

# CONVERSATIONS WITH A CATHOLIC

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The following is a series of email correspondence that Avram had with a Roman Catholic from Mexico named Miguel. We pick it up in the midst of their correspondence.

Dear Miguel,

Shalom: May His Wisdom, Love and Forgiveness prevail in all our discussions.

I am going to bypass much of what you said, that we don't get bogged down in many different things at once. I want to concentrate for a moment, on how you defended praying to Mary and what you presented about Mary, that she was sinless. In the end, I want to see how you uphold your position or admit that the Roman Catholic Church was wrong. In my last email I wrote:

'For all I know, you could think that Mary was sinless and taken to Heaven without dying. This is a specific. Do you believe that? Is that not Catholic doctrine and is there not worship and prayers directed toward Mary even as we write and communicate with one another, commanded as such, by the Catholic Church?'

'Are you able to honestly scrutinize your faith or belief?'

and you replied:

Yes, I absolutely believe that the woman whose womb carried the Lord of the Universe for nine months was kept, by the power of God only, sinless. Yes, absolutely, I do believe in Mary's dormition taken to heaven in body and soul by Yeshua. The first doctrine comes from the angel's greeting in Luke one, "full of grace" and the second event, although not explicitly in the Bible, has been accepted by the whole Church since its beginnings. As a matter of fact, at the end of Revelation 11, John sees the Ark of the Covenant and immediately at the beginning of Chapter 12 he sees a woman, which many ancient and modern biblical scholars have interpreted as the Virgin Mary. Thus, it is clearly implied that she was taken to Heaven in body and soul since the book was written much later than the time she was taken by Yeshua to His Holy Mansion. No, there is no official Catholic doctrine that command us to pray to Mary, much less to worship her. WE ONLY WORSHIP THE ONE LIVING GOD: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Hail Mary and other devotional prayers either have a biblical basis or ask Mary, as part of the Church in Heaven and the communion of saints, to intercede for us. The Book of Revelation talks about the saints in Heaven elevating prayers to the Lord and thus interceding for the saints on Earth.

Yes, I am able to scrutinize and will continue to scrutinize my faith.

and my reply to you:

In your first sentence you state: 'Yes, I absolutely believe that the woman whose womb carried the Lord of the Universe for nine months was kept, by the power of God only, sinless.' Do you mean that for the nine months of pregnancy, she was sinless, or for her whole life? Either way I find unbiblical but I wanted clarification from you.

Can you give me any cite in the Bible that tells us that anyone thought Mary to be sinless? If you can't, then telling me that she is, because Gabriel (Luke 1:26) called her, 'full of grace' rests strictly on an interpretation that is without any biblical foundation. In other words, where does one find (in the Bible), that

‘full of grace’ equals sinlessness? And actually, the word ‘full’ is not found in Luke 1:26. This is not what the angel is saying. And as for ‘grace’ being equal to ‘sinlessness’ I think you are going to have a problem showing me this.

Digressing for a moment, in the Greek, Mary’s name is not mentioned in the initial greeting, as is common in the Roman Church when praying (‘Hail Mary, full of grace’), not that that is a concern of mine, as it is only a standard way of praying but the Word of God states that Gabriel said this:

‘Hail, one having been favored.’ Or from the Hebrew, which Gabriel would have had to speak to Miryam to be understood, ‘Shalom! You have found God’s Grace’ or ‘Shalom! God has been gracious to you.’

There is no mention of her name or her being sinless. Because Yahveh chooses someone, it doesn’t imply that they are sinless. Whether it be Moses, Father Abraham, King David or Mary. In other words, for someone, or especially an organization as powerful and as theologically aware as the Catholic Church is, to present Mary as sinless, would require something more than just a greeting from an angel in which the angel said that the person was chosen or highly favored by God. Where does it say in the Bible that Mary was sinless? Your translation of ‘*keka-ri-tow-may-nay*’ as ‘full of grace’ (Luke 1:28), and that it means that Mary is sinless, is very difficult to accept.

The Greek word for ‘one having been favored’ (‘*keka-ri-tow-may-nay*’), comes from the verb ‘*kah-ree-toe*’ and means,

‘to favor, visit with favor, to make an object of favor, to gift; passive; to be visited with free favor, be an object of gracious visitation, Luke 1:28’<sup>1</sup>

Another lexicon defines ‘*kah-ree-toe*’ as, ‘favor (highly), show kindness to, bless someone’ ‘in the NT used in reference to divine grace’.<sup>2</sup> And in the classic lexicon that I think would be seen as authoritative among Catholic scholars, the definition is,

‘bestow favor upon, favor highly, bless...in the angel’s greeting to Mary...favored one (in the sight of God) Luke 1:28’.<sup>3</sup>

There is no indication in any of them that her sin or sinlessness is even being hinted at. What we find is the sovereign, gracious will of Yahveh bestowing on a Jewish maiden named Miryam, the blessing of being the mother of the Messiah of Israel.

As for the word’s usage in the Hebrew Bible, it is linked with the Hebrew verb for ‘grace’ (*hanan*) and for ‘forgiving-loving-kindness’ (*hesed*).

‘In the basic stem the verb ‘*hanan*’ occurs 56 times’ and denotes the ‘kind turning of one person to another’ as expressed in an act of assistance...It rather means the attitude of a person in its direction to another in a specific gracious action...Thus in Gen. 33:5’ Yahveh ‘has been gracious to Jacob in giving him children. According to Psalm 119:29,’ Yahveh ‘is gracious with the’ (giving of) ‘the Law.’<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wesley J. Perschbacher, Editor, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1990), p. 437, 238.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Friberg and Barbara Friberg, Editors, with Neva Miller. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), p. 407.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Bauer, augmented by William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 879.

<sup>4</sup> Gerhard Friedrich, Editor, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Translator and Editor, *Theological Dictionary of the New Tes-*

‘In 41 of the 56 sayings Yahweh (sic) is the subject of the saying. 26 of these instances are in Psalms where *hanayni*’ (be gracious or merciful to me)...is found no less than 19 times in prayers’.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the person was asking God to be gracious to them, hardly an understanding of one being sinless or having anything to do with sinlessness. Yahveh,

‘is expressly named in the prayers, and is called upon to hear the prayer, 4:1, to heal 6:2; 41:2, to look upon the plight of the petitioner in the face of his foes 9:13, to redeem him 26:11...to pardon his sins 51:1, etc.’<sup>6</sup>

‘The specifically OT form of this cry for help...is to be seen when the petitioner appeals to the grace of the covenant or to Yahweh’s own Word. It is against this background that the blessing of the priest when he prays for the gracious intervention of Yahweh acquires its true significance...the blessing of Aaron (Num. 6:25), in which the name of Yahweh is put upon the people refers to the gracious will of Yahweh, who has pledged Himself to His people in His special covenant.’<sup>7</sup>

The ‘blessing of Aaron that the cite refers to is this:

‘Yahveh make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you;’

It has nothing to do with sinlessness but with God’s favor being bestowed upon the person or people. In the case of Miryam we see exactly that: God’s favor or grace coming to her, announcing that she will be the mother of the Son of David. The other Hebrew word that can be seen to be placed in the slot of the Greek word for ‘favor’ is *hesed* which means,

‘forgiving-loving-kindness’ and ‘is particularly adapted to denote what takes place in the covenant between Yahweh and Israel.’<sup>8</sup>

The use of the word in Deut. 7:9 (‘Yahveh, who shows ‘covenant forgiving-loving-kindness to thousands of generations of them that love Me and keep My Commandments’) is ‘a reference to grace converted into action.’<sup>9</sup>

The use of the two Hebrew words for ‘grace’ or ‘favor’ do not point in any way to sinlessness but to Yahveh bestowing upon a person or a people, His beneficence. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament states that the Greek word means, ‘to show grace...to bless’.<sup>10</sup>

Can you tell me how one can get ‘sinlessness’ out of that Greek word? If you can’t then the Catholic doctrine of Mary being sinless goes against the Bible. Why? If the Bible is not telling us that Mary is sinless and the Catholic Church is, we have the Catholic Church placing it’s own doctrine upon its people. This cannot be found in the Bible. And it goes directly against the understanding that since Adam and Eve, only Jesus was without sin. When someone proclaims that Mary was sinless, we seem to have is a false doctrine, whether for nine months or her whole life. If we base a doctrine on what cannot be found in the

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*tament*, vol 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), p. 377.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 378.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 383.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 393.

Bible, then it has to have been made up by Man. In this case, the Roman Catholic Church inherited it from Babylon, as I will show in a moment. Do you not find it a concern that Mary is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible as being sinless? To state that Mary was sinless is to say that she didn't need the shed Blood of her Son. She didn't need salvation because only sinners need that. Again, this places the Catholic Mary in a biblically untenable position. And it raises her to equality in terms of sinlessness, with Yeshua.

The official teaching that Mary was born without sin is not an ancient one, as far as the Catholic Church is concerned. It arose about 150 years ago as Alexander Hislop says:

'What, however, had never been done before, was done in December, 1854. Then bishops from all parts of Christendom, and representatives from the ends of the earth, met in Rome; and with only four dissentient voices, it was decreed that Mary, the mother of God, who died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, should henceforth be worshipped as the Immaculate Virgin, 'conceived and born without sin.''<sup>11</sup>

Here we have the teaching that Mary was without sin for her whole life (not just the nine months of her pregnancy). The doctrine of Mary being 'sinless' and being the one to pray to, to intercede for Catholics, and Mary being worshipped as the Third Person of the Trinity, was seen in many countries around the world, each having a different name for the Madonna, but only to make her their national goddess, many years before Jesus was born. Hislop writes,

'The worship of the goddess-mother with the child in her arms continued to be observed in Egypt till Christianity entered. If the Gospel had come in power among the mass of the people, the worship of this goddess-queen would have been overthrown. With the generality it came only in name. Instead, therefore, of the Babylonian goddess being cast out, in too many cases her name only was changed. She was called the Virgin Mary, and, with her child, was worshipped with the same idolatrous feeling by professing Christians, as formerly by open and avowed Pagans.'

'The consequence was, that when, in AD 325, the Nicene Council was summoned to condemn the heresy of Arius, who denied the true divinity of Christ, that heresy indeed was condemned, but not without the help of men who gave distinct indications of a desire to put the creature on a level with the Creator, to set the Virgin-mother side by side with her Son. At the Council of Nice, says the author of 'Nimrod...The Melchite section' that is, the representatives of the so-called Christianity of Egypt, 'held that there were three persons in the Trinity;'

'the Father, the Virgin Mary, and Messiah their Son.'

In reference to this astounding fact, elicited by the Nicene Council, Father Newman speaks exultingly of these discussions as tending to the glorification of Mary.'

'Thus,' says he, 'the controversy opened a question which it did not settle. It discovered a new sphere, if we may so speak, in the realms of light, to which the Church had not yet assigned its inhabitant. Thus, there was a wonder in Heaven; a throne was seen far above all created powers, mediatorial, intercessory, a title archetypal, a crown bright as the morning star, a glory issuing from the eternal throne, robes pure as the heavens, and a sceptre over all. And who was the predestined heir of that majesty? Who was that wis-

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<sup>11</sup> The Reverend Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, 2nd American edition (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959; originally written in 1862), p. 267.

dom, and what was her name, the mother of fair love, and far, and holy hope, exalted like a palm-tree in Engaddi, and a rose-plant in Jericho, created from the beginning before the world, in God's counsels, and in Jerusalem was her power? The vision is found in the Apocalypse, 'a Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.'

'The intelligent reader will see at a glance the absurdity of applying this vision of the 'woman' of the Apocalypse to the Virgin Mary. John expressly declares that what he saw was a 'sign' or 'symbol' (*semeion*). If the woman here is a literal woman, the woman that sits on the seven hills must be the same. 'The woman' in both cases is a 'symbol.' 'The woman' on the seven hills is the symbol of the false church; the woman clothed with the sun, of the true church; the Bride, the Lamb's wife.'

'The votaries of Mary,' adds he (i.e. Father Newman) 'do not exceed the true faith, unless the blasphemers of her Son came up to it. The Church of Rome is not idolatrous, unless Arianism<sup>12</sup> is orthodoxy.'

This is the very poetry of blasphemy. It contains an argument too; but what does that argument amount to? It just amounts to this, that if Christ be admitted to be truly and properly God, and worthy of Divine honors, His mother, from whom He derived merely His humanity, must be admitted to be the same, must be raised far above the level of all creatures, and be worshipped as a partaker of the Godhead. The divinity of Christ is made to stand or fall with the divinity of His mother. Such is Popery in the nineteenth century; yea, such is Popery in England.'<sup>13</sup>

If you have not read, *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop, I would highly suggest it to you, Miguel. It is a classic, written in the 1860's that parallels the Catholic Church with ancient Babylon. I have never seen anyone successfully refute it. It would be good reading for anyone wanting to know how deceptive Satan can be.

Can you give me any biblical connection that defines the Woman in Revelation 12 as Mary, other than the fact that some scholars believe that it is Mary? I mean, after all, there are scholars for Jehovah's Witness and the Mormons who will 'prove' to us that Jesus is really the archangel Michael, and not deity. Deception is a tool of Satan. I am looking for solid biblical evidence that tells me that Mary is the Woman in Rev. 12 AND that God wants us to, or allows us, to pray to Mary (or anyone other than Him and His Messiah, our High Priest Yeshua).

'The 'woman clothed with the sun', for example, is to be understood in contrast to 'the great prostitute'<sup>14</sup> (Rev. 17:1). What this means is that the great prostitute called 'Babylon, Mystery Religion' is a world-religious system that imitates or mimics ancient Babylon.

'Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,' (Rev. 17:1)

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<sup>12</sup> E. A. Livingstone, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 36. Arianism is a 'heresy which denied the full Divinity of Christ, so named after its founder, Arius. Arius seems to have held that the Son of God was not eternal but created by the Father'.

<sup>13</sup> Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>14</sup> The Rev. Canon Leon Morris, General Editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Revelation* by Leon Morris M.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press 2000), p. 151.

‘and on her forehead a name was written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.’ And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Yeshua. When I saw her, I wondered greatly. And the angel said to me, ‘Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits’. (Rev. 17:5-9)

Can you tell me what city sits on seven mountains or seven hills? Does not Rome proudly display herself as the city built on seven hills? Is it possible that what Revelation is speaking about, the great whore of Babylon, is the Roman Catholic Church? Perhaps you don’t think that the great whore is a religious system. It would be hard to make it anything else as Revelation shows us that ‘God’s people’ are in it:

‘I heard another voice from Heaven, saying, ‘Come out of her, My people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as Heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.’ (Rev. 18:4-5)

Do you think that Satan is going to deceive the whole world by displaying himself as the Devil with a pitchfork? He is very clever and insidious. What better way to masquerade and deceive many people, then to present a religious system that seems godly but at its core is demonic? Again from Hislop we read this about Mary being the dwelling place of God:

‘The human nature of Christ is the ‘Tabernacle of God,’ inasmuch as the Divine nature has veiled its glory in such a way, by assuming our nature, that we can come near without overwhelming dread to the Holy God.’ To this glorious truth John refers when he says (John 1:14),

‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt (literally tabernacled) among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.’

In this sense Christ, the God-man is the only ‘Tabernacle of God.’ Now, it is precisely in this sense that Rome calls Mary the ‘Tabernacle of God,’ or of the ‘Holy Ghost.’<sup>15</sup>

‘Thus speaks the author of a Popish work devoted to the exaltation of the Virgin, in which all the peculiar titles and prerogatives of Christ are given to Mary:’

‘Behold the tabernacle of God, the mansion of God, the habitation, the city of God is with men, and in men and for men, for their salvation, and exaltation, and eternal glorification...Is it most clear that this is true of the holy church? and in like manner also equally true of the most holy sacrament of the Lord’s body? Is it (true) of every one of us in as far as we are truly Christians? Undoubtedly; but we have to contemplate this mystery (as existing) in a peculiar manner in the most holy Mother of our Lord.’<sup>16</sup>

‘Then the author, after endeavoring to show that ‘Mary is rightly considered as the Tabernacle of God with men,’ and that in a peculiar sense, a sense different from that in which all Christians are the ‘temple of God,’ thus proceeds with express reference to her in this

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<sup>15</sup> Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. *Pancarpium Marioe* or *Marianum*, pp. 141-142.

character of the Tabernacle:”

‘Great truly is the benefit, singular is the privilege, that the Tabernacle of God should be with men, IN WHICH men may safely come near to God become man.’<sup>17</sup>

‘Here the whole mediatorial glory of Christ, as the God-man in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, is given to Mary, or at least is shared with her. The above extracts are taken from a work published upwards of two hundred years ago. Has the Papacy improved since then? Has it repented of its blasphemies? No, the very reverse. The quotation already given from Father Newman proves this; but there is still stronger proof.’

‘In a recently published work, the same blasphemous idea is even more clearly unfolded. While Mary is called ‘The HOUSE consecrated to God,’ and the ‘TEMPLE of the Trinity,’ the following versicle and response will show in what sense she is regarded as the temple of the Holy Ghost.’<sup>18</sup>

‘The Lord himself created HER in the Holy Ghost, and Poured HER out among all his works.’<sup>19</sup>

‘This astounding language manifestly implies that Mary is identified with the Holy Ghost, when it speaks of her ‘being poured out’ on ‘all the works of God’; and that, as we have seen, was just the very way in which the Woman, regarded as the ‘Tabernacle’ or House of God by the Pagans, was looked upon...The names of blasphemy bestowed by the Papacy on Mary have not one shadow of foundation in the Bible, but are all to be found in the Babylonian idolatry.’<sup>20</sup>

Then Hislop proceeds to show us how the teaching that Mary is the personification of the Holy Spirit didn’t originate with the Catholic Church but with ancient Babylon. He writes that the,

‘Babylonian queen seems to have been the first to whom that honor was given. She was called the Queen of Heaven. (Jeremiah 44:17-19, 25). In Egypt she was styled Athor; i.e. ‘the Habitation of God’<sup>21</sup> to signify that in her dwelt all the ‘fullness of the Godhead.’ To point out the great goddess-mother, in a Pantheistic sense, as at once the Infinite and Almighty one, and the Virgin mother, this inscription was engraved upon one of her temples in Egypt:’

‘I am all that has been or that is, or that shall be. No mortal has removed my veil. The fruit which I have brought forth is the Sun.’<sup>22</sup>

‘In Greece she had the name of Hestia and among the Romans, Vesta, which is just a modification of the same name; a name which, though it has been commonly understood in a different sense, really meant ‘The Dwelling-place.’<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 84-85.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 85. *Golden Manual*, p. 649. This work has the imprimatur of ‘Nicholas, Bishop of Melipotamus, now Cardinal Wiseman.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 77. Bunsen, vol. i. p. 401.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 386-387.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-78. Hestia, in Greek, signifies ‘a house’ or ‘a dwelling.’ This is usually thought to be the secondary

Don't you find it slightly discomfoting to realize that what the Roman Catholic Church has bestowed upon Mary, is not only unbiblical for the Jewish maiden but is the very essence and titles of the pagan Queen of Heaven? How can one biblically justify this? Does Hislop have an axe to grind against the Catholic Church? He certainly does and it seems, with many biblical reasons.

To say that the Woman of Revelation 12 is Mary, is hardly something that is universally accepted: Leon Morris states that,

'Sign (*semeion*) is used often in the Fourth Gospel of Jesus' miracles...The action John is describing seems to take place on earth, but he sees the actors in the sky first of all. There is a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head...The symbolism is Joseph's dream (Gen. 37:9)'. 'In this symbolism we must discern Israel, the chosen people of God. 'She comes standing upon the Old Testament revelation of reflected light and clothed with the New Testament revelation which is as the sun shining in his strength' (Torrence). The twelve stars will be the twelve patriarchs or the tribes which descended from them.'<sup>24</sup>

'The figure of Israel as a travailing woman is found several times (Is. 66:7-8; Mic. 4:10; 5:3; etc.)'. 'He' (i.e. the Apostle John) 'uses the Greek present tense, 'cries' and his participles 'travailing' and 'being in pain' (the latter not elsewhere in the New Testament of childbirth; it refers to torture), bring the scene before our eyes. The time of birth is near. Israel is about to give birth to the Messiah'<sup>25</sup> in the midst of torture (Roman occupation and oppression). 'Here the woman is undoubtedly Israel who gives birth to the Messiah'<sup>26</sup> and not Miryam.'

Why isn't the Woman in Revelation Mary? Because it says that the woman and her children (believers), will be taken into the wilderness. The wilderness is a picture of this present world of darkness (in comparison to the New Jerusalem which is the city of the great King).<sup>27</sup>

Rev. 3:12: 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the Temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the Name of My God, and the Name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from My God, and My new Name.'

Rev. 21:2: 'And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.'

This present world is the wilderness that Revelation speaks of and when the Heavens and the Earth shall pass away, all those that have believed in Yahveh and His Messiah King will live forever, glorified and 'one' with Messiah Yeshua as His Bride. That is the Promise. This world is the wilderness because this world is covered with darkness and the ruler of it is Satan. As it was in the Wilderness with the Sons of Israel, that Yahveh provided for His people Israel, so it is today in the wilderness of the world: Yahveh provides for His people Israel, both Jew and Gentile who love Yeshua. You also wrote:

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meaning of the word, its proper meaning being believed to be 'fire.' But the statements made in regard to Hestia, show that the name is derived from Hes or Hese 'to cover, to shelter' which is the very idea of a house, which 'covers' or 'shelters' from the inclemency of the weather.

<sup>24</sup> Morris, *Revelation*, p. 152.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 152-153.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 48:2; Matt. 5:34-35.

‘The Hail Mary and other devotional prayers either have a biblical basis or ask Mary, as part of the Church in Heaven and the communion of saints, to intercede for us. The Book of Revelation talks about the saints in Heaven elevating prayers to the Lord and thus interceding for the saints on Earth.’

Where does God say that we can pray to them on our behalf? Interesting to note is that in most, if not all pagan religions, prayers to the dead, especially the dead ‘holy ones’ or ‘saints’ give special merit to those praying them. Isn’t that what Catholics do when they pray to St. Christopher? Aren’t they praying to a dead man? And even if you want to suggest that St. Christopher is alive in Heaven, where does the Bible command us or even hint to us that we should pray to him or anyone like him? Why pray to St. Christopher, when we can pray directly to Yahveh in the Name of the Messiah of Israel, in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Mary, as blessed as she was, is dead. Just as John and Paul and Peter are. The God of Israel forbids us to pray to dead people, Apostles or anyone else. It is not only a gross sin but opens up the person to the spiritual forces of darkness:

‘There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to Yahveh’ (Deut. 18:10-12).

The cite lists those people who practice witchcraft, etc., and even though Catholics who pray ‘to saints’ might not see themselves in this position, praying to a dead person to help them in time of need is tantamount to ‘calling up the dead’. How can it be anything else?

If you can’t honestly answer my questions biblically, then your position, that it’s alright to pray to Mary, to intercede for anyone on their behalf, and that Mary was without sin, is biblically untenable. And this brings us to a time of Truth. You wrote:

‘Yes, I am able to scrutinize and will continue to scrutinize my faith.’

It is not ‘your’ position that is in question here Miguel but what the Catholic Church teaches. I am calling you to integrity. Can you see that what the Catholic Church has taught is without biblical foundation? Or are you going to present documents of men to me, in defiance of all Scripture, that will ‘show me’ that Mary is sinless and yes, one can and should pray to her? If both or either of these positions (that Mary is sinless and that we can and should pray to her), are biblically untenable and actually go against what God’s Word teaches us, than you cannot tell me that the Catholic Church is without error (theologically). And it opens up the way, a breach in the Church’s theological wall so to speak, that it might be in error about other doctrines.

Now we will see just how honest you are and how able you are ‘to scrutinize your faith.’

In the Name of the Holy One of Israel, Messiah Yeshua,

Avram

29 July 2001

Dear Miguel,

I am a simple man. Tell me that three plus one equals four, and I will believe you. Tell me that three plus one equals five and I will know that you lack understanding.

The power that is pride is that it blinds those who walk in it. I know very well what I am talking about for I have seen myself about 18 years ago, thinking my 'church' had it all together.

I will show you three Roman Catholic beliefs about Mary that have no basis in Scripture. Then I will ask you if you can see what I am talking about.

1. You speak of Mary being sinless, using the text, 'full of grace' to 'show me' such. I have already given you a nine page paper on why that is not a correct interpretation of that phrase. Can you give me one cite in Scripture that tells us that Mary was without sin for any length of time? You seem to not understand that sin is not only external ('that Mary didn't sin'; i.e. she didn't commit an act of sin, like stealing, etc.), but that sin is a matter of our human nature.

The very nature of a human being is 'sin' in God's Eyes. For her to be sinless would mean that she didn't have a human nature like Adam and Eve (after the fall). For her to be given a pre-Adamic nature (i.e. before Adam rebelled against God), but for Scripture to be silent on it, gives one no indication that she ever had a different nature than Adam's sinful one. For God, by His Grace, as you believe, to change Mary's nature is not beyond His capability. But for you to believe that, when there is no Scripture for that belief to rest on, means that you are taking your belief 'out of the thin air.' Or, perhaps as you would tell me, from the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. You believe that Mary was taken into Heaven in bodily form and has not died. Can you give me one cite in Scripture that would lead me to think this? Again, a Roman Catholic tradition that has absolutely no Scriptural basis. Don't you find it rather strange that both Enoch and Elijah, who were taken into Heaven, have accounts that tell us that in Scripture; but Mary doesn't? Shouldn't that cause you to stop and say, 'Hmm...I wonder why not?'
3. You believe that it is alright to pray to Mary. Can you give me one cite in Scripture that would cause me to believe that? Again, a Roman Catholic tradition that has absolutely no Scriptural basis. The Scripture is full of cites that tell us to come to the Father through the Son but not one that even hints that we should speak with Mary. Perhaps an oversight on the part of the Holy Spirit which wrote the New Testament? Or would you tell me that the Holy Spirit was saving that gem, the desire on God's part for us to pray to Mary, to be passed on by way of oral tradition through the Apostles Peter and Paul? That would be an oral tradition that goes against the Word of God.

Please don't think that I am denigrating Mary, or more accurately, the Jewish maiden who bore the Messiah of Israel, Miryam. I am not demeaning her but only trying to sort through the Catholic traditions that have no biblical basis, to get to what the Bible says about her. Truly, she was blessed above every woman who ever lived. And truly, she was deeply hurt by the death of her first born Son. To say that she was more than a woman though, to give to her characteristics that are only the Savior's (sinlessness, mediatorial role, existence in Heaven for us today), is not exalting her but demonically perverting her. She was a human being like us whom Yahveh chose to bear His sinless Son. Miryam is certainly worthy to be honored as an example of submissiveness to God's Will and the mother of our Lord Yeshua but not to be worshiped as God the Holy Spirit or the Queen of Heaven. That is idolatry.

In one of my emails I spoke of there possibly being a resemblance between you and the Pharisees. I said:

‘If you accept Church tradition that obviously nullifies the Word of God, how are you any different than those Pharisees who asked Yeshua, ‘Why don’t your disciples follow the Tradition of the Elders and wash their hands before they eat?’

You responded and said:

‘Am I any different from those Pharisees who questioned Yeshua? Absolutely, and I wonder if you, as a Messianic Jew, are still attached to many of the laws and commandments that clouded those Jews from discovering the true Messiah. Obviously those Jews believed in the One God of Israel, followed the Torah, worshipped in a Synagogue, expected a Messiah, kept the Sabbath, and even defended fiercely all of their Jewish religion and traditions, and despite all those good things, they failed to recognize and accept Jesus as the Messiah...so there is no way I resemble those Jews, externally or internally...remember that it is not me who has a Jewish heritage and I have never, ever questioned Yeshua’s teachings.’

Putting aside your perspective on the religious integrity of the Pharisees who attacked Jesus (‘Obviously those Jews believed in the One God of Israel’), I don’t think you understand what I am saying to you. You speak of not having a Jewish heritage but does not your Church adopt the Pharisaic mode of determining what is authoritative and what is not? Does not your Church, like the Pharisees before them, and the Rabbis today, present the exact parallel of authority concerning Scripture and their authority? In other words, the Catholic Church bases its authority to present doctrine that cannot be found in Scripture or that actually goes against Scripture, on the same grounds that the Rabbis use to deceive the Jewish people: tradition and declaration that God gave them that authority.

The Rabbis claim that their Oral Tradition (known as the Talmud), not only came from God Himself but that it is greater than Scripture. In other words, when Scripture and tradition clash, tradition wins out. How then can you say that you don’t have anything in common with the Pharisees? You walk in a Roman Catholic version of Pharisaic Judaism. Don’t think so? Let me explain.

The Rabbis tell us that the authority of the Talmud (and therefore THEIR authority), is derived from God Himself. The progression goes like this: God gave the Oral Tradition to Moses.

‘Moses passed it on to Joshua. Joshua gave it to the Elders. The Elders gave it to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it to the Men of the Great Assembly’<sup>28</sup> (in Ezra and Nehemiah’s day).

And that’s how we got the Oral Tradition that the Rabbis say supplements the Torah (Word of God). It’s not that they say that the Talmud opposes the Word of God, they tell us that the Talmud helps us to understand what God is saying and what God meant. Sounds like the Catholics borrowed their doctrine on ‘the tradition of the Fathers’ from the Jews, doesn’t it? But we see that Jesus had a great problem with it (Matt. 15:1-20, etc.). Hmm...

The Rabbis use the Talmud to teach us of things that the Torah fails to mention (like how to slaughter a sacrifice; where to cut the throat, etc.). They also use it to give the Jewish people more commandments, commandments that are not in the Word of God but ‘seem to come from the Word’ as they twist and contort the Word to make it read the way they want it to.

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<sup>28</sup> Ariel & Devorah Berkowitz, *Torah Rediscovered* (Lakewood, CO: First Fruits of Zion, 1996), p. 81. This is from the *Mishnah*, tractate *Pirke Avot* 1:1.

‘According to Rabbi Pinhas Kehati, a modern Mishnaic scholar in Jerusalem’,<sup>29</sup>

‘The purpose of this opening statement (in Pirke Avot), is to teach us that every word cited in this tractate, as indeed the whole of the oral Torah’ (Talmud) ‘can in their systematic form be traced back through the Prophets to Mosheh Rabbeinu’ (Moses Our Teacher), ‘the Father of all prophets, who received the whole ‘Torah, it’s laws, rules of inference and interpretations, from the Almighty Himself.’<sup>30</sup>

Does not that sound strangely like the Catholic version of how and why their written tradition came to be and why it is to be considered above questioning? Let me show you what I consider to be a Jewish parallel to your Catholic understanding that ‘full of grace’ meant that Mary was sinless.

One place where the Rabbis contort the Word of God, using a passage of Scripture to do so, concerns the eating of meat and dairy together. The Rabbis state it is a sin to eat them at the same time. The rabbinic view comes from one verse of Scripture that is repeated three times in the Torah. Exodus 23:19 is the first place we see it:

*‘You must not boil a kid in his mother’s milk.’*

From this sentence, the Rabbis have constructed a veritable Mt. Everest of rabbinic regulations relating to the separation of meat and dairy. Note well that God never speaks of separating any milk from any meat products in the verse. Yet the Rabbis tells us that this includes the separation of meat and dairy dishes,<sup>31</sup> pots, pans, sinks for washing the dishes and even separate refrigerators for keeping meat and dairy products. One can not place meat on a dairy dish (or vice versa), or the dish (pot, pan, etc.), becomes contaminated.<sup>32</sup> The main thrust of their interpretation is that one cannot eat meat and dairy at the same meal.

Interesting to realize is that none of these meat or dairy products that they are speaking about are forbidden, or sin in and of themselves (for the meat would only be clean according to Lev. 11, and all dairy products are biblically clean). But to eat the two at the same meal is sin in the eyes of the Rabbis. This comes from that one verse. There are no other verses in Scripture that even hints at this interpretation.

The Rabbis believe that the young goat or lamb could not be eaten at the same time as one would drink the milk.<sup>33</sup> Of course, God never says anything about eating the kid or drinking the milk, or saying that there needs to be a separation of time between the two of them. He says not to boil a kid in its mother’s milk.

The reason why that verse (repeated in Ex. 34.26 and Deut. 14:21), is in Scripture is because God is warning His people Israel that they are not to look to magic for their plentiful harvest of crops. The proper understanding of this passage deals with ancient Egyptian, Canaanite and Syrian idolatrous fertility rites.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Rabbi Pinhas Kehati, *Mishnah: Seder Nezikin*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem, 1994), VII 7. (This was a footnote taken from *Torah Rediscovered*, p. 167.)

<sup>31</sup> If one puts a piece of cheese on a new plate, that plate becomes a ‘dairy plate’ forever. Hence the need to have two fully separate sets of dishes, silverware, etc. Of course, they cannot have a plate with meat and dairy on it either. This would be sin in their eyes, also.

<sup>32</sup> The exception to this rule is if the dish is glass. Glass being non porous, the Rabbis allow for this as long as it has been thoroughly washed.

<sup>33</sup> The possibility exists that you can eat them at different times, which should have alerted the Rabbis and their followers to the absurdity of their interpretation. Carrying this rabbinic absurdity to all meat and dairy possibilities, chickens which do not give milk, still can not be eaten together with dairy products.

The boiled milk would be sprinkled over the fields by the pagans, after the fall harvest, for a bountiful harvest for the next year. This was in honor of the pagan god or goddess of fertility and harvest.

The first two passages of the kid in its mother milk follows right on the heels of the Feast of Tabernacles (Ex. 23:16; 34:22). The Feast of Tabernacles is the end time or autumn harvest Feast of God. It comes in October. In the third passage where the kid is mentioned, immediately after that is the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 14:22ff). The Lord is declaring to His people Israel that after their harvest season was over, they were to trust Him for a bountiful harvest for the next year. They were not to rely on magic. This was in stark contrast to the pagan peoples around them who would practice idolatry and witchcraft 'to insure a good harvest' the following year.

We can not find one Scripture where God commands that we abstain from eating dairy and meat together. Not one. The Rabbis have perverted the Word of God when they declare that it is sin to eat meat and dairy together. A perversion that takes away from the Commandments of God by misinterpreting and falsifying them. The Rabbis have set up a false standard of sin. If a Jew eats cheese and meat together, they are sinning according to the Rabbis. This rabbinical 'commandment' is confused with holiness. Many Jews think that they are good Jews, or holy, or worthy of eternal life because they keep this practice. It is Man perverting the Word of God, speaking in the Name of God, something that God never intended. Whoa unto the shepherds that have not counseled the Flock of God properly.

Biblically, there is no problem with eating meat and dairy together. We see that the Lord and His two angels did it. The Rabbis try and get around this by saying that they waited 18 minutes after they had the dairy, to eat the meat.<sup>35</sup> The Scripture, though, speaks differently. It tells us that Father Abraham served the three of them all the food at the same time:

'And he took butter (cream), and milk and the calf which he had dressed and set it before them and he stood by them under the tree and they did eat.' (Gen. 18:8).

Miguel, can you see the perversion in the Jewish Camp? I am telling you that a similar perversion exists in the Roman Catholic Camp. Can you see it now with Mary?

You tell me that the Roman Catholic Church gets its authority from Jesus Himself who gave it to Peter and Paul and then to the Church. Can you not see that the basis for Roman Catholic tradition, negating the Word of God, is the same as that of the Jewish Rabbis? Can you not see that by honoring and exalting tradition above the Word of God, one nullifies the Word of God in those areas where tradition has no biblical support? Is this not exactly what Yeshua said to those Pharisees that day when He said that they

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<sup>34</sup> Rev. James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1972; originally written about 1874), p. 73. Number 133 says that this 'injunction is put in connection with sacrifices and festivals, the seething of a kid in his mother's milk...was an 'idolatrous practice' done 'for the purpose of making trees and fields more fruitful the following year.' This is seen 'on the authority of an ancient Karaite comment on the Pentateuch...the trees, fields, gardens and orchards' would be 'sprinkled with that milk.' Charles F. Pfeiffer, Old Testament, Everett F. Harrison, New Testament, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 73. 'in the Ugarit literature discovered in 1930, it was learned that boiling a kid in its mother's milk was a Canaanite practice used in connection with fertility rites (*Birth of the Gods*, 1:14).' R. L. Harris, Editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, Associate Editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 285. 'Since a Ugaritic text (UT 16: Text no. 52:14) specifies, 'They cook a kid in milk,' the biblical injunction may have been directed against a Canaanite fertility rite.'

<sup>35</sup> Eighteen minutes being only one school of rabbinic thought on how long one must wait after eating dairy, to eat meat. Others say 30 minutes. To eat dairy after one has eaten meat, one must wait upwards of four to six hours. A great nutritional health practice for sure but hardly sin if one does not adhere to it. Nutritional science has told us that the eating of dairy and meat products together retards digestion.

taught for the Commandments of God, the doctrines of men? The Pharisees questioned the Lord:

‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the Tradition of the Elders but eat their bread with impure hands?’ (Mark 7:5)

Yeshua responded to them and in this, we can see His view on tradition that comes against what the Scripture teaches. He said,

‘Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors Me with their lips but their heart is far away from Me, for in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men...Neglecting the Commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men... You are experts at setting aside the Commandment of God in order to keep your tradition’’ (Mark 7:6-9).

Is not the Roman Catholic Church a daughter of Pharisaic Judaism? Is not the authority structure for the Roman Catholic Church an exact duplicate of the Pharisaic?

Three plus one equals four. Will you tell me that it equals five? That because of Roman Catholic tradition, it is now dogma and equal to and greater than the Word of God?

I have shown you three beliefs about Mary that have no basis in the Word of God. I have also shown you the basis of rabbinic authority and told you that Roman Catholic authority is parallel to it. Will you continue to tell me that your tradition has greater merit in the eyes of God than that of the Jews because of an alleged ‘word from an Apostle’? If that is the case, than why did it take the Catholic Church 1800 years to officially tell us that Mary was sinless<sup>36</sup> and 1900 years to tell us that when ‘the course of her life was finished’ she ‘taken up, body and soul, into the glory of heaven’?<sup>37</sup>

‘A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed, but on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed’ (Deut. 19:15).

‘But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.’ (Matt. 18:16).

If you cannot or will not acknowledge your belief in these three areas of Mary rests solely on Roman Catholic tradition that has absolutely no basis in the Word of God, are you not a Roman Catholic Pharisee?

How can I show you heavenly things about Messiah Yeshua, Miguel, if you insist on clinging to demonic perversions of His Word?

May you come to the knowledge of His Truth, Miguel,

Avram

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<sup>36</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), p. 823. A papal decree issued on Dec. 8th, 1854. The Reverend Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p. 267. ‘What, however, had never been done before, was done in December, 1854. Then bishops from all parts of Christendom, and representatives from the ends of the earth, met in Rome; and with only four dissentient voices, it was decreed that Mary, the mother of God, who died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, should henceforth be worshipped as the Immaculate Virgin, ‘conceived and born without sin.’’

<sup>37</sup> Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 823. ‘On November 1st, 1950, the bull *Munificentissimus Deus* declared the dogma of the Assumption of Mary...(*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 32 (1950), pp. 753-73).’