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Maria nova Eva: Its Doctrinal Foundation and its Reflection in Iconography

Maria nova Eva: jej doktrynalne podstawy i jej odbicie w ikonografii

Abstract. This article aims to shed light on some textual and iconographic manifestations of the radical opposition between Eve and the Virgin Mary that Christian doctrinal tradition has emphasized since the early centuries of our era. To that end, we will first present, in two sections, its textual expressions: in the first, we will examine some testimonies in which some Fathers and theologians of the Eastern and Western Churches expressed this antithesis; in the second, we will present many fragments of medieval Latin liturgical hymns that poetically illustrate this contrast. In the third section, we will analyze seven paintings and sculptures that symbolically represent this Eve/Mary antithesis. In the conclusions, we will synthesize the essential doctrinal meanings that the medieval Fathers, theologians, and hymnographers revealed through their various argumentative and rhetorical expressions.

Abstrakt. Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu rzucenie światła na niektóre tekstowe i ikonograficzne przejawy radykalnej opozycji, którą chrześcijańska tradycja doktrynalna podkreślała od wczesnych wieków naszej ery, pomiędzy Ewą a Maryją Dziewicą. W tym celu najpierw przedstawimy, w dwóch częściach, ich teksty: w pierwszej przeanalizujemy niektóre świadectwa, w których różni Ojcowie i teologowie Kościołów Wschodniego i Zachodniego wyrażali tę antytezę; w drugiej przedstawimy liczne fragmenty średniowiecznych łacińskich hymnów liturgicznych, które poetycko ilustrują ten kontrast. W trzeciej części przeanalizujemy siedem obrazów i rzeźb, które symbolicznie przedstawiają tę antytezę Ewy i Maryi. W zakończeniu zsyntetyzujemy istotne znaczenia doktrynalne, które średniowieczni Ojcowie, teologowie i hymnografowie ujawniali poprzez swoje różnorodne wypowiedzi argumentacyjne i retoryczne.

Keywords: divine motherhood, redemption, mariology, patristics, liturgical hymn, Marian iconography, metaphor.

Słowa kluczowe: macierzyństwo Boże, odkupienie, mariologia, patrystyka, hymn liturgiczny, ikonografia maryjna, metafora.

Introduction

From the first centuries of the Christian era, not a few Church Fathers and theologians concordantly stressed the crucial contrast or antithesis between Eve and the Virgin Mary. These teachers of Christian doctrine based this antithesis on the two opposite attitudes of both protagonists: Eve disobeyed Yahweh by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil, thus transmitting original sin, death and damnation to humanity; on the contrary, the Virgin Mary obeyed the plan of God the Father by accepting to conceive and give birth to God the Son made man, thus contributing with Him to mankind's redemption and salvation.

In this article¹ –which complements another study we did five years ago (Salvador-González 2021: 57–91)– we will expose and analyze some testimonies brought on this subject by the Eastern and Western Church Fathers and theologians, as well as many excerpts of medieval liturgical hymns that poetically developed such antithesis. To better appraise the literary, conceptual, and theological contributions of these hymns in this regard, we will display in parallel columns the original Latin text and its English translation of the extracts through which the hymnographers develop the topic under study.

¹ This article forms an integral part of the training activities and the doctoral thesis that I will develop in the Doctoral Program in Humanities, Communication and Documentation: Humanities at the Carlos III University of Madrid.

1. The antithesis Eve/Mary in light of Church Fathers and medieval theologians

2.1. In the context of the Greek-Eastern Patristics

Several Fathers and theologians of the Eastern Christian Churches reflected on the antithetical parallel between the First Mother and the Mother of the Savior.

Around the middle of the 3rd century, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus (c. 213–c. 270) affirmed in his first homily for the Annunciation that God chose the Virgin Mary alone from among all generations through his grace, because she was truly prudent and wise in all things, and no one like her was ever found among all humankind.² The author expands on this opinion, adding that the Virgin Eve, by negligently accepting the word of the evil serpent in paradise, was corrupted by the senses of her mind, and through her the deceitful demon poisoned and introduced pain and death into the whole world; conversely, Eve's fall was repaired only in the Virgin Mary.³

A little over a century later, St. Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315–386) asserts in a writing about Christ incarnate that, as through the virgin Eve we suffered death, it was fitting that through another virgin, or rather, another Virgin, life should be restored to us, so that as the serpent deceived the former, so too Gabriel might bring the good news to the latter.⁴

More than three hundred years later, the celebrated hymnographer Saint Andrew of Crete or of Jerusalem, Bishop of Gortyna in Crete (c. 650–c. 712/26), declares in an important canon that today the ends of the earth rejoice because of the Virgin Mary for two reasons: because she gave birth to God the Son outside of marriage, and also because she destroyed the curse that the first mother Eve introduced into humankind, causing women to have to give birth in shame and pain.⁵ In another canon for the birth of Mary, the author maintains that, with

² Gregorius Thaumaturgus, *Homilia I in Annuntiatione Virg. Mariae*. PG 10, 1147. J.-P. Migne places this homily among the dubious writings (*Dubia*) of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus.

³ Gregorius Thaumaturgus, *Homilia I in Annuntiatione Virg. Mariae*. PG 10, 1147. J.-P. Migne places this homily among the dubious writings (*Dubia*) of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus.

⁴ Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses XII. De Christo incarnato*, XV. PG 33, 741) places this homily among the dubious writings (*Dubia*) of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus.

⁵ Andreas Cretensis, *Magnus Canon*. PG 97, 1330.

her birth, Eve's condemnation was lifted, and Adam was freed from his former horrors. Saint Andrew of Crete concludes by noting that the world proclaims the birth of the Immaculate Virgin, because in her we are all redeemed from the destruction caused by our first parents.⁶

A century and a half later, the renowned Greek-Eastern liturgical poet Saint Joseph the Hymnographer (816–886) states in a passage of his celebrated *Mariale* that, when the most pure Virgin Mary gave birth without pain to Christ, who healed the sufferings and sorrows of all, Eve was freed from suffering. The author adds that the most chaste Virgin remained unconsumed, enduring the fire of divinity.⁷ In another passage of that same Marian anthology, the lyricist contrasts Eve and Mary, saying that Eve plucked the fruit of the tree of death, while the most chaste Mary made the tree of life bear fruit, whose fragrance gave life to all who were dead.⁸ Finally, in another fragment of this *Mariale*, Joseph the Hymnographer suggestively indicates that the poison that the first mother Eve drank when she listened with her ears to the serpent, Gabriel threw it away, when he acclaimed Mary *Ave* (Hail), because only she gave birth to the eliminator of the serpent's malice, assumed beyond all thought and word.⁹

1.2. In the context of the Latin Church's Patristics and medieval theology

The masters of Christian doctrine in the Latin West also brought numerous testimonies on this matter.

In the second half of the 4th century, the influential thinker Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (c. 339/40–397), in a significant sermon on the first and second Adam, underscores the radical contrast between the pernicious Eve and the beneficent Mary, stating:

2. Therefore, evil came to us through a woman, but also good through a woman; for through Eve we fell, through Mary we stand; through Eve we were prostrate, through Mary we were raised; through Eve we were given into slavery, through Mary we were freed. Eve took away our duration, Mary restored our perpetuity;

⁶ Andreas Cretensis, *Canon in B. Mariae Nativitatem*. PG 97, 1322.

⁷ Josephus Hymnographus, *Mariale*. PG 105, 1174.

⁸ Josephus Hymnographus, *Mariale*. PG 105, 1150.

⁹ Josephus Hymnographus, *Mariale*. PG 105, 1142.

Eve caused us to be condemned by the fruit of the tree, Mary absolved us by the gift of the tree; for Christ also hung on the tree [of the cross], like a fruit.¹⁰

A few lines later, the Milanese prelate goes on to express his wonder at the mystery of Mary's sacraments, at the fact that the immortal God creates the mortal Mary, who gives birth to the immortal God the Son, while the incorporeal God the Son remains on earth, and the corporeal Christ remains in heaven: God becomes man, but manifests himself as God; and all this is undertaken because of Adam, and is purified through Mary.¹¹ Further emphasizing these concepts, Saint Ambrose continues:

Therefore, happy is Eve, through whom the opportunity was given; and even more happy is Mary, through whom healing was given; happy is Eve, through whom the people were born; still more happy is Mary, through whom Christ was born. Therefore, so much the better for the other, yes, but so much more glorious for both; for Christ would not have gladdened Mary if she had not formed the first Eve, from whom Mary herself was born; nor would he have come to the people if she had not first sinned in the world. This one [Eve] is called the mother of the human race, that one [Mary] the mother of salvation: Eve taught us, and Mary strengthened us.¹²

¹⁰ "2. Ergo malum per feminam, immo per feminam bonum; quia per Evam cecidimus, per Mariam stamus: per Evam prostrati, erecti per Mariam: per Evam servituti addicti, per Mariam liberi effecti. Eva nobis sustulit diuturnitatem, Maria nobis reddidit perpetuitatem: Eva nos damnari fecit per arboris pomum, Maria absolvit per arboris donum; quia et Christus in ligno pependit, ut fructus." (Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Sermo XLV. De primo Adam et secundo*, 2. PL 17, 692).

¹¹ "4. O sacramentorum, ut diximus, Mariae mysterium, o conclusam perfidis, et manifestam fidelibus disciplinam! Immortalis mortalem aedificat, parit immortalem: incorporalis terra concluditur, corporalis coelo: Deus homo efficitur, sed exhibetur Deus; et hoc totum per Adam committitur, et lavatur per Mariam." (Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Sermo XLV. De primo Adam et secundo*, 4. PL 17, 692).

¹² "Ergo felix Eva, per quam data est occasio: immo felix Maria, per quam tributa est curatio: felix Eva, per quam natus est populus; felicior Maria, per quam natus est Christus. Igitur alteri melior, immo et gloriosae utraeque; quia non laetificasset Mariam Christus, nisi Evam priorem, de qua nata est ipsa Maria, definxisset: nec venisset ad populum, nisi prius illa deliquisset in saeculo. Haec mater humani generis dicitur, illa salutis: Eva nos edocuit, roboravit et Maria." (Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Sermo XLV. De primo Adam et secundo*. PL 17, 692).

Following this, Saint Ambrose concludes his position on this Mariological topic, declaring that through Eve we grow and through Mary we reign; through Eve we were seduced to earth, but through Mary we were raised to heaven. The author concludes by saying that there are two women in one, for Mary was present in Eve, and then Eve was revealed by Mary.¹³

Some three decades later, the prestigious master Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354–430), is also another prominent defender of the Eve/Mary antithesis. Thus, in a sermon for the Assumption, he begins by asserting that the Virgin is higher than heaven and deeper than the abyss, because she carried God enclosed in her immaculate womb, whom no creature can contain; and because, moreover, only she deserved to be called mother and wife, and only she resolved the losses of the first mother, Eve, bringing redemption to lost humanity.¹⁴ Saint Augustine then expands on this notion by stating:

Because the mother of our human race [Eve] brought punishment to the world; the Mother of our Lord brought salvation to the world. Eve was the bearer of sin; Mary was the bearer of merit. Eve harmed us by killing us; Mary benefited us by giving us life. The former wounded; the latter healed. For she gave birth to the Savior of all in a wondrous and priceless way.¹⁵

Within the realm of Latin Patristics we can also place the well-known hymn *O gloriosa domina* (c. 6th century), most likely attributed to the refined Italian poet Saint Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers (530–610), which displays the contrast between Eve and Mary in these lyrical terms:

¹³ “5. Por Eva crescimus, per Mariam regnamus: per Evam seducti ad terram, per Mariam elevati ad coelum; et ut totum breviter legis patefaciam sacramentum, et duas in unam fuisse, sicuti omnes esse ostendam: in Eva tunc Maria inerat, per Mariam postea revelata est Eva.” (Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Sermo XLV. De primo Adam et secundo*. PL 17, 692).

¹⁴ “Altior enim coelo est, de qua loquimur; abyssio profundior, cui laudes dicere conamur. Deum enim quem omnis creatura non capit, ipsa immaculato utero clausum gestavit. Haec est enim quae sola meruit mater et sponsa vocari, haec primae matris damna resolvit, haec homini perditio redemptionem adduxit.” (Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermo CCVIII. In festo assumptione B. Mariae*, 4. PL 39, 2130)

¹⁵ “Mater enim generis nostri poenam intulit mundo; Genitrix Domini nostri salutem edidit mundo. Auctrix peccati Eva; auctrix meriti Maria. Eva occidendo obfuit; Maria vivificando profuit. Illa percussit; ista sanavit. Haec enim mirabili atque inaestimabili modo omnium rerum et suum peperit Salvatorem.” (Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermo CCVIII. In festo assumptione B. Mariae*, 4. PL 39, 2130–2131).

O heaven's glorious mistress,
enthron'd above the starry sky!
thou feedest with thy sacred breast
thy own Creator, Lord most high.
What man had lost in hapless Eve,
thy sacred womb to man restores,
thou to the wretched here beneath
hast open'd Heaven's eternal doors.
Hail, O refulgent Hall of light!
Hail Gate august of Heaven's high King!
through thee redeem'd to endless life,
thy praise let all the nations sing.¹⁶

O gloriosa domina,
excelsa super sidera,
qui te creavit provide,
lactas sacro ubere.
Quod Eva tristis abstulit,
tu reddis almo germine;
intrent ut astra flebiles,
coeli fenestra facta es.
Tu regis alti ianua
Et porta lucis fulgida;
Vitam datam per virginem,
Gentes redemptae, plaudite.¹⁷

Around the first quarter of the 11th century, St. Fulbert of Chartres (c. 960–1028), in a sermon on the Annunciation—formerly attributed by J.-P. Migne to St. Augustine¹⁸—begins by pointing out that in the Virgin Mary the curse placed upon the unfortunate Eve is lifted, when God told her that she would bear her children in pain (Gen. 11:16), because Mary gave birth to the Lord with joy; and, while Eve wept giving birth to a sinner, Mary rejoiced giving birth to an innocent one (Jesus). While Eve lamented, Mary exulted; Eve shed tears, Mary bred joy in her womb, because Eve gave birth to a sinner, while Mary gave birth to an innocent one.¹⁹ The author further clarifies this argument by stating:

¹⁶ The English translation comes from *Thesaurus Precum Latinarum*: <https://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/BVM/OGloriosa.html>

¹⁷ Venantius Fortunatus (530–609) (attrib.), *O gloriosa domina*: <https://carifilii.es/oh-gloriosa-senora> Published also, with light variants, with the title *Hymnus 420. Purificationis b. Mariae v.*, in Mone, 130; with the title *Hymnus 27. In purificatione S. Mariae ad vespas*, in AHMA 2, 39; and, with the title *Hymnus 72. (7.) Hymnus Beatae Mariae*, in AHMA 50, 87.

¹⁸ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermo CXCIV (a). De Annuntiatione Dominica (II) (b)*. PL 39, 2104–2105.

¹⁹ “1. *Evae damna, et Mariae beneficia*. Adest nobis, dilectissimi, optatus dies beatae ac venerabilis semper Virginis Mariae: ideo cum summa exultatione gaudent terra nostra, tante Virginis illustrata die solemni. Haec est enim flos campi, de qua ortum est pretiosum lilium convallium, per cuius partum mutatur natura, protoplastorumque deletur et culpa. Precisum est in ea illud Evae infelicitatis elogium quo dicitur, *In tristitia paries filios* (Gen, 11, 16): quia ista in laetitia Dominum parturivit. Eva enim luxit, ista

Because [Mary] engendered being a virgin, as she conceived as a virgin; she gave birth inviolate, for there was no lust in the conception. In both cases, a miracle occurred: a pregnant woman without corruption and a virgin giving birth. An angel, sent by God the Father at the beginning of our redemption, descended from heaven to greet the Blessed Mary: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you,” the angel said. Thus, Mary was filled with grace, and Eve was freed from sin. Eve’s curse was transformed into a blessing for Mary: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you.” The Lord is with you in your heart, with you in your womb, with you in your support.²⁰

Fulbert then goes on to explain the contrast between Eve and Mary with these apodictic statements:

The mother of our human race [Eve] brought punishment to the world; the Mother of our Lord brought salvation to the world. Eve was the bearer of sin; Mary, the bearer of merit; Eve harmed us with death, Mary benefited us by giving us life. The former wounded us; the latter healed us. For Mary’s obedience is exchanged for Eve’s disobedience, Mary’s faith for Eve’s treachery. Therefore, Mary joyfully bears the child, joyfully embraces her son, and carries the one by whom she is carried.²¹

A couple of generations later, the prestigious Benedictine master Saint Peter Damian, Bishop of Ostia and Cardinal (1007–1072), declared in one of his

exsultavit; Eva lacrymas, Maria gaudium in ventre portavit: quia illa peccatorem, ista edidit innocentem.” (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Sermo IX. De Annuntiatione Dominica*. PL 141, 336).

²⁰ “Virgo quippe genuit, quia virgo concepit; inviolata peperit, quia in conceptu libido non fuit. Utrobique miraculum, et sine corruptione gravida, et in partu virgo puerpera. Descendit angelus de coelo missus a Patre Deo in nostra redemptionis exordium, ad beatam salutandam Mariam: Ave, inquit angelus ad eam, *gratia plena, Dominus tecum*. Impleta est ergo Maria gratia, et Eva vacuata est a culpa. Maledictio Evae in benedictionem mutatur Maria: Ave, *gratia plena, Dominus tecum*. Tecum Dominus in corde, tecum in ventre, tecum in utero, tecum in auxilio.” (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Sermo IX. De Annuntiatione Dominica*. PL 141, 336).

²¹ “Mater generis nostri poena intulit mundo; Genitrix Domini nostri salutem attulit mundo. Auctrix peccati Eva; auctrix meriti Maria; Eva occidendo obfuit, Maria vivificando profuit. Illa percussit; ista sanavit. Pro inoboedientia enim oboedientia commutatur, fides pro perfidia compesatur. Laeta igitur Maria gestat infantem, exsultans amplexatur filium, portat a quo portabatur.” (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Sermo IX. De Annuntiatione Dominica*. PL 141, 336–337).

sermons that through the food of the forbidden fruit we were expelled from the pleasures of paradise, while through the food that is Christ we were restored to the joys of paradise; Eve ate the food for which she punished us with the hunger of eternal fasting, while Mary ate the food that opened for us the entrance to the heavenly banquet.²²

Almost half a century later, Bruno of Asti or Segni, Abbot of Montecassino and Bishop of Segni (1047–1123), in a writing on the birth of the Virgin, presents the contrast between Eve and Mary, pointing out that the first head of the human lineage is Adam, the second is Christ, and this lineage begins with Eve and ends with Mary; death, originated by Eve, is established at the beginning, and life, restored by Mary, is established at the end. Bruno de Segni goes on to state that Eve was defeated by the devil, while Mary bound and defeated him, because, when the lineage extends from Eve to Mary, in her the chain with which the ancient serpent, the devil Satan, was trapped was finally bound and embodied, so that he who entered the kingdom through a woman, Eve, whom he deceived, was expelled from the kingdom, deceived and chained by that other unique woman, Mary.²³

Approximately one generation later, the respected Cistercian Doctor of the Church, Saint Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux (1090–1153), addresses the topic under analysis in a sermon on the Virgin Mary. After stating that, while Mary is a rose, Eve is a thorn, “who both stabbed her husband to death and inflicted on her posterity the sting of sin,” the author emphasizes that Eve is a thorn

²² “Per cibum namque a paradisi sumus amoenitate dejecti, per cibum quoque ad paradisi gaudia reparati. Cibum comedit Eva, per quem nos aeterni jejunii fame multavit; cibum Maria edidit, qui nobis coelestis convivii aditam patefecit.” (Petrus Damianus, *Sermo XLV*. PL 144, 743 C).

²³ “Primum hujus lineae caput est Adam; secundum vero Christus. Haec linea incipit ab Eva, et desinit in Mariam. In principio mors, et in fine vita consistit. Mors per Evam facta est, vita per Mariam reddita est. Illa a diabolo victa est; haec diabolum ligavit et vicit. Cum enim ab Eva usque ad ipsam Mariam linea extendatur, in ipsa tandem ille hamus ligatus et incarnatus est, per quem captus est ille Leviathan, serpens antiquus, qui est diabolus et Satanas, ut qui per feminam in regnum intravit, per feminam de regno extraheretur; et qui feminam illudit, et suis sibi vinculis ligavit, ab hac una femina illuderetur et ligaretur.” (Bruno Signiensis vel Astensis, *Sententiarum Liber Quintus. De laudibus Beatissimae Virginis Mariae. Caput II. De nativitate B. Mariae Virginis*. PL 165, 1023).

that inflicts death on all, while Mary is a rose that restores a healthy destiny for all.²⁴

In another writing in honor of the Virgin Mary, the holy Abbot of Clairvaux addresses her with this rhetorical appeal:

Mother Eve, mother of sorrow, who condemned your children before giving birth to them, embrace with all your daughters the feet of this new mother [Mary], for she herself removes the ancient bitterness, removes the disgrace, annuls the writing of condemnation, and erases the proscription. O Virgin, noble stem, stem of Jesse, through whom what perished in the root rose again in the branch. Eve is the root of bitterness, Mary is the root of eternal sweetness.²⁵

Saint Bernard immediately continues his discussion on the complete contrast between Eve and Mary in these incisive terms:

This [Mary] is the wondrous and profound dispenser of wisdom, who, just as a stem grows from a root, so a daughter is born of a mother, so a free woman from an exiled woman, so an empress from a captive, so a blossoming rose from a withered thorn. Your mother [Eve] scarcely possessed innocence, and she lost it. Scarcely had she stood, and she fell. She had not yet given birth, and she condemned those yet to be born. But the Blessed Virgin Mary became a true antidote to the deadly poison of deception, so that from her womb she might prepare the secret of heavenly medicine.²⁶

²⁴ “Eva ergo spina fuit, Maria rosa exstitit: Eva spina, vulnerando; Maria rosa, omnium affectus mulcendo. Eva spina, infligens omnibus mortem: Maria rosa, reddens salutiferam omnibus sortem.” (Bernardus Claraevallensis, *De Beata Virgine Sermo*. PL 184, 1020).

²⁵ “Mater Eva, mater doloris, que prius filios damnasti quam pareres, amplectere cum omnibus filiabus pedes hujus novae matris, quia ipsa tollit antiquam amaritudinem, tollit opprobrium, rescindit damnationis chirographum, delet proscriptionem. O Virgo, virga nobilis, virga Jesse, per quam in ramo convaluit, quod perierat in radice. Radix amaritudinis Eva, radix aeternae dulcedinis Maria.” (Bernardus Claraevallensis, *De laude Mariae Virginis*. PL 182, 1144).

²⁶ “Haec est miranda, et profundissima dispensatrix sapientiae, quae talis virga nascetur de tali radice talis filia de tali matre, talis libera de tali proscripta, talis imperatrix de tali captiva, tam florens rosa de tam sicca spina! Mater tua vix habuit innocentiam, et amisit. Vix stetit, et cecidit. Nondum pepererat, et nascituros damnavit. Sed beatissima virgo Maria contra lethiferum suasionis venenum facta est regale antidotum, ut ex suo utero prepararet medicinae coelestis arcanum.” (Bernardus Claraevallensis, *De laude Mariae Virginis*. PL 182, 1144).

Around the same time that St. Bernard expressed this view, the Cistercian St. Amadeus, Bishop of Lausanne (1110–1159), also highlighted the stark contrast between Eve and Mary. In a homily on the human conception/incarnation of Christ, the Lausanne prelate noted the radical difference between the births of Eve and Mary, indicating that Eve gave birth in corruption and pain to a servant, a criminal, and a sinner, while Mary gave birth incorrupt and without pain to the Lord, the righteous one, the one who justifies us from sin.²⁷ St. Amadeus further expanded on this antithesis between the childbirths of Eve and Mary, declaring:

Eve's childbirth multiplies death; Mary's childbirth saves us from death. The dragon stalks Eve in labor; Mary's childbirth is administered by angels. Fear grips Eve in childbirth; divine power rejoices Mary in childbirth. Eve exposes those she bears to many misfortunes, while Mary saves those she bears from all evil. When Eve gave birth, evil abounded, but when the Virgin Mary gave birth, grace overflowed. At Mary's childbirth, the heavens rejoiced, and the earth was glad, and even hell was shaken and terrified.²⁸

Some four decades later, the French diplomat and poet Pierre de Blois (1135–1203), in a sermon on the Assumption, urges Adam and Eve to rejoice today, because, as Mary enters heaven, the door is opened to her offspring; and, while Eve led us to misery, Mary, the strong woman whom Solomon sought, exalts us to glory, for she, through her son, bound the strong man, armed with strength; and she is the one who crushed the head of the ancient serpent.²⁹

²⁷ "His omissis, redeamus ad id de quo tractabamus, et differentiam partuum Maria et Eva perpendamus. Eva parit corrupta, Maria incorrupta peperit. Eva in dolore, Maria in salute. Eva in vetustate, Maria in novitate. Ista servum, illa Dominum. Ista reum, illa justum. Ista peccatorem, illa justificantem a peccato." (Amadeus Lausannensis. *Homilia III. De Incarnatione Christi et Virginis conceptione de Spiritu Sancto*. PL 188, 1323).

²⁸ "Evae partus mortes multiplicat, partus Mariae a morte salvat. Evae parturienti draco insidiatur, partui Mariae ab angelis ministratur. Evam parturientem tremor cordis occupat, parientem Mariam virtus divina laetificat. Eva quos parit, multis exponit casibus, quos parit Maria, salvat a malis omnibus. Eva pariente, abundavit malitia, pariente vero Virgine Maria, superabundavit gratia. In partu Mariae coeli laetati sunt, et terra exsultavit, infernus etiam commotus expavit." (Amadeus Lausannensis. *Homilia III. De Incarnatione Christi et Virginis conceptione de Spiritu Sancto*. PL 188, 1323).

²⁹ "Gaudeant hodie Adam et Eva parentes, aut potius peremptores nostri, quia, dum Maria coelum ingreditur, posteritati ejus reseratur ingressus. Eva nos duxit in miseriam,

2. The contrast between Eve and Mary in light of Medieval Liturgical Hymns

We will now present some fragments of Latin medieval liturgical hymns that deal with the antithesis Eve/Mary, already underlined by a number of Church Fathers and medieval theologians. To better appreciate the conceptual and literary evolution of the expressions on the matter, we will present these hymns in strict chronological order, grouping them by century.

10th-century hymns

Dating from the 10th century we have found these two hymns alluding to the topic under analysis:

The well-known hymn *Ave maris stella* establishes the contrast between Eve and Mary in this short stanza:

2. Taking that *Ave* [Hail]
From the mouth of Gabriel,
Establish us in peace
Changing the name of Eve.

2. Sumens illud Ave
Gabrielis ore
Funda nos in pace
Mutans Evae nomen.³⁰

Hymnus 2. De Nativitate Beatae Mariae Virginis emphasizes with unusual insistence the antithesis of Eve/Mary through these repetitive statements:

ista nos exultat in gloriam. Haec est mulier illa fortis, quam Salomon potius prophetando quam dubitando quaerebat, cum diceret: *Mulierem fortem quis inveniet?* Haec *sceptrum exactoris*, et *virgam oneris ejus* superavit, *sicut in die Madian*; haec mediante filio fortem armatum fortiter alligavit, haec est qua caput antiqui serpentis contrivit.” (Petrus Blesensis, *Sermo XXXV. In Assumptione B. Mariae*. PL 207, 665).

³⁰ *Ave maris stella* (c. s. X). Also published, with the title *Hymnus 29. Item alius de S. Mariae*, in AHMA 2, 39.

3. Eve made us guilty,
 Eve made us guilty,
 The firstborn broke the commandment,
 The firstborn broke the commandment
 And believed the serpent.
 Mary is the flower of chastity,
 Mary is the flower of chastity.
 She is the path of life, quite gentle,
 She is the path of life, quite gentle,
 She gave birth to the one who saves us.

3. Eva nos culpa subegit,
 Subegit culpa nos Eva,
 Primaeva dum jussa fregit,
 Fregit jussa dum primaeva
 Serpentine credidit.
 Maria flos castitatis,
 Castitatis flos Maria,
 Via vitae, mitis satis.
 Satis mitis, vitae via,
 Nos salvantem edidit.³¹

12th-century hymns

Dating from the 12th century, we have identified these five liturgical hymns alluding to our theme:

Hymnus 581. De sancta Maria Virgine extols the moral sublimity of the Savior's mother in contrast to the pernicious conduct of Eve, saying:

Oh, incomparable dignity
 of the Mother of Almighty God,
 who affirms herself as the author of salva-
 tion by offering herself chastely to God,
 From whom emanated a splendor
 that illuminated with its clarity
 the darkness of the world.
 For the life that Eve
 took away through transgression,
 Mary
 restored through obedience.

O dignitas incomparabilis
 omnipotentis dei matris,
 quae auctrix salutis extitit,
 dum castam deo se obtulit;
 de qua splendor effulsit,
 qui mundi caliginem
 sua claritate obduxit.
 nam vitam, quam Eva
 praevaricando abstulit,
 hanc Maria
 obediendo reddidit.³²

Hymnus 78. De Beata Maria Virgine praises and invokes Mary's power to regenerate us from the grave damage that Eve caused us, in these stanzas:

³¹ *Hymnus 2. De Nativitate B. M. V.* AHMA 2, 122.

³² *Hymnus 581. De s. Maria v.* Mone, 394–395.

4a. Through Eve was lost
 What had been founded,
 But through you (now) the homeland
 Is returned to the exile;
 Open for us the gates
 of life,
 (O) hope of sinners, Mary.
 4b. Hail, flower and
 Gentle refuge [from the Alas!],
 Gem of chastity
 And throne of grace,
 Queen of the tribunal, reconcile
 The guilty
 With the King of mercy.

4a. Per Evam perdita
 Fuerant condita,
 Sed per te (nunc) est reddita
 Exsuli patria;
 Nobis vitae atria
 Tu resera,
 (O) peccatorum spes, Maria.
 4b. Ave, flos et [a Vae]
 Assylum suave,
 Gemma pudicitiae
 Thronusque gratiae,
 Reis, regina curiae,
 Concilia
 Regem misericordiae.³³

Hymnus 326. De conceptione sanctae Mariae virginis. In matutinis laudibus glorifies Mary for having remedied the evils caused by our first mother, in these verses:

Oh, how abundant a blessing
 was poured out upon you, O Virgin,
 with which the curse
 that Eve brought about is destroyed.
 Hear our praises,
 blessed among women.

O quam larga te perfudit,
 virgo, benedictio,
 qua deletur, quam induxit
 Eva, maledictio.
 Intende nostris laudibus,
 beata in mulieribus!³⁴

The Benedictin Bernard of Morlaix, or of Cluny (†1140), in *Hymnus 323 (1). Mariale. Rhythmus VIII*, contrasts the harmful Eve with the regenerative Mary in these verses:

5. The cruel mother Eve
 Harmed her offspring to death;
 Your faith, with which you shine,
 has given us back life.

5. Mater Eva morte saeva
 Prolem suam perdidit;
 Tua fides, qua renides,
 Nobis vitam reddidit.³⁵

³³ *Hymnus 78. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 42, 87.

³⁴ *Hymnus 326. De conceptione s. Mariae virg. In matutinis laudibus.* Mone, 11.

³⁵ Bernhardus Morlanensis, *Hymnus 323 (1). Mariale. Rhythmus VIII.* AHMA 50, 438.

The French churchman Guy of Bazoches (ante 1143–1203), in *Hymnus* 324. *Ad beatam Virginem Mariam*, requests the saving help of the Virgin, restorer of the evils caused by Eve, in these consonnances:

Your conception
restored us,
those whom the serpent's deception
overwhelmed,
rescued us
from the brink of death,
and put an end
to the exile
that Eve deserved.
Oh, glorious Lady,
we beseech you, blot out the sins
of those who praise you with their songs.

Tua nos restituit
conceptio,
quos serpentis obruit
deceptio,
de mortis eripuit
confinio,
et finem imposuit
exilio,
quod Eva promeruit.
O gloriosa domina,
quorum laudant carmina,
precamur, dele crimina.³⁶

13th-century hymns

Dating back to the 13th century, we have found these five hymns related to the topic under study:

Hymnus 145. *De beata Maria Virgine* contrasts Eve, the cause of humanity's death, with Mary, the regenerator of life, by stating:

2a. The shadow of cruel death passes,
The Virgin full of grace
Replaces the light of holy destiny.
2b. Death sprang from Eve,
But Mary overthrew death,
Bringing joy to the world.

2a. Transit umbra saevae mortis,
Subit lumen sanctae sortis,
Virgo plena gratia.
2b. Mors per Evam pullulavit,
Sed Maria mortem stravit
Mundo ferens gaudia.³⁷

³⁶ Guido von Basoches, *Hymnus* 324. *Ad b. V. Mariam*. Mone, 6. Also published, with the title Guido von Basoches, *Hymnus* 349. (6.) *De Beata Maria V.*, in AHMA 50, 513.

³⁷ *Hymnus* 145. *De beata Maria V.* AHMA 10, 110.

Hymnus 143. De Beata Maria Virgine requests the saving help of the New Eve in this stanza:

13. Make us immune to the evil
that Eve brought with the apple,
and after death receive us
in glory with joy
to reign with your Son.

13. Fac nos immunes a malo,
Quod attulit Eva malo,
Et post mortem in gloria
Nos recipe cum gaudio
Regnatos cum filio.³⁸

Hymnus 62. De Beata Maria Virgine exalts Mary for her effective regenerative power, stating:

4. Eve harmed us,
giving us death and mourning,
but thus, Virgin, blossomed
the fruit of your womb,
5. May the old vices
be taken away by you,
but may the chastity of salvation also be
offered [by you].
6. You are the fountain that floods
all with the water of grace,
Mother of the King of glory,
Who ruins hell.

4. Eva nobis nocuit
Dans mortem et luctus,
Sed sic, virgo, floruit
Ventris tui fructus,
5. Quod antiqua vitia
Per te sint ablata,
Sed et castimonia
Salutis oblata.
6. Tu fons aquam gratiae
Omnibus inundans,
Mater regis gloriae,
Infernum pessum dans.³⁹

The English theologian Stephen Langton (c. 1150–1228), Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal, in his *Hymnus XI. Psalterium beatae Mariae. Tertia Quadragena*, asks for the beneficent help of the Virgin to remedy the evils caused by Eve, in this stanza:

3. Hail, Mother of grace,
Blessed Mother,
not bound
by the curses of Eve,
I beg you, take away the weight of crimes
and offenses,
to moderate the edicts
of the severe Judge.

3. Ave, mater gratiae,
mater benedicta,
Maledictionibus
Evae non astricta,
Moles, quaeso, criminum
aufer et delicta,
Ut severi iudicis
temperes edicta.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Hymnus 143. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 46, 192.

³⁹ *Hymnus 62. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 45a, 50–51.

⁴⁰ Stephanus Cantuariensis, *Hymnus XI. Psalterium beatae Mariae. Tertia Quadragena*. AHMA 35, 162.

Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, in this *Hymnus XII. Psalterium beatae Mariae Virginis. Secunda Quinquagena*, which is attributed to him, asks the Virgin to restore the celestial light extinguished by Eve, in these verses:

26. Hail, Virgin, rest of God,
You are an ancient day to me
And restore the light of paradise
that I lost because of Eve.

26. Ave, virgo, Dei quies,
Tu antiquus mihi dies
Et, per Evam quam amisi,
Redde lucem paradisi.⁴¹

14th-century hymns

Dating from the 14th century, we have recorded these three hymns relating to the topic in question:

Hymnus 138. De Partu beatae Mariae Virginis contrasts the salvific benefits that Mary provides us with the destructive evils caused by Eve, stating:

3. He who cleanses you covers you with
his shadow,
By covering you with his shadow he
makes you fruitful, O conception of Jesus,
You take away our affliction through the
Ave [Hail],
By reversing the name of Eve
Through the messenger Gabriel.
4. Virgin, you gave birth to a child,
Star, you clothed the Sun
With a unique garment,
You have given life to the world,
You have removed the harm of Eve
With a virginal childbirth.

3. Qui te mundat, te obumbrat,
Obumbrando te fecundat,
O Iesu gignitio,
Nostrum vae per ave tollis,
Nomen Evae dum revolvis
Gabriele nuntio.
4. Virgo, prolem genuisti,
Stella, solem induisti
Veste singulari,
Mundo vitam contulisti,
Evae damnum abstulisti
Partu puellari.⁴²

Hymnus 192 underscores, through numerous tropes, the substantial antithesis between Eve, the producer of many evils for humanity, and Mary, the regenerator of all corresponding good things, by stating:

⁴¹ Bonaventura de Balneoregio (attrib.), *Hymnus XII. Psalterium beatae Mariae V. Secunda Quinquagena*. AHMA 35, 176.

⁴² *Hymnus 138. De Partu beatae Mariae V.* AHMA 31, 139.

1. Eve lost us all,
 bringing the death of guilt,
 The Virgin restored life,
 Bringing the fruit of life,
 The one brings sadness,
 The other re-established joy,
 And joy as she gave birth.
 R. Eve lost us all,
 The Virgin restored life to us.

2. Eve, ravaged by her bite,
 Prepares poison for posterity,
 The Virgin, full of grace,
 Brings medicine to the unfortunate.
 The serpent defeats the one,
 The other [Mary], as she gives birth to God,
 crushes its head.

3. Eve makes us
 enemies of the Lord,
 The other [Mary] restores peace to us, uniting
 God with man,
 This one [Eve] is the mother of crime,
 The other [Mary] is the minister of the
 covenant, and exists as intercessor.
 R. Eve lost us all,
 The Virgin gave us back our lives.

4. Eve closes heaven to us
 By eating from the forbidden tree,
 The Virgin reopens it
 through the merit of a new childbirth,
 Toward whom she [Mary] who bore this one,
 May lead the sorrowful children of Eve
 Who remember Him.

1. Eva cunctos perdidit
 Culpae mortem inferens,
 Virgo vitam reddidit
 Fructum vitae proferens,
 Infert illa tristia,
 Haec refudit gaudia,
 Gaudium dum peperit.
 R. Eva cunctos perdidit,
 Virgo vitam reddidit.

2. Eva morsu saucia
 Virus parat posteris,
 Virgo plena gratia
 Medelam fert miseris.
 Illam serpens superat,
 Haec, Deum dum generat
 Caput ejus conterit.

3. Eva nos constituit
 Inimicos Domini,
 Haec pacem restituit
 Deum jungens homini,
 Illa mater sceleris,
 Haec ministra foederis
 Et precatrix exstitit.
 R. Eva cunctos perdidit,
 Virgo vitam reddidit.

4. Eva coelum obserat
 Eso ligno vetito,
 Virgo illud reserat
 Novi partus merito,
 Ad quod sui memores
 Evae natos flebiles
 Ducat, quae hunc genuit.⁴³

The German Carthusian Konrad von Haimburg (†1360) expresses in *Hymnus 2. Crinale Beatae Mariae Virginis* some privileges of Mary, exempt from the burdens caused by Eve, in these verses:

⁴³ *Hymnus 192. AHMA 20, 150.*

8. Hail, Blessed Mother,
in whom there is no sin.
Not burdened by the yoke of Eve,
nor afflicted in childbirth,
but you give birth with joy.

8. Salve mater benedicta,
In qua nulla sunt delicta.
Evae jugo non adstricta
Nec in partu es afflicta,
Sed enixa jubilans.⁴⁴

13th–15th century hymns

Written at some unknown date during the long interval between the 13th and 15th centuries, we have found *Hymnus 46*, which proclaims the supreme sublimity of the Virgin Mary above all the descendants of Eve, stating:

2. Unique Virgin,
No one is more worthy than you,
Bright star of the sea,
Brighter than the moon,
Thus you came to the aid,
Queen, of the sorrowful world,
Thus you resolved the harm
of Mother Eve.

2. Virgo singularis,
Te nulla dignior,
Fulgens stella maris,
Luna lucidior,
Sic succurristi,
Regina, mundo tristi,
Evae matris,
Noxam sic solvisti.⁴⁵

14th–15th century hymns

Dating from some imprecise date between the 14th and 15th centuries, *Hymnus 121. Super Ave Maria* praises the Virgin for her regenerative reversal of the evils caused by Eve, in this stanza:

1. Hail, royal maiden,
Immaculate Virgin,
The emblems of virtue
make you pleasing to God,
Through you now the troubles of Eve
are taken from us,
You, Eve turned backward
Changing sadness into joy,
are called by this Ave [Hail].

1. Ave, puella regia,
Virgo immaculata,
Virtutum insignia
Te reddunt Deo grata,
Per te nunc Evae taedia
Sint nobis oblata,
Tu Eva transversata
Mutans luctum in gaudium,
Ex hoc Ave vocata.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Conradus Gemnicensis, *Hymnus 2. Crinale B. M. V.* AHMA 3, 23.

⁴⁵ *Hymnus 46.* AHMA 1, 85.

⁴⁶ *Hymnus 121. Super Ave Maria.* AHMA 30, 233.

15th century hymns

Composed in the 15th century, we have cataloged these five hymns alluding to the topic under analysis:

Hymnus 537. De beata Maria virgine congratulates the prophesied Mary for having healed the evils caused by Eve, in these rhymes:

4. Rejoice, Mary,
happy creature,
healer
of the most grievous wounds,
the prophet foretold you
as prototype and figure.
You, Virgin, who bear
the sure secret
of heaven,
you filled heaven with grace,
through whom what Eve condemned
remains destroyed.

4. Gaude Maria,
felix creatura,
cura
vulnerum praedura,
typus et figura
vatum praesignavit.
Tu coeli, virgo,
bajulans secretum
fretum,
tu coelitus repletum,
a qua stat deletum
quod Eva damnavit.⁴⁷

Hymnus 97. De Beata Maria Virgine praises Mary for having given birth to the one who will heal the evils caused to humanity by Eve, saying:

2a. By giving birth to our savior,
the weeping and sorrow of Eve,
by reversing her name
2b. You became joy,
therefore you have deserved
to be greeted with a song.

2a. Nostrum gignens salvatorem
Evae planctum et maerorem
Eius verso nomine
2b. In gaudium transtulisti,
Hoc idcirco meruisti
Salutari carmine.⁴⁸

Hymnus 480. De beata virgine. Oratio congratulates Mary for resolving the evils caused by Eve, in this stanza:

⁴⁷ *Hymnus 537. De b. Maria v.* Mone, 327. Also published, with the title *Hymnus 49*, in AHMA 1, 87.

⁴⁸ *Hymnus 97. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 42, 101.

75. Rejoice, temple of divinity
and origin of goodness,
through you peace is confirmed
and the ruin
that comes from Eve is restored.

75. Gaude templum deitatis
et origo bonitatis,
per te pax est confirmata
et ruina restaurata
ex Eva progrediens.⁴⁹

Hymnus 102. Super Ave Maria extols the Virgin Mary as the mother of the Redeemer, the one who repaired the evil caused by Eve, in these verses:

6. And Eve's ruin is repaired,
through you salvation is given,
Eve is changed into *Ave*,
by inverting Eve's name;
Blessed be your Son,
Given up to death for sins
And tortured in the flesh
by wretched man.

6. Et ruina reparatur
Evae, per te salus datur,
Eva in Ave mutatur
Evae verso nomine;
Benedictus tuus natus,
Pro peccatis morti datus
Et in carne cruciatus
Misero pro homine.⁵⁰

The well-known hymnographer Ulrich Stöcklins von Rottach, abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Wessobrunn in Bavaria between 1438 and 1443, in *Hymnus I. Carmen pulcherrimum de beata Virgine*. I, asks for Mary's help, with whom he begins to repair the harm caused by Eve, in these rhymes:

9. Hail, Virgin, whom
An abundant blessing flooded,
With which the curse that Eve induced,
is destroyed
lift the evil things
that the vexation of Satan already struck.

9. Ave, virgo, quam perfudit
Larga benedictio,
Qua deletur, quam induxit
Eva maledictio,
Aufer mala, quae iam cudit
Satanae vexatio.⁵¹

What we have seen in the two preceding sections clearly reveals the abundance, the conceptual variety, and the poetic creativity through which the Church Fathers, theologians, and medieval liturgical hymnographers viewed the Virgin Mary with a personality and characteristics entirely opposed to those

⁴⁹ *Hymnus 480. De beata virgine. Oratio*. Mone, 196.

⁵⁰ *Hymnus 102. Super Ave Maria*. AHMA 30, 209.

⁵¹ Udalricus Wessofontanus, *Hymnus I. Carmen pulcherrimum de beata Virgine*. I. AHMA 38, 239.

of Eve: thus they were able to designate Mary as the New Eve. Through such a strong Eve/Mary antithesis, all these Christian writers brought to light the profound, crucial doctrinal meanings that we have discussed so far.

Therefore, it is amazing that such an important Mariological topic has received so little attention from modern authors. Almost none treats it, and the few who do often refer to it rather perfunctorily. Thus most of the Mariologists we consulted (Alastruey 1952; Merkelbach 1954; Graef 1967; de La Potterie 1988; Bastero de Eleizalde 1995; Fernández 1999; Ponce Cuéllar 2001; Cerbelaud 2003; de La Soujeole 2007; De Fiores 2008; De Fiores, Ferrari Schieffer, and Perrella 2009; Calero de los Ríos 2010; García Paredes 2015; Casás Otero 2015; Hauke 2015; Bonarrigo 2018; Reynolds 2019) completely ignore the Eve/Mary antithesis. In contrast, a few of them (Burghardt 1964: 488–547; De Fiores 1992: 114–116; Pozo 2005: 347–360) consider the subject in depth, although none cites any medieval liturgical hymn as an argument from authority.

3. Some Iconographic Expressions of the Eve/Mary Antithesis

As expected, these doctrinal considerations regarding the contrast between Eve and Mary, expressed by some Church Fathers and medieval theologians, as well as numerous medieval liturgical hymns, were well illustrated in many paintings and sculptures. The seven works of art we will analyze below are just a representative sample of these specific illustrations.

The mullion of *The Portal of the Virgin*, in the North portal of the West façade of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris exhibits the statue of *The Virgin and Child*, c. 1210s.⁵²

This prominent placement of the Virgin Mary at one of the entrances to the main façade of the Parisian cathedral is due to two reasons: firstly, to the specific fact that, as its title indicates, Notre-Dame Cathedral is dedicated to the Virgin Mary; secondly, to the general fact that, positioned on the central mullion above the church entrance, the statue of Mary with her divine Son in her arms

⁵² *Virgin and Child*, mullion of *The Portal of the Virgin*, North portal of the West façade of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, c. 1210s. Photo Wikimedia Commons (cropped): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/CF1612_Paris_4e_Notre-Dame_de_Paris_portail_de_la_Vierge_rwk.jpg

represents her as the starting point of human salvation, having conceived the Redeemer, and as the open gateway to the temple/Heaven (*Porta Coeli*).



Fig. 1.1 *Virgin and Child*, mullion of *The Portal of the Virgin*, North portal of the West façade of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, c. 1210s.



Fig. 1.2. *Adam and Eve in the Paradise*, at the bottom of the mullion of *The Portal of the Virgin*, Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris.

Furthermore, the bottom of the mullion depicts three consecutive scenes of Adam and Eve in Paradise:⁵³ on the left, the creation of Eve from the rib of the sleeping Adam; in the center, original sin; and on the right, the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. It is evident that, by placing the monumental statue of Mary with her Child in her arms on the triple relief of Adam and Eve, the intellectual author of this sculptural ensemble wanted to highlight the Eve/Mary antithesis, that is, the opposition between the disobedience, guilt, death and condemnation embodied by Eve, and the obedience, grace, life and salvation embodied by the Virgin: in other words, Mary as the New Eve.

⁵³ *Adam and Eve in the Paradise*, detail of the base of the *Virgin and Child* in the mullion of *The Portal of the Virgin*, Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. Photo Wikipedia: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cath%C3%A9drale_Notre-Dame_de_Paris#/media/Fichier:Temptation_Adam_Eva.jpg



Fig. 2. Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, 1425–27. Prado Museum, Madrid.

Fra Angelico (c. 1395–1455) painted between 1425 and 1427 for the church of the convent of Santo Domingo in Fiesole, Italy, *The Annunciation* now housed in the Prado Museum in Madrid.⁵⁴ In a transparent, loggia-like structure, the Archangel Gabriel, with his arms crossed over his chest, bows respectfully before the seated Virgin Mary, who interrupts her prayer, humbly bowing her head and crossing her arms over her chest, in a gesture similar to that of the archangel. Aside from other painted details, whose profound symbolism we have explained in another study,⁵⁵ we are now interested in highlighting an aspect of particular significance: the presence of Adam and Eve, who, filled with shame and modestly

⁵⁴ Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, 1425–26. Prado Museum, Madrid. Photo Wikipedia: [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anunciaci%C3%B3n_\(Fra_Angelico,_Madrid\)#/media/Archivo:La_Anunciaci%C3%B3n_de_Fra_Angelico.jpg](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anunciaci%C3%B3n_(Fra_Angelico,_Madrid)#/media/Archivo:La_Anunciaci%C3%B3n_de_Fra_Angelico.jpg)

⁵⁵ José María Salvador-González, “La Anunciación de Fra Angelico en el Museo del Prado. Interpretación de sus significados doctrinales”, in Pablo de Paz Amérigo & Ignacio Sanz Extremeño (eds.), *Eulogía. Estudios sobre cristianismo primitivo. Homenaje a Mercedes López Salvá*, Madrid, Guillermo Escolar Editor, 2018, 345–367.

covered in long garments of animal skins, are expelled from Paradise by an angel flying among the trees. Just as the conceptual designer of the Notre-Dame de Paris sculptural ensemble just analyzed, the cultured Dominican friar and priest Fra Angelico sought to highlight the aforementioned theological content underlying the Eve/Mary antithesis.

A few years later, Fra Angelico depicted, albeit in a much more subtle way, a similar juxtaposition/contrast between the scenes of the Annunciation and the Expulsion from Paradise in two other *Annunciations*: the one in San Giovanni Valdarno (1430–1432) and the one in the Diocesan Museum of Cortona (1434).



Fig. 3. Giovanni di Paolo, *The Annunciation and Expulsion from Paradise*, c. 1435. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Painted by Giovanni di Paolo (c. 1403–1482), *The Annunciation and Expulsion from Paradise*, c. 1435, at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.,⁵⁶ is probably one of the five predella panels of a now-lost Sienese altarpiece.

⁵⁶ Giovanni di Paolo, *The Annunciation and Expulsion from Paradise*, c. 1435. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Photo NGA: <https://www.nga.gov/artworks/364-annunciation-and-expulsion-paradise>

The Annunciation scene unfolds in a luxurious palazzo, where the standing Archangel Gabriel converses with the seated Virgin Mary, who displays a gesture of submissive obedience by crossing her arms over her chest, while in an adjacent room, Saint Joseph remains absent from the salvific event, warming himself before a lit fireplace.

The most important detail for our purposes is, in the space outside Mary's house, the scene of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden by an angel who forcefully pushes them out, while Yahweh, levitating in a broad halo of rays in the upper left corner, commands the expulsion of our first parents, pointing at them with his right hand.

Clearly, the mastermind behind this panel also wanted to express the Eve/Mary contrast here, emphasizing the essential relationship between original sin and the condemnation of humanity because of Eve and Adam, and the need for grace and salvation guaranteed by the Redeemer, who, at the precise final moment of the Annunciation, is being conceived in Mary's virginal womb.



Fig. 4. Petrus Christus, *Virgin and Child under an Arch*, c. 1445. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Petrus Christus (c. 1410/17–1475/76) presents an unusual composition in *Virgin and Child under an Arch*, c. 1445, from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam.⁵⁷ In fact, it appears somewhat artificial to frame the figures of the Virgin and Child with what seems to be a doorway in a tiled space, completely open to a luminous landscape. This circumstance lends credence to the idea that this is not a real doorway, but rather a symbolic, stage-like frame intended to house the scene of original sin, with the sculpted figures of Adam, on the left, and Eve, on the right, eating the forbidden apple and shamefully covering their nakedness, before the presence of the serpent-demon coiled around the tree trunk next to Eve. It is quite clear that Petrus Christus wanted to introduce this artificial device of an open “door” into the landscape to illustrate the antitheses Eve/Mary, Adam/Christ and original sin versus redemption, the latter being assured by the figure of the Child Redeemer, begotten by the mediating Virgin.

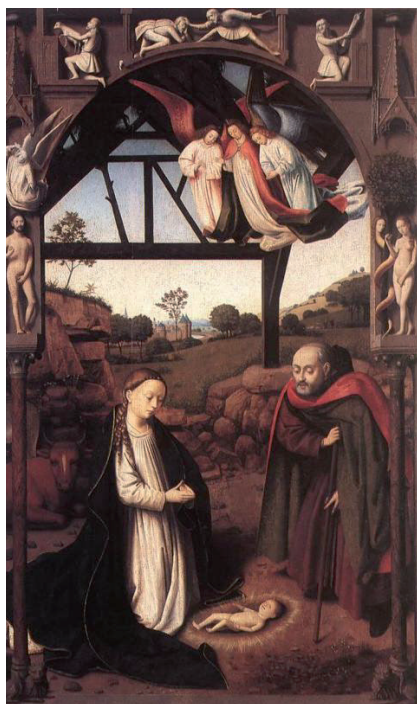


Fig. 5. Petrus Christus, *The Adoration of the Christ Child*. Right panel of the diptych *The Annunciation and The Adoration of the Christ Child*, 1452. Groeningen Museum, Brugge.

⁵⁷ Petrus Christus, *Virgin and Child under an Arch*, c. 1445. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Photo Wikimedia Commons: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a6/P_Christus_-_Madonna_met_kind_-_NK1841_-_Museum_Boijmans_Van_Beuningen.jpg

Using a similar artifice to the preceding painting, Petrus Christus designed *The Adoration of the Christ Child*, on the right panel of the diptych *The Annunciation and The Adoration of the Christ Child*, 1452, at the Groeningen Museum in Bruges.⁵⁸ Indeed, in this panel as well, the painter depicts an unreal doorway of the stable where Christ was born in Bethlehem—consisting of a light, almost immaterial roof, completely open to the landscape. Framed within this opening is the scene of the Adoration of the Child by the kneeling Mary and Joseph.



Fig. 6. Dirk Bouts and workshop, *The Annunciation*, left panel of *The Triptych with Scenes from the Life of the Virgin*, c. 1445. Prado Museum, Madrid. Photo Wikipedia: [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Tr%C3%ADptico_de_la_vida_de_la_Virgen_\(Bouts\).jpg](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Tr%C3%ADptico_de_la_vida_de_la_Virgen_(Bouts).jpg)

Petrus Christus deemed it necessary to introduce this artificial „door” to frame the small, „real” figures of the protagonists of the first two sins of humankind: moving from bottom to top, starting on the left, our gaze encounters Adam with the apple, covering his genitals; the avenging angel with his sword bidding van het Jezuskind, 1452, _Groeningemuseum, _0040038000.jpg

expelling the first parents from the Garden of Eden, Abel's offering to Yahweh, Cain's murder of Abel, Cain's offering, and Eve covering her groin after eating the apple offered to her by the serpent/demon. Again, as in the preceding panel, Petrus Christus also used this unreal „door” of the hut to highlight the previously explained antitheses of Eve/Mary, Adam/Christ, sin/redemption, as well as condemnation (expulsion from the Garden of Eden) versus salvation (entrance into the Heavenly Paradise).

Depicted by Dirk Bouts (1415–1475) and workshop, *The Annunciation* on the left panel of the incorrectly named *Triptych with Scenes from the Life of the Virgin*,⁵⁹ c. 1465, in the Prado Museum in Madrid,⁶⁰ is staged in a vaulted room with a certain chapel-like appearance. The announcement to Mary by the angel Gabriel, covered with a splendid cope, appears framed by an unreal door – the real door of the room is seen ajar on the back wall –, which is only an artificial symbolic arch intended to place in its single archivolt some relief scenes directly related to the central motif of the Virgin being announced: going up from left to right, our eye finds the figure of a prophet of the Old Testament, the creation of Eve from one of Adam's ribs, Yahweh forbidding the first parents to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, original sin, the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the labors of Adam and Eve, Cain killing his brother Abel, and the figure of a second prophet. Here too, Dirk Bouts, as Petrus Christus did before him, wanted to introduce this illusory scenographic framework because all the sculptural scenes located in it illustrate the aforementioned contrasts: Eve/Mary, Adam/Christ – who is being conceived by the Virgin at the very moment of accepting the design of God that Gabriel communicates to him –, sin and condemnation versus grace and salvation.

Probably painted by Giovanni Francesco Maineri (act. 1489–1506) between 1490 and 1499, this *Mirandola Book of Hours* was probably produced for Galeotto Pico della Mirandola and his wife Bianca d'Este, whose arms appear depicted at the left, and at the right, respectively, in the lower margin of the miniature on

⁵⁹ This set consists of four panels, not the three typical of a triptych. The scenes depicted on these four panels are: *The Annunciation*, *The Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth*, *The Adoration of the Child*, and *The Adoration of the Magi*.

⁶⁰ Dirk Bouts and workshop, *The Annunciation*, left panel of *The Triptych with Scenes from the Life of the Virgin*, c. 1445. Prado Museum, Madrid. Photo Wikipedia: [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Tr%C3%ADptico_de_la_vida_de_la_Virgen_\(Bouts\).jpg](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:Tr%C3%ADptico_de_la_vida_de_la_Virgen_(Bouts).jpg)

f. 13r.⁶¹ The themes figured in the full-page miniatures are *The Annunciation to Mary*, set in a setting of whimsical architecture in the upper register, and *Original Sin*, unnaturally staged in a luxurious palace (rather than in the Garden of Eden) in the lower register.



Fig. 7. Giovanni Francesco Maineri (attributed), *The Annunciation*, from *The Mirandola Hours Use of Rome*, (f. 13), c. 1490–99. The British Library, London.

Once again, the fact that the painter wanted to include in such a contradictory scene Adam and Eve seduced by the serpent-demon to eat the forbidden fruit is explained again by the intention to underline the already explained antitheses between Eve and Mary, Adam and Christ (already conceived in the womb of the Virgin at the final instant of the Annunciation), original sin and redeeming grace, condemnation-expulsion from the Earthly Paradise and salvation-readmission to the Heavenly Paradise.

⁶¹ Giovanni Francesco Maineri (attributed), *The Annunciation*, from *The Mirandola Hours Use of Rome*, (f. 13), c. 1490–99. The British Library, London. Photo: Wikimedia Commons: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Mirandola_Hours_-_The_Annunciation_\(f._13\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Mirandola_Hours_-_The_Annunciation_(f._13).jpg)

Conclusions

Upon completing this research, we can synthesize the meanings that the Church Fathers, theologians, and liturgical hymnographers studied reveal in their statements regarding the complete contrast between Eve and the Virgin Mary. We could concentrate these meanings around the following antitheses:

Some texts highlight a *phonetic antithesis*, due to the fact that the name Eve, when reversed, becomes *Ave* (Hail).

Many texts underscore a *behavioral antithesis*, contrasting Eve's disobedience in eating the fruit forbidden by Yahweh with Mary's complete obedience in unrestrictedly accepting God the Father's plan to be the mother of his divine Son.

Others emphasize a *genealogical antithesis*, in the sense that Eve is the mother of degenerate humanity, while Mary is the mother of regenerated humanity, having given birth to the Redeemer.

Some texts insist on a *genetic antithesis*, contrasting the fact that Eve is the mother of lustful conception (through intercourse) and painful childbirth, while Mary is a mother who conceives without sexual relations and gives birth virginally and without pain.

Many texts highlight a *moral antithesis*, since Eve is a sinful woman and the initiator of sin in humankind, while Mary is a sinless woman, holy and full of sublime virtues.

Some also point to a *pathetic antithesis*, since Eve is the mother of the suffering of humanity, while Mary is the mother of the happiness restored to a happy humanity.

Others highlight an *eschatological antithesis*, in the sense that Eve is the mother of humanity's damnation, while Mary is the mother of its salvation, having given birth to the Savior.

Ultimately, we can also conclude that these various antitheses are reflected, to a greater or lesser degree, in the seven paintings and sculptures we have analyzed and in other artistic images related to the antithesis under study.

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