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"TOTA PULCHRA ES": MARY, THE SONG OF SONGS, AND THE SACRAMENTS

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In a pair of articles published in 1951 in Orate Fratres, *Jean Daniélou, S.J., demonstrated that the Fathers of the Church interpreted the Song of Songs as a prophecy of the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation. This interpretation fostered continuity between the Jewish liturgy, which features the Song of Songs in the observance of Passover and Sabbath, on the one hand, and Christian ritual, which gives a place of honor to the sacraments of initiation in the Easter vigil, on the other. This article traces the application of the Song of Songs to the sacraments of initiation in early Christian writers such as Hippolytus and Ambrose and in medieval writers such as Paschasius Radbertus, Honorius Augustodunensis, and Alain de Lille. These writers linked Mary as "full of grace" to the sacraments of the Church, given as means for grace. The seal given in Baptism, the signaculum placed on the heart (Sg. 8:6), the sealed fountain of the Song (Sg. 4:12), and the "Seal of Holy Mary" became closely connected with each other. The article ends with examples of how depictions of the Immaculate Conception as "Tota pulchra" (Sg.4:7) in*

the modern period came to inspire catechetical visual art that intermingled the metaphors of the Song with the iconography of the sacraments.

Thanks to the *ressourcement* sparking the liturgical movement in the mid-twentieth century and continuing in the wake of Vatican Council II, liturgical historians following Jean Daniélou know that the mystagogy of the early Church drew heavily upon the Song of Songs as the "Song of Sacraments" in its explanation to neophytes of the sacramental signs of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.[1] Historians also note the rich employ of the Song of Songs in instructions given to consecrated virgins, in the liturgy for the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in related, Marian biblical exegesis, preaching, and art.[2] These sacramental and Marian phenomena have been treated as separate developments, however, and—as far as I know—never considered together as stages in the development of a single doctrine about Mary and the sacraments. This

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[1] Jean Daniélou, S.J., "The Canticles, A Song of Sacraments," *Orate Fratres* 3 (1951): 97–103; "The Canticles, A Song of Sacraments (II)," *Orate Fratres* 4 (1951): 161–65. See also Jean Daniélou, S.J., *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 191–207; F. B. A. Asiedu, "The Song of Songs and the Ascent of Soul: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Language of Mysticism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 55.3 (2001): 299–317; Karl Shuve. *The Song of Songs and the Fashioning of Identity in Early Latin Christianity*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 43–46, 73–76, 23–37, 150–55.

[2] See Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 248–51, 268–75; David J. Rothenberg, *The Flower of Paradise: Marian Devotion and Secular Song in Medieval and Renaissance Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 26, 28, 36.

separation carries over into the treatment of an important resource for a unified reading of these Marian and sacramental traditions: Paschasius Radbertus (c. 785–c. 865), the author both of the important Eucharistic treatise *De Corpore at Sanguine Domini* (822) and of the first Marian treatise of the Middle Ages, *Cogitis Me,* composed to explain the mystery of Mary's Assumption in terms of the verses from the Song of Songs echoed in that feast's liturgy. As Hannah Matis rightly notes, Paschasius's Marian and sacramental writings, all of which employ the Song of Songs, are seldom studied together.[3]

In this essay, I undertake such a study while considering the development of a medieval doctrine about Mary and the sacraments: I use the Song of Songs as an Ariadne's thread to tie Mary and the sacraments of initiation together and to guide a passage through the labyrinth of relations connecting them.[4] I first recall the use of the Song in ancient mystagogy, highlighting especially the Marian contributions of Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–c. 235) and St. Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397) to baptismal catechesis. I turn then to consider Paschasius Radbertus as a pivotal figure in a Marian arc joining Baptism and Eucharist as sacraments of salvation. Finally, while placing special emphasis on sacramental references, I survey the Marian commentaries that three medieval exegetes—Honorius Augustodunensis (1080–1154), Rupert of Deutz (c. 1075–c. 1129), and Alain

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[3] Hannah W. Matis, "'Love's Lament': Paschasius Radbertus and the Song of Songs," Chapter Six, in Matis, *The Song of Songs in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 176–213, at 178.

[4] The Cretan princess Ariadne figures in the myths of Theseus and the Minotaur. Named after her, "Ariadne's thread" designates a process of problem solving that involves the use of multiple means.

de Lille (c. 1128–1203)—wrote on the Song of Songs. These writings show that the Song of Songs remained a "Song of Sacraments" for the Middle Ages, when the Eucharist, understood as the "greatest of the sacraments,"[5] came to outshine its indispensable precursor, Baptism.[6] Whereas Mary is bride and mother in the Baptismal Song, welcoming new, divine life, she is Christ's faithful companion and co-redemptrix in the Eucharistic Song, embracing the cross with him and sharing in his triumph over sin and death.

What emerges finally from these diverse materials, I argue, is something of central importance: Mary's spousal inseparability from her Son—sealed in the Incarnation, in the marriage of his divinity with the human nature he assumed uniquely from her—makes her a co-institutor with Christ of the sacraments given to the Church, as well as to Mary, their faith-filled, exemplary recipient. For Mary, the Incarnate Word, for whom and to whom she gave her fiat, is the Sacrament of sacraments; from whom she, more than any other member of the Church, received "grace upon grace" (Jn 1:16).[7] Considering Mary in this sacramental way can take us far, I suggest, in uniting the so-called ecclesio-typical and Christo-typical Mariologies. Mary is one with the bridal and maternal Church that administers and receives the sacraments because she, as bride and mother, is one with

[5] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 65, Art. 3.

[6] For a useful discussion of the historical shift from a "baptismal" to a "penitential-eucharistic" emphasis in Christian teaching and experience, see George Huntson Williams, "The Sacramental Presuppositions of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*," *Church History* 26.3 (1957): 245–74, especially 245–53.

[7] For biblical quotations, I use the Revised Standard Version.

Christ, whose Incarnation St. Augustine names "the Sacrament."[8]

The Song and Mary in the Mystagogy of the Early Church

The earliest Christian commentary on the Song of Songs was almost certainly a mystagogical discourse. Composed in the third century by Hippolytus, a Greek-speaking Christian leader in Rome, the enigmatic text that survives is "a *written* distillation of oral performance,"[9] suitable for a vigil at Paschal time in a house-church. Answering in part to Valentinian rituals of initiation, Hippolytus interprets the Song for newly baptized Christians in a way that highlights the sensory, nuptial signs of the Christian mysteries. He focuses particularly on the image of ointment, suggesting its explanatory power for the post-baptismal anointing. In the *Logos* theology of Hippolytus, Song 1:3, "Your name is ointment poured out," refers to the Word made flesh, the God-man for whom the people of Israel longed. In the fullness of time, "of this very anointing made desirous," Hippolytus writes, "the Blessed Virgin Mary received the

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[8] "But when the fullness of time came she [the Wisdom of God] was sent … in order that the Word might become flesh, that is, become man. In this sacrament that was prophesied for the future lay the salvation of those wise and holy men also who were born of women before he was born of the virgin; and in this sacrament now proclaimed as achieved lies the salvation of all who believe, hope, and love. For this is *the great sacrament of piety, which was manifested in the flesh, justified in spirit, was seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed in the world, taken up in glory* (1 Tm. 3:16)." Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991), IV.5.27 (p. 173).

[9] Yancy Warren Smith, "Hippolytus' Commentary on the Song of Songs in Social and Critical Context" (PhD diss., Brite Divinity School, 2009), 381. Smith includes a complete English translation of the commentary as found in the Georgian manuscript, with comparison to other surviving witnesses.

Word in order to conceive."[10] Later in the commentary, Hippolytus incorporates the entire genealogy of Jesus Christ in Luke 3:23–28 and Matthew 1:1–16 into his interpretation of the "couch of Solomon," surrounded by "sixty mighty men of the mighty men of Israel, all equipped with swords" (Sg 3:7–8). Yancy Warren Smith argues persuasively that Hippolytus uses the complex genealogical image to recall the Eucharistic celebration. "[T]he gathered community of women and men celebrating the offering of the body and blood of the Lord" understood it, Smith explains, to entail "an offering of their own flesh to God in the company of all the faithful of all generations through the body of Christ,"[11] born of Mary. The Word was made flesh on the couch of the king, namely, in the womb of the Virgin Mary: "from her was born our Lord Jesus Christ."[12] Elsewhere Hippolytus interprets the gazelle-like Beloved "leaping upon the mountains" (Sg 2:8) as referring also to the Incarnation: "What is the leaping? It is of the swift Word. For he leapt from heaven to the virgin womb, from the womb into the world, from the world to the Cross, from the Cross to Hades, from Hades he ascended again to Earth, from Earth to the Heavens."[13]

As Smith and others have demonstrated, Hippolytus's writing on the Song influenced not only the *Mystagogical Instructions* of Cyril of Jerusalem and the famous third-century commentary by Origen of Alexandria, Hippolytus's

[10] Hippolytus, *In Canticum*, 2.26, in Smith, "Hippolytus' Commentary," 281.
[11] Smith, "Hippolytus' Commentary," 449.
[12] Hippolytus, *In Canticum*, 27.11, in Smith, "Hippolytus' Commentary," 373.
[13] Hippolytus, *In Canticum*, 21.2, in Smith, "Hippolytus' Commentary," 336.

younger contemporary, but also important fourth-century texts by Ambrose, who quotes from Hippolytus in *De Sacramentis* and *De Mysteriis,* in his mystical treatise *On Isaac and the Soul,* and in his *Exposition of Psalm 118 (119),* "a series of sermons on the Christian ethical life for new converts."[14]

On the Sacraments (*De Sacramentis*) entitles a lecture series that Ambrose gave to neophytes in Milan shortly after their initiation into the Church during the Easter vigil. The talks systematically recall and explain in order the rites in which they have participated, shedding light on their meaning. As Ambrose explains, "in a Christian man, faith is first,"[15] followed by a reasoned understanding. (Ambrose's student, Augustine finds a warrant for this claim in a verse he frequently quotes from the Song of Songs: "You will come and pass through, beginning from faith" [Sg 4:8, LXX].)[16] Naming Baptism a "passing over from sin to life,"[17] a passover foreshadowed by the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea (Ex 14:15–31), Ambrose proceeds to explain the rich symbolism of the "opening of the ears" (the *Effeta*), the prebaptismal anointing, the renunciations of Satan and his works, the approach to the

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[14] Smith, "Hippolytus' Commentary," 63.

[15] St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments and On the Mysteries*, trans. T. Thompson, ed. J. H. Srawley (London: SPCK, 1950), 47; *De Sacramentis / De Mysteriis*, ed. Josef Schmitz, C.S.S.R., Fontes Christiani (Freiburg: Herder, 1990), 1.1.1. Hereafter, I give the page number from the English translation by Thompson and cite book, chapter, and paragraph of the Latin text edited by Schmitz.

[16] St. Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B., ed. John E. Rochelle, O.S.A., 6 vols. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 2:21 (Exposition 1 of Psalm 33.10), 3:360 (Exposition of Psalm 67.41), 6:205 (Exposition of Psalm 134.18).

[17] St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*, 53; *De Sacramentis*, 1.4.12.

font, the consecration of the font with the Easter candle, the triple confession of faith and the threefold immersion into the water, the rising up out of the tomb-shaped font, the clothing in white garments, the postbaptismal anointing of the head, the feet-washing, the spiritual seal conferred through the invocation of the Holy Spirit, and the approach to the altar for the reception of the Eucharist.

When recalling this approach to the altar in *De Sacramentis,* Ambrose first breaks into quotations of the Song of Songs. The glorious purity of the baptized, arisen to new life with the resurrected Christ, causes him to exclaim in the company of the angels: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness made white?" (Sg 8:5).[18] Ambrose likens the invitation of the newly baptized to receive Christ in Communion to Christ's call to the soul or to the Church: "Let her kiss me with the kisses of her mouth" (Sg 1:1).[19] In rapid, exhilarating sequence, Ambrose quotes additional verses of the Song that correspond to other signs of the sacraments received—the wine of the Eucharist, the scented chrism of confirmation: "Because thy breasts are better than wine" (Sg 1:2); "Thy name is an ointment poured forth, therefore the virgins love thee" (Sg 1:3); "Draw us; we will run after the fragrance of thy ointments" (Sg 1:4).[20] Ambrose summarizes the whole richness of the Eucharist as a wedding banquet with another word from the Songs: "The king hath

[18] St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*, 81–82; *De Sacramentis*, 4.2.5. Here and elsewhere, Ambrose follows LXX, translating the Greek expression as "made white" (*dealbata*).

[19] St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*, 96; *De Sacramentis*, 5.2.5.

[20] St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*, 97; *De Sacramentis*, 5.2.8–10.

brought me into his chamber, … into his storehouse" (Sg 1:4).

To this royal offering of "good draughts, pleasant savours, sweet honey, divers fruits, varied foods" to the souls of the neophytes,[21] the bridal Church replies with her own invitation to Christ, taken from the Song: "Let my brother come down into his garden and take the fruit of the fruit-trees" (Sg 4:16).[22] Ambrose imagines the neophytes, dressed in white and radiant, as blossoming fruittrees. Speaking as the Bridegroom and echoing the Song, Christ is then heard to reply that he has indeed "come down into [his] garden," gathered "the vintage of myrrh with [his] ointments," "eaten [his] bread with honey," "drunk [his] wine with [his] milk" (Sg 5:1)—an example he wishes his disciples to follow: "*Eat,* he says, *my brethren, and be drunk* (Sg 5:1).[23]

Among the Fathers, Hippolytus and Ambrose excel in their use of the Song of Songs within a mystagogical context, but, thanks to Ephesians 5:25–27, a nuptial interpretation of Baptism is frequently found in patristic writers, notably Cyril of Jerusalem and St. John Chrysostom, but also Origen of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine of Hippo.[24] As Karl Shuve has recently demonstrated, moreover, passages from the Song of Songs referring to the Church as

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[21] St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*, 98; *De Sacramentis*, 5.2.11.

[22] St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*, 99; *De Sacramentis*, 5.3.14.

[23] St. Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*, 100; *De Sacramentis*, 5.3.15.

[24] On nuptial imagery, see Hugh M. Riley, *Christian Initiation: A Comparative Study of the Interpretation of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Ambrose of Milan* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1974), 166, 178, 439, 440; Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 196–203.

a "garden enclosed" (Sg 4:12), a "fountain sealed" (Sg 4:12), a singular "dove" (Sg 6:8), and a "lily among thorns" (Sg 2:2) were regularly employed in apologetic and polemical writings against the Donatists concerning Baptism (and the question of rebaptism).[25]

Mary is found in these early sacramental writings first, and most importantly, as we have already anticipated, in repeated references to the Incarnation, the "Sacrament" of all the Christian sacraments. The enfleshment of the Word in her makes Mary, by her *fiat,* the condign co-establisher with Christ of the sacraments and renders her mysteriously present at every Christian's new birth in Baptism, at every Eucharistic celebration, and at every sealing with the Spirit. Surveying patristic references to Mary in baptismal contexts, Hugo Rahner, S.J., concludes, "Baptism is forever a continuation of the birth of God made man, born of the Virgin, conceived by the Spirit.… Mary is, therefore, in a real sense the beginning of our baptismal grace."[26]

Christ was first anointed with the Spirit, Augustine instructs, at his conception in Mary's womb.[27] The king's

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[25] See Shuve, *Fashioning of Identity*, 38–39, 43, 46, 73; Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery*, 196–203.

[26] Hugo Rahner, S.J., *Our Lady and the Church*, trans. Sebastian Bullough (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1961), 73–74.

[27] "It is written of him more openly in the Acts of the Apostles, *that God anointed him with the Holy Spirit* (Acts 10:38), not of course with a visible oil but with the gift of grace which is signified by the chrism the Church anoints the baptized with. Nor, to be sure, was Christ only anointed with the Holy Spirit when the dove came down upon him at his baptism; what he was doing then was graciously prefiguring his body, that is his Church, in which it is particularly those who have just been baptized that receive the Holy Spirit. But we must realize that he was anointed with this mystical and invisible anointing when the Word of God became flesh, that is, when a human nature … was coupled to the Word of God in the virgin's womb so as to become one person with him. That is why we confess that he was born of the Holy Spirit and the

couch where Christ was conceived is also the prophesied place of Eucharistic refreshment, according to Hippolytus.[28] Ambrose in *De Sacramentis* points to the miracle of the Virgin Conception and Virgin Birth as the guarantee for each one's supernatural regeneration in Christ through Baptism.[29] "[I]n presenting the mystagogy of baptism as new birth," Hugh Riley observes, John Chrysostom similarly "uses the mystery of the Virgin Birth to elucidate the new birth of the baptized."[30]

Alluding in a treatise on Baptism to the Incarnation as a fruitful marriage between the Lord and "the flesh [assumed] from Mary," Pacian of Barcelona († before 392) draws upon the Johannine image of the divine life as an implanted seed (1 Jn 3:9; *semen ipsius*) and offers this instruction: "From this marriage is born the Christian people, with the Spirit of the Lord coming from above.… The seed of Christ, that is, the Spirit of God, produces through the hands of the priests the new man, conceived in the womb of our [spiritual] mother and received at birth at the baptismal font."[31] Pope Leo the Great similarly insists, "To everyone who is reborn, the water of baptism is like the Virgin's womb. The same Holy Spirit fills the font as filled the Virgin, so that the sin that was nullified there by that sacred conception may be removed also here by the mystic washing."[32]

Virgin Mary." Augustine, *Trinity*, XV.6.46 (p. 431).

[28] Smith, "Hippolytus' Commentary," 449.

[29] Ambrose, *On the Sacraments*, 89; *De Sacramentis*, 4.17.

[30] Riley, *Christian Initiation*, 150.

[31] Pacian, "On Baptism," in *Iberian Fathers, Vol. 3: Pacian of Barcelona and Orosius of Braga*, trans. Craig L. Hanson, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 99 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 91–92.

[32] Leo I, Homily 24.3, in Robin M. Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols,*

The sinless purity of the newly baptized, imaged as the spotless bride of Song of Songs 4:7, prompted many early Christians to renew their baptismal vows through virginal consecration, in order to generate a new "race" of virgins in the Church taking its beginning (in Rahner's words) "directly from the Incarnation and the grace of Baptism."[33] Not surprisingly, therefore, Ambrose of Milan employs in his fervent writings on virginity—*De virginibus*, *De virginitate*, and especially *De institutione virginis et sanctae Mariae uiginitate perpetua*—the same lush imagery from the Song of Songs found in his catechetical instructions to neophytes. He even presents the Virgin Mary as the model of each virgin joined to Christ: "She is called 'Mary,' that is, she receives the name of her who bore Christ. For a holy soul can be said to bear Christ spiritually."[34] What is written figuratively in the Song of Songs about the Church ("in figura ecclesiae") is also written prophetically about Mary ("de Maria prophetata"), Ambrose declares,[35] announcing an exegetical principle that eventually gives rise to verse-by-verse Marian commentaries on the Songs in the twelfth century, a development coincident with advances in sacramental theology.

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and Settings of Early Christian Baptism, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 248.

[33] Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church*, 36.

[34] St. Ambrose, *On Virginity*, trans. Daniel Callam, C.S.B. (Toronto: Peregrina, 1989), IV.20. For the Latin text, see *De Virginitate*, in St. Ambrose, *Opera omnia* 14/2, *Verginità*, ed. Franco Gori (Milan: Città Nuova, 1989).

[35] Ambrose, *De Institutione Virginis*, 89, in *Verginità*, ed. Franco Gori (Milan: Città Nuova, 1989). 172. On Ambrose's Mariology, see Joseph Huhn, *Der Geheimnis der Jungfrau-Mutter Maria nach dem kirchenvater Ambrosius* (Wurzburg: Echter, 1954); Charles William Neumann, *The Virgin Mary in the Works of Saint Ambrose* (Fribourg: University Press, 1962).

Born in Christ from "Mary at the font" (to echo Rahner's fine phrase),[36] every Christian bears the features of Jesus and Mary. Because of the Incarnation, Mary is to be found in and among her spiritual children in Christ, the members of the bridal Church, cleansed from sin, sealed with the Spirit's anointing, and desirous of the Eucharist. As Rahner puts it, "Mary contains in herself all the mysteries fulfilled in ourselves at our rebirth."[37] The mystery of the Son's Incarnation, renewed in each member of the Church through Baptism, conforms each member and the Church as a whole to the virtuous pattern of Mary's human life as the God-bearer. Mary thus both co-initiates the life of Christ in the soul of the baptized and nurtures its virtuous development through her example and maternal intercession.

For Ambrose of Milan, Mary is the first and greatest of the neophytes, the one who penetrated the mysteries of the faith to their depth. Ambrose's series of twenty-two sermons on Psalm 119 [118] treats that great alphabet psalm as a primer in moral theology for neophytes, the chief themes of which resound in Mary and Joseph's example in presenting the infant Jesus for circumcision on the eighth day, in literal obedience to the Law (Lv 12:3–4), but also as a prophecy of the resurrection.[38] (Circumcision is understood to be an Old Testament type of Baptism.)[39] In this extended Ambrosian

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[36] Rahner uses the phrase as a chapter title in *Our Lady and the Church*, 71–84.

[37] Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church*, 59.

[38] *Expositio in Psalmum 118*, Prologue.2, *Expositio Psalmi CXVIII / Commento al Salmo 118*, ed. Luigi Franco Pizzolato, 2 vols., *Opera Omnia di Sant'Ambrogio* (Milan: Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 1987), 1:56. Subsequent citations of passages from the exposition are by the number of the Hebrew letter and by paragraph.

[39] See Connor O'Brien, "Bede's Theology of Circumcision, Its Sources, and

exposition (a work of his maturity), the repeated appearances of Mary in comments on individual sets of verses,[40] starting with the first (on the verses for the letter Aleph), are coupled with citations of the Song of Songs, thus preparing the way for the excursus (22.32–45), in which the study of the psalm modulates into an ecclesial interpretation of the Song of Songs (8:5–14), as if the latter were a seamless continuation of the former.

Citing the Song in his exposition of the Aleph verses (Ps 119:1–8), Ambrose identifies the kiss requested by the bride (Sg 1:1) with the grace of the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary at the hour of the Incarnation (Lk 1:35), when she was first drawn into the king's chamber (Sg 1:4), that is, into the Paschal mysteries: the time of his passion, the piercing of his side, the effusion of his blood, the ointment of the sepulcher, the mystery of the resurrection (*Exposition*, 1.16). Associating Mary's sword-pierced heart (Lk 2:35) both with the bride's heart, wounded by love (Sg 4:9),[41] and with Sacred Scriptures represented as a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12), Ambrose understood the center of Mary's heart to have been opened through illumination and filled with understanding of all the mysteries concerning Christ (*Exposition*, 19.38). Turning Christ's words and deeds over and over in her heart (Lk 2:19; 51), treasuring them, remembering them, seeking understanding of them, Mary is the great model for the newly baptized who seek an

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Significance," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 67.2 (2016): 594–613; Andrew Hofer, O.P., "The Circumcision of the Lord: Saving Mystery after Modern Oblivion," *Nova et Vetera* 3.2 (2005): 259–77.

[40] For references to Mary, see *Expositio in Psalmum 118*, 1.16; 2.6, 8, 28; 3.19; 4.17; 5.3, 12; 7.24; 12.1, 17; 13.3; 14.46; 19.38; 22.30.

[41] See *De Virginitate*, XIV.91.

understanding of the sacramental signs. Ambrose therefore points to Mary's pondering heart in his expositions of the letters Beth (Ps 119:9–16), Dalet (Ps 119:25–32), Labd (Ps 119:89–96), Mem (Ps 119:97–104), and Kof (Ps 119:145–52).[42]

In Ambrose's Song-saturated exposition of Psalm 119 [118], Mary is a model of obedience to God (12.1), of virginal chastity (5.3), and of humility (14.46). The New Eve who bears Christ as the fruit of her womb (5.12), Mary is the mother of the living; she is "Mary at the font." Commenting on the Beth verses, Ambrose identifies the neophyte with the "black but beautiful" bride of Song 1:4, who is "black" because of Eve's sin, but "beautiful" because she "received from the virgin, taken up [*suscepit*] from Mary" (2.8). In the Ghimel section of his exposition (Ps 119:17–24), Ambrose speaks of the cloud that overshadowed Mary at the Annunciation (Lk 1:35), likening it to the bright cloud that surrounded Jesus on Mount Tabor (Mt 17:5)—the Word becoming flesh in Mary, so that the Holy Spirit might transfigure the body of our lowliness (*Exposition*, 4.17; cf. Phil 3:21). Ambrose's exposition of the He verses (Ps 119: 31–40) similarly associates Mary with a light-filled cloud, a column of fire and cloud (cf. Ex 13:21, 33:9; Is 19:1), to lead God's holy people (*Exposition*, 5.3).

Supported by an echo of the Song, the Marian theme of the Word's descent resounds in Ambrose's commentary on the Nun verses (Ps 119: 105–112). Ambrose interprets the name of fourteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet as referring

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[42] For reference to Mary's pondering heart, see *Expositio in Psalmum 118*, 2.6, 8; 4.17; 12.1, 17; 13.3; 19.38.

either to the uniqueness of the Only-begotten Son (*unicus*) or to the shepherds' passover (*pascua*) at Springtime from one grazing place to another (cf. Ez 34:14; *pascuae eorum*), and thus, by allegorical extension, to the Paschal mystery of Christ's descent as the Good Shepherd and the lamb of sacrifice (*Exposition*, 14.1). Born of the Virgin, Christ has truly "pastured among the lilies" (Ps 22:2, *in loco pascuae*; Sg 2:16, *pascitur inter lilia*), Ambrose observes (*Exposition*, 14.2–3). He paraphrases St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (2:6–8) to describe Christ's self-emptying descent as a David-like shepherd from the "mountain" of his godhead to the "valley" of his humanity: "In such pastures he, true David, … born a human through the childbearing of the virgin, humbled himself even onto death."[43] Commenting on verse 112 of Psalm 119 [118], "I have inclined [*inclinavi*] my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end," Ambrose first considers the Son's humility in bending down to take the form of a servant (Phil 2:7), assuming flesh from Mary. He goes on to note that the Lord exalts the lowly, as Mary herself, the humble handmaiden, experienced and proclaimed (*Exposition*, 14.46; see Lk 1:52).

Under the heading of the Hebrew letter Tau,[44] the concluding verse of Psalm 119 [118], "I have gone astray [*erraui*] like a lost sheep" (v. 176), not surprisingly calls to Ambrose's mind both the parable of the lost sheep (Lk 15:3–7), the image of the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life

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[43] "In talibus pascuis uerus David … homo natus per uirginis partum humiliauit se usque ad mortem." Ambrose, *Expositio in Psalmum 118*, 14.4.

[44] Ambrose takes the name of this letter, often viewed as a T-form of the cross, to mean either "He has wandered" (*errauit*) or "He has finished" (*consummauit*)—meanings that, taken in combination, mysteriously point to the salvific event at Calvary. *Expositio in Psalmum 118*, 22.1.

for his sheep in order to take it up again (Jn 10:11–18), and the pastoral poetry of the Song of Songs, through which the bridal Church may also be pictured as a flock. Exactly at this concluding verse, which provides the pivot into an excursus featuring Songs 8:5–14, Ambrose personifies the prayer of the bridal Church, Christ's mystical body: "Take me up [*suscipe me*] in the flesh, which in Adam has fallen. Take me up [*suscipe me*] not from Sara, but from Mary; that the virgin might not only be incorrupt, but also a virgin intact through grace from every lapse of sin. Carry me [*porta me*] in the cross, which is salvific for the erring."[45]

In Ambrose's exegesis, the image of a "taking up" (*suscipere*) seamlessly joins together three related, intertextual images: that of the shepherd who lifts the lost sheep upon his shoulders (Lk 15:5; *imponit in umeros suos*) and carries it, rejoicing;[46] that of the Lord who has the power to "take up" his own life again in the resurrection (Jn 10:18; potestatem … iterum sumendi eam);[47] and that of the Word who has "assumed" or "taken on" a human nature in the Incarnation. When the personified Church asks to be taken up by Christ from Mary (*ex Maria*), she names Mary the

[45] "Suscipe me in carne quae in Adam lapsa est. Suscipe me non ex Sarra, sed ex Maria; ut incorrupta sit uirgo, sed uirgo per gratiam ab omni integra labe peccati. Porta me in cruce, quae salutaris errantibus est." Ambrose, *Expositio in Psalmum 118*, 22.30. Elsewhere, Ambrose speaks of the sin of Eve having been partly remedied through Sara and perfectly through Mary.

[46] Ambrose does not quote the parable of the lost sheep directly, but evokes it by writing about a sheep who has wandered from the flock of the Lord. *Expositio in Psalmum 118*, 22.29.

[47] Cf. Ambrose, *Expositio in Psalmum 118*, 22.31–32. Here, Ambrose applies the psalmist's petition, "Let me live" (v. 175), to the power of the resurrected Lord.

New Eve at the side of the New Adam and the "type" of her very self as Christ's spotless bride.

Mary's Assumption, the Eucharist, and the Song in Paschasius Radbertus

In the Church's tradition, Christ's assumption of human nature from the Virgin Mary preconditions Mary's own Assumption, body and soul, into Heaven. Following in the tradition of Ambrose and drawing upon his writings,[48] the Carolingian abbot Paschasius Radbertus commented in his epistolary treatise *Cogitis Me* upon the texts from the Song used in the liturgy for the feast of the Assumption. Playing the part of a latter-day Jerome for the nuns of Soissons, whom he addresses as "Paula" and "Eustochium," Paschasius distinguishes what faith affirms about Mary's destiny from what cannot be known about the end of her earthly life. In the process (as Rachel Fulton [Brown] has argued), Paschasius elucidates the Song's status as a fitting, biblical witness to events in the life of the Virgin not narrated in the Sacred Scriptures themselves, but rather in apocryphal sources, such as the *Liber Requiei Mariae* (*The Book of Mary's Repose*; late third century) and *De Transitu Virginis* (*On the Passing of the Virgin*; late fifth century).[49] Illumined by liturgical echoes of the Song of Songs, the feast of the Assumption, writes Fulton, "celebrated the Incarnation of

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[48] See Shuve, *Fashioning of Identity*, 171–72.

[49] Rachel Fulton, "'Quae est ista quae ascendit sicut aurora consurgens?': The Song of Songs as the *Historia* for the Office of the Assumption," *Mediaeval Studies* 60 (1998): 55–122. On the apocryphal sources, see Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

the bridegroom in the womb of the mother-bride and in the heart of the faithful soul."[50]

E. Ann Matter has hailed Paschasius's ardent, personal, and Marian interpretation of the Song as "the beginning of a new mode of exegesis," anticipating later Marian and mystical commentaries.[51] What I want to highlight here is how Paschasius uses the Song of Songs to connect his teaching on the Assumption to his Eucharistic doctrine, which was controversial in his own time,[52] but which, as Matis observes, laid "the foundation for all subsequent teaching on the Eucharist."[53] For Paschasius, the biblical Song witnesses to the nuptial nature of the sacrament, which joins every faithful communicant to Christ in what Celia Chazelle calls a "direct, personal, and almost physical union,"[54] approximating the spiritual and physical intimacy between Christ and Mary. In both *Cogitis Me* and *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, Paschasius quotes from the Song of Songs; in both, he is heavily indebted to Ambrose's Mariology.

In *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini,* Paschasius follows the Gospels' account of Jesus's institution of the Eucharist (Mk 14:22–25; Mt 26: 26–29; Lk 22: 19–20) and of its promised salvific effect (Jn 6:48–51, 53–58), as well as "the guidance of Ambrose," in asserting "that the Eucharist

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[50] Fulton, "Quae est ista,'' 117.

[51] E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 154.

[52] See Celia Chazelle, "Figure, Character, and the Glorified Body in the Carolingian Eucharistic Controversy," *Traditio* 47 (1992): 1–36.

[53] Matis, "Love's Lament," 177.

[54] Chazelle, "Figure, Character, and the Glorified Body," 11.

contains the true, historical body of Christ, born of the Virgin Mary." [55] Likening the transformative moment of the consecration to that of the Incarnation, Paschasius instructs, "As from the Virgin through the Spirit true flesh is created without union of sex, so through the same, out of the substance of bread and wine, the very same body and blood of Christ may be mystically consecrated."[56] The mixing of water with wine at the offertory of the Mass—symbolic of the joining of the human with the divine—prompts Paschasius to recall the "wine more excellent than water," that is, Christ in his two natures, "born through Mary from the flesh."[57] This sacramental wine, taken from the king's "wine-cellar" (Sg 1:3; 2:4), awakens memories of the Bridegroom's two "breasts," which are "better than wine" (Sg 1:3).[58]

Contrastive and conjoined, the images from Song 5:1 of mixed myrrh and spice, of bread and honey, of wine and milk, support Paschasius's conclusion: "We receive in the Eucharist the same bread from Heaven [Jn 6:51] … that hung

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[55] Ibid., 9.

[56] Paschasius Radbertus, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, ed. Bede Paulus, CCCM 16 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 4.17–20 (28). I cite the Latin text by chapter and line number, followed in parentheses by the page number in this edition. For additional comparisons of Incarnation to what will later be called eucharistic transubstantiation, see 1.83–84 (16), 3.78–80 (26), 3.83–85 (27), 4.86–90 (30). For this quote, I use the translation of George McCracken, in *Early Medieval Theology*, ed. and trans. George E. McCracken (1957; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 101. McCracken's translation of Paschasius's treatise in *Early Medieval Theology*, 94–108, is partial and selective; it does not include many passages that echo the Song of Songs. All translations that follow this first citation are mine.

[57] Paschasius, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, 11.42–45 (73); see Chazelle, "Figure, Character, and the Glorified Body," 11.

[58] Paschasius, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, 11.47–50 (74).

upon the cross."[59] "Made a priest forever," Christ "daily intercedes for us," and gives us to eat of his own body, "the body that was born of the Virgin, … that hung upon the cross, was buried in the tomb, rose from the dead, [and] penetrated the heavens."[60] The blood the High Priest offers is his very own, Paschasius insists, "[that same blood] from which he was created in the womb of the Virgin, so that the Word would be made flesh."[61]

Although "our sin has been removed at Baptism, our weakness remains,"[62] the abbot instructs, and therefore Christ renews his sacrifice on Calvary for us daily upon the altar in order to nourish us from the "tree of life" (Gn 2:9, 3:22) planted in the Church, which is the "paradise of delights" (Sg 4:13).[63] The "plenty of grain and wine" (Gn 27:28) promised to Jacob has been given to Jesus, the true Jacob, born from "the Virgin;"[64] his own virginal flesh and blood, offered at Calvary, have thus become the food of virginal souls, of young men and maidens, and the cause of their beauty (cf. Zec 9:16–17).[65] Even in the hands of unworthy ministers, the Eucharist, instituted on the eve of Christ's Passion, is and remains the bond of unity for the Bridegroom's "one dove" (Sg 6:8), the Church.[66] As Chazelle explains, "Only if the Eucharist is indeed the flesh and blood of the Passion can each Christian rest assured that

[59] Ibid., 10.76–77 (68).
[60] Ibid., 7.25–28 (38).
[61] Ibid., 12.28–29 (77).
[62] Ibid., 9.10–12 (52).
[63] Ibid., 9.65–67 (54).
[64] Ibid., 21.113–17 (114–15).
[65] Ibid., 21.150–54 (116); 21.169–71 (117).
[66] Ibid., 12.156 (82).

its consumption is salvific."[67] Christ's risen body has been glorified through his Passion; changed in form after Christ's Resurrection and Ascension, it remains nonetheless the same human body, the body Mary bore, the body that suffered crucifixion. By the same principle, Christ's body given in the Eucharist remains the same human body, hidden under the sensible signs of bread and wine.

Present in the sacrament in figure and in truth (cf. Heb 3:1: figura substantiae),[68] Christ uses the bread and wine fittingly prefigured in the offering of Melchisedek (Gn 14:18), but in the Eucharist, they are a special kind of figure. Unlike the Old Testament prefigurement, which remains bread and wine while pointing to something else that comes later, the Eucharistic bread and wine is actually transformed into Christ's historical body and blood through the Holy Spirit at the words of consecration. As Chazelle instructs, Paschasius therefore introduces alongside the biblical word "figure," the Ambrosian term "character," whereby the perceptible appearances of bread and wine are likened by analogy to the writing, the sign or mark, of oral speech: "The character is so closely linked with the thing to which it refers that it makes all the power of the latter available through its own sensible form, and thus (in Paschasius's view) may even be said to be or to contain that reality, just as Christ is truly God,"[69] bearing in his flesh (as Christ does) "the very stamp of his [divine] nature" (Heb 1:3).[70]

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[67] Chazelle, "Figure, Character, and the Glorified Body," 10.

[68] I quote here from *Biblia Sacra Volgata*, ed. Robert Weber, Roger Gryson, 5th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007).

[69] Chazelle, "Figure, Character, and the Glorified Body," 18.

[70] Chazelle proposes that Paschasius borrows the distinction between "character" and "figure" from Ambrose's *De Incarnatione*, where Ambrose

Scripture points to a mysterious connection between the Ascension and the Eucharist when Jesus responds to those scandalized by declaration, "I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:35), asking them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?" (Jn 6:61–62).[71] Following this hint, Paschasius's teaching on the invisible bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist is strongly tied to Christ's bodily Ascension. Chazelle explains: "Christ ascended into heaven with his body, yet the Eucharist is left on earth to be 'the visible figure and character of his flesh and blood,' which nourishes the faithful in mind as well as flesh in order that they may better grasp what is invisible and spiritual."[72]

Paschasius's teaching on Mary's Assumption is similarly Eucharistic. The strong principle of physical and spiritual unity binding Christ to Mary in *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini* appears in *Cogitis Me,* where Paschasius multiplies echoes of the Song of Songs to describe Mary's intense, quasi-physical longing for Christ after his Ascension and his love-filled summons to her at her own heavenly homegoing in body and soul. From paragraph 45 through paragraph 107 of *Cogitis Me*, Paschasius places upon the lips of Christ and of the Church the praises of Mary, imaged as the Bride of the Songs, whom Christ calls

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associates the word *caracter* with Hebrews 1:3, where Christ himself is called a "figure" or "character" of the substance of God the Father. "Figure, Character, and the Glorified Body," 16.

[71] Douglas Farrow, *Ascension Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 64. Farrow sees Mary's Assumption as keyed to the Eucharistic and ecclesial meaning of the Ascension of the Lord. See also Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Grand Rapids, MI.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999).

[72] Chazelle, "Figure, Character, and Glorified Body," 17.

homeward to himself.[73] "What can be purer [than the virginal body of Mary], who generated the body of Christ without the contagion of the flesh?" wonders Paschasius.[74] Uniquely drawn as Mother of God into the mysteries of the Incarnation and of the Eucharist,[75] Mary participates to the highest possible degree in what Paschasius calls the "one sacrament," who is Christ himself: "One and the same is he who was both the leader of them [that is, the Israelites in their flight from Egypt] and our redeemer through the Passion of his body—one indeed in his own body, one in sacrament and one in spirit."[76] The unity of the sacrament is the unity of divinity and humanity in the one person whom the Virgin conceived and bore.[77] Through the unity of the sacrament, Christ's bride, the Church (cf. Eph 5:25–27), and Mary, as the Church's mother and foremost member, participate in the homeward journey of Jesus at his Ascension.

The Sacraments in Medieval Marian Exegesis of the Song

The Carolingian Eucharistic controversy surrounding Paschasius's clearly stated, orthodox doctrine was followed

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[73] Paschasius cites Sg 3:6 (par. 45), Sg 6:9 and 8:5 (par. 46–47), Sg 2:10 and 4:8 (par. 57), Sg 4:12 (par. 59), Sg 1:14 and 6:12 (par. 88), Sg 2:1 (par. 89), Sg 8:6 (par. 90), Sg 1:2 (par. 100), Sg 4:12 (par. 107). See Albert Ripberger, ed., *Der Pseudo-Hieronymus-Brief IX "Cogitis Me": Ein Erster Marianischer Traktat des Mittelalters von Paschasius Radbert*, Spicilegium Friburgense 9 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1962).

[74] "Quid castius, quae corpus Christi, sine contagion corporis generauit?" Paschasius, *Cogitis Me*, par. 103 (Ripberger, 107). My translation.

[75] Paschasius in *Cogitis Me* recalls the Chalcedonian formula concerning Christ's one Person in two natures: "totus quippe Deus in carne uirginis, de qua natus est, et totus homo" (par. 55; Ripberger, 83).

[76] Paschasius, *Cogitis Me*, par. 63 (Ripberger, 88). My translation.

[77] Ibid., par. 78 (Ripberger, 95).

not only by the controversy incited by the heretical Eucharistic teaching of Berengar of Tours (999–1088), but also by the Investiture Controversy and the Gregorian Reform, which provided the foreground for a celibate clergy the nuptial character of Holy Orders. The twelfth century saw both a revival of sacramental theology and a (not unrelated) innovation in Song of Songs exegesis—namely, the verse-by-verse interpretation of the entire Song in relation to the Virgin Mary. Remarkably, the commentary of Honorius Augustodunensis is entitled *Sigillum Beatae Virginae,* "The Seal of the Blessed Virgin"; the title evokes the lover's seal of Song 8:6, but also employs a word freighted with significance in early Christian mystagogy, namely, the sacramental seal (*sigillum*) of the Spirit's empowering descent and the indelible mark of Christian membership. Rupert of Deutz's Marian exposition of the Song has *De Incarnatione* (*On the Incarnation*) as a second, alternative title—one that succinctly points to the salvific mystery of mysteries that establishes and defines the relationship between Mary and the sacraments.

In general, despite manifold changes in sacramental practice, the Marian expositions of the Song reflect and build upon the ancient mystagogical tradition that correlates the lyrical images from the Songs with the outward signs of the sacraments of initiation: water, ointment, bread and wine, white robes, a kiss of peace, and perhaps (as found in some early Christian rites) also a nuptial crown or wreath akin to that worn by first communicants still today.[78] In an age of infant Baptism and adult penance, however, the Eucharist

[78] See Robin Jensen, *Living Water*, 242.

came to predominate as the object of nuptial longing for the Christian soul. As the pure, faith-filled participant in Christ's offering at Calvary and as the Assumpta, Mary modeled this Eucharistic love-longing for the faithful, her children in Christ, whom she had borne in him at the baptismal font.

Linking Christ himself with the "fountain of the gardens" (Sg 4:15), Honorius praises Mary as Christ's Mother: "From you flowed the 'fountain of the gardens,' that is, through you has come the Baptism of the faithful."[79] From Mary's virginal womb came the sinless one, Christ, whose purity at his Baptism in the Jordan consecrated the baptismal font.[80] Similarly, Alain de Lille writes: "And you, Virgin-Genetrix of God, were a fruitful supply of plenty, the fountain in which there was a stream of inexpressible mercy, in which there was the bath of all graces—the 'fountain' who accepted in the bosom of your compassion the outpouring of our tears."[81] United with Christ spiritually and physically, Mary was herself a fountain "sealed with the mark of faith, the sign of the gospel of truth, and the bolt of virginity," in

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[79] "De te fluxit *fons hortorum,* id est per te venit baptisma fidelium." Honorius Augustodunensis, *Sigillum Beatae Mariae*, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, ed. J-P Migne (Paris, 1844ff) [henceforth PL] 172, c495–518, quoted at 508A. My translation. For a complete translation of Honorius's work, see Honorius of Autun, *The Seal of Blessed Mary*, trans. Amelia Carr (Toronto: Peregrina, 1991).

[80] Honorius, *Sigillum Beatae Mariae*, PL 172, c498C.

[81] "Et tu, Virgo Dei genitrix, fuisti uber copia plenitudinis fons in quo ineffabilis misericordiae fluentum, in quo gratiarum omnium irriguum. *Fons* qui in sinu suae pietatis recipit lacrymarum nostrarum profluvium." Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio in Cantica Canticorum*, PL 210, c51–110, quoted at c82C. All translations of Alain are mine. Denys Turner provides a translation of selected excerpts from Alain's *Elucidatio* in *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 291–307.

such a way that "neither heretics nor demons might be able to weaken faith in [her]."[82]

When the Song compares the teeth of the bride to flocks of shorn sheep coming up from the bath (Sg 4:2)—a passage the Fathers of the Church regularly applied to the purifying and illuminating effects of Baptism—Alain praises Mary for her detachment from earthly things, from which "washing" there also proceeds the pure and genuine spiritual understandings of the Scriptures, symbolized in the flocks of sheep.[83] "Even as the Church is without stain and sin," writes Alain, "so too, the glorious Virgin. And as the Church in various persons has the totality of gifts, so too the Virgin Mary has in herself the totality of charisms."[84]

The bride's exclamation, "Your two breasts, fragrant with the best ointments, are better than wine, your name is oil poured out!" (Sg 1:3), retains for Rupert of Deutz the same Incarnational significance it had for Hippolytus in the third century. For Rupert, the Incarnate Word, Christ himself, is the unsurpassable gift of the Holy Spirit to Mary—indeed, the gift of all the gifts. Interpreting the two breasts of the Bridegroom as the remission of sin and the granting of diverse graces, Rupert explains, "His is the name, that is, his is the Word or Son who was conceived [through the love or the Spirit of God], for the Son is the name of the Father, above all such a Son, such a Word, through whom

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[82] "*Signatus* fidei sigillo, evangelicae veritatis signaculo, et virginitatis pessulo; ita ut nec haeretici vel daemones in te fidem vel Evangelii veritatem possint infirmare." Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c82C.

[83] Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c92D.

[84] "Ecclesia est sine macula et ruga, ita et Virgo gloriosa. Et sicut Ecclesia in diversis personis habet universitatem donorum, sic Virgo Maria in se universitatem charismatum." Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c60B.

God is greatly named, greatly praised, in heaven and on earth."[85] For Rupert, the Bride's fervent petition, "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth" (Sg 1:1), is exactly what Mary said in her *fiat* (Lk 1:38) at the hour of the Annunciation.[86] At the Spirit's overshadowing, he writes, "God the Father kissed you, [Mary], with the kiss of his mouth."[87]

The image of the litter of Solomon, the king's couch or recliner, surrounded by soldiers (Sg 3:7–8), moves Alain to think, as Hippolytus of Rome had done, of the Incarnation: "His couch is the glorious virgin, because Christ, having assumed [our] humanity, reposed in her."[88] Perhaps inspired by artistic depictions of Mary as the *Sedes Sapientiae* (Seat of Wisdom), Alain adds: "A litter is literally called a 'seat' from 'sitting,' because it bears a seated person.… Christ has fashioned this seat in the virgin womb by taking flesh of the Virgin."[89] Thinking of Christ seated or reclining with his disciples leads Alain, however, in his exposition of Song 3:1–4 to associate Mary herself with the Upper Room where Christ instituted the Eucharist:

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[85] "ejus est Verbum sive Filius qui concipitur. Nam Filius nomen est Patris, praesertim talis Filius, tale Verbum, per quod Deus in coelo et in terra valde nominatus, valde est inclytus." Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria in Cantica Canticorum*, PL 168, c837–962, at c842A–842B.

[86] Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria*, PL 168, c839A.

[87] "Deus Pater te osculatus est 'osculo oris sui.'" Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria*, PL 168, c840A.

[88] "Cujus lectulus est Virgo gloriosa, quia in ea recubuit Christus humanitate assumpta." Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c75B.

[89] "Ad litteram ferculum dicitur sedes a sedendo, quia fert sedentem.… Hanc fabricatus est Christus in utero virginali carnem sumendo de Virgine." Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c75D–76A.

> Through a bed also is signified, without incongruity, that home on mount Sion, in which Christ with his disciples celebrated the last Supper, into which (after the Passion of Christ himself) the glorious Virgin is said to have betaken herself, seeking through fervent sighs and holy desires Him whom her soul loved (Sg 3:3), and she was worshipping in that place, and kissing with humbly beseeching lips of the heart in those places where, for example, the beloved Son dined with his disciples, or in the place He had washed their feet, or wherever she had been able to imagine him seated.[90]

In the passage I have just quoted, the figure of Mary seamlessly merges with that of Mary Magdalene, who, weeping, sought Christ in the garden of his burial and encountered there the risen Lord, and who (imagined as the sinful woman of Luke 7:36–50) had kissed and anointed Christ's feet while he reclined at table in the home of the Pharisee. Christ's mother and bride, the very "seat" of his Incarnation, Mary is and remains also the disciple who places herself at the feet of the seated Word-made-flesh, present in the sacrament instituted in the Upper Room. Her memory of him is the very memory of the Church; her searching for him and finding of him, seated again and again at table, enacts Christ's command: "Do this in memory of me" (Lk 22:19).

Already in the early Church, as we have seen, the invitation of the Bridegroom to his comrades, "Eat, friends,

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[90] "Per lectum etiam non absurde domus illa in arce Sion sita, in qua Christus cum discipulis supremam coenam celebravit, significatur, in quam post ipsius Christi passionem gloriosa Virgo sese recepisse perhibetur, quaerens per crebra suspiria et sancta desideria quem diligebat anima sua, ibique loca illa venerabatur, venerandoque ore cordis osculabatur, in quibus dilectum filium vel cum discipulis accubuisse, vel in eorumdem pedum lotione prostratum fuisse, aut alicubi resedisse imaginari poterat." Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c72D–73A.

and drink, and become intoxicated" (Sg 5:1), held Eucharistic significance as a prophecy of Christ's own invitation at the supper before his Passion. The Marian exegetes recall this sublime, sacramental significance, contrasting Christ's offering of his body in the form of bread with the serpent's tempting offer of forbidden fruit to Eve in Genesis 3. Within this framework, Mary appears as the New Eve, whose faith-filled acceptance of the Incarnation, and of all that it entailed, contrasts with Eve's too credulous yielding to temptation. As Rupert of Deutz writes, "Bad was the fruit, very bad the bite, by which Adam through Eve lost life and found death; good the fruit, by which the human race through Mary lost death and found life."[91] Through Christ's grace, Mary's faith at the Annunciation and at foot of the cross allowed Jesus, the fruit of her womb, to offer his own body from the tree of the cross as a life-giving food. Enjoying a familiar wordplay, Alain observes, "Christ does not call his cross a *bad* [*malam*] tree, but rather, an *apple* [*malum*] tree, on account of the fruit of eternal happiness which the Virgin Mother receives through the cross and, with her, the rest of the faithful souls—but she more fully.… The glorious Virgin herself supports the apple."[92] "This is his fruit," Rupert states. "For why did he come, why has he grown up among the trees of the forest, if not that he might produce fruit of this kind, by which he might wipe out the

[91] "Malus fructus, imo malus morsus, quo Adam per Evam vitam perdidit, et mortem invenit: bonus fructus, quo genus humanum per Mariam mortem perdidit, et vitam invenit." Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria*, PL 168, c860D.

[92] "Arborem enim non malam, sed malum vocat Christus crucem suam, propter aeternae beatitudinis fructum, quem per crucem Virgo mater accepit, et cum ipsa caeterae fideles animae, sed illa plenius.… illa gloriosa malum sustinuit." Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c105B–105C.

guilt of the first deviation, the bite of the old tree?"[93] Rupert immediately follows this comment with a direct quotation of Christ's words spoken at the Last Supper: "When the time came for eating fruit of this kind, 'taking bread and wine and blessing it, he said, 'Take and eat; this is my body. Take and drink; this is my blood' (Mt 26:26–27)."[94]

When the lover of the Song praises his beloved, saying, "Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies" (Sg 7:2), Marian exegetes hear in these words another reference to Christ as Eucharist. "The belly of the Virgin is eloquently compared to a pile of wheat," observes Alain, "because from its very self proceeds the grain of wheat which, falling to the earth, died and brought forth much fruit (Jn 12:24)."[95]

Bruno of Segni hears in Song 3:11, "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart," an echo not only of the "Ecce homo" and an allusion to the crown of thorns, but also a prophecy of Christ's glorified and Eucharistic presence: "You, … Virgin Mary, have crowned the Son, because, assuming flesh from you, he is placed in our midst—He whom the choir of apostles, confessors, and virgins / thus encircle like a living crown of watchful

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[93] "Ad quid enim venit, ad quid succrevit inter ligna sylvarum, nisi ut faceret hujusmodi fructum, quo evacuaret primae praevaricationis reatum, ligni vetiti morsum?" Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria*, PL 168, c860D.

[94] "Ubi tempus venit hujuscemodi fructus edendi, 'accipiens panem et vinum, et benedicens: Accipite, inquit, et comedite, hoc est corpus meum. Accipite et bibite, hic est sanguis meus.'" Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria*, PL 168, c860D.

[95] "Eleganter venter Virginis comparatur acervo tritici, quia de ipso processit granum frumenti, quod cadens in terram et mortuum, multiplicem fructum attulit." Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c98D.

soldiers."[96] Similarly, Alain de Lille finds Mary's crowning of her Son on his wedding day to refer to her virginal conception of him, which (as St. Anselm of Canterbury had explained in his treatise on the topic) gave Christ a human nature perfectly unstained by Adam's sin.[97]

Christ, in turn, crowned Mary. Just as early Christians recalled Christ's Resurrection and Ascension in the clothing of the newly baptized in white robes,[98] so the Marian exegetes, inspired by the liturgy for the feast of the Assumption and by the example of Paschasius Radbertus in *Cogitis Me*, applied to Mary, the Assumpta, the great exponent of the bridal Church, the words of Song 8:5, "Who is that coming up from the wilderness, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?" "Inasmuch as she was so deserving," writes Alain, "the company of heavenly spirits praise her, assumed into heaven, in this way."[99]

Commenting on Song 6:10, "Who is this that looks like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?" Rupert too refers to Mary's Assumption: "When you were taken up from this world and transported to the heavenly wedding feast, then you were 'elected like the sun;' I say, 'elected' for us, because even as we adore and worship the true God as eternal sun, the Son of God born from you as a true sun, so also we honor and revere

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[96] "Tu tamen, Virgo Maria, coronasti Filium; / Quia carnem de te sumens ponitur in medium. / Quem chorus apostolorum, confessorum, virginum, / Sio circumdat, ut corona prudentium militum." Bruno of Segni, *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum*, PL 164, c1233–1288, at c1255B.

[97] Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c77A.

[98] See Riley, *Christian Initiation*, 438–51.

[99] "Et quia tanti meriti fuit Virgo, eam assumptam in coelum laudant cum admiratione exercitus coelestium spirituum in hunc modum." Alain de Lille, *Elucidatio*, PL 210, c105A.

you as Genetrix of the true God, knowing that all the honor paid to the mother certainly redounds to the glory of the Son."[100]

"Tota Pulchra"

Inspired by Biblical exegesis like this, a later generation of visual artists saw Mary Immaculate in the Apocalyptic Woman of Revelation 12:1, "crowned with twelve stars" and "clothed with the sun," the "moon under her feet." They set as a blazon above her image the words of Song 4:7, "Tota pulchra es amica mea et macula non est in te" (Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee), and surrounded Mary's figure with titles and emblems from the Songs. Some of these, perhaps all of them, we have discovered, are also signs of the sacraments of initiation. Seen as an ensemble, these sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—draw Christians into the life of Christ, which was and is also Mary's life, due to her singular role in the Incarnation, the Sacrament of sacraments.

In an age accustomed to allegorical interpretation, the double-use of the images of the Song of Songs as symbols both of Mary and of the sacraments organically linked these veiled mysteries. The Church as "fountain sealed" (Sg 4:12) through Baptism saw herself mirrored in, and mothered by, Mary, "fountain sealed" (Sg 4:12) through her virginal

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[100] "Quando autem de hoc mundo assumpta atque ad aethereum thalamum translata es, tunc tu et extunc 'electa ut sol;' 'electa,' inquam, nobis, quia sicut ex te natum Dei Filium solem verum, solem aeternum adoramus et colimus ut Deum verum, sic et te honoramus atque veneramur, ut veri Dei Genitricem, scientes quia totus honor impensus matri sine dubio redundat in gloriam Filii." Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria*, PL 168, c937A–937B.

conception of Christ. The single image with double signification instructed the faithful to see the Church herself as Marian in her sacramental reception and dispensation of Christ's grace. At the same time, the Church's developing sacramental theology shed new light not only upon Mary's fullness of grace as Christ's mother and bridal helpmate in the entire work of salvation, but also, through Mary, upon the Church's own election, mission, and destiny.

The "Tota Pulchra" paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries surround the central, large image of Mary with a host of smaller images largely taken from the Song of Songs; they praise Mary in her spotless beauty as immaculately conceived, while veiling ecclesial and sacramental understandings.[101] Depicted as young and beautiful, Mary is at the same time the "Apocalyptic Woman" who doubles as a figure of the Church, crowned with twelve stars and clothed with the sun's radiance (Rv 12:1).

In an age less adept at allegorical understanding, the signs of the sacraments, the symbols of the Song, and the images of Mary and the Church remain interactive, but appear side-by-side each other, as an emblematic array, instead of veiled within each other. Some years ago, Fr. Neil J. Roy, then a colleague of mine at the University of Notre Dame, shared with me a remarkable illustration from a

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[101] See Thomas Buffer and Bruce Horner, "The Art of the Immaculate Conception," *Marian Studies* 55 (2004): 184–211, esp. 193–196; Maurice Vloberg, "The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception," in *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance*, ed. Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958, repr. 2017), 475–80.

catechism for high school students, published in 1955.[102] In it, the Virgin Mary appears prominently in the upper half of the illustration, crowned with stars, surrounded by an aureole and angels, her hands extended and rays emanating downward from them, in the style of the Miraculous Medal.[103] Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, from whom rays of grace also extend downwards, the Virgin in the picture has conceived her son Jesus, represented as an infant within her, located at her heart and, like her, surrounded by a radiant aureole. At Mary's feet, however, is neither the world nor the serpent, as in more familiar iconography of the Immaculata, but instead the Church, symbolized by the dome of the Papal Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Directly below the depicted basilica are a set of seven roundels, containing emblems of the seven sacraments. Flanking these roundels and at the base of the full-page illustration are other emblems marked with biblical references to assist the students in identifying them. Among these is an emblem of the redemptive prophecy given to Eve in Genesis 3:15, matched on the opposite side by one of the Annunciation in Luke 1. Most of the remaining symbols on the page, however, are taken from the Song of Songs.

This textbook example bears rich witness to a long tradition throughout which the Song of Songs was at once a "Song of Sacraments" and a wedding song, celebrating the Incarnation of the Word in Mary's womb, her fullness of grace, and the marriage of Christ with his Church. But it also

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[102] Clarence E. Elwell, et al, *Our Quest for Happiness, IV: Toward the Eternal Commencement* (Chicago: Metzger, Bush, 1955), 57.

[103] On the Miraculous Medal, see Maurice Vloberg, "Iconography of the Immaculate Conception," 463–512, at 472 and plate XXI.

bears witness to an apocalyptic unveiling of that tradition, a pictorial reduction of it to discrete, seemingly disconnected emblems on the page. The gaps in understanding, represented through the spaces between and among the separate images, call for a new and deeper synthesis of Mariology and sacramental theology; a resounding of the Song; a renewal, in short, of the mystagogy that discovers Mary and Jesus together in Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The two-in-oneness of Jesus and Mary veiled in the sacraments secures, after all, the wedding of Christ with his bride, the Church, and with each of the Church's members—the wedding praised and prophesied in the Song of Songs.

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