

The temple in images of the Annunciation: a double dogmatic symbol according to the Latin theological tradition (6th-15th centuries)

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Abstract. This article² aims to unveil the doctrinal meanings that many Church Fathers and theologians have deciphered in some Old Testament terms such as *templum*, *tabernaculum*, *domus Sapientiae*, *arca* and other similar expressions related to sacred spaces or containers. In many specific cases, they have interpreted these expressions as metaphors or symbols of the Virgin Mary's womb and Christ's human nature. As a consequence, these interpretive approaches are reflected in some images of the Annunciation of the 14th and 15th centuries. So this article will analyze first a selected set of patristic, theological, and liturgical texts, and secondly, will examine eight paintings of the Annunciation with a temple-shaped house to see if there is an essential relation between those exegetical texts and these pictorial images. Based on that double analysis, it seems reasonable to conclude that the temple depicted in these Annunciations is a visual metaphor that illustrates the doctrinal meanings decrypted by the Fathers and theologians in their interpretations of the textual metaphors mentioned above.

Keywords: Annunciation; *templum Dei*; Latin Patristics; Christ's incarnation; Mary's divine motherhood.

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Resumen. Este artículo tiene como objetivo desvelar los significados doctrinales que muchos Padres y teólogos de la Iglesia han descifrado en algunos términos del Antiguo Testamento, como *templum*, *tabernaculum*, *domus Sapientiae*, *arca* y otras expresiones similares relacionadas con espacios o contenedores de lo sagrado. En muchos casos específicos, interpretaron estas expresiones como metáforas o símbolos del vientre de la Virgen María y la naturaleza humana de Cristo. Como consecuencia, estos enfoques interpretativos se reflejan en algunas imágenes de la Anunciación de los siglos XIV y XV. Por lo tanto, este artículo analizará primero un selecto conjunto de textos patristicos, teológicos y litúrgicos, y en segundo lugar analizará ocho pinturas de la Anunciación con una casa en forma de templo, para ver si hay alguna relación esencial entre esos textos exegéticos y esas imágenes pictóricas. Basado en ese doble análisis, parece razonable concluir que el templo representado en estas Anunciaciones es una metáfora visual que ilustra los significados doctrinales descifrados por los Padres y teólogos en sus interpretaciones de las metáforas textuales antes mencionadas.

Palabras clave: Anunciación; *templum Dei*; Patrística Latina; encarnación de Cristo; maternidad divina de María.

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1. Introduction

Systematic research into the primary sources of Christian doctrine has long provided us with a series of surprising findings. One of them is the countless series of comments with which, for more than a millennium

—from at least the 3rd to the 15th century— many Fathers and theologians of the Greek-Eastern and Latin Churches interpret several Old Testament expressions, such as “*templum Dei*,” “abode of the Most High,” “house of Wisdom,” “sanctuary,” “tabernacle,” “altar,” “ark,” and other similar metaphorical expressions related to spaces

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or containers devoted to the sacred. In this specific case, the most surprising outcome is the substantial exegetical agreement of all thinkers, both Eastern and Western, since they all agree in considering such expressions according to a double and complementary Christological and Mariological projection. All those Fathers and theologians from East and West agree in interpreting these biblical expressions as textual metaphors of God the Son's incarnation in Mary's virginal womb, as well as Mary's virginal divine motherhood.

In this article we restrict ourselves to consider only some exegetical testimonies that the Latin Fathers and theologians provide in this regard from the 6th to the 15th century, thus complementing what we have exposed in another article on similar explanation proposed by the Latin Church Fathers since the 3rd century until the Second Council of Constantinople (553)³. Furthermore, these two articles are complemented by another study in which we address the interpretations given by the Greek-Eastern Fathers from the 3rd to the 9th century on these metaphorical expressions⁴. It should be pointed out that what we show in the current article is only a small set of Latin exegetical texts, selected from among the many that we have so far registered, a selective restriction needed in order not to overstretch this article.

On the other hand, our frequent examination of the images of medieval sacred art soon revealed the existence of many pictures of the Annunciation in whose scene the house of Mary exhibits a precise shape of temple or chapel. Such a finding could not surprise us, since, as the essential content of the medieval Christian image is based on doctrinal texts, it was easy to suppose that the many exegetical comments mentioned above would have some reflection on the sacred iconography of the Middle Ages.

Because of both findings, in this article, we will first proceed to analyze a series of texts alluding to the textual metaphors under study. Then we will examine eight paintings of the Annunciation that include a house with a (more or less explicit) temple aspect. The comparative analysis of both sets, texts, and images will allow deducing some reasonably founded iconographic interpretations of these eight Annunciations⁵.

2. Analysis of patristic, theological and liturgical texts on the figure of *templum Dei* and other similar metaphors

It should be pointed out at the outset that the robust and ancient Christian doctrinal tradition on the interpretation of the metaphorical expressions *templum*, *tabernaculum*,

domus Sapientiae, *sanctuarium Trinitatis*, *arca*, and other similar metaphors alluding to spaces or containers of the godhead is documented with high abundance and diversity not only in exegetical writings of well-known Church Fathers and theologians but also in countless medieval Latin liturgical hymns, almost all anonymous, which were sung at various times of customary rituals or devotional acts and some festivals religious of the liturgical year. For this reason, we will analyze separately in the following two subsections some representative texts of both sets: in the first, we will study many explanatory texts by Fathers and theologians; in the second subsection, we will bring a few stanzas drawn from medieval liturgical hymns.

It should be pointed out from now on that, despite their substantial unanimity of criteria when interpreting the expressions mentioned above as metaphors for God the Son's incarnation in Mary's virginal womb, the Fathers and theologians of the East and the Occident adopted, however, three exegetical variants, not antithetical, but complementary, depending on the emphasis given to one or the other of the protagonists of this incarnation: most of them assumed an exclusively Mariological variant, which considers that the *templum Dei* and other similar expressions symbolize Mary, and more specifically her virginal womb; some believed another Christological option, which recognizes that these symbolize Christ, and specifically, the human body or nature to which He unites his divine nature when incarnating; only a few adopted a third variant, the double variant, simultaneously, Mariological and Christological, because they consider that these expressions mean both the body of Christ and the womb of Mary, for the simple reason that God the Son took his human body from the belly of the Virgin.

2.1. The interpretive tradition in Church Fathers and medieval theologians since the 6th century

In the middle of the 6th century, St. Justus, Bishop of Urgell, ranks among the defenders of the Christological interpretation. In writing on the *Song of Songs*, he interprets the Apostle John's quote, "And my prayer came to your holy temple," saying that we must understand as the right Lord's temple this human body whom the fullness of God united in Mary's virginal womb and helped Humanity by redeeming it⁶.

Probably towards the end of the 6th century or the beginning of the 7th century, the exquisite Italian poet and hymnographer St. Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530-c. 607/609), Bishop of Poitiers, stands on the double interpretive variant, Mariological and Christological at the

³ We have studied this subject in the paper Salvador-González, José María, 2020b, "Latin theological interpretations on *templum Dei* until the Second Council of Constantinople (553): a double Christological and Mariological symbol" (article under revision in an academic journal).

⁴ See Salvador-González, José María, 2020c, "Greek Fathers's interpretations on *templum Dei* as a double theological metaphor (3th-9th centuries)" (article under revision in an academic journal).

⁵ The current article complements what we have dealt with in the following three papers: Salvador-González, José María, 2020a, "Iconographic interpretation of the temple as a theological symbol in images of The Annunciation of the 14th and 15th centuries", *Fenestella. Inside Medieval Art*, 1 (in press); Salvador-González, José María, 2020b, "Latin theological interpretations on *templum Dei* until the Second Council of Constantinople (553): a double Christological and Mariological symbol"; Salvador-González, José María, 2020c, "Greek Fathers's interpretations on *templum Dei* as a double theological metaphor (3th-9th centuries)" (the last two articles are under revision in two academic journals).

⁶ "Et veniet oratio mea ad templum sanctum tuum (*Ion.* 2, 8)... Melius ille solus intellegendus est Domini fuisse veridicum templum quem divina sibi plenitudo in uterum virginalem coniunxit et humano generi redimendo succurrit." (Justus Urgellensis, *Super Cantica, Ion.* 8. In Sergio Alvarez Campos (comp.), 1981, *Corpus Marianum Patristicum*, Burgos, Aldecoa, vol. VI, 352).

same time. Thus, in a comment on the Creed, he asserts that Christ, born of God the Father before all centuries, later made his temple (his body) by the work of the Holy Spirit; for just as in the sanctification of the divine Spirit there is no fragility, so no corruption appeared in her delivery; in this way, the unique one (Only-Begotten) in heaven and unique (only-begotten) on earth, accepted to enter the world through Virgin Mary's door (vulva)⁷. In another passage from this same sermon, Fortunatus points out that affirming that Christ chose for himself to form the temple of his human body in Mary's womb means that he preserved her virginity in conceiving and giving birth to him⁸. Thus the author states that even identifying this metaphor of *templum Dei* with Christ's human body formed from Virgin's bowels, such metaphor necessarily implies the preservation of Mary's virginity in Christ's conception, or, in other words, necessarily involves Mary's virginal divine motherhood and Christ's supernatural conception/incarnation in Virgin's immaculate entrails.

However, complementing this Christological interpretation, Venantius Fortunatus also subscribes to the Mariological projection, when in a versed hymn in honor of Christ and the Virgin Mary he proclaims in lyrical outpourings:

Happy virginity, which is worthy of the Almighty with childbirth,
The one that deserved to beget her Creator.
The Creator's temples are the virgin's modest members,
And God Himself dwells in such an abode.
How much can the wife please for her virginity
Whom his mother delights but as a virgin!⁹

Venantius Fortunatus is thus, to our knowledge, the last Latin thinker to subscribe simultaneously to the two exegetical versions, Mariological and Christological, on the figure of the *templum Dei* and similar metaphorical expressions. All the Latin authors that we will analyze be-

low will restrict their interpretation to the Mariological variant.

In the first half of the 7th century, the Spanish polygraph scholar St. Isidore, archbishop of Seville (c. 556-636), in one of his many apologetic writings, describes the Virgin Mary as "clear lineage of David, a stem of Jesse, closed orchard, sealed fountain, Mother of the Lord, temple of God, tabernacle of the Holy Spirit, Holy Virgin, virgin recently delivered, a virgin before childbirth, virgin after childbirth", for which she welcomed the greeting of the angel Gabriel and recognized the mystery of her conception¹⁰.

Towards the middle of the 11th century the Benedictine reformer St. Peter Damian (1007-1072), bishop of Ostia and cardinal, declares in his 15th sermon on the birth of Mary that, as the redemption of humankind was impossible if Christ had not been born of the Virgin, so it was also necessary for the Virgin to be born in whom the Word of God could incarnate¹¹. Therefore, it was convenient for the King of heaven to build a house first, according to Solomon's sentence "Wisdom has built her house," a home in which God deigned to have his lodging when descending to earth¹². This house has been built by the Eternal Wisdom for herself in such a way that it [Mary's womb] was worthy to receive and procreate her [the Eternal Wisdom] from the entrails of her immaculate flesh¹³. Some lines later the author asks this rhetorical question: if Solomon solemnly celebrated with Israel's people the dedication of a temple made with stones with such an abundant and magnificent sacrifice, how much joy should the birth of Mary give the Christian people, in whose womb, as a holy temple, God himself deigned to take human nature from her and live visibly with humanity?¹⁴ Peter Damian goes on to say that, although we believe that God descended to that temple of Solomon, however, God accepted to remain in our favor in a much more beautiful and happy way in this reasonable sanctuary that is Virgin's womb, in which "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."¹⁵ A few lines later, the author

⁷ "Qui natus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine. Ille qui de Patre ante saecula natus est, postea de Spiritu Sancto, cujus templum in Virgine fabricatum est intelligendum. Nam sicut in sanctificatione spiritus nulla fragilitas exstitit, sic nec in partu ejusdem causa corruptionis apparuit. Qui in coelis unus, in terris unicus, per portam Virginis ingredi mundum dignatus est." (Venantius Fortunatus, *Miscellanea. Liber XI, Caput Primum. Expositio Symboli*. PL 88, 348).

⁸ Venantius Fortunatus, *Miscellanea 10, 1, 32. Expositio orationis Dominicae*. PL 88, 318.

⁹ "Virginitas felix, quae partu est digna Tonantis,
Quae meruit Dominum progenerare suum.
Templa Creatoris sunt membra pudica puellae,
Et habitat proprius tale cubile Deus,
Quantum sponsa potest de virginitate placere,
Ipsa cui genetrix non nisi virgo placet." (Venantius Fortunatus, *Miscellanea. Liber VIII. In nomine Domini nostri Iesu Christi et Dominae Mariae Matris eius de virginitate*. PL 88, 268-269).

¹⁰ "Maria (quae interpretatur Domina sive Illuminatrix), clara stirps David, Virga Jesse, Hortus conclusus, Fons signatus, Mater Domini, Templum Dei, Sacrarium Spiritus sancti. Virgo sancta, Virgo feta (fecunda o fecundada), virgo ante partum, virgo post partum, salutationem ab angelo accepit et mysterium conceptionis agnovit". (Isidorus Hispalensis, *De ortu et obitu Patrum*, 111. PL 83, 148).

¹¹ "Sicut ergo impossibile erat ut humani generis redemptio fieret, nisi Dei Filius de Virgine nasceretur; ita etiam necessarium fuerat ut Virgo, ex qua Verbum caro fieret, nasceretur." (Petrus Damianus, *Sermo XLV. II. In Nativitate Beatissimae Virginis Mariae (VIII Sept.)*, PL 144, 741).

¹² "Oportebat quippe prius aedificari domum, in quam descendens coelestis Rex habere dignaretur hospitium. Illam videlicet, de qua per Salomonem dicitur: "Sapientia aedificavit sibi domum". (Ibid.).

¹³ "Quam utique aeterna Sapientia, quae attingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponit omnia suaviter (Sap. VIII), talem construxit quae digna fieret illum suscipere, et de intemeratae carnis suae visceribus procreare." (Ibid.).

¹⁴ "Nam si Salomon cum israelitico populo, in dedicatione templi ex lapidibus facti, tam copiosum et magnificentum sacrificium solemniter celebravit [III Reg. viii]; quale quantumque gaudium beatae Mariae nativitas populo Christiano debet afferre, in cuius utero, velut revera sacratissimum templum, Deus ipse descendens, et humanam naturam ex ea suscipere, et cum hominibus dignatus est visibiliter habitare?" (Ibid.).

¹⁵ "Licet enim et in illud Salomonis templum Deus descendisse credendus sit, in hoc tamen rationabili sanctuario, hoc est, in beatissimae Virginis utero, multo mirabilius multoque felicius dignatus est manere pro nobis, in quo Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis (Joan. I)." (Ibid., 741-

states that God descended to this temple amid the darkness of Jews' infidelity; and not only deigned to descend to this temple, which is Virgin Mary's womb but from it, he took our mortal human nature for himself and united it to his perfect divine nature¹⁶.

In the last decades of the 11th century, the Italian Benedictine theologian St. Anselm of Aosta (1033-1109), archbishop of Canterbury, in prayer in honor of the Virgin calls her "the royal hall of universal propitiation, the cause of general reconciliation, the vessel and the temple of life and salvation for all people"; then he declares himself incompetent to review all the benefits that she granted him and people, which acclaims her as their lady¹⁷. Moreover, in his 53rd sermon in praise of Mary, he pleads for her help and mercy, lauding her as the inviolate and incomparable Virgin Mother of God, "the most grateful temple of God, the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit, the door of heaven," through which all humankind lives after God¹⁸.

In another speech in honor of the Virgin, Anselm extols her as the Mother of God, the temple of the living God, the royal palace of the eternal King, the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit (*O beata Dei genitrix, virgo Maria, templum Dei vivi, aula Regis aeterni, sacrarium Spiritus sancti*)¹⁹. According to the author, for a unique, incomparable privilege and miracle, she made possible for the Word of God, begotten of God the Father before all centuries, to also become her son, being at the same time God and man (*cui novo et inaudito miraculo datum est ut Verbum quod ante saecula Deus genuit, fieret filius tuus, Deus et homo*)²⁰.

In prayer in homage to the Virgin St. Anselm glorifies her with these lyrical expressions:

Mary, temple of the Lord,
Tabernacle of the Paraclete,
The honor of the saint virgins,
The comfort of those who grieve²¹.
Finally, in a psalter to celebrate Mary, he proclaims with gratitude:

Hail, heavenly mansion.
Through whose temple,
We receive the incarnate
The mercy of God²².

A few stanzas later St. Anselm exclaims:

Hail, the temple of Jerusalem,
That has a heavenly form,
From whose sanctuary
The vision of the Father came²³.

In the first decades of the 12th century, the Benedictine monk and cardinal Geoffrey of Vendôme (c.1070-1132) points out in a sermon on Christ's Nativity that "the most beautiful and incomparable Virgin Mary", from whose womb the Son of God came to us (*templum Domini est Maria beatissima et incomparabilis virgo, de cujus utero ad nos venit Dei Patris imago*), is not only the temple's door predicted by the prophet Ezekiel, but is also "the Lord's temple", from whose womb the God's *Imago* (Christ) came to us (*Haec porta templi, et templum Domini est Maria beatissima et incomparabilis virgo, de cujus utero ad nos venit Dei Patris imago*)²⁴.

Around the same years, Peter Abelard and St. Bernard of Clairvaux joined the widespread Mariological interpretation of *templum Dei* and other similar metaphorical expressions. The controversial scholastic philosopher Peter Abelard (1079-1142) testifies in a sermon on the Nativity that the Lord Jesus came to us through the Virgin Mary as if she were a door and as to his temple, while marrying our human nature in it²⁵.

Some years later, the influential Cistercian abbot and reformer St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), commenting on Jesus's virginal birth in a sermon for the Christmas vigil, eulogizes the "unique, painless, candid, incorruptible birth; that consecrates the virginal womb's temple without desecrating it," and the "birth, which

742).

¹⁶ "Ad illud ergo templum Dominus in nebula descendit, ut caecam Judaicae infidelitatis caliginem designaret [...]. Illi, denique templo Deus omnipotens gloriam quidem sui adventus contulit, sed nihil ex eo in sua natura suscepit; in beatissimae autem Virginis uterum non solum dignatus est descendere, sed ex eo etiam perfectam sibi substantiam nostrae mortalitatis unire." (Ibid., 742).

¹⁷ "Tu aula universalis propitiationis, causa generalis reconciliationis, vas et templum vitae et salutis universorum, nimium contraho merita tua, cum in me homunculo vili singulariter recenseo beneficia tua, quae mundus amans gaudet, gaudens clamat esse sua." (Anselmus Cantauriensis, *Orationes sive Meditationes. 7. Oratio ad Sanctam Mariam pro impetrando eius et Christi amore*, In *Obras completas de San Anselmo* (Traducidas por primera vez al castellano. Texto latino de la edición crítica del P. Schmidt). Vol. II, Madrid, La Editorial Católica, Col. BAC, 1953, 316).

¹⁸ Anselmus Cantauriensis, *Oratio LIII. Ad Sanctam Virginem Mariam, et ad Sanctum Ioannem Evangelistam*. PL 158, 960.

¹⁹ Anselmus Cantauriensis, *Oratio LV, Ad eandem sanctam Virginem Mariam*. PL 158, 961.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Maria templum Domini, sacrarium Paracleti, Sacrarum decus virginum, Moerentium solatium." (Anselmus Cantauriensis, *Oratio LXI. Rhythmus ad sanctam Virginem Mariam et ad omnes Sanctos*. PL 158, 965).

²² "Ave coelestis mansio. De cujus templi medio, Suscepimus incarnatam Dei misericordiam." (Anselmus Cantauriensis, *Hymni et Psalterium de Sancta Virgine Maria. Psalterium Dominae nostrae (Pars I)*. PL 158, 1.040).

²³ "Ave templum Hierusalem, Habens coelestem speciem, A cujus sanctuario Processit Patris visio." (Ibid., 1.041).

²⁴ Goffridus Vindocinensis, *Sermo IV. In Nativitate Domini IV*. PL 157, 248.

²⁵ "Per hanc quippe Virginem quasi portam quamdam ad nos quasi in templum suum Dominus ingreditur, dum se in ea nostrae copulat naturae." (Petrus Abelardus, *Sermo II. In Natali Domini*. PL 178, 393).

transcends the laws of nature, although transforming it; unimaginable in the realm of the miraculous, but remedied by the energy of its mystery.”²⁶

And in a sermon on the Virgin’s Purification, St. Bernard puts in a complex circumlocution these rhetorical questions in Mary’s mouth:

Do you think that she could not lament and say: “Why do I need purification? Why abstain from entering the temple, having turned my womb, which knows no man, into a temple of the Holy Spirit? Why should I not enter the temple, I who have given birth to the Lord of the temple? In this conception and this childbirth, there was nothing impure or illicit that should be purified: this is evident being my son the purity’s source and coming to purify the sins [of humankind]. What will the rite purify me, I who have been made pure in the same immaculate delivery?”²⁷

Almost at the same time the German theologian and scientist Honorius of Autun (c. 1080-c. 1157) interprets two biblical quotes –“Whoever created me rested in my tabernacle,” and “In the sun he set his tabernacle”–, in the sense that the Tabernacle of the Church or God is the blessed Virgin Mary, in whom God the Son becoming man rested, and from whom the husband leaves his bridal room²⁸.

More than a century later, the famous Franciscan scholastic teacher and cardinal St. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (c.1217 / 1221-1274), in a sermon on Mary’s Purification, brings some reasonings for justifying to apply these metaphorical concepts to Mary. He begins saying that, from the allegorical perspective, we can say that Mary’s womb is a right temple in which the

entire deity inhabited bodily²⁹. Therefore we can designate it rightly as God’s temple built by the divine power, decorated by the divine wisdom, consecrated by the grace of God and fulfilled with the presence of God³⁰. Bonaventure insists on the idea that the construction of this temple has been made by the Father’s power; its ornamentation, by Son’s wisdom; his consecration, by the Holy Spirit’s grace; its fullness, by the Incarnate Word’s presence³¹. That is due –the author concludes– to the fact that being “the noble triclinium of the whole Trinity,” it is, nonetheless, the incarnate Word’s exclusive temple and abode³².

In another sermon on the Annunciation, when interpreting the *Ecclesiastical* phrase “*He who gave me being rested in my tabernacle*,” St. Bonaventure explains that the Creator (“*He who gave me being*”) and the inhabitant (the one who “*Rested in my tabernacle*”), “are the same person, God and man at the same time” (*Idem enim est Creator et inhabitator, quia idem est Deus et homo*)³³. Then the author confirms that these words alluding to the tabernacle of God “apply, in effect, literally, to the Virgin Mary, in whose tabernacle rested the Lord bodily” (*secundum intellectum litteralem convenit Virgini Mariae, in cuius tabernaculo requievit Dominus corporaliter*)³⁴. A few lines later, St. Bonaventure reiterates:

So let the Virgin Mary say first: *He who created me*, etc., because it conforms literally to her; because the Lord of Majesty himself rested in his tabernacle, as he became a man in her womb; therefore the most excellent prophet says: *The Most High sanctified his tabernacle*. He indeed sanctified by the grace the tabernacle he had made by forming a [human] nature so that he could be born from her³⁵.

²⁶ “O partus solus sine dolore, solus nescius (p. 126) pudoris, corruptionis ignarus, non reserans, sed consecrans virginalis uteri templum! O natiuitas supra naturam, sed pro natura; miraculi excellentia superans, sed reparans virtute mysterii!” (Bernardus Claraevallensis, *In Vigilia Natiuitatis Domini. Sermo Primus*, 1. In *Obras completas de San Bernardo. Edición bilingüe (promovida por la Conferencia Regional Española de Abades Cistercienses, Vol. III. Sermones litúrgicos (I°)*, Madrid, La Editorial Católica, 1985, 127-128).

²⁷ “Putas ergo non poterat moveri animus eius, et dicere: «Quid mihi opus est purificatione? Cur absteineam ab ingressu templi? Cuius uterus, nesciens virum, templum factus est Spiritus Sancti. Cur non ingrediar templum, quae peperit Dominum templi? Nihil in hoc conceptu, nihil in partu impurum fuit, nihil illicitum, nihil purgandum: nimirum cum proles ista fons puritatis sit et purgationem facere venerit delictorum. Quid in me legalis purificet observatio, quae purissima facta sum ipso partu immaculato?» (Bernardus Claraevallensis, *In Purificatione Sanctae Mariae. Sermo Tertius*. In *Obras completas de San Bernardo. Edición bilingüe*, op. cit., 381). We have made the English translation of this text based on the Spanish translation of the Latin text made by the editors of the aforementioned *Obras Completas*.

²⁸ “Quae congratulando subjungit: *Qui me creavit in tabernaculo meo requievit*. Tabernaculum Ecclesiae vel Dei est beata semper virgo Maria, ut dicitur: *In sole posuit tabernaculum suum* (Psal, XVIII, 6). In quo Filius Dei homo veniens requievit, et de quo ut sponsus de thalamo processit (*ibid.*).” (Honorius Augustodunensis, *Sigillum Beatae Mariae ubi exponuntur Cantica Canticatorum*, PL 172, 498).

²⁹ “Secundum allegoriam vero nomine templi datur intelligi uterus Virginis, in quo tota Divinitas corporaliter habitavit”. (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, *I. De Purificatione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III*. In *Obras de San Buenaventura. Edición bilingüe*, vol. IV. *Teología mística*, Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1963, 563-567 We have made the English translation of this text based on the Spanish translation of the Latin text made by the editors of the aforementioned *Obras de San Buenaventura*.

³⁰ “et ideo recte dicitur Dei templum fabricatum divina potentia, adornatum divina sapientia, dedicatum divina gratia et adimpletum divina praesentia.” (*Ibid.*)

³¹ “Debetur enim huius templi fabricatio potentiae Patris; adornatio, sapientiae Filii; dedicatio, gratiae Spiritus sancti; adimpletio, praesentia Verbi incarnati.” (*Ibid.*).

³² “Cum enim sit ‘totius Trinitatis nobile triclinium’, est tamen Verbi incarnati speciale templum et hospitium.” (*Ibid.*). We have made the English translation of this text based on the Spanish translation of the Latin text made by the editors of the aforementioned *Obras de San Buenaventura*.

³³ Bonaventura de Balneoregio, *II. De Annuntiatione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo IV*. In *Obras de San Buenaventura. Edición bilingüe*, Vol. IV. *Teología mística*, op. cit., 626.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ “Primo ergo dicat Virgo Maria: *Qui creavit me* etc., quoniam ei competit ad litteram; ipse enim Dominus Maiestatis requievit in eius tabernaculo, dum homo factus est in eius utero; propter quod dicit eximius Prophetarum: *Sanctificavit tabernaculum suum Altissimus*. Sanctificavit utique per gratiam tabernaculum, quod fabricaverat formando naturam, ut posset nasci ex ea.” (*Ibid.*, 627). We have made the English translation of this text

2.2. Doctrinal tradition on the figure of *templum Dei* and other similar metaphors in medieval Latin liturgical hymnals

The Christian doctrinal tradition that interprets the figure “temple of God” and other analogous metaphors as symbols of Mary (in her virginal divine motherhood) and of Christ (in her virginal conception/incarnation) is also built and strengthened by hymns, songs, antiphons, prayers and other liturgical and devotional expressions produced throughout the Middle Ages, especially from the 11th century onwards. From this extraordinarily rich –although, unfortunately, very little known and, still less, exploited– a medieval liturgical and devotional tradition on the metaphorical expressions under analysis, we now present, as a representative sample, a selection of stanzas extracted from numerous medieval liturgical hymns.

Before starting this new subsection, two preliminary remarks prevail. First, in this specific research the three valuable collections of medieval Latin liturgical hymns compiled in the mid-nineteenth century (1853-1855)³⁶ by the German archivist and historian Franz Joseph Mone (1796-1871), especially the second one³⁷, have been extremely useful to us, to whom we cannot but thank for their enormous work of compilation, transcription and critical edition of those hymns from old and forgotten codices. Second, we will expose the selected liturgical texts without giving further explanation, since they are sufficiently explicit on identifying Mary as God’s temple or similar metaphors, about her virginal divine motherhood and Son of God’s supernatural conception/incarnation in her virginal womb.

To begin with, our anthology of liturgical texts, the Hymn 398, elaborated on the Ave Maria prayer, indicates:

The King of kings entered the chamber of your
womb,
He inhabited it as if it were a tabernacle,

For us, he armed himself to fight
With convenient weapons, with which
He shot down the enemy³⁸.

In the Hymn 480, among other verses of praise to Mary, the following stand out:

Rejoice, the temple of Deity
And the origin of goodness,
For you, peace has been confirmed
And ruin has been restored
That came from Eva³⁹.

Similarly, the Hymn 482 exults with the Virgin by stating:

Rejoice, Mary, temple
From the supreme majesty,
Rejoice, Mary, mirror
Of virginity⁴⁰.

Hymn 484 greets Mary with these metaphorical compliments:

Hail, holy temple of God,
Source of salvation, the door of hope,
All the inmates run towards you
With full confidence⁴¹.

Hymn 522 exalts Mary with these suggestive analogies:

Hail, the temple of the supreme King,
Hail, protector of the flock of Christ,
The flowery stem of Jesé.
Hail, Virgin Savior,
Whose name is Mary,
Refulgent star of the sea⁴².

based on the Spanish translation of the Latin text made by the editors of the aforementioned *Obras de San Buenaventura*..

³⁶ Franc. Jos. Mone, *Hymni Latini Medii Aevi. E codd. Mss. Edidit et adnotationibus illustravit Franc. Jos. Mone. Tomus Primus. Hymni ad Deum et angelos*, Friburgi Brisgoviae, Sumptibus Herder, 1853; *Hymni Latini Medii Aevi. E codd. Mss. Edidit et adnotationibus illustravit Franc. Jos. Mone. Tomus Secundus. Hymni ad. B.V. Mariam*, Friburgi Brisgoviae, Sumptibus Herder, 185; *Tomus Tertius. Hymni ad Sanctos*, Friburgi Brisgoviae, Sumptibus Herder, 1855.

³⁷ Franc. Jos. Mone, *Hymni Latini Medii Aevi. E codd. Mss. Edidit et adnotationibus illustravit Franc. Jos. Mone. Tomus Secundus. Hymni ad. B.V. Mariam*, Friburgi Brisgoviae, Sumptibus Herder, 1854.

³⁸ “Ventris habitaculum Rex regum intravit,

Quasi tabernaculum hoc inhabitavit,
Pugnaturus propter nos ibi se armavit

Armis condecens, quibus hostem stravit.” (“Hymnus 398. Ave Maria”, in Franc. Jos. Mone, *Hymni Latini Medii Aevi, Tomus Secundus. Hymni ad. B.V. Mariam*, op. cit., 102).

³⁹ “Gaude templum Deitatis

Et origo bonitatis,
Per te pax est confirmata
Et ruina restaurata

Ex Eva progrediens.” (“Hymnus 480. De b. virgine oratio”, in Ibid, 196).

⁴⁰ “Gaude, Maria, templum

Summae majestatis,
Gaude, Maria, speculum
Virginitatis.” (“Hymnus 482. De s. Maria”, in Ibid, 200).

⁴¹ “Ave templum sanctum Dei,

Fons salutis, porta spei,
Ad te currunt omnes rei
Plena cum fiducia.” (“Hymnus 484. De b. v. Maria”, in Ibid, 201).

⁴² “Salve, templum summi Regis,

Ave, custos Christi gregis,
Jesse virga florida:

3. Analysis of some images of the Annunciation (14th-15th centuries) with the house of Mary in the form of a temple

The consolidated doctrinal tradition –based on that abundant, multi secular, and concordant series of interpretations of the textual metaphors above in their double Mariological and Christological projections already mentioned– is illustrated in many medieval images of the Annunciation, a Marian event in which God the Son’s incarnation became real. That is why some Annunciations in the 14th and 15th centuries depict Mary’s home in Nazareth with a surprising aspect of temple or chapel⁴³. We will now analyze eight images of the Annunciation that include this particular feature.



Fig. 1. Pietro Cavallini, *The Annunciation*, c. 1296-1300. Apse of the basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere, Roma. Wikimedia Commons. Photo Yorck Project (2002). Public domain

Pietro Cavallini (c. 1250-c. 1330) depicts *The Annunciation*, c. 1296-1300, of the basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere in Rome (Fig. 1), as one of the scenes from the cycle of the *Life of the Virgin* with which he adorned in mosaic the apse of this basilica. Commissioned by Bertoldo Stefaneschi, this cycle also includes the episodes of the *Birth of the Virgin*, the *Nativity of Jesus*, the *Adoration of the Magi*, the *Presentation of Jesus to the temple*, and the *Dormition of the Virgin*.

In this Trastevere *Annunciation* Cavallini places the angel Gabriel on a synthetic landscaped ground (suggested by the plants that grow on it), still walking towards Mary, whom he blesses, while holding the herald’s rod in his left hand. In the middle of the upper edge, God the Father, represented as a haloed head, emits a ray of light that descends on the Virgin, carrying in his wake the Holy Spirit in the form of a

white dove. Holding a closed book in her left hand –proof of having interrupted her prayer/meditation due to the angel’s unexpected arrival– and placing the right hand on her chest as a sign of modesty and fear, Mary is sitting on a throne.

What interests us most in this case is that Cavallini has embedded the Virgin’s throne in a miniaturized construction with the aspect of an altarpiece (the main body) and an altar (the two side tables). Now, bearing in mind that during the Duecento and in most of the Trecento, the architectures represented in the paintings and sculptures to figure buildings or cities were shaped on a tiny scale and with extreme morphological simplicity –almost always synthesized by some of its most connoted parts–, it seems clear that the author of this *Annunciation* of Santa Maria in Trastevere wants to signify through this altarpiece/altar the temple in its entirety: it would thus be an allusion through a metonymy, since a part of a whole (the altarpiece/altar) would represent and mean the whole, in this case, a temple in its entirety. It looks reasonable to conjecture that the intellectual author of this Marian scene –perhaps some friar or cleric who could have iconographically advised the material author, Cavallini⁴⁴– has taken into account the deep symbolic meanings that Mary’s house in the shape of a temple encloses in the decisive salvific episode of the Annunciation, as we have shown in the first part of this article.

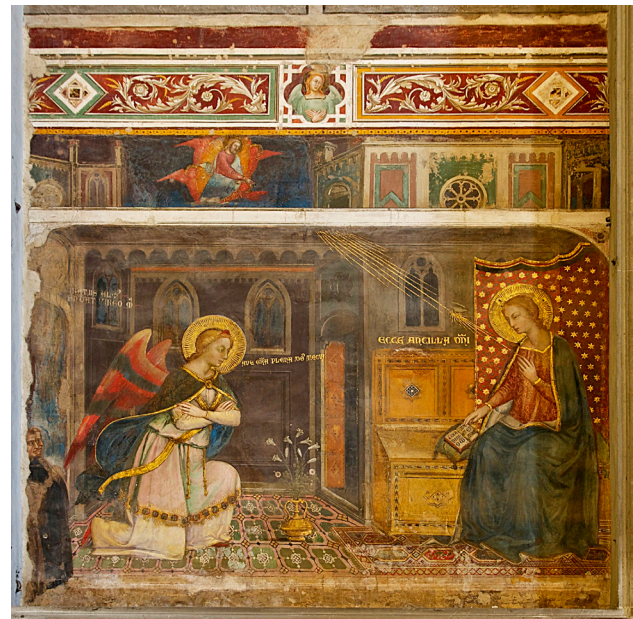


Fig. 2. Jacopo di Cione, *The Annunciation*, c. 1371. Basilica del Convento di San Marco, Florence. Photo Wikimedia Commons: Jebulon.

Salve, Virgo salutaris,
Quae Maria nuncuparis,
Stella maris lucida.” (“Hymnus 522. De b. Maria”, in *Ibid*, 308).

⁴³ More or less in this order of ideas, the prestigious iconographer Louis Réau expresses: “Le décor de la Salutation Angélique s’est transformé au cours des siècles. D’après l’Évangile de Luc et les Apocryphes, la scène se passe dans la maison habitée à Nazareth par Joseph et la Sainte Vierge. Si les textes son peu explicites, ils sont unanimes sur ce point. Cependant l’art chrétien n’en a longtemps tenu aucun compte. Au lieu de localiser l’apparition de l’Ange dans la ‘chambre de la petite maison de Marie’, comme l’imagine le Pseudo-Bonaventure, les artistes ne se font aucun scrupule de la transporter dans un palais ou dans une église, soit même sous un portique ou en plein air au milieu d’un jardin.” (Louis Réau, 1957, *Iconographie de l’Art Chrétien, Tome Second. Iconographie de la Bible. II. Nouveau Testament*, Paris: PUF, 185-186).

⁴⁴ It is known that the cardinal and writer Jacopo Caetani degli Stefaneschi (c. 1270-1343), brother of the principal of these Cavallini mosaics, was the one who wrote the verses that appear inscribed under each of the mosaic scenes of the aforementioned cycle of Life of the Virgin in this Roman basilica. It is therefore not surprising that Cardinal Stefaneschi himself was the one who instructed Cavallini iconographically, inducing him to capture the throne / altarpiece / altar in this Annunciation as a theological symbol of Mary.

Jacopo di Cione (1325-1390), staged *The Annunciation*, c. 1371 of the basilica of the Convento di San Marco in Florence (Fig. 2), in a building with a certain resemblance to a small Christian temple, with an unusual mixture of Romanesque and Gothic elements. This is implied by the Gothic windows of the room and the external towers, one of which features both a Romanesque rose window and the Lombard-inspired blind little arches, also visible in the room above the Gothic windows. Flying over the building in the middle of a mandorla of cherubim, God the Father sends with his right hand towards the Virgin a ray of light, in whose wake the dove of the Holy Spirit is already approaching Mary. Inside the luxurious room, the dialogue between the two protagonists takes place. Kneeling and crossing the arms over his chest, the angel greets the Virgin with the praise AVE GRA[TIA] PLENA DO[MINUS] TECUM, which is seen inscribed in golden letters in a line that leaves his mouth towards Mary. Seated under a purple canopy, leaning down the head with the left hand covering her chest, the Virgin shows her final acceptance of God's plan by pronouncing ECCE ANCILLA D[OMI]NI, which emits from her mouth in a line inscribed in golden letters towards Gabriel. As additional proof of her consent to the design of the Most High, Mary lays her hand on the prayer book—as the one who swears by putting her hand on the Bible does—, whose open pages read Isaiah's prophecy ECCE VIRGO CONCIPIET ET PARIET [FILIUM], announcing the birth of the Messiah in Virgin's womb.

We are interested here in highlighting the (relatively lax) resemblance of a temple that the painter has given to Mary's dwelling, with the probable intention of illustrating in this scene of the Annunciation the doctrinal symbolisms that we explained above.



Fig. 3. The Limbourg Brothers, *The Annunciation*, a miniature of *The Belles Heures of Jean de France, duc de Berry*, c. 1405-1409. The Metropolitan Museum, New York. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Commissioned by John of France, Duke of Berry, the Limbourg Brothers illuminated between 1405 and 1408 or 1409 the splendid devotional book *Les Belles Heures du Duc de Berry*, one of whose full-page miniatures is *The Annunciation* we are analyzing here. Framed by a luxurious fringe full of foliage, prophets, musician angels, naked children, and animals, along with the Duke's two coats of arms, the scene of the Annunciation takes place in a luxurious vaulted room, with a specific appearance of a chapel or ecclesiastical compound. This is suggested by the design of columns, arches, entablatures, and roof, the unusual balcony/pulpit in which God the Father, surrounded by angels, blesses Mary, as well as the elaborate lectern with an ark (to keep books), which is prolonged in the form of a "Solomonic" column and crowned by the statue of Moses with the tablets of the Law.

In that secluded enclosure, the angel, holding a large, symbolic stem of lilies⁴⁵ in his left hand, points with his right index finger to the Virgin as the designated one by the Most High to be the mother of his divine Son. Kneeling on the ground with the hands crossed on her chest, Mary humbly accepts the design of God, while the fertilizing beam of rays coming from God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove arrives on her head. In this miniature, relatively similar to the case of the Cavallini mosaic just analyzed, the small chapel-like room metonymically represents the entirety of a great temple, as a metaphor for the dogmatic meanings that we exposed in the first part of the paper.



Fig. 4. Robert Campin, *The Annunciation*, c. 1420-1425. Prado Museum, Madrid. Photo Prado Museum

Robert Campin (c. 1375-1444) organizes the episode of his *Annunciation*, c. 1420-1425, of the Prado Museum in Madrid (Fig. 4), in the context of an elaborate Gothic temple. Inside her central nave, Mary appears seated on a cushion on the floor, absorbed in reading a great prayer

⁴⁵ We have analyzed the rich doctrinal meanings of the symbol of the stem of lilies in the following papers: Salvador-González, José María, 2013, *Flos de radice Iesse. A hermeneutic approach to the theme of the lily in the Spanish Gothic painting of The Annunciation from patristic and theological sources*. *Eikón Imago*, 4 (2013 / 2): 183-222; Salvador-González, José María, 21014a, "In virga Aaron Maria ostendebatur. Nueva interpretación del lirio en La Anunciación gótica española a la luz de fuentes patrísticas y teológicas", *Anales de Historia del Arte*, 24 (2014): 37-60; Salvador-González, José María. 2014b, "Flos campi et lilium convallium. Third interpretation of lily in the iconography of *The Annunciation* in Italian Trecento art from patristic and theological sources", *Eikón Imago*, 5 (2014)75-96; Salvador-González, José María, 2015b, "Sanctitate vernans virga Aaronis. Interpretation of the stem of lilies in the medieval iconography of the Annunciation according to theological sources". *Oxford Academic Studies Press. Art Studies and Architectural Journal*, vol. 10, n. 9 (2015): 2-32.

book, unaware of the presence of the angel Gabriel. Clad in luxurious red cope, he remains to kneel outside the temple, holding the herald's staff in his right hand. In the upper left corner, God the Father, amid a shining halo and escorted by angels, sends to the Virgin a ray of light, which after passing through a window, reaches Mary, whose head radiates a halo of beams of a similar nature. It should be noted that Robert Campin, if having planned the event of the Annunciation in this vast Gothic church, undoubtedly does so intentionally for suggestively visualizing the exegetical approach according to which Mary is the true *templum Dei*, as shown in the first part of the current paper⁴⁶.



Fig. 5. Jan van Eyck, *The Annunciation in a church*, 1434, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Photo National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

With the robust realism typical of early Flemish painters, Jan van Eyck (c. 1390-1441) designs *The Annunciation in a church*, c. 1434, of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (Fig. 5), in a massive, colossal temple. In the middle of the central nave, the two interlocutors of the Marian event synthetically express the initial and final moments of the well-known dialogue between them. Clad in sumptuous purple cope with gold brocade, the smiling angel Gabriel, pointing upwards to show the origin of his message, pronounces the initial praise AVE GRA[TIA] PLENA, inscribed in gold letters in a line directed towards Mary. She expresses her unrestricted acceptance to the divine will humbly enouncing the sentence ECCE ANCILLA D[OMI]NI, written in golden letters –inverted from top to bottom and from right to left– directed to the heavenly messenger. Meanwhile, the beam of rays of light, descending from the heights, falls into the right ear of Mary, thus signifying the famous thesis of the *conceptio per aurem*⁴⁷.

Apart from the symbolic meanings of the stem of lilies and the open prayer book in front of the Virgin, we are now interested in fixing our interpretive focus on the massive temple into which the artist has transformed the Virgin's abode in this panel. In doing so, the intellectual author of this *Annunciation in a church* –maybe van Eyck himself, or probably a clergyman or friar, acting as the iconographic programmer of this Marian scene– is aware of the profound doctrinal significance that this temple assumes here, as a symbol of the Virgin Mary as the *templum Dei*, in the Mariological and Christological projections that we have explained above.

However, this crucial doctrinal symbolism has gone unnoticed by almost all the commentators on this splendid painting. Some of them, like David M. Robb⁴⁸, Giorgio T Faggini & Albert Châtelet⁴⁹, Lotte Brand Philip⁵⁰, Elisabeth Dhanens⁵¹, Barbara G. Lane⁵², James E. Snyder⁵³, Susie Nash⁵⁴, o Amanda Simpson⁵⁵, do not even mention it. Others, like Craig Harbison⁵⁶, and Till-Holger Borchert⁵⁷, entertain themselves only in the formal or stylistic aspects of the temple. Only a few iconographers,

⁴⁶ When analyzing this Annunciation, Felix Thürlemann (2002, *Robert Campin: a monographic study with critical catalogue*, Munich, Prestel, 196, fig. 208) –who denies the authorship of Robert Campin on it–, ignores the doctrinal symbolism of this painted temple.

⁴⁷ We have studied this issue in the article Salvador-González, 2015a, José María. “*Per aurem intrat Christus in Mariam*. Aproximación iconográfica a la *conceptio per aurem* en la pintura italiana del Trecento desde fuentes patrísticas y teológicas”. *Ilu. Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones*, 20 (2015): 193-230. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_ILUR.2015.v20.50410.

⁴⁸ In his comment on this Washington *Annunciation* David M. Robb (1936, “The Iconography of the Annunciation in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries”, *Art Bulletin*, 18.4, New York, December 1936, 506-508) says nothing on the symbolism of this painted temple.

⁴⁹ Faggini, Giorgio T & Châtelet, Albert, 1969, *Tout l'oeuvre peint des frères Van Eyck*, Paris. Flammarion..

⁵⁰ Philip, Lotte Brand, 1971, *The Ghent Altarpiece and the Art of Jan van Eyck*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 139, fig. 138.

⁵¹ Dhanens, Elisabeth, 1980, *Hubert and Jan van Eyck*, New York: Tabard Press, 355, 358, fig. 221.

⁵² Lane, Barbara G., 1984, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting*. New York, 45-47, fig. 28.

⁵³ Snyder, James E., *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350-1575*. New York, 1985: 103-104, fig. 103.

⁵⁴ Nash, Susie, 2008, *Northern Renaissance Art*. Oxford History of Art. Oxford, 205.

⁵⁵ When commenting this painting by van Eyck, Amanda Simpson (2007, *Van Eyck. The complete work* (London, Chaucer Press, 128 p.2007, 102-103) forget to mention the temple painted here.

⁵⁶ In his comment on this Washington *Annunciation*, Craig Harbison (2008, *Jan van Eyck, The Play of Realism*, Reaktion Books, Londres, 1991, 175-176, fig. 114) comments the painted temple according to a purely formal and stylistic approach, without realising its theological meanings.

⁵⁷ In his extended comment on this *Annunciation* by Jan van Eyck, Till-Holger Borchert (*Van Eyck*. Köln, Taschen, 49-51) only takes into account the formal and stylistic aspects of this temple, without addressing its doctrinal meanings..

such as Panofsky⁵⁸ and Schiller⁵⁹, venture some doctrinal interpretations of specific elements of this temple, although these are gratuitous and unjustified, as not based on documentary arguments.

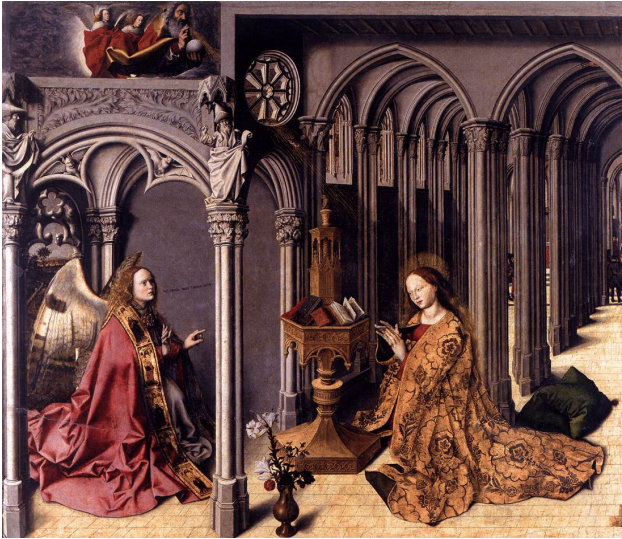


Fig. 6. Barthélemy d'Eyck (attributed), *The Annunciation*, c.1442-1445. Église de Sainte Marie-Madeleine, Aix-en-Provence. Photo Web Gallery of Art.

Barthélemy d'Eyck (*ante 1420-post 1470*) –if he is the author of this work attributed to him– stages *The Annunciation*, c. 1443-1445, of the church of Sainte Marie-Madeleine in Aix-en-Provence (Fig. 6)⁶⁰, in a very original way, in the outstanding context of a large Gothic temple, with an oblique view towards the semi-hidden apse. Covered with a red cope and kneeling in front of Mary, Gabriel begins his announcement with the compliment *Ave Gratia Plena Dominus tecum*, inscribed in a line that leaves his mouth towards its recipient. The crestfallen Virgin, kneeling before an elaborate lectern in which her prayer book is open, extends the arms with the hands outstretched in a gesture that could be interpreted as acceptance of the design of the Most High to make her the mother of his divine Son preserving her virginity. In the upper left corner, the Almighty blesses Mary and breathes into her the fertilizing ray of light, which, traversing the side rosette,

conveys in its wake the minuscule Christ child carrying a cross on his shoulders, before falling upon the Virgin.

Apart from these narrative elements, it suits to highlight in this *Aix Annunciation* the shape of a massive temple that the intellectual author of this painting has given to Virgin's house, wanting to illustrate the deep dogmatic meanings hidden into this painted temple as a symbol of Mary in her status of *templum Dei*. Now, many commentators of this *Aix Annunciation* entertain only in the formal and stylistic features of this painted temple, as it happens in the case of Panofsky⁶¹. To our knowledge, only the Japanese historian Yoshiaki Nishino⁶² gives –based on a quote from Saint Bernard– some brief (quite debatable) iconographic interpretations of the doctrinal meaning of the temple⁶³.



Fig. 7. Petrus Christus (attributed), *The Friedsam Annunciation*, c. 1450. The Metropolitan Museum, New York. Photo: The Metropolitan Museum, New York.

⁵⁸ In his comments on this *Annunciation in a church*, Erwin Panofsky, (1953, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character*. 2 vols. Cambridge, Mass., 1953: 1:137-139, 147-148, 193-194, 2: pl. 111, fig. 238) brings some suggestive, although insufficiently justified “interpretations” on the stylistic romanesque and gothic elements of this temple (windows, murals, tiles) (p. 137-139). Nevertheless he does not interpret the temple as a dogmatic symbol of Mary.

⁵⁹ In her extended comments on this van Eyck *Annunciation*, the prestigious iconographer Gertrud Schiller (1971, *Iconography of Christian Art, Vol.* London, Lund Humphries, 50-52, fig. 116), after repeating many interpretations by Panofski (without mentioning him), asserts in an unjustified way: “We see how the symbolism of the fifteenth century immediately makes the world and nature – mastered for purposes of artistic representation – intelligible. Objects, architectural details, plants and instruments become allusions to transcendental realities. In the process a system of intellectual references and realities was created which was hidden behind the artistic representation of nature, space, the world and movement.” (Schiller, 1971, 50).

⁶⁰ Master of Aix (probably Barthélemy d'Eyck (*ante 1420-post 1470*), *The Annunciation*, c.1443-45, oil on wood, 155x176 cm. Église Ste. Marie-Madeleine, Aix-en-Provence.

⁶¹ Erwin Panofsky (1953, 133-134, 307, note 277¹, and note 305²) says nothing about the doctrinal symbolism of the temple painted in this *Aix Annunciation*.

⁶² Nishino, Yoshiaki, 1999, “*Le Triptyque de l'Annonciation d'Aix et son Programme iconographique*”, *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. 20, n° 39 (1999): 55-74.

⁶³ In that order of ideas, Yoshiaki Nishino points out: “L'Annonciation [de Barthélemy d'Eyck en Aix-en-Provence] a, en effet, lieu à l'intérieur d'une église, lieu que St. Bernard qualifie de ‘chambre pudique’ ou ‘chambre virginale’ où la Vierge se retire pour prier Dieu; dans ce contexte, la Vierge est elle-même comparée à une église, au Temple de Salomon, à l'Arche de l'Alliance, et est appelée ‘verbi palatium’, palais du verbe fait chair.” (Nishino, 1999: 65).

However, as much as they have gone unnoticed by most of the commentators on this work by Barthélemy d'Eyck, the doctrinal implications symbolized in the temple painted in this *Aix Annunciation* have extraordinary relevance, as we have shown above, based on an abundant *corpus* of patristic and theological arguments.

Petrus Christus (c. 1410/15–c. 1475/76) –if he painted this work attributed to him– structures *The Friedsam Annunciation*, c. 1450, from the Metropolitan Museum in New York, according to an entirely exceptional arrangement. When placing the Virgin standing on the narthex's lintel of a temple with the door closed behind her, while the angel Gabriel is outside, the author of this painting creates a unique case in the context of the 15th-century Flemish painting.

This panel has sparked a series of debates on its authorship among prestigious experts, including Max J. Friedländer⁶⁴ and Erwin Panofsky. They have assigned it to Jan van Eyck, or his brother Hubert van Eyck or the van Eyck brothers' workshop, while other specialists agree in attributing it to Petrus Christus, an attribution that for now remains the most acceptable. On the other hand, almost all historians and iconographers who have analyzed this painting, such as Friedländer, Panofsky, or Elisabeth Dhanens⁶⁵, have focused only on historiographical and formalist questions, such as authorship, style, technique, and historical record.

Apart from these positivist discussions, the relatively few experts who have formulated some iconographic interpretations of this *Annunciation*, such as Panofsky⁶⁶ or Gertrud Schiller⁶⁷, are content to see the opposition between some Romanesque and Gothic elements present on the temple façade as a metaphorical image of the opposition between Judaism (the Romanesque) and Christianity (the Gothic), or in the extended (fundamentally wrong) advice that lilies signify the purity of Mary⁶⁸, or even in the unwarranted claim that this painted temple identifies Mary as the institutional Church.

We will not stop now to enter into these interminable historiographical debates or formalist disquisitions since our interest is to present sufficient documentary arguments to justify that this temple is a double symbol of Mary and Christ, as we have shown above. That will contribute, by rebound, to dismantle some straightforward “interpretations” given so far on the temple painted in this unusual *Annunciation*.



Fig. 8. The Master of Charles de France, *The Annunciation*, a miniature of the *Livre d'Heures de Charles de France*, 1465. Metropolitan Museum, New York

The double-paged *Annunciation* depicted by the Master of Charles of France (active c. 1450-1475) in the *Livre d'Heures de Charles de France*, 1465, that belonged to Charles, Duke of Normandy and brother of King Louis XI, and today at the Metropolitan Museum of New York, is an exceptional case within the selection of works that we are analyzing. With a very refined and precious style, the artist imagines this Marian event in a context of extraordinary decorative exuberance. On the left page, the angel Gabriel, kneeling on the ground and holding the herald's staff in the left hand, remains in the square, without having entered the building, while a long procession of musical angels descending from heaven is behind him. Flying over Gabriel's head, the dove of the Holy Spirit directs a wide beam of rays of light towards the Virgin.

On the right page, Mary stands within an elaborate and luxurious golden Gothic temple, filled with columns, pinnacles, niches, and sculptures of prophets, apostles, and saints. Seated facing forward on a red cushion on the floor and holding open her prayer book, the Virgin slightly turns the face to her right, as if signifying the dialogue she establishes with the heavenly messenger. At the bottom of that scene, in the apse of the temple, a priest officiates the Mass in the presence of some faithful, a detail that means the essential continuity between the episode of the Annunciation –in which the instantaneous Christ's conception/incarnation is accomplished– and Christian religion, founded by who at this very moment is being conceived in Mary's virginal womb. That allusion to Christianity is also highlighted in the form

⁶⁴ Max J. Friedländer, 1924, *Die altniederländische Malerei*. Vol. 1, *Die Van Eyck, Petrus Christus*. Berlin, 158; and Max J. Friedländer et al. 1967, *Early Netherlandish Painting*. Vol. 1, *The van Eycks-Petrus Christus*. New York, 89, 102-4, 110 n. 67, pl. 95.

⁶⁵ In her comment on this painting, Elisabeth Dhanens (1980, *Hubert and Jan van Eyck*. New York, pp. 355-356, ill.) observes that it has sometimes been attributed to Hubert but is more likely to be by Petrus Christus.

⁶⁶ Erwin Panofsky (1953, vol. 1, pp. 133-34, 226, 230-32, 278, 305, 412 n. 3, p. 451 n. 2; vol. 2, pl. 152).

⁶⁷ Gertrud Schiller (1971, 49-50, fig. 115), following essentially Panofsky's interpretations (without mentioning him), repeats the stylistic-formalist analyzes of this church, before stating without any documented justification: “Mary, standing on the threshold of the church between the Old and New Testaments is conceived as the gateway to salvation.” (Schiller, 1971, 50).

⁶⁸ We have already explained in other texts (see the preceding Note 45) that the stem of lilies in the images of the Annunciation simultaneously signifies the supernatural conception / incarnation of God the Son in the womb of the Virgin Mary (the lily flower), and the virginal divine motherhood de Mary (the stem).

of the Gothic temple embodied here. However, beyond this primary and superficial meaning, we are interested in putting in evidence documentarily the deeper Mariological and Christological contents –already explained– that this temple represented here contains.

4. Conclusions

After this double comparative analysis of texts and images undertaken in this article, some conclusions look reasonable:

1. During the millennium between the 6th and the 15th century, many Latin Church Fathers and theologians interpreted some biblical expressions with a substantial agreement such as *templum Dei*, “abode of the Most High”, *domus Sapientiae*, “sanctuary,” “tabernacle,” and other similar words related to spaces or containers devoted to the sacred, as metaphors for the incarnation of God the Son in the virginal womb of Mary. Incidentally, such agreement goes hand in hand with a similar interpretative understanding that on those same metaphorical terms is manifested not only by the Latin Fathers from the 3rd century to the Second Council of Constantinople (553) but also by the Greek-Eastern Fathers during the Middle Ages.

2. Despite this agreement in the central thesis, the Latin Fathers and theologians analyzed in this article adopted three possible interpretative variants, depending on the emphasis they gave to one or another of the protagonists of this incarnation. Those three variants are the Mariological, according to which the metaphors above symbolize Mary, and more specifically, her virginal womb; the Christological option, according to which they signify the body or human nature of Christ; the third exegetical variant is twofold, simultaneously Mariological and Christological, according to which some (few) authors consider that these metaphorical expressions symbolize both Christ’s human body and Mary’s womb because God the Son got his human body from Virgin Mary’s womb.

3. Since it was precisely at the Annunciation when the conception/incarnation of God the Son in the womb

of Mary took place, it was foreseeable that the consolidated, millennial doctrinal tradition established until the end of the Middle Ages by the consistent patristic and theological interpretations of the *templum Dei* and the other similar metaphorical expressions already alluded were manifested in some way in the medieval representations of the Annunciation.

4. Among the countless medieval artistic images of the Annunciation, many of them –produced indistinctively by Italian, Flemish, French, Spanish and German artists– offer the eloquent confirmation that the house of Mary in Nazareth is represented with the more or less explicit appearance of a temple or church. The eight paintings analyzed in this article, as a representative sample by, confirm this finding.

5. It is very symptomatic that artists so dissimilar and from such a different socio-cultural context (Flemish, Italian, French, German, Spanish) coincide in representing the house of Mary in the form of a temple. Such an intercultural agreement undoubtedly reveals that this house/temple cannot be a mere coincidence, a mere whim of the artist or a simple compositional detail without significant value, but must be a symbol loaded with some crucial doctrinal meaning.

6. Thus, the double comparative analysis between the patristic, theological and liturgical texts exposed in this paper, and the eight images of the Annunciation studied here allow us to infer a final decisive conclusion: the intellectual authors of these images –probably a friar or clergyman who, as the iconographic programmer, instructed the painter– include in these Annunciations a temple as a representation of the house of Mary to symbolize the incarnation of God the Son in the womb of Mary. To put it in other terms, they include in their artistic images that temple as a *visual metaphor* that allows illustrating the *textual metaphors* alluding to *templum Dei*, *domus Sapientiae*, *tabernaculum*, *sacrarium*, and other similar expressions of sacred spaces, interpreted by the Church Fathers and theologians in the complementary Mariological and Christological projections explained above.

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