

Marian Studies

Volume 38 *Proceedings from the Thirty-Eighth
National Convention of the Mariological Society of
America held in Washington, D.C.*

Article 14

1987

The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Theology and Devotion of the Seventeenth-Century Anglican Divines

William L. Lahey

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lahey, William L. (1987) "The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Theology and Devotion of the Seventeenth-Century Anglican Divines," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 38, Article 14.
Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol38/iss1/14

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marian Library Publications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marian Studies by an authorized editor of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE THEOLOGY AND DEVOTION OF THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ANGLICAN DIVINES

INTRODUCTION

England, not only in church but also in nation, has been known in history as "Our Lady's Dowry." There the Blessed Virgin was most frequently spoken of and addressed as "Our Lady Saint Mary."¹ The image of Mary with the Christ was set in the crown of the early monarchs.² Many colleges, particularly at Oxford and Cambridge, were placed officially "under her protection."³ Many flowers found in England have the term "Lady" in their names, for example, Lady's smock, Lady's-mantle, Lady's-slipper and Marigold (Mary's gold). Many places still employ her title such as Lady Grove, Lady Mead, and Mary Well.⁴ In quoting from an early source, we find the inscription, "One could not honor Mary and hold women in despite for it is not wisdom to despise that which God loveth."⁵ Even the patron saint of England, Saint George, was known as "Our sovereign Lady's knight."⁶ More, therefore, is the pity that, in the tragic era of the Reformation and following closely thereafter, thought and devotion concerning her suffered as it did in the English Church.

¹ Rogers, Margaret, "England, Our Lady's Dowry," *Queen* 37, no. 5 (Jan-Feb 1987): 18.

² Rogers, "England," 18.

³ Rogers, "England," 18.

⁴ Rogers, "England," 18.

⁵ Rogers, "England," 18.

⁶ Rogers, "England," 19.

I. A CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS IN THE 1600s

A brief chronology may be of value here.

1603—Granting of tolerance to Roman Catholics in England by James I.

1620—Mayflower Expedition.

1625—Founding of the Daughters of Charity by St. Vincent de Paul (in France).

1643 to 1649—Civil war in England.

1644—Establishment of the Feast of the “Purest Heart of Mary.”

1644—Execution of Archbishop William Laud.

1649—Execution of King Charles I.

1660 to 1685—Reign of Charles II and the restoration of the Monarchy.

1683—Extension of the Feast of the “Holy Name of Mary” to the whole Church.

1685—Ascent of James II (brother of Charles II) to the throne of England.

1688—Rise to power of William of Orange (and Mary) in England.

II. SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY

In order to do a paper of this nature, it is necessary, first of all, to go back briefly not only into the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history of English Christianity but also, where Our Lady is concerned, even as far back as Genesis. History of the development of doctrine and devotion to the Blessed Virgin dates that far back. Exegetical controversy continues to this day over the text: “I will put enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it [the seed] shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for his [Christ’s] heel”(Genesis 3:15). The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* does not mention the Virgin in treating this passage, but with the use of “he” for “it” a messianic connotation is introduced. If so, then the woman must be Mary rather than Eve, Mary as the Second Eve—Eve in the literal sense, but envisioning Mary.

It was for New Testament writers and the early Fathers to see the messianic exegesis of this passage. Jewish tradition knew of none such.

Again, we have the familiar passage from Isaiah 7:14: "The Maiden is with child—" (*Jerusalem Bible*). With the name of the son to be called "Emmanuel," the obvious and well-known messianic exegesis is apparent. Suffice it then to refresh our minds with a brief scriptural foundation of the tradition of Mary's essential role in salvation history and theology.

Contrary to some misconceptions, early sixteenth-century English Church doctrine did not suffer a decline in Marian thought. That came later due to weak theology, from which came reliance on unwarranted legends, the Apocrypha, and misunderstanding of continental Catholic thought. In places, piety degenerated into superstition; however, the formularies of faith drawn up during the reign of Henry the Eighth were, in context, unobjectionable. The ten articles, "of fifteen things," declared respect for the authority of the Fathers, the approval of images as "kindlers and stirrers of men's minds." This applied especially to images of Christ and Our Lady.

Mary's virginity is found in the Bishop's Book of 1537 and five pages are devoted to the interpretation of the "Hail Mary." With all his moral escapades to the contrary notwithstanding, Henry VIII began his last will and testament by invoking "Our Lady of God." Even in the first Prayer Book of Edward the Sixth, dated 1549, Mary is mentioned in the Eucharistic Liturgy. The feasts of the Purification and Annunciation are retained.

It was not until after the reign of Queen Mary and the "Thirty-nine Articles" of 1571 that we begin to see orthodox Marian doctrine and devotion truly fading from the English Church. It seems probable that the influence of Bede, Saint Anselm, Eadmer, Aelred of Rievaulx, Nicholas of St. Alban's, Grosseteste, William of Ware and, more especially, Duns Scotus was of little use because their writings were never adapted to the vernacular. On top of that, the dissolution of the monasteries deprived not only the people but also theologians of important Marian centers.

Queen Elizabeth I was Catholic essentially in all but papal allegiance. She had no use for Scots, the Dutch, Lutherans or Huguenots. The fact is she affected no great respect even for the Church of England. She chose bishops who had suffered under Mary Tudor, many of whom were permeated with Lutheran or Calvinistic inclinations due to their exile, with no specific reverence for the office they held. She treated them with contempt, and would address them as no more than "Doctor."⁷ In many respects she reduced their functions to zero. They became political pawns on a chess board of historic turmoil for the country. Consequently, with time on their hands they got rich from their secular pursuits and the estates commensurate with their sees. They sold spiritual functions and ordained the unfit for a price, among other excesses. In all this, historians usually agree that Elizabeth was more concerned for the country than for the church. She could not abandon the Anglican position, however, for she had no use for the Presbyterian form of church government.⁸

One must keep in mind that in the sixteenth century the term Protestant meant quite the opposite of what it means today. Pro, meaning "in favor of," and testis, akin to the term "to witness," joined together meant "to witness in favor of" rather than "to be against." It is, of course, a bit difficult to determine precisely what dissident Christians in those days were witnessing in favor of when there was so much opposition to Catholicism. One must also remember that in England at this time there was a great hatred of the Roman See and pontiff.

After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, Elizabeth reconciled with the Catholic gentry. She was queen of a nation divided in creed, but loyal to her as queen. It is interesting to note that Elizabeth and her successor politicians apparently did not wish the Church of England to become too genuine. Its element of unsoundness kept

⁷ Froude, James A., *History of England: From the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth* (12 vols.; New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co., 1875), 12: 567f.

⁸ Froude, *History*, 12: 567f.

it from becoming too powerful.⁹ She had little use for the views of either Luther or Calvin, but was first of all a politician. In declaring to the papal ambassadors that she felt forced into a separation from the Pope, she probably spoke the truth. She was, after all, identified from birth with the cause of independence, being the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.¹⁰ The credibility of her legitimacy was doubted in many quarters. Consequently, circumstances and the political posture of the nation in the midst of a tumultuous western Europe, rather than choice, caused her to continue in a position of separation from Rome.

With all this in mind, radical changes did not take place in the Church of England as they did on the continent. The episcopate was maintained; orthodox Catholic doctrine, discipline, and worship—albeit reformed—continued, and the breach with Rome existed only when national autonomy was threatened.¹¹ Considering the eclectic days of the boy-King Edward and, then, the resumption of unity with Rome under Mary, followed by the swing of the pendulum once again under Elizabeth, it is little wonder there were many things of greater importance in the eyes of such men as Lancelot Andrewes than the place of the Virgin Mary, which consequently faded in importance. The rule of James I saw a king who hated the Presbyterians and who wished to walk a middle road. The problems of Puritan objections to the sign of the cross, the wedding ring, use of the Apocryphal scriptures and the Churching of Women, not to mention the wearing of the square cap—all of which may seem to us today as rather childish—were major issues for many in those days. Emphasis seemed to be on a preaching ministry rather than on one of prayer, sacraments, and absolution. The emergence of the *King James Bible*, coming as it did from the older and more scholarly “Bishop’s Bible,” on the one hand, and the more popular

⁹ Froude, *History*, 12: 579.

¹⁰ Froude, *History*, 12: 582.

¹¹ Bevan, Wilson Lloyd, *Church History: Mediaeval and Modern* (Sewanee, Tenn.: University Press, 1914), 264.

Genevan/Rheims Bible on the other, was considered to be extremely important in the final product of the religion of the day. The Puritan revolt to such other things as kneeling for Holy Communion and use of the surplice and cope went rampant through the land. On the other hand, Roman Catholics who would not attend Anglican worship were fined twenty pounds for such a deficiency. By 1608, they were being impoverished by confiscation of their lands and goods. By 1618, some had even been executed.¹²

We must also keep in mind that the reign of James the First (the Sixth of Scotland) saw the emergence of sovereignty to the people through Parliament. Strength accrued to the Puritans and, with the defeat of the Armada, there was an awakening of the Roman Catholic influence. The Church of England, nonetheless, produced men such as Archbishop Bancroft and Bishop Andrewes who were scholarly, devout, dignified, and conservative. Contrary to Elizabeth, James I liked the Church of England. He believed adamantly in the divine right of kings. The monarchy and the episcopate stood together, the church supporting the king. In his first speech before Parliament, James referred to the Church of England as "Our Mother Church."¹³ James, however, was distrusted by the anti-Roman populace when he proposed the marriage of his son to a Roman Catholic, the Princess Henrietta Marie of France. We must also remember that the 1620 Mayflower episode came from a dispute between Puritans and Anglicans, rather than between non-Roman Catholics and the papacy. Consequently, in all of this turmoil, while the seventeenth-century divines studied the Greek fathers rather than the Schoolmen, theological and devotional standards were generally not high.

Charles the First also believed in the divine right of kings to the

¹² Frere, Walter Howard, *The English Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I (1558-1625)* (A History of the English Church, 5; London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1907), 288.

¹³ Moorman, John. R. H., *A History of the Church in England* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), 222.

extent that, in 1629, he dissolved Parliament and ruled by royal prerogative. While he and Archbishop Laud are in many Anglican quarters today looked upon with favor, even as saints, they ruled in a most despotic manner.

Other prominent writers of the day were William Jewel, who wrote against the positions of Rome, and Richard Hooker who wrote against the deficiencies of Puritanism; there were also: Montague, Cosin, Fuller, Jeremy Taylor, Herbert Ferrar, and Thomas Ken. The latter expressed the minds of these divines rather clearly, as he wrote: "I die in the Holy, Catholic and Apostolick Faith, professed by the whole Church before the disunion of East and West. More particularly I dye in the *Communion of the Church of England* as it stands distinguished from all Papall and Puritan Innovations, and as it adheres to the doctrine of the Cross."¹⁴ In the mid-seventeenth century, Archbishop William Laud and King Charles the First went to the block at least in part for their desire to return to Catholic orthodoxy. The famous long parliament of 1640 provided a serious attack on Archbishop William Laud. However, Gladstone spoke of him as "the man who prevented the English Church from being bound in the fetters of Calvinism."¹⁵

Under Cromwell and during the Commonwealth period, Anglicans, Romans, and, strangely-enough, Antinomians were the only ones restricted in their practice of religion. Under the Commonwealth, the Church of England could not celebrate Christmas. A question to be asked, then, is: "Where was the Blessed Mother in thought and practice if her son's birthday was repudiated by the law of the land?" People during the Commonwealth were deprived often of baptism and communion as well as of any but a civil marriage. Calvinism in England was virtually (but not totally) complete. Fragmentation was an inevitable outcome, and minor sects became numerous until the restoration.

Charles the Second returned in 1660 and with him the episcopate,

¹⁴ Cited in Moorman, *A History*, 234.

¹⁵ Bevan, *Church History*, 266.

the *Prayer Book*, and the faith of the church as it had been in the days of James the First, Charles the First and William Laud. Charles the First died in sympathy a Roman Catholic, and was succeeded by Charles the Second, also Roman Catholic. In these days, reason replaced authority and precedent. All was to be judged at that bar.

In existence for only a short time, the new era of the Restoration under Charles the Second could not bring back so quickly such things as a healthy concept of the Blessed Mother, when it had been a crime only a few years earlier even to celebrate Christmas. There was no way the Act of 1662 could attain any sort of near perfect restoration.

This was also the era of the ecclesiastical controversy between Cardinal Bellarmine and Bishop Richard Hooker who, though a great Anglican, had strong shreds of Calvinism still in him. The major topics were the Catholicity of the English Church, exclusive of papal obedience, and the concepts and controversy of and between the royal supremacy and papal primacy. The complications in this turbulent age were again seen in the controversy between Jesuits and secular Roman Catholic clergy and in the final appointment of William Bishop, a secular Roman Catholic Bishop, in 1623, to assume authority over Roman Catholics in England.¹⁶ James the Second definitely approved of the movement.

There was, nonetheless, only a meager hope for reunion with Rome. A few new convents were established by the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits. The National Church was protected and penalties for other religious persuasions were suspended. Puritanism was growing in force, however, and Separatism was becoming more clearly defined.

The reign of Charles the Second ended rather ignominiously, as he fled before the invasion of William of Orange. Thus, a Roman Catholic was replaced by a Dutch Calvinist whose wife, Mary, was Anglican. Charles' failures fomented the rebellion of 1688 and the virtual end of the short life of the Stuart Dynasty. Under the

¹⁶ Frere, *The English Church*, 375.

Hanoverians, the church became hardly more than a branch of the government.

The seventeenth century was as turbulent an age as was its predecessor. It is just not as popular, primarily due, it would appear, to the fact that the sixteenth century was the true age of so-called reformation. The Church in England not only reaped the whirlwind of the Reformation, but also perpetuated and increased it. It is on this background of the House of Stuart, on bishops such as Bancroft and Laud, on despotic leadership such as that of Cromwell, that we must consider the attitude of the English divines in both thought and prayer where the Blessed Virgin Mary is concerned.

III. THE MEN

We now turn to the men of the seventeenth century to determine not necessarily the devotion of the people, which we have seen historically was much atrophied, but to see what those "sparks among the stubble" thought and practiced themselves. Seventeenth-century English churchmen paid a great deal of attention to the scriptures and to the Fathers of the church, as is evidenced by the number of sermons recorded in the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology.

1. *Herbert Thorndike* died in 1672. In his work *An Epilogue to the Tragedy of the Church of England*, Book Three, Chapter 31, pages 21 to 30, entitled "Three Sorts of Prayers Used by Rome," he writes of those prayers made to God "but to desire His blessings by and through the merits and intercession of His Saints" (See the Roman Canon of that day). On the First Sunday of Advent, he points out, the Catholic Church prays: "That we who believe her truly the Mother of God, may be helped by her intercessions with Thee." He goes on to say this "First kind [of prayer] seems to me utterly agreeable with Christianity." Thorndike is not so kind to the second sort of prayers, for example, litanies wherein, he says, Mary is mentioned more than God: ". . . you have much oftener the Blessed Virgin repeated again and again . . ." He submits that in the invocation of saints, Rome "desire[s] . . . of them the same bless-

ings . . . which all Christians desire of God." This he calls idolatry.¹⁷

Perhaps this is a good place to comment on the fact that invocation of saints in those days meant more than it does now. The controversy stemmed, it seems, over an understanding of "invoking" to mean invoking the person rather than the prayers of the person. The divines of that period seem strongly to reject invoking the person, but they approve invoking intercessions and the orthodox application of the doctrine of the communion of saints.

2. John Cosin, in a sermon delivered in 1632, number 10, states: "They [i.e., Rome] say to the Blessed Virgin, 'O Holy Mother of God, vouchsafe and keep us, we worship thy name, and that world without end; let thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in thee'"¹⁸ Cosin sees this type of language as attributing to Mary that degree of devotion defined as "latría," worthy only of God himself.

3. From William Clagett, "Discourse Concerning the Worship of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints" (1686), we read: "As to the Virgin Mary . . . we do with men and Angels acknowledge that she was *blessed among women*, . . .; since she was not the Mother only, but Virgin Mother . . . we do not only set it forth upon the anniversary of the Annunciation, but frequently also in our sermons and daily in the Creed But if nothing at all had been said of her personal qualities in the Scriptures . . . , we might have presumed without rashness that . . . God . . . would have the Mother of Our Lord to retain the purity of a Virgin . . .," that she was a most holy of earthen vessels, that she was a faithful disciple of Christ and "from all this we cannot but conclude that she is very happy and glorious in the kingdom of Heaven."¹⁹ This is asserted not on any "particular revelations," but by "general reasons."²⁰

¹⁷ More, P. E. & F. L. Cross, comps. and eds., *Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, (London: S.P.C.K., 1951): Herbert Thorndike, no. 238.

¹⁸ More & Cross, *Anglicanism*: John Cosin, no. 239.

¹⁹ More & Cross, *Anglicanism*: Wm. Clagett, no. 241.

²⁰ More & Cross, *Anglicanism*: Wm. Clagett, no. 241.

He, nonetheless, goes on to say: "But if . . . they [Rome] yield to her those services which no creature is to receive, they do by consequence represent her as a lady that aspires to the glory of the Most High; which is by no means for the glory of the Blessed Virgin." He finishes his sermon with the quote: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Mt. 4:10). I might interject here that the controversy raged for many years during which the dislike of Rome on the part of Englishmen, from the record of history, appears to have grown evermore bitter.

4. *John Pearson*, in his "A Exposition of the Creed" (1659), comments on Article III:

It was her own prediction, *From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed* [from the *Magnificat*]; but the obligation is ours to call her, to esteem her so. If Elizabeth cried out . . . *Blessed art thou among women*, when Christ was but newly conceived in her [Mary's] womb, what expressions of honour and admiration can we think sufficient now that Christ is in Heaven, and that Mother with Him! Far be it from any Christian to derogate from that special privilege granted her, which is incommunicable to any other. We cannot bear too reverend a regard unto the *Mother of Our Lord*, so long as we give her not that worship which is due unto the Lord Himself. Let us keep the language of the Primitive Church. Let her be honoured and esteemed, let Him [Christ] be worshipped and adored.²¹

Once again, we have here an attitude on the part of seventeenth-century Anglicans that Mary is not to be worshipped as God, but given the highest degree of veneration, even "hyperdulya." The difference between our twentieth-century concept and that of seventeenth-century Anglicanism again seems to be one of misunderstanding or misapplication of terminology.

5. From *George Hickes*, consecrated in 1694 during the reign of William and Mary, there is a writing entitled "Speculum Beatae

²¹ More & Cross, *Anglicanism*: John Pearson, no. 242.

Virginis" (1686): "It is our duty . . . to honour and celebrate her name and commemorate her virtues and set forth her praises We ought not to mention her name without honour If the names of other Saints are distinguished with miniature, hers ought to shine with gold."²² He goes on to say in this article how much more to be esteemed is Mary than the woman who annointed Christ. He again goes on to warn against excessive honor, beyond what any human creature could be given. We must not "romance her into a deity . . . as if her graces were indeed Divine attributes . . . as a late book asserts, 'one and the same with those of her Son.'²³ He refers to her as "the Queen" and to Christ as "King," but he admonishes us not to pay her the homage due to her Son. He further refers to the church as our "pure and holy mother," equating the Church of England with the Primitive Church which gives: "her the honourable titles of Holy, and Blessed, and Perpetual Virgin, . . . Mother of God." It was his wish that the Church of England "go as far as we can with our fellow-Christians of the Latin Communion." And yet he does not hold her to be "a donor or as an intercessor in the presence of God." Nor does he (by implication) accept her immaculate conception: ". . . let us admire her singular purity and holiness, though we cannot admit her innocence."²⁴ He urges the keeping of her festivals (in the plural) "as it becomes true sons of the Primitive Church of England."

6. In 1635, *Anthony Stafford* wrote "The Female Glory; or the Life and Death of Our Blessed Lady, the Holy Virgin Mary, God's Own Immaculate Mother." This treatise contained allusions to the Assumption. The work created a storm among the Puritans. Archbishop William Laud stood in defense of the writer.

Stafford writes: ". . . I profess that I am her admirer, not her idolater," that I in no way "rob God of His honour and bestow it

²² More & Cross, *Anglicanism*: George Hicckes, no. 243.

²³ More & Cross, *Anglicanism*: George Hicckes, no. 243.

²⁴ More & Cross, *Anglicanism*: George Hicckes, no. 243.

on her.”²⁵ He criticizes the continental Protestants for their ignoring her, seeing this as displeasing to God. Yet he also sets invocation apart, evidence once again of misinterpretation of terminology. The Reverend Canon A. M. Allchin of England, a recognized authority on this subject, in his excellent article, “Our Lady in Seventeenth-Century Anglican Devotion and Theology,” states that Caroline divines appeal constantly to “the Scriptures interpreted by the perpetual practice of God’s Church.”²⁶

7. *Thomas Ken*, who lived from 1637 to 1711, writes in a poem destined to become a hymn:

Her virgin-eyes saw God Incarnate born
 When she to Bethlehem came that happy morn
 How high her raptures then began to swell,
 None but her own omniscient Son can tell;
 As Eve when she her fontal sin review’d,
 Wept for herself, and all she should include;
 Bless’d Mary, with man’s Saviour in embrace,
 Joy’d for herself, and for all human race;
 All Saints are by her Son’s dear influence bless’d,
 She kept the very fountain at her breast;
 The Son adored and nursed by the sweet Maid,
 A thousand-fold of love for love repaid;
 Heaven with transcendent joys her entrance graced,
 Next to His throne her Son His Mother placed;
 And here below, now she’s of Heaven possessed
 All generations are to call her blessed.²⁷

Ken was a High-Church bishop, but High Church in those days looked much different than the Catholic position in the Anglican

²⁵ More & Cross, *Anglicanism*: Anthony Stafford, no. 244.

²⁶ Allchin, A. M., “Our Lady in Seventeenth-Century Anglican Devotion and Theology,” in *The Blessed Virgin Mary: Essays by Anglican Writers* (E. L. Mascall & H. S. Box, eds.; London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1963), 53.

²⁷ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 54.

Communion today. And here we must also recognize that in Anglicanism then, as now, a great disparity in thought and practice (called by some “comprehensiveness”) existed. There are in this poem suspicious allusions to the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary, for example: “Her virgin-eyes saw God Incarnate born” and “Next to His throne her Son His Mother placed.”

No doubt, there was an official break with the medieval past spawned during the sixteenth century, greater in the daily practice of the people than in the minds and devotion of the great churchmen. Remember that the shrine of Walsingham had been destroyed; official liturgical veneration of Mary had all but disappeared, and invocation of Mary along with any other saints, presumably due to the aforementioned misunderstanding of the term, was prohibited. Writers of the day did not substantially challenge this, perhaps because it was a break primarily in popular devotion rather than first and foremost an aberration of doctrine. Many attacks on the practice of Rome accused Catholics of giving glory due to God only to a creature, albeit the Mother of God.

8. *Mark Frank*, whose dates are 1613 to 1644, declares—with that familiar quote: “Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give the praise”—that Mary must also sing God’s praise. In this same quotation, Frank continues, “. . . and they do her wrong as well as God, that give his glory unto her, who will not give his glory to another, though to his mother, because she is but his earthly mother—a thing infinitely distant from the heavenly Father.”²⁸

Allchin contends that there is an evident difference here with the tradition of the Eastern Church in which the glory befitting God is explicitly attributed to Mary. But again the problem is one of terminology, dependent on a correct Eastern understanding of the term “theosis” or “deification.”²⁹ Eastern idiom about the way divine

²⁸ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 56.

²⁹ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 56.

life is communicated was very hard for the Western mind to grasp in those days, perhaps even today. For example, how does receiving Holy Communion break the Communion fast? Suffice it to say that, in Eastern thought, God becomes man by nature that man may become as God (united with God) by grace. Herein, the glory of Mary as Mother of God has an appropriate place. Eastern Orthodox belief differentiates between essence and energies; taken out of context, this language can lend itself to a rather pagan interpretation. In the Western Middle Ages, thought of and devotion to our Lady appear divorced from their doctrinal setting. Consequently, expressions which appear idolatrous to the theologically insentient are, in the minds of the more theologically mature, quite acceptable. Anglican theologians in those days truly feared that Mary and the saints would be ascribed some position of their own as demigods, positions acquired by their own efforts rather than by God's grace. There was a failure to understand that what the Church honors in the saints is the work God has done in them.

9. Bishop *George Bull*, 1634 to 1710, states: "We abhor to divide the divine kingdom and empire, giving one half, the better half, the kingdom of mercy to the blessed Virgin, and leaving only the kingdom of justice to her Son. This is downright treason against the only universal King and Monarch of the world" (*The Works of George Bull*, 1: 104-105).³⁰ This concept comes up again and again in the polemic of the time. The Anglican writers responded with the quotation from I Timothy 5: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Universal repudiation of invocation existed, but what was meant then was not the modern use in which invocation means to ask the prayers of another. Those who repudiated invocation, as they then understood it, might well have believed that the saints did indeed pray for them.

10. Bishop *William Forbes*, 1485 to 1534, declared in his *Considerationes Modestae*:

³⁰ Allchin, "Our Lady," 57.

The word invocation, when used with regard to the saints, is generally almost unbearable to Protestant ears, because to invoke God is, strictly speaking, to call upon him to help us with a religious affection of heart, or even to call him into the heart, as Jerome or rather Bede and Augustine write: and this cannot be said of the saints.

The mere addressing of angels and saints, inviting them to pray with us and for us to God, in the same way that we ask good people during their lifetime here to intercede with God for us . . . we with those Protestants who prefer to speak more clearly and carefully in this matter, call advocacy, rather than invocation, a calling unto rather than a calling upon.³¹

Allchin declares that the rejection of invocation is, rather, a different sense of the word at that time. He quotes from George Herbert's poem, "To All Angels and Saints," in demonstration:

Not out of envy or maliciousness
Do I forbear to crave your special aid:
I would address
My vows to thee most gladly, Blessed Maid
And Mother of my God, in my distress.
Thou art the holy mine, whence came the gold,
The great restorative for all decay
In young and old;
Thou art the cabinet where the jewel lay:
Chiefly to thee would I my soul unfold:
But now, alas, I dare not; for our King,
Whom we do all jointly adore and praise
Bids no such thing. (*The Works of George Herbert*, ed. F. E. Hutchinson, p. 78)³²

Herbert Thorndike, 1598 to 1662, maintains that the saints in heaven pray for us and we should pray for the dead:

³¹ Allchin, "Our Lady," 57-58, see nn. 8 and 9.

³² Allchin, "Our Lady," 58.

There is the same ground to believe the communion of saints, in the prayers, which those that depart in the highest favour with God make for us; in the prayers, which we make for those that depart in the lowest degree of favour with God, that there is for the common Christianity; namely the Scriptures interpreted by the perpetual practice of God's Church. (Henry Thorndike, *Works*, 5: 248)³³

He sees asking God to hear the prayers of the saints on our behalf as excellent. He sees asking the saints directly to pray for us as innocent but leading to abuse. He considers prayers that desire of the saints, Mary included, specific blessings, as though they could come other than from God, as idolatry. Such prayers need not be taken too literally but are yet open to abuse.³⁴ These protestations, though somewhat negative were not altogether unjustified under the conditions of the times. As we know, the seventeenth-century situation differed from ours today; the Assumption and Immaculate Conception doctrines were not yet defined by Rome. Historical criticism of the New Testament was hardly the particular knowledge of theologians of that day. There was a gradation of doctrine. The Virgin Birth was not questioned. The term *Theotokos* was even interpreted as "Mother of God," rather than simply as "God-bearer"—a more accurate translation of the term, and this was on the basis of the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431. Even those who were adamant against what they conceived of as the excesses of Rome maintained its use. They also held to Our Lady's perpetual virginity. *George Bull* declared the following:

Now the necessary consequence of this dignity of the blessed Virgin [viz., that she was Mother of God] is, that she remained for ever a virgin, as the catholic church hath always held and maintained. For it cannot with decency be imagined, that the most holy vessel, which was thus

³³ Allchin, "Our Lady," 59.

³⁴ Allchin, "Our Lady," 59.

consecrated to be a receptacle for the Deity, should afterwards be desecrated and profaned by human use.³⁵

Canon Allchin maintains that men such as Lancelot Andrewes, Richard Hooker, John Pearson, and Jeremy Taylor all concurred.

11. Bishop *Jeremy Taylor* (1613-67) wrote:

And He that came from His grave fast tied with a stone and a signature, and into the college of the apostles “the doors being shut,” and into the glories of His Father through the solid orbs of all the firmament, came also (as the Church piously believes) into the world so without doing violence to the virginal and pure body of His mother, that He did also leave her virginity entire, to be a seal, that none might open the gate of that sanctuary; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, “This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord God of Israel hath entered by it, therefore it shall be shut.” (Ezek 44:2.)³⁶

Earlier, Taylor had stated: “As there was no sin in the conception, so neither had she pains in the production, as the Church from the days of Gregory Nazianzen until now, hath piously believed . . .”³⁷ Whatever we may now think of this scriptural interpretation and reference to Saint Gregory, it points up what at least one of the seventeenth-century greats held dear, belief in the perpetual virginity and *Theotokos*, the God-bearer—the oldest, if not the most crucial, of Our Lady’s attributes.

As for the Immaculate Conception and Assumption, there is much less to go on, much less evidence for them in the Fathers of the first six centuries. *Thomas Ken* (1637-1711) seems to affirm both doctrines rather openly (see Allchin, p. 54). Bishop *John Cosin* declares that the Assumption is omitted because of Romish superstition (see John

³⁵ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 61.

³⁶ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 61.

³⁷ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 61.

Cosin, *Works*, 5: 203). He continues, “The truth is, that the blessed Virgin’s soul was taken up into paradise; but whether her body was assumed thither or no we cannot certainly say; and it is better piously to doubt of it than rashly to affirm it, or to define anything about it” (J. Cosin, *Works*, 5: 211). He further states that the Roman Church [as of that day] does not make it a matter of faith, and finishes his remarks by declaring the body of the Virgin to be nonetheless: “the choicest vessel of God’s grace that ever the world had among all His saints . . .” (J. Cosin, *Works*, 5: 217).³⁸

While, as stated above, there was a break in devotional practice, there was not a total cessation. Seventeenth-century Anglican writers seemed to point out her discreet place in the Gospels and continued it nonetheless. However, the previously mentioned *Anthony Stafford*, not a theologian, published “The Female Glory” in 1645, the full subtitle of which says: “or the Life and Death of Our Blessed Lady, The Holy Virgin Mary, God’s Own Immaculate Mother.” Mascall says that in this untypical work ““there are manifested the most extravagant exuberances of the baroque imagination.””³⁹ More typical are passages in *Jeremy Taylor’s Life of Christ* which exemplify his meditation on her Annunciation and delivery. He sees her as a type of the devout Christian and that at prayer. At the moment of the angel’s message, he writes, “she was full of joy, yet she was carried like a full vessel, without the violent tossings of a tempestuous passion or the wrecks of a stormy imagination.” Elsewhere, he states: “We have no security of the particular; but there is no piety so diffident as to require a sign to create belief that her employment at the instant was holy and religious . . .”⁴⁰ Taylor enlarges on Mary as the type and example of the contemplative life. In comparing her to Saint Paul, whose accomplishments he lists—e.g., preached to the gentiles, disputed with Jews, confounded heretics, wrote letters, suf-

³⁸ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 62-63.

³⁹ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 63.

⁴⁰ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 63-64.

ferred dangers, injuries, affronts and persecutions, Taylor says that Mary "arrived to her perfections by the means of a quiet and silent piety, the internal actions of love, devotion, and contemplation; . . . those graces which walk in a veil and silence, make great ascents to God"41

Taylor spoke of Our Lady in direct relation to the Incarnation and as a model for every Christian; *Mark Frank* did the same in his sermons. Frank had been rejected from Cambridge University in 1644, for refusing to take the Puritan Covenant. After the restoration of the monarchy, he was elected as Master of Pembroke College. As a prominent and scholarly man, he must be taken seriously for that age. In his sermons he displayed a warm devotion to the Blessed Mother; he showed her to us as not only virgin and Mother of God, but also as type of the church and of the faithful Christian. He showed us Christ's presence in her as related to his continuing presence in the life and sacraments of the church. Frank showed us her part in the mystery of Emmanuel.⁴²

In an Epiphany sermon, Frank says: "I do not wonder interpreters make this house [meaning the abode where the Magi found the Christ] the church of God. It is the gate and court of heaven, . . . here is the shrine and altar, the glorious Virgin's lap, where the Saviour of the world is laid" Allchin states: "It is a picture with Mary at the centre, not herself the object of worship," but rather "the holy place, where God is to be found."⁴³ In a Christmas sermon, Frank writes: "The woman clothed with the sun, the sun compassed with a woman. She the gate of heaven, he the King of Glory that came forth. She the mother of the everlasting God: he God without a mother"44 In his sermon on the Annunciation, he goes on to say: ". . . I see it is time to do it [make use of the Angelic

⁴¹ Allchin, "Our Lady," 64-65.

⁴² Allchin, "Our Lady," 65.

⁴³ Allchin, "Our Lady," 66.

⁴⁴ Allchin, "Our Lady," 66-67.

salutations in the text], when our Lord is wounded through our Lady's sides; both our Lord and the Mother of our Lord, most vilely spoken of by a new generation of wicked men [quite surely, he must be talking of the Puritans here], who, because the Romanists make little less of her than a goddess, they [meaning again the Puritans] make not so much of her as a good woman"⁴⁵ Frank points out: "We are not to salute great persons by their names, but by their titles; and the Mother of God is above the greatest we meet with upon earth. . . . We are not to speak of the blessed Virgin, the Apostles, and Saints, as if we were speaking to our servants It is a new fashion of religion . . . to unsaint the saints, to deny them their proper titles"⁴⁶

Earlier, Frank states, ". . . Christ in her be the business; that we take pattern by the Angel, to give her no more than is her due, yet to be sure to give her that though"⁴⁷ Again later, he writes that God "is not with her, as he is with anyone else. . . . as well in her body as in her soul, personally, essentially, nay bodily with her, and take a body from her . . . all good must needs be with her"⁴⁸ This sounds to me much like the Immaculate Conception by implication if not in actuality. Frank continues to say in another passage: "Maria is *maris stella* [he quotes Bede]: 'the star of the sea,' a fit name for the mother of the bright Morning Star that rises out of the vast sea of God's infinite and endless love. Maria . . . St. Ambrose interprets it, *Deus ex genere meo*, 'God of my kin'; as if by her very name she was designed to have God born of her"⁴⁹ Frank discusses the Greek term *Kexaritomena*: "having been already filled with Grace," comparing the new translation, "highly favored," with the old, "full of grace." He says, "Grace is favour; God's grace

⁴⁵ Allchin, "Our Lady," 68-69.

⁴⁶ Allchin, "Our Lady," 69.

⁴⁷ Allchin, "Our Lady," 69-70.

⁴⁸ Allchin, "Our Lady," 70.

⁴⁹ Allchin, "Our Lady," 70-71.

is divine favour; high in grace, high in his favour; full of his grace, full of his favour—all comes to one.”⁵⁰ A further bit of theology can be seen in the following excerpt, as well as in other sermons of Mark Frank:

Created grace is either sanctifying or edifying; the gifts of the Holy Spirit that sanctify make us holy; or the gifts that make us serviceable to make others so Of each kind she [Mary] had her fullness according to her measure And it is fit enough to believe that she who was so highly honoured to have her womb filled with the body of the Lord, had her soul as fully filled by the Holy Ghost [Immaculate Conception].⁵¹

He goes on to say that Mary had not grace “to preach, to administer, to govern, to play the apostle,” since she would not thus function. “But in respect of the increated grace, that is, of Christ, . . . none [was] ever so filled with grace indeed. This was a grace of the highest nature of which created nature was never capable; *κεχαριτωμένη* [is] well rendered ‘highly, highly favored’; for it is most highly can be imagined, and this is her first title” He further sees her as more blessed in soul: “Blessed she indeed that was the conduit of so great blessings, though blessed most in the bearing him in her soul, much more than bearing him in her body.”⁵² Echoing the words of Christ, Allchin says that “it is she who heard the Word of God and kept it, who is at its centre and its heart.” Frank clearly reflects the theme, then, to think of our Lady only in relation to our Lord, and this particularly with regard to his Incarnation.

Another theme in Anglican writing of the time is that of Mary as type for every Christian soul in whom the Lord is to be born. Frank continues in the same sermon:

⁵⁰ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 71.

⁵¹ Allchin, “Our Lady,” 71.

⁵² Allchin, “Our Lady,” 71-72.

Especially if we now here dispose ourselves by chastity, humility, and devotion, as she did, to receive him, and let him be new born in us. . . . Blessed is the virgin soul, more blessed than others, in S. Paul's opinion For God hath exalted the humble and meek . . . better than the proudest lady.⁵³

Still another theme is Christ's presence in the flesh [our flesh] through the child-bearing of Blessed Mary. Quoting Mark Frank again, we find: "There he . . . highly favours us . . . ; there we are all made blessed Marys, and become mothers, sisters, and brothers of our Lord . . . there grace is in its fullest plenty" ⁵⁴ Further, the whole Christian dispensation, and especially the sacramental presence of Christ at the altar, is seen, in a sense, to be of a piece with the childbearing of Mary. In poetry, *Henry Vaughan* (1622-1645) writes: "And such a knot what arm dares loose, / What life, what death can sever? / Which us in him and he in us united keeps forever." In the Anglican liturgy we pray before Holy Communion: "—that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us."⁵⁵

IV. DEVOTIONS

A good many examples of Marian devotions may be cited from original sources. We have a great number of interesting samples from many of the men of whom we have already spoken. For instance, we begin with a paraphrase of the Magnificat by Bishop *Thomas Ken*, which at the very least indicates a concern for Marian devotion:

My Soul, my Spirit, with exalted Voice,
Praise God my Saviour, and in him rejoice;
Who on His Handmaid shines so bright, that all
The future World must Mary Blessed call.

⁵³ Allchin, "Our Lady," 74.

⁵⁴ Allchin, "Our Lady," 74.

⁵⁵ *Book of Common Prayer*, 1979 (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 337.

160 *Mary and Seventeenth-Century Anglican Divines*

. The Mighty, me above my sex has raised;
His Name, which holy is, be ever praised.
His mercy on his votaries descends;
To endless generations it extends.
Strong is His arm, and scatters as a cloud
The vain imaginations of the proud.
He puts down mighty sinners from their seat;
He makes the meek, and humble spirit, great;
He fills the empty souls, who to Him pray,
And empty sends the gluttoned souls away.
He'll no propitious promises evade,
To Abram, or to our forefathers made.
He His preventing Mercy keeps in mind,
Which His dear Israel saves, and all mankind.⁵⁶

Writing again, Bishop Ken (1637-1711) asks for aid in praising the grace vouchsafed to the Blessed Virgin:

O JESU, who bless'd Mary didst revere,
Near Thee enthroned in the celestial Sphere,
Help me to sing the plenitude of Grace,
Exalting her above all female race,
The mighty Love Thou didst on her diffuse,
Whom Thou God-man didst for Thy Mother choose.⁵⁷

Bishop *John Cosin* (1594-1672) was not the most astute Anglo-Catholic, but he writes the following devotion in thanksgiving for the Blessed Virgin:

ALMIGHTY GOD, Forasmuch as we be not only taught to pray, but to give thanks also for all men, we do offer up unto Thee most high laud, and hearty thanks for all Thy wonderful graces and virtues, which

⁵⁶ Barnes, John, *XV Devotions of Our Lady: From Anglican Writers of the XVII Century* (London: Society of S. Peter & S. Paul, 1973), 7.

⁵⁷ Barnes, *Devotions*, 8.

Thou hast declared in all Thy Saints, and by them bestowed upon Thy holy Church from the beginning of the world; and chiefly in the glorious and most blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; as also in the blessed Angels in heaven; and in all other holy persons upon earth, who by their lives and labours have shined forth as lights in the several generations of the world.⁵⁸

One familiar with the bidding prayer of 1604 can see essences of it in this particular prayer.⁵⁹ Bishop *Jeremy Taylor* provides for us the following devotion for grace to follow the Blessed Mother's example:

O ETERNAL and Almighty God, who didst send Thy holy angel in embassy to the blessed Virgin Mother of our Lord, to manifest the actuating of Thine eternal purpose of the redemption of mankind by the incarnation of Thine eternal Son; put me, by the assistances of Thy divine grace, into such holy dispositions, that I may never impede the event and effect of those mercies which in the counsels of thy predestination Thou didst design for me. Give me a promptness to obey Thee to the degree and semblance of angelical alacrity; give me holy purity and piety, prudence and modesty, like those excellencies which Thou didst create in the ever-blessed Virgin, the Mother of God: grant that my employment be always holy, unmixed with worldly affections, that I may converse with angels, entertain the holy Jesus, conceive Him in my soul, nourish Him with the expresses of most innocent and holy affections, and bring Him forth and publish Him in a life of piety and obedience, that He may dwell in me for ever, and I may for ever dwell in Him, in the house of eternal pleasures and glories, world without end.⁶⁰

Dr. *John Donne* writes, towards the year 1630, a devotion of thanksgiving for the Virgin's part in redemption:

⁵⁸ Barnes, *Devotions*, 8.

⁵⁹ *Book of Common Prayer, 1928* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 47.

⁶⁰ Barnes, *Devotions*, 9.

FOR that fair blessed Mother-maid,
Whose flesh redeem'd us; That she-Cherubin,
Which unlock'd Paradise, and made
One claim for innocence, and dis seiz'd sin,
Whose womb was a strange heav'n, for there
God cloath'd Himself, and grew,
Our zealous thanks we pour. As her deeds were
Our helps, so are her prayers; nor can she sue
In vain, who hath such titles unto you.⁶¹

An interesting use of the litany form in the devotion of that day can be seen in a writing by *Thomas Traherne* (1637-74). This is also a thanksgiving for the exaltation and for virtues of the Blessed Virgin:

O LORD I praise and magnify thy Name
For the Most Holy Virgin-Mother of God,
Who is the Highest of Thy Saints.
The most Glorious of all Thy Creatures.
The most Perfect of all Thy Works.
The nearest unto Thee, in the Throne of God.
Whom Thou didst please to make
Daughter of the Eternal Father.
Mother of the Eternal Son.
Spouse of the Eternal Spirit.
Tabernacle of the most Glorious Trinity.
Mother of Jesus.
Mother of the Messias.
Mother of Him who was the Desire of all Nations.
Mother of the Prince of Peace.
Mother of the King of Heaven.
Mother of our Creator.
Mother and Virgin.
Mirror of Humility and Obedience.
Mirror of Wisdom and Devotion.
Mirror of Modesty and Chastity.

⁶¹ Barnes, *Devotions*, 10.

Mirror of sweetness and Resignation.

Mirror of Sanctity.

Mirror of all Virtues.⁶²

While this devotion is directed to God, it certainly puts our Lady in an exalted position. The last paragraph concludes as follows:

The most unworthy of all Thy Servants falleth down to worship Thee for Thine own Excellencies; even Thee O Lord, for Thine own perfection, and for all those Glorious Graces, given and imparted to this Holy Virgin, and to all Thy Saints.⁶³

We come across a rare consideration of the sorrows of the Virgin Mary, a devotion written by Bishop *Joseph Hall* who lived between 1574 and 1656:

But above all other, O thou Blessed Virgin, the Holy Mother of our Lord, how many swords pierced thy soul; while standing close by His Cross, thou sawest thy dear Son and Saviour thus indignantly used, thus stripped, thus stretched, thus nailed, thus bleeding, thus dying, thus pierced! How did thy troubled heart now recount, what the Angel Gabriel had reported to thee from God, in the message of thy blessed Conception of that Son of God! How didst thou think of the miraculous formation of that thy Divine burden, by the power of the Holy Ghost! How didst thou recall those prophesies of Anna and Simeon concerning Him, and all those supernatural works of His, the irrefragible proofs of His Godhead! And, laying all these together, with the miserable infirmities of His Passion, how wert thou crucified with Him! The care, that He took for thee in the extremity of His torments, could not choose but melt thy heart into sorrow: but oh, when, in the height of His pain and misery, thou heardest Him cry out MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME? what a cold horror

⁶² Barnes, *Devotions*, 10-11.

⁶³ Barnes, *Devotions*, 11.

possessed thy soul! I cannot now wonder, at thy qualms and swoonings: I could rather wonder, that thou survivedst so sad an hour.⁶⁴

Dr. *Joseph Beaumont*, living 1616-99, writes this, hoping that the Virgin may receive due honor:

She, the transcendent Crown of Females, she
Great Jacob's Ladder, Aarons Budding Rod,
The chrystal Princess of Virginitie,
David's fair Tower, the Mother of her God,
Mary herself: O may that lovely Name
Be Blessings Nest, and the dear Theme of Fame.⁶⁵

Bishop *Lancelot Andrewes*, dying in 1626, writes the following which indicates most clearly his acceptance, at least, of the Immaculate Conception:

Commemorating the allholy immaculate, more than blessed Mary, Mother of God and ever virgin, with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other and all our life, to Christ our God; for to Thee, O Lord, belongeth glory, honour, and worship. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with me and all of us. Amen.⁶⁶

In contemplation of the purification of the Blessed Virgin, Dr. *Nathaniel Eaton*, 1609?-74, writes as follows:

I APPREHEND, Bright Maid, no reason for't,
So God-Like pure, as we believe thou wert,
Why thou shouldst these mysterious Rites apply
Thy spotless self yet more to purify.
Unless perhaps, as some affirm, there be

⁶⁴ Barnes, *Devotions*, 13-14.

⁶⁵ Barnes, *Devotions*, 14.

⁶⁶ Barnes, *Devotions*, 19.

A new found ACME in Divinitie,
 Like unto that, which, in another sense,
 Grammarians call the more than perfect tense:
 I know not how their dreams they can assure,
 But this I know, thou'rt either more than pure,
 Or these Mysterious Rites, Bright Maid, to thee,
 That wert so pure before, superfluous be.⁶⁷

In consideration of the Annunciation, Bishop *Joseph Hall* (previously quoted) writes as follows:

How gladly do we second the angel in the praise of her, which was more ours than his! How justly do we bless her, whom the angel pronounced blessed! How worthily is she honoured of men, whom the angel proclaimeth beloved of God! O blessed Mary, he cannot bless thee, he cannot honour thee, too much, that deifies thee not. That, which the angel said of thee, thou hast prophesied of thyself: we believe the angel, and thee. All generations shall call thee blessed, by the fruit of whose womb all generations are blessed.⁶⁸

Anthony Stafford, who lived between 1587 and 1645 and was previously spoken of in this paper, writes this rather lengthy devotion in praise of the Blessed Virgin:

O THOU eternal glory of thy sex! had the Queen of Sheba seen thee, as she did Solomon, she had not so soon been delivered out of the trance into which her admiration cast her. In these she might have discovered all the perfections of which woman-kind is capable

Thou didst excell Abel in Innocency, Abraham in Faith, Isaac in Obedience, David in Gentleness, the Prophets and Apostles in Piety, and the Martyrs in Patience. O thou whom Heaven would have of the same constancy, purity, and sublimity with itself, thou art so far from having an equal, that all thy sex cannot afford a worthy witness of thy ex-

⁶⁷ Barnes, *Devotions*, 16.

⁶⁸ Barnes, *Devotions*, 13.

cellencies! O thou Mother of the true Moses, who never put on the yoke of Pharaoh, but stood free in the midst of Egypt! Thou rod of Jesse, always straight, who brought forth the fruit of life! Thou wert here a terrestrial Paradise, where into Serpent never entered, on which God's malediction was never imposed, and hast no doubt, now in the celestial Paradise a conspicuous seat above all the Angelical orders, and next to thy glorified Son himself. For if Christ's promise to all His fellow-feeling members that if they suffer with Him, they shall reign with Him, if they die with Him, they shall live with Him; what eminent place in Heaven shalt thou have assigned to thee, who in soul didst suffer for Him more than all His Martyrs?

O thou bashful Morn that didst precede and produce our Sun! Thou circumscription (if I may so say) of the uncircumscribed! Thou root to this Herb of Grace! Thou Mother of our Creator! Thou nurse to him by whom all things are fed! Thou comprehender of the incomprehensible! Thou bearer of Him whose word sustains the Globes! Thou who didst impart flesh to Him who wanted nothing else!

Thou Sarah, thou Mother of many Nations, who brought forth our Isaac, our Laughter, when a just sorrow concieved [sic] for a loss esteemed irreparable had clouded this inferior world! O pardon, gracious Princess, my weak endeavour to sum up thy value, which comes as short of thee as my head does of Heaven. Nothing that is not itself glorified, can express thy glory to the height. Thou deservest a Quire of Queens here, and another of Angels in Heaven to sing thy praises. Were all the Earth's brood, the drops, the sands of the sea, and the stars of Heaven tongued, they could not all express thee so well, as silent extasy.⁶⁹

In concluding this section on Marian devotion, suffice it to quote a devotion in which Our Lady is praised by *Ben Jonson*, who lived from 1573 to 1637, using a rather advanced concept of the Blessed Virgin as Mother and spouse of God, along with many other accolades. I think this devotion shows a good bit of advancement for that age:

⁶⁹ Barnes, *Devotions*, 16-17.

Mary and Seventeenth-Century Anglican Divines

167

DAUGHTER, and Mother, and the Spouse of God,
 Alike of kin, to that most blessed Trine
 Of Persons, yet in Union (One) divine.
 How are thy gifts, and graces blaz'd abroad!

Most holy, and pure Virgin, blessed Maid,
 Sweet Tree of Life, King David's strength and Tower,
 The House of Gold, the Gate of Heaven's power,
 The Morning-star, whose light our Fall hath stayed.

Great Queen of Queens, most mild, most meek, most wise,
 Most venerable. Cause of all our joy.
 Whose cheerful look our sadness doth destroy,
 And art the spotless Mirror to mans eyes.

The Seat of Sapience, the most lovely Mother,
 And most to be admired of thy sex,
 Who madst us happy all, in thy reflexe,
 By bringing forth God's only Son, no other.

Thou Throne of glory, beauteous as the Moon,
 The rosy Morning, or the rising Sun,
 Who like a giant hast his course to run,
 Till he hath reach'd his twofold point of Noon.⁷⁰

Notice the universality of his comments on the Blessed Virgin. Can one do other than think in terms of the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse of St. John as one reads this? The last verse continues to show forth the concept of her universality:

How are thy gifts and graces blaz'd abroad,
 Through all the lines of this circumference,
 T'impart in all purg'd hearts this virgin sense
 Of being Daughter, Mother, Spouse of God?⁷¹

⁷⁰ Barnes, *Devotions*, 18.

⁷¹ Barnes, *Devotions*, 18.

All of these devotions (taken from a collection of devotions of Our Lady from Anglican writers of the seventeenth century) indicate, it seems to me, a rather profound concept of Our Lady, even though it was not so mentioned in the official formularies of the Church of England at that time. Nonetheless, the men who were writers—who were devout people, bishops and priests, or doctors of religion—seem to have provided, for those who would use them, many good examples of devotion and beautifully written ones. So here again, we see that Anglican devotion and thought concerning the Blessed Mother was far from dead, even though it was perhaps kept in isolated places. These writers held forth and kept for future use these devotions and this thought of Blessed Mary, Ever-Virgin Lady and Queen in England.

CONCLUSION

It is a fact of history that both devotion and theological development concerning the Blessed Mother suffered during the turbulent times of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in England as well as on the continent. Suspicions of so-called Roman excesses were inborn for the men who taught, governed and ministered to a nation ripped asunder spiritually in the former century and which continued to suffer the pathos of schism with Rome and internal division in the latter century. It has been impossible here to do more than reflect briefly on the virtually militant attitudes of Puritans, Calvinists, and Sectarians. Speaking of the doctrines and practices of the continental and Roman Church has provided, at best, a backdrop to the endeavors and status of religion within the English church.

In those days, the Church of England had little to give, of sophisticated Marian theology, and much to gain from the Roman and Orthodox communions. The teaching of those seventeenth-century Anglican theologians who were of sounder persuasion, and at the time more in tune with the Catholic faith, shows that they did not intend, any more than did the original sixteenth-century reformers, to wipe out the veneration of Mary, although, certainly, there were

others of lesser persuasion. Whatever one's position—pursuant to the papacy and communion therewith as being essential to authentic Catholicism—one must, I believe, wonder at the ability of the English divines to preserve as much of orthodox doctrine and devotion as they did. Men such as Archbishop Sancroft (not to be confused with Bancroft), who was in every way efficient and effective, left his see with much frustration, being followed by the inept George Abbott, circa 1610. With disagreement on all sides, with monarchs who wanted political servants rather than spiritual leaders where the church was concerned, with a background of heretical teaching that could not but have tempered their theological curiosity in all areas, with a research posture that put holy scripture in a unique if not narrow position, and with the necessity of keeping their heads actually as well as literally—it is amazing not only that they were able to do so much, but also that they did it with such scholarly process.

That any devotion to Mary could survive the rule of the “Round-heads”—who abolished Christmas, bowing and genuflecting, altars, the use of the wedding ring, and the sign of the cross—is presumably attributable only to the hand of God. One harkens to the words of Christ in Matthew: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” [my church]. It is curious to me that, in my research into the thought of bishops and theologians who held so strictly to holy scripture in their considerations of Mary, I find so little treatment of Mary as “Our Lady of Sorrows.” Considering the Feast of the Purification and the scriptures associated with it containing the prophecies of Simeon and Anna, it seems that this would have been an important consideration for them. At least, however, the kernel of later and more developed Marian doctrines is to be found in the works of the men we have reviewed in this study.

Their emphasis on Mary as *Theotokos*, as ever-virgin, as the woman playing an essential role in the divine plan for men's salvation; their veneration of her and use of titles such as Our Blessed Lady; the amount of beautiful literature and hymnody they left to us—all these

formed an inheritance essential to the more pronounced expansion of Mariology and Marian devotion that would emerge in the English Church in future generations.

Many Anglicans in those earlier days lamented her devotional demise. John Keble, for instance, while not strictly a seventeenth-century personage, wrote a poem entitled "Mother Out of Sight." Many of the controversies that raged between Roman Catholics and Anglicans were centered in their mutual misunderstanding of their different interpretations of the terms "advocation" and "invocation," and in their misunderstanding about invoking the saint or angel, on the one hand, and invoking their prayers and intercessions on our behalf or that of others, on the other hand.

It could well be that as ecumenical relations grow between the Roman, Anglican, and Orthodox churches, we will come to see that the English church of the seventeenth century was truly theologically afraid of heresy where, in fact, no heresy was. They reacted out of a fear where no fear need have been. Devotion to Mary and teaching about her, though thinned down in those days, did not totally die out. Thanks be to God that some Anglican divines kept as much of it alive as they did, until theologians of another age could once again build upon it.

WILLIAM L. LAHEY, S.S.C.
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Winter Haven, Florida