223 Mary (*Maria*)

Mary is commended by the faith. For what all the clerics of the world do not prove, one girl believed. For if the angel had said that in knowing a man she would conceive it would be easy, but that a virgin should conceive was more difficult.

Again, that a virgin should conceive only a man would yet be tolerable, but that she should conceive God was the greatest difficulty.

¶ But however greatly difficult this saying would be, yet the intelligence of the girl along with her faith grasped this. Wherefore Augustine,[[1]](#endnote-1) the Jews were embarrassed who saw this in the law by the figures of the prophetic writings. The philosophers were embarrassed who studied to disprove by every argument of theirs how this could happen. One girl responded with one word: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done,” [Luke 1:38]. But if she would have said, Although, by nature this cannot be, God can do this. Of this the maiden or however through the way of nature the argument of the virgin runs when she said, “How shall this be done, because I know not man?” [Luke 1:34]. Where Augustine in *Sermone de nature virginis*,[[2]](#endnote-2) Christ was born from an untouched woman, who by divine law was not that virtue be born through desire, or chastity through lust. Nor could he come from heaven except through a new order, who came to destroy the ancient rule of death.

¶ Again, about the concept of virginity, so unfamiliar and marvelous they come together that Joseph a grave and just man wanted to put her away secretly because of the great mystery he recognized in her, he thought himself unworthy to approach her.

Again, Augustine, *De vere Deum*,[[3]](#endnote-3) Joseph understanding that Mary was pregnant, he was disturbed because Mary whom he accepted in the temple as his wife and not yet did he know her, she appeared pregnant. And he raged with himself debating whether I might make a disclosure or keeping quiet if I would become a betrayer.

¶ I will incur adulterous poison of cruelty because I know such according to the law are to be stoned. If I am quiet, I consent to a crime and place my portion with adulterers. Therefore, if I remain quiet it is evil, to reveal adultery is worse, I will put her away from the marriage. Wherefore in the same place, Augustine,[[4]](#endnote-4) if only you know that someone has sinned, and you want to accuse him before all, it is not a corrector of crime, but a betrayer. Wherefore Joseph a just man, with such a great burning shame that he was suspicious of his wife, with a great benignity he dissimulated that he was suspicious certainly that she was guilty of adultery. However, because he alone thought this he did not wish to divulge, preferring more the disclosure to the sinner than to punish the sinner.

Again, Jerome upon that of [Matt. 1:18]:[[5]](#endnote-5) “She was found with child.” Joseph who loved his wife when he saw she was pregnant rebuked her. In truth she not being able to excuse herself from her pregnancy, proven by the witness of her womb, with tears wondered that her husband did not know. When he heard Joseph believed more her way of life as if than his own estimation.

Again, Chrysostom,[[6]](#endnote-6) O inestimable praise of Mary! Joseph believed more her chastity, than her womb, more her grace than nature. Where he believed it more possible that Mary could conceive without a man, than that she could sin.

¶ Again, to express sufficiently the praise of the virgin, neither scripture suffices, nor figure, nor words. Wherefore as a preliminary for the stuttering and being deficient in her praise, they went around through scriptures to explore what matter could be compared to devour. Wherefore also sometimes they compared her to light, because of purity, Esth. 8[:16]: “To the Jews a new light seemed to rise.” Sometimes to fire, because of charity, Exod. 13[:21]: “And the Lord of Israel went before them in a pillar of a cloud, and of fire. Sometimes to beaten gold, because of serenity, 3 Kings 19[:12] Behold “a whistling of a gentle air.” And there sometimes the lady of the earth, because of the stability of the Church. The earth in truth stands in eternity. Sometimes to a fountain, because of fecundity, Cant. 4[:15]: “The fountain of gardens: the well of living waters.”

Again, Mary received Christ because of three reasons: because of humility of mind, because of integrity of faith, because of immensity of love.

¶ Concerning the first, Ruth last chapter [4:16]: “She taking the child laid it in her bosom, and was a nurse unto it and she carried it.” And Luke 1[:48]: “He has regarded his handmaid.”

Concerning the second, Luke 1[:54]: “He has received Israel his servant.”

For the third, Psal. [72:24]: “You have held me by my right hand.”

¶ Again Mary is compared to the cedar because of its incorruptible nature, because of very height, because of its virtuous odor. So Mary lacks the putrification of sin. For putrification is inflicted for sin, but as the blessed virgin escaped this sin through grace, so also the pain of sin which is the corruption of the flesh and this is the argument of Augustine in *Sermone de assumpcione*,[[7]](#endnote-7) if, he says, Christ preserved the virginity of his mother, so he preserved her body from corruption.

¶ Again, the body of Christ and the body of his mother were of the same nature, but the body of Christ was incorruptible, so also his mother.

Concerning the second, Ezech. 31[:3-5]: “Behold, the Assyrian was like a cedar in Libanus, … his height exalted above all the trees.”

Concerning the third, Gen. 3[:15]: “She shall crush your head.” For he who deceived the first woman and conquered her by the second woman has been crushed. Therefore that fits to her of Nahum. 1[:15]: “For Belial shall no more pass through thee again.”

Again, “Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart,” [Luke 2:19]. Because namely the words of the spirits on high, the poor shepherds, the kings and magi, old and young. And these words are called through the four corners of the world, spread out through her to the school teaching of Christ, because these are of integrity they go forth from the spouse of vivacity, and army of holiness, and desire of piety and solace.

First, the word from the east, Luke 1[:37]: “Because no word shall be impossible with God” they go forth.

Second, from the north, Luke [2:15]: “Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass.”

Third, from the south, Acts 13[:48]: “The Gentiles hearing it, were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.”

Fourth, from the west, Luke 2[:29]: “Now you do dismiss your servant, O Lord, according to your word.” Because certainly they observed the word of his law with the rest.

Again, Mary was marvelous and as far as her name and as far as the matter and as far as the name because *Ya* is the name of God. Wherefore Maria is morally as if the mother of God. Nor can Mary be named unless God is named.

Second, as far as the matter because then she contains the name of God, however she contains in her bosom that one of the Lord.

¶ That this virgin gave birth without suffering can be the persuasion for a certain glory which says that Adam while Eve was formed by him saw the secrets of heaven and was in joy. Just so it happened concerning John the evangelist when he reclined upon the chest of Jesus.

¶ Therefore since the first woman was formed without pain, it follows that the first man lacking a temporal father, namely, Christ would be born from his mother without pain and this is what the angel said to Mary [Luc. 1:28]: “Ave,” that is, without (*a*) woe (*vae*) in giving birth. The whole trinity sent these three letters to Mary through the angel when he said, “Ave.” For the first letter .a. the Father sent about whom it is said, “I am Alpha,” [Apoc. 22:13]. The second letter .v. the Holy Spirit sent who is called, “Unction,” [1 John 2:27]. The third letter .e. the Son sent who is called, “Emmanuel,” [Matt. 1:23]. Truly, therefore, Mary is called, “Full of grace,” [Luke 1:28], because according to Bernard above,[[8]](#endnote-8) Mary was sent to all and all things were made so that from her plenitude all might receive, the captive redemption, the sick treatment, the sorrowing consolation, the guilty pardon, the just grace, the angel joy, God flesh, the Trinity glory, so that now there would not be one who hides from his heat. Therefore concerning this that is explained in Eccli. 24[:26]: “Come over to me, all you that desire me.” So that he might say that of Isai. 55[:1]: “All you that thirst, come to the waters.” Concerning her beauty it is said in Esth. 2[:15]: “For she was exceeding fair.” About which note in the book,[[9]](#endnote-9) it is narrated how the cleric lost his eye in looking at Mary.

1. Augustine, *De natura et gratia* 36.42 (PL 44:267): Excepta itaque sancta virgine Maria, de qua propter honorem Domini nullam prorsus cum de peccatis agitur, haberi volo quaestionem: unde enim scimus quid ei plus gratiae collatum fuerit ad vincendum omni ex parte peccatum, quae concipere ac parere meruit, quem constat nullum habuisse peccatum? hac ergo Virgine excepta, si omnes illos sanctos et sanctas, cum hic viverent, congregare possemus et interrogare utrum essent sine peccato, quid fuisse responsuros putamus? utrum hoc quod iste dicit, an quod Joannes apostolus? Rogo vos, quantalibet fuerint in hoc corpore excellentia sanctitatis, si hoc interrogari potuissent, nonne una voce clamassent, Si dixerimus quia peccatum non habemus, nos ipsos decipimus, et veritas in nobis non est?  [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Augustine, *Sermo* 194.3 (PL 39:2106): Exsultat Maria, et matrem se laeta miratur, et de Spiritu sancto se peperisse gaudet: nec quia peperit innupta, terretur; sed quia genuerit, cum exsultatione miratur. Gaudeamus ergo et nos, fratres, in die tantae Virginis, quae dum desponsaretur fabro, coeli nupsit architecto.

Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Catena in Matt. 1:9: Augustine, in Sermone 6 de Nativ.: Nascitur ab intacta femina Christus quia fas non erat, ut virtus per voluptatem, castitas per luxuriam, per corruptionem incorruptio nasceretur. Nec poterat novo ordine adventare de celo, qui vetustum mortis destruere veniebat imperium.

<http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/cmt01.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Catena in Matt. 1:10: Augustine, *In sermone 14 de Nativitate*: intelligens enim Joseph Marie uterum gravidari, turbatur quod Mariam quam de templo Domini acceperat et nondum cognoverat gravidam sentiebat; secumque estuabat disputans et dicens quid faciam prodo aut taceo si prodidero, adulterio non consentio, sed vitium crudelitatis incurro quia secundum Moysi sententiam lapidandam eam esse cognosco. Si tacuero, malo consentio et cum adultgeris portionem meam pono. Quoniam erogo tacere malum est, adulterium prodere peius est, dimittam eam a coniugio.

<http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/cmt01.html>

Cf. Hugh Ripelin of Strasburg, *Compendium Theologicae Veritatis* 6.38 (8:228b): Multis dse causis beata Virgo fuit desponsata viro: primo, ut designaret Ecclesiam desponsatam Christo, quae similiter est virgo; secundo, ut Joseph testis esset integerrimae castitatis ejus; tertio, ut per Joseph origo ejus ostenderetur, quia per viros genealogia texitur; quarto, no infamaretur, si generaret non habens maritum; quinto, ne velut incontinens damnaretur, quia de tribu erat sacerdotali, et tales comburebantur, aliae adulterae lapidabantur...octavo, no Judaei Christum tanquam illegitimum juste persequi viderentur; nono, nelegi, quae commendat matrimonium, contrariari Dominus videretur. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Augustine, *Sermones de Scripturis* 82.7.10 (PL 38:510): Nam si solus nosti quia peccavit in te, et eum vis coram omnibus arguere; non es correptor, sed proditor. Attende quemadmodum vir justus, Joseph, tanto flagitio quod de uxore fuerat suspicatus, tanta benignitate pepercit, antequam sciret unde illa conceperat: quia gravidam senserat, et se ad illam non accessisse noverat.

Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Catena in Matt. 1:10: Augustinus de Verb. Dom. Vel aliter: si solus nosti quia aliquis peccaverit in te, eum vis coram hominibus arguere, non es corrector sed proditor. Unde vir iustus Ioseph tanto flagitio quod de uxore fuerat suspicatus, magna benignitate pepercit. Aestuabat utique certa adulterii suspicio; et tamen, quia ipse solus sciebat, noluit eam divulgare sed occulte dimittere, volens prodesse peccanti, non punire peccantem.

<http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/cmt01.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Evangelium Matthaei* 1.18 (PL 26:24): Non ab alio inventa est nisi a Joseph, qui pene licentia maritali futurae uxoris omnia noverat. Quod autem dicitur, Antequam convenirent: non sequitur, ut postea convenerint; sed Scriptura quod factum non sit, ostendit. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum* Homilia 1 ex cap. 1 (PG 56:633): O inaestimabilis laus Mariae! Magis credebat castitati ejus, quam utero ejus: et plus gratiae, quam naturae. Conceptionem manifeste videbat, et fornicationem suspicari non poterat. Possibilius esse credebat mulierem sine viro posse concipere, quam Mariam posse peccare. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Augustine, (or Ambrose), *Sermo* 208.4 (PL 39:2131): 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. Quae enim haec virgo tam sancta, ad quam venire dignaretur Spiritus sanctus? quae tam speciosa, ut eam sibi Deus eligeret sponsam? quae tam casta, ut esse posset virgo post partum? Haec est Dei templum, fons ille signatus, et porta in domo Domini clausa. Ad hanc namque, ut dixi, Spiritus sanctus descendit, huic virtus Altissimi obumbravit. Haec est immaculata coitu, fecunda partu, virgo lactans, Angelorum et hominum cibum nutriens. Merito itaque beata singulari a nobis praeconio extollitur, quae singulare commercium mundo praebuit. Denique tantum se ad coeli fastigia sublevavit, ut Verbum in principio apud Deum de superna coeli arce susciperet. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Bernard, *Sermones de tempore* Sermo de duodecim praerogativis BVM 2 (PL 183:430): Denique omnibus omnia facta est, sapientibus et insipientibus copiosissima charitate debitricem se fecit. Omnibus misericordiae sinum aperit, ut de plenitudine ejus accipiant universi, captivus redemptionem, aeger curationem, tristis consolationem, peccator veniam, justus gratiam, angelus laetitiam, denique tota Trinitas gloriam, Filii persona carnis humanae substantiam; ut non sit qui se abscondat a calore ejus. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Libro, cf. William de Lancea, *Diaetae salutis* 5.3 (8:296a-b): Fides etiam comparatur oculo dextero. Sinister oculus est ratio quæ solum de naturalibus judicat dexter vero fides quæ omnia tam naturalia quam miracula determinat et intellectum *in obsequium Christi* captivat ut dicit Apostolus Et sicut qui amisit oculum dextrum inutilis est ad bella quia scutum operit sinistrum et sic nullum habet oculum quo videat ferire vel cavere adversarium: sic qui non habet fidem inutilis est ad pugnam spiritualem Unde Naas dicit hominibus vel viris Jabez Galaad: *In hoc feriam vobisDe cum fædus ut eruam omnium oculos dextros* ut habetur in libris Regum. Naas interpretatur *serpens* vel *coluber* et signat serpentem antitur quum id est diabolum qui nititur eruere oculum dextrum id est fidem ut ad bellum spirituale hominem reddat inutilem Ipse enim est corvus infernalis qui cum cadavera invenit primum oculum invadit. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)