



# New Testament Expositor

A Periodical for Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky



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## Heresy in the Church at Chillicothe

**Theotokos**, (Greek: “God-Bearer”), in Eastern Orthodoxy, the designation of the Virgin Mary as mother of God. The term has had great historical importance because the Nestorians, who stressed the independence of the divine and human natures in Christ, opposed its use, on the ground that it compromised the human nature of Christ, and held that the more accurate and proper term for Mary was Christotokos (“Christ-Bearer”). The Council of Ephesus (431), basing its arguments on the unity of the person of Christ, anathematized all who denied that Christ was truly divine, and asserted that Mary was truly the mother of God. The Council of Chalcedon (451) used the term in formulating the definition of the hypostatic union (of Christ’s human and divine natures). *See also* two natures of Christ. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Theotokos>)

A word/title used since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. A title for the virgin Mary, recognized at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ecumenical Council in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. (<https://orthodoxwiki.org/Theotokos>)

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Have you ever heard of the *theotokos*? I suspect you haven’t. The etymology of the word is a compound of two Greek words “theos” (God) and “tokos” (bearer). Wikipedia says a close paraphrase of this compound word is “she whose offspring is God,” while from [orthodoxwiki.org](https://orthodoxwiki.org), it is more literally correct to render it “birth-giver to God.”

Early on in church history, but well after the time of the revelation and canonicity of the New Testament, that word generated much debate amongst religious theologians; the debate concerned the nature of Jesus, how He was both man and God in all respects. Perhaps our understanding of a topic like this is faulty; if so, you’ll not be the only one in that category. John 1:1-18 makes it clear to us that God became flesh, and no matter my lack of understanding, I understand that.

An important point to the thrust of this article is that all that anyone can say about a complex (or simple) subject is that which is revealed in the pages of Holy Writ (the New Testament).

### **Problem**

This definition or the meaning assigned to this Greek word, by itself, poses a problem. Just think about it and you’ll see it. If Mary is “birth-giver” to God, then Mary existed before God. Those who accept the teachings and ideas associated with *theotokos* clearly refuse this ramification of Mary *before* God, but try as they might to get out from underneath this entanglement, it stares at them in the face.

While they try to get out from under this entanglement (which they can’t), the efforts they expend in doing this have muddied up the waters that virtually guarantees clari-

ty of understanding will not result.

### **No Existence**

Two prominent churches that teach *theotokos* are the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. “It is used throughout the Eastern Church’s Liturgy, both Orthodox and Catholic. It lies at the heart of the Latin Rite’s deep Marian piety and devotion” (<https://www.catholic.org/mary/theo.php>).

This doctrine has no existence in the New Testament but has its origin much later than the era of the sacred Scriptures. As best as can be determined, this doctrine has its origin in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, but became anchored into “church doctrine” in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, well after the time Peter wrote: *Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue* (2 Peter 1:2-3, ASV).

Pay attention to what you just read. At the time in which Peter wrote, he expressly declares we have **all things** that pertain unto life and godliness. Since we have all things that pertain unto life and godliness, meaning there is not one thing that God wants us to know that we don’t have. It has been revealed! Notice the words of Jude 3, *Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was **once for all delivered** unto the saints* (emphasis added, RT).

The thrust of these two verses are abundantly clear; there is nothing coming from God by way of revelation that will be added to what we have in the New Testament. That includes what is commonly called “sacred traditions.” Sacred traditions are the construct of man and nothing more.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the words of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Since the doctrine/teaching of *theotokos* is not in the New Testament, it is a doctrine that is in addition to the New Testament, and not of God.

### **Firestorm**

Not far from here, a sister in the Lord (wife of a preacher) penned some words on this topic *theotokos* on her blog. It created a firestorm in the local congregation; a firestorm so great that one elder resigned and he and his wife left the fellowship of that congregation. Clearly, this is not ideal because brethren need to hold together in such a fractured religious world. Not ideal, but it appears to be necessary because when such a teaching like this takes root in the local congregation, a teaching not from God, the seeds of Satan that are sown rapidly produce a crop.

A brother in the midst of this asked me what I thought  
*Cont. on pg. 7*

## THE ROSETTA STONE WAS THE KEY

(All pictures by David R. Kenney and should be so designated unless otherwise stipulated)

In my *NKJV Open Study Bible* is a section entitled “The Greatest Archaeological Discoveries and Their Effects on the Bible.” I recall hearing of the Rosetta Stone in my World History class at Centralia High School. I knew it was a major discovery in that it provided a key to discerning a language that had become lost, but I had forgotten its connection to the Bible. In the subsection “Foundational Discoveries of the Nineteenth Century,” the first entry was the Rosetta Stone’s “Key to Egypt’s Splendid Past.”

I was able to examine a replica of the Rosetta Stone in the Egyptian Museum Cairo (EMC). The actual Rosetta Stone is in the British Museum and can be viewed online at their website ([britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)). The British Museum heralds the Rosetta Stone as one of the most famous objects among their holdings.

The name “Rosetta” pertains to the location where it was found (on the west side of the Nile River at a place called *Rashid*). It was accidentally discovered during Napoleon’s expedition in the year 1799. Fortunately, the leader of the detail, Pierre-François Bouchard (1771–1822), realized the stone’s importance. The Rosetta Stone is a broken black piece of granite in the form of a stela which was inscribed with three different languages. The writing was a decree recognizing the new king of Egypt, Ptolemy V (r. 204–181 BCE).

The decree is repeated in three different languages: Koine Greek (54 lines), Demotic (32 lines), and Hieroglyphics (14 lines). Prior to the discovery, the ability to read hieroglyphics had been lost for centuries. Koine Greek had spread across the known world due to the conquests of Alexander the Great who died in 323 BCE. His kingdom was ultimately divided among four leaders (the Diadochi). These leaders fought several wars amongst themselves until the Battle of Ipsus (301 BCE) forced settlement. The Ptolemies had control of the portion that included Egypt and would retain control until the arrival of the Roman Empire. Incidentally, Ptolemy’s name is spelled in the form of a cartouche among the hieroglyphic section. Using these accounts in parallel, unlocking the hieroglyphic language was feasible, but the process took several years.

Our country has sadly moved away from a more multilingual nation. It was not all that uncommon for people to know multiple languages, but sadly that has diminished. When I think of the three lines of the Rosetta Stone and its key to knowledge of an ancient language, I am reminded of another three-line document with even greater knowledge and far more impact on the world. I am reminded of the three-line on placard that read: “And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Luke 23:38). Vehemently, the religious leaders complained to Pilate about even this wording, requesting it read that he *claimed* to be such (John 19:21), but Pilate steadfastly refused their request. Thankfully, we have been blessed that this history, Christ’s history, though written in Koine Greek which many of us have not learned, has been

readily translated and spread throughout the world including our own native tongue.

The Rosetta Stone was given to England as part of the Treaty of Alexandria (1801) by France. It has been a part of the British Museum’s holdings ever since it was placed there by King George III. For a considerable period, there has been a push to return artifacts to their country of origin. Among the artifacts being discussed includes the Rosetta Stone. The discussion is one of good will rather than barter. Some look at these artifacts from other countries as equivalent to “spoils of war” and their return in terms of “de-colonizing” museums. There has been some success in this effort, so the repatriation of artifacts is not uncommon. Whether or not the Rosetta Stone will be repatriated is yet to be seen. The British Museum Act prohibits such a return; however, such acts can be revised (the current British Museum Act of 1963 replaced a prior version of 1902). Such a precedent could have far-reaching consequences to our modern concept of the “museum.” This is a reminder that man’s laws can be changed by men, but God’s laws may never be changed by man!

One may go to London to see the Rosetta Stone with his own eyes today, but someday one may have to go to a location in Egypt (perhaps the Grand Egyptian Museum of Cairo GEMC which will replace the EMC). But thankfully, no one owns the sacred writings of Scripture. All in this country are free to read it with more copies available than at any other time in history. But will we?

### SOURCES:

*The inquiry - is it time for Britain to return the Rosetta Stone?* - BBC sounds (2022) BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct39tp> (Accessed: 19 August 2024).

*Everything you ever wanted to know about the rosetta stone* | British Museum (2017). Available at: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/everything-you-ever-wanted-know-about-rosetta-stone> (Accessed: 19 August 2024).



Our guide, Romani, discussing the details the Rosetta Stone with Dr. Rick Brumback, Director of the FHU School of Theology. This replica of the Rosetta Stone is in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (EMC). Photograph by David R. Kenney, May 27, 2024.



The 2024 Egypt Tour Group in front of the Egyptian Museum of Cairo (EMC). Photograph by Dr. Jonathan Moore, May 27, 2024.

(David Kenney is the Minister at the Newcomerstown Church of Christ and an instructor at WVSOP)

## **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT JUDGING?**

Not so very long ago, if you would ask a random stranger on the street if they knew a Bible verse, most would be able to say John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” It was a verse that most people knew even if they had never been to church. Fast forward to present day America. Now if you ask someone if they know a Bible verse, a common response will be “Judge not lest you be judged” (Matthew 7:1). When you try to correct someone of sin, a common response is, “Don’t judge me. Doesn’t the Bible say not to judge?” Let us now examine what the Bible teaches about judging.

### **JUDGING ACCORDING TO APPEARANCE:**

In James 2:1-4, the Bible reads, “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool,’ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”

James is condemning judging based on appearance in this text. Judging based on appearance does two things. 1) Judging shows partiality. 2) It is described as being a judge with evil thoughts. This type of judging is wrong.

The first part of John 7:24 says, “Do not judge according to appearance.” We will talk about the second half of this verse later in this article. John is saying not to judge based on how someone looks. It is easy to judge based on looks. Have you ever looked at someone that was covered in tattoos and piercings and thought to yourself, “I bet they’re up to no good?” Do you ever look at someone dressed in a suit and think to yourself, “That man is rich. He can do anything he wants to with all of the money he has?” It is easy to look around and automatically start judging them based on how they look. This is the type of judging that is condemned throughout Scripture.

### **JUDGING HYPOCRITICALLY**

Let’s now look at Matthew 7:1 in its context. Matthew 7:1-5 says, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’, and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

The type of judging condemned here is hypocritical judging. We must not judge someone when we are guilty of the same thing. We must make sure we are right with God, before we try to help someone else make sure they are right with God. The Bible condemns hypocritical judging.

### **JUDGING RIGHTEOUSLY**

Up to now, we have looked at the type of judging that the Bible condemns. Now let us look at the type of judging that the Bible commands. John 7:24 says, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with a righteous judgment.” Christians are to judge with a righteous judgment.

All judgments must be in line with the word of God. If it doesn’t go against the clear teaching of the Bible, we must not pass judgment. We must speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.

1 John 4:1 says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” If we are going to do what this verse says, a judgment must be made. If we are going to judge what someone teaches to be true or not, we must hold their teaching up to the word of God and make sure it aligns with Bible teaching. If it does not align with Bible teaching, it is our responsibility to first make that known to that person. Show them what the Bible teaches about the subject. If they still insist on teaching the false doctrine after that, we must mark them as false teachers. Romans 16:17-18 says, “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”

We must make judgments whether something is sinful or not. If the Bible teaches that something is sinful, we must stay away from it. Not only that, but we must teach others to stay away from it, and show those already engaged in it that the Bible teaches that it is sinful.

When you try to correct someone of sin, many may accuse you of judging and hating. While it is judging, it is the type of judging that the Bible commands, not the type of judging that the Bible condemns. Also, it is not hate to show someone what God’s word says about this matter or that matter. It is the most loving thing one can do for another. It shows love for one’s eternal soul.

So then, the Bible condemns judging based on appearance and hypocritical judging. But the Bible commands judging with a righteous judgment. Let us all strive to be diligent students of God’s word and teach people the truth about judging.

(Robert Leedy— Robert is the Minister at the Henderson Church of Christ in Henderson West Virginia )

about it all. He printed her blog post and gave me a copy, asking my opinion. My first impression was the Roman Catholic Church had infiltrated the mind of a sister in the Lord. I had heard rumblings before this there was sympathy with the Greek (Eastern) Orthodox Church, and it was but a few moments later that I learned this is a doctrine of that Church also.

The blog post of this sister expressed a number of things not in accordance with the New Testament, such as speaking to the dead (Mary), how the Father was not needed as she needed comfort in the death of her son (“I didn’t need the Father in that moment. I needed the Mother. I needed His mother.”), and then closes with a prayer to Mary: “And so to her I say, ‘I have hastened unto you; O Mother of the Word, and ever-Virgin, From all distresses and dangers deliver me. Most Holy Theotokos save us.’”

The sentiments in the above paragraph have no sanction in the New Testament. Since all that we can know about divine things are in the Bible, let us be reminded of Paul’s words: *But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema* (Gal. 1:8-9).

The word “heresy” is a strong word. Merriam-Webster defines the word “adherence to a religious opinion contrary to church dogma.” In this case, it is not “church dogma,” but the teachings of the New Testament. If one teaches contrary to that which Paul, Peter, John, Matthew, et al., taught, it is heresy. The teaching of *theotokos* is one such teaching.

### Conclusion

Jesus is our mediator, our intercessor. A mediator is defined as one who mediates between two parties in order to reconcile them. We use the word in such a way to bridge a gap between two *disputing* parties. In the New Testament, in the context of Jesus, the word is not used in precisely the same way. The role of mediator is Jesus reconciling the created with the Creator, but only if the created submits to the holy will of God. Any *dispute* on our end toward Him who is Creator results in a lack of reconciliation. The word is only used in the New Testament (ASV), and that 7 times. In 1 Timothy 2:5, the Scripture declares Jesus as our mediator. This is repeated in Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; and 12:24. Mary is never assigned this role, this function. Thus, any petition to her is **not** a New Testament teaching, but a matter of going beyond what God has revealed. *Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son* (2 John 9).

If this was a private belief, that would be bad and serious enough to condemn the one who believes it. Once that opinion gets out and is taught (or expressed) in a public manner, especially by the wife of a preacher, as on a blog (or some other public medium), then it is expressing an opinion that seeks to influence others of the reasonableness of the idea. It is one’s effort to teach, but it violates the express teachings of the New Testament. *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them* (Rom. 16:17).

(Ron Thomas is the Minister at the Rio Grande Church of Christ)

## AREA EVENTS UPCOMING

**January 24-25** Ohio Winter Lectureship, Navigating Today’s Crossroads: Culture, Faith, and Society in Harmony, Church of Christ 1130 Fishinger Road Columbus OH 43221, 614-451-4886

**February 21-23** Challenge Youth Conference Pigeon Forge, TN, Register online, cyconline.com

**March 16-20** Freed Hardeman Lectures, Freed Hardeman University, 158 East Main Street Henderson, TN 38340, 1-800-FHU-FHU1

**March 30-April 3** Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, 3950 Forest Hill Irene Rd, Memphis, TN, 901-751-2242

**April 6-10** Gospel Meeting, Allen Webster, Rio Grande Church of Christ 568 OH-325, Centerville, OH 45685, 740-245-9130

**April 27-30** Gospel Meeting Scott Judge, Greenville Church of Christ 4599 Children’s Home– Bradford Rd. Greenville, OH 45331, 937-548-4467

## WORKS WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION

West Virginia School of Preaching  
(www.wvsop.com)

Warren Christian Apologetic Center  
(www.warrenapologetics.org)

Southeast Institute for Biblical Studies  
(www.makingpreachers.com)

Added to the Church  
(addedtothechurch.com)

**Each month there is an elders / preachers meeting at the Blackburn Hills Rd. church building (Athens, Ohio), where David Brothers preaches. It’s designed for elders and preachers, but others are welcome to attend. Please email Scott or Ron for more info.**