency of Protestants, even of those who profess to hold the mystery of the Incarnation, is to regard the union, not as the union of two natures in one person, but as a simple moral union of two persons, one human, the other God. Hence Protestants have a tendency to “dissolve [Jesus],” and to cherish the spirit of what the apostle [St. John] calls Antichrist. But the true doctrine of the Incarnation, which we must admit if we admit any real incarnation at all, is, that the human and divine natures are united, without being confounded, in one divine Person. Person is distinguishable, not separable from nature, for no person is conceivable as really existing without a nature; and though human as well as divine nature is distinguishable from person, yet neither is conceivable as really existing without person or personality. The human nature of Christ is not human nature divested of personality, it is [united to] as much as is the human nature of Peter or John, but its Person is divine, not human – the eternal Person of the divine nature of Christ. Hence Christ is two distinct natures in one Person, which divine Person is God, the second Person of the ever-adorable Trinity.

Now God in his human nature is literally and truly the son of Mary...She is not the mother of the human race received into union with God – the error of the Adoptionists, implying that the human nature of Christ has a human personality, which it has not, and

never had. [Yet] human nature cannot exist without a personality. Then that which was conceived was conceived in the womb of Mary and born of her was the Divine Person assuming to himself flesh, or the nature of man; [was] therefore God. Hence in the strictest sense of the word, Mary is the mother of God, and therefore God is as truly her Son as anyone is the son of his own mother.

Unquestionably, Mary was not the mother of God in his divine nature, that is, the mother of the divinity, for in that sense God is eternal, necessary, and self-existent being, and the Creator of Mary, not her Son; But God incarnate is still God, and God having assumed flesh is no less God in his human nature than in his divine nature. And therefore Mary is none the less the mother of God because his mother only in his human nature, for the human nature of which she is the mother is the human nature of God. She is not the mother of the divinity, but she is the mother of God, for since the Incarnation, God the Son is the one Person of both divine nature and human nature, and is, as to nature, at once God and man. How God can descend to be the Person of human nature, or exalt human nature to be truly his own, is a mystery which we do not attempt to explain; which transcends every created intelligence, and which none but himself can fully comprehend. All we know or [claim] to know is the fact that he has done so, and thus, although our Creator, has become our Brother, flesh or our flesh, that we might be made partakers of his divine nature, and live forever in a true society with him.

Now Mary, as the mother of God, is something more than an ordinary woman, and holds a place in the economy of grace different from that of any other woman, different from and above that of any other creature. She has been honored by the Creator as no other creature has been, for she alone has been selected by him to be his mother. If God has distinguished her from all other women, if he has chosen her to be his mother, shall we not distinguish her from all other women, and honor her as his mother? What higher honor could God confer on a creature than he has conferred on Mary? Shall we not honor whom God delights to honor, and like him give the highest honor that we can give to a creature? We are to love and honor the Son as we honor the Father, and we are to love and honor him in his humanity no less than in his divinity.

We cannot dissolve Christ; ‘Every spirit that dissolveth Jesus,’ says the blessed apostle John, “is not of God; and this is Antichrist, of whom you heard that he cometh; and he is already in the world.” We cannot dissolve Christ, and worship him in his divine nature only, and refuse to worship him in his human nature. He is one Christ – not two, one human and other divine; [he] is two forever distinct natures in one Person, to be loved and honored alike in both natures, and therefore in her from whom he took his human nature. We cannot honor him without honoring her, if we try, nor honor her as his mother without honoring him. Such is the intimate relation between the mother and the Son that whatever honor we render her as his mother redounds to him, and whatever honor we render to him as her son – that is, to him as come in the flesh – will overflow and extend to her. The two cannot be separated, for the flesh of the Son, is the flesh of the mother, and both have one and the same nature, and it is impossible to honor the nature in the one without honoring it in the other.

If we bear this in mind, we shall find no difficulty in justifying the peculiar worship of Mary, or in vindicating the strongest language which Catholic piety has ever used in addressing her. Mary is the mother of God, from her the Son of God took his flesh, his human nature. By this fact she becomes intimately connected with the mystery of our redemption and final salvation. We are redeemed only by God, not in his divine nature, but in that very nature which he took from the womb of Mary. In the present providence of God, man could not be saved and enabled to gain his supernatural end without the incarnation of the Son, that is to say, man could only be redeemed by God in the flesh – God in human nature; for as the divine nature can neither suffer, nor obey, nor merit, it was only in the human nature, in the flesh become really his nature, that God could perform the work of redemption, that he could satisfy for sin, and merit for us the grace of pardon and sanctification. Mary is thus called, and rightly called, the “mother of grace,” for she is that inasmuch as she is the mother of the sacred flesh through which grace has been purchased and is communicated to us.

But God did not become incarnate in the womb of Mary without her free, voluntary consent; and thus she by her own will co-operates in the work of our redemption, and therefore for another reason, may be called the mother of grace and associated with our salvation. Much is what is said of Mary in this respect rests on the fact of this consent. We might reasonably presume, from what we know of the dealings of God with men, that this consent was first obtained; for we [could] not well suppose that God would do violence to one he so loved as to choose her to be his mother, or that he would be conceived in her womb against or without her free consent. It is evident also, from the history given us by St. Luke of the Annunciation, that this consent was asked and obtained.

“The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. Who, having heard, was troubled at this saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel, How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren. Because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.* And the angel departed from her.”

Here manifestly is consent asked and consent given, and though given, not till an explanation has been demanded and received. It is plain from the narrative that Mary [is] not only a virgin, but resolved always to be a virgin, and she does not give her consent until assured by the angel that she can become the mother of the Son of God without prejudice to

her virginity. She knows not and will not know man and when assured that this is not necessary and referred to the conception of her cousin Elizabeth as an evidence that no word is impossible with God, then, but not till then, does she give her consent: "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.*"

There was then a moment when the salvation of the world depended on the consent of Mary. Man could not be redeemed, satisfaction could not be made for sin, and grace obtained, without the Incarnation, and the Incarnation could not take place without the free, voluntary consent of this humble Jewish maiden. While, then, we are lost in admiration of the infinite condescension of God, that would do such honor to human nature as in some sort to place himself in dependence on the will of one of our race to carry into effect his own purpose of infinite love and mercy, we cannot help feeling deep gratitude to Mary for the consent she gave. We call her blessed for two great things he that is mighty has done to her, and we bless her also for her own consent to the work of the redemption. She gave to that work all she had; she gave her will; she gave her flesh; she gave her Son to one long Passion of thirty-three years, to the agony in the garden and to the death on the cross. It is true that God had selected her from all eternity to be his mother, and had filled her with grace; but neither the election nor the grace took away her free will, or diminished the merit of her voluntary consent. She could have refused; and does she deserve no love and gratitude from us, who have hope only through her flesh assumed by the Son of God, that she did not refuse? Can we say, in view of this fact, that she has no peculiar relation to our redemption, no share in the work of our salvation? To say so would be simply to deny that we are redeemed and saved by God in the flesh; that the flesh, or human nature of our Lord performs any office in the work of redemption and salvation. Wherefore, to refuse to honor Mary as connected with and sharing in that work is to deny that it is in his human nature that God redeems and saves us; which is either to deny redemption and salvation altogether, or to contend that God redeems and saves us in his divinity, that is to contend that the divine nature suffered and died!

Mary is really the mother of our Lord, for our Lord did in reality, not in appearance merely, come in the flesh. He is true God of God, and true man of the flesh of the Virgin. Then between Mary and Jesus there was and is the real relation of mother and son, and Mary still preserves all her maternal rights in regard to her Son, and he still owes her all filial love, reverence, and obedience. For if he is God, he is also man, and in his humanity has all that pertains to pure and sinless humanity. This would even justify in some measure the expression – which however, does not please us – said to have been used not by the Church but by some Catholics, in their ardent devotion to Mary. "Command thy Son." The Son of God in his humanity – not of course in his divine nature, nor in any matter which is proper to him only in that nature – was subject to Mary here, and obeyed her. Therefore, her will, always one with God's will, because moved by the divine nature, is still regarded by him as the will of his mother, and has that weight with him that the right will of a mother must always have with a good, pious, and loving son.

We may then see the reasonableness of what many of our writers say, that Mary is the channel through which our Lord dispenses his graces, and that he dispenses none save through her intercession. This, perhaps, is not precisely of faith, but it is a very general

opinion of our doctors. There is no reason why it should not be so, and there are many why we should hold it, aside from the belief of the doctors and the general belief of the faithful. Mary is the channel through which all grace flows to us, inasmuch as she is the mother of the flesh in which God merited grace for us, redeems, sanctifies, and blesses us with everlasting life. But aside from this, to be made the channel through which God communicates his grace to us, whether the grace of conversion or perseverance, is a high honor to her. And can we doubt that Jesus, as a loving son, would delight to load with honors that dear mother who had borne him in her womb, and in her arms, and nursed him at her breast? Could he confer on her a higher honor than to make her intercession the condition on which he dispenses grace to us while in the flesh? Can we suppose his love for her would not induce him to do so? Did he not even before conceived in her womb, fill her with grace, make her all-beautiful? What then, can be communicated to a creature, will he withhold from her? He will withhold no good thing from them that love him; certainly not then from his own mother, who loves him more than anyone else.

It would be in strict accordance with the plan of God's gracious providence, which includes the ministry of angels, and adopts throughout the principle of intercession as an integral part of it, for our Lord to place Mary first, and to give her the blessed privilege of interceding in all cases, and of always having her intercession effectual. The whole, under this point of view, rests on the love which God bears to his saints, and his delight in honoring them. It would seem, if we may so speak, that his love is so great that he exhausts his infinite wisdom in multiplying honors to them. And which of his saints should he so delight to honor as his own immaculate and loving mother?

Mary is also *our* mother, the mother of all the faithful. They who never reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation, and have no faith in redemption through the cross, laugh at us when we call her our mother. Yet she *is* our mother, and to say the least, as truly our mother as was Eve herself. Eutychianism is a heresy, the human nature hypostatically united to the divine remains ever distinct from [it], and therefore our Lord remains forever God and man in one Person. By assuming our nature, the Son of God has made himself our Brother. Now, of this human nature in Christ, Mary is the Mother; and she is [as] truly our mother, insofar as we through this nature become united to him.

She is not our natural mother; but [she is the mother] of our nature in God, and insofar as we were raised to brotherhood with Christ her Son, and made through him one with God. She is our spiritual mother...we cannot too often repeat that it is the Word made flesh, or God in the flesh, who redeems and saves or beatifies us. It is always through the Incarnate Son that we have access to the Father, or that even the saints in heaven behold him in the beatific vision as he is. The life we as Christians live here is the life that proceeds from God in his humanity, and the life we hope to live in the hereafter proceeds from him in the same sense. To suppose the saint here or hereafter separated from the flesh which God assumed in the womb of the Virgin would be to suppose his annihilation as a saint, as much as to suppose our separation from God as Creator would be to suppose the annihilation of our natural existence.

Here is the mystery of godliness which was manifest in the flesh. Then, unless we make it true that Mary is not the mother of our Lord in his human nature, we cannot make it untrue that she is our spiritual mother. So long as spiritual life is dependent on God in his human nature, so long is Mary truly the mother of spiritual life, and so long as she is the mother of that life, so long is she our spiritual mother and to be honored as such; and honored even more than our natural mother, for the spiritual life is infinitely more than the natural life. Mary is our spiritual mother inasmuch as it has been through her intercession that we have been regenerated, and hope to obtain the gift of perseverance.

Mary is called the queen of heaven – of heaven and earth – our universal queen. Our Lord is king, for to him has all dominion been given. He is king, not merely as Son of God, in his divine nature, but he is king in his human nature, as Son of Mary. Her Son is king; then she as mother of the king, is queen. As he loves and honors his mother, and must as a good son wish all creatures also to love and honor her, he must have crowned her queen, and given her a formal title to the love, honor, and obedience due a queen.

Here are considerations which, if taken in connection with the mystery of the Incarnation, will fully justify our warm devotion to Mary, and the strongest expression which in the fervor of our piety we can use. God has honored her and placed her above every other creature, next below himself, has endowed her with all the graces a creature can receive, and exalted her to a rank as near his own as she can hold without ceasing to be creature. She is pure, spotless, all-beautiful, full of grace, full of sweet love, co-operating in her will in the whole work of redemption, and constantly interceding for sinners, and for the perseverance of the regenerate. What more can we say? What other creature can have higher, or anything like so high, claims upon our love and gratitude? And what can be more pleasing to her divine Son than for us to regard ourselves as her clients, and to render her the highest honor in our power? Considering her relation as mother to our King, the love her Son bears her, the high honor he bestows on her, and the favors he delights constantly to show her – whose intercession can be more powerful, or whom can man invoke with more, or with equal, confidence?

The peculiar devotion of Catholics to Mary springs, as all must see, from our faith in the Incarnation. Granting that mystery, all is right and proper, and consequently the fact we insist on it bears witness to the world that we believe with a firm faith that that mystery is a reality, that Jesus has really come in the flesh, and that by his flesh, or God in the flesh, we are saved. The worship of Mary is one perpetual festival in honor of that sacred mystery, and the prominent part assigned to Mary in all Catholic worship is only a proof of our faith that all in Christian redemption and salvation turns on the mystery of the Word made flesh. The daily practice of devotion to Mary as the mother of God, aside from the special graces it obtains for us, keeps alive in our minds and in our hearts this mystery of mysteries, and our dependence on it for every good in the spiritual order. We cannot think of Mary without thinking of Jesus; we cannot honor her without honoring him as her Son; for here the honor of the mother is from the Son, not the honor of the Son from the mother.

We do not honor Mary as separated from her Son, but as his mother, and for what she is, being his mother. Her name brings at once to our mind his name, and the mystery of

the Incarnation, the foundation of all our hope, the source of all our life. We do not connect her with the mystery of redemption as efficient cause, for the efficient cause is the infinite charity of the ever-adorable Trinity; but we do connect her with it as a medial cause, as an instrument, and as an instrument freely co-operating, and therefore not as without a moral share, in the work and the glory of our salvation. As long as we worship her, we cannot forget the Lord that bought us, who redeemed us with a price, the price of his own blood; and indifference to her worship is always a sign of want of love to him, and want of faith in the Incarnation as a reality. None of those who reject her worship understand, or if they understand, believe, the doctrine of salvation through the cross. Her worship is the best conceivable preservative of the essential Christian faith and to neglect it as we see from history, is only to fall into unbelief and mere naturalism.

We do not honor Mary as God; we know she is a creature, and that it is only as a creature that we can honor her. The very foundation of the honor we give her is the fact that she is a creature. We honor her as the mother of God, from whose womb he took his flesh, his created nature. The more we honor her, the more, therefore, are we reminded that she is not God, but is, like ourselves, God's creature. We cannot call her our mother, and assert that it is only through the flesh that our Lord took from her womb that we come into brotherhood with him, and are united to him by a common nature, without distinctly asserting her to be a creature like ourselves. To suppose her divine, or any other than a true woman of our own race, would overthrow our whole faith in the mystery of the Incarnation, and destroy all hopes of heaven.

Protestants call the worship we pay to Mary, Mariolatry. [In the preceding section the charge has been fully answered.] The peculiar distinctive worship of God is the offering of sacrifice. [Those who have rejected] the sacrifice of the Mass have retained nothing more than we offer to Mary and the saints. Consequently they are unable to perceive any distinction between what they regard as the external worship of God, and that which we render to him in his saints – that is a worship of prayer and praise. But we have a sacrifice, and are therefore able to distinguish between the highest honor we render to his saints, and the supreme worship we render to him – never to any creature.

The Protestant may speak of internal sacrifices, those of a broken heart, and of inward justice, but these are only sacrifices by way of analogy, and what should always accompany the sacrifice proper. If the Protestant tells us that he has in the interior homage and contrition and real submission of himself a distinct and peculiar worship of God, we tell him, in return, that then he must not call the worship we render to Mary Mariolatry, because this homage and submission, in the sense he means, we never offer to her. If he has something in this interior that pertains to supreme worship the worship of *latria*, he must bear in mind that we do not offer it to the saints, and therefore our worship of them is not idolatry; if he has something of this sort, then he does not himself offer any worship proper to God, external or internal, and [he] therefore has in no sense any worship to offer to God of a higher order than that which we offer to Mary and to the saints.

The worship of the saints, we conclude, is the worship of God in his works, the peculiar worship of Mary is the honoring of God in the mystery of the Incarnation. As God

in both is infinitely adorable, the honor we render to the saints or to Mary can never be carried too high, and as it is always distinguishable in kind from that worship we render to him for what he is in himself, as God or Creator, Redeemer, and supreme Good, it can never be idolatry or detract from the honor due to him alone. We love and honor God too little, but we cannot honor the saints too much, we are too weak, too cold, and too languid in our love to Jesus, but we cannot be too strong and fervid in our love to Mary, for we can never love and honor her so much as God himself loves and honors her.

We need not say that works on the love and veneration of Mary can hardly be too much multiplied, for that love and veneration cannot be carried to excess. No doubt wherever there is strong faith and lively devotion without proper instruction, there may chance to be manifested now and then something of superstition, whether the immediate object of worship be the saints or even God himself; for there is nothing which men cannot abuse. But superstition, except and combined with idolatry and unbelief, or misbelief, is not one of the dangers of our times; and as the worship of Mary is the best preservative from idolatry, heresy, and unbelief, so is it the best preservative from superstition.

Her clients will never become spiritual rappers, or abettors of modern necromancy. Her devout children will not be found among those who call up the spirits of the dead, and seek to be placed in communication with devils. The devils fly at her approach, and all lying spirits are silent in her presence. She is queen of heaven and earth, and even rebellious spirits must tremble and bow before her. Demon-worship is undeniably reviving in the modern world; and there is no room to doubt that it is owing to the abandonment of the worship of her Son, the incarnate God. Where Mary is not loved and honored, Christ is not worshipped; and where Christ is not worshipped, the devils have the field all to themselves.

The first symptom of apostasy from Christ and of a lapse into heathenism is the neglect of his most holy mother, and the rejection of that worship as superstition or idolatry; because that involves a rejection of the Incarnation, which comprises in itself all Christianity.

In its bearings on Christian faith and worship then, we cherish the worship of Mary, and are anxious to see devotion to her increase. But we are also anxious to see it increase as the best preservative of the moral dangers of our epoch. Mary is the mother of chaste love, and chaste love is that which in our age is most rare. The predominating sin of our times is impurity, at once the cause and effect of the modern sentimental philosophy. The popular literature of the day is unchaste and impure. Catholic morality is scouted as impracticable and absurd; law is regarded as fallen into desuetude; intellect is derided, reason is looked upon as superfluous, if not tyrannical; and the heart is extolled as the representative of God on earth. Feeling is honored as the voice of the Most High, and whatever tends to restrain or control it is held to be a direct violation of the will of our Creator. Passion is deified, and nothing is held to be sacred but our transitory feelings. Hence everywhere we find an impatience of restraint; a loud and indignant protest against all rule or measure in our affections and all those usages or customs of past times intended as safeguards of manners and morals; and a universal demand for liberty, which simply means unbounded license to

follow our impure or perverted instincts, and to indulge our most turbulent and unchaste passions, without shame or remorse.

The last, perhaps the only, remedy for this fearful state of things is to be sought in promoting and extending the worship of Mary. Society is lapsing, if it has not already lapsed, into the state in which Christianity found it some eighteen hundred years ago, and a new conversion of the gentiles has become necessary. Christian society can be restored only by the same faith and worship which originally created it. Jesus and Mary are now, as then, the only hope of the world, and their power and goodwill remain undiminished. The worship of Mary as mother of God redeemed the pagan world from its horrible corruptions, introduced and sustained the Christian family, and secured the fruits of the sacrament of marriage. It will do no less for our modern world, if cultivated; and we regard as one of the favorable signs that better times are at hand, the increasing devotion to Mary.

This is marked throughout the whole Catholic world, as is manifest from the intense interest that is felt in the probable approaching definition of the question of the Immaculate Conception. Nowhere is the change in regard to devotion to Mary as the mother of God more striking than among the Catholics of Great Britain and of our own country. This devotion is peculiarly Catholic, and any increase of it is an indication of reviving life and fervor among Catholics; and if Catholics had only the life and fervor they should have, the whole world would soon bow in humble reverence at the foot of the cross. It is owing to our deadness, our lack of zeal our lack or true fervor in our devotions, that so many nations and such multitudes of souls are still held in the chains of darkness under the dominion of Satan.

There are two ways in which the love and service of Mary will contribute to redeem society and restore Christian purity – the one the natural influence of such love and service on the heart of her worshippers, and the other the graces which in requital she obtains from her Son and bestows upon her clients. Mary is the mother of chaste love. The nature of love is always to unite the heart to the object loved. Love always makes us like unto the beloved, and we always become like the object we really and sincerely worship. If we may say, like worshippers, like gods, we may with equal truth say, like gods like worshippers. The love of Mary tends naturally, from the nature of all love, to unite us to her, by a virtue kindred to her own. We cannot love her, dwell on her merits, her excellences, her glories, without being constantly led to imitate her virtues, to love and strive after her perfect purity, her deep humility, her profound submission, and her unreserved obedience. Her love checks all lawlessness of the affections, all turbulence of the passions, all perturbation of the senses, fills the heart with sweet peace and a serene joy, restores to the soul her self-command, and maintains perfect order and tranquility within. Something of this effect is produced whenever we love any truly virtuous person. If this is so when the beloved is but an ordinary mortal, how much more when the beloved, the one with whom we commune, and whose virtues we reverence and long to possess, is Mary, the mother of God, the simplest and lowliest of handmaidens, but surpassing in true beauty, loveliness and worth all the other creatures of God!

Undoubtedly the worship of Mary is restricted to Catholics, and to those Catholics not undeserving of the name; but this is no objection to our general conclusion. We are too

apt to forget that the Church is in the world, and that it is through her that society is redeemed – too apt to forget that the quiet and unobtrusive virtues of Catholics living in the midst of a hostile world are always powerful in their operations on that world; and that the world is converted, not by the direct efforts we make to convert it, but by the efforts we make to live, ourselves, as good Catholics, and to save our own souls. The little handful of sincere and devout Catholics, the little family of sincere and earnest clients of Mary, seeking to imitate her virtues in their own little community, are as leaven hidden in three measures of meal. Virtue goes forth from them, diffuses itself on all sides, till the whole is leavened. No matter how small the number, the fact that even some keep alive in the community the love and veneration of Mary, the true ideal of womanhood, the true patroness of the Christian family, the mother of chaste love, adorned with all the virtues, and to whom the Holy Ghost says, “Thou art all-fair, O my love,” must have a redeeming effect on the whole community, and sooner or later must banish impurity, and revive the love of holy purity and reverence for Catholic morality.

For in the second place the worship of Mary is profitable, not only by the subjective effect it has upon her lovers, but also by the blessings she obtains for them, and, at their solicitation, for others. In these later times we have almost lost sight of religion in its objective character. The world has ceased to believe in the Real Presence; it denies the whole sacramental character of Christianity, and laughs at us when we speak of any sacrament as having any virtue not derived from the faith and virtue of the recipient. The whole non-Catholic world makes religion a purely subjective affair, and deduces all its truth from the mind, and all its efficacy from the heart, that accepts and cherishes it, so that even in religion, which is a binding of man anew to God, man is everything and God is nothing.

At bottom that world is atheistical, at best Epicurean. It either denies God altogether, or excludes him from all care of the world he has created. It has no understanding of his providence, no belief in his abiding presence with his creatures, or his fee and tender providence in their behalf. Faith, it assumes, is profitable only in its subjective operations, prayer only its natural effect on the mind and heart of him who prays, and love on in its natural effect on the affections of the lover. This cold and atheistical philosophy is the enlightenment, the progress of our age. But we who are Christians know that it is false, we know that God is very near unto every one of us, is ever free to help us, and that there is nothing that he will not do for them that love him truly, sincerely, confide in him, and in him only.

Mary is the channel through which her divine Son dispenses all his graces and blessings to us, and he loves and delights to load with his favors all who love and honor her. Thus to love and serve her is the way to secure his favor, and to obtain those graces we need to resist the workings of concupiscence, and to maintain the purity of our souls, and of our bodies, which are the temple of God. She says, “I love them that love me”; we cannot doubt that she will favor with her always successful intercession those whom she loves. She will obtain grace for us to keep ourselves chaste, and will in requital of our love to her obtain graces even for those without, that they may be brought in and healed of their wounds and putrefying sores. So that, under either point of view, the love and worship of Mary, the mother of God, a mother yet a virgin, always a virgin – Virgin most pure, most holy, most

humble, most amiable, most loving, most merciful, most faithful, most powerful – cannot fail to enable us to overcome the terrible impurity of our age, and to attain to the virtues now most needed for our own individual salvation, and for the safety of society.

In this view of the case, we must feel that nothing is more important than the cultivation of the Love and worship of Mary. She is our life, our sweetness, our hope, and we must suffer no sneers of those without, no profane babblings about “Mariolatry,” to move us, or in the least deter us from giving our hearts to Mary. We must fly to her protection as the child flies to its mother, and seek our safety and consolation in her love, in her maternal embrace. Our help is in thee, sweet mother. O protect us, thy children, and save us from the evil communications of the world, lost to virtue, and enslaved to the enemy of our souls!
