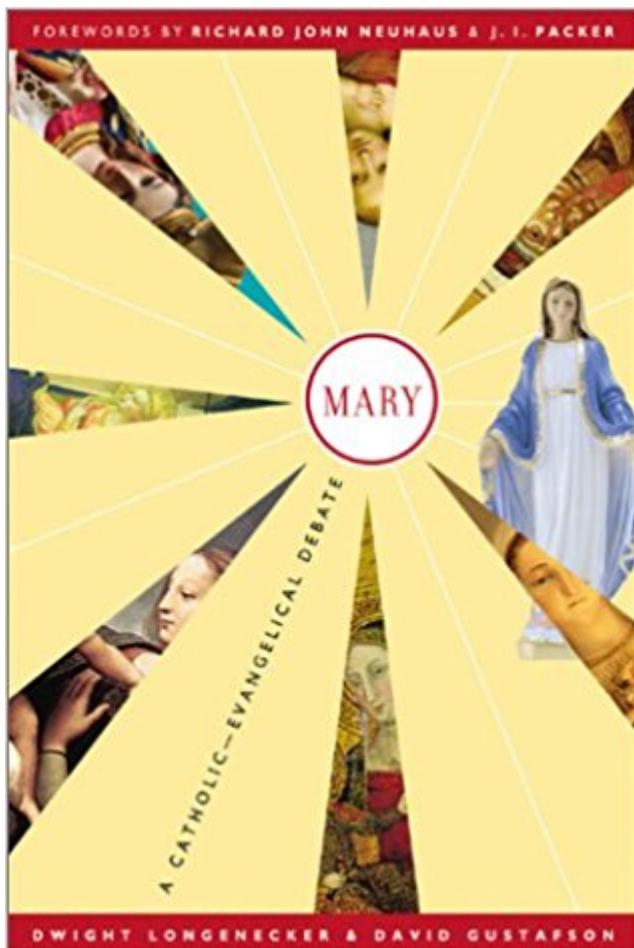


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# Mary: A Catholic-Evangelical Debate



## **Synopsis**

What happens when an Evangelical and a Catholic get into a discussion about Mary? Believe it or not-something wonderful. We invite you to eavesdrop on Dwight Longenecker and David Gustafson in *Mary: A Catholic-Evangelical Debate*. This engaging exchange between two laymen tackles the most controversial doctrines and practices surrounding Mary. The conversation, while expertly researched and rigorously argued, is witty and accessible. It is a fine model of the honesty and humble reflection required for successful communication between evangelicals and non-evangelical believers. Ultimately, we might find that to better understand Mary is to better understand our incarnate Lord. *Mary* features questions at the end of each chapter for study, discussion and reflection, as well as a useful bibliography for further reading on the topic. Forewords by J. I. Packer and Richard John Neuhaus are included.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"This book is evidence of a new Marian apparition--her appearance in recent Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogues. When it comes to Mary, there is much that we agree on, and much about which we still remain divided. This winsome but tough-minded discussion helps us to sort through those distinctions and thus contributes to the kind of healthy ecumenism we need more of."--Timothy George, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University "There is simply no other book in print that explores this most immovable impasse between Protestants and Catholics in a way that both uncompromising Evangelicals like J. I. Packer and uncompromising Catholics like Richard John

Neuhaus can wholly applaud. Clear, honest, mutually respectful, uncompromising, and illuminating!"--Peter Kreeft, Boston College "Eavesdropping on this conversation is a real treat and, of course, more than that--a serious exchange in which crucial theological questions and deep personal piety become tightly intertwined. As the authors themselves evince, a lot more is at stake than personal preferences and devotional sensibilities. Without either diminishing the differences or resorting to caricature, the conversation in both tone and substance is a salutary model."--Michael Horton, president of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals "Every time I have heard Protestants and Catholics talk about Mary, they have started fighting, complete with name-calling and door-slapping. The Catholic Longenecker and the Protestant Gustafson both assert their positions with every argument and fact they can find, but they do not fight even when they radically disagree. The result is a truly illuminating book and a serious theological study that is (oh rare event) quite fun to read."--David Mills, Touchstone "This debate is lively and full of challenge; it is also a dialogue, an interaction between friends, not a polemic, and it could serve as a model for ecumenical work. With a wealth of solid theological information, it throws much light on Mary's role in God's plan and in the life of Christians. Readers will be stimulated by its honesty and fraternal spirit and, one hopes, come to know Mary better. Both Catholics and Evangelicals will learn much from this book."--Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago

DWIGHT LONGENECKER is the author of *More Christianity*, *St. Benedict & St. Therese*, and *Challenging Catholics*. He is a freelance writer and broadcaster in Chippenham, England, where he lives with his wife and children. DAVID GUSTAFSON is an assistant chief in the United States Department of Justice, Tax Division. He and his family live in Washington, D.C.

Events such as the recent Lutheran - Catholic declaration on justification are testaments to the growing ecumenicalism within the Christianity community. Despite progress in this area differences remain on several issues, such as the relationship between scripture, tradition and church. While not a core theological issue, arguably, the single largest stumbling block between rank and file believers is the role of the Virgin Mary; Catholics feeling that Protestant undervalue her role and Protestants contending that much Marian dogma is unfounded. Though the role of the Virgin Mary is an interesting question, prior to coming across this book, I had been unable to find a resource that engaged the issue in what I considered to be a balanced, critical and comprehensive manner; much of the Protestant material in this area being either superficial or overly polemical (e.g. Rhodes, White, McCarthy etc.), whereas Catholic material was either extremely terse (e.g. Catholic

Encyclopedia) or devotional. While this book has too much strength three aspects that I found particularly helpful were its respectful tone, its explanation of Catholic terminology and the discussion of recent Marian dogmas within the Catholic Church. First, with respect to tone, discussion of the Virgin Mary can be a sensitive issue and if one is not careful such discussions can rapidly escalate into shrill emotionally charged exchanges. Hence, I was impressed by the authors' tone. While arguing forcefully and disagreeing in several areas they maintained a civil and respectful dialogue, engaging with each other rather than just talking past each other in an attempt to score debating points. Second, with respect to terminology, often misunderstanding or assumptions regarding language contribute to disagreement. Such terminological misunderstanding is especially acute in theological discourse, in the present case Catholic terminology surrounding Mary sounds foreign, and excessive, to many modern Protestant readers. While not removing all disagreement in this area Longenecker's explication of terms like mediatrix and co-redeemer are helpful in reducing some extreme interpretations and misunderstandings. Finally, the dialogue highlighted the connections or potential connections between The Catholic Church's understanding of alleged Marian apparitions and recent Marian dogmas. It had always struck me as odd why now, after all these centuries the Catholic Church decided to formalize the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. After reading this discussion it strikes me that there is significant connection between these dogmas and beliefs concerning Marian apparitions. It is a subject I would be interested in pursuing further. Overall this is an excellent book that I highly recommend for anyone interested in the subject of the Virgin Mary. I am hopeful that similar books on issues such as papal infallibility are either available or forthcoming..

This book gives you both sides of the debate on the extent of honor due to Mary in the Christian Church. Longenecker and his debater went to college together but met again years later, after Longenecker had become a Catholic. Discussions progressed and eventually gravitated to this discussion on Mary. Longenecker presents and then defends the actual teaching of the Church on honoring Mary (as opposed to the stereotype other Christians think the Church teaches). The opponent asks the hard questions and conducts a well thought out debate. Whichever side of the debate you are on, this book would be an asset to your library.

This book is excellent and honest. There is no relativism here. This is a serious conversation/debate between committed christians, who are honestly trying to discern Christ's will for their lives and the church. Authors Dwight Longnecker and David Gustafson go head to head on Mary on these pages.

Longnecker, a convert to Catholicism, defends Catholic doctrine articulately in the face of a very competent challenge from Gustafson. This book, which comes out of ECT (Evangelicals and Catholics Together) is a clear example of the search for truth via serious dialog and debate. While I felt Longnecker was a little too gentle in places, and gave some unnecessary ground, in general I thought it was a "gloves off" but deeply civil discussion between two christians. I must admit that this book surprised me. As an orthodox Catholic I find the thought of the Catholic church being "together" with evangelicals problematic. We are dealing with a group of people who count bigots like Dave Hunt and Tim LaHaye as part of their membership. It can be argued that they butcher the gospel by dividing it up and placing an unhealthy and ahistorical emphasis on the book of revelation, placing it ahead of the gospels and the ministry of Jesus Christ. We are talking about people who vehemently opposed having a Catholic priest chaplain of the House of Representatives. Catholics need to always remember that Norman Vincent Peale told evangelicals that they could not vote for JFK because he was Catholic. They are now doing the same thing to a mormon presidential candidate I won't mention by name. It is clear therefore that these people's theology makes learning from their past mistakes difficult. Evangelicals deny the sacraments Christ himself founded. They rip people away from historic christianity without even a pause or a semblance of humility in the name of evangelization, even though they have no claim to apostolic authority. The list of abuses goes on and on. But I note that evangelicals who are as conservatively protestant as I am Catholic list the same set of concerns about Evangelicals and Catholics Together, albeit filtered through the lens of their own ideology. When I see this, I remind myself of the call to unity in the gospels. It is a struggle, but I remind myself that many evangelicals are honest and sincere Christians who believe what it is that they say: Hunt, Chick, and others notwithstanding. While the Catholic church must continue to proclaim the truth, we must not forget the emphasis that Jesus places on love for our brethren. A good challenging book. Highly recommended.

I went to the authors' alma mater, and like them, took a different path. BJU was anti-Catholic, but these two grads--an Episcopal Federal Judge and Catholic Priest (living near the campus)--are allies, not enemies. The Reformation is long past, and we Protestants have largely discovered that what unites us in Christ is greater than that which divides us (minor doctrines). That being said, there is considerable difference of opinion about Mary, and I confess I've never read a book devoted (pun intended) to her. The title says "debate" but it is more of a cordial dialogue between two good friends. I found myself thinking that, even though I don't agree with the Catholic position for the most part, their claims are not egregious, and in many cases, once clarified, they don't sound

as bad as I'd thought. This is a substantive, extremely well written book that will make you think. I found a copy at a seminary library and had to have my own copy. This book needs to stay in print! Anyone interested in studying Catholic/Protestant differences will benefit from this outstanding discussion.

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