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COMPLUTENSE

Salvador-González, José María. *Domus Sapientiae: doctrinal explanation and iconography in images of the Annunciation*. Generis Publishing 2022. ISBN 978-1-63902-937-2

The present study, which includes four edited studies by Professor José María Salvador-González aims to provide convincing answers for the doctrinal interpretation of the Virgin's house in the form of a palace, as presented in the iconography of the Annunciation. The professor makes use of numerous doctrinal and hymnographic texts which were compiled, over the course of a millennium, by Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church and theologians. All of them attempted to decode with Christological and Mariological concepts and other similar translational expressions the biblical reference to the House that Sophia of God built, referring to spaces reserved only for God or the king. All these patristic, theological, and liturgical texts formed a solid doctrinal tradition of the Church, considering that such metaphors refer to the supernatural birth of the Son of God and the virgin divine motherhood of the Virgin Mary. The author considers that the Virgin's house in Nazareth appearing as a palace allows us to consider that this palace functions as a visual metaphor that depicts the textual metaphor of *Domus Sapientiae* and other similar metaphorical expressions.

The study is divided into 4 chapters. The first chapter presents the theological views of Greek Church Fathers on *domus sapientiae*. The author uses texts from the *Patrologia Graeca* by J.-P. Migne, discussing among others texts of Origen, Saint Ephrem of Syria, Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, Saint Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople, etc. All the Greek Fathers follow the *consensus partum* on their interpretation of the metaphorical expressions used for the beatification of the Virgin Mary, such as the "impassable door", "the uncultivated field", "the urn and the ark that contains the manna" the lampstand and the censer of immaterial coal", "the throne of the Lord" etc. Metaphorical expressions like *domus Sapientiae*, *palatium Dei*, *aula regalis*, *domicilium Trinitatis*, *thronus deitatis*, reflect, according to the author, two doctrinal meanings: they symbolize the virginal uterus of the Holy Virgin or the human nature or body that God's Son received from Mary's womb.

The second chapter deals with the views of the Latin Church Fathers on the *domus Sapientiae*. The author mentions among others St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, St. Jerome of Stridon, St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, etc. The Latin sources verify the complete agreement between Greek and Latin Church Fathers on the metaphors applied to the *domus sapientiae*. All these interpretations contributed to the doctrinal confirmation of virginity of the Virgin and the virgin birth of Christ, without the mediation of man's sperm. All the above interpretations expressed poetically in Latin medieval liturgical Hymnography, which is the subject of Chapter three. All these Latin liturgical hymns were

inspired either by Greek equivalent ones –just to mention the Akathist Hymn– or by the exegetical comments of the Greek and Latin Church Fathers and theologians that contributed to the Marian devotion.

Last chapter, Chapter 4, deals with the iconography of the *domus Sapientiae*, during the High Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The author wonders if there is any connection between the iconographic themes for the Annunciation and the doctrinal texts of previous centuries. Second, whether the artists who depicted the Annunciation had any theological training, so as to represent all those symbolic elements which they included in their paintings. It is impossible that these artists, unless we single out Fra Angelico, Fra Filippo Lippi, Fra Carnevale and Fra Bartolomeo, who were monks, possessed theological or doctrinal knowledge, as they came from environments that were slowly but surely "awakening" from the spiritual Middle Ages. The author's opinion that probably the artists had at their disposal some pictorial program, or a representative of the church (clergyman, monk, bishop), who guided them in representing the scene of the Annunciation, finds us in absolute agreement.

The author analyses 19 paintings on the theme of the Annunciation, originating mainly from Italy, Germany, and Italy. The selection of those countries was based on their common spiritual heritage. The author analyzes these paintings and states precisely which pictorial elements are absent from the compositions.

To sum up, this study offers both textual and iconographic material, in order to interpret the Annunciation of the Virgin as best as possible. Despite the chronological and geographical distance that separates them, the Greek and Latin Church Fathers and theologians agree that the various expressions found in doctrinal texts or in hymns function as symbols or metaphors. In any case, it seems obvious that the form of the palace or royal residence included in the 19 pictorial compositions analysed in the study, represent the deep Christological and Mariological interpretation of Christ's incarnation as "house of Wisdom" (*domus Sapientiae*), "house of God" (*domus Dei*), "palace of the King" (*palatium Regis*), "royal palace" (*aula regia*), "domicile of the Trinity" (*domicilium Trinitatis*), etc. Finally, we believe that this particular study also contributes, among other things, greatly to the understanding between the two religious traditions (Greek and Latin) and their common theological background.

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