

The doctrinal metaphor *porta clausa* in medieval liturgical hymns and its reflection in the iconography of the Annunciation

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Abstract: Focused on investigating some interpretations of the vision of the prophet Ezekiel about the eastern shut gate of the temple that was to be rebuilt in Jerusalem, this article¹ seeks two objectives. First, to present many fragments of medieval liturgical hymns in Latin that interpret the Ezekiel's sentence in a Mariological and Christological sense. Second, to analyze seven artistic representations of the Annunciation that include a shut door in their scene. The comparative analysis between these hymnic texts and these artistic images allows us to conclude that both reflect the same doctrinal meanings.

Keywords: Mariology, divine motherhood, perpetual virginity, Christ's incarnation, biblical prefiguration, liturgical canticle.

^{ES} La metáfora doctrinal *porta clausa* en himnos litúrgicos medievales y su reflejo en la iconografía de la Anunciación

Resumen: Centrado en investigar algunas interpretaciones de la visión del profeta Ezequiel sobre la puerta oriental cerrada del templo que debía ser reconstruido en Jerusalén, este artículo persigue dos objetivos. En primer lugar, presentar numerosos fragmentos de himnos litúrgicos medievales en latín que interpretan la sentencia de Ezequiel en un sentido mariológico y cristológico. En segundo lugar, analizar siete representaciones artísticas de la Anunciación que incluyen una puerta cerrada en su escena. El análisis comparativo entre estos textos himnarios y estas imágenes artísticas permite concluir que ambos reflejan los mismos significados doctrinales.

Palabras clave: Mariología, maternidad divina, virginidad perpetua, encarnación de Cristo, prefiguración bíblica, cantico litúrgico.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Patristic and theological background in the East and West on Ezekiel's *porta clausa*. 3. The biblical *porta clausa* metaphor in Latin medieval liturgical hymns. 4. Ezekiel's *porta clausa* in some images of the Annunciation. 5. Conclusions. 6. References. 6.1. Primary Sources. 6.2. Bibliography.

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1. Introduction

In the context of our constant consultation of the primary sources of Christian doctrine, one fact caught our attention: the extraordinary frequency with which the Eastern and Western Church Fathers, theologians, and medieval liturgical hymnographers consider the Virgin Mary prefigured in the passage of the prophet Ezekiel on the closed door (*porta clausa*) of the temple that was to be rebuilt in Jerusalem.

We have already analyzed in other articles the exegeses of the Eastern and Western Church Fathers and theologians on Ezekiel's *porta clausa*: we have studied those of the Fathers of the Greek-Eastern Churches in two distinct, complementary papers,² while we have also investigated those produced by the Latin Church Father and theologians between the 6th and 12th centuries.³ In the current article we will study the expressions of medieval liturgical hymnographers on Ezekiel's closed door.

Therefore, it is important to remember the details of this passage from the prophet's story. Ezekiel states in his book that, upon completing the 25th year of the captivity of the Jewish people in Babylon, Yahweh made him see all the elements with which the Temple had to be rebuilt in Jerusalem after the destruction of the previous one by the Babylonians in command of Nebuchadnezzar I. In the detailed description of all parts, measures, and ornamentation that would characterize this second Temple (Ezek. 40-42.), Ezekiel writes:

Then the Lord God brought me back through the east-facing outer gate of the sanctuary. But it was shut. The Lord told me, «This gate is to remain shut. It will not be opened. No man is to enter through it, because the Lord God of Israel entered through it, so it is to remain shut. (Ezek. 44.1-3. *Bible*, International Standard Version [ISV]).⁴

Now, at first glance Ezekiel's statement on this temple's Eastern gate seems merely objective, referred to a gate in its physical reality. However, according to the various studies that we have done on the subject, the Fathers and medieval theologians of the Eastern and Western Churches interpreted from an early date this Ezekiel's text according to a double symbolism, simultaneously Mariological and Christological. In fact, from the 4th century on, and for at least a millennium, a huge group of Fathers and medieval theologians of Greek-Eastern and Latin

Churches interpreted this Ezekiel's shut gate according to several crucial theological meanings.

2. Patristic and theological background in the East and West on Ezekiel's *porta clausa*

In two previous articles,⁵ we exposed the exegeses of numerous Fathers of the Greek-Eastern Churches on Ezekiel's shut gate, that we cannot repeat here. We just need to review in chronological order the names of those Greek-Eastern Churches Fathers who offered some interpretations in this regard, namely: Ephrem of Syria (c. 307-373), Amphilochius of Iconium (c. 339/340-c. 395/403), Nilus Abbas († c. 430), Cyril of Alexandria (c. 370/373-444), Proclus of Constantinople (*ante* 390-446), Hesychius of Jerusalem († post 450), Theodotus of Ancyra (5th century), Theodoret of Cyrus or Kyros (393-465), Jacob of Serugh (c. 451-521), Philoxenos of Mabbug (c. 440-523), Severus, Patriarch of Antioch (456-538), Leontius of Byzantium (c. 485-c. 543), Theodosius of Alexandria (midst 6th century), Romanos the Melodist (c. 485-c. 555/562), Gregory, Patriarch of Antioch († 593), George of Pisida († 641), Leontios of Neapolis (c. 600-c. 670), Theotecnos of Livias (7th century), Anastasios of Sinai (c. 630-post 700), Germanus of Constantinople (c. 650/60-c.730 /33), Andrew of Crete (c. 660-c. 740), John Damascene (675-749), John of Euboea (8th century), Epiphanius the Monk (end of the 8th century or beginning of the 9th), Joseph the Hymnographer (c. 816-886), George of Nicomedia (9th century), Peter, bishop of Argos († post 922).

We have also studied in another article⁶ the interpretations given to Ezekiel's *porta clausa* by the Latin Church Fathers and theologians between the 6th and 12th centuries, whose detailed results cannot be reiterated now. We can only record in chronological order the Latin thinkers studied in this article, namely: Ambrose of Milan (330-397), Ruffinus of Aquileia (345-411), Jerome of Strido (c. 347-420), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Peter Chrysologus (c. 380-c. 450/451), Gregory the Great (c. 540-604), Venantius Fortunatus (c. 536-610), Isidore of Seville (c. 556-636), Ildefonsus of Toledo (607-667), Paschasius Radbertus (c.772-865), Peter Damian (1007-1072), Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), Guibert of Nogent (1055-1124), Geoffrey of Vendôme (c. 1070-1132), Peter Abelard (1079-1142), Adam of Saint-Victor († 1146), Honoré d'Autun (1080-c. 1153), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Richard of Saint-Victor (c. 1110-1173), Peter of Celle (c. 1115-1183), and Peter of Blois (1135-1204).

Although it is not possible to repeat here the statements made in this regard by each Greek-Eastern and Western Fathers and theologians about Ezekiel's *porta clausa*, however, we can now recapitulate the main theses in which the interpretations offered for almost a millennium by the various Fathers and theologians agree. In fact, all these Christian masters agreed in interpreting that Ezekiel's shut gate symbolized the Virgin Mary's womb when supernaturally conceived and gave birth to God the Son incarnate, while preserving her virginity perpetually.

² José María Salvador González, «*Haec porta Domini*. Exegeses of some Greek Church Fathers on Ezekiel's *porta clausa* (5th -10th centuries)». *Cauriensia* 16 (2020): 615-633; and «Christian exegeses on Ezekiel's *porta clausa* before the Councils of Ephesus, Constantinople, and Chalcedon». *Konstantinove Listy (Constantine's Letters)* 14/2 (2021): 3-13.

³ José María Salvador González, «*Porta clausa es, Virgo*. Exegeses on Ezekiel's *porta clausa* by some Latin Church Fathers and theologians between the 6th and the 12th centuries». *Cauriensia* 17 (2022): 511-537.

⁴ «1. Et convertit me ad viam portæ sanctuarii exterioris quæ respiciebat ad orientem et erat clausa. 2 Et dixit Dominus ad me: porta hæc clausa erit; non aperietur et vir non transiet per eam, quoniam Dominus Deus Israël ingressus est per eam; eritque clausa» (Ezek. 44,1-2. *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*. Nova editio (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 2005 [1946]), 847).

⁵ José María Salvador González, «*Haec porta Domini*», 615-633; and «Christian exegeses on Ezekiel's *porta clausa*», 3-13.

⁶ José María Salvador-González, «*Porta clausa es, Virgo*», 511-537

Furthermore, they considered this temple's shut gate according to a double Christological and Mariological projection, as a simultaneous and complementary metaphor of both Mary's divine motherhood –in its two crucial events of conceiving and giving birth–, and her perpetual virginity, as well as Christ's supernatural conception and birth. Thus, the Eastern and Western Church Fathers and theologians agree in interpreting the Ezekiel's closed door according to two Christological and three Mariological theses. From its double Christological projection, Ezekiel's *porta clausa* through which the Lord entered and exited means Christ's conception/incarnation (He entered through the gate) and birth (He exited through the gate) of Mary's virginal womb (the gate was shut and remained shut in both cases without being violated). From its triple Mariological projection, this *porta clausa* means above all the virginal divine motherhood of Mary in her two key moments, when she conceived (the Lord entered through the door without opening it) and when gave birth to Christ (the Lord came out through the door without opening it); but it also means Mary's perpetual virginity, as revealed by Ezekiel's emphatic sentence «This gate is to remain shut. It will not be opened. No man is to enter through it, because the Lord God of Israel entered through it, so it is to remain shut» (Ezek 44:3). Thus, within the Greek-Eastern and Latin Churches, the doctrinal tradition was consolidated in the sense of defending that Mary was a virgin before childbirth (*virgo ante partum*), virgin in childbirth (*virgo in partu*), and virgin forever after childbirth (*virgo post partum*).

3. The biblical *porta clausa* metaphor in Latin medieval liturgical hymns

Based on this thousand-year, unanimous tradition established by the Eastern and Western Church Fathers and medieval theologians, numerous hymnographers composed countless liturgical hymns in Latin throughout the Middle Ages, in some of whose stanzas they took up the theme of Ezekiel's *porta clausa*. In this article we will focus precisely on the analysis of those fragments of hymns alluding to the closed door of Ezekiel, to shed light on its bivalent Mariological and Christological projection, centered on the five doctrinal theses just mentioned.

To make evident the evolution of interpretations in this regard, we will present these hymns in strict chronological order.

9th century hymn

As the only testimony from the 9th century, we have found *Hymnus 110. De Beata Maria Virgine*, which alludes to the Virgin Mary in reference to the prophet's vision in these terms:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 8. Well, from you
the prophet
Ezequiel says | 8. De te enim
dicit Hiezechiel
propheta, |
| 9. That the door
Is closed
In the house of the
Lord. | 9. Quia, erat
clausa in domo
Domini
porta. ⁷ |

10th century hymns

Dating back to the 10th century, we have documented the following three hymns:

- *Hymnus 104. In Assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis* expresses the five Mariological and Christological theses considering Ezekiel's prophecy in these stanzas:

7. Thus, the virginal bonds remain,
While the powerful [God the Son] leaves the
chamber of modesty, so that the doors remain
more compactly closed than when God en-
tered, overcoming its lock.

8. The unopened door of the mansion,
That the prophet's lofty vision showed,
points out this, that it is passable only by the
tremendous prince, but that it will remain
closed perennially.

7. Sic virginalia vincula permanent,
Prodit pudoris dum thalamo potens,
Mansere clausae artius ut fores
Intrante Deo quas sera vinxerat.

8. Hoc signat aedis janua non patens,
Quam celsa vatis visio prodidit,
Soli tremendo pervia principi,
Mansura nempe clausa perenniter.⁸

- *Hymnus 74. De Beata Maria Virgine* enunciates several biblical pre-figurations of Mary's virginal divine motherhood, among them that of the prophet under study, saying:

2. The legislator pre-signed this birth,
While the burning bush caught fire,
Ezekiel showed the closed door,
In you the stem of Jesse blossomed,
For you Gideon's fleece is irrigated,
And the area of the land is consolidated,
The Son of God becomes man.

2. Hunc partum legislator praesignavit,
Dum rubus ardens incanduit,
Ezechiel portam clausam monstravit,
In te virga lesse flouruit.
Gedeonis per te vellus rigatur,
Area telluris solidatur,
Filius Dei sic humanatur.⁹

- Blessed Notker Balbulus, monk in the Saint Gall abbey (c. 840–912), in *Hymnus 99. In Purificatione Beatae Mariae Virginis*, attributed to him, proclaims the virginal divine motherhood of Mary in these verses:

3. Rejoice,
mother and virgin

⁷ *Hymnus 110. De Beata Maria Virgine* AHMA 53, 192. Stanza retaken in *Hymnus 110. De Beata Maria Virgine* AHMA 53, 192.

⁸ *Hymnus 104. In Assumptione BMV*. AHMA 14, 108.

⁹ *Hymnus 74. De Beata Maria V*. AHMA 45, 60.

Noble,
that, for having believed
The archangelic oracle
by Gabriel
You fathered a Son while being closed.

3. Laetare,
mater et virgo
nobilis,
Gabrielis archangelico
quae oraculo
credula
genuisti clausa filium.¹⁰

10th-11th centuries hymns

Datable to an imprecise date between the 10th and 11th centuries, we have recorded those two hymns suggesting the topic under analysis:

- *Hymnus 92. De Beata Maria Virgine* proclaims the virginal divine motherhood and perpetual virginity of Mary with various Old Testament tropes, with special emphasis on the temple's closed door, through these rhymes:

6a. He doesn't know the way, he doesn't know
the cause,
He does not know the one who enters and
leaves
While you are closed.

6b. The fountain, the closed garden are signs,
However, a fruit worthy of all praise
is born from you.

7a. The door always remains closed,
And yet a Son is born from you,
whose empire remains.

7b. A stem blooms bearing fruit;
who will ignore that your fruit
Is this mystery?

6a. Nescit modum, nescit causam,
Nescit illum, qui te clausam
Intrat et egreditur.

6b. Signa fontem, hortum claude,
Dignus tamen omni laude
Ex te fructus editur.

7 a. Semper clausa manet porta,
Tamen ex te proles orta,
Cuius stat imperium.

7 b. Ferens fructum virga floret;
Tui fructus quis ignoret
Hoc esse mysterium?¹¹

- *Hymnus 210. «Hymnus de Domino Salvatore»* alludes to Mary according to the metaphor under analysis in this stanza:

3. As predicted by Ezekiel,
The crown of the people of Israel
Noticed the closed door
Passable for the supreme thunderer.

3. Ut providus Ezechiel,
Corona plebis Israhel,
Clausam notavit ianuam
Summo tonanti perviam.¹²

11th century hymns

Dating back to the 11th century, we have recorded these four hymns referring to the topic considered:

- *Hymnus 79. De Beata Maria Virgine* refers to the virginal conception of God the Son in Mary's womb according to the prophetic sentence above, stating:

10a. And the sent archangel Gabriel
Greeted you
And impregnated you with the word.

10b. You are the door that Ezekiel
Pre-commemorated closed
That no [male] opened.

10a. Archangelus te Gabriel
Et missus salutavit
Et verbo fecundavit.

10b. Tu porta, quam Ezechiel
Clausam praememoravit,
Quam [vir] non reseravit.¹³

- The influential Benedictine St. Peter Damian, cardinal and Bishop of Ostia (1007-1072), in his *Hymnus 54. (39) De Beata Maria Virgine* exalts the divine motherhood of Mary in these terms:

18. You are the closed door of the temple,
The royal hall of the supreme King,
The treasury of talent
By which we have been redeemed.

18. Tu porta templi clausa,
Superni regis aula,
Aerarium talenti,
Per quod sumus redempti.¹⁴

- *Hymnus 110b. De Beata Maria Virgine* refers to the prophetic announcement of the mother of God in these verses:

8. Well, from you
The prophet Ezekiel
Prophesies

¹⁰ *Hymnus 99. In Purificatione Beatae M. V. Ascribitur Notkero.* AHMA 53, 171.

¹¹ *Hymnus 92. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 37, 86.

¹² *Hymnus 210. «Hymnus de Domino Salvatore.* AHMA 51, 244.

¹³ *Hymnus 79. De Beata Maria Virgine* AHMA 37, 79.

¹⁴ *Petrus Damianus, Hymnus 54. (39) De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 48, 52.

9. That he saw you
like a closed door
From the house of God.

8. De te olim
vates Ezechiel
prophetat

9. Vidisse te
clausam in atrio
domus Dei portam.¹⁵

- *Hymnus 107. In Assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis* exalts the perpetual virginity of Mary in reference to the sentence of Ezekiel, in those stanzas:

6. This is now the door
From the sacred abode,

7. The one whom the prophet commemorates
closed.

8. Never open to anyone,
But only to God,
And it remains closed forever.

6. Haec nunc est sacrae aedis
ianua,

7. Quam clausam tunc propheta
memorat,

8. Nulli patens unquam
soli nisi Domino,
manens clausa per saecula.¹⁶

10h-12th centuries hymns

In the 300-year interval between the 10th and 12th centuries we have found these two hymns referring to the biblical sentence in question:

- *Hymnus 15. In Natali Domini. (in missa maiori)* sings Mary's virginal divine motherhood in these stanzas:

4a. The polished star of the sea
advanced,
and the shut door
refers to Mary.

4b. The mother's womb
Swells with milk,
Being intact,
[she is] Pregnant without a man.

4a. Processit stella
maris lustrata
et porta
clausa fertque Maria.

4b. Viscera matris
tument lactea,
intacta,
sine viro gravida.¹⁷

- *Hymnus 2. In Nativitate Domini* refers to Mary's virginal divine motherhood through the two biblical pre-figurations of Aaron's blossoming rod and the temple's closed door, in these stanzas:

3a. [It is a wonder] That a stem still dry
flourished
And produced nuts
Being covered.

3b. That Ezekiel saw
Mary
like a closed door
as a virgin and mother.

3a. Virga necnon
arida floruerat,
nucisque
tectata induxerat,

3b. Portam clausam
viserat Ezechiel
Mariam
virginemque almam.¹⁸

12th century hymns

Dated in the 12th century we have documented these eight hymns referring to the topic under study:

- *Hymnus 326. De conceptione sanctae Mariae virginis* proclaims the five Mariological and Christological theses above through these eloquent concepts:

Oh, Mary, closed door,
that no one opened,
This prince who passed through
Was God and man,
And neither when entering nor leaving
He broke the lock,
But he assumed the buckle of the flesh
That he didn't have before,
And, dressed like this, he came out
like a husband from his bedchamber.

O Maria clausa porta,
quam nemo aperuit,
princeps ille, qui transivit,
deus et homo fuit,
nec ingressus nec egressus
violavit clausulam,
sed quam prius non habebat,
sumpsit carnis fibulam,

¹⁵ *Hymnus 110b. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 53, 193.

¹⁶ *Hymnus 107. In Assumptione Beatae M. V.* AHMA 53, 187.

¹⁷ *Hymnus 15. In Natali Domini. (in missa maiori).* AHMA 7, 35.

¹⁸ *Hymnus 2. In Nativitate Domini.* AHMA 40, 22.

sic togatus tanquam sponsus
suo processit thalamo.¹⁹

- *Hymnus 504. Psalterium Mariae* enunciates the supernatural divine motherhood and perpetual virginity of Mary in these simple terms:

Hail, house closed to men,
Open to God in an admirable way,
Holiness suits you
And the length of the days.

Ave domus clausa viro,
deo patens modo miro,
te dierum sanctitudo
deceat atque longitudo.²⁰

- *Hymnus 79. De beata Maria Virgine (Infra Nativitatem et Purificationem)* expresses the pre-figuration of the mother of God in Ezekiel's vision and in Daniel's story about the stone from the mountain cut without hands, in these rhymes:

10a. A closed door pointed to you
Through which only the King entered
Closing the lock.

10b. This was also demonstrated
By the stone with which no man worked,
cut by a miracle.

10a. Porta clausa te signavit,
Per quam solus rex intravit
Serato signaculo;

10b. Hoc et lapis praemonstravit,
Quo nil homo laboravit,
Abscissus miraculo.²¹

- *Hymnus 145. De beata Maria Virgine* exalts the virginal mother of God and perpetual virgin Mary with various poetic symbols, expressing:

7a. Closed door, fountain of the gardens,
On which the King of heaven sat,
Not open to any man.

7b. Exhaling tuberosae, flower of odors,
Smell of the flower, decorous vase,
Pigment's warehouse.

7a. Porta clausa, fons hortorum,
In qua sedit rex coelorum
Nulli viro pervia.

7b. Nardus spirans, flos odorum,
Odor floris, vas decorum,
Cella pigmentaria.²²

- *Hymnus 105. De Beata Maria Virgine* indicates the divine motherhood of Mary with several biblical figures, in these rhymes:

11b. A man is surrounded by a woman,
A closed door is crossed,
A giant runs, the path is known,
The lily of the valley blooms.

11b. Muliere vir ambitur,
Porta clausa pertransitur,
Gigas currit, via scitur,
Floret vallis lilium.²³

- *Hymnus 137. Kyrie «Virginis odas» De Beata Maria Virgine* sings the virginal divine motherhood of the Savior's mother in those stanzas:

a. She was certainly
the closed door, upon entering
and when leaving like this.

b. fertile virgin
and fertile that engenders from the land to
Him

c. Who did heavens
and redeemed the earth
with his blood.

a. lanua clausa
erat quippe, intrans,
exiens ita.

b. Virgo opima
fertilisque gleba generans eum

c. Polum qui fecit
terramque cruore
redemit suo.²⁴

- *Hymnus 21. In Nativitate Domini* expresses the virginal divine motherhood of Mary with these brief verses:

6. The star of the sea advanced
polished,
And Mary gives birth with the door closed.

6. Processit stella maris
lustrata,
et porta clausa parit Maria.²⁵

¹⁹ *Hymnus 326. De conceptione s. Mariae virg.* Mone, 11. Published also, with the title *Hymnus 11. De corona spinea*. In 3. *Nocturno. Responsoria*, in AHMA 5, 49.

²⁰ *Hymnus 504. Psalterium Mariae.* Mone, 238. Published also, with the title *Hymnus XIII. Psalterium beatae Mariae V. Secunda Quinquagena*, in AHMA 35, 193.

²¹ *Hymnus 79. De beata Maria V. (Infra Nativ. et Purific.)*. AHMA 9, 64.

²² *Hymnus 145. De beata Maria V.* AHMA 10, 110.

²³ *Hymnus 105. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 42, 107.

²⁴ *Hymnus 137. Kyrie «Virginis odas» De Beata M. V., 2.* AHMA 47, 193.

²⁵ *Hymnus 21. In Nativitate Domini.* AHMA 53, 35.

- The Augustinian abbot Alexander Neckam (1157-1217) in his *Hymnus 275. (1) De Beata Maria Virgine* mentions the virginal mother of God with several Old Testament figures, expressing:

3a. This is the thalamus of the husband
In which while humanity
Married the divinity,
The heavens leaned so low
That men
Have been allies with God:
Happy marriage!

3b. This is this glorious one
City of God,
In which singular things are beautiful,
All funny,
where the door is closed
Completely beautiful;
This is the hope of the faithful.

3a. Haec est sponsi thalamus,
in quo deitati
Dum nupsit humanitas,
tam sunt inclinati
Caeli, quam sunt homines
Deo foederati;
Felix matrimonium!

3b. Haec est illa civitas
Dei gloriosa,
In qua pulchra singula,
cuncta gratiosa,
In qua porta clausa est
tota speciosa;
Haec est spes fidelium.²⁶

12h-13th centuries hymns

From an imprecise date between the 12th and 13th centuries we record *Hymnus 93. De Beata Maria Virgine*, which extols the supernatural divine motherhood of Mary in these rhymes:

2a. Hail, virgin, star of the sea,
Hail, mother, you don't know
Any man when conceiving.

2b. In a new way, in an admirable way,
You give birth without a man to a man
And you breastfeed the Father, being his
daughter.

2a. Ave, virgo, stella maris,
Ave, mater, omnis maris
In conceptu nescia.

2 b. Novo more, modo miro
Paris virum sine viro,
Lactas patrem filia.²⁷

13th century hymns

Dating back to the 13th century, we have documented the following ten hymns:

- *Hymnus 348. Tropus in gallicantu* sings the virginal divine motherhood of Mary with these lyrical tropes:

The closed door is passed through,
And it is not found to be patent,
The worm feeds on manna,
The stem is crowned with a flower,
A rose gives birth to a lily.

Porta clausa pertransitur,
neque patens invenitur,
manna vermis enutritur,
virga flore redimitur,
rosa parit lilium.²⁸

- *Hymnus 360. De sancta Maria* exalts the perpetual virgin and virginal mother of God with several biblical pre-figurations, stating:

Blooming garden by the south that blows,
Closed door before and after,
Unviable path for men.
Land irrigated with the dew of heaven,
Gideon Fleece
Irrigated with the rain of divinity.

Florens hortus austro flante,
porta clausa post et ante,
via viris invia,
Fusa coeli rore tellus,
fusum Gedeonis
vellus deitatis pluvia.²⁹

- *Hymnus 524. Prosa de beata virgine* glorifies Mary as the virginal mother of God through these lyrical metaphors:

Closed door, fountain of the gardens,
Custodian warehouse of ointments,
Pigment's warehouse;
Fragrance that surpasses
To the cinnamon cane,
To myrrh, frankincense and balm.

Porta clausa, fons hortorum,
cella custos unguentorum,
cella pigmentaria;

²⁶ Alexander Neckam, *Hymnus 275. (1) De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 48, 263.

²⁷ *Hymnus 93. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 40, 97.

²⁸ *Hymnus 348. Tropus in gallicantu.* Mone, 38. Published also, with the title *Hymnus 214*, in AHMA 20, 167; and, with the title *Hymnus 67. In Nativitate Domini. In Gallicantu*, en AHMA 49, 46.

²⁹ *Hymnus 360. De s. Maria.* Mone, 53. Published also, with the title *Hymnus 219. De Beata Maria V.*, in AHMA 54, 346.

Cinnamomi calaumum,
myrrham, thus et balsamum
superans fragrantia.³⁰

- *Hymnus 136. De beata Maria Virgine* hails the mother of God with these rhetorical figures:

1a. Hail, mother of the Lord,
Double-scented flower,
only virgin mother,

1b. Sealed fountain of grace,
Garden of modesty,
You are called a closed lock.

1a. Ave, mater Domini.
Flos odoris gemini,
Virgo mater unica,

1b. Fons signatus gratiae,
Hortus pudicitiae,
Sera clausa diceris.³¹

- *Hymnus 77. De Beata Maria Virgine* praises the virginal mother of the Redeemer with these expressive concepts:

6a. Tree that bears the fruit of life,
Closed door, path of life,
Origin of clemency.

6b. The tree is the mother, the fruit is the Word,
With which the sinner as reduced
Takes the path of grace.

6a. Arbor ferens fructum vitae,
Porta clausa, via vitae,
Origo clementiae.

6b. Arbor mater, verbum fructus,
Quo peccator ut reductus
Carpit iter gratiae.³²

- *Hymnus 99. Pro Vacatione in Natali Domini* poetically proclaims the five Mariological and Christological theses already explained, alluding to their prefiguration in the vision of Ezekiel and other Old Testament figures, by stating:

10. Ezekiel said that he saw
A door to the east
that was not open,
The Virgin gives birth with the door
Of her closed womb, from which the light was born,
And she shone on Earth.

11. Door closed before and after,
Blooming garden by the south wind that

blows,
Abundant garden of balsam,
Closed garden that blooms with the south wind,
From whose confinement God emerges,
Like a husband from his bedchamber.

10. Ezechiel non patentem
Se portam ad orientem
Vidisse perhibuit,
Ventricis parit clausa porta
Virgo, de qua lux est orta
Et terris enituit.

11. Porta clausa post et ante,
Florens hortus austro flante,
Hortus fetus balsamo,
Hortus clausus florens austro,
Cuius Deus prodit claustris,
Sponsus ut ex thalamo.³³

- *Hymnus 140. De Beata Maria Virgine. (Figurae veteris Testamenti)* expresses the supernatural prerogatives of the mother of God in this stanza:

35. Ezekiel saw a door
Locked and really
It denotes a tabernacle;
You always existed closed
By giving birth, and you provided God
A humble refuge.

35. Clausam vidit portam sera
Ezechiel et revera
Notatur sacrarium;
Clausam semper exstitisti
Parens, Deo tribuisti
Humile refugium.³⁴

- *Hymnus 198. In Purificatione Beatae Mariae Virginis* lauds the virginal divine motherhood and perpetual virginity of Mary through various biblical figures, in these rhymes:

9. This is that sealed fountain,
That enclosed, fertilized garden
With the seeds of virtues;

10. This is that closed door,
Which God for a latent cause
Shut down to men.

9. Haec est ille fons signatus,
Hortus clausus, fecundatus
Virtutum seminibus;

10. Haec est illa porta clausa,
Quam latente Deus causa
Clauserat hominibus.³⁵

³⁰ *Hymnus 524. Prosa de beata virgine*. Mone, 310. Published also, with the title *Hymnus 245. De Beata Maria V. Ascribitur Adamo de S. Victore*, in AHMA 54, 383.

³¹ *Hymnus 136. De beata Maria V.* AHMA 10, 104.

³² *Hymnus 77. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 37, 77.

³³ *Hymnus 99. Pro Vacatione in Natali Domini*. AHMA 45, 81.

³⁴ *Hymnus 140. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 46, 187.

³⁵ *Hymnus 198. In Purificatione Beatae Mariae V.* AHMA 54, 309.

- Edmundus Abindoniensis or Cantuariensis (c. 1174-1240), in his *Hymnus X. Psalterium beatae Mariae Virginis* greets the mother of God through some biblical figures, including that of the prophet Ezekiel, by pointing out:

9. Hail, Virgin, throne of God,
In which only the good one seats,
Who has no equal,
Who culminated my cause
As left through a closed door,
Taking a weak flesh.

9. Ave, virgo, Dei thronus,
In quo sedet solus bonus,
Qui non habet similem,
Qui perfecit meam causam,
Dum per portam exit clausam,
Carnem sumens fragilem.³⁶

- Adam de la Bassée, canon in Saint-Pierre de Lille († 1286), in his *Hymnus 337. (39) De Beata Maria Virgine*, recalling the supernatural conception of God the Son in Mary's virginal womb after the announcement of the archangel Gabriel, considers the vision of Ezekiel and the physical phenomenon of a ray of light passing through a glass, when indicating:

6a. Well with Gabriel's greetings
The King of heaven entered
Through the door, that the vision of Ezekiel
Points closed.

6b. This singular door,
The truly door of salvation,
Like glass, that the force of the sun
Does not corrupt with his lightning.

6a. Nam subivit rex de caelis
Cum salute Gabrielis
Portam, quam Ezechielis
Clausam signat visio.

6b. Porta illa singularis,
Porta vere salutaris,
Par vitro, quod vis solaris
Non corrumpit radio.³⁷

13h-14th centuries hymns

Datable to some imprecise date between the 12th and 14th centuries, we have found these two hymns:

- *Hymnus 100. De Beata Maria Virgine* suggests the Mariological and Christological theses mentioned above, taking up the simile of the ray of light passing through the glass in parallel with the prophet's passage, stating:

3a. Just as the sun enters the glass
Thus, the Holy One entered you:
Oh, what wonderful power!

3b. A closed door at the entrance,
A closed door at exit;
These are the miracle prizes.

3a. Ut intrat vitrum helios,
Te sic intravit hagnos:
O quam mira potentia!

3b. Porta clausa per ingressum.
Porta clausa per egressum;
Haec sunt miraculi praemia.³⁸

- *Hymnus 105. De Beata Maria Virgine* greets the virginal mother of God with these eloquent metaphors:

9a. You are called stem, virgin,
Temple, vessel, tabernacle,

9b. Closed door, sunlight,
Luminary of Heaven.

9a. Virga, virgo, nuncuparis
Templum, vas, sacrarium,

9b. Porta clausa, lux solaris,
Caeli luminarium.³⁹

14th century hymns

Dated in the 14th century we have recorded these nine hymns alluding to the biblical metaphor analyzed:

- *Hymnus 41. De Beata Virgine Maria* expresses the five doctrinal theses under study through this brief reference to the prophet's passage:

2. The King passed through the door
And it remained closed
As Ezekiel saw it.

2. Rex per portam transivit,
Ezechiel ut vidit,
Clausaque permansit.⁴⁰

- *Hymnus 76. De beata Maria Virgine* salutes Mary's virginal divine motherhood and perpetual virginity in these stanzas:

3a. Hail, door,
Which, closed to men,
Is open
Only to prince God.

3b. Hail, intact
Mother, gravid
Virgin, blessed
Above all.

³⁶ Edmundus Cantuariensis, *Hymnus X. Psalterium beatae Mariae V. auctore Edmundo Cantuariensi*. AHMA 35, 137.

³⁷ Adam de Basseia, *Hymnus 337. (39) De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 48, 315.

³⁸ *Hymnus 100. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 40, 102.

³⁹ *Hymnus 105. De Beata Maria V.* AHMA 40, 105.

⁴⁰ *Hymnus 41. De B.V. Maria.* AHMA 2, 168.

3a. Salve, porta,
quae viro clausa,
soli Deo principi
es aperta.

3b. Salve, mater
integra, virgo
gravida, super omnes
benedicta.⁴¹

- *Hymnus 92. De beata Maria Virgine* suggests the five Mariological and Christological theses above explained in these rhymes:

2a. After Gabriel's announcement
You conceived with the south wind that blows,
Door closed after and before;
Joseph is amazed that you are pregnant,
But, when the angel reassured him,
It is clear that, proving the matter,
She is an impassable path for men.

2a. Gabriele nuntiante
Concepisti austro flante,
Porta clausa post et ante;
Joseph stupet te praegnante,
Sed angelo confortante
Patet, quod sit re probante
Via viris invia.⁴²

- *Hymnus 5. In Nativitate Domini Nostri* alludes to Christ's virginal conception in these stanzas:

4 a.m. The fountain sealed, the door closed
manifests itself without male intervention,
nature wonders for this.

4b. Well, such a generation
Befits God, a creature
Gives birth to the Creator while being pure.

4a. Fons signatus, porta clausa,
Patet sine viri causa,
Admiratur hoc natura.

4b. Talis namque genitura
Decet Deum, parit pura,
Creatorem creatura.⁴³

- *Hymnus 173* mentions the supernatural conception and birth of the Redeemer in the virginal womb of Mary in these verses:

2. The vision of the prophets
Is already proven with things,
While a rose gives birth to a lily,
Mary gives birth to the Son of God,
The old Law ends.

3. The closed door was passable,
A new man came out,
The strongest defeated the strong,
From there hope grows better
The enemy lies down depressed.

2. Prophetarum visio
Jam rebus comprobatur,
Dum rosa parit liliū,
Maria Dei filium,
Lex vetus terminatur.

3. Porta clausa patuit
Vir novus est egressus,
Fortemque vicit fortior,
Spes inde crescit melior,
Hostis jacet depressus.⁴⁴

- *Hymnus 86. Super Ave Maria* enunciates the virginal divine motherhood and the perpetual virginity of the mother of God with these brief expressions:

7. The door of the womb is closed,
It was never opened
From your [womb], virgin mother, who

perseveres truly.
7. Ventris porta clausa est,
numquam fit aperta,
Tui, mater virgo, quae
perseveras certa.⁴⁵

- *Hymnus 59. In Purificatione Beatae Mariae Virginis* requests the protection of the virginal mother of God, alluding to her with various poetic figures, expressing:

6a. Hail, virgin, but fruitful,
Hail, mother, pure virgin,
Deliver your servants
From the deep storm.

6b. Way of heaven, cell of the King,
Closed door, star of the sea,
Guide us in the storm of the sea
And in the turbulence of the world.

6a. Salve, virgo, sed fecunda,
Salve, mater, virgo munda,
Tuos servos a profunda
Libera voragine.

6b. Via caeli, regis cella,
Porta clausa, maris stella,
Nos a maris duc procella
Et a mundi turbine.⁴⁶

- Johann von Jenstein, Archbishop of Prague († 1400), in his *Hymnus 392. (4) De Visitatione*

⁴¹ *Hymnus 76. De beata Maria V.* AHMA 8, 67.

⁴² *Hymnus 92. De beata Maria V.* AHMA 8, 75.

⁴³ *Hymnus 5. In Nativitate DN.* AHMA 9, 13.

⁴⁴ *Hymnus 173.* AHMA 20, 132.

⁴⁵ *Hymnus 86. Super Ave Maria.* AHMA 30, 192.

⁴⁶ *Hymnus 59. In Purificatione BMV.* AHMA 37, 63.

Beatae Mariae Virginis. Sequentia Tertia points to the virginal mother of God through these biblical figures:

3a. Hail, born of the seed of Jesse,
Fruit-bearing stem.

3b. Hail, closed door of the temple,
Passable only to God.

3a. Salve, lesse stirpe orta
Virgula fructifera,

3b. Salve, clausa templi porta,
Soli Deo pervia.⁴⁷

- Konrad von Haimburg (Conradus Gemnicensis, † 1360), in his *Hymnus 2. Crinale Beatae Mariae Virginis* requires the saving protection of the virginal mother of God, whom he praises with these biblical figures:

122. Oh, Mary, closed door,
Enclosed garden, comfort us,
You were born from the lineage of kings,
Take us to Paradise,
First fruits of the virgins.

22. O Maria, clausa porta,
Clausus hortus, nos conforta,
Tu de stirpe regum orta,
Paradiso nos reporta,
Virginum primitiae.⁴⁸

13h-15th centuries hymns

Datable to some unknown date in the interval between the 13th and 15th centuries, we have documented these six hymns alluding to the topic at hand:

- *Hymnus 21* asks for the help of the virginal mother of the Savior in these lyrical terms:

4. Door that remains closed,
with golden locks
Beautifully covered with a purple mantle, very
pleasant,
Make your Son
Propitious.

4. Porta clausa permanens,
Clausuris deaurata,
Pulchre trabeata,
Praegrata,
Tuum natum
Fac propitium.⁴⁹

- *Hymnus 35* also requests the saving intercession of the Virgin Mary, designating her with various Old Testament tropes, stating:

Mary, fleece
Of Gideon irrigated by heaven,
Mary, true and beloved
Daughter of Solomon,
Mary, who remains like Ezekiel's
closed door, worshiping God
In our favor,
Blessed mother of God.

Maria Gedeonis
Vellus de coelo roridum,
Maria Salomonis
Vera dilecta nata,
Maria porta clausa stans
Ezechielis, adorans
Pro nobis
Dei genitrix beata.⁵⁰

- *Hymnus 80* designates the virginal mother of the Redeemer with the passage of the prophet, indicating:

1. The closed door
of Ezekiel is passed through,
by which the light was born
and salvation is found.

1. Ezechielis porta
Clausus pertransitur,
Per quam lux est orta,
Salus invenitur.⁵¹

- *Hymnus 122* exalts Mary for her virginal divine motherhood and her perpetual virginity through these poetic concepts:

2. Stepping on the earth
The moon under your feet,
Being more beautiful than the stars,
The heavenly armies
Praise you as the mother of light,
You are the door of the Prince,
Eternally closed,
Now and forever.

2. Lunam sub tuis pedibus
Calcans terrestria,
Pulchrior sideribus,
Coelorum agmina
Laudant te matrem luminis,
Tu porta principis,
Clausus aeternaliter,
Nunc et perenniter.⁵²

⁴⁷ Johannes a Jenstein, *Hymnus 392. (4) De Visitatione B. M. V. Sequentia Tertia*. AHMA 48, 424. Published also, with the title *Hymnus 414. Prosa de Visitatione b. v. Mariae*, in Mone, 123.

⁴⁸ Conradus Gemnicensis, *Hymnus 2. Crinale B. M. V.* AHMA 3, 25. Published also, with the title *Hymnus 507. Oratio, quae dicitur crinale beatae Mariae virginis*, in Mone, 271.

⁴⁹ *Hymnus 21*. AHMA 1, 64.

⁵⁰ *Hymnus 35*. AHMA 1, 75.

⁵¹ *Hymnus 80*. AHMA 1, 107. Published also, with the title *Hymnus 166. De Nativitate Domini*, in AHMA 45, 135.

⁵² *Hymnus 122*. AHMA 1, 134.

- *Hymnus 199* refers to the virginal divine motherhood of Mary in this concise stanza:

6. The heavens remain closed,
The door firmly secured,
While the Most High Son of God
Becomes a man.

6. Clausa manent aetera,
Porta firmata ferrea,
Donec Dei altissimus
Est humanatus filius.⁵³

- *Hymnus 337. De Visitatione Beatae Mariae Virginis* mentions Mary's virginal divine motherhood and perpetual virginity by these various Old Testament figures:

16a. [Mary] Is like Solomon's throne,
Like Gideon's fleece,
A land never plowed.

16b. A burning bush, which is not consumed.
A closed and fenced garden.
A tightly closed door.

16a. Est ut thronus Salomonis,
Velut vellus Gedeonis,
Terra nunquam exarata,

16 b. Rubus ardens, non comburens,
Hortus clausus et conclusus,
Porta clausa obserata.⁵⁴

14h-15th centuries hymns

Datable to some unknown date between the 14th and 15th centuries, we have found these three hymns referring to our topic:

- *Hymnus 610. Oratio ad beatam virginem* indicates the virginal divine motherhood and perpetual virginity of Mary, announced by the archangel Gabriel, through these various biblical pre-figurations:

The closed door
What Ezekiel saw foreshadows you,
And Daniel inside the lake
Was not without cause,
And no man, who frightened Daniel,
Entered by the door:
This is what Gabriel predicted.

Te figurat porta clausa,
quam vidit Ezechiel,
neque fuit sine causa
intra lacum Daniel,
et per portam non intravit
vir, qui Daniele pavit:
sic praedixit Gabriel.⁵⁵

- *Hymnus VI. Psalterium beatae Mariae Virginis. Tertia Quinquagena* refers to the virginal divine motherhood of Mary alluding to the passage of the prophet, in these terms:

32. Behold, how good
and how joyful it is
That God, descending into the depths,
Passed through you as through a closed door,
To perfect our cause.

32. Ecce, quam bonum et quam iucundum,
Quod exiit per te portam clausam
Deus descendens in profundum,
Ut nostram perficeret causam.⁵⁶

- *Hymnus XII. Psalterium beatae Mariae Virginis. Secunda Quinquagena*, erroneously attributed to Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1217/21-1274), expresses the supernatural divine motherhood of Mary through these various Old Testament pre-figurations:

21. Hail, Virgin door of life,
Closed door, closed garden,
fleece of the famous Gideon.
Throne of the true Solomon.

21. Salve, virgo, vitae portus,
Clausus porta, clausus hortus,
Vellus clari Gedeonis,
Veri thronus Salomonis.⁵⁷

15th century hymns

Dating back to the 15th century, we have recorded these twenty-three hymns referring to the subject, three of which were written by the famous hymnographer Ulrich Stöcklins von Rottach:

- *Hymnus 615. Laus beatae Mariae* extols the protective power of the virginal mother of the Savior in these verses:

Mary, who remains like Ezekiel's
closed door, praying to God
In our favor,
Blessed mother of God.

Maria clausa porta stans
Ezechielis, exorans
pro nobis deum,
genitrix beata.⁵⁸

- *Hymnus 49. De Annuntiatione Beatae Mariae Virginis* refers to the virginal mother of God through these Old Testament figures:

⁵⁶ *Hymnus VI. Psalterium beatae Mariae V. Tertia Quinquagena.* AHMA 36, 90.

⁵⁷ *Hymnus XII. Psalterium beatae Mariae V. sancto Bonaventurae tributum. Secunda Quinquagena.* AHMA 35, 175.

⁵⁸ *Hymnus 615. Laus b. Mariae.* Mone, 436.

⁵³ *Hymnus 199.* AHMA 1, 176

⁵⁴ *Hymnus 337. De Visitatione B.M.V.* AHMA 44, 302.

⁵⁵ *Hymnus 610. Oratio ad beatam virginem.* Mone, 429.

3a. The signs of the law are declared,
This is the throne of the supreme King,
The closed door of the Lord.

3b. A stem that greens and spreads,
That bears fruit without dew,
Resembles the Virgin.

3a. Declarantur signa legis,
Haec est thronus summi regis,
Porta clausa Domini.

3b. Virga virens et pertingens,
Sine rore fructum ferens
Similatur virgini.⁵⁹

- *Hymnus 14. In Nativitate Domini Nostri* designates the Virgin Mary through these poetic tropes:

6a. Hail, walnut seedbed,
Cyprus and olive cluster,
Flower of the valleys field.

6b. Closed door, sealed fountain,
Stem that blooms, breath of the south,
Rose, saffron, lily.

6a. Ave nucis sementiva,
Botrus Cypri et oliva,
Flos campi convallium:

6b. Porta clausa, fons signatus,
Virga florens, austri flatus,
Rosa, crocus, lilium.⁶⁰

- *Hymnus 76. In Sanctificatione Beatae Mariae Virginis* mentions the virginal motherhood and perpetual virginity of the mother of God in these verses:

1a. Hail, Door always closed,
Cause that is surprised by the first cause,
Virgin, parturient, daughter.

1a. Ave, porta semper clausa,
Primae causae stupens causa,
Virgo, parens, filia.⁶¹

- *Hymnus 80. In Nativitate Beatae Mariae Virginis* also exalts the virginal motherhood and perpetual virginity of the Redeemer's mother in these rhymes:

3a. Oh, you, happy gate of heaven,
Always closed, through which
the true light appeared born.

3b. With whose beauty of light
The darkness of our shadowed night
disappeared.

3a. O felix tu coeli porta,
Semper clausa, per quam orta
Vera lux apparuit,

3b. Cujus lucis venustate
Nostrae noctis obumbratae
Caligo disparuit.⁶²

- *Hymnus 90. De Visitatione Beatae Mariae Virginis* greets the supernatural conception of God the Son in the womb of the perpetually virgin Mary with these rhymes:

1a. Hail, admirable pregnant woman,
Virgin who engenders God,
Fertilized by the Paraclete;

1b. Hail, always closed door,
House, in which a pause pleases
To the illustrious King of kings.

1a Ave, praegnans admiranda,
Virgo Deum generanda,
Fecunda paraclito;

1b. Ave, porta semper clausa,
Domus, ubi placet pausa
Regi regum inclito.⁶³

- *Hymnus 44. In Conceptione Beatae Mariae Virginis* alludes to the virginal mother of the Savior through these biblical figures:

3. Star of Jacob, fleece
Of Gideon, Solomon's temple,
burning bush,
Closed door with admirable gifts
In this daughter of Ana
A reed pastures the lilies.

3. Stella Jacob, Gedeonis
Vellus, templum Salomonis,
Rubus incombustionis,
Porta miris clausa donis,
Hac in Annae filia
Carex pascit lilia.⁶⁴

- *Hymnus 217* mentions the virginal divine motherhood of Mary with this brief allusion to the prophetic text under study, stating:

4. Ezekiel
Described you, like he saw you,
Like a closed door not opened,
Passable, but closed.

4. Clausam portam non apertam,
Permeatam, sed seratam
Te descripsit, sicut vidit
Ezechiel.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ *Hymnus 49. De Annuntiatione BMV.* AHMA 8, 48.

⁶⁰ *Hymnus 14. In Nativitate DN.* AHMA 10, 18.

⁶¹ *Hymnus 76. In Sanctificatione BMV.* AHMA 10, 64.

⁶² *Hymnus 80. In Nativitate BMV.* AHMA 10, 68.

⁶³ *Hymnus 90. De Visitatione BMV.* AHMA 10, 75.

⁶⁴ *Hymnus 44. In Conceptione BMV.* AHMA 11, 34.

⁶⁵ *Hymnus 217.* AHMA 20, 168.

- *Hymnus 82. In Annuntiatione Beatae Mariae Virginis. Ad Laudes* expresses the divine motherhood and perpetual virginity of Mary in the light of Ezekiel's text, in that stanza:

4. The door of Christ became passable
Filled with all grace,
And the King passed away, and it remains
Closed, as it was, forever.

4. Fit porta Christi pervia
Referta plena gratia,
Transitque rex, et permanet
Clausula, ut fuit, per saecula.⁶⁶

- *Hymnus 38. De Conceptione Beatae Mariae Virginis. Ad Tertiam* exalts the virginal divine motherhood of Mary through these various biblical pre-figurations:

1. Hail, ark of the covenant,
Solomon's Throne,
Beautiful rainbow,
Bramble of vision,
Germinal stem that greens,
Gideon's Fleece,
closed door of divinity,
Lacking lividity.

1. Salve arca foederis,
thronus Salomonis,
Arcus pulcher aetheris,
rubus visionis,
Virga frondens germinis,
vellus Gedeonis,
Porta clausa numinis,
expers livionis.⁶⁷

- *Hymnus 53. De VII Gaudiis Beatae Mariae Virginis* celebrates the virginal motherhood and perpetual virginity of the Savior's mother alluding to the passage from Ezekiel, in these rhymes:

1. Rejoice first, oh Mary,
Because from eternity
Your prediction has been made,
Rejoice, door always closed
And the cause of our salvation
And the separation of blame.

1. Gaude primum, o Maria,
Ab aeterno tui quia
Facta est praevisio,
Gaude, porta semper clausa
Nostraeque salutis causa
Et culpae discissio.⁶⁸

- *Hymnus 142. De Partu Virginis* applauds the supernatural conception of God the Son in the virginal womb of Mary, expressing:

2. Virgin mother, the born Father
Becomes a man from man
Admirably without a man;
This nature ignores the rights,
God man is born of a Virgin
The house being closed.

2. Virgo mater, natus pater,
Modo miro sine viro
Fit homo de homine;
Haec natura nescit iura,
Clausula domo Deus homo
Nascitur de virgine.⁶⁹

- *Hymnus 173. De V Gaudiis Beatae Mariae Virginis* glorifies the virginal conception and the supernatural birth of God the Son in Mary's womb, placing them in eloquent parallelism with the sunbeam passing through a glass, by these rhymes:

2. Rejoice, you who give birth closed,
Without knowing the pains of childbirth,
Just as the sun enters the glass
And it doesn't damage it when leaving,
so Christ is born from you,
And virginity is not diminished
And you remain immaculate.

2. Gaude, clausa parturiens,
Dolores partus nesciens,
Ut vitrum sol ingreditur,
Nec per ingressum laeditur,
Ex te Christus sic oritur,
Nec pudor diminuitur,
Ac manes illibata.⁷⁰

- *Hymnus VII. Psalterium Domini Nostri Iesu Christi. Secunda Quinquagena* greets the supernatural birth of the Savior from the inviolate womb of Mary, with this stanza:

7. Hail, Jesus, who came out of a closed vulva,
And entered this valley of tears,
You are going to fight the humankind's enemy
And you will truly reward those who judge.

7. Ave, Iesu, qui clausam vulvam es egressus
Atque in hanc miseriae vallem ingressus,
Hostem humani generis debellaturus
Vereque iudicantes remuneraturus.⁷¹

- *Hymnus II. Psalterium beatae Mariae Virginis. Tertia Quinquagena* alludes to the virginal motherhood

⁶⁶ *Hymnus 82. In Annuntiatione B. M. V. Ad Laudes.* AHMA 27, 118.

⁶⁷ *Hymnus 38. De Conceptione BMV. Ad Tertiam.* AHMA 30, 93.

⁶⁸ *Hymnus 53. De VII Gaudiis BMV.* AHMA 30, 118.

⁶⁹ *Hymnus 142. De Partu Virginis.* AHMA 31, 142.

⁷⁰ *Hymnus 173. De V Gaudiis BMV.* AHMA 31, 177.

⁷¹ *Hymnus VII. Psalterium D. N. Iesu Christi. Secunda Quinquagena.* AHMA 35, 96.

and perpetual virginity of Mary, in implicit reference to the text of Ezekiel, when expressing:

47. Hail Zion
And city of peace,
Whose doors
Divinity,
when entering,
Strengthened their lock,
Therefore, they remain
Closed forever.

47. Ave, Sion
et pacis civitas,
Cuius portas
ingressa deitas
Confortavit
earum pessulum,
Unde clausae
manent in saeculum.⁷²

- *Hymnus 50. In Nativitate Beatae Mariae Virginis* mentions Mary as the virginal mother of the Savior through these various Old Testament figures:

4a. This is the stem of a pious lineage,
The closed door, the praise
of wisdom, this is the whistle of Elijah,
The Lord is naturally there

4b. The mountain seen by Daniel,
From which a stone was cut,
The undivided Immanuel
For whom [came] the end of death.

4a. Haec est virga stirpis piae,
Porta clausa, laus sophiae,
Haec est sibilus Eliae,
Ibi nempe Dominus.

4b. Mons a Daniele visus,
De quo lapis est excisus,
Emanuel indivisus,
Per quem mortis terminus.⁷³

- *Hymnus 111. De Nativitate Domini* refers cryptically to two prophetic announcements about the virginal mother of God, in this stanza:

3. Behold, the secret of Isaiah
Spreads today,
Ezekiel's closed door
Closes rapidly.

3. En, secretum Isaiae
Propalatur hodie,
Porta clausa Ezechiel
Reseratur festine.⁷⁴

- *Hymnus 77. Kyrie «O, Maria lux». De Beata Maria Virgine* invokes the saving protection of the mother of the Redeemer with these expressive supplications:

a. Medicine of sinners,
Closed door, fountain of the gardens,
Eleison [have mercy].

b. Say prayers to the Son
so that he does not surrender to punishment,
Eleison [have mercy].

c. Those whom he made with his own hand,
but may he free them from all misery
with his grace,
Eleison [have mercy].

a. Medicina peccatorum,
Porta clausa, fons hortorum.
eleison.

b. Funde preces ad filium,
Ne tradat ad supplicium,
eleison,

c. Quos manu fecit propria,
Sed ab omni miseria
Liberet sua gratia,
eleison.⁷⁵

- *Hymnus 110. De Beata Maria Virgine* alludes to the mother of God under the vision of the prophet, stating:

5a. This is the door of Ezekiel,
For which the King of heaven
It happened while it was closed, so that
All faithful people believe.

5a. Porta haec Ezechielis,
Per quam clausam rex de caelis
Pertransivit, ut fidelis
Omnis credit populus.⁷⁶

- Antonius de Lantsee (s. XV), in his *Hymnus VIII. Psalterium beatae Mariae Virginis. Secunda Quinquagena* greets the mother of God as the door foreseen by the prophet, in these simple terms:

25. Hail, you are called a closed door
By Ezekiel.

25. Ave, ab Ezechiele
Porta clausa praedicaris.⁷⁷

⁷² *Hymnus II. Psalterium beatae Mariae Virginis. Tertia Quinquagena*. AHMA 36, 40.

⁷³ *Hymnus 50. In Nativitate BMV*. AHMA 37, 53.

⁷⁴ *Hymnus 111. De Nativitate Domini*. AHMA 45, 98.

⁷⁵ *Hymnus 77. Kyrie «O, Maria lux». De Beata M. V.*, 3. AHMA 47, 141.

⁷⁶ *Hymnus 110. De Beata Maria V*. AHMA 42, 110.

⁷⁷ Antonius de Lantsee, *Hymnus VIII. Psalterium beatae Mariae V. auctore Antonio de Lantsee. Secunda Quinquagena*. AHMA 36, 102.

- The well-known hymnographer Ulrich Stöcklins von Rottach (Udalrichus Wessofontanus), abbot of Wessobrunn between 1438 and 1443, in his *Hymnus 24. Centimonium Beatae Virginis. Secunda Pars. Caput secundum* alludes to the supernatural incarnation of God the Son in the virginal womb of Mary, through this stanza:

98. This is how you are the closed door
In the house of the Lord,
that remains passable alone
To this same divinity,
When he submitted himself
To the flesh situation,
in which he took care
Of the fallen man.

98. Sic porta clausa es
in domo Domini,
Solum stans pervia
eidem numini,
Quando se subdidit
carnis discrimini,
In qua consuluit
dejecto homini.⁷⁸

- Furthermore, Ulrich Stöcklins von Rottach, in his *Hymnus 49. Rosarium II*, II salutes the virginal mother of the Redeemer in this stanza:

12. Rejoice, Virgin, closed door,
that no one opened,
Pause of our Savior,
The only one who passed through you,
Who is and always existed
For the sake of our salvation.

12. Gaude, virgo, porta clausa,
Quam nemo aperuit,
Salvatoris nostri pausa,
Qui te solus transiit,
Qui salutis nostrae causa
Est et semper exstitit.⁷⁹

- Finally, Ulrich Stöcklins von Rottach, in his *Hymnus XI. Psalterium Secundum. Quinquagena III* requests the saving contest of the Virgin Mary through these rhymes:

147. Hail, closed door
In the house of the Lord, which exists before
God,
Reconcile me with the heavenly breath,
Me who run along the path of vices.

147. Ave, porta in domo Domini
Clausam, Deo existens praevia,
Me concorda superno flammis
Vitorum currentem in via.⁸⁰

Undated hymns

From an imprecise date we have documented these three hymns referring to the topic under study:

- *Hymnus 16. In Nativitate Beatae Mariae Virginis. Ad Vesperas* refers to the virginal divine motherhood and perpetual virginity of Mary in these verses:

3. From this same son is born,
A Virgin who engenders Christ,
Who closes the door of the heavenly hall
closed to the world.

3. Ex ipsa proles oritur,
Virgo, quae Christum generat,
Qui clausam mundo januam
Coelestis aulae reserat.⁸¹

- *Hymnus 18. Hymnus in Annuntiatione sanctae Mariae* mentions God the Son's supernatural incarnation in Mary's virginal womb, stating:

4. The Lord, future man,
Enters through the closed door,
The Word made flesh is conceived
In the closed virginal hall.

4. Futurus homo Dominus
Portam clausam ingreditur,
Aula clausa virginea
Verbum caro concipitur.⁸²

- *Hymnus 24. Conductis ad Poculum* expresses the Mariological and Christological theses above mentioned through these concise rhymes:

6. The mother closed when conceiving
Was also closed when giving birth,
And you, you are God when entering,
And also when leaving after entering.

6. Clausa mater concipiens
Clausam fuit et pariens
Et tu, Deus ingrediens,
Ingressus et egrediens.⁸³

As you can see, in perfect parallelism with what was expressed for almost a millennium by the Fathers and theologians of the Eastern and Western Churches, all the fragments of hymns studied here

⁷⁸ Udalrichus Wessafontanus, *Hymnus 24. Centimonium Beatae Virginis. Secunda Pars. Caput secundum*. AHMA 6, 80.

⁷⁹ Udalrichus Wessofontanus, *Hymnus 49. Rosarium II*, II. AHMA 6, 157. Published also, with the title Udalrichus Wessofontanus, *Hymnus I. Carmen pulcherrimum de beata Virgine*, II, in AHMA 38, 240.

⁸⁰ Udalrichus Wessofontanus, *Hymnus XI. Psalterium Secundum. Quinquagena III*. AHMA 38, 156.

⁸¹ *Hymnus 16. In Nativitate BMV. Ad Vesperas*. AHMA 14, 170.

⁸² *Hymnus 18. Hymnus in Annuntiatione sanctae Mariae*. AHMA 14, 171.

⁸³ *Hymnus 24. Conductis ad Poculum*. AHMA 20, 229.

coincide, with greater or lesser emphasis, in interpreting the temple's closed door prophesied by Ezekiel as a textual metaphor of three Mariological and two Christological theses. From the Mariological perspective, Ezekiel's *porta clausa* expresses the virginal divine motherhood of Mary in its two key moments, when conceiving God the Son made man and when giving birth to him; and also the perpetual virginity of Mary. From the Christological perspective Ezekiel's *porta clausa* means the supernatural human conception of God the Son made man without manly intervention, and his supernatural birth without destroying his mother's virginity.

In this sense, given the crucial significance of these five Mariological and Christological theses unanimously confirmed by the consolidated patristic, theological and hymnographic tradition, it is quite surprising that most of the authors of the Mariology books we know —Xabier Pikaza,⁸⁴ Stefano De Flores,⁸⁵ Bruno Forte,⁸⁶ Ignace de la Potterie,⁸⁷ Domiciano Fernández,⁸⁸ Klemens Stock,⁸⁹ Miguel Ponce Cuéllar,⁹⁰ Dominique Cerbelaud,⁹¹ Cándido Pozo,⁹² Karl-Heinz Menke,⁹³ Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole,⁹⁴ José Luis Bastero de Eleizalde,⁹⁵ Stefano De Flores, Valeria Ferrari Schiefer, & Stefano M. Perrella,⁹⁶ Antonio M. Calero de los Ríos,⁹⁷ Leo Scheffczyk,⁹⁸ Jesús Casás Otero,⁹⁹ José C.R. García Paredes,¹⁰⁰ Luigi Bonarrigo,¹⁰¹ Ángel Castaño Félix,¹⁰² and Manfred Hauke¹⁰³— do not even mention the bib-

lical metaphor of Ezekiel's *porta clausa* as a clear Old Testament pre-figuration of Mary's perpetual virginity and virginal divine motherhood, a pre-figuration in perfect parallelism with that of God the Son supernaturally conceived and given birth to the Virgin Mary.

4. Ezekiel's *porta clausa* in some images of the Annunciation

Thus, this thousand-year, unanimous Patristic, theological, and hymnographic tradition interprets Ezekiel's *porta clausa* as a double metaphor of the Virgin Mary and Christ, in the five Mariological and Christological meanings already explained. Now, it is worth remembering that Mary's virginal divine motherhood began effectively in the episode of the Annunciation, after the Virgin unrestrictedly obeyed, as a slave of the Lord (*ancilla Domini*), the plan of God the Father announced to her by the archangel Gabriel. Therefore, it was foreseeable that some artistic images of the Annunciation would represent a closed door in the scene, as a perfect *visual symbol* that illustrated the *textual symbol* expressed by the Fathers, theologians, and hymnographers when interpreting Ezekiel's *porta clausa* as a clear reference to the virginal mother of God the Son. Thus, it is shocking that no symbol manual we know (Georges Ferguson,¹⁰⁴ Hans Biedermann,¹⁰⁵ Michel Feuillet,¹⁰⁶ and Udo Becker¹⁰⁷— mentions the Mariological symbol of the permanently closed door in the sense conveyed by Ezekiel. A similar surprise arises when verifying that none of the renowned experts in Christian iconography —Émile Mâle,¹⁰⁸ Louis Bréhier,¹⁰⁹ Manuel Trens,¹¹⁰ Louis Réau,¹¹¹ Giuseppe M. Toscano,¹¹² André Grabar,¹¹³ Gertrud Schiller,¹¹⁴ Dominique Iogna-Prat, Éric Palazzo & Daniel Russo¹¹⁵— doctrinally document the biblical metaphor of Ezekiel's shut gate in images of the Annunciation.

We will now analyze seven examples of pictorial *Annunciations* from the 14th and 15th centuries —when the iconography of this Marian theme becomes increasingly complex and detailed— that include a symbolic «closed door» in Mary's home.

⁸⁴ Xabier Pikaza. *La madre de Jesús. Introducción a la mariología*. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1989.

⁸⁵ Stefano De Flores. *María en la teología contemporánea*. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1991; and *María madre di Gesù. Sintesi storico salvifica (Corso di Teologia Sistemática)*. Bologna: Edizioni Deboniane, 1992.

⁸⁶ Bruno Forte. *María, la mujer icono del misterio. Ensayo de mariología simbólico-narrativa*. Salamanca: Sígueme, 1993.

⁸⁷ Ignace de La Potterie. *Marie dans le mystère de l'Alliance*. Paris: Desclée, 1995.

⁸⁸ Domiciano Fernández. *María en la historia de la salvación. Ensayo de una mariología narrativa*. Madrid: Publicaciones Claretianas, 1999.

⁸⁹ Klemens Stock. *María, la madre del Señor, en el Nuevo Testamento*. Madrid: Edibesa, 1999.

⁹⁰ Miguel Ponce Cuéllar. *María, Madre del Redentor y Madre de la Iglesia*. Barcelona: Herder, 2001.

⁹¹ Dominique Cerbelaud. *María. Un itinerario dogmático*. Salamanca: Ed. San Esteban / Madrid: Edibesa, 2005.

⁹² Cándido Pozo. *María, nueva Eva*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2005.

⁹³ Karl-Heinz Menke. *María en la historia de Israel y en la fe de la Iglesia*. Salamanca: Sígueme, 2007.

⁹⁴ Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole. *Initiation à la théologie mariale: «Tous les âges me diront bienheureuse»*. Paris: Parole et silence, 2007.

⁹⁵ Juan Luis Bastero de Eleizalde. *María, Madre del Redentor*. Pamplona: EUNSA, 2009.

⁹⁶ Stefano De Flores, Valeria Ferrari Schiefer & Stefano M. Perrella (dirs.). *Mariología* (Dizionario San Paolo). Cinisello Balsamo (Milano): Ed. San Paolo, 2009.

⁹⁷ Antonio María Calero de los Ríos. *María, signo de esperanza cierta. Manual de Mariología*. Madrid: Editorial CCS, 2010.

⁹⁸ Leo Scheffczyk. *María, Madre y acompañante de Cristo*. Valencia: EDICEP, 2010.

⁹⁹ Jesús Casás Otero. *Tota Pulchra. María, esplendor de la belleza divina*. Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ José Cristo Rey García Paredes. *Mariología*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2015.

¹⁰¹ Luigi Bonarrigo. *María Sposa dello Spirito Santo nella teología contemporánea*. Lugano: Eurpress / Siena: Cantagalli, 2018.

¹⁰² Ángel Castaño Félix. *María «Sedes Sapientiae»*. Mariología. Madrid: EDICE, 2019.

¹⁰³ Manfred Hauke. *Introduction to Mariologie*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021

¹⁰⁴ Georges Ferguson. *Signos y símbolos en el arte cristiano*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1956.

¹⁰⁵ Hans Biedermann. *Diccionario de símbolos*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1993.

¹⁰⁶ Michel Feuillet. *Lessico dei simboli cristiani*. Roma: Edizioni Arkeios, 2007.

¹⁰⁷ Udo Becker. *Enciclopedia de los símbolos*. Barcelona: Swing, 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Émile Mâle. *L'art religieux du XIIe siècle en France. Étude sur les origines de l'iconographie du Moyen Âge*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1967 [1924].

¹⁰⁹ Louis Bréhier. *L'art chrétien. Son développement iconographique dès origines à nos jours*. Paris: Renouard-H. Laurens, 1928.

¹¹⁰ Manuel Trens. *María. Iconografía de la Virgen en el arte español*. Madrid: Plus Ultra, 1947.

¹¹¹ Louis Réau. *Iconographie de l'art chrétien. Tome 2. Iconographie de la Bible. Part II. Nouveau Testament*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957.

¹¹² Giuseppe Maria Toscano. *Il pensiero cristiano nell'arte*. Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1960, 3 vols.

¹¹³ André Grabar. *Les voies de la création en iconographie chrétienne: Antiquité et Moyen Âge*. Paris: Flammarion, 1979.

¹¹⁴ Gertrud Schiller. *Iconographie der christlichen Kunst. Band 4,2, Maria*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher VerlagHaus, 1980.

¹¹⁵ Dominique Iogna-Prat, Éric Palazzo & Daniel Russo. *Marie. Le culte de la Vierge dans la société médiévale*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1996.

Pietro di Miniato, *La Anunciación*, c. 1390-1400, Santa Maria Novella, Florencia



Fig. 1. Pietro di Miniato, *The Annunciation*, c. 1390-1400, fresco, reverse of the facade, Santa Maria Novella, Florencia

Pietro di Miniato (c. 1366-1430) structure *The Annunciation*, c. 1390-1400 – frescoed on the reverse of the façade of the Dominican basilica of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (Fig. 1)— in a very original way. The Virgin Mary appears serenely seated in the main area of a geometric house, in the background of which you can see her bedroom with the symbolic conjugal bed. On a lectern in front of her lies an open book whose pages read the prophecy of Isaiah *Ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium* (Is 7:14). Unexpectedly, however, the archangel Gabriel remains genuflected outside the house, in front of an impassable closed door. In this sense, taking into account that in the images of the Annunciation the heavenly messenger is almost always nearby and in visual contact with the Virgin, the circumstance that in this fresco such physical and visual proximity does not exist, due to the interference of this closed door, it seems evident that the intellectual author of this painting –probably a Dominican friar from the convent of Santa Maria Novella, who would have instructed Pietro di Miniato in this sense– wanted to represent in this way, as a *visual metaphor*, the *textual metaphor* Ezekiel's *porta clausa*, to illustrate the five Mariological and Christological meanings we have already explained.

Donatello, *The Cavalcanti Annunciation*, c. 1435. Cappella Cavalcanti, Basilica di Santa Croce, Florencia



Fig. 2. Donatello, *The Cavalcanti Annunciation*, c. 1435. Cappella Cavalcanti, Basilica di Santa Croce, Florencia

Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi, better known as Donatello (1386-1466), poses *The Annunciation Cavalcanti*, c. 1435, sculpted in polychrome and gilded sandstone in the Cavalcanti Chapel of the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence (Fig. 2), according to a very interesting composition for our purposes. The circumstance of being a high relief forces him to compress the scene, stripping it of the complex narrative elements usual in this event, and reducing it to the sole presence of the two protagonists, Gabriel and Maria, framing them in the narrow niche made up of two pilasters and an entablature. What is significant about the case is that the only element included in this bare scene is –in addition to the seat from which Mary has risen– a monumental closed door, made up of four panels decorated with phytomorphic elements. It is also clear here that the invasive presence of this shut door has been highlighted with such prominence –as the only scenographic background and relational link between the Virgin and the heavenly messenger– to refer to Ezekiel's *porta clausa*, with the five dogmatic meanings already explained. It is very likely that some friar assigned to the Franciscan basilica of Santa Croce in which this relief is found instructed or demanded that the artist include a closed door in this *Annunciation*.

In this sense, it is symptomatic that almost all the commentators we know of this work by Donatello –Paul

Schubring,¹¹⁶ Leo Planiscig,¹¹⁷ Ludwig Goldscheider,¹¹⁸ Filippo Rossi,¹¹⁹ Giovanna Gaeta Bertelà,¹²⁰ Alan Phipps Darr & Giorgio Bonsanti,¹²¹ Artur Rosenauer¹²²—silence the presence of that closed door, thus ignoring its crucial doctrinal symbolisms. To our knowledge, only Frederick Hartt and, after him, Shirley N. Blum, mention this closure, which they then interpret in an incomplete manner. When referring to this Cavalcanti Annunciation, Hartt assures: «This door is the porta clausa (closed door) of Ezekiel's vision, the age-old prophecy of the virginity of Mary».¹²³ Following this opinion of Hartt, Shirley N. Blum states that, in this work by Donatello, «Mary's virginity is represented by the closed panels behind her».¹²⁴ Faced with this incomplete and unjustified opinion of Hartt and Blum, it would be appropriate to remember that, according to the ancient tradition of the Fathers, theologians, and liturgical hymnographers, Ezekiel's *porta clausa* carries the five Mariological and Christological meanings already explained, among them, the virginity of Mary, but not just virginity, but her perpetual virginity.

Rogier van der Weyden, *The Annunciation*, from *The Annunciation Triptych*, c. 1440, Musée du Louvre, Paris

Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400-1464), in *The Annunciation*, central panel of the *Annunciation Triptych*, c. 1440, in the Musée du Louvre in Paris (Fig. 3), plans a complex composition, in the context of a luxurious Flemish bourgeois residence. It is important to specify that many elements included in this scene entail deep symbolic meanings, which we cannot expose here, as we have already explained them extensively in another study.¹²⁵ However, we are interested in highlighting on the left side edge the almost imperceptible closed door through which the archangel Gabriel entered without opening it. It seems reasonable to assume that the intellectual author of this painting—perhaps a friar or ecclesiastic who instructed van der Weyden in this sense—decided to include in this *Annunciation* a closed door to visually illustrate the five dogmatic meanings already explained about the closed door of Ezekiel.



Fig.3. Rogier van der Weyden, *The Annunciation*, central panel of *The Annunciation Triptych*, c. 1440. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Therefore, it is surprising that, except for Dirk De Vos,¹²⁶ none of the experts consulted comment on this Louvre *Annunciation*—Erwin Panofsky,¹²⁷ Max J. Friedländer,¹²⁸ Odile Delenda,¹²⁹ Craig Harbison,¹³⁰ Albert Châtelet,¹³¹—mention the closed door nor, even less, interpret its symbolic content.

Konrad Witz, *The Annunciation*, c. 1440. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg

Konrad Witz (1410-1445) stages *The Annunciation*, c. 1440, from the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg (Fig. 4), in a modest room, with thick wooden beams and no furniture, with a certain appearance of a hut. In that rustic enclosure, the archangel Gabriel communicates to the Virgin the Almighty's plan, after his initial salutation *Ave Maria gratia plena Dominus tecum* (Luke 1:28), inscribed on the unfolded phylactery that he carries in her left hand. Interrupting the reading of the book that she keeps open in front of her, Mary turns her head slightly towards the heavenly herald to dialogue with him. For our purposes, the most notable thing in this painting is the solid wooden door that remains closed behind Gabriel's back. It seems evident that the intellectual author of this painting wanted to highlight this closed door with the purpose of visually alluding to the five Mariological and Christological meanings underlying

¹¹⁶ Schubring, Paul. *Donatello. Des meisters Werke*. Stuttgart / Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1907.

¹¹⁷ Leo Planiscig, *Donatello*. Wien: Verlag Antonio Schroll, 1947 [1939].

¹¹⁸ Ludwig Goldscheider, *Donatello*. Oxford: Phaidon, 1944 [1941].

¹¹⁹ Filippo Rossi, *Donatello*. Milano: Electa Editrice, 1953.

¹²⁰ Giovanna Gaeta Bertelà, *Donatello i Della Robbia*. Firenze: Beccucci, 1970.

¹²¹ Alan Phipps Darr, & Giorgio Bonsanti, a cura di. *Donatello e i suoi. Scultura fiorentina del primo Rinascimento*. Founders Society. Detroit Institute of Arts / Milano: La casa Usher, Arnoldo Mondadori, 1986.

¹²² Rosenauer, Artur. *Donatello. L'opera completa*. Milano: Electa, 1993.

¹²³ Frederik Hartt. *History of Italian Renaissance art. Painting, sculpture, architecture*. London: Thames and Hudson Hartt, 1987, 236-237

¹²⁴ Shirley Neilsen Blum. *The New Art of the Fifteenth Century: Faith and Art in Florence and the Netherlands*. New York: Abbeville Press, 2015, 184.

¹²⁵ José María Salvador-González, *Thalamus Dei. The Bed in Images of the Annunciation. Its Iconography and Doctrinal Explanation*. Madrid: Editorial Dykinson / Editorial Sindéresis, 2024.

¹²⁶ Dirk De Vos. *Rogier van der Weyden. L'œuvre complet*. Paris: Hazan, 1999, 195.

¹²⁷ Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting, Its origins and character*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966 [1953], pp. 252-256, 278, 287, 293, 309.

¹²⁸ Max J. Friedländer, Friedländer, Max J. 1967. *Early Netherlandish painting*. Vol. 2. *Rogier van der Weyden and the Master of Flemalle*. Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1967, plate 17.

¹²⁹ Odile Delenda. *Rogier van der Weyden (Roger de Le Pasture)*. Paris: Cerf, Tricorné, 1987, 33.

¹³⁰ Craig Harbison. *Jan van Eyck. The Play of Realism*. London: Reaktion Books, 1991, 36-37

¹³¹ Albert Châtelet. *Rogier van der Weyden: problèmes de la vie et de l'œuvre*. Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1999, 43 ; y *Rogier van der Weyden: (Rogier de la Pasture)*. Paris: Gallimard, 1999, 97-99.

Ezekiel's *porta clausa* according to the Fathers, theologians, and liturgical hymnographers of the Eastern and Western Churches.



Fig. 4. Konrad Witz, *The Annunciation*, c. 1440. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.

Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, panel of the *Armadio degli Argenti*, c. 1451-53. Museo Convento di San Marco, Florencia

Fra Angelico, whose real name was Guido di Pietro (1395-1455), structures in perfect symmetry the composition of *The Annunciation*, panel from the *Armadio degli Argenti*, c. 1451-53, in the Museo Convento di San Marco in Florence (Fig. 5). In the middle of the porticoed courtyard of a suggested palace, the genuflecting archangel Gabriel points his left index finger towards the sky to indicate the origin of the divine message he is bringing, which is summarized in the phrase *ECCE CONCIPIES IN VTERO ET PARIES FILIVM ET VOCABIS NOMEN EI[VS] IHESVM. LVCE I.C.* (Luke 1:31), which appears inscribed in the phylactery located at the base of the painting. In turn, this message fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah *ECCE VIRGO CONCIPIET ET PARIET FILIVM ET VOCABIT NOMEN EIVS E[M]MANV[E]L. YSA.VI.C.* (Is 7:14-15), which is inscribed in the phylactery on the upper edge of the table. Kneeling reverently in front of the heavenly messenger, the Virgin Mary crosses her hands over her body as a sign of acceptance of the will of the Almighty.



Fig. 5. Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, panel of the *Armadio degli Argenti*, c. 1451-53. Museo Convento di San Marco, Florence.

It is interesting to highlight in this panel the closed door that appears as a central vanishing point in the last plane, a door enclosure that is complemented and completed by the closed garden (*hortus conclusus*) located behind the porticoed patio. After all, the *hortus conclusus* is also a symbol of Mary's perpetual virginity. Now, there is no doubt that the cultured Dominican priest and friar that was Fra Angelico placed in this *Annunciation* that *porta clausa* and that *hortus conclusus* in perfect knowledge of the multiple and essential Mariological and Christological meanings underlying both biblical metaphors. It is therefore surprising that none of the experts consulted who comments on this *Annunciation* in the *Armadio degli Argenti* —John Pope-Hennessy,¹³² Giorgio Bonsanti,¹³³ Jacqueline Guillaud & Maurice Guillaud,¹³⁴ Gabriele Bartz,¹³⁵ Alessandro Zuccari,¹³⁶ Gerardo de Simone¹³⁷ — mention the closed door nor, even less, interprets its doctrinal meaning.

¹³² Pope-Hennessy, John. *Fra Angelico*. London: Phaidon Press, 1952, 124.

¹³³ Giorgio Bonsanti. *Fra Angelico au Musée de Saint-Marc*. Paris: Atlas, 1984, 73-76

¹³⁴ Jacqueline Guillaud & Maurice Guillaud. *Fra Angelico. Lumière de l'âme: Peintures sur bois et fresques du Couvent San Marco de Florence*. Paris / New York: Guillaud, 1986.

¹³⁵ Gabriele Bartz. *Guido di Piero, llamado Fra Angelico: hacia 1395-1455*. Colonia: Könemann, 2000, 102-105

¹³⁶ Alessandro Zuccari. «Simbolismi medievali e forme rinascimentali: la «porta dischiusa» nell'arte dell'Angelico». In *Beato Angelico. L'alba del Rinascimento*, Alessandro Zuccari, Giovanni Morello & Gerardo de Simone, eds. Milano: Skira, 2009, 41.

¹³⁷ Gerardo de Simone. «Armadio degli Argenti (cat. 33)». In *Beato Angelico. L'alba del Rinascimento*, Alessandro Zuccari, Giovanni Morello & Gerardo de Simone, eds. Milano: Skira, 2009, 226-229.

Piero della Francesca, *The Annunciation*, c.1455, church of Saint Francis, Arezzo



Fig. 6. Piero della Francesca, *The Annunciation*, c.1455, church of Saint Francis, Arezzo.

Piero della Francesca (1415/20-1492) stages *The Annunciation*, c.1455, frescoed in the church of Saint Francis in Arezzo (Fig. 6). into a composition patterned according to the golden ratio. In the context of a monumental Renaissance palace, Gabriel begins to kneel before the Virgin in the outer courtyard, while he blesses her with her right hand. Majestically standing within the palace, Mary turns slightly towards the heavenly herald to hear her message. What is interesting to highlight here for our purposes is the closed door that, on the back wall, establishes the link between the angel and the Virgin.

It seems reasonable to think that some Franciscan friar from the Areteine church of Saint Francis induced/demanded Piero della Francesca to paint a *porta clausa* in this *Annunciation*. Therefore, it is surprising that, except for Frederick Hartt and Ronald Lightbown, no commentator we know of this work by Piero —Kenneth Clark,¹³⁸ Roberto Longhi,¹³⁹ Antonio Paolucci,¹⁴⁰ Alberto Busignani,¹⁴¹ Philip Hendy,¹⁴² Giuseppe Centauro,¹⁴³ Alessandro Angelini,¹⁴⁴ Steffi

Roettgen,¹⁴⁵ C. Bertelli & A. Paolucci,¹⁴⁶ Silvia Ronchey¹⁴⁷ — mentions the presence of the closed door, and, even less, explains documentarily its doctrinal meanings. Only Frederick Hartt¹⁴⁸ and Ronald Lightbown¹⁴⁹ mention the closed door, although they give certain erroneous interpretations of it. Hartt, following an isolated text by the Dominican Saint Antoninus of Florence, interprets the *porta clausa* as the door of salvation.¹⁵⁰ Lightbown¹⁵¹ also mistakenly interprets this closed door from this Arezzo fresco as the *porta salutis* (door of salvation). The contradictory thing about this interpretation by Hartt and Lightbown is claiming that a closed door means salvation: in effect, it is not understandable how men can enter heaven if its door is closed.

Hans Memling or workshop of Roger van der Weyden, *The Clugny Annunciation*, c. 1465-70. The Metropolitan Museum, New York



Fig. 7. Hans Memling or workshop of Roger van der Weyden, *The Clugny Annunciation*, c. 1465-70. The Metropolitan Museum, New York.

¹³⁸ Kenneth Clark. *Piero della Francesca*. London: Phaidon, 1951, 93-96.

¹³⁹ Roberto Longhi. *Piero della Francesca*. Paris: Hazan 1989, 79, 81.

¹⁴⁰ Antonio Paolucci. *Piero della Francesca. Catalogue complet des peintures*. Paris: Bordsas. 1990, 86-87.

¹⁴¹ Alberto Busignani. *Piero della Francesca*. Firenze: Sadea, Sansoni, 1967, 97-99.

¹⁴² Philip Hendy. *Piero della Francesca and the Early Renaissance*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968, 85-86, 90.

¹⁴³ Giuseppe Centauro. *Dipinti murali di Piero della Francesc. La basilica di S. Francesco ad Arezzo. Indagini su sette secoli*. Milano: Electa, 1990, 225, 275, 284.

¹⁴⁴ Alessandro Angelini. *Piero della Francesca*. Firenze: Scala, 1991, 41.

¹⁴⁵ Steffi Roettgen. *Fresques italiennes de la Renaissance, 1400-1470*. Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 1996, 230-233.

¹⁴⁶ A. Bertelli & A. Paolucci. *Piero della Francesca e le corti italiane* (cat. exh.). Milano: Skira. 2007.

¹⁴⁷ Sylvia Ronchey. *L'enigma di Piero. L'ultimo bizantino e la crociata fantasma nella rivelazione di un grande quadro*. Milano: Rizzoli, 2007.

¹⁴⁸ Hartt, *History of Italian Renaissance art*, 1987, 278.

¹⁴⁹ Ronald Lightbown. *Piero della Francesca*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1992, 175-176.

¹⁵⁰ «Among St. Antonine's writings is the declaration that the *porta clausa* is the way to Salvation.» (Frederik Hartt, *History of Italian Renaissance art. Painting, sculpture, architecture*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, 278).

¹⁵¹ Lightbown. *Piero della Francesca*, 1991, 175.

Hans Memling (1430-1494) or the workshop of Roger van der Weyden places *The Clugny Annunciation*, c. 1465-70, from the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Fig. 7), in the scenic environment of a luxurious bourgeois residence in Flanders. Aside from the multiple symbolic elements that appear included in this painting, we are interested in shedding light on the closed door behind the angel Gabriel, through which he entered without opening it. There are reasons to conjecture that the intellectual author of this painting –perhaps a friar or ecclesiastic who instructed the painter– included in this *Annunciation* a closed door to illustrate as a *visual metaphor* the Mariological and Christological meanings contained in the *textual metaphor* of Ezekiel's *porta clausa*.

In this sense, it is regrettable that none of the specialists consulted who analyzes this *Clugny Annunciation* –Max J. Friedländer,¹⁵² Martin Davis,¹⁵³ Odile Delenda,¹⁵⁴ Albert Châtelet,¹⁵⁵ and Elisabeth Dhanens & Jellie Dijkstra¹⁵⁶– mention the closed door nor, even less, explain its doctrinal meanings.

5. Conclusions

As a result of this article, we can draw the following essential conclusions.

For almost a thousand years the Fathers and theologians of the Eastern and Western Churches considered that the statement by the prophet Ezekiel about the Eastern closed door of the temple clearly confirmed the five Mariological and Christological theses already explained: in fact, they interpreted this prophetic *porta clausa* as a metaphor for the virginal divine motherhood (in its two key moments, in conceiving and giving birth to Christ) and the perpetual virginity of Mary, as well as, complementary, the conception/incarnation and birth of God the Son made man in the virginal womb of Mary.

Based on the almost thousand-year patristic and theological tradition, numerous hymnographers composed countless liturgical hymns in Latin, many of whose stanzas take up the biblical metaphor above, according to the fivefold doctrinal projection already specified.

From the Christological perspective, the *porta clausa* means the supernatural human conception of God the Son made man without manly intervention, and his supernatural birth without destroying his mother's virginity.

Furthermore, taking into account that the virginal divine motherhood of Mary and the supernatural conception/incarnation of God the Son were verified in the final moment of the event of the angel's Annunciation to the Virgin, it was foreseeable that some artistic representations of the Annunciation could include in their scene a closed door, in allusion to Ezekiel's prophetic vision, drawing inspiration

from this solid conceptual basis constituted by the Fathers, theologians, and hymnographers when interpreting the statement of Ezekiel.

In this sense, the comparative analysis between these exegetical texts and the figure of the shut door included in seven 14th-15th centuries *Annunciations* allows us to confirm the following hypothesis: the shut door figured in these *Annunciations* constitutes a persuasive *visual metaphor* through which the intellectual authors of these works of art illustrate the five Mariological and Christological thesis highlighted by the Greek-Eastern and Latin Fathers, theologians, and liturgical hymnographers when interpreting as a *textual metaphor* Ezekiel's *porta clausa*.

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¹⁵² Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish painting*. Vol. 2. *Rogier van der Weyden and the Master of Flemalle*, 1967, plate 49; Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish painting*. Vol. 6. *Hans Mem-linc and Gerard David*, 1971, plate 26.

¹⁵³ Davis, *Rogier van der Weyden*, 1973, 271-272.

¹⁵⁴ Delenda, *Rogier van der Weyden*, 1987, 56

¹⁵⁵ Châtelet, *Rogier van der Weyden: problèmes de la vie et de l'œuvre*, 1999, 124

¹⁵⁶ Elisabeth Dhanens & Jellie Dijkstra, *Rogier de la Pasture van der Weyden. Introduction à l'œuvre. Relecture des sources.* Tournai. La Renaissance du Livre, 1999, 47.

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