Mary and the Protestants

Kilian McDonnell OSB

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, kmcdonnell@csbsju.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/saint_johns_abbey_pubs

Part of the Christianity Commons

Recommended Citation


Reprinted with permission.
Mary and the Protestants

BY KILIAN MCDONNELL, O.S.B.

One of the areas which divide Protestants and Catholics is devotion to Mary, but there are signs that a change for the better is taking place. 

A Lutheran theologian, Joseph Stittler, has suggested that Protestants should not withhold all veneration of Mary because they consider Catholic veneration of Mary as imbalanced: "The way to correct imbalance is to teach balance, not to damn imbalance with silence. This silence cannot appeal to the Bible. For there we hear of her. There we hear her speak; and what she says is rich and many-dimensional. . . . It is not strange but right and proper that her meaning should be declared and her praise sung from a Protestant pulpit. If we find it in our competence to hail the witness to the faith of as in her, then you can help me as to Mary. That is hardly distinguishable from magic. All you have to do is to say "Mary, Mary," and, without the reformation of life, you can assure your entry into the kingdom of heaven. Religious sensibilities of Protestants are rightly offended by this religious fluff, having sweetness but no substance.

We have no intention of diluting Marian doctrine so as not to give offense to our Protestant friends. To do so would be a disservice to both Protestants and ourselves. But we do not want to place before the Protestants the sweets of a superficial religiosity, nor the derivative and secondary aspects of the mystery of Mary. Rather, we want to lead them to the center of the mystery, rooted deep in Scripture and tradition, which shows the mother of God turned toward men in her desire to lead us to her Son and turned toward the Father in praise and adoration. We also want to show them that our devotion to Mary can be tender without descending to shallow emotionalism. We want to show them that, though she is Queen of Heaven, she is first and foremost "the handmaid of the Lord." And we want to show them the riches of their own-Protestant-tradition: "Mary prays for the Church."