

III. Mary's "immaculate conception".

1. Teaching of the Catholic Church.

Pope Pius IX proclaimed as a dogma that Mary was conceived without the original sin. The Catholic Church calls this the dogma of the "immaculate conception". "Immaculate conception" refers thus to Mary's conception without the original sin – not that of Jesus, as is often supposed.

Accordingly, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for the honor of the Holy and undivided Trinity, for the glory and adornment of the Virgin Mother of God, for the exaltation of the Catholic Faith, and for the furtherance of the Catholic religion, by the authority of Jesus Christ our Lord, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own: "We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."

Pius IX, 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*

The Holy Spirit *prepared* Mary by his grace. It was fitting that the mother of him in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Colossians 2:9) should herself be "full of grace." She was, by sheer grace, conceived without sin as the most humble of creatures, the most capable of welcoming the inexpressible gift of the Almighty. It was quite correct for the angel Gabriel to greet her as the "Daughter of Zion": "Rejoice" (cf. Zephaniah 3:14; Zachariah 2:14.). It is the thanksgiving of the whole People of God, and thus of the Church, which Mary in her canticle (cf. Luke 1:46-55) lifts up to the Father in the Holy Spirit while carrying within her the eternal Son.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §722

The teaching that Mary was "totally preserved from the stain of original sin" and then "remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life" (Catechism of the Catholic Church – CCC, §508) would mean, however, that Mary did not need a Saviour and Redeemer – since she was free from all sin. In Luke 1:47, however, Mary herself proclaims that her spirit rejoiced in her „Saviour”.

46 And Mary said:

“My soul exalts the Lord,

47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

Luke 1:46-47 NASB

In order thus to reconcile the doctrines of Mary's immaculate conception and sinlessness with the fact that she herself admitted that she needed a Saviour, the Catholic Church has created a teaching according to which Mary was redeemed "from the moment of her conception".

Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, "full of grace" through God (Luke 1:28), was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*: DS 2803).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §491

The "splendor of an entirely unique holiness" by which Mary is "enriched from the first instant of her conception" comes wholly from Christ: she is "redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son" (Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 53, 56). The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person "in Christ with every spiritual

blessing in the heavenly places” and chose her “in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love” (cf. Ephesians 1:3-4).
 Catechism of the Catholic Church, §492

2. „Immaculate conception” - arguments of the Catholic Church and the teaching of the scripture.

2.1. Biblical basis for the dogma.

2.1.1. Luke 1:28.

The main verse used to defend the doctrine of the supposed “immaculate conception” is Luke 1:28. Basing its teaching on the wrong rendering of “full of grace” (see chapter II), the Catholic church has drawn a series of unfounded conclusions directly contradicting the teaching of the scripture which led to the proclamation of the dogma.

According to the teaching of the Church Mary was filled with grace and, in the eyes of the Church, the fullness of grace is tantamount to sinlessness, since any sin would have distorted this fullness. And if Mary was sinless, then it means she must have been free from the sin nature, just as Jesus was – otherwise she would have had to sin. And since she was free from the sin nature, then she must have been conceived “immaculate”. The reasoning of the Church can be presented in the following way:

1. Mary was “full of grace”.
2. Fullness of grace means sinlessness, since sin would have distorted this fullness.
3. In order not to sin, Mary must have been free from the sin nature.
4. In order to be free from the sin nature, Mary’s conception must have been “immaculate”.

The Church has thus arrived at the dogma of “immaculate conception” following a devious course of ignoring the teaching of the scripture at every step and building one unfounded conclusion upon another. The reasoning of the Church is wrong in every of these points.

1. Mary was “full of grace”.
False. As it has been discussed in depth in the previous chapter, Mary found favour with God and was not “filled with grace”. The Greek word *kecharitōmenē* is a perfect passive participle from the verb *charitoō* which means “to cause to be the recipient of a benefit, bestow favor on, favor highly, bless” (BDAG) and does not contain the idea of fullness. The perfect tense means that Mary received grace at some point in the past and this state of being graced/favoured was still lasting when these words were spoken to her. We should translate *kecharitōmenē* as “the one who has been graced/favoured”.
2. Fullness of grace means sinlessness, since sin would have distorted this fullness.
False. Mary was not “full of grace”, but even the designation that someone is “full of grace” - which in any case does not refer to Mary – is not equivalent to sinlessness (see chapter II, point 4). The Bible clearly teaches that all men are sinners and this refers to Mary also. Christ is the only exception (see chapter IV).
3. In order not to sin, Mary must have been free from the sin nature.
False. As shown above, Mary was not “full of grace” and she was not sinless. The scripture teaches that only Christ was free from the sin nature and personal sin (see chapter IV) and gives absolutely no basis to ascribe these attributes to Mary. Both doctrines are unfounded inventions of the church fathers directly contradicting the scriptural teaching of universal sinfulness from which only Christ was exempt.
4. In order to be free from the sin nature, Mary’s conception must have been “immaculate”.

False. All the above conclusions drawn by the Catholic Church are wrong, so the conclusion based on them is wrong also.

2.1.2. Genesis 3:15.

Another key verse used to defend the dogma of “immaculate conception” is Genesis 3:15. God says the following words to the serpent:

15 And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.
Genesis 3:15 NIV

According to the Catholic teaching Mary stands together with Christ in a perfect enmity towards Satan and for this enmity to be perfect, Mary must be sinless. And for her to be sinless, she must have been conceived without the original sin. The reasoning of the Catholic Church goes as follows.

1. The woman in Genesis 3:15 is Mary.
2. The offspring of the woman who will crush the head of Satan’s offspring is Christ.
3. The foretold victory of Christ over Satan is total (“he will crush your head”).
4. Mary is in the same absolute enmity towards Satan as her offspring who will crush the head of Satan – Christ.
5. For the enmity of Mary towards the evil one and her victory over him to be total, Mary must have been free from any sin.
6. Since Mary must have been free from any sin, this means she must have been born free from the sin nature.

In this case too, the Church attempting to warp the meaning of the Word of God for the purpose of defending a false doctrine. In the argumentation presented there are several unfounded logical leaps to which Genesis 3:15 gives no basis.

1. The woman in Genesis 3:15 is Mary.

According to the interpretation of the Church if the offspring of the woman who will crush the head of Satan is Christ, then Mary must be the woman. This interpretation is wrong, however.

Firstly, we would have to completely ignore the context to interpret this verse as speaking about Mary. The beginning of the third chapter of Genesis tells of the fall of man and then from verse 14 through to 19 we have the words of the so called “Genesis curse” – the punishment of the serpent and the foretelling of his ultimate defeat and the curse that man has brought upon himself by sinning against God. God first addresses the serpent (verses 14-15), then the woman (verse 16) and finally the man (verses 17-19). The woman in verse 15 is Eve, not Mary.

Secondly, the fact that we have in this verse a prophecy that would be fulfilled by a distant future offspring of Eve, does not warrant taking Mary as the woman. We must remember that the prophecy is about the distant offspring of the woman and not the woman herself. This offspring – our Lord, Jesus Christ – was still not known at that time and His Person and His coming were a mystery that the Old Testament believers waited to have revealed (Matthew 13:17; John 8:56; 1 Peter 1:10-12). We are not here dealing with a prophecy, however, that would require us to seek or symbolically interpret the

identity of the woman herself. The woman is Eve and it is clear in this verse. We would have to break all principles of biblical exegesis to take Genesis 3:15 as referring to Mary.

It is thus also an error to perceive Mary as the “new Eve”, as some Church fathers did and as the Catholic Church presently teaches. The Word of God calls Jesus “the last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45), but nowhere is the title “new Eve” used towards Mary. It is Christ who as the God-man paid for the sin which came through Adam and Eve and which has since been committed by every member of the human race and it is obvious that thanks to His perfect sacrifice there is no need for a “new Eve” or the “last Eve” to come. Describing Mary as the “new Eve” also ignores the key fact that Adam and Eve were in a marriage relationship with each other – in which Mary was clearly not with Christ. Some other Catholic teachings also lead to this paradox in which she de facto becomes Jesus partner and His beloved (see the wrong Catholic interpretation of Song of Songs 4:7 below and Psalm 45 in point 3 of chapter V).

Since it has been demonstrated that the verse does not speak about Mary, Catholic argumentation is invalidated. Nevertheless, the remaining errors will also be analysed.

2. The offspring of the woman who will crush the head of Satan’s offspring is Christ.
3. The foretold victory of Christ over Satan is total (“he will crush your head”).

It is true that the offspring of the woman who would “crush the head” of Satan is Christ. Satan has been doomed to defeat in his rebellion against God from the very beginning. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross has been the turning point of this conflict (Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8), since through it humanity’s main problem has been solved – sin, on which Satan’s dominion over man has been founded (cf. the text on Christus Victor as a theory of redemption, especially point 2). Ultimately Satan will be defeated and thrown for all eternity into the lake of fire just before the eternal state begins (Revelation 20:10).

God’s words are a prophecy of the victory of Christ as the future offspring of the woman. The enmity between Satan and humanity finds its fulfilment in Christ defeating Satan (“he will crush your head”) and in the treacherous attack of Satan on Christ, executed through the betrayal and lie of Judas and false accusations in the process against Jesus which as a whole was a travesty of justice (“and you will strike his heel”). We should add here, however, that although it may have seemed to Satan that his attack will be successful and will disrupt God’s plan, it only brought about its fulfilment. The coming of Christ to redeem the sins of humanity and the manner in which this was to happen have been ordained by God from eternity past (2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:18-20).

Although God introduces enmity between the woman and Satan, Genesis 3:15 clearly states that it is the offspring of the woman who will crush the head of Satan’s offspring – and not the woman herself. The Hebrew text is unambiguous – the pronoun הוּ (hu) which is the subject in the words הוּא יִשְׁפֹּחַ אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ (hu yeshuphekha rosh) – “he will crush head”, is used for masculine and neuter genders and refers to the word זָרְעָהּ (zar’ah) which means “her seed/offspring” – and not to the woman. Without any basis the Catholic Church teaches that it is not the offspring of the woman who will crush Satan’s head, but the woman’s offspring together with the woman, or even the woman herself (!), which is a direct contradiction of the words of the scripture. In the constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* which proclaimed the “immaculate conception” as a dogma, pope Pius IX writes:

And indeed it was wholly fitting that so wonderful a mother should be ever resplendent with the glory of most sublime holiness and so completely free from all taint of original sin that she would triumph utterly over the ancient serpent.

Pius IX, 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 1

Hence, just as Christ, the Mediator between God and man, assumed human nature, blotted the handwriting of the decree that stood against us, and fastened it triumphantly to the cross, so the most holy Virgin, united with him by a most intimate and indissoluble bond, was, with

him and through him, eternally at enmity with the evil serpent, and most completely triumphed over him, and thus crushed his head with her immaculate foot.

Pius IX, 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 16

As if these splendid eulogies and tributes were not sufficient, the Fathers proclaimed with particular and definite statements that when one treats of sin, the holy Virgin Mary is not even to be mentioned; for to her more grace was given than was necessary to conquer sin completely (Cf. St. Augustine, *De Natura et Gratia*, c. 36.). They also declared that the most glorious Virgin was Reparatrix of the first parents, the giver of life to posterity; that she was chosen before the ages, prepared for himself by the Most High, foretold by God when he said to the serpent, “I will put enmities between you and the woman” (Genesis 3:15) – unmistakable evidence that she was crushed the poisonous head of the serpent.

Pius IX, 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 22

All our hope do we repose in the most Blessed Virgin – in the all fair and immaculate one who has crushed the poisonous head of the most cruel serpent and brought salvation to the world

Pius IX, 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 36

The pope’s teaching, present also among other Church fathers, directly contradicts and twists the teaching of the scripture, ascribing to Mary a deed she did not accomplish – nor could have.

4. Mary is in the same absolute enmity towards Satan as her offspring who will crush the head of Satan – Christ.
5. For the enmity of Mary towards the evil one and her victory over him to be total, Mary must have been free from any sin.

God did introduce enmity between the serpent and the woman, but the conclusion drawn by the Catholic Church that the enmity on woman’s part is of an absolute character and hence implies her sinlessness is totally unfounded. This is another invention of the Church fathers in which the meaning of the Word of God is twisted with the purpose of creating a biblical basis for their false teaching. As it has been shown above, it is Christ who crushes Satan’s head. There is enmity between the woman and Satan, but it is her offspring who defeats Satan, and not the woman together with her offspring. It is thus an unfounded leap of logic to regard the enmity between the woman and Satan as being of such an absolute character as the victory of Christ over the devil – the verse gives no basis for such a conclusion. God said that there would be a state of enmity between the woman and Satan and we know that this is the case – Satan has been man’s enemy from the beginning. The very Hebrew word שָׂטָן (*satan*) means adversary.

There is no hint in God’s words that we should consider the enmity on the woman’s part as so perfect that it leaves no room for sin. Quite the contrary – although the devil has been our adversary from the beginning, all people except Christ have been sinners. Enmity towards Satan and sinlessness are two separate issues and the verse makes no reference and provides no basis for the latter. This conclusion of the Catholic Church is the hinge of their entire argument and the fact that it is groundless renders the argument void.

We observe here, however, similar reasoning as in the case of angel’s words from Luke 1:28, where the Church not only bases its teaching on a wrong translation of the word meaning “the one who has been graced/favoured” and calls Mary “full of grace”, but infers from it that if she is full of grace, then this fullness leaves no room for sin – hence she is sinless. Seeking a biblical justification for the unbiblical teaching of Mary’s sinlessness the Church follows the same fallacious logic in this case.

6. Since Mary must have been free from any sin, this means she must have been born free from the sin nature.

The final result of this mistaken reasoning is the statement that Mary’s conception must have been “immaculate” – since she was sinless, she must have been conceived free from the sin nature. Firstly,

the whole Catholic argumentation is invalidated by the fact that the woman in Genesis 3:15 is Eve, not Mary. As it has also been shown, although the final victory of Christ over Satan is absolute, Genesis 3:15 (nor any other verse in the Bible) gives no basis to consider the enmity between the woman and Satan as such. Baseless is thus also the conclusion that enmity implies sinlessness. It also contradicts with the teaching of the scripture on universal sinfulness, which refers to Mary as well (see chapter IV).

The reasoning of the Catholic Church contains several serious errors which make the final conclusion void.

1. The woman in Genesis 3:15 is Mary.
False. The context clearly shows that the woman in this verse is Eve and gives no basis for seeking types or prophecies in God's words regarding the woman. The prophecy is about the distant offspring of the woman and not about the woman herself. All principles of biblical exegesis need to be broken in order to take Mary as the woman.
2. The offspring of the woman who will crush the head of Satan's offspring is Christ.
True. Christ is the foretold distant offspring of the woman who will defeat Satan.
3. The foretold victory of Christ over Satan is total ("he will crush your head").
True. Satan has been doomed to defeat in his rebellion against God from the very beginning. Christ's sacrifice on the cross has been the turning point of this conflict which will end with Satan being thrown to the lake of fire, where he will be for eternity. Genesis 3:15 clearly says, however, that it is the woman's offspring who will crush the head of Satan – and not the woman herself. It is a serious error and twisting of the words of the scripture to ascribe the victory of Satan to Mary, as does Pius IX in the constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*.
4. Mary is in the same absolute enmity towards Satan as her offspring who will crush the head of Satan – Christ.
False. This conclusion has no basis. There is enmity between the woman and Satan, but neither Genesis 3:15 nor any other verse provides any foundation to regard this enmity as absolute. Absolute is the victory of Christ over Satan, and not the enmity between the woman and Satan.
5. For the enmity of Mary towards the evil one and her victory over him to be total, Mary must have been free from any sin.
False. The enmity between the woman together with her offspring and Satan is not absolute and, what is plainly evident, it doesn't preclude human sin. Quite the contrary – although the devil has been our adversary from the beginning, all people except Christ have been sinners – as is plainly evident. Enmity towards Satan and sinlessness are two separate issues and the verse makes no reference and provides no basis for the latter.
6. Since Mary must have been free from any sin, this means she must have been born free from the sin nature.
False. The error of this conclusion results from the error of all the conclusions that lead to it. The verse doesn't speak about Mary and the woman was not in the state of absolute enmity with Satan which would imply her sinlessness. There is thus no basis to the final conclusion – that Mary's conception was immaculate.

As it was the case with Luke 1:28, here also we are dealing with an attempt by the Catholic Church to use the scripture to defend an unbiblical, false doctrine.

2.1.3. Song of Solomon 4:7.

In their defence of the teaching of "immaculate conception" the Catholic Church also quotes Song of Solomon 4:7. Lack of blemish of the bride is supposed to refer to Mary's conception being free from the original sin.

7 “You are altogether beautiful, my darling,
And there is no blemish in you.
Song of Solomon 4:7 NASB

This verse, however, the entire book, has got nothing to do with Mary. Song of Solomon describes the love between the husband and the bride and is an allegory of the relationship between Christ and His bride – who is the true church as the congregation of believers and not Mary. The Song reminds us how great the love of our Lord towards us is, through which He paid for all our sins on the cross.

22 Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. **24** But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, **26** so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **27** that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. **28** So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; **29** for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, **30** because we are members of His body. **31** For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. **32** This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:22-32 NASB

2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.
Ephesians 5:2 NASB

It is also hard to explain how the Catholic Church can metaphorically interpret the bride as being Mary, if the husband – also according to the Catholic interpretation – is the Christ Himself (cf. point 2.1.2 above, interpretation of the first conclusion by the Catholic Church).

2.1.4. Old Testament types.

Apart from the passages described above which are meant to provide the main scriptural basis for the dogma, the Catholic Church sees numerous Old Testament fragments as types and prophecies of Mary’s “immaculate conception”. These are listed in a paragraph from the *Ineffabilis Deus* constitution quoted below.

All the quoted types and prophecies are without exception wrong interpretations of the Catholic Church and no cited passage from scripture refers to Mary. Only some of them have been commented on, since the majority represents such an obvious violation of principles of biblical interpretation that a comment is not warranted.

This sublime and singular privilege of the Blessed Virgin, together with her most excellent innocence, purity, holiness and freedom from every stain of sin, as well as the unspeakable abundance and greatness of all heavenly graces, virtues and privileges – these the Fathers beheld in that ark of Noah, which was built by divine command and escaped entirely safe and sound from the common shipwreck of the whole world (cf. Genesis 6:9) [Noah’s ark as a type of immaculate conception of Mary (!) – B.Syl.]; in the ladder which Jacob saw reaching from the earth to heaven, by whose rungs the angels of God ascended and descended, and on whose top the Lord himself leaned (cf. Genesis 28:12) [the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream as a foreshadowing of Mary being the way to the Lord – it is hard to take the fantasies of the church fathers seriously and it is hard to see how this picture is meant to support the teaching of the immaculate conception; the scripture also teaches that there is only one way to the Lord and this way is Christ, John 14:6 – B.Syl.]; in that bush which Moses saw in the holy place burning on all sides, which was not consumed or injured in any way but grew green and

blossomed beautifully (cf. Exodus 3:2) [the burning bush is a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice on the cross – the fact that the bush was burning, but was not consumed is a picture of Christ staying alive during the three hours of darkness when He took God's wrath and the penalty for every committed sin in the history of humanity upon Himself; this verse has got nothing to do with Mary and it is a blasphemy to attribute to Mary the prophecies about Christ and elevate her to His level; the scripture also nowhere says that the bush “grew green and blossomed beautifully” – it is an invention by the pope and another falsification of the words of the scripture – B.Syl.]; in that impregnable tower before the enemy, from which hung a thousand bucklers and all the armor of the strong (cf. Song of Solomon 4:4) [no comment – B.Syl.]; in that garden enclosed on all sides, which cannot be violated or corrupted by any deceitful plots (cf. Song of Solomon 4:12) [no comment – B.Syl.]; as in that resplendent city of God, which has its foundations on the holy mountains (cf. Psalm 87:1) [no comment – B.Syl.]; in that most august temple of God, which, radiant with divine splendors, is full of the glory of God (cf. Isaiah 6:1-4) [this passage describes the temple in which God presently dwells and which Isaiah saw in the vision He received from the Lord. Seeing a type of Mary in God's heavenly temple is also best left without a comment – B.Syl.]; and in very many other biblical types of this kind. In such allusions the Fathers taught that the exalted dignity of the Mother of God, her spotless innocence and her sanctity unstained by any fault, had been prophesied in a wonderful manner [no comment – B.Syl.].
 Piusa IX, 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*

In the entire biblical justification of the dogma of Mary's immaculate conception the Church follows the twisted logic in which first a teaching originating on speculation and inventions which lacks any biblical basis whatsoever is accepted and then the Church fathers and Catholic theologians attempt to find support for this teaching in the Word of God, warping its meaning and breaking all principles of biblical exegesis. Treating the inspired Word of God as a plastic material with which they can do whatever they wish in order to defend their false doctrines is a serious error of the Catholic Church.

2.2. The logical paradox of the “clean vessel”.

According to the Catholic defenders of the dogma of immaculate conception it was necessary that Christ be born from a womb unstained by sin. Not only, however, the scripture provides no basis for this conclusion, but it also leads to a paradox.

Firstly, Mary didn't need to be sinless for Christ to be free from the sin nature, since it is passed on through the male line (see chapter IV). The scripture also nowhere mentions that Christ was to be born from a “clean womb” that was unstained by sin – it's an invention of the Catholic Church.

Secondly, if we assume that Mary had to be unstained by the original sin for Jesus to be born from a sinless womb, then Mary's parents would also have to have been sinless, and so consequently also their parents and the parents of their parents, etc. Essentially all Mary's ancestors would have to be free from the original sin for her to be free from it. This is obviously absurd.

The Catholic Church does not, however, attempt to prove that both the line of Mary's father and mother were free from original sin. So if according to the teaching of the Church we accept that God, in order to ensure that Jesus is conceived and born through a womb unstained by sin (which is an unbiblical invention), had to protect Mary from the original sin, but there was no need to protect Mary's parents for her to be sinless, then we encounter another paradox – namely that the mother of Christ, Mary, had to be sinless for Christ to be born from a “clean womb” and be sinless, but Mary's parents didn't have to be sinless for Mary to be sinless. This means that God could have protected Mary from the original sin regardless of the sin of her parents and without the need of a birth from a “clean womb”, but a “clean womb” was needed for Jesus (!).

3. Redemption “from the moment of conception”.

The teaching of Mary's redemption "from the moment of conception" has been created by the Catholic Church in an attempt to reconcile the dogma of her "immaculate conception" and alleged sinlessness (Mary's sinlessness is a false teaching – see chapter IV below) with the fact that Mary herself professed that she needed a Saviour.

46 And Mary said:
"My soul exalts the Lord,
47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
Luke 1:46-47 NASB

According to this doctrine Mary has been redeemed in an anticipatory manner, before she came to the world ("the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception . . . was preserved free from all stain of original sin", Pius IX, 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*) and was granted this privilege due to the merits of her Son ("by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin", Pius IX, 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*).

The doctrine of Mary's redemption "from the moment of conception" not only lacks any biblical basis, but it contradicts the most fundamental teachings of the scripture.

3.1. Mary's sinlessness makes redemption redundant.

The Catholics explain this doctrine in the following way ("Immaculate Conception and Assumption", n.d.):

Mary, too, required a Savior. Like all other descendants of Adam, she was subject to the necessity of contracting original sin. But by a special intervention of God, undertaken at the instant she was conceived, she was preserved from the stain of original sin and its consequences. She was therefore redeemed by the grace of Christ, but in a special way — by anticipation.

Consider an analogy: Suppose a man falls into a deep pit, and someone reaches down to pull him out. The man has been "saved" from the pit. Now imagine a woman walking along, and she too is about to topple into the pit, but at the very moment that she is to fall in, someone holds her back and prevents her. She too has been saved from the pit, but in an even better way: She was not simply taken out of the pit, she was prevented from getting stained by the mud in the first place. This is the illustration Christians have used for a thousand years to explain how Mary was saved by Christ. By receiving Christ's grace at her conception, she had his grace applied to her before she was able to become mired in original sin and its stain.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that she was "redeemed in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son" (CCC, §492). She has more reason to call God her Savior than we do, because he saved her in an even more glorious manner!

But what about Romans 3:23, "all have sinned"? Have all people committed actual sins? Consider a child below the age of reason. By definition he can't sin, since sinning requires the ability to reason and the ability to intend to sin. This is indicated by Paul later in the letter to the Romans when he speaks of the time when Jacob and Esau were unborn babies as a time when they "had done nothing either good or bad" (Romans 9:11).

We also know of another very prominent exception to the rule: Jesus (Hebrews 4:15). So if Paul's statement in Romans 3 includes an exception for the New Adam (Jesus), one may argue that an exception for the New Eve (Mary) can also be made.

The quoted analogy solves the problem of Mary's sinlessness and her redemption only apparently¹. It presents a false view of redemption and contains a logical fallacy which renders it void.

Firstly, the pit analogy is incorrect in whichever way it is interpreted. If by "falling into the pit" the author refers to contracting the sin nature, which is the case with Mary ("She was not simply taken out of the pit, she was prevented from getting stained by the mud in the first place. . . .By receiving Christ's grace at her conception, she had his grace applied to her before she was able to become mired in original sin and its stain.") and could also be taken to be the case with the man who does fall into the pit, then this illustration is proven wrong by the following facts:

- a) that since the sin nature is contracted at conception through male's seed, there would be no period when the man could be thought of as "walking" before he falls into the pit, since his body has been infested with the original sin from the beginning of its existence – there would thus be no time in man's existence that would precede "falling into the pit";
- b) it paints a false picture that a man is condemned without making any free will choice, which is against the perfect righteousness of God who saves and condemns us not arbitrarily, but based on our decision to accept or reject Christ.

On the other hand, if we take "falling into the pit" on man's part as committing a personal sin, then not only are we introducing an interpretive inconsistency whereby we are explaining the same analogy in two different ways depending on who it's referring to (in the case of Mary "falling into the pit" would be contracting the sin nature, but in everyone else's case – committing a personal sin), but we encounter other theological barriers which are insurmountable.

Taking personal sin as "falling into the pit" wrongly indicates that it is personal sin that is the ground of our condemnation. This is incorrect, however, since on the cross Christ paid for all the sins of the entire human race.

29 The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:29 NASB

2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world.*

1 John 2:2 NASB

10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

1 Timothy 4:10 NASB

Those who believe in Christ accept His payment for their sin and are saved. Those who choose not to believe in Christ are condemned not on the basis of their sin, however, since it has been paid for, but on the basis of their rejection of Christ's payment for their sin and the unacceptability of their own works for salvation.

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. **13** And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds.

Revelation 20:12-13 NASB

Finally the statement that a child below the age of reason cannot sin "since sinning requires the ability to reason and the ability to intend to sin" is erroneous. Children begin to sin very early in life and the vigour of the sin nature is there to be seen in children of only a couple of years of age, who may already

1 Mary's sinlessness is discussed in chapter IV, but it should be emphasised here that treating Mary as equal to Jesus in any respect, including this one, and ascribing to her Jesus' attributes and prerogatives for which scripture provides no basis is a serious error.

start displaying disobedience to their parents, selfishness or any other behaviour that is reckoned as sin by God. Just because a child does not yet know what sin is by no means precludes that their capacity to sin. God's righteousness is not relative, however, but absolute and sin is counted as sin regardless of the level of awareness of the one committing it (cf. Leviticus 4:2-3, 4:22-23, 27-28, 5:15-18, 22:14).

17 "Now if a person sins and does any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment. **18** He is then to bring to the priest a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his error in which he sinned unintentionally and did not know it, and it will be forgiven him.
Leviticus 5:17-18 NASB

13 For [even] before the Law [was handed down], there was [indeed] sin in the world, but, when there was no Law, sin was not being taken into account [by us as it was after the Law].

14 Nevertheless, sin did reign [over mankind during the period] from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in a manner similar to Adam (i.e., by violating a clearly stated divine prohibition), who is a type of the One [destined] to come (i.e., Christ, the Last Adam).
Romans 5:13-14 RB

We should also bear in mind that any thought or emotion which opposes the will of God is sinful; such thoughts and emotions always precede the action and also among the youngest infants appear before they find expression in an observable deed.

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.
Psalm 51:5 NASB

A correct "pit analogy" of our redemption would thus go as follows:

1. We all receive our sin nature from our father. We are born infested with original sin and thus it could be said we are born in the pit.
2. Very early in life, before we are able to make a decision to believe in Christ as our Saviour, we begin to commit personal sins. Christ, however, died for these sins also and if a child should die before they were able to place their faith in Christ, they are automatically saved, since it's the free will choice to reject Christ that forms the basis of condemnation. We could thus say that those who have not yet attained to a level of spiritual maturity necessary for one to believe in Christ are, through God's grace, automatically "picked up" from the pit.
3. All those who are mature enough to believe in Christ make a free will choice to accept or reject His sacrifice for their sin. Those who choose to believe are picked up from the pit. Those who reject Him, remain in the pit and are judged on the basis this rejection and the unacceptability of their own works for salvation.

If, however, we follow the analogy given despite its theological errors, we arrive at a logical error that renders it void in any case.

It is sin that requires payment and it is a sinner who needs redemption. Lack of sin doesn't require payment and one who is free from all sin doesn't need redemption. This is quite simple. If thus someone doesn't possess a sin nature and doesn't commit a personal sin throughout their life, then this person doesn't have any sin that would require being paid for and they don't need to be redeemed. If the Church teaches that Mary is sinless – free from the sin nature and any personal sin – then this teaching is irreconcilable with the need for a Saviour and Redeemer. In her case the Redeemer would have nothing to pay for.

The Catholics attempt to defend this clear logical error through the analogy quoted above in which the woman is preserved from falling into the pit. This very analogy, however, directly contradicts the teaching of the Church, since it is according to this teaching that Mary – being sinless – was never about to fall to the pit in any case. One cannot prevent from falling into a pit a person who was never

going to fall into that pit. We cannot equate prevention from sin with redemption. If one has been prevented from any sin, they don't need redemption.

If Mary was born without the sin nature and never committed a personal sin, she wouldn't have needed a Saviour and a Redeemer. Since, however, she herself praises her "Saviour", then it means she was a sinner, like all of us. Logic does not allow for any other solution. Mary's immaculate conception and her alleged sinlessness cannot be reconciled with the need for redemption. The Catholic argumentation presented above is invalid.

3.2. The way in which we achieve salvation.

3.2.1. "By grace through faith".

The scripture clearly teaches that we are all saved in the same way – by grace through faith (see also the text on salvation, especially point 4).

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; **9** not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9 NASB

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, **22** even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; **25** whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.
Romans 3:21-25a NASB

"By grace", because it is a gift of God that He sent His Son to pay for our sins and did not require this payment from us. It's a payment we could never make ourselves. During the three hours of darkness (Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44-45) Christ paid on the cross for all the sins ever committed in human history and bore the punishment due us.

25 *He* who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.
Romans 4:25 NASB

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.
Romans 5:10 NASB

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace
Ephesians 1:7 NASB

32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
Ephesians 4:32 NASB

5 For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *given* at the proper time.
1 Timothy 2:5-6 NASB

9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,
2 Timothy 1:9 NASB

4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, **5** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy
Titus 3:4-5a NASB

24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.
1 Peter 2:24 NASB

18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;
1 Peter 3:18 NASB

“Through faith” – because it is by placing our faith in Christ that we accept this payment for our sin and appropriate the righteousness made available to us.

16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
John 3:16 NASB

36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”
John 3:36 NASB

1 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. **2** In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. **3** If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also”.
John 14:1-3 NASB

12 And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.
Acts 4:12 NASB

43 Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.
Acts 10:43 NASB

31 Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.
Acts 16:31

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, **9** and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,
Philippians 3:8-9 NASB

11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. **12** He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.
1 John 5:11-13 NASB

There is no exception from this path to salvation for anyone – quite contrary, an exception is not possible. Hence Mary is not an exception either².

² All believers are saved “by grace through faith”, including those from the Old Testament times. Old Testament believers were putting their faith in the promise of the coming Messiah-Redeemer

Firstly, all of us are sinners unable to pay for our own sin and cleanse ourselves from it, so as to achieve the perfect standard of God's righteousness required for salvation. We all need a Saviour and Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, and whom God gave us in His love, making salvation possible.

Secondly, God doesn't save and condemn arbitrarily – at random or ignoring the free will of the person being saved or condemned. Although we are not able to redeem ourselves, we are still responsible for our salvation by God giving us the possibility to accept the payment for our sins in Christ through our free will decision – or not.

Every teaching according to which we either don't need the payment for our sin and redemption (i.e., we are sinless or capable or achieving salvation through our own works) or according to which salvation is granted to us regardless of whether we make a free will choice to accept the payment for our sin or not – and so regardless of our free will (i.e., we are saved regardless of how we used our free will) is false and directly contradicts the Word of God.

3.2.2. “Redemption from the moment of conception” and free will choice.

The doctrine of Mary's “redemption from the moment of conception” contradicts this most fundamental teaching of the scripture – about salvation which we achieve “by grace through faith”.

God in His grace took the punishment for our sin upon Himself and paid for it in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Our role is the free will choice to accept this payment by putting our faith in Christ – or not. It is on this basis that we are saved or condemned. According to the Catholic Church, however, Mary was redeemed “from the moment of her conception” (CCC, §491) – and so before the time she was able to make a conscious, free will decision to believe in Christ as her Saviour. The dogma of “immaculate conception” states Mary was redeemed “by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ” (CCC, §491) – and so independently of her free will.

According to this doctrine God hence saves and condemns arbitrarily – regardless of the choice made by a particular person. This teaching directly contradicts God's perfect righteousness (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 11:7, 33:5, 50:6, 89:15, 96:13, 119:142, 61:8, 16:5) according to which He performs His judgments (Psalm 7:11, 9:8-9, 96:11-13, 98:8-9; Jeremiah 11:20; Acts 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 1:17). A righteous God cannot allow some to spend eternity with Him in perfect and presently unimaginable happiness and condemn others to the lake of fire regardless of the decision made by both groups – but “by virtue of the merits” of others.

The teaching of the Mary's “redemption from the moment of conception” directly contradicts the most fundamental teaching of the scripture – about the way we are saved. It contravenes the perfect righteousness of God who judges us and saves or condemns based on our free will choice to accept Christ's payment for our sin or not. Finally, this doctrine invalidates the most important issue in the entire history of creation – our free will and the choice we make – for God in Christ, or against Him.

4. Summary.

1. It is a dogma of the Catholic Church that Mary was born free from the original sin.

whom they didn't yet know. We put our faith in the One who has come and fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, completing our redemption on the cross – in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.
Genesis 15:6 NASB

3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”
Romans 4:3 NASB

2. No verse used by the Catholic Church as a biblical justification of the dogma of the “immaculate conception” – Luke 1:28, Genesis 3:15, Song of Solomon 4:7 or the quoted Old Testament passages – gives any basis for this teaching.
 1. Luke 1:28 is the main scripture passage used to defend the teaching of the alleged “immaculate conception” of Mary. This verse, however, does not say that Mary was “full of grace”, as the Church teaches, using this expression as a basis to proclaim her as sinless (see chapter II).
 2. Genesis 3:15 does not speak about Mary, and Eve, who is being addressed by God, is not Mary’s type. The verse doesn’t contain any prophecy or foreshadowing of Mary. Genesis 3:15 also does not in any way teach or suggest that the woman is in the state of perfect enmity with Satan which in the eyes of the Church would imply her sinlessness.
 3. Song of Solomon 4:7, as the entire book, has got nothing to do with Mary. Song of Solomon describes the love between the husband and the bride and is an allegory of the relationship between Christ and His bride, who is the true Church as the congregation of believers – and not Mary. It is also hard to explain how the Catholic Church can interpret the bride as metaphorically being Mary, if the husband – also according to the Catholic interpretation – is the Christ Himself.
 4. All the alleged Old Testament foreshadowings and types of Mary’s “immaculate conception” are without exception wrong interpretations of the Catholic Church and no cited passage from scripture refers to Mary.
3. In the entire biblical justification of the dogma of Mary’s “immaculate conception” the Church follows the twisted logic in which first a teaching based on speculation and inventions which lacks any biblical basis whatsoever is accepted and then the Church fathers and Catholic theologians attempt to find support for this teaching in the Word of God, warping its meaning and breaking all principles of biblical exegesis. Treating the inspired Word of God as a plastic material with which they can do whatever they wish in order to defend their false doctrines is a serious error of the Catholic Church.
4. According to the Catholic defenders of the dogma of immaculate conception it was necessary that Christ be born from a womb unstained by sin. Not only the scripture provides no basis for this conclusion, but it also leads to a paradox.
 1. Firstly, Mary didn’t need to be sinless for Christ to be free from the sin nature, since it is passed on through the male line.
 2. Secondly, if we assume that Mary had to be unstained by the original sin for Jesus to be born from a sinless womb, then Mary’s parents would also have to have been sinless, and so consequently also their parents and the parents of their parents, etc. Essentially all Mary’s ancestors would have to be free from the original sin for her to be free from it.
 3. The Catholic Church does not, however, attempt to prove that both the line of Mary’s father and mother were free from original sin. So if according to the teaching of the Church we accept that God, in order to ensure that Jesus is conceived and born through a womb unstained by sin (which is an unbiblical invention), had to protect Mary from the original sin, but there was no need to protect her parents, then we encounter another paradox – namely that mother of Christ, Mary, had to be sinless for Christ to be born from a “clean womb” and be sinless, but Mary’s parents didn’t have to be sinless for Mary to be sinless. This means that God could protect Mary from the original sin regardless of the sin of her parents and without the need of a birth from a “clean womb”, but “clean womb” was needed for Jesus (!).
5. In order to reconcile the dogma of Mary “immaculate conception” and her alleged sinlessness with the fact that Mary herself professes that she needed a Saviour, the Catholic Church created the teaching of Mary’s redemption “from the moment of conception”. The doctrine of

Mary's redemption "from the moment of conception" not only lacks any biblical basis, but it contradicts the most fundamental teachings of the scripture.

6. It is sin that requires payment and it is a sinner who needs redemption. Lack of sin doesn't require payment and one who is free from all sin doesn't need redemption. Hence if someone doesn't possess a sin nature and doesn't commit a personal sin throughout their life, including the period when they are a spiritually mature person capable of making free will decisions – then this person doesn't have any sin that would require being paid for and they don't need to be redeemed. If the Church teaches that Mary is sinless – free from the sin nature and any personal sin, then this teaching is irreconcilable with the need for a Saviour and Redeemer. In her case the Redeemer would have nothing to pay for. Since, however, she herself praises her "Saviour", then it means she was a sinner, as all of us. Logic does not allow for any other solution.
7. The scripture clearly teaches that we are all saved in the same way – by grace through faith. "By grace", because it is a gift of God that He sent His Son to pay for our sins and did not require this payment from us. "Through faith" – because it is by placing our faith in Christ that we accept this payment for our sin and appropriate the righteousness made available to us.
8. The doctrine of Mary's "redemption from the moment of conception" contradicts this most fundamental teaching of the scripture. God in His grace took the punishment for our sin upon Himself and paid for it in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Our role is the free will choice to accept this payment by putting our faith in Christ – or not. It is on this basis that we are saved or condemned. According to the Catholic Church, however, Mary was redeemed "from the moment of her conception" – and so before the time she was able to make a conscious, free will decision to believe in Christ as her Saviour. The dogma of "immaculate conception" states that Mary was redeemed "by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ" – thus independently of her free will.
9. According to this doctrine God hence saves and condemns arbitrarily – regardless of the choice made by a particular person. This teaching directly contradicts God's perfect righteousness according to which He performs His judgments. A righteous God cannot allow some to spend eternity with Him in perfect and presently unimaginable happiness and condemn others to the lake of fire regardless of the decision made by both groups – but "by virtue of the merits" of others.
10. The teaching of the Mary's "redemption from the moment of conception" directly contradicts the most fundamental teaching of the scripture – about the way we are saved. It contravenes the perfect righteousness of God who judges us and saves or condemns based on our free will choice to accept Christ's payment for our sin or not. Finally, this doctrine invalidates the most important issue in the entire history of creation – our free will and the choice we make – for God in Christ, or against Him.

References:

- Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., Arndt, W. F., Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Immaculate Conception and Assumption (n.d.). Retrieved from:
<https://www.catholic.com/tract/immaculate-conception-and-assumption>
- John Paul, II. (1994). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Retrieved from:
http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM
- Pius, IX. (1854). *Ineffabilis Deus*. Apostolic Constitutions. Retrieved from:
<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius09/pgineff.htm>

See also:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/immaculate-conception.html>

<https://carm.org/what-are-the-four-marian-dogmas>