

**The Novelty of the cult of Mary from Nazareth
vs. the Cult of the Great Mother
(prehistory, myths, cults of the Virgin Goddesses and Mother Goddess)**

Summary

By employing theology, history, archeology, study of religions and psychoanalysis I have tried to describe the theological originality of the cult of Mary from Nazareth against a background of the different cults of the Great Mother. I referred to many branches of science in order to provide a thorough investigation of the problem. Different ranges of meaning learned from many approaches to that question however, resulted in theological explanation.

If we compare the prehistoric cult of womanhood in the religions of the great Mother with Marian veneration it is clearly visible that St Mary was never worshipped as a Christian personification of fertility or regarded as a Christian Earth Mother, or Mother that planted seeds. She was never connected with any cyclic vegetation, fecundity or the rhythm of birth and death cult. As the obedient servant, Mary from Nazareth found Her liturgical cult, which reminds believers of God's work of salvation. The Virgin Mary was never venerated as a dual-sexed deity or connected with any vegetation cult. Mary from Nazareth is adored as an historic person, the earthly Mother of the Incarnated Word.

From a sociological point of view, matriarchy isn't an essential feature of Christianity. For that reason woman isn't the embodiment of the deity. Christians venerate the Virgin Mary as the earthly Mother of the Incarnated Word i.e. Mother of the Second Person of the Trinity. She was an obedient servant of the Lord and was never venerated as a deity. In Christianity, St. Mary didn't present the primary supernatural, physical or magical power as it was in the religions of Bronze Age. The Collyridians episode which worshipped Mary, Mother of Jesus as goddess was an isolated sectarian movement existing on the outskirts of Christianity in the 4th century. Apart from the Collyridians heresy, the drift to female priesthood never existed in Christianity as it did in the religions of Great Mother (Vestal Virgins) or in the cults of Fertility Goddesses (priestess of Ishtar or Aphrodite).

It is impossible to find any links or parallels between ancient mythological goddesses and the Marian cult. St Mary unlike in the womanhood cult of the Bronze Age was a divine protector of love or fertility. If the cult of St Mary is clearly connected with motherhood it has in no way a sexual aspect. Her veneration points at the timeless female features of the virgin and mother common to all mankind. For Christians, the pagan cults of goddesses were regarded as cults of demonic idolatry. They were definitely condemned by the Old Testament judges and prophets and rejected entirely by Church Fathers. Theodosius the Great officially banned all forms of pagan cults (edict of 392). Certainly some external pagan rituals existed in the gestures and practices of inhabitants of the Roman Empire, which were only partially converted Christians, following numerous conversions to Christianity after 313. Christian veneration of Mary from Nazareth as the Virgin Mary and Mother of God is an original, autonomous cult. The veneration of St. Mary is subordinated to the superlative cult of God. Mary from Nazareth is not a God but a human being who fulfills a substantial role in the historical acts of Salvation prepared by God. She was never connected with any cosmic force. She has never performed any ritual magical practices to get in touch with a deity. By her free, permanent choice of God she bore utter moral responsibility. As a creation of God and the first made in Jesus Christ image, she first attained salvation. The Message of the Church concerning Maria from Nazareth didn't use an acontextual, mythical language because it isn't an universal religious myth but is the Church's catechesis on the historical events. Mary from Nazareth is an historical person. With the mythological virgin-mother goddesses, St. Mary shares the common symbol of womanhood but only on the linguistic and anthropological layer of significance. The Marian cult isn't a continuation of any previous pagan cult of goddesses. It is impossible because of the Christian doctrine – it would be idolatry. There is no historical evidence supporting such a supposition. Iconography doesn't afford proofs also. The Marian cult and the ancient cults of the goddesses are doctrinally divergent and theologically incoherent. There is no historical continuity or coherence between them.