



Hahn, Scott.

*Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God*

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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I was raised Catholic but departed from the church shortly after my confirmation. God would eventually grab a hold of me at 21 years of age but as it happens he didn't intend for me to return to the Church of my childhood. Instead I've been serving in Pentecostal churches for the past dozen years. And still, there are plenty of things about Catholicism that I miss, most notably liturgical worship and that inexplicable feeling that comes from knowing that yours is an ancient tradition.

There are also things, that at this point in my life, would keep me from returning, most notably the filioque clause in the Western version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and the Marian Dogmas. I doubt I'll ever be able to accept the filioque but I'm open to the things that the Catholic Church teaches about Mary. I've never been one of those Protestants who took pleasure in denigrating the mother of our Lord Jesus just to avoid the possibility of worshipping her!

So with this in mind I began reading through Scott Hahn's *Hail, Holy Queen* in order to see if he could convince me that the Marian Dogmas had more support than I had previously thought. In his usual conversational style, which marks all of his popular writing, Hahn makes the case for Mary's Immaculate Conception (not to be confused with the virginal conception of Christ); her Divine Motherhood (i.e., her being the Theotokos – Mother of God); Perpetual Virginity; and Bodily Assumption.

But before turning to these Dogmas themselves, Hahn teaches the reader a bit about biblical typology. He presents Mary as the "New Eve" receiving grace where the first Eve rejected it;

succeeding where the first Eve failed. Mary is also the “New Ark of the Covenant” who carried the Word of God made flesh; the true Bread from heaven; and the eternal High Priest. And just as every Davidic king had a “queen mother,” Mary is the Queen Mother par excellence, receiving due reverence even in the presence of her Son who is her superior.

In all of this Hahn exhibits a keen knowledge of Scripture and is able to reveal subtle allusions amidst some glaringly obvious types and shadows, and all of this with an eye on John’s Apocalypse and what it says about the woman clothed in the sun (Rev. 12). He also takes the reader through the Catechism of the Catholic Church and what the Fathers of the Church have had to say about Mary throughout the centuries. I’ll admit that he presents an impressive case for the antiquity of many of these Dogmas.

He also helped to clear up some things that I had always taken issue with, namely the idea of Mary as the “New Eve” to Jesus’ “New Adam.” How could Jesus’ mother also be his wife (especially in light of the fact that the Church is called the Bride of Christ)? He responds with reference to Isaiah 62:4-5, which actually makes sense, at least as far as I’m concerned. It’s funny, but one of his least sophisticated arguments in the book, a recounting of a homily delivered by a priest for the feast of the Immaculate Conception, really hit home. In short, the priest asked who would preserve their mother from sin if they had the power. The answer is everyone, of course, and yet none of us have that power. But Jesus does, and he used it (158-59)! Simple yet profound.

There were times when I thought that Hahn was reaching. For example, he goes through the standard objections to Mary’s Perpetual Virginité and notes the appeal to the place in the Gospels where Jesus’ mother is said to be outside with his brothers and sisters. Hahn’s response is that the Greek word for brother (*adelphos*) was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to refer to not only brothers, but also cousins or kinsman more generally, and that in Hebrew and Aramaic, which would have been spoken by Jews in first century Palestine, there was no distinct word for cousin so the word for brother would have been used (104).

I’m left to wonder exactly how the Gospel writers could have communicated that these people were in fact Jesus’ brothers and sisters then. What could they have possibly said, other than what they did say, to indicate such? I’m also curious about the use of *adelphai* (sisters) in Mark 6:3 and the longer reading of Mark 3:32. Did the feminine form of the word have the same range of meaning, and if so, where do we see this attested? I’m also be interested to learn why *adelphai* is set beside *adelphoi* in Mark 12:31-32 and *adelphos* in Mark 6:3 when there are many instances where *adelphoi* has “brother and sisters” as the intended meaning.

I was also underwhelmed by Hahn’s arguments for the Bodily Assumption, which is not mentioned in Christian writings until the sixth century. He points to Mary being found in heaven

in body and spirit in Revelation 12, but that simply assumes what has to be proven, namely that Revelation 12 is about Mary in the first place. There is good reason to believe that it is about Israel. The appeal to there being established feast days when we do first read about the Bodily Assumption does nothing to show when they were established. Likewise, his anecdotal evidence about encountering a priest who wrote the one book on the subject just when he needed him most, does not an argument for the Assumption make.

In the end Hahn failed to convince me of the truth of all the Marian Dogmas but he did show me that there's more to them than I had previously thought. He also offers one of the best explanations for praying the rosary that I've ever read and he demonstrates how focused meditation is far from vain repetition (without denying that it could turn into such). His is an intriguing study that shows the devotion of a son who truly loves his mother and we can all take a page out of Hahn's book on that point.