

IV. Mary as sinless.

1. Teaching of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church teaches that Mary “was totally preserved from the stain of original sin” (see chapter III above) and that “she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life”.

From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. “Full of grace”, Mary is “the most excellent fruit of redemption” (Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103): from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §508

2. Teaching of the scripture.

2.1. Universal sinfulness.

As everything else, Adam and Eve were created by God as perfect (Genesis 1:31). This perfection, however, was lost the moment they sinned. Sin brought immediate spiritual death upon them – separation from God (cf. Isaiah 59:2) – and through it made their physical bodies subject to physical death (Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:56; James 1:14-15).¹

Although both Adam and Eve sinned, the sin nature is transmitted through the male line. This is because although Eve was deceived by Satan (Genesis 3:1-6; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 2 Corinthians 11:3), Adam sinned in full cognizance – he knew what he was doing and what the consequences of his action were going to be. He could have remained faithful to God and potentially lost Eve, or sinned together with her. Through his lack of faith and disobedience he chose the latter.²

The sin of Adam and Eve corrupted the human nature and this corruption is transmitted through the male line to every human being.

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—³
Romans 5:12 NASB

-
- 1 Spiritual death means separation from God. Adam and Eve did not die physically on the day they sinned, despite God telling Adam in Genesis 2:17 that “from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die”. They suffered spiritual death which brought physical death upon them and which ultimately results in eternal death – eternal separation from God in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).
 - 2 Seeing that Eve ate of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam could have trusted God and obeyed His commandment despite Eve’s sin, in faith awaiting for Him to provide a solution in this tragic situation. After all, God knew that it was not good for man to be alone and it is He who gave him the woman (Genesis 2:18-22). Adam, putting the relationship with Eve above the relationship with God, probably under the fear of loss, took the forbidden fruit from her. Ultimately it is a manifestation of unbelief that God will provide us with everything we need. An in-depth description of the fall of man can be read at: <https://ichthys.com/3A-Anthro.htm#IV.%20The%20Fall%20of%20Man>.
 - 3 We should bear in mind that the “because” at the end of this verse does not mean that death spread to all men as a result of each man’s sin – as if it was possible that it would not come upon the one who does not sin. We should understand “because” here as referring to the whole point presented in this verse, which can be rendered in the following way: “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men – and the fact that the entire humanity has been infested with Adam’s sin (consequence of which is death) can be seen in the fact that all have sinned”.

17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.
Romans 5:17 NASB

19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.
Romans 5:19 NASB

21 For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.
1 Corinthians 15:21-22 NASB

Hence the scripture clearly teaches that we are all sinners.

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
Romans 3:23 NASB

46 When they sin against You - for there is no man who does not sin -
1 Kings 8:46a NIV

3 If You, Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
Psalm 130:3 NASB

2 And do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no man living is righteous.
Psalm 143:2 NASB

9 Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart,
I am pure from my sin"?
Proverbs 20:9 NASB

20 Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who *continually* does good and who never sins.
Ecclesiastes 7:20 NASB

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.
1 John 1:8-10 NASB

2 For we all stumble in many *ways*.
James 3:2a NASB

2.2. Only Christ was sinless.

Only Christ could have gone through His life without sin, since only He was born without the sin nature.

As discussed above, the sin nature is passed down through the male line. For every member of the human race this fact is irrelevant, since we need both the father and the mother to be conceived. It is relevant in the case of Christ, however. Since He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35) without a human father, He was the only human being ever to be born without the stain of the original sin. Through this He was the only man except Adam and Eve who could have gone through His life without sin – which He also accomplished.

Christ's sinlessness is mentioned several times in the scripture and it is indirectly taught in numerous places.⁴

22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;
1 Peter 2:22 NASB

21 He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
2 Corinthians 5:21 NASB

15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet* without sin.
Hebrews 4:15 NASB

26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;
Hebrews 7:26 NASB

5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.
1 John 3:5 NASB

9 His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.
Isaiah 53:9 NASB

His sinlessness was symbolically taught in Old Testament animal sacrifices which were a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross and as such had to be immaculate – free from any blemish or defect (Leviticus 22:17-25; Numbers 19:2, etc.).

5 Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.
Exodus 12:5 NASB

1 “You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish *or* any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the Lord your God.
Deuteronomy 17:1 NASB

18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, **19** but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.
1 Peter 1:18-19 NASB

2.3. Lack of any biblical foundation for the alleged sinlessness of Mary and her need for a Saviour.

4 It is obvious that Paul excludes Jesus from the statement that “all have sinned” in Romans 3:23, since He himself mentions Christ's sinlessness in 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB):

21 He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The principle of universal sinfulness does not apply to Jesus Christ, who was a God-man born without the sin nature.

There is not a single verse in the Bible teaching that Mary is an exception from universal sinfulness of the entire human race. The scripture not only never describes Mary as sinless, but also gives no basis to do so.

Mary's sinlessness is a false teaching of the Catholic Church based on groundless conclusions drawn mainly from Luke 1:28 (see chapter II) and Genesis 3:15 (see chapter III, point 2.1.2), although they seek the foundation for this doctrine also in other parts of the scripture (see chapter III, points 2.1.3 and 2.1.4).

As it has been discussed in depth above, the fact that Mary needed a Saviour clearly shows that she was a sinner (chapter III, point 3). Lack of sin doesn't require payment and one who is free from all sin doesn't need redemption.⁵

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 their defence of the erroneous doctrines of Mary's "immaculate conception" and her sinlessness, the Church attempts to baselessly exclude Mary from Paul's statement about the universal sinfulness in Romans 3:23 ("Immaculate conception and Assumption", n.d.).

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.

Firstly, as discussed in detail in the previous chapter (point 3.1), we ought to bear in mind that children begin to sin very early in life, before they are able to put their faith in Christ, and the fact that a child still doesn't know what sin is in no way precludes its capability to sin.

Erroneous and totally unfounded is thus the reasoning that since Christ is an exception from Paul's statement, then Mary can be made one also, as the Catholic Church teaches. It de facto amounts to stating that since Christ – who existed from eternity past as God and who as the only person was born without the sin nature and who was the only to live His life in perfect obedience to God the Father – was sinless, then Mary – a person like us, born with a sin nature, of whom we know even from the limited accounts of her in the gospels that she did not understand aspects of God's plan of salvation (see chapter V, point 3, analysis of paragraphs 38 and 39) – can also be sinless (!). We are dealing here with one of many examples of the Catholic Church groundlessly ascribing to Mary the attributes and prerogatives which belong only to Christ. Mary was neither conceived "immaculately", nor was she redeemed "from the moment of her conception", nor did she live her life without committing a personal sin.

5. Summary.

1. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary "remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life" (CCC, §508).

5 It is also difficult to reconcile Mary's supposed sinlessness with her ritual impurity according to the Law of Moses, through which she had to offer a sacrifice after the days of her purification following the birth of Jesus have been completed (Slick, n.d.; Luke 1:22-24; cf. Leviticus 12:1-8).

2. The sin of Adam and Eve corrupted human nature and this corruption is transmitted through the male line to every man. The Word of God clearly teaches that all men are sinners.
3. Only Christ was sinless. Since He was conceived by the Holy Spirit without a human father, He was the only human being ever to be born without the stain of the original sin. Through this He was the only man except Adam and Eve who could have gone through His life without sin – which He also accomplished. Christ’s sinlessness is mentioned several times in the scripture and it is indirectly taught in numerous places, for example through animal sacrifices prescribed in the Mosaic Law.
4. There is not a single verse in the Bible teaching that Mary is an exception from universal sinfulness of the entire humanity. The scripture not only never describes Mary as sinless, but also gives no basis to do so.
5. Like every man except Adam, Eve and Christ, Mary was born with the sin nature. As it has been discussed in depth above (see chapter III), the dogma of her “immaculate conception” is false and devoid of any biblical basis, as is the teaching of her “redemption from the point of conception”.
6. The Word of God clearly teaches universal sinfulness and gives only one exception – Jesus Christ.
7. Like every other man with a sin nature who achieves the ability to make decisions, Mary sinned. This is clearly shown by the fact that she herself confessed the need for a Saviour (Luke 1:47). Lack of sin doesn’t require payment and one who is free from all sin doesn’t need redemption – if Mary were sinless, she wouldn’t need a Saviour.
8. Erroneous and totally unfounded is the reasoning that since Christ is an exception from Paul’s statement in Romans 3:23, then Mary can be made one also, as the Catholic Church teaches. It de facto amounts to stating that since Christ – who existed from eternity past as God and who as the only person was born without the sin nature and who was the only to live His life in perfect obedience to God the Father – was sinless, then Mary – a person like us, born with a sin nature, of whom we know even from the limited accounts of her in the gospels that she did not understand aspects of God’s plan of salvation (see chapter V, point 3, analysis of paragraphs 38 and 39) can also be sinless (!). We are dealing here with one of many examples of the Catholic Church groundlessly ascribing to Mary the attributes and prerogatives which belong only to Christ.
9. Mary was neither conceived “immaculately”, nor was she redeemed “from the moment of her conception”, nor did she live her life without committing a personal sin.

References:

- 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/ENGO015/_INDEX.HTM
 Slick, M. (n.d.). If Mary was sinless, why was she unclean and had to offer a sacrifice for sin?.
 Retrieved from: <https://carm.org/mary-unclean-offered-sacrifice-for-sin>

See also:

<http://ichthys.com/mail-In-your-Anger-do-not-Sin.htm> (question 4)