

A strange glory indeed!

3) Evaluating Neuhaus in light of the text

a) Accent

Truly, the accent is on *Mary as the mother* of God and not on the fact that she is the mother *of God*. Neuhaus concerns himself with Mary, her suffering, her thoughts, her place, and her sinlessness.

b) Displacement of Christ's love

He displaces biblical teaching and the love of God the Son and His super-abounding unselfishness in His crucifixion. His unselfishness comes to expression in His love for Mary. He looks at her needs. He is suffering, but He knows that a sword pierces her heart (Lk. 2.35). *He is sensitive to her feelings (cf. not calling out to her as mother but distancing Himself by the use of the word woman [Note: this is not indicating that she is the new Eve and the mother of a new humanity, for one, this radically distorts the two-Adam scheme replacing Rom.5 with the conjectures of tradition])*. He is active, even from the cross (!), in looking out for her good: "Behold your son, and John, behold your mother." He unselfishly concentrates on her suffering as a mother at the loss of her son. *He sees to it that a new son will stand in His place and care for her. Jesus is marvelously unselfish in His crucifixion love.*

What does Neuhaus do? He places attention on the suffering of Mary (not on the compassion of Christ in His suffering that is far greater!).

c) The saving obedience of Christ is minimized

Jesus is telling us that He goes to the cross according to the authoritative will of the Father in heaven. Otherwise, Pilate could do nothing. Therefore, Jesus is there on the cross near Mary and John in loving obedience to the Father. Being on the cross is due to His submission to God. Everything He does on the cross is in every detail under the umbrella of heavenly authority. The act of honoring Mary is a matter of humble obedience to the Father in heaven.

Jesus dies in obedience to the Father to complete His work as a sacrifice for sinners (*Mary was a sinner who needed a Savior*, Lk. 1.46). He fulfills all righteousness by perfectly obeying the will of God in order to give us His righteousness. He obeys all the commandments. Obedience to the fifth commandment is a case in point of all that Jesus did to save the guilty by His innocence. Unselfish, humble, and obedient love is saving love.

d) The new family is distorted

What do we learn from the Mary/John scenario? We learn that by crucifixion love Jesus authoritatively inaugurates the new covenant church family. In a very important sense, *Mary will no longer be the mother of Jesus. She will have another son and that son will have her as his mother. [Note that we could from this say, "Hail Mary not the mother of God" because a new relationship that accents her place under Christ as her Savior like all believing mothers is coming into being by the cross]* Jesus does not call her mother in relation to Himself but he calls her mother in relation to John (John, from now on she is your mother not mine). *A radically new order of things will result from crucifixion love.* This has to be in line with His teaching that those who do His will are His mother, brother, and sister (Mat. 12.46-50).

Notably, *by this saying from the cross Mary does not become the mother of us all, not in a way that is different from any other mother.* The point is that Mary becomes *His* mother [the mother of Jesus] *in a new relationship*, like all mothers who submit themselves under the authoritative love of Christ (as was anticipated when He called her "woman" at the wedding in Cana). In other words, she is His mother because she is His and she is a mother. Just as it is the case that all who are mothers who belong to Christ are His mothers. There is no parental authority here, not even uniqueness. That Mary is the mother of Christ means that she is in His

family and under His authoritative love. Mary and John are the first members of the new covenant community in a very practical sense.

What it means to be the mother of Christ and the brother of Christ is that we are family to one another in Him and under the banner of His saving love. For example, because our elderly sister, Louise Brown, is a mother that belongs to Christ then she is His mother. This means that she is family to us; she is a spiritual mother to us. Likewise, the believing women of this church are our spiritual sisters and the men are our spiritual brothers.

**Matthew 12:48-50 "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" <sup>49</sup> And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>50</sup> For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."**

2B. The blessed mother of God (Scripture calls her blessed?): a distortion of Scripture

Better to take it like the memorial to Mary Magdalene (Mat. 26.13) because: a) All the apostles are "blessed" (Mat. 13.16), and hearers and doers of the word are more blessed than Mary: **Luke 11:27-28, As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" <sup>28</sup> But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"**

3B. As the mother of God, why do Catholics claim that she was conceived immaculately? Why do they insist that she never had children (the brothers of Christ were not born of Mary)?

Answer: because she is so elevated to god-like status, as mother of God she must have been sinless beginning at her birth (so she needs no Savior, but Scripture states in her own words that she does need a Savior).

She allegedly therefore never had children-because sex itself has a taint to it, which is false.

She had to consent to the birth of Jesus-freely because God does not violate the freedom of his creatures (Neuhaus, 86). Salvation depends on Mary (on her cooperation): *no Christ and no cross without her consent!* To get away from this dependence as something bad, the answer is that she must be sinless so that without violating her will, she would willingly obey God and allow Christ to be born.

All attention is diverted to Mary in the name of Christ: think of Christ = Mary; of Mary = Christ; Mariology is Christology (83). At the root is the doctrinal idolatry of human autonomy!

Major point of contention

Mary is elevated in Catholic theology and practice in a way that breaks the 2<sup>nd</sup>. It is not simply Mariology (theology about Mary based on Christology, theology about Christ); it is Mariolatry, worshipping God by idolizing Mary. We cannot make such an affirmation without solid biblical support. With such support, we must still maintain love and respect for Catholics who profess faith in Christ. OT Israel shows that among the professing covenant community there can be idolaters mixed with believers (cf. the high places that godly kings repeatedly destroyed, only to have the idol worship restored *by God's covenant people!*).

A strange glory indeed

To give glory to Mary to the displacement of the saving love of Christ

Goya's painting is on the cover of the book

The picture is of Christ on the cross with the cross hidden in the background.

Note: attention to Christ on the cross in statues and paintings (for worship, say, via a crucifix) *removes the cross from view*; the *message of the cross is lost sight of*. Use of images

leads to the idolizing of Mary, saints, and angels as objects of worship; worship goes no farther than the statues and the saving message of the gospel is seriously distorted.