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Gratia Plena: The Catholic Feminist Possibilities of the Immaculate Conception Dogma

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For Mom —

Thank you for making all of this possible

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My mother often tells a story about how two weeks into kindergarten, she picked me up, and I declared that I was done with school. It had been a fun two weeks, but it had been enough. She broke the news to me that was not the case. And now, finally, at the end of school, I want to thank all of those who have made this journey so worthwhile.

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Here are thousands of meals, she said,
and here is clothing and a good education.
And here is your lanyard, I replied,
which I made with a little help from a counselor.

Here is a breathing body and a beating heart,
strong legs, bones and teeth,
and two clear eyes to read the world, she whispered,
and here, I said, is the lanyard I made at camp.
And here, I wish to say to her now,
is a smaller gift—not the worn truth

that you can never repay your mother,
but the rueful admission that when she took
the two-tone lanyard from my hand,
I was as sure as a [child] could be
that this useless, worthless thing I wove
out of boredom would be enough to make us even.

Mom, this thesis is not a useless, worthless thing, but it could never be enough to make us even. Thank you for everything. I love you.

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Abbreviations

BDAG	*Bauer's Lexicon*
CCC	*Catechism of the Catholic Church*
De Trin.	*De Trinitate*
DV	*De Veritate*
LG	*Lumen Gentium*
LS	*Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary*
LSJ	*Liddel and Scott's Greek–English Lexicon*
NRSVCE	New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition
ST	*Summa Theologiae*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

"*Gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit*."

Thomas Aquinas
Summa Theologiae I.Q1.A8

Introduction

By the 1970s, the Roman Catholic Church was still in a period of change. The Second Vatican Council had concluded in 1965 bringing in sweeping reforms across the Church, but there was still more to do. Pope Paul VI,[1] who oversaw the final two years of the Council, continued to reform even after council concluded. In 1970 he elevated Saints Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Ávila to the distinction of "Doctor of the Church," making them the first women to receive this rank. This event hinted at the Pope's acceptance of the changing roles of women throughout the upheaval of second-wave feminism. Aware of the long relationship between Mary and Catholic women, Paul VI promulgated the apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus* in which he acknowledged that as the world began to better understand and promote women, so too did Marian devotion need to evolve to reflect this:

> Devotion to the Blessed Virgin must also pay close attention to certain findings of the human sciences. This will help to eliminate one of the causes of the difficulties experienced in devotion to the Mother of the Lord, namely, the discrepancy existing between some aspects of this devotion and modern anthropological discoveries and the profound changes which have occurred in the psycho-sociological field in which modern [humanity] lives and works. The picture of the Blessed Virgin presented in a certain type of devotional literature cannot easily be reconciled with today's life-style, especially the way women live today. In the home, woman's equality and coresponsibility with man in the running of the family are being justly recognized by laws and the evolution of customs. In the sphere of politics women have in many countries gained a position in public life equal to that of men. In the social field women are at work in a whole range of different employments, getting further away every day from the restricted surroundings of the home. In the cultural field new possibilities are opening up for women in scientific research and intellectual activities.[2]

[1] Life: 1897–1978. Pontificate: 1963–1978. Canonized: 2018 by Pope Francis.
[2] Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, (1974) 34, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19740202_marialis-cultus.html. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.

Though this was published over fifty years ago, Paul VI raises key issues that are still relevant for women in the Church and in fourth-wave feminism today. This excerpt presents a beginning point for a new, modern, relevant Mariology, and it touches on many of the themes I will develop in this thesis. Paul VI acknowledges two forces that are the impetus for this new Marian theology: new anthropological *discoveries* and *changes* in the psycho-sociological field. The first point seems to be an acknowledgement that the Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference that was so key to the Church's anthropology and theology of women had been largely disproven. The second point seems to implicitly point toward the social and legal changes brought about by second-wave feminists.

Later in the exhortation, Paul VI further considers why Marian devotion should evolve as the Church does:

> [Mary] is held up as an example to the faithful rather for the way in which, in her own particular life, she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God (cf. Lk. 1:38), because she heard the word of God and acted on it, and because charity and a spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ's disciples. All of this has a permanent and universal exemplary value.[3]

Here Paul VI praises Mary – not for meekness and passivity as others have done – but as an active participant in her own journey of salvation. Framing Mary in this way and then calling on the reader to emulate these characteristics calls for women to be more active disciples in the Church.

Paul VI also illuminates a key tension for feminist Mariologists today and for years before: Mary is a perfect, universal example of discipleship, but interpretations of her image of discipleship must evolve to reflect developments and discoveries about women in different fields. Paul VI says as much later in the same encyclical, writing,

> It should be considered quite normal for succeeding generations of Christians in differing sociocultural contexts to have expressed their

[3] Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 35.

> sentiments about the Mother of Jesus in a way and manner which reflected their own age…When the Church considers the long history of Marian devotion she rejoices at the continuity of the element of cult which it shows, but she does not bind herself to any particular expression of an individual cultural epoch or to the particular anthropological ideas underlying such expressions.[4]

This exhortation represents an important moment in the Roman Catholic Church that has been lost in the time since it was published. Even after this call from Paul VI, his successors have done little to perpetuate his vision for Mary (and to a certain extent, some have even reversed his aims). Nevertheless, his invitation that Christians should engage with Mary in ways befitting their own time and sociocultural circumstances is timeless. With his call to action in mind, let us consider the problem that this thesis addresses in answer to Paul VI.

The Problem

The feminist theologians that we will consider in the literature review have repeatedly emphasized how historically Mary has been framed as the feminine-passive figure before the masculine-active God. This feminine-passive/masculine-active dynamic is rooted in the Greek philosopher Aristotle's (384–322 BCE) biology. Aristotle primarily discusses his biology in *History of Animals* [*Historia Animalium*] and in the *Generation of Animals* [*De Generatione Animalium*], and he draws sharp distinctions in both body and temperament between men and women. In the *Generation of Animals*, Aristotle explains conception between male and female as follows:

> And as the proximate motive cause, to which belong the *logos* and the Form, is better and more divine in its nature than the Matter, it is *better* also that the superior one should be separate from the inferior one. That is why wherever possible and so far as possible the male is separate from the

[4] Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 36.

> female, since it is something *better* and more divine in that it is the principle of movement for generated things, while the female serves as their matter.[5]

Here we can see Aristotle attributing to men the nobler active principle of "form" while women must contend with the lowlier passive principle of matter. Prudence Allen, RSM, in the first volume of *The Concept of Woman* articulates how Aristotle's ideas about generation negatively impacted women, writing:

> The most striking aspect of Aristotle's analysis is that he sought to develop a theory of sex identity that drew upon conclusions in one area of thought to make premises in yet another. In particular, Aristotle's description of the female as the privation of the male in the category of opposites, as considered in the area of metaphysics, was the foundation for the devaluation of woman in the area of generation. Further, the theory of the inferior generation of the female fetus offered the rationale for the devaluation of woman under the categories of wisdom and virtue.[6]

In her article critiquing Aristotelean biology, Maryanne Cline Horowitz offers her own answer to this issue raised by Allen as she asks the reader, "Could it be…that because Aristotle associated females with material activities (providing food and clothes) and males with the spiritual activities (scholarship and government), these distinctions became embodied in his embryology?"[7] Further in her analysis, Horowitz argues that Aristotle's theory of conception impacted wider understanding of male–female dynamics: "Furthermore, Aristotle himself and later thinkers extended his biological-philosophical concepts of male and female into cosmic distinctions: maleness is active, femaleness is passive; maleness is spiritual, femaleness is material."[8]

Horowitz is right to claim that scholars after Aristotle would apply his philosophy of conception to areas beyond biology, but Aristotle makes many of these wider distinctions between men and women himself in his *History of Animals*:

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[5] Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, II.732a.5–12. Emphasis is by translator.
[6] Prudence Allen, RSM, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC–AD 1250*, 2. ed. (Eerdmans, 1997), 83.
[7] Maryanne Cline Horowitz, "Aristotle and Woman," *Journal of the History of Biology* 9, no. 2 (1976): 194.
[8] Horowitz, "Aristotle and Woman," 185–87.

> In all kinds in which there are the female and the male, nature has established much the same difference in the character of the females as compared with that of the males…For the character of the females is *softer, and quicker to be tamed, and more receptive of handling, and readier to learn*…All females are less spirited than the males, except the bear and leopard: in these the female is held to be braver. But in the other kinds the females are softer, more vicious, less simple, more impetuous, more attentive to the feeding of the young, while the males on the contrary are more spirited, wilder, simpler, less cunning. There are traces of these characters in virtually all animals, but they are all the more evident in those that are more possessed of character and especially in man. For man's nature is the most complete, so that these dispositions too are more evident in humans. Hence *a wife is more compassionate than a husband and more given to tears*, but also more jealous and complaining and more apt to scold and fight. The female is also more dispirited and despondent than the male, more shameless and lying, is readier to deceive and has a longer memory; furthermore, she is more wakeful, more afraid of action, and in general is less inclined to move than the male and takes less nourishment.[9] [emphasis mine]

This is a long passage, but read in its entirety, the reader can see the absurdity in it. The passages that I have emphasized portray women as passive or softer than men. In this passage and the preceding passage from *De Generatione Animalium* Aristotle finds fault in women's intellect, emotion, and their physical bodies. This tripartite anthropology will be key in this thesis.

Aristotle's work was preserved through the work of Muslim scholars in the early Middle Ages, and once his work was translated into Latin, it gained prevalence in the West. Dominican priest and theologian Thomas Aquinas (c.1225–1274), who was introduced to Aristotle's work through these new Latin translations, integrated much of Aristotle's biology into Catholic doctrine. This is to women's detriment. In this first passage from the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas discusses what he considers to be the differences between men's and women's bodies:

[9] Aristotle, *Historia Animalium*.VIII(IX).608.22–608b.16.

> As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence; such as that of a south wind, which is moist, as the Philosopher observes (*De Gener. Animal.* iv, 2). On the other hand, as regards human nature in general, woman is not misbegotten, but is included in nature's intention as directed to the work of generation. Now the general intention of nature depends on God, Who is the universal Author of nature. Therefore, in producing nature, God formed not only the male but also the female.[10]

Here Aquinas draws directly from Aristotle to conclude that the man is the active force in conception while the woman is the passive. He does bring the Aristotelean theory of conception into the Christian context by arguing that women are not misbegotten inasmuch as God is creator. Like Aristotle, Aquinas extends his theory of women's bodies to their personalities:

> Accordingly, since woman, as regards the body, has a weak temperament, the result is that for the most part, whatever she holds to, she holds to it weakly; although in rare cases the opposite occurs, according to Proverbs 31:10, "Who shall find a valiant woman?" And since small and weak things "are accounted as though they were not" (Aristotle, *Phys*. ii, 5) the Philosopher speaks of women as though they had not the firm judgment of reason, although the contrary happens in some women. Hence he states that "we do not describe women as being continent, because they are vacillating" through being unstable of reason, and "are easily led" so that they follow their passions readily.[11]

[10] *ST* I.Q92.A1. All passages from the *Summa Theologiae* are translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. In-text citation original.
[11] *ST* II-II.Q156.A1. In-text citation original.

In this passage we can see how Aquinas's initial argument of women as passive evolves into their having a weak temperament and how he quotes directly from Aristotle to aid his argument. Feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether sees the ramifications of this: "This split view of woman as redeemable nongendered soul and subjugated female body and social roles becomes the dominant Western Christian tradition…The product of an incomplete gestation, women are inherently inferior in body, mind, and will, and so are incapable of autonomous existence and must be under male subjection."[12] However, as Ruether (and the other feminist theologians of the following literature review) contends, the male-active/female-passive dynamic takes on divine implications in the Christian context:

> The patriarchal interpretation of God reinforces this patriarchal reading of Christian doctrines of creation, sin, and salvation. Indeed, it is the capstone of this reading by seeing God as a patriarchal divine male who created the world as a system of rule of men over women, masters over slaves, and rulers over subjects…Yet dominant Christianity sees the patriarchal male metaphors for God as appropriate to express God's nature. God rules with sovereign authority to dominate and punish. Rationality and ruling power are seen as male qualities to be exercised by males and inappropriate for women.[13]

In this passage, Ruether finds the ultimate conclusion of an Aristotelean-based theology of sex difference in the Christian context: God becomes synonymous with male and the male with God, and women are never synonymous with either and the resulting power. This is then translated onto Mary – a key model for Christian womanhood – as being passive/receptive before the "male" God. Mary's "passivity" in this relationship is then transferred onto women so that to be faithful emulators of Mary, they must be "passive" as she it.

However, the situation is not beyond salvaging even for Aquinas. In Mary Daly's early work *The Church and the Second Sex*, she argues that Aquinas is both the problem (in his adherence to Aristotle) and the solution (in his understanding of the image of God in the rational will) for feminists. She writes:

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[12] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 34 (2014): 86.
[13] Ruether, "Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives," 87.

> It is abundantly clear, therefore, that even according to Thomas's own principles, the alleged defectiveness of women, both as to their role in generation and considered as products of the generative process, becomes extremely difficult to uphold. Indeed, in the light of these principles it becomes impossible to uphold. According to Thomas, it is the intellectual soul which makes the human person to be the image of God (ST I.93.6c). This is neither caused by the male, nor is it essentially different in man and woman.[14]

Daly reveals that Aquinas can be the solution to the Aristotelean understanding of sexual difference he helped integrate into Christianity. By removing that theology of sexual difference influenced by Aristotle's biology (that through modern science we understand to be inaccurate), Aquinas can be an important method for feminist interpretation of Mary. In this passage from *Subordination and Equivalence*, author Kari Elizabeth Børresen demonstrates how the work of Aquinas (and for her, Augustine) demonstrates that such systems of sexual difference will be null at the resurrection:

> According to [Augustine and Aquinas] the redemption is brought about by the restoration of the whole of creation, and for the human being with indestructible soul, this means the resurrection of the body. This restoration of *all* creation totally destroys the idea of a male-centered order of creation. Woman is raised with her female body; but her beatitude is concerned only with her activity as an individual created to the image of God: her function as a helper will be left in abeyance. The hierarchy of the sexes will be replaced by a hierarchy of love towards God: each will be rewarded according to his [or her] individual degree of grace and merits.[15]

Examining Mary as the Immaculate Conception can be a path forward for women alive today to break free of a system of sexual difference before the resurrection. Exploring

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[14] Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Beacon Press, 1985), 94. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[15] Kari Elizabeth Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Charles H. Talbot (University Press of America, 1981), 332.

the possibilities of how to reach that is the aim of this thesis as I will demonstrate in the following section on the research question.

Research Question – To what extent can a feminist interpretation of the Immaculate Conception benefit Catholic women?

A theology of sexual difference that was influenced by Aristotle's biology has essentially denied women their full humanity. For women's full humanity to be found, discussion should begin with an incontrovertible part of Catholic teaching. In Mariology, this place is the four Marian dogmas: Perpetual Virginity, Divine Maternity, the Assumption, and the Immaculate Conception. Any of these dogmas would be a valid starting point for feminist Mariology, but the Immaculate Conception is the best opportunity to discuss grace, nature, and anthropology of women through Mary to realize the promise of Paul VI's encyclical and ultimately dismantle this Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference as it remains in Catholicism.[16]

The Immaculate Conception was dogmatized in 1854 by Pope Pius IX (1792-1878) in the apostolic constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*. The official definition states:

> We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin [*ab omni originalis culpae labe praeservatam immunem*], is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful.[17]

While this passage does define the dogma, it does so in a negative formulation as Sarah Butler, MSBT argues:

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[16] While this thesis is focused on the Immaculate Conception, it is important to consider the four Marian dogmas within and without each other. That is, there are moments when Mary's immaculateness intersects with – for example – her virginity. Such intersections do not denigrate my focus on Mary's immaculateness. Rather, these moments enhance discussion on her immaculateness. This creates a more holistic image of Mary within the bounds of Marian dogma.

[17] Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*.

> The object of the privilege is that the Virgin Mary "was preserved immune from all stain of original sin [*fuisse ab omni originalis culpae labe praeservatam immunem*]." This is a negative formulation: Mary was not tainted by original sin. The formula does not define the essential nature of "original sin"; it does not say what Mary's immunity from its "stain" [*labes*] meant for her. These questions are neither raised nor answered by the definition…[18]

Butler's argument demonstrates that *Ineffabilis Deus* only defines what Mary *is not* (without original sin) rather than what she *is*. This, therefore, leaves the possibility for a positive formulation of the Immaculate Conception that benefits women facing misogyny because of an Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference while also remaining in the bounds of Catholic theology. In this thesis the positive formulation of the Immaculate Conception is rooted in the idea of Mary as "full of grace" [*gratia plena*].

However, as we will see in the literature review, many feminist theologians have viewed Mary's Immaculate Conception as an awkward impediment in making her a relatable model for women. Mary's being conceived in grace [*gratia*] rather than original sin is a unique relationship with God; therefore, her immaculateness should make her an unhelpful figure with which to dismantle the Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference since she should be the exception to every rule of womanhood. Aquinas provides the answer. The Angelic Doctor contends that "grace does not destroy nature but perfects it."[19] Because of this, I argue that Mary as the grace-full Immaculate Conception is not separated from humanity and is not the exception to the rule. Therefore, Mary can serve as an effective representative of the female sex, and her Immaculate Conception will provide an important means to discuss nature and grace making it an asset – not an impediment – to feminist Mariology.

This thesis presents a constructive theology of the Immaculate Conception with a positive formulation of Mary as *gratia plena* for the benefit of Catholic women. In this thesis I reject Aristotle's biology as relevant to Catholic anthropology of women. However, it holds to the philosopher's logical style of establishing the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as

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[18] Sara Butler, MSBT, "The Immaculate Conception: Why Was It Defined as a Dogma? And What Was Defined?," in *Studying Mary: Reflections on the Virgin Mary in Anglican and Roman Catholic Theology and Devotion*, ed. Adelbert Denaux and Nicholas Sagovsky (T and T Clark, 2007), 151.
[19] *ST* I.Q1.A8.

the axiom from which later arguments must follow. Because of this, I conclude with a feminist interpretation and positive formulation of the Immaculate Conception dogma which cannot be denied to be within the bounds of orthodox Catholic theology for the benefit of women.

It would seem more effective for a feminist argument that relies on the link between Mary and women to focus on Mary's gendered roles like mother and virgin.[20] My thesis benefits from considering Mary as a creature in relation to her creator, and the Immaculate Conception is the most effective starting place because it begins with God creating Mary *gratia plena.* This frame challenges the tradition of female/feminine Mary as passive before the masculine God. This tradition then becomes mapped onto the Church as women being submissive before men. Mary's Immaculate Conception is the best opportunity to discuss Mary as a creature because it is about her humanity, and her unique grace-fullness is not a detriment to women trying to emulate her. By highlighting the dignity of Mary as a creature that is expressed in her womanhood, we can see that Mary brings women into that full humanity with her and alongside the men whose full humanity has long been recognized. It is not that women should have special status; rather, they want the same dignity of their full humanity that an Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference has denied them (but not men). Thus, women can more perfectly be recognized as creatures before their creator God. Just as Daly wrote, Aquinas's (ungendered) understanding of humanity before God made in his image is a beginning to reclaiming women's full humanity:

> I answer that, while in all creatures there is some kind of likeness to God, in the rational creature alone we find a likeness of "image" as we have explained above; whereas in other creatures we find a likeness by way of a "trace." Now the intellect or mind is that whereby the rational creature excels other creatures; wherefore this image of God is not found even in the rational creature except in the mind; while in the other parts, which the rational creature may happen to possess, we find the likeness of a "trace," as in other creatures to which, in reference to such parts, the rational creature can be likened. We may easily understand the reason of this if we consider the way in which a "trace," and the way in which an "image," represents

[20] I recognize that both women and men can be virgins. However, the Church has historically emphasized women's virginity rather than men's.

> anything. An "image" represents something by likeness in species, as we have said; while a "trace" represents something by way of an effect, which represents the cause in such a way as not to attain to the likeness of species. For imprints which are left by the movements of animals are called "traces": so also ashes are a trace of fire, and desolation of the land a trace of a hostile army.[21]

And Mary, with a human nature that is perfected and not destroyed in grace by her Immaculate Conception, is the most effective representative to demonstrate how all women are made in the image and likeness of God.

Literature Review – Introduction

The literature I present in this review comes from three areas: Thomistic theology of Mary, feminist theology, and recent literature on the Immaculate Conception. The Thomist theologians I examine published their work before Vatican II, but their systematic understanding of how grace would impact Mary makes their arguments applicable to this project. These use Thomism to portray Mary as the exception to womanhood rather than its model. Their portrayal of Mary is the kind of Mariology that the feminist theologians in the next section are rebelling against. The feminist theologians in the second section do not engage heavily with the Immaculate Conception because they consider it too much of a deterrent from making Mary a relatable figure for women. However, I draw from how they center Mary and women's experiences in theology. Other recent scholarship on Mary and the Immaculate Conception does not engage seriously with the question of gender. These three sections of the literature review demonstrate the need for new feminist scholarship with a Thomistic methodology on the Immaculate Conception that makes the dogma its centerpiece.

Literature Review – Thomistic Theology of Mary

The Thomistic scholars in this section – Édouard Hugon, OP, and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP – published the works discussed here before the Second Vatican Council. While it may seem unnecessary to review pre-conciliar work, Hugon and Garrigou-

[21] *ST* I.Q93.A6.

Lagrange's application of a Thomistic methodology (particularly with regard to grace [*gratia*]) has been influential on how I bring Thomism to the Immaculate Conception in this thesis. Their work further demonstrates that this dogma – which was championed by the Franciscans and was largely defined by Franciscan theologian John Duns Scotus (c.1265–1308) – can work within the bounds of Dominican/Thomistic scholarship.

Édouard Hugon, OP

Édouard Hugon, OP (1867-1929), a Dominican priest and Thomist, published *Mary, Full of Grace* in 1926. Hugon evaluates Mary's relationship to grace [*gratia*] by applying a Thomistic framework to the matter. He divides the book into two sections: in the first, Hugon considers how Mary increases in grace from the Immaculate Conception and then during her earthly life, and in the second he considers how Mary's grace impacts others through intercession after the Assumption. Because this thesis is only focused on Mary's earthly life, I will only focus on the first part of the book in my review.

In the first chapter, Hugon considers grace in general and in relation to Jesus and Mary. He compares actual grace and habitual grace and defines them as:

> [Actual graces] are temporary aids, supernatural flashes that seize the intellect, swift impulses which take hold of the will…Habitual grace is continually attentive to our soul to preserve its warmth and life, it brings the soul new and permanent being, a second nature, which is a birth to divine life. Habitual grace confers the character of children of God and actual grace the activity of the children of God. Habitual grace unites us to the Lord and sanctifies us by this contract; actual grace makes us feel the touch of the Holy Spirit. With actual grace, God passes by; with habitual grace, God remains.[22]

This distinction, that clearly draws on Aquinas's understanding of grace,[23] is useful for my thesis argument as we will see as I apply it to Mary. For now, it is important to note that there is precedent for using these distinctions of grace in a Marian sense. This is

[22] Édouard Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, trans. John G Brungardt, 5th ed., Thomistic Tradition Series (Providence: Cluny Media, 2019), 13.
[23] *ST* I-II.Q109–114.

especially important because Aquinas writes about grace with maculate[24] people in mind, and Hugon demonstrates – as I will also do – that this understanding of grace is applicable to Immaculate Mary.

In the rest of this section, Hugon divides Mary's life into key moments of grace. The first "sanctification" occurs at the Immaculate Conception, the second "sanctification" at the annunciation, and the third at the Assumption when she is fully united with God. Each of these moments of grace is meant to aid her in her role as Mother of God. I will discuss each of these in turn, but first I must reject the language Hugon uses of first and second "sanctification." As we will see in my argument, the Immaculate Conception is tantamount to the sacrament of baptism which cannot be repeated.[25] Therefore, language implying that Mary is sanctified twice is not applicable to this thesis.

On the Immaculate Conception, Hugon argues that Mary had to be properly prepared for the incarnation later in life. This is why the Immaculate Conception was necessary as was the fact that, unlike Jesus, Mary had to "progress in grace" throughout her life. He writes, "Mary, at her conception, attains God less than she does later when she conceives the Word of life. Thus, her initial grace is not a consummate grace. However, it is ever the preparation and the foundation of the divine maternity."[26] From this excerpt, we can see that for Hugon, all of Mary's life centers around her becoming the Mother of God at the incarnation. I do not refute the notion that Mary is immaculately conceived in anticipation of the incarnation, but my thesis focuses on the divine maternity to the extent that it can illuminate the Immaculate Conception. For Hugon, it is the opposite: he considers the Immaculate Conception to the extent to which it can illuminate the divine maternity.

Hugon elaborates more on *how* Mary's immaculate conception comes about: "From the first instant Mary was marked as the Mother of God, and it was necessary that grace already dispose her in view of this destiny, that she receive the perfection of a future Mother of God. She did not yet have her supreme dignity, but she required a fitting preparation. In a word her first sanctification had to be the foundation of the divine maternity."[27] Here Hugon and I are aligned: Mary's immaculate conception comes about by an infusion of grace at

[24] Throughout this thesis I refer to people who are conceived in original sin (i.e., everyone except Mary and Jesus) as "maculate." This is a more efficient way to reference people who are conceived in original sin. It is also a reference to the early modern debate over the Immaculate Conception. Those who supported the Immaculate Conception called themselves "Immaculists" and those who did not called themselves "Maculists."
[25] *CCC*, 1272.
[26] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 20.
[27] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 21–22.

conception rather than original sin. This is the first step in developing a positive definition of the Immaculate Conception.

Hugon also discusses Mary's grace-fullness in relation to other saints and concludes that Mary is uniquely grace-full. He argues that Mary's grace at conception was greater than the saints and angels both individually and collectively. To the first point, he lists past saints and scholars including John Damascene (d. c. 749) and Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) and concludes that Mary surpasses saints and angels individually: "…it would be useless to cite particular testimonies since all the current works of Mariology are unanimous on this point."[28] To the second matter of Mary's initial grace-fullness compared to that of the saints and angels collectively, Hugon contends that her grace must have been greater because of her destiny to become Mother of God later in life:

> The initial grace, being the basis and the preparation for the divine maternity, must be proportioned to that dignity, since it is an axiom that every disposition is measured to the ultimate character…[N]amely the divine maternity, is an incommensurable dignity that exceeds as does the infinite all the perfections and every dignity of creatures taken together. There, the first sanctification, so as to have some bearing upon this dignity, even from afar, must surpass the gifts and graces of all creatures at once.[29]

Here again we see Hugon framing Mary's relationship with grace around her divine maternity while also emphasizing how exceptionally grace-full Mary is even compared to other holy men and women. In this thesis, I do not examine the specifics of Mary's comparative grace-fullness like Hugon does here. However, I do argue that even in this unique grace-fullness Mary's humanity is not destroyed and that she can still be an effective model for holiness.

In chapter three, Hugon argues that Mary had a second plenitude of grace at the annunciation. His argument for this increase comes down to three proofs: first, Mary must be prepared for the incarnation; second, Mary's pregnancy with Jesus brings her into uniquely close physical proximity with him as the source of grace; and third, Mary is united to God through love. To the first proof Hugon writes,

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[28] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 21.
[29] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 25–26.

> …it is a law of providence that, when a creature is called upon for a special ministry, God prepares it in a manner which is worth of the role to be filled. If the grace of the first instant, though a distant and unfinished preparation, were so full and so fecund, what is there to say about this present grace, which is the immediate, final, and complete preparation? It must be that this second sanctification is measured by the maternity itself, that it be at its level, surpassing all human and angelic heights, and attain the confines of divinity.[30]

Hugon is not clear on whether this is grace that compels or aids Mary in accepting the incarnation or if this is a final grace that prepares her soul to love God as mother as she will do from the annunciation. Hugon writes, "It will not be difficult to understand that such a contract must have produced grace, if one considers that Our Lord seeks above all the union which is made by charity."[31] This point about the physical proximity of Jesus to Mary resulting in an increase in grace in her is tied to his argument that Mary is uniquely loved by God. However, this physical relationship is not enough as Hugon writes, "And, for his part, Our Lord longed to love above all in [Mary's] spirit and heart. He would suffer veritable violence if there were none but this material, bodily union: he cannot will the physical tie without the moral embrace of charity also, the union of nature without the union of grace.[32]

Hugon expands on this idea of grace's relationship to love in his next proof that Mary and Jesus love each other intensely: "…the reciprocal love of the Son for the Mother and the Mother for the Son. A principle often invoked here is that grace answers to love and is measured by it."[33] Hugon expands on this idea later as he writes,

> It is clear that she must be more loved than all creatures, for to be the Mother of God is incomparably greater than to be the mother of any other being now existing or of those in any possible world. The love of Christ for his Mother contains all that there is exquisite in nature, for it comes from a heart where every human feeling is carried to the sublime. It contains all that there

[30] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 40.
[31] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 43.
[32] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 44.
[33] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 46.

> is of the sublime in the supernatural, for it comes from a soul to which grace and charity have communicated aspirations and longings which resonate even into eternity. But above all it is the love of God.[34]

Hugon's argument about the relationship between grace and love will be important later as I discuss Mary's heart.

In this section on the final plenitude of grace, Hugon considers how grace affected Mary from the incarnation until the end of her earthly life. He argues that Mary continuously is increasing in grace because even she cannot exhaust it: "But, first of all, grace has capacities that expand it indefinitely. Its measure, like that of love, is to be without measure, *modus sine modo diligere*, as Saint Bernard says. Jesus Christ alone, the universal principle of salvation, was able to realize in his soul all the powers of grace. No creature, even Mary, is capable of exhausting that which expands without end."[35] He offers proofs for this claim that she increased in grace. The first is that she merited such grace throughout her life: "Merit requires free, morally good acts, made in a state of grace, in the sight of God, by a person who is still a wayfarer. All the actions of the Blessed Virgin combine these qualities."[36] I agree with Hugon that Mary increases in grace for the rest of her life. As we will see going forward, grace does not suppress her humanity.

Part of Hugon's interpretation, however, relies on the notion that Mary enjoyed infused knowledge throughout her life which prevented her from sinning: "Her infused knowledge guarded against all improvidence and her Immaculate Conception, along with the privilege of absolute integrity, assured her immunity from concupiscence and the storms of the senses. As her soul was submissive to God, so also was her body submissive to the soul and the inferior faculties to reason. Such is the harmonious order in a creature who is an abridged world of nature and grace: *microcosmos gratiae*."[37] He expands on how this infused knowledge works: "This miraculous knowledge of which we are speaking exerts itself solely in the spiritual sphere of the soul, without the concurrence of the imagination and sensation. The interior faculties preserve all of their autonomy and their particular pursuits remain no less natural or easy."[38] I believe Hugon is making this argument in order to impress upon the reader how unique Mary's relationship with God is by ascribing her this gift. However,

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[34] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 48.
[35] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 76–77.
[36] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 77.
[37] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 80.
[38] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 80.

arguing that Mary has miraculously infused knowledge does not reflect moments when we see her pondering in the Gospels including Luke 2:19. Furthermore this line of argument unnecessarily separates Mary from humanity whereas my argument on immaculate decision-making emphasizes her humanity.

In the last chapter, on Mary's grace-fullness in her earthly life, Hugon considers Mary in the context of the wider Church and argues that she had all the graces ever afforded any of the saints. He quotes, Aquinas who writes, "Everything belonging to perfection ought to have been displayed in the Blessed Virgin."[39] One of the sections in his discussion relevant to my tripartite anthropology is his discussion of the privileges of her body. Arguing that Jesus had a perfect body, Hugon contends that Mary must also have had a perfect body:

> Now, we know that Mary must resemble her Son in all things. Neither flaw, nor disorder – even physical – is to be found in the immaculate clay from which the Word willed to mold his body. They are both virginal, the body of Christ and the body of Mary, each full of health. In them nature deploys all its powers, and their organs, also the instruments of the supernatural, enjoy a harmonious interplay with fulness of strength that excludes every morbid ailment. As the Blessed Virgin bore fruit when in full bloom, she also advanced in age without losing that perfect youth which is ally to maturity.[40]

Hugon's argument about the perfection of Mary's body in particularly interesting in light of the Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference that is so prevalent in Thomism. Hugon argues that Mary must have had a perfect body, but according to Aristotle the female body is inherently flawed because it is the lesser form of the male body.[41] For Mary to have had a perfect body, is Hugon ascribing to her more masculine traits such as not menstruating?

On the privileges of her intellect he writes,

> It is more evident still that she was never subject to error. Error is born of ignorance and adds a deformity which produces intellectual ugliness. [A

[39] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 101.
[40] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 106.
[41] Aristotle, *De Gen. Animal.*, II.732a.5–12.

> human being] in the state of innocence had a perfect virginity of mind; by the Fall his [or her] understanding was wounded and violated. Mary, who is exempt from original sin, is entirely whole in body, soul, and mind. The virginity of her intelligence is as inviolable as that of her body. Her title as Mother of God is a guarantee for her against error, which is not just an imperfection and is more than a fault. It is the disorder and shame of the mind.[42]

I agree with Hugon that Mary never erred, but Hugon ascribes this to her being Mother of God whereas I link it to her Immaculate Conception.

Hugon also contends that Mary increases in intellect as she increases in grace:

> This knowledge grew right alongside the proportional increase of grace, from the first sanctification all the way until the final consummation…The time she spent in Nazareth, the frequent one-on-one discussions with the God of all knowledge, the contact with his soul, are all titles to further knowledge. When Mary became the mother of the human race at Golgatha, she received light in relation with this new destiny. The descent of the Paraclete brought to her a wealth of his gifts of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Her life of contemplation after the Ascension of her Son transformed her spirit: she lived in a light bordering upon that of heaven.[43]

Hugon's argument that Mary grows in knowledge during her life largely through supernatural means over-emphasizes her uniqueness. As I will demonstrate, it is possible (and important for women's sake) that Mary grow in knowledge through normal, natural means.

Despite the places in Hugon's argument where I deviate from him, I agree with his assessment of Mary's relationship to human nature. In one of his later sections on integrity of nature, Hugon writes:

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[42] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 111. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[43] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 112.

> A nature is integrated when there does not exist in it any division between the parts which compose it, when the lower realm is entirely subordinate to the higher realm: the body to the soul, the sense to reason, the sensible appetite to the will. In order that every division might be cast aside, it is necessary that nothing be able to separate the soul from the body and that there never be any trouble or discord between the mind and the lower faculties. Perfect integrity thus includes preservation from death, error, and concupiscence. Such was the privilege with which our first parents were favored, and all this arose from the fact that the soul was entirely submitted to God. Original sin destroyed that harmony. Thenceforth: perpetual conflict between soul and body, a lamentable division arose which opened the door to sickness and was finished by a catastrophe, the separation of the two elements in death. Between the faculties arose a ruinous discord, which prevented the sense from faithfully serving reason, and appetite from being the supple minister of the will. Thus arises the disorder, that interior combat which has made the saints groan. This is not a morbid quality added to our nature, but once the supernatural bond that maintains the powers is removed, the inferior faculties follow their blind drives, like a spirited charger when the reins are lost.[44]

This excerpt from Hugon represents my argument about Mary in relation to the human nature she shares with everyone and women in particular. Mary is unique in that she has an integrated, harmonious nature because she is *gratia plena* and thus lacking original sin. This harmony comes from the correct ordering of the body to the mind and whole self to God. Later I will develop my own interpretation as to how Mary avoids sin that does not involve infused knowledge. Hugon argues this to emphasize Mary's uniqueness, but I contend that Mary's harmonious nature does not separate her from all others with human nature. Hugon also likens Mary's harmonious nature to that of Adam and Eve before the Fall, but this question is outside the scope of my thesis.

[44] Hugon, OP, *Mary, Full of Grace*, 118.

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP

Dominican priest and Thomist Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP (1877–1964), further develops ideas from Hugon's Mariology in his book *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, originally published in English in 1949. Garrigou-Lagrange does not significantly deviate from Hugon's Mariology, but he does further develop a theology about Mary's intellect in her lifetime. Most relevant to this thesis and for constructing a positive definition of the Immaculate Conception, Garrigou-Lagrange affirms that Mary received sanctifying grace at conception:

> It follows therefore that Mary was not preserved free from every stain of original sin otherwise than by receiving sanctifying grace into her soul from the first instant of her conception. Thus, she was conceived in a state of justice and holiness which is the effect of the divine friendship as opposed to the divine malediction, and in consequence she was withdrawn from the slavery of the devil and the subjection to the law of concupiscence. She was withdrawn too from subjection to the law of suffering and death, considered as penalties of the sin of our nature, even though both Jesus and Mary knew suffering and death in so far as they knew the consequences of our nature (*in carne passibili*) and endured them for our salvation.[45]

Garrigou-Lagrange's conclusion that Mary must have been conceived in sanctifying grace rather than just without original sin reflects my own conclusion about how to develop a positive definition of the Immaculate Conception. Later in this introduction, I will explain in greater detail than Garrigou-Lagrange does how Mary is conceived in sanctifying grace. Like Scotus,[46] Garrigou-Lagrange argues that Mary never experiences concupiscence. He writes,

> Since the definition of the Immaculate Conception we are obliged to hold that concupiscence has been not only bound, or restrained, in Mary from the time that she was in her mother's womb, but even that she was never in any sense its subject. There could be no disordered movement in her sensitive

[45] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, trans. Bernard J Kelly, CSS (B. Herder Book Company, 1949), 52.
[46] John Duns Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, trans. Allan B. Wolter, Text Series, no. 22 (Franciscan Institute, 2000), 75.

> nature, no escape of her sensibility from the previous control of reason and will. Her sensibility was always full subject to her rational powers, and thereby to God's Will, as obtained in the state of original innocence.[47]

I agree with Garrigou-Lagrange's insistence that Mary never encountered concupiscence in any form. This is an important distinction between Mary and the maculate people who look to her as a model of holiness. However, as I argue, it should not be seen as a major impediment. Like Hugon, Garrigou-Lagrange maintains that Mary avoided sin because she had infused knowledge, writing,

> Almost all present-day theologians admit that it is at least very probable that, in her mother's womb, Mary had the use of her free will through infused knowledge – transitorily, at any rate. They admit too that she had the use of this infused knowledge on certain occasions, such as the incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension; also that she had the use of it for the purpose of acquiring a more perfect knowledge of the divine perfections and the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. There is all the more reason for admitting that Mary had this privilege when we recall that infused knowledge was given to the apostles on the first Pentecost when they received the gift of tongues, and that the great St. Teresa, after arriving at the Seventh Mansion, had frequent intellectual visions of the Trinity such as can only be explained by infused ideas. Even those theologians who are most conservative in their views do not hesitate to admit this much of Mary.[48]

Garrigou-Lagrange argues that Mary needed infused knowledge at key moments like the incarnation so that she could better strive to understand the Trinity. However, ascribing infused knowledge to Mary – especially at the incarnation – only undermines her free will that allows her to consider and decide to accept the incarnation. Furthermore, he misattributes infused knowledge to the Apostles and Teresa of Ávila since his descriptions are more

[47] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 64.
[48] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 94.

indicative of the grace of tongues[49] and personal revelation, respectively. Garrigou-Lagrange further his discussion about Mary's partial knowledge, writing,

> [Mary] did not, for example, understand the full import of what Jesus said about His Father's business when she found Him in the Temple. But, as has been often said, the limits were limits, not gaps. Hence, she was in no sense ignorant, for the limits did not deprive her of the knowledge of anything she should have known at the time. God's Mother knew at every stage of her life all that it was becoming for her to know. Nor was she subject to error. She was never precipitate in judging; if she had not sufficient light she suspended her judgement; if she was not sure about a thing she was satisfied to affirm that it was likely or probable. For example, when she thought it likely that Jesus was not in the company of her friends and relatives on the occasion when she lost Him, her belief was a very likely one indeed – though in point of fact it was not true – and in looking on it as likely Mary did not err.[50]

I agree with Garrigou-Lagrange's framing of Mary's partial knowledge as "limits not gaps" because it evokes (as I argue) incompleteness in human knowledge as a ramification of human nature rather than as ignorance. However, I disagree with his claim that if Mary encountered something she did not understand she would stop engaging with it. This contradicts moments of her pondering in the Gospels such as Luke 2:19, as we will see in chapter one.

Further in his discussion on Mary's intellect, Garrigou-Lagrange comments on her relationship to scripture. "She had, too, an eminent and wonderfully simple knowledge of what the scripture said of the Messiah, the incarnation, and the Redemption. Thus, she was full exempt from concupiscence and error."[51] His description of her knowledge of scripture being "simple" is congruent with his theory of Mary having infused knowledge since with it there would be no need to study scripture if one miraculously knew it. However, as we will see, there is greater benefit and precedent in framing Mary as a keen student of scripture and reader of the Word from the medieval tradition.

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[49] *ST* II-II.176.1.
[50] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 146.
[51] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 65.

Elsewhere, Garrigou-Lagrange portrays Mary as someone *striving* to know God rather than just enjoying infused knowledge, writing,

> Mary's progress was the most continuous of all. It encountered no obstacle, not halted not delayed by attachment to self or the things of this world. It was the most rapid of all, because the rate at which it commenced was determined by Mary's fulness of grace and therefore surpassed that of all the saints. Thus, there was in Mary (especially if, as is probable, her infused knowledge gave her the use of reason and will during her hours of sleep) a wonderful increase in the love of God of which the accelerated motion of bodies under the force of gravitation is but a distant image.[52]

This excerpt portraying Mary progressing closer to God and holiness is similar to how I portray Mary as one progressing in grace throughout her life. This portrayal, as I will argue, also makes Mary a more relatable figure for those wishing to imitate her intellect. Garrigou-Lagrange also argues that Mary was not robotic in her actions despite her sinlessness, writing,

> From this it follows that every deliberate act of a person in the state of grace which is not a sin is morally good; in consequence, it is virtually ordained to God, the final end of the just, and is meritorious. "Every act of those who have charity is either meritorious or de-meritorious" (*De Malo* a.5, ad 17). This is an additional reason for saying that all Mary's deliberate acts were good and meritorious. And we may add that none of the acts she performed during her waking hours were indeliberate or machine-like, but all were under the control of her intellect and her grace-directed will.[53]

I agree with Garrigou-Lagrange that it would be incorrect to portray Mary as "machine-like" in her actions. As we will see in chapter two, this argument will be important in discussing Mary's emotions. Despite my argument that Mary did not have infused

[52] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 100.
[53] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 106.

knowledge, I do argue that she encountered grace throughout her life as Garrigou-Lagrange argues:

> This privilege [being *impeccantia*] includes first of all a very high degree of habitual grace and charity, which gives the soul a strong inclination to the act of love of God and withdraws it from sin. It includes also confirmation in grace, which when granted to a saint is had normally through an increase in charity, especially that proper to the state of transforming union, and an increase of actual efficacious graces which preserve the soul *de facto* from sin and move it to ever more meritorious acts. Thus, Mary enjoyed a special assistance of Divine Providence. This assistance – more effective than even that which belonged to the state of innocence – preserved all her faculties from faults and kept her soul in a state of the most complete generosity. Just as confirmation in grace is an effect of the predestination of the saints, so this preservative assistance granted to Mary was an effect of her peculiar predestination. Far from diminishing her liberty or free will, the effect of this preservation from sin was to confer on her full liberty in the order of moral goodness, with no inclination to evil (just as her mind never tended to error). Hence her liberty, following the example of that of Jesus, was a faithful and most pure image of God's liberty, which is at once sovereign and incapable of sin.[54]

Garrigou-Lagrange's argument implies that God is very pointedly intervening in Mary's life, but that this does not impede her free will. In chapter one, I nuance this idea more so that Mary's personal freedom is more foregrounded but without diminishing her dependence on God that she shares with all Christians.[55]

Garrigou-Lagrange, more so than Hugon, considers Mary's immaculateness in relation to others, writing, "She had received fulness of grace under three respects. First, so

[54] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 73–74.
[55] I am aware of the debate between Garrigou-Lagrange and Henri de Lubac, SJ, over nature and grace in Aquinas's theology. Their debate involved the wider contention between twentieth-century Neo-Thomists and the *Nouvelle théologie* (also called "Ressourcement") movement and their respective proponents' eventual participation at the Second Vatican Council. Because this debate is so complex both theologically and historically, I do not have adequate time to consider my thesis's place in this debate. Thomas V. Gourlay's 2019 article "Nature, Grace, and Catholic Engagement in Contemporary Cultural Dialogue" provides a succinct overview of the debate between de Lubac and Garrigou-Lagrange.

as to avoid every sin, however slight, and to practise all the virtues in an eminent degree. Secondly, so as to overflow from her soul upon her body and prepare her to receive the Incarnate Son of God. Thirdly, so as to overflow upon all men and to aid them in the practice of all the virtues."[56] In his third point, Garrigou-Lagrange is speaking about Mary as intercessor after the assumption in a general way. In my thesis I take the idea of Mary's grace-fullness in relation to others as an example of holiness during her life.

Hugon and Garrigou-Lagrange, through their scholarship, demonstrate three key ideas that I will carry into the rest of this thesis. First, they demonstrate that a Thomistic methodology is compatible with this historically Scotist/Franciscan dogma. As we will see, Aquinas's work is key for my argument's development. Second, they both contend – Garrigou-Lagrange especially – that Mary is conceived with an infusion of sanctifying grace rather than original sin at conception and that this infusion is the beginning of her life of grace-fullness. In a later section I will explain in greater detail how Mary is conceived in sanctifying grace as a means to move between Scotus and Aquinas's theologies. Finally, both friars portray Mary as growing in grace throughout her life. I will argue the same but to emphasize Mary's humanity while they emphasize her uniqueness.

However, despite these ways in which Hugon and Garrigou-Lagrange further Thomistic Mariology, there are important points in which my work takes theirs further into the contemporary feminist discussion. First, I will refute their notion that Mary has infused knowledge to guide her at important decision moments throughout her life and propose an alternative that frames Mary as a studious woman. Second, I argue that it is more beneficial (particularly for women) to focus on Mary's divine maternity in light of the Immaculate Conception rather than her Immaculate Conception in light of her divine maternity. When Hugon and Garrigou-Lagrange do the latter, they play into the gendered dynamic of Mary and Jesus's relationship rather than the creator–creature relationship that the Immaculate Conception offers. Finally, the overall tone of both books emphasizes how Mary is the exception of womanhood and humanity rather than the rule. In the next section of this literature review, we will see how the feminist theologians there considered ways to make Mary more human and relatable for the sake of other women. Their work is largely a response to overly romantic scholarship on Mary like that which Hugon and Garrigou-Lagrange wrote.

[56] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 77–78.

Literature Review – Feminist Theology

The feminist scholars who appear in this section published from immediately after Vatican II into the 2000s. Thus, these works represent the directions that post-Vatican II feminist Mariology has taken. These scholars – Mary Daly, Marina Warner, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Tina Beattie, and Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ – develop key critiques relevant to this thesis of such images of Mary as feminine–passive before a masculine-active God and earlier theologians' tendency to over-idealize Mary such as in the scholarship in the previous section. Furthermore, they largely treat the Immaculate Conception as an impediment to feminist Mariology which my thesis disproves.

Mary Daly

Mary Daly's (1928–2010) work as a feminist theologian represents a wide range of what feminist theology can be. She began her career as a woman critiquing but still living within the Catholic Church, and by the end of her career she had left Christianity altogether. In *The Church and the Second Sex,* originally published in 1968 shortly after Vatican II's conclusion and in the midst of second-wave feminism, one can see Daly's hopeful critique of the Catholic Church. Using Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* as her guide, Daly spends the first chapter presenting the flaws in the Catholic Church's understanding of womanhood. In this review, however, I will be focusing on Daly's commentary on Mary and the Immaculate Conception.

In the humorously titled chapter "The Pedestal Peddlers," Daly explains her critique of Mariology as it was in the 1960s. Much of her critique is on how clerics interact with Mary. In this first passage, Daly recounts how a seminarian she met in Rome said he was instructed by his spiritual advisor to go to Mary when experiencing "bad thoughts":[57]

> What it can spawn is that dream world which is precisely "the metaphysical world of woman," the ideal, static woman, who is so much less troublesome than the real article. Since she belongs to "another world," she cannot compete with man. Safely relegated to her pedestal, she serves his purpose, his psychological need, without having any purpose of her own.[58]

[57] Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, 160.
[58] Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, 161.

Following from this argument, Daly explains why a theology of women rooted in Mary is a useless endeavor, writing, "This assumption invokes the whole fallacious process of spinning a 'theology of woman' out of Marian doctrine, in which process fills the void left by the unknown historical fact and universalizes with naive abandon."[59] I agree with Daly that there is ultimately little profit in focusing on the historical Mary. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and Elizabeth Johnson demonstrate this in their very different interpretations of what Mary's life between the ascension and assumption might have been like. However, because the Immaculate Conception dogma is universal for the Catholic Church, it is an opportunity to develop a Marian theology that could benefit all Catholics even if the details of how it helps them varies between cultures.

In a later section Daly articulates her concern with the Jesus–Mary dynamic that echoes throughout many other feminist theologians' works:

> The most catastrophic aspect of this method is its simplistic analogizing from the Christ–Mary relationship to the man–woman relationship in general. The inevitable fruit of this method, despite the elaborate precautions of its proponents, is the relegating of the woman to a hopelessly inferior situation. Thus, Father Galot[60] argues that as Christ *operated* and Mary, being totally dependent, merely *cooperated*, so it is, analogously, with the respective roles of men and women in the Church.[61]

Here Daly makes an important observation that will reoccur in much of the following feminist literature: because Jesus is male and Mary is female, much of the rhetoric about Mary and Jesus intentionally or otherwise frames Mary as feminine–passive to Jesus's masculine–active. This reflects the problem with an Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference that I raised earlier in this introduction.

In her 1973 book *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* Daly is far more critical of the Church and Mariology. Written after she left Christianity, Daly is more dismissive of Mary and the Church, which comes across in her

[59] Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, 162.
[60] Jean Galot, SJ, author of *L'église et la femme*.
[61] Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, 162.

writing style. In the following passage, Daly singles out Mary – for whom she had such sympathy in her previous work – as a source of consternation for Catholic women:

> In the preceding chapter I have indicated that total identification of women with evil would be dysfunctional. Catholicism has offered women compensatory and reflected glory through identification with Mary. The inimitability of the Virgin-Mother model (literally understood) has left all women essentially identified with Eve. At the same time, it has served to separate the "feminine" ideal of good from the active role attributed to Jesus. The vicarious, derivative, and passive ideal of feminine good is *partially* identified with the Jesus model (insofar as Jesus is seen as victim). Yet it is also split off from the latter through reification in the symbol of Mary. This "makes sense" when one realizes that, as the real scapegoats of patriarchy, women cannot effectively be identified with the savior image. On one level, then, the Mary symbol functions to perpetuate the façade of semi-identification (by relation) of females with the Christ, deflecting female outrage and inhibiting insight and hope.[62]

Daly also engages more with the Immaculate Conception in this work, but she still focuses on the gender dynamic between Mary and Jesus.

> As symbolically portrayed, then, Mary is "good" only in relation to Jesus. This "fact" was reinforced on one level of perception by the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception—the doctrine that Mary was conceived without original sin—although the dogma gives also a contradictory message, as I will later show. This doctrine "officially" sets her apart from all other women as utterly unique, an impossible "model." It may be objected that this also sets her apart from men, but when the symbolism is seen in its full context (as expressed in Catholic doctrine) it can be seen as intending to reinforce sexual hierarchy, for the Immaculate Conception "occurred" in anticipation of Christ's divinity. That is, Mary was said to have been

[62] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Beacon Press, 1973), 81–82.

> "immaculately conceived" in order to be worthy to become the Mother of Jesus, who was divine. Once again, the Marian doctrine reinforces sexual caste. The inimitability of "Mary conceived without sin" ensures that all women as women are in the caste with Eve. At the same time it reflects and reinforces duality of status.[63]

Daly means Mary's dependence on Jesus within the frame of the male–female dynamic she critiqued in *The Church and the Second Sex* discussed above. However, in this critique Daly has found an important truth – that Mary as a creature is totally dependent on Christ as her creator. What she misses, however, is that this truth extends to men as well as women. Daly's discussion of the Immaculate Conception continues later in the chapter:

> I have already pointed out that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, as it became formulated, reinforced the imagery of sexism to the extent that it was seen in the context of preparing her to become the Mother of Jesus, who "saved" her, so to speak, in advance. However, when the idea itself of Mary's being conceived free of "original sin" is "selectively perceived," it can convey an entirely different meaning. It can be understood as a negation of the myth of feminine evil, a rejection of religion's Fall into servitude to patriarchy. It then functions as a prophetic intimation of the *Fall* that is yet on its way, that I have pointed to in the preceding chapter. This is the feared Fall beyond patriarchy's "good and evil," in which women no longer bear the burden of the scapegoat's role. Seen outside its "normal" context, the symbol of the Immaculate Conception foreshadows the coming Fall into the sacred, in which women are "conceived" as free from the crippling burden of submersion in the role of "the Other," and therefore are able to bring the human psyche beyond the pseudo-sacred of oppressive symbols and values.[64]

This passage is reminiscent of Daly's earlier work that is more sympathetic to Mary and the Church. Her idea that Mary as immaculately conceived is the beginning of women's

[63] Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, 82.
[64] Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, 86.

full humanity within the Church is central to this thesis. Daly's critique that Mary is immaculately conceived in anticipation of the incarnation implies that she has resigned the dogma to the male-female dynamic from which she once tried to save it. However, I will demonstrate in this thesis, that the dogma emphasizes Mary's place as creature rather than her place as woman.

Daly is even more radical by the time she writes *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, which was published in 1978.[65] She again addresses the Immaculate Conception, with her glib metaphor furthering her disdain for the dogma:

> Within the rapist christian myth of the Virgin Birth the role of Mary is utterly minimal; yet she is "there." She gives her unqualified "consent." She bears the Son who pre-existed her and she adores him. According to catholic theology, she was even "saved" by him in advance of her own birth. This is the meaning of the "Immaculate Conception" of Mary – the dogma that Mary was herself conceived free of "original sin" through the grace of the "savior" who would be born of her. This grace received in advance, described by theologians as "grace of prevention or preservation," is something like a supernatural credit card issued to a very special patron (matron). Mary's credit line was crossed before she was even conceived. Double crossed by the divine Master Charge system, she was in a state of perpetual indebtedness. Still, as I have explained elsewhere, despite all the theological minimizing of Mary's "role," the mythic presence of the Goddess was perceivable in this faded and reversed mirror image.[66]

Even in the glib tone Daly uses in this passage, she has correctly understood the theology of the Immaculate Conception as defined by Scotus,[67] who argued that Mary was pre-emptively redeemed by the same grace of Jesus's death and resurrection that redeems the rest of humanity.

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[65] I refute Daly's argument that the annunciation is rape (*Gyn/Ecology*, 85) in detail in chapter one. Thus, it does not appear here in the literature review.
[66] Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Beacon Press, 1978), 85.
[67] Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, 39–45.

Marina Warner

Like Mary Daly's later work, second-wave feminist Marina Warner's (b. 1946) work represents a total dismissal of Mariology as an aid to women in the Church. I discuss Warner's work as an example of the feminist discourse to which my thesis stands in opposition. In her 1976 book *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*, Warner excavates her personal relationship to Mary and the history of devotion, focusing on Europe in particular. In the prologue Warner recounts her intense childhood devotion to Mary (calling herself a "devout Mariolater"[68]) that waned as she reached puberty and Mary was made an imposing figure of sexual purity.[69] In her exploration on the history of Marian devotion, Warner breaks her argument into five major parts that focus on a different facets of Marian devotion: "Virgin," "Queen," "Bride," "Mother," and "Intercessor." For the purposes of this thesis, we will focus on Warner's discussion on the Immaculate Conception which falls under the "Mother" heading.

Throughout the chapter, Warner's tone is of dismissive disbelief as she traces the history of the dogma through its formal theology and popular devotion. She is particularly critical of the popular understanding of the dogma within the Church in comparison to Protestant theologians. She writes,

> The popular belief has never found the theology anything but superfluous to its continuing life; but the theology has placed enormous obstacles in the way of the ecumenical movement. The Reformed Churches recoil from the superhuman exaltation of Mary that the doctrine implies, and the interpretation of scripture and tradition necessary to "prove" the Immaculate Conception. Thus, the characteristic response to the fluid and volatile emotion of its members – to incorporate their beliefs in an inflexible set of propositions and conclusions – has failed to educate the members or to raise their belief from an emotional to an intellectual level, but it continues to alienate possible friends, who do understand the doctrine's significance.[70]

[68] Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), xxxii.
[69] Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, xxxi–xxxiii.
[70] Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 243.

I disagree with Warner that the theology of Immaculate Conception is only a cumbersome accessory to the popular devotion. This thesis demonstrates that the Immaculate Conception has a rich theological tradition alongside the popular tradition of the devotion. As for Warner's claims about the anti-ecumenical implications of the dogma, I argue that a feminist interpretation that benefits Catholic women could have positive implications for non-Catholic Christian women as well.

For many feminist theologians – including those more sympathetic to the Catholic Church than Warner – the Immaculate Conception represents a divide between Mary and the rest of humanity. Warner articulates this concern for feminists, writing,

> As the icon of the ideal, the Virgin affirms the inferiority of the human lot. Soaring above the men and women who pray to her, the Virgin conceived without sin underscores rather than alleviates pain and anxiety and accentuates the feelings of sinfulness. The state her votaries believe to be hers must always elude them, for all creatures except her are, they are told, born in sin. Mary is indeed Eve's other face: the two female symbols excite that very emotion that the story of the Fall sought to explain and the story of the Incarnate God sought to heal: the feeling that in its very nature humanity is fatally estranged from goodness, which for a believer, is God. Any symbol that exacerbates that pain runs counter to the central Christian doctrine that mankind was made and redeemed by God, and, more important it is a continuing enemy of hope and happiness.[71]

In this thesis I dismantle the notion that the Immaculate Conception separates Mary from all other women, but Warner does have a legitimate concern. Mary does enjoy special favor from God as the Immaculate Conception. Warner's title *Alone of All Her Sex* further emphasizes her claims about Mary's untouchability. The title comes from a medieval poem about Mary that reads:

> She…had no peer
> Either in our first mother or in all women
> Who were to come. But alone of all her sex

[71] Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 259–60.

She pleased the Lord.[72]

Warner has skewed the poet's compliment to Mary to a derogatory claim that she is wholly set apart from all other women. The title, like my thesis, focuses on Mary's relationship with other women rather than women and men – all of whom have been touched by original sin. Warner's title highlights Mary's role as (unobtainable) model for women alone. In my thesis I do not try to break the long-established relationship between women and Mary. Rather, I argue that Mary is not alone of all her sex. Her immaculateness highlights rather than diminishes her humanity. The grace [*gratia*] that fills her is the same grace gifted to any maculate woman. Mary is not alone; she is the epitome of humanity and womanhood.

Further to her critique of the separation between Mary and women, Warner considers the supposed dualism between the body and the spirit which the Immaculate Conception exacerbates for her:

> However the reply is framed, the Immaculate Conception remains the dogma by which the Virgin Mary is set apart from the human race because she is not stained by the Fall. And if on one plane the perfection of Mary is defined as the conquest of the natural laws of childbearing and death, then the prevailing idea of perfection denies the goodness of the created world, and of the human body, and postulates another perfect destiny where such conditions do not obtain. This is dualistic, and the Virgin Mary is a symbol and an instrument of that dualism.[73]

Warner's critique of the supposed dualism of the Immaculate Conception comes up several times in the chapter. She makes a more specific argument about how Mary's immaculateness conquers her human body, writing:

> For it extends with complete logic the doctrines of the virgin birth of Christ and the belief in the Virgin's Assumption, both of which resulted from her exemption from the natural law that was the penalty of the Fall: childbirth in pain and suffering, corruption in the grace. The only biological function

[72] Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, xxix.
[73] Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 259.

> she was allowed (apart from the asexual function of weeping) was lactation, and as we have seen, the Dominicans who opposed the Immaculate Conception, fostered the cult of the Virgin's milk.[74]

I will later argue in chapter three that Mary's immaculateness is in harmony with her body, but this does not prevent her from natural bodily experiences like pain in childbirth. But Warner makes an important critique about how the historical interest in Mary's uniqueness has led to odd conversations about her body. She is right to recognize the absurdity of many of these bodily limitations, but they should not be a deterrent to deeper study of the Immaculate Conception.

Rosemary Radford Ruether

After Daly and Warner, who are largely dismissive of Mary, the theologians we consider next are much more sympathetic to Mary and the Church. I align my thesis more so with these theologians. In *Mary—The Feminine Face of the Church* published in 1977, feminist Catholic scholar Rosemary Radford Ruether (1936-2022) considers feminist theology more directly in relationship with Mary, and her work comes toward the end of the second-wave feminist movement. Ruether frames the text as an aid to Protestants grappling with questions of masculinity and femininity in their traditions. Despite her intended Protestant audience, Ruether's conclusions about the masculine–feminine dynamic are relevant to my Catholic audience. She divides her argument into two parts: "Mary in the Bible" and "Mary in the Church." In the first part, Ruether focuses on the history of feminine symbols in ancient religions before discussing Mary's role in the Bible. While Ruether and I both engage with the Biblical Mary in our feminist arguments, our methodologies are largely different with my own engagement modeled more on Elizabeth Johnson's as discussed below. In part two on Mary and the Church, Ruether raises critical questions relevant to this thesis.

Before her critique on gender in Christianity, Ruether discusses the key Marian intellectual traditions like Mary–Eve and the Marian dogmas including the Immaculate Conception. Her discussion on the Immaculate Conception is largely focused on its historical

[74] Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 256–57.

development and how it is received in the Protestant tradition. However, her conclusion about nature and grace in the Immaculate Conception is relevant to my argument:

> The theological importance to Mariology in this theology of Immaculate Conception, therefore, lies in her "pure" humanity. As the representative of humanity in its original goodness, she becomes the anticipation of its restoration and fulfillment at the end of history. In her will be realized the final glorification of the human community and of creation in the new heaven and the new earth, in cooperation with the redemptive work of God in Christ. Theologically, Mary is the personification of the church, the new Israel, the hope of humankind.[75]

I agree with Ruether framing Mary as the immaculately conceived as the "hope of humankind," and as we continue, I hope to demonstrate how the Immaculate Conception has more to offer people (women, in particular) in this life than just a theoretical ideal. Writing for a Protestant audience, Ruether segues this argument about Mary as the pinnacle of grace-filled humanity into a discussion on Protestant rejection of the potential goodness in human nature: "Any such coordination between nature and grace was abhorrent to the strict theology of the Reformation."[76]

As Ruether moves to her conclusion about masculinity and femininity, her argument circles back to her Protestant audience. She writes, "Despite their reaffirmation of the goodness of marriage, the Reformers showed no disposition to elevate the role of women to be representatives of Christ in the preaching and teaching of the church…Protestant theology views the symbols of male and female as divine headship and creaturely subordination."[77] This issue of women not being representatives of Christ in the clergy is more relevant to Catholics than to Protestants today since many Protestant traditions now ordain women while Roman Catholicism does not.[78] Thus, Ruether's advice about Mariology being potentially effective in breaking the masculine-active/feminine-passive divide is more relevant to the Catholic focus of this thesis. Ruether advises:

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[75] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mary: The Feminine Face of the Church* (The Westminster Press, 1977), 68.
[76] Ruether, *Mary: The Feminine Face of the Church*, 72.
[77] Ruether, *Mary: The Feminine Face of the Church*, 73.
[78] While I engage with scholars who are explicit about Mariology and women seeking ordination in Roman Catholicism, this thesis only engages with the issue tangentially.

> Mariology can allow the male to experience himself as "feminine" or to experience what is called his "feminine side." Even the most patriarchal theologian is able to experience himself as the passive, receptive vassal of divine activity and grace, since all people in the church are thought of as "feminine" in relation to the dominant "masculine" ego of "God." This does not mean that receptivity is a bad thing…But when only one side, the male, is active, and the other side, the female, is receptive, women never learn to be real people, and men never learn to listen and help others.[79]

Ruether is more sympathetic to Mariology's relationship to the masculine–feminine than Daly is and does not seek to overthrow it entirely. Rather, Ruether seeks to give women space to be the active participant in a dynamic which she sees as key to women experiencing full humanity. Elsewhere in her work, Ruether is more explicit about how the active-passive dynamic is inherited from Aristotle.[80]

Ruether develops her thought on the masculine–feminine dynamic in greater depth in her 1983 book *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. While Ruether engages less explicitly with Mariology in this work, her conclusions about gender dynamics are still relevant for this thesis. In her discussion on male–female dynamics in an anthropological sense, Ruether defines different kinds of feminism. Her discussion on "romantic feminism" will be relevant in later discussion in this thesis:

> In contrast to liberal feminism, romantic feminism stresses the differences between male and female as representative of complementary opposites: femininity and masculinity. In contrast to patriarchal anthropology, romantic feminism takes its definition of femaleness not from carnality and sin but from spiritual femininity, that is, intuitive spirituality, altruism, emotional sensitivity, and moral (sexual) purity. These ideas of spiritual femininity are particularly developed in Mariology. But Mariology, in classical Catholicism, is set against historical women as representatives of

[79] Ruether, *Mary: The Feminine Face of the Church*, 78–79.
[80] Ruether, "Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives."

> carnal femaleness. Mary was the spiritual lady in whose service one rejected real (carnal) females.[81]

Romantic feminism is Ruether's more developed critique of what Daly amusingly called "Pedestal Pedlers" – the notion that women are more spiritual, closer to God, or on a pedestal. This is an effective critique of how the Church treats women because it defines the misogyny that women endure under the guise of equal dignity before God. This is also one of the comparatively few times Ruether invokes Mary in *Sexism and God-Talk* (presumably because she is the focus of the previous book). In chapter four, I will expand on Ruether's definition of romantic feminism to argue that it is the child of the Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference discussed in this thesis. I agree with her claim that Mary is set apart as the rejection of the female carnal existence in current Catholic discourse, but in this thesis, I demonstrate that Mary should not be set apart as she says here:

> God is modeled after the patriarchal ruling class and is seen as addressing this class of males directly, adopting them as his "sons." They are his representatives, the responsible partners of the covenant with him. Women as wives now become symbolically repressed as the dependent servant class. Wives, along with children and servants, represent those ruled over and owned by the patriarchal class. They relate to man as he relates to God. A symbolic hierarchy is set up: God–male–female. Women no longer stand in direct relation to God; they are connected to God secondarily through the male.[82]

Here Ruether furthers her commentary on the masculine–feminine dynamic by arguing that women must always have a masculine intermediatory between themselves and God.

> Nevertheless, corrected by feminist criticism of the androcentric hierarchicalism [*sic*], these same categories of classical theology disclose entirely different possibilities. Women must reject a concept of the Fall that

[81] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Beacon Press, 1983), 104–5.
[82] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 53.

> makes them scapegoats for the advent of evil and uses this to "punish" them through historical subordination. At the same time women cannot neglect the basic theological insight that humanity has become radically alienated from its true relationship to itself, to nature, and to God. This alienation, which is not just individual but systemic, has denied the condition of humanity in history. Not sex, but sexism – the distortion of gender (as well as other differences between human groups) into structures of unjust domination and subordination – is central to the origin and transmission of this alienated, fallen condition. Feminism, far from rejecting concepts of the Fall, can rediscover its meaning in a radically new way.[83]

Ruether's insight that sexism rather than sex difference is a ramification of the Fall will have important ramifications in this thesis. Later, as I discuss methodologies, we will see how Ruether's definition of feminist theology reflects this notion of sexism being a result of the Fall. Throughout this thesis, I argue that Mary, who does not experience the same ramifications of the Fall, represents an important point of liberation for women enduring sexism.

Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemar

Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor (originally published in Portuguese in 1987 and published in English in 1989) by Ivone Gebara (b. 1944) and Maria Clara Bingemer (b. 1949) presents a feminist Mariology in a South American liberation theology context. The authors begin their text with a new anthropological framework. They then explain their hermeneutics for Marian theology and in the following chapter apply that hermeneutics to Mary in Scripture. They then apply their work to the four Marian dogmas. Section five focuses on Marian traditions specific to Latin America, and the work concludes with their theology of how Mary can liberate the poor, focusing on the Magnificat as a "Song of the People." Because my work overlaps with this text in the authors' interest in a new feminist anthropology of women, I will focus my literature review on that chapter and on their interpretation of the Immaculate Conception in a later chapter.

[83] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 37.

In chapter one, "Toward a New Anthropological Perspective," Gebara and Bingemer argue that past Mariological work has focused very little on a Marian anthropology (conceding that many such works only imply a Platonic anthropology).[84] They argue that this has contributed to a vision of Mary that focuses on her femininity: "Traditional Mariology speaks of Mary in 'feminine' terms, idealizing her on the basis of certain qualities said to be feminine, a determination from the male viewpoint. Thus, Mary is 'retrieved' by this traditional anthropologico-theological vision and goes on to justify it insofar as she is a product of that vision."[85] Gebara and Bingemer claim that Mary is considered "feminine" through a male understanding of what femininity is.

Part of Gebara and Bingemer's solution to this issue is a move "from a male-centered to a human-centered anthropology." They argue that "'Man' is the main actor in salvation history. That perspective projects on to God the cultural traits of the male gender in all realms of existence." Like Gebara and Bingemer, I argued in The Problem section above that maleness has become associated with God and vice versa, but I explicitly rooted this anthropology in an Aristotelean-based system of sex difference that has been mapped onto Christian theology. Gebara and Bingemer counteract this relationship between maleness and divinity with a human-centric anthropology that "posits human-kind, man and woman, as the center of history."[86] They further argue: "The male expression of humanity is not privileged at the expense of the female; nor is there any effort to affirm the latter in order to downgrade the former. A human-centered anthropology seeks to grasp the revelation of the divine all throughout the human and accepts the historical and theological consequences of this stance." The authors foresee the ramifications of this anthropology in their Marian theology: "An anthropology with human-centered characteristics is the only kind that will enable us to work out a Marian theology that can recover the historic activity of women for the sake of the Kingdom and which consequently can do justice for Mary, women, men, and ultimately to humankind created in the image and likeness of God."[87] Following Gebara and Bingemer, I move away from this androcentric definition of femininity that Gebara and Bingemer criticize by focusing on Mary's humanity.

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[84] Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, trans. Phillip Berryman, Liberation and Theology 7 (Burns and Oates, 1989), 1.
[85] Gebara and Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 2.
[86] Gebara and Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 3.
[87] Gebara and Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 4.

Gebara and Bingemer's discussion on the Immaculate Conception dogma is part of their larger discussion on the four Marian dogmas in chapter four. The authors include a very brief overview of the dogma's development[88] before delving into scriptural support for the dogma. Ultimately their interpretation of the dogma in its feminist context can be succinctly captured in the following passage:

> The immaculate conception is therefore a utopia that energizes that people's overall endeavor and sustains their hope in their God (see Puebla 298). At the end of a long history of grace and sin, of love and passion, is the woman inaugurating a new era which already bears within itself the anticipation of the end, when God will be in all. In the figure of Mary, the church, the new people of God, sees its yearnings and longings, the divine proposal for humankind already achieved. 'Mary is presented as the culmination of humankind and Israel's crowning glory…History runs out and humankind rests because in its own representative it sees itself transported to the fulfillment of history, when utopia will become reality.' Mary's immaculate conception is the pledge that assures that Jesus' utopia – the kingdom of God – can be achieved on this poor earth.[89]

While I agree with Gebara and Bingemer that the Immaculate Conception represents a promise of salvation to Christians, the authors should more explicitly link the promises of their human-centric anthropology to the Immaculate Conception. While I do not use the term human-centric anthropology in my thesis, I do advocate for a multi-dimensional image of Mary in examining her mind, heart, and body that emphasizes Mary's shared womanhood and humanity with other women.

Tina Beattie

In her 2002 monograph *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate: A Marian Narrative of Women's Salvation*, Tina Beattie (b. 1955) engages with male–female dynamic in the Catholic tradition in a way that is useful to my thesis argument. As the title implies, much of Beattie's argument focuses on Mary's relationship with Eve. Beattie primarily uses Luce Irigaray's

[88] Gebara and Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 108–9.
[89] Gebara and Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, 112.

work as the bedrock of her discussion, which is rooted in third-wave feminism. Beattie and I have largely the same goal in mind in our work: to articulate how Mary can advance the roles of and engage the whole humanity of Catholic women. However, we have vastly different routes to this goal with Beattie focusing on the Mary–Eve relationship with a psycho-linguistic methodology. In contrast, I focus on the Immaculate Conception dogma and use a Thomistic methodology. Like others in this literature, Beattie is concerned with how women can be limited in the Church and how Mary can contribute to those limitations. She writes:

> However, this raises the question of how far women can be said to be 'true participants' in the Catholic community, particularly with regard to the story of Mary. To allow one's identity to be shaped by Mary's story can be a disfiguring and even self-destructive experience for women, since it entails conformity to an identity that is governed by an androcentric ideal of maternal femininity, which can work in opposition to the woman's bodily sense of self.[90]

Like Warner and Daly, Beattie voices concern about women's relationships to Mary, but Beattie concentrates on Mary as developed by men to suit their androcentric ideal of women, writing:

> However much women might be active participants in Marian faith and devotion, women's narratives only find expression within the authoritative version of the Christian story when they are mediated and authenticated by men. This means that the female body works in double opposition to women theologically. On the one hand, it provides men with a site of difference on which to inscribe their own fantasies of maternal femininity, so that the idea of "woman" has become disembodied in the Catholic narrative of faith in so far as the one who speaks as and for woman bears no necessary relation to the female body. On the other hand, it serves as the basis for women's exclusion from roles of authority and from the sacramental priesthood, so that "woman" becomes essentially identified with the female body for the

[90] Tina Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate: A Marian Narrative of Women's Salvation* (Continuum, 2002), 20.

> purposes of exclusion, but never for the purposes of inclusion. Thus, complex strategies of interpretation are required if the female "I" is to receive a self that is enlarged rather than diminished by the Marian tradition, especially bearing in mind Ricoeur's suggestion that refiguration is largely a struggle between symbolic worlds. In other words, it is not the result of the reader or interpreter standing outside texts and assessing them from a position of neutral objectivity. Rather, it involves recognizing that we are always already positioned by the cultural and religious texts that we inhabit, and the task of creative interpretation is therefore a symbolic struggle from within.[91]

Beattie, like others, demonstrates how Mary represents the feminine-passive to a man's masculine-active. But Beattie furthers this argument by arguing that men can move into the feminine, but women cannot move into the masculine. She writes:

> As I shall show later, while this theological essentialism serves to preclude women from performing any role traditionally identified as masculine, it does not preclude the mimesis of Marian femininity by men, as an expression of their creatureliness before God.[92]

I will build on Beattie's argument by demonstrating that Mary's Immaculate Conception, in particular, can help women move into the masculine sphere by claiming their full humanity in the same way that men can move into the feminine. Beattie does not largely engage with the Immaculate Conception and is more concerned with Mary's divine motherhood and perpetual virginity. However, the following argument can also be applied to the Immaculate Conception:

> The virginal motherhood of Mary is an expression of the same kind of theological language that seeks (and necessarily fails) to explain the two natures in the one person of Christ, or the three persons in the one God. Such beliefs challenge us to think differently and to think difference

[91] Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 21–22.
[92] Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 72.

> differently, to escape the knowledge of good and evil that condemns us to a world of oppositional relationships, and to discover a reconciling language of harmony and relationality in multiple differences. It is a refusal of a Hegelian dialectic in which difference is overwhelmed in the struggle of power relationships, and an affirmation of an open-ended dialogue in which different identities, natures and ways of being are not mutually exclusive but mutually enriching. The creative freedom implicit in the title virgin mother lies not in the polarization of the terms but in the middle ground, in the play of difference between them, a middle ground that, as Gregory says, lies between "the subtlety of God and the density of the flesh."[93]

Beattie's discussion here on seeming contradictions not as "mutually exclusive but mutually enriching" is referring to the contradiction of Mary's virginal motherhood; however, her discussion of the supposed other contradictions in Christian theology means that there is potential to expand her argument for Mary beyond her virginal motherhood. In this line of argument, Mary's Immaculate Conception enriches her humanity in a seeming contradiction. Woven throughout *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate* is Beattie's critique of the Mariology of Pope John Paul II (who was pontiff when Beattie published this work) Oand his theology of the body. She writes:

> John Paul II has developed a rich theology of the body in Original Unity of Man and Woman, in which he claims that "Through the fact that the Word of God became flesh, the body entered theology . . . through the main door." He refers to masculinity and femininity as being based on "two different 'incarnations,' that is, on two ways of 'being a body' of the same human being, created "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27)." This suggests a theology that recognizes both the revelatory potential of the human body as male and female, and the need for an understanding of the ways in which man and woman together and individually bear the image of God in their sexed bodies. My question is to what extent this insight is actually developed in the Pope's theology, in a way that allows women a symbolic narrative within

[93] Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 126.

> which to explore what it means to be a female incarnation of the image of God.[94]

Beattie continues her discussion on John Paul II later in the text, writing:

> To refer back to John Paul II's argument that God breaks the pattern of history by making a new covenant with a woman, the celebration of the generic woman rather than just the individual Mary as the one who first enters into the new covenant would entail recognizing patriarchy as symptomatic of all other forms of oppression and injustice. Only then does it make sense to see the redemption of woman as prior to every other form of redemption, in such a way that all the other liberating consequences of the incarnation flow from this first redemptive act. Thus the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which holds that Mary as the new Eve was conceived without original sin, becomes a positive affirmation of the central place of woman in the story of salvation as the first of the fallen and the first of the redeemed, in such a way that all the other human consequences of the story unfold around the central figures of Eve and Mary.[95]

In these passages, Beattie helpfully dissects John Paul II's theology of women, noting that in his *Theology of the Body* he does affirm women – like men – are made in the image of God, but critiquing that his theology of women does not go further than this. Furthermore, Beattie's argument in the second passage demonstrates that the Immaculate Conception has potential as a starting place for a feminist interpretation of salvation history.

Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ

In her 1985 article "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women" Catholic feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ (b. 1941) critiques how post-conciliar Mariology largely limits women. This is despite Pope Paul VI and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) calling for a new interpretation of Mary that better reflects the worries and experiences of modern women in *Marialis Cultus* and *Behold Your Mother:*

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[94] Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 75.
[95] Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 169–70.

Woman of Faith, respectively. As Johnson begins her three-point critique of modern Mariology, she challenges Paul VI and the USCCB's intentions, writing,

> It is simply not enough to replace one set of virtues with another more suited to our present value system and to propose this new Mary as worthy of emulation. The basic structures which give rise simultaneously to the glorification of Mary and the subordination of women, the root attitudes which generate this pattern, need to be exposed and corrected. There is too much deep prejudice involved in the marian tradition for the simple strategy of a redescription of Mary's virtues to resolve.[96]

Johnson makes an important point in this passage that it is not enough to just change the ramifications of a doctrine but engage anew with the doctrine itself. Johnson offers several valid critiques throughout this article, but I will focus on one in particular that best demonstrates how the Immaculate Conception can benefit feminist Mariology. In her third critique that "the marian tradition has truncated the ideal of feminine fulfilment and wholeness," Johnson breaks down three of the most prevalent images of Mary: handmaiden, virgin, and mother. On the image of "mother," Johnson critiques overemphasis of Mary's motherhood that has come at the detriment of women:

> However, concentration on Mary's motherhood in the tradition has served to reinforce the perception that motherhood is the *raison d'etre* of a woman's life, the one divinely approved accomplishment, rather than the Gospel proclamation that Mary's blessedness consists in hearing the Word of God and keeping it. It has thereby legitimated domesticity as the primary vocation for women.[97]

This critique of Mary's motherhood plays out elsewhere in Johnson's argument. Implicit in this argument is critique of arguments like Hugon and Garrigou-Lagrange's framing of the Immaculate Conception only as it benefits our understanding of the divine

[96] Elizabeth A Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," *Horizons* 12, no. 1 (1985): 121.
[97] Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 128.

maternity, overemphasizing the importance of motherhood for women. In her critique of gender complementarianism that has resulted from Mariology, Johnson writes:

> Suffice it to say that from a feminist perspective, complementarity conceived of in this way is far from beautiful. It is a mask for an ideology which places woman in a stereotyped role on account of her gender, a role where she is praised for living at less than full capacity. (We might also note that it does the same for men with the difference that the preordained role of the male is that of the superior.) The marian tradition has been used to legitimate this conception of the relationship between the sexes, for Mary the woman is exalted precisely for accepting the secondary role assigned to her in view of the priority of Christ the man. A true theological affirmation has become a destructive and oppressive symbol by being applied in naive analogical fashion to personal and sociological relationships.[98]

This argument hints at but does not explicitly name Aristotle and his influence on a theology of sexual difference as the source of this complementarianism's problem for women. By framing this Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference as the problem this thesis addresses, I can build on arguments like this from Johnson. To round out her critique, Johnson quotes from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in her critique of the traditional nativity scene of Mary kneeling before the Christ-child: "For the first time in human history, the mother kneels before her son; she freely accepts her inferiority."[99] Johnson's critique – aided by de Beauvoir – is that overemphasis on Mary's motherhood only feeds the unbalanced male–female dynamic of complementarianism. Johnson only addresses the Immaculate Conception implicitly in her critique of Mariology:

> An overview of the history of early Christian thought about Mary and about the nature of women gives evidence of this paradox: that the exaltation of the one woman, Mary, grew in direct proportion to disparaging theory and vituperative rhetoric regarding the rest of womankind. The growing honor paid to Mary in theology and cult redounded to her benefit to the exclusion

[98] Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 125.
[99] As quoted in Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 125.

> of other women, and this because of one fundamental assumption: that Mary was not a type (*typose*), exemplifying the capacity of redeemed humanity including women, but the great exception. Her glorious precedence prevented any analogy between herself and other women, all of whom fell short by comparison.[100]

Johnson does not explicitly name the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as the dividing factor as other feminist Mariologists do (like Marina Warner). However, the Immaculate Conception can be seen as more dividing between Mary and women than the other Marian dogmas that, to a lesser degree, divide them. This thesis will demonstrate how the Immaculate Conception does not elevate Mary at the expense of other women and how it can be an asset rather than a hindrance to feminist Mariology.

Johnson offers three possible solutions to these concerns and others raised in the article. She proposes that highlighting the historical Mary will help us find commonalities between her and women.[101] The second possibility would frame Mary as a type of the Church and "as a disciple who hears the Word of God and keeps it,"[102] allowing Mary to more effectively model behavior for modern-day disciples. In the third option Johnson frames Mary as liberator that would reinterpret "the meaning of traditional qualities of virginity and motherhood."[103]

Johnson develops these proposals – particularly on the historical Mary – in her 2003 book *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*. This work comes nearly two decades after the preceding article, placing the works at opposite ends of the third-wave feminist movement. Johnson begins her argument with an overview of feminist Mariology up until the time of her writing before making her own proposal to the reader. She then offers a detailed picture of the socio-economic world the historical Mary would have known before applying her proposal to Marian passages in the canonical Gospels. While Johnson and I have different aims in our feminist Mariology, we do share similar methodologies as we will see. In this passage Johnson criticizes the way in which Mary is the exception to womanhood:

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[100] Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 121–22.
[101] Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 130.
[102] Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 131.
[103] Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 132–34.

> The *doctrinal-mythologizing* approach, which governs Catholic tradition, separates Mary from all other women and gifts her privileges far beyond their ken: virginal conception, mother of God, immaculate conception, assumption into heaven. In a feminist sense these doctrines can be seen to carry a double message, signaling as they do female power in both historical and heavenly realms. However, by making Mary here the exception rather than the type, these doctrines, as we have seen, subtly disparage women's sexuality, holiness, and independence. Within the patriarchal structure of the church they allow one glorified woman to function which inhibits the fullness of other women.[104]

Like Daly and Warner, Johnson makes the legitimate point that the Marian dogmas do cast Mary as the exception rather than the rule. In an effort to combat this Johnson proposes emphasizing Mary's humanity:

> Within this chorus of women's voices in a new key, I am going to explore the option to consider Mary as a genuine human being who acted according to the call of the Spirit in the particular circumstances of her own history. This entails viewing her as a first-century Jewish woman living a hard-scrabble life in a land occupied by a foreign empire. Naming the grace of her choices in this context and the long-term influence of her life, I propose that we situate her within the communion of saints and develop a theology of her significance within this community.[105]

In considering Mary's earthly human life in context, Johnson does not deny Mary's holiness. Having established Mary within her historical context, Johnson insists on Mary's place among the saints:

> I am proposing that one fruitful way to work out a liberating feminist theology of Mary is to locate her in the communion of saints and there to remember her, dangerously and consolingly, as a woman with her own

[104] Elizabeth A Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (Continuum, 2006), 40.
[105] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 42–43.

> particular history among her contemporaries and before God. At first glance placing Mary in the company of the saints may seem strange to those accustomed to more traditional Catholic practice, even though the title "Saint Mary" adorns many churches, schools, and other institutions. It may seem a diminishment of the honor that is her due as the *Theotokos*, or bearer of God. But at root it grants her the highest honor the Christian tradition acknowledges for a human being, namely, the core dignity of being created in the divine image and likeness and gifted, in community with others, with a graced relationship with God.[106]

This method balances Mary's humanity and holiness and bridges the divide between Mary and all holy men and women. Even while emphasizing Mary's common holiness, Johnson is not wholly dismissive of her (entirely unique) Immaculate Conception. Later in her argument, she frames the Immaculate Conception as a presence of grace rather than just the absence of original sin – an idea that is threaded throughout this thesis. Johnson also aligns herself with Karl Rahner, SJ's (1904-1984) theology of Mary as she summarizes his argument: "…Rahner points out the ramification that whatever Mary has ultimately reveals something of God's way with all human beings. Her own situation as first of the redeemed in Christ anticipates the gift of grace offered to all humankind in the incarnation."[107] This sentiment of both celebrating the grace-fullness of Mary in the Immaculate Conception and using it as a bridge between her and the rest of humanity is key to my thesis.

However, Johnson largely leaves this discussion of the Immaculate Conception behind to focus on developing a portrait of the historical Mary – or Miriam of Nazareth as Johnson calls her to emphasize her historical place – which she then maps onto scripture. Johnson's style of using scripture is something I emulate throughout this thesis. Johnson is not overly focused on grammar and style as a biblical scholar might be; she prefers to focus on the overall narrative of a given passage while framing within her feminist framework. As we will see, I apply a similar process when discussing Marian passages in this thesis.

Despite these similarities, Johnson and I examine scripture with different goals in mind. In discussing each passage, Johnson aims to frame Mary as one woman among many. For example, in her discussion of the conception story in Matthew 1:18-25,[108] Johnson aligns

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[106] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 95.
[107] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 108.
[108] I use this example from Matthew because it is not discussed in my thesis.

Mary with the women in Matthew's genealogy who "found themselves at some point outside the patriarchal family structure:"[109] "Like the four unconventional foremothers [Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah], Mary's situation is irregular. Her pregnancy is suspicious; socially and legally within the patriarchal culture there is more than a hint of disrepute."[110] Having aligned Mary with her Old Testament predecessors, Johnson then aligns Mary's experience with women today: "The story of illicit pregnancy places Mary in solidarity with women who suffer violence or the threat of violence from patriarchal authority, affirming against all social consensus that God is with them."[111] With this process we can see how Johnson accomplishes her aim of settling Mary within the existing communion of saints. While I draw from Johnson often in my biblical analysis, I emphasize the role that grace is playing at a given instance in Mary's life and leave discussion of how Mary can aid women to chapter four.

Based on these passages from the selected feminist theologians above, we can see that the major themes their work highlights are: their critique of associating men with God and women with Mary to women's detriment; how men can move between the masculine and feminine in relation to God and women, but women must remain in the feminine; how Mary is seen as an exception among all women rather than as an exemplar; the dichotomy between Mary and Eve; and how the Church idealizes Mary and women to women's disadvantage. Each theologian offers her solution to these issues, and in this conclusion, I suggest how my feminist interpretation of the Immaculate Conception dogma can take their arguments further.

Daly, Ruether, and Beattie have critiqued the way in which the Christ–Mary/God–Mary dynamic has been interpreted in male–female rather than creator–creature categories. The Immaculate Conception focuses on Mary's beginning relationship with God. Even though Mary is saved by the same grace from Jesus's crucifixion, it would be incorrect to frame this as a male–female dynamic since Jesus is operator as Creator–Savior rather than as a man. Furthermore, men as well as women are redeemed by this grace.

Daly, Ruether, and Beattie argue that in the bounds of Catholic theology men can move between the masculine–active in relation to men and the feminine–passive in relation to women. This is in contrast to women, who can only ever be feminine–passive in relation to men and God. In chapter four, I will argue that Mary as the Immaculate Conception breaks

[109] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 222.
[110] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 227.
[111] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 238.

this and moves into the masculine-active role as someone who never suffered the same effects of the Fall.

Many have noted how the Church idealizes Mary to the degradation of women. Gebara and Bingemer, in their critique of how Mary is characterized as feminine, note how this vision of femininity has been developed and perpetuated by men rather than women. The Immaculate Conception is a unique trait for Mary alone; however, as this thesis demonstrates a feminist interpretation of Mary as the Immaculate Conception can have positive ramifications for Catholic women.

Daly, Ruether, Gebara and Bingemer also argue that the Church has a tendency to over-idealize both Mary and women to women's detriment. My feminist interpretation of the Immaculate Conception develops a holistic portrait of Mary through her body, mind, and heart to emphasize her humanity. I then show how this positively affects women.

Literature Review – Contemporary Scholarship on the Immaculate Conception

This section focuses on recent general scholarship on the Immaculate Conception. It includes older but foundational works from Edward O'Connor, CSC, and Hilda Graef and newer work on the development of the Immaculate Conception from Marylin McCord Adams. This section also shows how little major scholarship has been focused solely on the Immaculate Conception apart from *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception* from 1958 and the *Journal of Marian Studies'* 2004 volume. The literature also largely ignores the role of gender in the Immaculate Conception and instead focuses on the historical development of the dogma.

Edward O'Connor, CSC (ed.), *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception* (1958)

Edward O'Connor, CSC's (1922–2024) edited volume *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance* is one of the largest volumes focused on the Immaculate Conception alone. Published before the Second Vatican Council, the work is divided into two sections. The first half focuses on the history and development of the

dogma, and the second half focuses on the theology of the dogma.[112] Because this thesis is more concerned with the theology of the Immaculate Conception rather than the history, I will focus on the second half of the volume.

In his preface to the volume, O'Connor opens with: "Of all the Catholic beliefs concerning the Blessed Virgin, that in her Immaculate Conception is, from several points of view, the most important and the most interesting."[113] This statement reflects his preface as a whole as he impresses upon the reader how significant this dogma is. In his introduction to the theological half of the book, O'Connor writes: "The theology of the Immaculate Conception implies not so much the amassing of arguments to show that it really has been revealed…but rather penetration into the meaning of the mystery by discernment of the reasons for it, the consequences that flow from it, and the relations in which it stands to the other mysteries with which it has been associated in the divine plan."[114]

In his chapter "The Meaning of the Immaculate Conception in the Perspectives of St. Thomas," Marie-Joseph Nicolas, OP (1906-1999) applies a Thomistic framework to the Immaculate Conception to consider: "why it was fitting for the Mother of God to be conceived without contracting original sin, and what effects this exemption had in her soul and in her entire being."[115] After a discussion of original sin and original justice, Nicolas frames his argument around the idea that: "There have been some who have minimized the necessity of the Immaculate Conception because they minimized the importance of original sin as a moral stain."[116] While this is a valid point, I frame Mary as *gratia plena* rather than just without original sin so this argument is not relevant to mine.

Like Hugon and Garrigou-Lagrange, Nicolas frames the importance and the need for the Immaculate Conception around Mary's divine maternity and emphasizes that her maternity is not just bodily but spiritual as well.[117] Also like the Thomists before him, Nicolas affirms Mary as conceived in grace,[118] but he explores in greater detail what this means and concludes that Mary could not have experienced concupiscence.

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[112] Perhaps appropriately given the dogma's complicated history between the two orders, Franciscan scholars appear in the first section on history while Dominican scholars dominate the second half on theology.
[113] Edward O'Connor, CSC, "Preface," in *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance*, ed. Edward O'Connor, CSC (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958), v.
[114] O'Connor, CSC, *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception*, xiv.
[115] Marie-Joseph Nicolas, OP, "The Meaning of the Immaculate Conception in the Perspectives of St. Thomas," in *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance*, ed. Edward O'Connor, CSC (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958), 327.
[116] Nicolas, OP, "The Meaning of the Immaculate Conception in the Perspectives of St. Thomas," 336.
[117] Nicolas, OP, "The Meaning of the Immaculate Conception in the Perspectives of St. Thomas," 336–37.
[118] Nicolas, OP, "The Meaning of the Immaculate Conception in the Perspectives of St. Thomas," 339.

> The reason why the grace of baptism does not bestow original innocence is, as St. Thomas tells us, that it heals only the person, and not the nature. When the last person has been called to salvation, nature will be healed in its entirety, collectively and inasmuch as specific nature, although in the virtue of baptism. In Mary's case, on the contrary, nature as such is saved at the same time as the person; it is precisely this which is meant by preservation from the sin of nature.[119]

Later in this thesis I will build on this relationship between the Immaculate Conception and the sacrament of baptism. Unlike Nicolas, I use this argument to support my image of Mary as a relatable figure while Nicholas – like fellow Thomists Hugon and Garrigou-Lagrange – makes this argument to emphasize her uniqueness.

Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (1963)

In *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, originally published in 1963, Graef traces the history of Marian theology and tradition. Graef's Marian history is unique in how she focuses on the Mariology of individual theologians in turn, including behemoths like Augustine of Hippo as well as lesser-known figures like Epiphanius the Monk.

Because this is a historical text, Graef discusses the Immaculate Conception as it is relevant to a given theologian, but it is not given any more attention than any other dogma or devotion. She becomes more focused on the immaculate Conception in her discussion on Eadmer of Canterbury, arguing that his work – influenced by Anselm of Canterbury – was highly influenced by popular devotion to Mary. As interest in the Immaculate Conception increases in the theologians she includes, so too does the discussion. In this way, Graef is totally led by her theologians' interests.

Marian Studies, "The Immaculate Conception: Calling and Destiny" (2004)

In 2004, the Mariological Society of America (MSA) made the theme of their annual meeting "The Immaculate Conception: Calling and Destiny" to mark one hundred and fifty

[119] Nicolas, OP, "The Meaning of the Immaculate Conception in the Perspectives of St. Thomas," 342.

years since *Ineffabilis Deus*. The papers presented at the meeting were then published as the fifty-fifth volume of MSA's journal *Marian Studies*. This volume is one of the largest publications focused completely on the Immaculate Conception since Edward O'Connor's 1958 edited volume on the dogma. The themes that the presenters focus on vary widely: Scott Hahn focuses on Old Testament typology of Mary; Catherine O'Brien considers the French response to the Immaculate Conception in media; and Thomas A Tompson considers how Vatican II's handling of the Immaculate Conception impacted ecumenical relationships. This is a small selection of the volume's articles, but they represent how one hundred and fifty years after the Immaculate Conception became dogma (and even longer since Mary's conception became an important topic of discussion for the Church), it is still a rich source for varied academic discourse. I would like to discuss in more depth one article – Deyanira Flores on Mary's grace-fullness – because it is most relevant to this thesis.

In her article "Mary, the Virgin 'Completely and Permanently Transformed by God's Grace': The Meaning and Implications of Luke 1:28 and the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in Mary's Spiritual Life," Flores considers how Mary's grace-fullness impacted her spiritual life. To develop her argument, Flores says she will root her argument in what Catholic Tradition says on Mary, grace itself, and how the mystics have understood the spiritual life with particular emphasis on John of the Cross (1542–1591).

The most relevant shared point of contact between Flores's article and this thesis is her argument that Mary's Immaculate Conception comes about because she receives sanctifying grace at conception.[120] Perhaps unintentionally, however, Flores's argument overall only seems to separate Mary more from the faithful. In part this is due to the overly romantic language Flores uses. For example, this passage in her introduction treats Mary so highly that it dehumanizes her:

> It is then with the utmost respect, fully aware of our total inadequacy in every sense, trusting only in God's grace, and moved alone by love and gratitude to the Immaculate One, that we shall dare to try to lift a little the veil and take a look at the spiritual life of the Virgin Mary, that a ray of its

[120] Part of this argument comes from Garrigou-Lagrange's work which is reviewed above.

> ineffable beauty may appear, to the glory of the Blessed Trinity and of the most Holy Mother herself.[121]

This tone carries on: as Flores more directly address the question of Mary's spiritual life, she emphasizes Mary's closeness to God at the expense of her relationship to humanity:

> The spiritual life may be defined as "life in the Holy Spirit" (cf. Rom.8:4; Gal.5:25). Mary's spiritual life is so perfect because it was always "a life in the Holy Spirit." We can say that the Holy Spirit "took the absolute lead" in the possession of her soul, making her all His from the very first instant of her Immaculate Conception, when she was "entrusted eternally to the Spirit of holiness" by her Son, and ever after, becoming "the permanent dwelling of the Spirit of God:" He was always in her and with her, filling her to overflowing with all His graces, virtues, gifts, and fruits – with all that this entails – illuminating her, guiding her, transforming her evermore in God. It is a constant presence and action on His part, with its sublime moments, like the annunciation, Calvary, and Pentecost, and a constant, faithful collaboration with His action on the part of the perfectly humble and docile Virgin.[122]

This passage, reflective of Flores's paper as a whole, heaps praises on Mary because of her Immaculate Conception but does not consider how Mary's spiritual life can be a model for others. By arguing that Mary is in unique, perfect communion with the Holy Spirit, Flores suggests that no one could ever hope to emulate her. This part of the argument implies that Mary is totally under the control of the Holy Spirit to the extent that it limits her free will. Furthermore, Flores considers Mary "perfectly humble and docile" despite, as I will argue, clear examples of her active dynamism in the canonical Gospels.

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[121] Deyanira Flores, "Mary, the Virgin 'Completely and Permanently Transformed by God's Grace': The Meaning and Implications of Luke 1:28 and the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception for Mary's Spiritual Life," *Marian Studies* 55 (2004): 48.

[122] Flores, "Mary, the Virgin 'Completely and Permanently Transformed by God's Grace': The Meaning and Implications of Luke 1:28 and the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception for Mary's Spiritual Life," 60.

Sarah Jane Boss (ed.), *Mary: The Complete Resource* (2007)

In her introduction to *Mary: The Complete Resource*, editor Sarah Jane Boss writes, "To understand the cult of the Virgin Mary is to understand the Christian religion…The many and various forms in which Christian people enact their relationship with Mary – including the suppression and rejection of her cult – are windows onto central features of Christianity."[123] Boss concedes this is a bold claim ("one perhaps dreamt up by a Mariologist as a means of keeping herself in business"[124]), but it does reflect the wide scope that *Mary: The Complete Resource* covers. The volume begins with work on Mary in the Gospels and early Christianity before moving into the medieval and later Church. From there, works are divided theologically along thematic lines such as "The English Reformers and the Blessed Virgin Mary" before closing on Mary in literature and art.

In *Mary: The Complete Resource*, the Immaculate Conception is most focused on in the chapter "The Development of the Doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception." Author Sarah Jane Boss argues that past scholars who frame the dogmatization of the Immaculate Conception as a "victory for popular devotion over the opinion of theologians" do so incorrectly; her chapter considers how Catholics have interpreted the Immaculate Conception over the years.

Boss begins the history of the Immaculate Conception with the *Protoevangelium of James*, but to emphasize her point that the Immaculate Conception was not driven by popular devotion alone, she largely frames the history around theologians' engagement. Boss argues Augustine of Hippo's seminal transmission theory of original sin seemingly conflicted with early popular belief that Mary did not sin. She contrasts this argument with Anselm of Canterbury's definition of original sin as lacking original justice which, Boss contends, became "the foundation for intellectual defenses of the immaculate conception."[125] Boss then balances this theological discussion by arguing that Mary's sinlessness was more linked to liturgical practice than theological discussion since Mary's birthday was a popular liturgical feast: "Since Christians could not celebrate the birthdays of people who were born in a state of sin, it was argued that [Mary and John the Baptist], who in any case were pre-eminent among the saints, must have been sanctified (i.e. freed from sin) before birth." Popular

[123] Sarah Jane Boss, "Editor's Introduction," in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (Continuum, 2007), 1.
[124] Boss, "Editor's Introduction," 1.
[125] Sarah Jane Boss, "The Development of the Doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception," in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (Continuum, 2007), 209.

celebration of Mary's birthday stimulated interest and debate concerning her conception. Boss concludes her discussion of the theologians by discussing Scotus's definition of the Immaculate Conception, framing it as "an optimistic understanding of humanity's, and the physical world's capacity for goodness and redemption."[126]

Not dismissing the role of popular devotion in the Immaculate Conception's development, Boss concludes with a brief history of the artistic depictions of the Immaculate Conception. She argues that early depictions focused on Anna and Joachim's embrace at the Temple gate as portrayed in the *Protoevangelium of James*, citing Master Bertram of Minden's altarpiece from *c*. 1400. But as the feast develops Boss argues that images of Anna and Joachim were replaced with images of Mary alone to "represent a simply spiritual aspect of the Virgin's conception."[127]

Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (2010)

In her 2010 book *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary*, medieval historian Miri Rubin traces the history of Marian devotion, tradition, and theology. Her range extends from the New Testament until the twenty-first century as Rubin wonders, "how did Mary, about whom so little is said in the Gospels, become the familiar global figure?"[128] Because Rubin has such a wide-ranging scope in history, the Immaculate Conception only makes up a small portion of her discussion.

In her discussion of the Immaculate Conception, Rubin is primarily interested (understandably so) in the history of its development rather in its theological implications. Rubin frames the development of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages as one rooted in conflict, particularly between the Franciscan Order, who championed the feast, and the Dominican Order, who did not. She emphasizes just how tense the debate was by citing a preface to a collection of Bernardino of Siena's sermons in which it is advised not to preach on the Immaculate Conception in front of Dominicans lest they start a brawl.[129] Rubin then traces how this rivalry also affected more powerful Dominicans and Franciscans as well as theologians outside these orders.

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[126] Boss, "The Development of the Doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception," 214–15.
[127] Boss, "The Development of the Doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception," 222.
[128] Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), xxii.
[129] Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary*, 304.

Marylin McCord Adams, "The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: A Thought-Experiment in Medieval Philosophical Theology" (2010)

In the article "The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: A Thought-Experiment in Medieval Philosophical Theology," American Episcopalian priest Marylin McCord Adams (1943-2017) frames the development of the Immaculate Conception as a medieval thought-experiment. Like most of the other scholars in this portion of the literature review, Adams focuses on the development of the dogma but does not frame it as a competitive process as Rubin in particular does. Adams argues the purpose of "thought-experiments" was to "explore the consequences of a set of assumptions without any prior commitment to their truth."[130]

Adams begins her history of the Immaculate Conception with Anselm of Canterbury's *Cur Deus Homo*, arguing that his theology is what began the debate about Mary's conception more formally than before. With her thought-experiment structure, Adams argues that each theologian who interacted with the idea of Mary's conception contributed to the Immaculate Conception's development in some way. For example, she argues that Anselm's initial interest in Mary's conception led to it becoming a more common liturgical feast, which in turn led to Bernard of Clairvaux's condemnation of the feast.[131]

Adams' argument highlights the importance of debate and experimentation in the development of any theological idea. Adams articulates this as:

> Debate also exposed the flexibility of tradition – how liturgical celebration is not in fact rigidly principled, and how traditional patterns of exegesis can easily be used to remove apparent contradictions between immaculate animation and Holy Writ. Such wealth of medieval analysis did not precipitate any definitive ecclesiastical determination, but it did allow negative presumptions to be lifted and did put the church in a position to decide the question with open eyes.[132]

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[130] Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: A Thought-Experiment in Medieval Philosophical Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 2 (2010): 133.
[131] Adams, "The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: A Thought-Experiment in Medieval Philosophical Theology," 138.
[132] Adams, "The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: A Thought-Experiment in Medieval Philosophical Theology," 159.

I present this thesis very much in this same spirit that understands that debate ultimately increases the Church's understanding of Mary. Paul VI's *Marialis Cultus* proposes much the same when one considers that the only way to bring Mary into conversation with the current concerns of the Church is through debate.

The scholarship I have presented here as contemporary literature on the Immaculate Conception also demonstrates how people continue to engage with the Immaculate Conception for both historical and theological purposes. Historical accounts of the Immaculate Conception focus on its contentious development, but the theological accounts have gone in many different directions.

All of the scholarship demonstrates three key themes: that a Thomistic methodology is compatible with the Immaculate Conception; that the dogma still needs to be contended with in feminist Mariology; that recent scholarship has not engaged with either of these themes adequately. Because of this, my thesis fills the gap in the research by using a Thomistic methodology to find the feminist implications of the Immaculate Conception. To do this, I begin my methodology by explaining more explicitly than previous research has done how Mary was conceived in sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*] to bridge between Scotus's definition of the Immaculate Conception and Aquinas's theology of grace [*gratia*].

Grace [*Gratia*] in This Thesis

I have established that the beginning framework of my positive formulation of the Immaculate Conception dogma is the idea that Mary is *gratia plena*. In this section, I will demonstrate with the historical theology behind the Immaculate Conception how I define *gratia plena* in this thesis. To do this, I am taking what has historically been a Scotist theology of the dogma, linking it with a Thomistic theology of grace.

I begin with John Duns Scotus's *Ioannes Duns Scotus Doctor Immaculatae Conceptionis* from Bibliotheca Immaculatae Conceptionis which appears in *Four Questions on Mary* in English.[133] In the text, Scotus traces the history of the Immaculate Conception up to his own lifetime and then refutes common arguments against the feast (this includes,

[133] John Duns Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, trans. Allan B. Wolter, Text Series, no. 22 (Franciscan Institute, 2000), 1.

somewhat ironically for this thesis, Aquinas's own refutation of the feast). Having done this, Scotus provides his theology of the Immaculate Conception, writing,

> I declare the first [option] to be possible, because grace [*gratia*] is equivalent to original justice [*iustitate originali*] so far as divine acceptance goes, so that because of this grace there is no original sin in the soul that possesses it. God could have at the very first instant infused into this soul [*animae*] grace [*gratiam*] to such a degree as was given to other souls at the time of circumcision or of baptism; therefore, in the first instant the soul would not have original sin, just as a baptized person would also not have it afterwards. And if the infection of the flesh was there in the first instant, it was not the necessary cause of the infection of the soul, just as neither after baptism when—according to many—the infection of the flesh remains whereas that of the soul does not; or God could have cleansed the flesh before infusing the soul, so that in that instant it was not infected.[134]

Here Scotus clearly declares that Mary must have had an infusion of grace [*gratia*] rather than original sin at conception. This, he argues, is possible through Jesus's redemptive work which *preserves* her rather than *cleanses* her.[135] This is crucial because it demonstrates that Mary – as the Immaculate Conception – is still saved by the same grace that redeems the rest of humanity. The difference is that maculate people receive this redemptive grace after having original sin. Because Mary receives this redemptive grace in lieu of original sin, she enjoys certain privileges. Ruggero Rosini, OFM summarizes this notion: "The absolute sanctity of Mary illumines the supreme perfection of the Redemption of Christ. Hence, the Redemption in its turn preserves Mary from sin, reaching its maximum effort."[136] Scotus does not offer more information about what kind of grace could do this other than to liken it to grace which one might receive at baptism. This is an important detail because it allows us to link Scotus's theology of the Immaculate Conception with Aquinas's theology of grace.

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[134] Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, 51.
[135] Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, 41.
[136] Ruggero Rosini, OFM, *Mariology of Blessed John Duns Scotus*, ed. Peter M. Felner, FI, trans. Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate (New Bedford, Mass.), Mariologia Franciscana 2 (Academy of the Immaculate, 2008), 73.

Unlike Scotus, Aquinas has a more expansive and detailed understanding of grace. In his theology of baptism, Aquinas emphasizes how the sacrament brings the recipient into a relationship with God that he or she did not have before:

> By Baptism [a person] is born again unto the spiritual life, which is proper to the faithful of Christ, as the Apostle says (Galatians 2:20): "And that I live now in the flesh; I live in the faith of the Son of God." Now life is only in those members that are united to the head, from which they derive sense and movement. And therefore it follows of necessity that by Baptism [a person] is incorporated in Christ, as one of His members…And it follows from this that the baptized are enlightened by Christ as to the knowledge of truth and made fruitful by Him with the fruitfulness of good works by the infusion of grace [*gratiae*].[137]

Elsewhere in his baptismal theology, Aquinas discusses how a baptized person's new relationship with God brings about grace for them as well: "Now the fulness of grace and virtues [*gratiae et virtutis*] flows from Christ the Head to all His members, according to John 1:16: 'Of His fulness we all have received.' Hence it is clear that [a person] receives grace and virtues [*gratiam et virtutes*] in Baptism."[138] In this theology of baptism, Aquinas does not name the kind of graces a person receives in the sacrament but emphasizes how baptism confers grace on the recipient because of their new closeness with God. In his classification on grace, Aquinas is more specific about the grace that unites one to God. This is called sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*] in which a person "is united to God [*homo Deo coniungitur*]." Based on Aquinas's emphasis on baptism bringing the recipient into a relationship with God, we can understand that the grace of baptism is sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*].

Let us return to Scotus's original definition of the Immaculate Conception in which he argues that Mary receives grace at conception like that of baptism. Now with Aquinas's understanding of baptismal grace in mind, we can see that Mary receives an infusion of

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[137] *ST* III.Q69.A5. In-text citations original. Translation has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[138] *ST* III.Q69.A4. Translation has been modified for gender inclusivity.

sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*] at conception which makes her the Immaculate Conception.[139] Thus, Mary is *gratia plena*.

Methodologies

Having united Scotus's definition of the Immaculate Conception with Aquinas's theology of grace [*gratia*], we can consider in practical terms the most effective ways to discuss Mary as *gratia plena* in this thesis. To progress this initial argument about grace I weave four methodologies together: feminist theology, Thomistic theology, Biblical-literary interpretation, and art historical analysis. I will now go through each one of these to explain how they progress my argument.

A feminist theology methodology centers the female experience of Mary and the Immaculate Conception in this thesis. I ground my understanding of feminist theology in Ruether's definition which states:

> The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive. Theologically speaking, whatever diminishes or denies the full humanity of women must be presumed not to reflect the divine or an authentic relation to the divine, or to reflect the authentic nature of things, or to be the message or work of an authentic redeemer or a community of redemption.[140]

Ruether's emphasis that feminist theology promotes women's full humanity will be crucial in this thesis because it allows me to contradict the Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference that I have argued is so detrimental to women.

A Thomistic theology of Mary as *gratia plena* will also be effective. As I have discussed, Aquinas was an influence in integrating Aristotle's methodology into Catholic doctrine. Thus, there are clear instances in which Aquinas borrows from Aristotle to women's

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[139] Karl Rahner, SJ, reaches the same definition of the Immaculate Conception that I do as an infusion of sanctifying grace: "But does it follow what has been said that Mary, from the beginning of her existence, was not only the object of a specifically unique predestining purpose of salvation on the part of God, but also possessed sanctifying grace; that in this sense she was preserved from original sin, redeemed by being preserved and not just by being freed from original sin?" Karl Rahner, SJ, *Theological Investigations: God, Christ, Mary, and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, OP (Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1961), 211.
[140] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 19.

detriment. However, as Daly has argued,[141] the solution to this Aristotle-influenced theology of sexual difference also lies in Aquinas's work as he argues that the rational soul in men and women is where the image of God is.[142]

In this thesis, I rely on the Thomistic process that proposes if an argument begins with a true initial premise, that argument which follows is also truthful. In the first question of the *Summa,* Aquinas explains this method for studying sacred theology to the reader. He writes, "As other sciences do not argue in proof of their principles, but argue from their principles to demonstrate other truths in these sciences: so this doctrine does not argue in proof of its principles, which are the articles of faith, but from them it goes on to prove something else; as the Apostle from the resurrection of Christ argues in proof of the general resurrection (1 Cor. 15)."[143] For Aquinas, his theological arguments begin with a true premise that is rooted the Deposit of Faith. The questions in the *Summa* follow this method.

In this thesis, the beginning premise is that Mary is immaculately conceived. This premise was officially defined in the dogmatic proclamation *Ineffabilis Deus*, and it has been upheld in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.[144] Therefore, the belief that Mary is immaculately conceived is truth in the Roman Catholic Church. Because of its established authority in Roman Catholic dogma, the Immaculate Conception is the starting true premise of this thesis, and I do not seek to prove its validity in this thesis.[145]

Using this method, Aquinas would proceed with a demonstration that followed his premise and resulted in a true conclusion. I am not suggesting that every argument I offer in this thesis is a demonstration in the strictest sense. Rather what follows from my premise are possibilities of the Immaculate Conception. These possibilities explore the extent to which Mary's immaculate conception impacts her mind, heart, and body. Based on those possibilities, I consider the extent to which they can positively impact Roman Catholic women.

Aquinas's theology and anthropology that I use throughout this thesis were written about maculate people, and I am adapting his ideas to Immaculate Mary. In doing so, I draw out Mary's shared humanity to show that her grace-fullness does not separate her from everyone else. Furthermore, Aquinas's theology is integral to Catholic doctrine today. Thus,

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[141] Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, 94.
[142] *ST* I.Q93.A6.
[143] *ST* I.Q1.A8. In-text citation original.
[144] *CCC* 490–494.
[145] I am not suggesting that everyone must believe in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Rather, because I am only concerned with Roman Catholic theology in this thesis, I am arguing that the Immaculate Conception is true within the bounds of Roman Catholic theology.

it is easier to contend that my feminist interpretation of the Immaculate Conception stays within the bounds of orthodox Catholic teaching.

However, in this methodology I do not adhere strictly to Aquinas's prioritizing knowledge over love. In this thesis, I conceptualize Mary's love for/knowledge of God as a spinning wheel. The more she loves God the more she seeks to know him, and the more she loves him the more she seeks to know him. I reject Garrigou-Lagrange's claim that Mary was sentient in the womb because of infused knowledge[146] because this has complications for Mary later in life as I will demonstrate. Thus, I must claim that Mary's love for God comes to her first as it would be part of the sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*] infused at conception.[147] Therefore, love comes first in Mary, and her knowledge for God (and *desire* to know him) comes from this initial love. However, it is not my intention to suggest that love is more powerful or prescient in Mary than her knowledge. Rather, I am arguing that this love came to her first, but it is not more important than knowledge.

To illustrate how Mary's immaculateness comes to life, I use a Biblical-literary interpretation to apply my feminist and Thomistic theology to passages from the canonical Gospels and the *Protoevangelium of James*. It is important to include Biblical and apocryphal passages relevant to Mary's life as *gratia plena* because, as we have seen in the literature review, past scholars like Garrigou-Lagrange have used Biblical interpretations of Mary to depict her as a figure of submission. In this thesis, I use Biblical passages (and relevant passages from the *Protoevangelium of James*) to portray Mary as an empowered woman. By basing my interpretation of Mary as an empowering figure for women in relevant Biblical passages, I demonstrate how my feminist interpretation of Mary is compatible with the canonical text of the Bible and the apocryphal text of the *Protoevangelium of James* that was so influential on Catholic tradition. To achieve this, I use the Immaculate Conception as a hermeneutical lens through which to read the text. I am not attempting to legitimize the dogma of the Immaculate Conception through the text. For a given passage, I present it to the reader and then give discuss recent Catholic exegesis relevant to that passage. Building on this, I either refute or build on the exegesis with my own interpretation that uses the Immaculate Conception as a hermeneutical lens. I do not call this interpretation Biblical exegesis because I freely mix passages from different Gospels to support my argument. This process is seldom done in formal exegesis. The reader should also note that the Biblical

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[146] Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, trans. Bernard J Kelly, CSS (B. Herder Book Company, 1949), 94.
[147] Aquinas concludes that there is love in God's grace. *ST* I-II.Q110.A1.

passages I discuss do not necessarily appear in canonical order. Rather they follow the order of my argument.

This methodology is inspired by Johnson's use of scripture in her book *Truly Our Sister.* In it, Johnson reproduces passages of Mary's actions from the canonical Gospels and then offers her interpretation based on her feminist framework. I do much the same, and like Johnson, I am only concerned with the language insofar as it aids my argument. This is in contrast to a Biblical scholar who would focus more on the text itself. The reader should also note that there are many instances in which I give (transliterated) Greek and Latin after words or phrases in a given passage. I provide the Greek since the New Testament was originally written in Greek, and I provide the Latin because the Vulgate is the official translation of the Bible in the Roman Catholic Church and has been so influential historically in the Church. When Greek and Latin texts appear together, the Greek word will come first and the Latin second.

The fourth methodology I use in this thesis is art-historical analysis. This methodology allows me to quite literally illustrate some of the concepts that I discuss in this thesis. Often, I use historical examples of sacred art and apply my feminist interpretation of the Immaculate Conception to those historical examples in order to demonstrate that my argument is compatible with the Church's artistic legacy. Sarah Jane Boss has made prominent use of art history in her history of the Immaculate Conception.[148] This demonstrates the importance of the artistic tradition in the Immaculate Conception, and I use this as a precedent for incorporating art-historical analysis into this thesis. Furthermore, historically women have found creative theological expression in both creating and commissioning works of art.

To effectively apply these four methodologies to Mary throughout this thesis I have broken my argument down into a tripartite anthropology of mind [*nous*/*mens*], heart [*kardia*/*cor*], and body [*sōma*/*corpus*]. I use the term "tripartite anthropology" to discuss three aspects of Mary's being: mind, heart, and body. These three aspects should not be considered the entirety of her being. The constraints of this thesis do not allow me space to explain and defend the notion that Mary's mind, heart, and body make up the entirety of her humanity. Rather, the reader should understand that "tripartite anthropology" conveys three key aspects of Mary's being that she shares with the rest of humanity. This structure is inspired by Paul's tripartite anthropology in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: " May the God of peace

[148] Boss, "The Development of the Doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception," 221–28.

himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."[149] Rather than exactly mimic Paul, I have distinguished between mind, heart, and body to articulate how Mary thinks, loves, and senses.

Henri de Lubac notes that this tripartite anthropology is different from the usual dichotomy of spirit and body in Christian thought.[150] His argument reflects what would be a simpler division in this thesis between just body and soul. This would be more convenient because historical dictionaries note how mind [*nous/mens*] and heart [*kardia/cor*] can be used to describe each other. Furthermore, Augustine – whose anthropology of mind and heart figure in this thesis – notes how intertwined these concepts: "Are we then to think of these three together, mind [*mentum*], love [*amorem*], knowledge [*notiam*], as being like one drink made out of wine and water and honey, in which each pervades the whole and yet they are three?... As for our trio, though, I cannot see how they are not of the same being…."[151] Augustine's claim of how intertwined the mind, love, and knowledge are further complicates the distinctions between mind and heart in this thesis. Furthermore, while the Gospels explicitly mention Mary's heart [*kardia/cor*], they do not mention her mind despite describing instances when she makes decisions. Despite these seeming limitations, dividing mind and heart into different chapters allows me to consider Mary's intellect and love as separate entities and therefore in greater detail than if they were together in one chapter. Mind and heart may have been interchangeable historically, but today they are considered separate entities.

As we will see, Mary's mind, heart, and body will be the focus of the first three chapters. In the chapter on Mary's mind, Aquinas's theology of grace and its relationship to the intellect and will is the primary focus. In the chapter on Mary's heart, I continue to draw on Aquinas's theology of love while also incorporating more of Augustine's anthropology of the mind and heart to demonstrate how the mind and heart are separate. In chapter three, focused on Mary's body, I draw from modern biological research on women's bodies to demonstrate how incorrect historical Aristotelean biology is.

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[149] NRSVCE. From the LXX: *pneuma, psyche kai sōma*. From the Vulgate: *spiritus vester, et anima, et corpus*.
[150] Henri de Lubac, SJ, *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (Ignatius Press, 1996), 120.
[151] *De Trin.,* IX.4.7.

Chapter Outlines

The tripartite anthropology of Mary's mind, heart, and body discussed above is the beginning place for the chapter structure in this thesis with the four methodologies woven throughout. I frame each chapter around a central "problem" that embodies a given aspect of this Aristotle-influenced theology of sexual difference (such as, mental, emotional, or physical) as related to Mary.[152] Chapter one focuses on the Immaculate mind of Mary. Chapter two focuses on the Immaculate heart of Mary. Discussion about Mary's heart and love follows the discussion on her mind because of Augustine's claim that one cannot love something without first knowing it;[153] thus, in first understanding how Mary thinks we can better appreciate how she loves. Chapter three focuses on the Immaculate body of Mary to complete the tripartite anthropology. Chapter four recreates the mind–heart–body structure in miniature to apply my feminist interpretation of Mary to women today.

Chapter one focuses on the Immaculate mind of Mary. Based on Aquinas's argument that the image of God dwells in the rational will of both men *and* women,[154] this chapter demonstrates that Mary is intellectually engaged in the incarnation and in Jesus's salvific work. In doing so, she disproves the Aristotelean notion that women are intellectually inferior to men. To demonstrate her intellectual engagement, I interpret her Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) as a statement of her self-knowledge. I then demonstrate how Mary is intellectually engaged by pondering the salvific events in her life in Luke 2:19 and Luke 2:33. Building on her life as pondering (or, "reading") these events, I demonstrate how Mary makes intellectual decisions rooted in grace to move the salvific narrative forward. These moments are her *fiat* at the annunciation (Luke 1:26–38) and her intervention at the Cana wedding (John 2:1–11).

Chapter two builds on the themes of chapter one to demonstrate how Mary loves and emotes. This chapter demonstrates that Mary's neither dulls her emotions nor makes her overly emotional (for example, swooning at the crucifixion). By arguing this, I can demonstrate that Mary defies the Aristotelean idea that women are overly emotional. I begin by framing Mary's love for God as friendship after Aquinas's definition and use Luke 2:51 to consider Mary's love alone. I then pair Mary's love with other emotions to demonstrate that she experiences a range of human emotions. I use her finding Jesus in the Temple (Luke

[152] I am not suggesting that each "problem" (or the creator of the problem) is explicitly drawing on Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference. Rather, I am arguing that, intentionally or otherwise, the problem reflects an aspect of Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference.
[153] *De Trin.* X.2.
[154] *ST* I.93.6.

2:48) to examine her love in relation to anger. To consider her love and sorrow, I divide the discussion into her anticipating sorrow in Simeon's prophecy (Luke 2:35) and her living it at the crucifixion (John 19:26–27).

Chapter three examines the Immaculate body of Mary. This chapter most explicitly refutes some common Aristotelean biological myths about Mary's body. In doing so, I demonstrate the importance of people – particularly women – having frank, unromantic conversations about women's bodies to recognize their full humanity. This chapter is unique in that it incorporates passages from the *Protoevangelium of James* because the work has been influential in the Church's understanding of Mary's body despite being apocryphal. I first argue that Mary was conceived through her parents' sexual intercourse in contrast to her son's asexual conception (*Protoevangelium* 2–4). Then I argue that Mary endures pain while giving birth to Jesus (Luke 2:6–7) – not as a ramification of original sin but rather because of human anatomy. Because Aquinas argues that Mary does not endure pain in birth because of her *in partu* virginity, I argue against the tradition that Mary's hymen was untorn while giving birth (Luke 1:34 and *Protoevangelium* 20). Finally, I argue that Mary menstruated between menarche and menopause and that this does not devalue her place as the Immaculate Conception (*Protoevangelium* 8).

Chapter four applies the constructive feminist theology of Mary's mind, heart, and body to contemporary women. First, I argue that romantic feminism – the notion that women are closer to original innocence and the *imago dei* as defined by Ruether[155] – is the child of this Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference. I then argue that one of the main purveyors of romantic feminism was Pope John Paul II. After establishing romantic feminism as a major hindrance to women today, I bring together contemporary misogynistic Catholic literature (both scholarly and popular) on the mind, heart, and body to demonstrate how romantic feminism runs through it. I then refute each example with my feminist interpretation of Mary that I have developed over the preceding chapters.

Closing

Understanding Immaculate Mary as *gratia plena* is the first step to constructing a theology of the Immaculate Conception that confronts an Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference. This also demonstrates the places in which Aquinas's and Scotus's

[155] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 105.

theology intersect. The most effective way to enact *gratia plena* is through the tripartite anthropology consisting of mind, heart, and body. We will proceed to the first of these in chapter one.

Chapter One: The Immaculate Mind of Mary

Introduction

In the thesis introduction, I argued that an Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference has created a narrative of women being intellectually inferior to men. Genevieve Lloyd speaks about the force that created this system without naming Aristotle, writing, "Rational knowledge has been construed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind."[1] In this chapter I refute that notion by demonstrating that Mary is actively, intellectually involved in the salvific narrative, moving it forward. Not only is Mary active, but chooses to be so, and she has the intellectual capacity for it. I also argue that Mary's natural, human intellect is perfected rather than destroyed in grace so that the processes by which she is intellectually engaged are common to all of humanity, demonstrating that women are intellectually capable of participating in their salvation.

After defining "mind" as the seat of the intellect, I deconstruct Mary Daly's critique of the annunciation as the chapter problem. I have divided the chapter into two major sections: pondering and decision-making, with these book-ended by considerations on Mary's sense of identity. Because the chapter is organized thematically, the Bible passages discussed do not follow canonical order. In the first section I argue that while Mary is intelligent and does intellectually engage in her son's life and mission, she does not know she is immaculately conceived, and her Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) reflects this partial knowledge of herself.

In the second section I consider how Mary ponders [*sumballō*/*conferre*]. To do this, I examine passages from the canonical Gospels that depict her pondering: Luke 2:19, in which Mary ponders the shepherds' visit to the nativity, and Luke 2:33, in which Mary reacts to Simeon's prophecy. In the third section I focus on Mary's decision making[2] [*genoito*/*fiat*].[3] In

[1] Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: Male and Female in Western Philosophy* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 2.
[2] I use the term "decision making" rather than "deciding" to evoke the multi-step process that goes into making a decision rather than just mere moment of decision itself that "deciding" evokes.
[3] In the canonical Gospels, there are instances of Mary making decisions, such as at the annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) and at the Cana wedding (John 2:1–11), but words like *krinō* or *statuere* do not appear. Because of this I have used *genoito*/*fiat* above in reference to the annunciation to illustrate her decision making.

this section I apply Thomas Aquinas's steps of decision making and his definition of conscience [*conscientia*] to Mary to argue that she – as immaculate – makes decisions as a maculate person would except that grace would prevent her from committing actual sin. I then apply my argument to passages in the canonical Gospels that depict her making decisions: her decision to accept the incarnation at the annunciation in Luke 1:26–38 and her decision to intervene at the Cana wedding feast in John 2:1–11. This structure around biblical passages will demonstrate how Mary in her daily life was intellectually engaged in the salvific narrative unfolding around her even if – despite being immaculately conceived – she does not fully understand the events in the moment. Nevertheless, she is still able to make perfect decisions with incomplete information. Because she only has partial knowledge of these situations and is still able to make perfect decisions, she is an effective model for those facing moral decisions.

Drawing on Aquinas's theory of the intellect, my chapter division between pondering and making decisions reflects his distinction between speculative intellect [*intellectus speculativus*] and practical intellect [*intellectus practicus*]. The former, Aquinas argues, "directs what it apprehends, not to operation, but to the consideration [*considerationem*] of truth."[4] The latter is "that which directs what it apprehends to operation."[5] Aquinas's distinction involving the speculative intellect that considers (or, in the language of this thesis, ponders) and then moves the practical intellect to action reflects the pondering-then-deciding structure in this chapter. I argue that Mary's pondering informs later decisions that she makes. Thus, as Aquinas argues,[6] Mary's pondering (speculative intellect) and decision making (practical intellect) are not separate powers [*potentia*].

Chapter Problem

Mary's mind has received little attention from Catholic scholars beyond interest in her supposed obedience at the annunciation,[7] but Mary Daly's claims about Mary's mind show why it is crucial to consider Mary's mind with greater academic rigor than in the past and why a feminist interpretation of her mind, that moves beyond the theme of obedience, can

[4] *ST*, I.Q79.A11.
[5] *ST* I.Q79.A11.
[6] *ST* I.Q79.A11.
[7] Irenaeus explicitly praises Mary's obedience at the annunciation which he contrasts with Eve's disobedience in Eden, and John Paul II reflects on the same dichotomy in the 1987 encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, demonstrating that the theme of Mary's obedience is acceptable within the Church. These two examples, bookending Church history, demonstrate that the theme of obedience is prevalent across history.

benefit Catholic women. Mary Daly's early work included a critique of how an Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference hindered women, but she argued that Aquinas's understanding of the intellect rendered such biases against women null. However, in this passage from *Gyn/Ecology* written after she left Christianity, Daly has ironically succumbed to the misogyny that this Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference would give Mary that she had once rejected. Daly writes:

> In the charming story of "the annunciation" the angel Gabriel appears to the terrified young girl, announcing that she has been chosen to become the mother of god. Her response to this sudden proposal from the godfather is totaled non-resistance: "Let it be done unto me according to thy word." Physical rape is not necessary when the mind/will/spirit has already been invaded. In refined religious rapism [*sic*], the victim is impregnated with the Supreme Seminal Idea, who becomes "the Word Made Flesh" …she gives her unqualified "consent."[8]

Daly's argument is a poor critique of the Mary of the annunciation because she assumes that Mary does not consent to the incarnation and that she lacks the capacity to do so. Given Mary's importance to Catholic women, one should hesitate before discrediting Mary as a role model like Daly does. Rather, as this thesis proposes, it is more helpful for Catholic women to frame discussion of Mary's mind with a feminist lens. Daly's claim of "totaled non-resistance" does not reflect the exchange Mary has with Gabriel in which, following her confusion, she asks for a sign which the angel provides with news that her older cousin Elizabeth is pregnant.[9] Daly then claims that Mary is not even raped in this instance because her "mind/will/spirit has already been invaded [by God]" – implying that rape would be better than her supposed mind control. Immaculate Mary has hardly been invaded. Rather, as I will elaborate later in this chapter, Mary's *fiat* is an intellectual decision rooted in grace. Aquinas's explanation of conscience and decision making in maculate people – which I apply to immaculate Mary – demonstrates that grace [*gratia*] is an aid but not

[8] Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, 85.
[9] Luke 1:34–36.

control in the decision-making process.[10] Mary is arguably freer than a maculate person because she is free from the temptation to sin.[11]

Furthermore, that Mary does not put up a physical or mental fight, does not mean that her consent is "unqualified." Instead, it demonstrates her closeness to God because as immaculately conceived Mary is more dependent on God than a maculate person.[12] In part two of this thesis I will argue for a feminist interpretation of Mary's *fiat* that recognizes her intellect and will.

Daly's argument – as we saw in the literature review – comes after years of deconstructing her relationship with Mary and Catholicism. Her denigration of Mary's intellect is not influenced by an Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference in the same way that other writing on Mary is. Rather, this passage represents Daly's surrender of Mary to misogyny, deeming her too far gone to save.

Defining "Mind" in This Chapter

To define "mind," [*nous*/*mens*] I am drawing from Greek and Latin Classical, Biblical, Patristic, and Thomistic sources to define "mind" as the seat of the intellect [*intellectus*], wisdom [*sapientia*], and will [*volantas*]. This definition then allows me to argue that Mary uses her mind to ponder and make decisions.

In Classical Greek philosophy *nous* was understood as being equivalent to "reason" and "spirit" [*pneuma*]. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [TDNT] notes that "The practical relation (of feeling, willing and acting) to an object retreats into the background, and the theoretical relation (of thinking and perceiving) comes to the fore."[13] In further classical usage, *nous* was also considered to be "employed in perceiving and thinking."[14] For example in the *Iliad* Homer describes "But he did not escape the wise mind [*nous*] of Zeus…"[15] This is a clear classical example of *nous* being used to describe the seat of the intellect as I am using it in this chapter.

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[10] Joseph Wawrykow, "Grace," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Joseph Wawrykow and Rik Van Nieuwenhove (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 198.
[11] Tobias Hoffmann, "Grace and Free Will," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas Joseph White (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 248. *ST* II-II.Q183.A4.
[12] Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (Ave Maria Press, 1965), 237; Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, 63.
[13] TDNT,, Johannes Behm and Ernst Würthwein, *s.v.*, "nous."
[14] LSJ, *s.v.*, "nous."
[15] Homer, *Iliad*, 15.461.

From Classical Roman usage, I draw from instances in which *mens* could signify "the intellectual faculties, the mind, understanding, intellect, reason, judgment, discernment, consideration, reflection."[16] In *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero writes, "Those then who are described as beside themselves are so described because they are not under the control of mind [*mentis*] to which the empire of the whole soul [*animi*] has been assigned by nature [*natura*]."[17] The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* [OLD] follows a similar line of thought, defining *mens* as the "seat or organ of intellectual activities, the mind."[18] The OLD cites Cato's *On Agriculture* as an example of such usage: "…by so doing he will learn what is in his servants' minds [*mente*]…"[19] These examples from Cicero and Cato demonstrate a precedent for using *mens* as the seat of the intellect.

There is also precedent for "mind" [*nous*/*mens*] as the seat of the intellect in Biblical usage. The biblical idea of *nous* as the seat of understanding is best illustrated in Luke 24:45: "Then he opened their minds [*noun*/*sensum*] to understand [*synienai*/*intelligerent*] the scriptures."[20] This verse demonstrates that it is the mind [*nous*] that engages the intellect to understand the revelation as Mary does in Luke 2:33 and 35. For BDAG, *nous* can be defined as "the faculty of intellectual perception" and "understanding, mind."[21] TDNT notes that in the New Testament, the term only occurs in Paul's letters save Luke 24:45 and Revelation 13:18;17:9. TDNT also emphasizes that *nous* is "not divine or the divinely related element in man."[22] This distinction is crucial when discussing Mary's mind in order to argue that she is in control of her mind as she ponders [*sumballō*/*conferre*] and makes decisions [*genoito*/*fiat*] rather than God controlling her as Daly argues.

To define "mind" [*mens*] in the Patristic period, I have drawn on Augustine's definitions of the mind from *De Trinitate*. Augustine uses these definitions of the mind to create theological understanding of the Trinity, but his definitions are relevant to Mary because Augustine presents a cohesive understanding of how the mind works within a theological context. He defines "mind" as: "This is [humanity] insofar as he [or she] excels other animals, that is in his [or her] reason or understanding and in whatever else can be said about the rational or intellectual soul that may belong to what is called mind [*mens*] or

[16] LS, *s.v.,* "Mens, mentis."
[17] Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 3,5,11.
[18] OLD, *s.v.,* "mens, mentis."
[19] Cato, *On Agriculture*, 5.5.
[20] NRSVCE, Luke 24:45.
[21] BDAG, *s.v.,* "nous."
[22] TDNT, *s.v.,* "nous."

consciousness [*animus*]."[23] Like the precedents I have already outlined, Augustine defines "mind" [*mens*] as being the seat of the intellect.

I also draw from Aquinas's definitions of "mind" [*mens*] because he builds on and expands Augustine's theology, creating a cohesive intellectual tradition. In the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas's definition of "mind" [*mens*] reflects Augustine's definition: "I answer that, We must assert that the intellect [*intellectus*] which is the principle of intellectual operation is the form of the human body…hence health is the form of the body and knowledge is a form of the human body…"[24] Both theologians consider "mind" to be the seat of the intellect.

Based on these definitions from Classical Greek and Roman, Biblical, Patristic, and Thomistic usage, there is a long precedent for defining "mind" [*nous*/*mens*] as the seat of the intellect, reason, and will, which is how it will be used throughout this chapter.

Mary's Partial Knowledge of Herself and Jesus

Before discussing how Mary ponders and makes decisions, it is important to acknowledge Luke 2:50 in which the evangelist specifically references Mary's partial knowledge.[25] It occurs after Mary and Joseph lose Jesus in Jerusalem after Passover, and they find him teaching with the elders in the Temple.[26] When Mary expresses her frustration to Jesus about losing him, he tells his parents, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"[27] The author then writes of Mary and Joseph: "But they did not understand [*sunēkan*/ *intellexerunt*] what he said to them."[28] While the author of Luke's Gospel does explicitly claim that Mary (and Joseph) does not understand what Jesus means about being in his father's house, it should not be understood as a blanket statement about Mary's ignorance in her and Jesus's lives.[29] Just after this instance, the author

[23] *De Trin.,* XV.1. Translation modified for gender inclusivity.
[24] *ST* I.Q76.A1.
[25] Throughout this chapter, I refer to Mary's understanding and knowledge as portrayed in the canonical Gospels as "partial knowledge" because the term correctly conveys that Mary does not totally understand the miraculous events happening but does nevertheless ponder these events and make intellectual decisions. Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of Our Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 146.
[26] Mary's reaction to finding Jesus is explored in greater depth in chapter two.
[27] NRSVCE, Luke 2:49.
[28] NRSVCE, Luke 2:50.
[29] René Laurentin cites the Temple incident as proof of Mary's general ignorance, writing, "No, Mary remained poor in the conceptional and scientific order. Her knowledge of Jesus remained obscure, wrapped and enshrouded in difficulties." René Laurentin, *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, trans. Charles Neumann (Ami Press, 1991), 31.

records, "His mother treasured all these things in her heart."[30] contradicting the notion that Mary is totally ignorant of what is happening around her.

I posit that some of Mary's partial knowledge is because she does not know she is the Immaculate Conception and thus does not know that she is always following God's will when she makes decisions. In *Truly Our Sister*, Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, argues that Mary cannot know she is immaculately conceived because her life still has daily inconveniences:

> John Paul II's repeated references to Mary's own need for religious faith bear this out: her life was a pilgrimage of faith…In other words, even where it is most religiously crucial, she struggled through without extra advantages. Patricia Noone's humorous comment is particularly apt: Mary did not have the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception framed and hanging on her kitchen wall, assuring her that she was sinless and free from error. Appreciating this historical slant I would add a theological point: even if she did, it would not lift her feet off the ground. Understood as the personal, living, self-communication of God's Spirit to Mary at the outset of her life, the Immaculate Conception does not extract her from the challenges that come with life on this planet. Rather, in its time-conditioned way, it fundamentally asserts the living God's self-gift to this woman who is called to a special vocation in salvation history. In so doing, it signals that when it comes to God's intent, grace is more original than sin.[31]

I agree with Johnson that we do see Mary moving through a life that is influenced by the divine power around her, but that divine power does not make her life easier. The incident of finding Jesus in the Temple from Luke 2:50 illustrates this: despite having an immaculate mind and a close relationship with God, she does not miraculously immediately know where to find Jesus or fully understand why he is there. But this partial knowledge does not discourage her from pondering the miraculous events, and she can still make perfect decisions without full knowledge of God's plan.

I would nuance Johnson's argument about Mary not knowing she is the Immaculate Conception and argue that Mary knows that she has a special relationship with God through

[30] NRSVCE, Luke 2:51. This verse is discussed in greater depth in chapter two.
[31] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 111–12.

the annunciation and the Magnificat; however, she does not know that she cannot sin. This is crucial because when she makes decisions, she has to do so in grace and faith that she is making a decision that leads her closer to God. She must make perfect decisions without perfect knowledge. In this way she is an example for all maculate people who must trust they are making decisions that lead them closer to God also without perfect knowledge. We will discuss this idea more in the following section on immaculate decision making.

Furthermore, Mary's partial knowledge of herself as expressed in the Magnificat reflects Aquinas's argument that no one can know if they have grace. He specifically applies this idea to sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*],[32] which Mary received at conception. Aquinas is writing with regard to those conceived in original sin and how they cannot know for certain that they have sanctifying grace, but it is also applicable to Mary who – at the Magnificat and throughout her life – does not hint that she knows she has sanctifying grace from conception. In this way people can relate to her partial knowledge. Nevertheless, this partial knowledge does not discourage her from pondering or prevent her from making sinless decisions.

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, argues that Mary "was never precipitate in judging; if she had not sufficient light she suspended her judgement; if she was not sure about a thing she was satisfied to affirm that it was likely or probable."[33] This idea does not reflect how we see Mary pondering and then acting on what she has pondered.

Who Does Mary Think She Is? – The Magnificat Luke 1:46–55

Having established that Mary does not know she is the Immaculate Conception who cannot sin and has partial knowledge of herself and Jesus we must ask: who does Mary think she is? The most effective way to uncover Mary's sense of self is in the Magnificat because it is a monologue in which Mary praises God's plan for humanity's redemption and Mary speaks to her place in this plan. This gives us a glimpse of how Mary sees and understands herself. This act of a woman expressing her identity in an intellectual capacity also disrupts an interpretation of Mary as a submissive handmaid and frames her as an intellectual figure who understands that she is pondering and acting in the salvific narrative.

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[32] *ST* I-II.Q112.A5.
[33] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 146.

Mary's describing herself as God's lowly "servant" [*doulēs/ancillae*] has inclined interpretation to frame Mary as a passive or simple woman before God. This, exacerbated by the Lukan author using masculine pronouns to describe God throughout the passage, plays into the Aristotelean idea of Mary as feminine/passive before the masculine/active God. However, when we consider Mary's servanthood in the context of Romans 1:1, her calling God her "Savior," and the reversals of fortune in Lukan writing, we can see how this passage illuminates her understanding of herself as an active, intellectually engaged woman.

The Magnificat occurs in Luke 1:46–55 when Mary, after accepting the incarnation in Luke 1:38, visits her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptist having also conceived miraculously after a visit from an angel to her husband Zechariah.[34] When Mary arrives, Elizabeth exclaims, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed in the fruit of your womb! And why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."[35] Elizabeth's mention that John leaps in her womb is traditionally understood as the moment of his sanctification from original sin [*peccatum originale*], though this is not explicit in the text and is not obvious to either woman.[36] After Elizabeth's greeting Mary sings her Magnificat in response:

My soul [*psychē/anima*] magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant [*doulēs/ancillae*].
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

[34] Luke 1:5–25.
[35] NRSVCE, Luke 1:42–45.
[36] *ST* III.Q27.A1.

he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.[37]

As discussed earlier, Mary says of herself, "for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant [*doulēs/ancillae*]," and in doing so reflects the same language in Luke 1:38 when she gives her *fiat*: "Here I am, the servant [*doulē/ancilla]* of the Lord…."[38] In her commentary on the Magnificat, Elizabeth Johnson frames Mary as an empowered figure, noting, "Clearly this is a picture of Mary that is the complete opposite of the passive, handmaid of the patriarchal imagination."[39] Thus to interpret Mary's calling herself the Lord's servant, Johnson argues that Mary is referencing her socio-economic position: "Mary's self-characterization of as lowly is not a metaphor for spiritual humility but is based on her actual social position."[40] While I agree with her framing Mary's Magnificat as an empowering moment, I disagree with Johnson's interpretation that Mary is referencing her place in society.

Elsewhere in her exegesis,[41] Johnson argues that Mary calling herself "servant" [*doules/ancillae*] should not be interpreted in a gendered way because Paul in his letter the Romans uses the same language.[42] The text reads: "Paul, a servant [*doulos*/*servus*] of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God…."[43] Johnson writes, "…when Paul uses *doulos* to describe himself (Rom. 1:1), interpreters think of ministry and office rather than humble obedience. Traditional demands for conformity to patriarchal order and for obedience to male religious authority figures, be they God, husband, or priest, make women shudder before this text…."[44] Johnson clearly demonstrates how misinterpretation of Mary's servanthood can be damaging to women. But the passage from Paul demonstrates that

[37] NRSVCE, Luke 1:46–55.
[38] In a later section on the annunciation, I discuss feminist interpretations of Mary calling herself a handmaid [*doulē/ancilla*] in greater depth.
[39] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 260.
[40] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 265.
[41] Johnson makes this argument in relation to Luke 1:38 but because the Greek is the same in both passages, I apply her argument here.
[42] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 255.
[43] NRSVCE, Romans 1:1.
[44] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 255.

it is not Mary's invocation of her servitude that is harmful for women but the patriarchal interpretation. But it is not just Paul's servanthood in Romans that can bring the Magnificat into feminist discourse.

In the second line of the canticle, Mary invokes God as her "Savior," and focusing on this can reinforce Mary's place as a creature before her creator God. In other exegesis, scholars focus on Mary as a symbol or representative of Israel. Catholic Biblical scholar Luke Timothy Johnson argues that Mary is the personification of Israel who rejoices at the arrival of the long-anticipated savior.[45] In *Truly Our Sister* Elizabeth Johnson is also keen to contextualize Mary with her Old Testament forebears. She likens Mary's Magnificat with Miriam in Exodus 15:2–21, Judith in Judith 16:1–17, Deborah in Judges 4:1–31, and Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1–10. In this work Johnson is most interested in the historical Mary – Miriam of Nazareth – and thus she often invokes Mary as a Jewish woman who, like her people, is eagerly anticipating salvation.[46]

Luke Timothy Johnson and Elizabeth Johnson's interpretation of the Magnificat as Jewish Mary's joy both as an individual and as the personification of Israel about the arrival of the savior is valid, and it does not rely on a gendered expression. While this interpretation is valid, I propose that when read in the context of Scotus's justification for the Immaculate Conception, Mary's invocation of God as her "Savior" has deeper meaning and offers insight into what Mary knows about herself. In the thesis introduction, I argued that in accordance with Scotus's interpretation of the Immaculate Conception, Mary's immaculate conception is possible because of the grace that proceeds from Jesus's suffering, death, and resurrection that makes salvation possible for the rest of humanity. Mary is only unique in that she receives it pre-emptively and without original sin that needs to be cleansed. Thus, she is already saved. Mary's invocation of God as her "Savior" can be understood as her recognizing that God has given her particular privilege without her knowing that she does not sin.

However, the third theme I wish to draw out from the Magnificat is the reversals of fortune motif that transforms Mary's lowly status. Luke Johnson notes that Mary describes the reversals of fortune for people in her song. In this new age, the mighty will become low, and the low will be exalted; the hungry will be fulfilled and the rich sent away without.[47]

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[45] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina Series, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, SJ, v. 3 (Liturgical Press, 1991), 41–43.
[46] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 263–64.
[47] Luke 1:51–53.

Luke Timothy Johnson likens this to the beatitudes from Luke 6:20–26 in which there are similar reversals of fortune. Jesus says in part, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."[48] Jesus's words reflect those of his mother: "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly…."[49] That Jesus's beatitudes – a Christian lesson – reflect the same reversal structure as the Magnificat furthers our interpretation that Mary's Magnificat can be understood from a Christian perspective as a sanctified woman anticipating the sanctification of those to come as well as a Jewish woman rejoicing in her savior's arrival for her and her people.

The reversal of fortune motif takes on more dimension when we consider it alongside Scotus's understanding of the Immaculate Conception. One could argue that as immaculately conceived, Mary is not as low as those conceived in original sin. If Mary never has original sin, she must not be as indebted to God. However, as Scotus argues in his defense of the Immaculate Conception, because Mary receives the highest gift (never having original sin) she must owe him the greatest debt.[50] We can then extend that argument to her lowliness – as the one who owes God the greatest debt, she must be lower than everyone else. Eventually, her fortunes too are reversed, and we see this in exalted titles like Queen of Heaven that the Church has given her. Mary's lowliness and her reversal of fortune to eventually becoming Queen of Heaven (among countless other honorifics) are reached in part because of the intellectual faith journey that Mary goes on throughout her life. Furthermore, she makes these reversals of fortune open to all of humanity because of her *fiat*, and this has greater implications for women because it should (in theory) end their association with the disobedience of Eve.

Luke Timothy Johnson notes that as the canticle progresses, Mary moves from her individual experience in "For behold henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;/ for he who is mighty has done great things for me…" to the collective in "He has helped his servant Israel,/in remembrance of his mercy,/as her spoke to our fathers…."[51] This movement from the specific to the general implies that Mary understands the immense undertaking she has just accepted as an individual (she is now the *Theotokos* and an unwed pregnant woman) and on behalf of Israel. Elizabeth Johnson picks up on this thread in her feminist interpretation.

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[48] NRSVCE, Luke 6:20–21.
[49] NRSVCE, Luke 1:52.
[50] Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, 45. Scotus's argument reflects the Franciscan tradition of focusing on Jesus's humanity, poverty, and humility in his earthly life.
[51] Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 43.

Seeking to tie the events of Mary's earthly life to those of women today, she argues, "The Spirit who vivified Mary and empowered her prophetic voice is the same Spirit who inspires and vivifies women of all ages."[52] I would build on Johnson's statement to add that the grace [*gratia*] that resides in Mary is the same grace that resides in all women since then. In the thesis introduction I argued that one key experience that immaculate Mary shares with maculate women is that the types of graces she experiences throughout her life are the same types of graces available to maculate women. Therefore, if Mary is empowered to sing about God and all that he was done, then all women have that gift available to them.

Interpreting the Magnificat as a statement of self-knowledge does not contradict Johnson's argument that Mary does not know she is immaculately conceived. Despite (correctly) anticipating that she will be called blessed in the future because God has given her an immense gift, there is nothing in the Magnificat that suggests Mary knows she is the Immaculate Conception and more specifically that she knows she cannot sin. Rather than being a disadvantage to the dogma, it is an asset that emphasizes Mary's similarity to those conceived in original sin. However, Mary's partial knowledge of herself as expressed in the Magnificat reflects Aquinas's argument that no one can know if they have grace. He specifically applies this idea to sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*][53] which Mary received at conception, as I argued in the thesis introduction. Aquinas argues this about those conceived in original sin and how they cannot know for certain that they have sanctifying grace. But it is also applicable to Mary who – at the Magnificat and throughout her life – does not hint that she knows she has sanctifying grace from conception/is immaculately conceived. In this way people can relate to her partial knowledge because a baptized person also does not explicitly know they have sanctifying grace. Having established that Mary does not know she is the Immaculate Conception but does intellectually participate in the salvific narrative, let us look at how Mary ponders as a means of understanding her son and his ministry.

Immaculate Pondering

Since we can see that Mary does not know she is the Immaculate Conception and does not know she does not err, let us consider how she ponders the events around her. There

[52] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 271.
[53] *ST* I-II.Q112.A5.

are two instances in the canonical Gospels that depict Mary pondering: Mary's reaction to the shepherds' visit to the nativity in Luke 2:19 and her reaction to Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:33. In this section I will argue that in Mary's life, she is confronted with mysteries that she does not fully understand, but these instances of pondering or marveling reflect her intellectual engagement with the salvific narrative even in moments when she is not being called to make a decision such as in Luke 1:26–38 and John 2:1–11. Focusing on Mary's pondering furthers my depiction of Mary as an intellectually engaged woman.

As stated in the chapter introduction, this section of Mary's mind can be defined as speculative intellect [*intellectus speculativus*] according to Aquinas's definition[54] in which her mind is connecting information to form conclusions about the miraculous events unfolding in front of her. This speculative intellect is also connected to Mary's practical intellect [*intellectus practicus*] and informs that intellect when she makes decisions. This section considers how pondering/speculative intellect impacts Mary's decision-making/practical intellect. I supplement this Thomistic understanding of pondering with how Augustine defines pondering. Aquinas develops his anthropology of the mind regarding maculate people, and I am applying this anthropology to Mary since grace does not destroy nature. In doing so, I can also demonstrate Mary's similarity to the rest of humanity by arguing that Aquinas's anthropology also applies to Mary.

Before delving further in Aquinas's anthropology of the mind, let us supplement his work with Augustine's. In *De Trinitate,* Augustine writes on loving and wanting to understand,

> [T]he more therefore the thing is known without being fully known, the more does the intelligence desire to know what remains…If a [human being] then earnestly, enthusiastically, and persistently seeks to know this, can he [or she] be said to be without love? What does he [or she] love, in that case? It is quite certain that nothing can be loved unless it is known. On the other hand, he [or she] does not love those three syllables which he [or she] already has by heart—and if he [or she] does love in them the fact that he [or she] knows they mean something, that is not precisely what we are concerned with, because this is not what he [or she] wants to know. The

[54] *ST* I.Q79.A11.

> object of our inquiry is what it is that he [or she] loves in that which he [or she] is studious to know.[55]

By applying this passage from *De Trinitate* to Mary, we can see that it is Mary's intellect rather than her immaculateness that makes her try to understand the salvific events in her life. Because of this, she is a model for women (and men) seeking to understand God because she is doing so through her shared humanity and not her unique immaculateness. Later in this chapter I will argue that Mary is studious both leading up to the annunciation and throughout Jesus's life, which enables her to both ponder and eventually make decisions. But to make these decisions discussed later, Mary must first ponder, which I classify as "speculative knowledge" as defined by Aquinas. Cajetan Cuddy, OP – consolidating Aquinas's definition – says of speculative knowledge, "The objects proper to speculative knowledge are non-operable things (e.g., divine being, natural beings) – things that cannot be made or done by us, so that our knowledge of them cannot be directed to activity as to an end."[56] This is exemplified when Mary is pondering the shepherd's visit to the nativity or when she contemplates Simeon's prophecy about her. She is not considering this information for immediate action.

The second form of knowledge that Mary (and all others) engage with is practical intellect, of which Cuddy says, "The objects proper to practical knowledge are operable things (e.g., shapes, houses, human actions, etc.) – things that can be made or done by us, so that we can direct the knowledge of them to activity as to an end."[57] I apply this to Mary making decisions because when she is making decisions she must use knowledge that she has built up and that is available to her to make the decision in that moment.

Cuddy and Aquinas also stress that there can be speculative intellect without practical, but no practical without speculative: "Moreover, practical knowledge presupposes speculative knowledge, while the inverse is not the case. There can be no practical knowledge without prior speculative knowledge."[58] This is why this chapter is structured so that the passages portraying Mary making decisions follow those on her pondering – to demonstrate how practical knowledge relies on the speculative. This further supports the

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[55] *De Trin*, X:2. Translation has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[56] Cajetan Cuddy, OP, "Thomas Aquinas on Conscience," in *Christianity and the Laws of Conscience: An Introduction*, ed. Jeffery B. Hammond and Helen M. Alvare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 116.
[57] Cuddy, OP, "Thomas Aquinas on Conscience," 116.
[58] Cuddy, OP, "Thomas Aquinas on Conscience," 117.

notion that – especially at Cana – Mary is relying on years of pondering or "reading" her son to make her decisions. Cuddy reinforces Aquinas's teaching, writing,

> Human knowledge requires investigation and the discursive movement of reason. We do not know all truths immediately. On the contrary, we discover truths by reasoning from something that is self-evident or already known to something that is not self-evident and not previously known.[59]

To understand more about how Mary's mind would be recalling important events and information as she ponders, we can use Augustine's definition of memory and remembering. In *De Trinitate* he writes:

> If, however, [one] holds in his [or her] memory and recollects the meaning of those words, [one] is now indeed doing something proper to the inner [person], but he [or she] is not yet to be thought of, or talked of, as living according to the trinity of the inner [person], unless he [or she] loves what these meanings proclaim, command and promise. [One] could, after all, remember and think about them because [one] reckons they are false and wants to try to refute them. So the will which, in this case, joins together what was contained in the memory and what has been imprinted there from on the thinking attention does indeed complete a trinity, being itself the third component; but one does not live according to it if one does not approve of what one thinks about as being false.[60]

Augustine describes the memory as stored images from previous thought[61] so that when Mary is pondering something she is using her will to access the stored images of the memory, perhaps from the annunciation as the nativity fulfills part of the angel's promise, to combine them with her active thought which is seeing the shepherds tell her about the choir of angels that led them to her family. Then after this event, all of the images (both old memories and those of the shepherds) move to her memory to be recalled at a later occasion.

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[59] Cuddy, OP, "Thomas Aquinas on Conscience," 120.
[60] *De Trin.,* XIII.26. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[61] *De Trin.,* XIV.6.

So having established that Mary would use her speculative intellect and use her memory to recall images from the past, let us apply this process to passages of her pondering.

Mary Meets the Shepherds at the Nativity – Luke 2:17–20

Having defined pondering and argued for its place in the Marian tradition, we turn now to analyze instances of Mary pondering in the canonical Gospels. In Luke 2, the author narrates Jesus's birth in Bethlehem which includes nearby shepherds coming to worship the infant following a visitation from angels telling them of Jesus's birth.[62] The author recounts:

> So [the shepherds] went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured [*sunetērei*/*conservabat*] all these words and pondered [*sumballousa/ conferens*] them in her heart [*kardiā*/*corde*].[63]

Before exploring Mary's pondering, I will note why this passage appears in this chapter. It would seem unreasonable to put this passage with explicit reference to Mary's heart [*kardia/cor*] in this chapter on Mary's mind. However, I argue that there is precedent discussing this passage in the context of Mary's mind. In the Greek original, the author describes Mary treasuring and pondering the shepherds' visit in her *kardia* rather than *nous*. *Kardia* and its Latin equivalent *cor* have long histories,[64] and there are instances when a reference to *kardia* or *cor* can be referring to the seat of the intellect. In LSJ cites references to *kardia* being understood as "mind,"[65] and the OLD cites instances where *cor* can be called "the centre of thought, memory, and other mental processes – the mind, soul, spirit."[66] Despite these historical references to *kardia*/*cor* as the seat of the intellect, the strongest reason that Luke 2:19 belongs in the chapter on Mary's mind is in the verb *sumballousa*.

Sumballein, the infinitive of *sumballousa*, meaning "to bring together," reflects Augustine's definition of thinking as bringing together information. BDAG defines *sumballō*

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[62] Luke 3:9–18.
[63] NRSVCE, Luke 2:17–20.
[64] As with *nous* and *mens* in this chapter, I explain the historical precedent for my use of *kardiā* and *cor* as seat of love and emotions in chapter two.
[65] LSJ, *s.v.*, "kardia."
[66] OLD, *s.v.,* "cor, cordis."

as "to give careful thought to, consider, ponder,"[67] which explicitly supports my decision to place this verse in the section on Mary pondering. LSJ defines the term, in part, as "Throw together, dash together, bring together, unite."[68] For *conferre* (infinitive of *conferens*), LS use similar language to LSJ: "To bring, bear, or carry together, to collect, gather."[69] The OLD follows suit: "To bring together, collect, concentrate."[70] LSJ, LS, and the OLD all describe both *sumballō* and *conferre* as bringing things together. These definitions reflect Augustine's definition of thinking bringing together images from the memory.[71] Because of Augustine's definition and the multiple definitions of *sumballō* and *conferre*, I have placed Luke 2:19 in the chapter on Mary's mind despite its explicit reference to Mary's heart [*kardiā*/*corde*].[72]

Recent exegesis focuses on the strange juxtaposition of the nativity scene's ordinary, humble setting with the extraordinariness of the shepherds' arrival to worship the Christ child. In his Lukan commentary, Luke Timothy Johnson emphasizes the contrast between the grandeur of the angels' visit to the shepherds and what they encounter at the manger: "The contrast, then, between the angelic panoply and the earthly reality is sharp; no wonder Mary 'turned these events over' in her heart, seeking to understand them. Nothing very glorious is suggested by the circumstances of the Messiah's birth."[73] Johnson uses this contrast as the starting point for Mary's pondering.

Ben F. Meyer in his article on Luke 2:19 and 51 argues that Mary's pondering is not because of the juxtaposition of settings (though he does acknowledge that the Lukan author is drawing a contrast between the two[74]), but because of what the shepherds said to the Holy Family. The author does not give exact dialogue, so the reader does not know what is said. But based on the angels' message that "…to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord,"[75] which the author says they recount to the Holy Family, the reader assumes that they worshiped the infant Jesus. This is more evident when the author recounts how after they left, the shepherds were "glorifying and praising God for all they had

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[67] BDAG, *s.v.*, "sumballō."
[68] LSJ, *s.v.*, "sumballō."
[69] LS, *s.v.*, "conferro, conferre."
[70] OLD, *s.v.,* "conferro, conferre."
[71] *De Trin*., XIV.8,11.
[72] Furthermore, TDNT cites Luke 2:19 is specifically an instance when *kardiā* means, "the seat of understanding, the source of thought and reflection." TDNT, *s.v.,* "kardia." TDNT also puts Luke 2:51 in this category, which is a distinction I refute in chapter two.
[73] Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 52.
[74] Ben F Meyer, "'But Mary Kept All These Things...' (Lk 2, 19.51)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1964): 46.
[75] NRSVCE, Luke 2:11.

heard and seen…."[76] Based on this Meyer argues that Mary is not pondering that shepherds visited them, but rather that they came to worship her son at the behest of a host of angels.[77]

Elizabeth Johnson takes a similar interpretation, arguing that "Both of these scenes [Luke 2:19 and 51] have to do with the revelation of the identity of this child. The fullness of his significance is not immediately apparent, and so Mary keeps mulling things over."[78] To an extent, I agree with Meyer and Elizabeth Johnson's argument that Mary is reacting to what the shepherds have told her rather than just their presence. However, I would give Mary more credit than Elizabeth Johnson does and propose that while Mary may not understand the entire extent of her son's nature and purpose, she does understand that he is the son of God.

In Luke 2:19, we meet Mary relatively early in her journey as depicted in the canonical Gospels. Thus far Mary has accepted the incarnation,[79] sung her Magnificat to Elizabeth,[80] and just delivered her child.[81] She thus has memories of these events. I propose that in pondering [*sumballousa/ conferens*] or bringing things together at Luke 2:19, Mary is bringing together her memories of these past events with the appearance of the shepherds to draw conclusions about her and her son's fates.

Elizabeth Johnson effectively summarizes Mary here:

> [Mary] is trying to interpret her life. She is seeking to understand difficult matters concerning the lives of those she loves. She is hoping to discern how the divine Spirit is moving in their midst. She ponders in order to fathom the meaning and keep on the right path. Following Luke's image of Mary as an exemplary disciple, later generations will see here a woman at prayer, actively contemplating the word of God. Hers is a life in the process of becoming – no final answers yet available.[82]

Johnson's interpretation reflects my view of Mary as a creature constantly trying to make sense of the miraculous events unfolding around her. In doing so (and in the natural order as defined by Augustine and Aquinas) she demonstrates that women are intellectually capable of participating in their salvation in defiance of Aristotle.

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[76] NRSVCE, Luke 2:20.
[77] Meyer, "'But Mary Kept All These Things...' (Lk 2, 19.51)," 45.
[78] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 278.
[79] Luke 1:26–38.
[80] Luke 1:39–56.
[81] Luke 2:1–7.
[82] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 278.

Furthermore, when we consider Johnson's framing Mary as a woman pursing truth with Augustine's writing on studiousness, we can see the larger ramifications. Augustine writes:

> And so we see that all the love of a studious spirit, that is of one who wishes to know what he [or she] does not know, is not love for the thing he [or she] does not know but for something he [or she] knows, on account of which he [or she] wants to know what he [or she] does not know. Even if he [or she] is so curious that he [or she] is carried away by the mere love of knowing unknown things for no known reason, such a curious [person] is indeed to be distinguished from the studious [person]; and yet not even he [or she] loves the unknown. Indeed, it would be truer to say that he [or she] hates the unknown, since he [or she] would like nothing to be unknown and everything known.[83]

This passage from Augustine's *De Trinitate* is an effective bridge between Luke 2:19 and Luke 2:33. Augustine's uniting the pursuit of knowledge with love elevates the importance of Mary's pondering. In the next section, we will consider a variation of pondering: wonder.

Mary's Reaction to Simeon's Prophecy – Luke 2:33

In the previous section, I consider Mary as pondering. In this section I focus on her intellectual engagement through wonder. In this section we will see how Mary is more effective at wondering or admiring these salvific events because she knows God better than the others around her. After the events of Luke 2:19, the Holy Family goes to the Temple to fulfill Mosaic Law by presenting Jesus and offering sacrifice. The author of Luke writes,

> Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided

[83] *De Trin.*, X.3. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.

> by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,
>
> "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
> according to your word;
> for my eyes have seen your salvation,
> which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
> a light for revelation to the Gentiles
> and for glory to your people Israel."
>
> And the child's father and mother were amazed [*thaumazontes*/*mirantes*] at what was being said about him.[84]

The scene concludes as Simeon prophesies to Mary that a sword will pierce her soul, but because this is a key passage in the Immaculate Heart tradition, I analyze it in the next chapter. As in Luke 2:19, Mary is reacting again to the miraculousness that her son has brought into her life. However this time instead of describing Mary as pondering the information, the author describes her as being amazed [*thaumazontes*/*mirantes*]. This is a moment of realization rather than contemplation.

Luke Timothy Johnson compares Simeon's Nunc Dimittis with Mary's Magnificat for a movement from speaking about the individual to the collective.[85] Simeon begins by thanking God for letting him live long enough to meet his Savior[86] before thanking him for saving Israel[87]; Mary begins her Magnificat praising God for all that he has done for her personally[88] and then prophesies about the reversals of fortune for the lowly and mighty.[89]

This is a moment of realization for Mary because the Nunc Dimittis builds on the themes of the Magnificat. This, coupled with the shepherd's praise at the nativity, reveals more to Mary about how God is acting in her life. From the Magnificat we understand that Mary understands that God is moving powerfully though her life. The Nunc Dimittis further underscores the uniqueness of Mary's situation and how significant her infant son is. Mary's

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[84] NRSVCE, Luke 2:25–33.
[85] Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 57.
[86] Luke 2:29–30.
[87] Luke 2:32.
[88] Luke 1:46–49.
[89] Luke 1:50–55.

amazement then must come from her realizing even more particularly than she did at the Magnificat how powerful her son is. In the thesis introduction I agreed with Scotus's claim that because Mary is given the greatest gift (being the Immaculate Conception) she thus owes Jesus the greatest debt.[90] The Nunc Dimittis is Mary deepening her understanding (from the Magnificat) of her son's power.

The author's use of *thaumazontes* translated in the Vulgate as *mirantes* evokes Aquinas's understanding of wonder [*admiratio]*. Aquinas defines this as "a kind of desire for knowledge; a desire which comes to [a person] when he [or she] sees an effect of which the cause either is unknown to him [or her], or surpasses his [or her] knowledge or faculty of understanding."[91] In his commentary on Aquinas on *admiratio,* Robert C. Miner further emphasizes the connection between *admiratio* and the desire for knowledge. "If *similitudo* is a formal cause of pleasure, *admiratio* comes nearer to being an efficient cause that motivates the agent. The immediate effect of *admiratio* ('wonder,' 'astonishment,' 'marvel') is not pleasure, but the desire to know. What causes pleasure is the conjunction of this desire with the hope that the object of desire can be attained. Thus, Aquinas says that wonder, if it is to function as a cause of pleasure, includes 'hope of acquiring the knowledge which one desires to have.'"[92]

Having established that Mary's wonder is rooted in her intellect, I propose that Mary is more effective in wondering than Joseph or another maculately-conceived person is. Mary's knowledge of God, though partial, is still greater than that of Joseph or another person. Because she knows more and desires to know more, she can more effectively marvel at God's work in her life and in humanity. Crucially, Mary – a woman – is the person most effective at marveling at Jesus. In this way, she is a model for women seeking to know God since she has proven that – despite the logic of an Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference – women are capable of intellectually engaging with salvation. This would then fuel her desire to know more about him and their roles in salvation.

This section on Immaculate pondering has demonstrated how Mary engages her speculative intellect to try to understand the mystical events happening in her life. In the next section on Immaculate decision making I consider how Mary applies this speculative

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[90] Scotus argues that Jesus preserves Mary from sin and presents her to Father and Holy Spirit so the salvation work is primarily his.
[91] *ST* I-II.Q32.A8. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[92] Robert C. Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae, 1a2ae 22-48* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 176.

knowledge to practical knowledge. Having seen how Mary tries to make sense of these events, let us now consider how she moves the salvific narrative forward.

Immaculate Decision Making

To understand how Mary makes decisions, let us consider how Aquinas explains decision making for maculate people. By applying this process to Immaculate Mary, we can create a theory of Immaculate decision making that reflects both Mary's grace-fullness and her common human nature. In *ST* I-II 8–17, Aquinas divides the decision-making process into three steps: first a person finds their intention or ends; second, she must decide the best means to attain their decided ends; and third, she must implement the act itself.[93] To understand Mary making decisions, I will explore how Mary's conscience through grace impacts her at each of these stages of decision. To discuss the process of decision making, I draw from Aquinas's *De Veritate* supplemented with sections from his *Summa Theologica*. I also draw from Cajetan Cuddy, OP's book chapter "St. Thomas Aquinas on Conscience" for his succinct definitions of these immense subjects.

At the beginning of this chapter, I framed Mary's pondering with Aquinas's speculative intellect [*intellectus practicus*] and her decision making as practical intellect [*intellectus speculativus*]. In this section I will unpack Aquinas's understanding of *synderesis*, conscience, and prudence that he develops to understand how maculate people make decisions. As I proceed through each of these elements, I explain how Mary as *gratia plena* also proceeds through these elements of decision making. Later, I will apply these steps to Mary's decision making at the annunciation in Luke 1:26–38 and her intervention at the Cana wedding feast in John 2:1–11.

Decision making in a Thomistic frame begins with *synderesis*, which is a "habitual disposition that shapes the human power of understanding."[94] *Synderesis* is knowledge of the "first general principles" that provides an infallible starting place for further reasoning. Aquinas argues this, writing,

> As a result, for probity to be possible in human actions, there must be some permanent principle which has unwavering integrity, in reference to which

[93] Wawrykow, "Grace," 198.
[94] Cuddy, OP, "Thomas Aquinas on Conscience," 120.

> all human works are examined, so that that permanent principle will resist all evil and assent to all good. This is *synderesis*, whose task it is to warn against evil and incline to good. Therefore, we agree that there can be no error in it.[95]

This notion of "resist all evil and assent to all good" reflects his understanding of natural law:

> Hence this is the first precept of law, that "good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided." All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this: so that whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as [a person's] good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of the natural law as something to be done or avoided.[96]

Synderesis could then be understood as a piece of natural law that resides within each person that draws them to goodness. Because it is rooted in the first precept of the law that "good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided" it is always infallible since that truth is first and absolute. This is true across humanity not just Mary.

Aquinas discusses *synderesis* with the maculate person in mind – as he does for each of these elements I will discuss – but his ideas are still applicable to immaculate Mary. Regarding *synderesis*, Mary is like maculate people in having infallible synderesis in her intellect. Applying grace [*gratia*] here would do little because the synderesis is infallible for everyone, so to say that Mary has a uniquely grace-full *synderesis* would not yield much change.

Understanding that *synderesis* is always a habitual power within the intellect, we turn to higher and lower reason, which provide particular knowledge which is then used in the act of conscience. Aquinas distinguishes between higher and lower reason as follows: "For it is called higher reason in its reference to higher natures, either as contemplating their nature and truth in themselves, or as receiving from them intelligible character and a kind of model for activity. It is called lower reason in so far as it is directed to lower things either to perceive them through contemplation or to manage them through activity."[97] In his

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[95] *DV* Q16.A2.reply.
[96] *ST* I-II.Q94.A2. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[97] *DV* Q15.A2.Reply.

commentary on Aquinas, Cuddy further summarizes the differences between higher and lower reason:[98] "Both reasons refer to truth and human action, and their proper moral norms abide with more particularity than the universal norms of *synderesis*. All of these judgments work in harmony. *Synderesis* and the habit of wisdom perfect higher reason. The habit of scientific knowledge perfects lower reason."[99]

When a person faces a particular act, conscience is used. For Aquinas, conscience is an act: "For the name *conscience* means the application of knowledge to something. Hence, to be conscious *(conscire)* means to know together *(simul scire).* But any knowledge can be applied to a thing. Hence, conscience cannot denote a special habit or power, but designates the act itself, which is the application of any habit or of any knowledge to some particular act."[100]

In his book chapter "Aquinas on Good Sense," Herbert McCabe, OP, contrasts Aquinas's understanding of conscience with how it is understood casually in the West in the twentieth century (and the twenty-first, though McCabe was writing before this time): "Nowadays we speak of someone 'consulting her conscience,' rather as one might consult a cookery-book or a railway timetable. Conscience is here seen as a private repository of answers to questions, or perhaps a set of rules of behaviour. Someone who 'has a conscience' about, say, abortion or betting is someone who detects in herself the belief that this activity is wrong or forbidden and who would therefore feel guilty were she to engage in it."[101] As McCabe demonstrates, Aquinas's understanding of conscience is significantly different from a modern, colloquial understanding of it. In this thesis, I use Aquinas's understanding of conscience as an act.

Aquinas further distinguishes between conscience and how the knowledge is applied. In the first instance, a person must decide if an action has taken place: "we are said to have conscience [that is, consciousness] of an act inasmuch as we know that the act has been placed or has not been placed…."[102] In the second mode, one applies knowledge to determine if an action is good or evil. Based on the passages of the canonical Gospels that I discuss in this chapter, we can assume that Mary is *conscious* that her actions have taken place, so I will focus only on this second mode of application.

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[98] It should be noted that higher and lower reason are not separate powers but are distinct in their functions. *ST* I.Q79.A9.
[99] Cuddy, OP, "Thomas Aquinas on Conscience," 122.
[100] *DV* Q17.A1.Reply.
[101] Herbert McCabe, OP, "Aquinas on Good Sense," in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Brian Davies, OP (Oxford University Press, 2002), 340.
[102] *DV* Q17.A1.Reply.

Regarding the second mode of application that determines the goodness or evilness of an act, Aquinas further divides this into paths: focusing on an action (or inaction) that will take place or focusing on an action (or inaction) that has already taken place. Because I am examining events in which Mary is making a decision – specifically whether to accept the incarnation and whether to intervene in her son's ministry – I will focus on the first course since it is concerned with future actions. In other words, the reader sees Mary intervening at the Cana wedding but does not see her ponder her actions afterward to consider if intervening was a morally good action; therefore, we can assume that that application of knowledge as conscience took place before the action.

Having defined *synderesis*, particular knowledge, and conscience, let us consider how these three elements interact. Cuddy summarizes Aquinas's argument: "The universal understanding of synderesis and the more particular knowledge of higher and lower reason intersect in the act of conscience. Their interplay enables an accurate judgment about an action's goodness. Because synderesis is universal and a specific action is quite particular, conscience requires some additional particular knowledge in order to evaluate a specific action."[103] Aquinas argues that it is this interplay between *synderesis*, particular knowledge, and conscience that can cause a person to err into sin:

> As is clear from what has been said conscience is nothing but the application of knowledge to some special act. Error, however, can occur in this application in two ways; in one, because that which is applied has error within it, and, in the other, because the application is faulty. Thus, in using a syllogism, mistakes can happen in two ways: either from the use of false premises, or from faulty construction of the syllogism. But this use of something false takes place only in one of the premises and not in the other. For, as has been said, through conscience the knowledge of *synderesis* and of higher and lower reason are applied to the examination of a particular act. However, since the act is particular and the judgment of *synderesis* is universal, the judgment of *synderesis* can be applied to the act only if some particular judgment is used as the minor premise. Sometimes, higher reason

[103] Cuddy, OP, "Thomas Aquinas on Conscience," 122–23.

> furnishes this particular judgment; sometimes lower reason does. Thus, the act of conscience is the result of a kind of particular syllogism.[104]

Until this point I have argued that Mary goes through this experience as Aquinas describes a maculate person would: she has infallible *synderesis*, her higher and lower reason inform particular knowledge, and to make a moral decision she applies these elements in an act of conscience. However, unlike the maculate person of Aquinas's description, Mary does not err in either creating premises or in creating a syllogism. I propose that she does not make these errors, and thus avoids actual sin, because of grace [*gratia*].

Grace [*gratia*] would be necessary for Mary to avoid the traps of faulty knowledge or syllogisms because it is a supernatural ability to do so. Because of original sin, it is normal to err in knowledge or application of knowledge. Thus, to rise above that tendency, Mary would need the supernatural gift of grace.[105] This method marries the need for Mary to have human nature that is influenced by grace as is afforded in her grace-fullness. It further demonstrates that Mary's intellect comes from her common human nature and not her grace-fullness so that other women can justify their moral decision-making rooted in their own intellect.

In his commentary on the *Summa Theologiae* I-II.109–114, Joseph Wawyrkow argues that, according to Aquinas, cooperative habitual grace "disposes the possessor to actions that are pleasing to God and conducive to bringing that person to the end that is God."[106] Based on this understanding of cooperative habitual grace in which a person is aided in actions bringing them closer to God, it would be appropriate to apply this kind of grace to Mary when making decisions.

Earlier in this chapter I argued that Mary as *gratia plena* is like maculate people when applying her conscience to actions up until the point of creating syllogisms. Aquinas argues that maculate people[107] can err into sin when creating syllogisms by either applying flawed knowledge or by applying correct knowledge incorrectly. I argued that Mary never errs into sin because she never falls into either of the mistakes I have just described. The reason for this infallible syllogism creation that Mary does is because of the cooperative habitual grace working through her.

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[104] *DV* Q17.A2.Reply.
[105] *ST* I-II.Q109.A2.
[106] Wawrykow, "Grace," 198.
[107] Aquinas is writing about human nature in general which is fallen. I add the emphasis on people's maculateness to distinguish them from Mary.

Immaculate Decision Making in the Canonical Gospels

In the canonical Gospels I propose there are two key moments when Mary makes decisions. The first is at the annunciation[108] when Mary decides to become Jesus's mother and thus the *Theotokos*, and the second is when she decides to intervene at the wedding at Cana,[109] compelling Jesus to perform his first public miracle and initiating his way to the cross. In this section I will argue that Mary, as *gratia plena*, is full of different forms of grace as defined by Aquinas[110] in these moments. I argue that Mary is full of cooperative habitual grace at the annunciation and at Cana. I also emphasize that like a maculately-conceived person, Mary has the same kinds of graces afforded to her, and she does not know when or how this grace is working within her.

Annunciation – Luke 1:26–38

In the preceding sections, I have detailed how Mary's grace-full mind ponders and marvels at God's movements in her life. In this section I consider how Mary as immaculate makes decisions based on the information she has taken in and uses it to intellectually move the salvific action forward. First, I consider how Mary makes the decision to accept the incarnation as told in Luke's Gospel. Thus far in Luke's Gospel, the author has described how the angel Gabriel came to the priest Zechariah while he was in the Temple and tells him that his wife Elizabeth would conceive and give birth to a son who was to be named John. Zechariah responds, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years."[111] Because of his disbelief, the angel mutes Zechariah until his son is born and named.

Of the canonical evangelists, the author of Luke presents the more Marian-centric telling of Jesus's conception and birth. In chapter one, the author describes how the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary in Nazareth and – through their exchange – Mary consents to the incarnation. In this section I will argue that the gospel's text portrays Mary as intellectually engaged with the angel's message and that her *fiat* is not a coerced submission but rather an

[108] Luke 1:26–38.
[109] John 2:1–11.
[110] *ST* I-II.111.
[111] NRSVCE, Luke 1:18.

intellectual decision rooted in grace [*gratia*] that is a perfect example of Christian obedience. Further, this is an example of a creature's obedience to God rather than a woman's obedience to a man. The author of Luke's Gospel describes Mary and Gabriel's encounter:

> And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: "Hail, full of grace [*kecharitōmenē*/*gratia plena*], the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself [*dielogizeto/cogitabat*] what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end." And Mary said to the angel: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" And the angel answering, said to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: Because no word shall be impossible with God." And Mary said: "Behold the handmaid [*doulē*/*ancilla*] of the Lord; be it done [*genoito*/*fiat*] to me according to thy word." And the angel departed from her.[112]

After the angel's initial greeting, the author of Luke's Gospel notes Mary's immediate response to the greeting: "[Mary] thought with herself [*dielogizeto/cogitabat*] what manner of salutation this should be."[113] In the Douay-Rheims, the translator has translated "thought with herself" from *dielogizeto*, the imperfect middle or passive of

[112] Douay-Rheims 1899 American Version, Luke 1:26-38. I use the Douay-Rheims translation here because it translates the Vulgate *gratia plena* as "full of grace." Framing Mary as *gratia plena*/full of grace is integral to this thesis, and the Douay-Rheims highlights that title more effectively than other translations.
[113] Douay-Rheims, Luke 1:29.

dialogizomai meaning "to consider."[114] The Greek here underscores that Mary is intellectually engaged with the annunciation. Her engagement at the annunciation should then carry to other moments.

We can interpret "to consider" as reasoning. In defining reason, Aquinas writes: "to reason is to advance from one thing understood to another, so as to know an intelligible truth…But [a human being] arrives at the knowledge of intelligible truth by advancing from one thing to another; and therefore he [or she] is called rational. Reasoning, therefore, is compared to understanding, as movement is to rest, or acquisition to possession; of which one belongs to the perfect, the other to the imperfect."[115] Using Aquinas's understanding of reasoning and the definition of *dialogizomai*, we can interpret Mary at the angel's greeting as moving toward understanding.[116]

After Mary's reactions and Gabriel's reassurance, he explains more about who her son will be: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."[117] Here and in verse 35,[118] Gabriel reveals information that will be important for Mary going forward.

In his commentary Luke Timothy Johnson argues that Mary's conversation with the angel contrasts with Zechariah's conversation. First, Johnson notes how the settings underscore the different places in society that the two occupy. Gabriel appears to Zechariah while he fulfills his priestly duties in the Temple; Mary is in the domestic sphere. Johnson then contrasts Zechariah's and Mary's reaction to the angel's messages: "Mary's mode of response is more positive than Zechariah's. Instead of his 'how shall I know,' which is a demand for proof, Mary simply asks how the promise might come true in light of its obvious roadblock, her virginity. It is almost as though she had heard only the 'you will conceive and bear a son' part of the message. When the angel makes clear that not human actions but divine power will affect this birth, she responds in obedient faith as powerful as those spoken by her son in the garden before his death (Luke 22:42), 'let it happen to me as you have said.'"[119]

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[114] Strong's Concordance, 1260.
[115] *ST* I.Q79.A8. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[116] Later in this chapter I will argue that if the annunciation is Mary reasoning, her Magnificat at the visitation can be read as her understanding (to some extent) God's favor in her life.
[117] NRSVCE, Luke 1:32–33.
[118] NRSVCE, Luke 1:35. "…therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God."
[119] Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 39.

In a moment I will nuance Johnson's claim that Mary consents "in obedient faith," but I agree with his argument that Mary's question for the angel differs from Zechariah. Mary does not ask for a sign like Zechariah does, but she wonders how she would become pregnant if she had not had sexual intercourse. Johnson argues that from a narrative standpoint this question gives the angel the opportunity to explain God's involvement in the matter,[120] but it also reveals how God is more willing to explain the events to a woman rather than to a man.

In his commentary, Luke Timothy Johnson considers that Mary's *fiat* is given "in obedient faith."[121] But, as Elizabeth Johnson points out, the word "obedient" does not appear in the text. She argues further that if one must interpret Mary's *fiat* as obedience, the best way to do so is to use the Latin root of the word *ob-audire* which means "to listen." She writes, "One might also point out that Luke is here depicting Mary as the ideal disciple, whose chief characteristic is hearing the word of God and keeping it, doing it, acting upon it, responding to it, this being the model for both women and men disciples without distinction."[122] I agree with Elizabeth Johnson's framing Mary as a *listening* disciple. This interpretation is especially key in light of my earlier argument that Mary spends her life "reading" her son and that this experience begins with her listening to the angel's message of how powerful and great he will be. The angel's words are the beginning of her seeking to understand Jesus both as her son and as her Savior. When we reach her Magnificat, we can imagine Mary drawing on grace [*gratia*] but also recalling Gabriel's words.

Mary the Book Worm

To further illustrate the idea of Mary pondering Jesus and the events in their lives to prepare her for making decisions, I borrow from the ancient and medieval tradition of "Mary as reader" in annunciation scenes as explained by Jean Leclerq, OSB, whose work was further developed by Laura Saetveit Miles. Leclerq and Miles both argue that in the Middle Ages, Mary was interpreted as a reader who, until the annunciation, reads the Old Testament

[120] Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 37–38.
[121] Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 39.
[122] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 255.

in anticipation of her savior [Fig. 1]. After Jesus's birth, Mary spends her life "reading" her son to understand his and, in relation, her own part in the salvific narrative. This explains why we see her pondering her son in scenes like Luke 2:19. Leclerq, in the article "Mary's Reading of Christ," cites Jerome's homily on the nativity[123] as an early example of this interpretation of Mary:

Figure 1: Bourdichon, The Annunciation, c. 1480–1485

> [Mary] was a holy woman, had read the Sacred scriptures, knew the prophets, and was recalling that the angel Gabriel had said to her the same things that the prophets had foretold. She was pondering in her heart whether the prophets anticipated the words "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God." Gabriel had said that; Isaia had foretold: "the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son." She had read the latter; she had heard the former. She looked upon the child lying before her; she saw in the manger the child crying; she saw there the Son of God, her Son, her one and only Son; she looked upon Him, and in her musing, she compares what she had heard with what she herself perceived.[124]

This passage from Jerome's homily on the nativity portrays Mary as an intellectual figure who is well-read in the Old Testament. There are at least two possible reasons to interpret Mary in this way. In the first instance, one could see Mary as being educated because of her relationship to Zechariah, head priest through her cousin Elizabeth. In the second instance, one could draw from the early life of Mary in the Temple as portrayed in the *Protoevangelium of James*.[125] The author of the *Protoevangelium* portrays Mary living in the

[123] Jean Leclerq, OSB, "Mary's Reading of Christ," *Monastic Studies* 15 (1984): 108–9.
[124] Jerome, Homily 88: On the Nativity of the Lord. Jerome, *The Homilies of Saint Jerome*, trans. Marie Liguori Ewald, IHM, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 57 (The Catholic University of America Press, 1966), 2:225.
[125] I describe the relationship between the *Protoevangelium of James* and Marian tradition in greater detail in chapter three.

Temple from the age of three to twelve when she must leave because of her menarche and the Temple's purity laws.[126] In her nine years there Mary would have presumably become educated in the Old Testament, which would account for her reading Isaiah at the annunciation. However, the *Protoevangelium of James* is an apocryphal text that Jerome rejected in his defense of Mary's *in partu* virginity.

This tradition furthers the idea that Mary is an intelligent woman who is making an informed choice at the annunciation. Furthermore, any woman can study or read scripture as a means to know God better and make decisions that will draw her closer to him. This is more mimicable action than Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP's infused knowledge privilege that he argues Mary – and Mary alone – has. He writes (as we have seen):

> Almost all present-day theologians admit that it is at least very probable that, in her mother's womb, Mary had the use of her free will through infused knowledge – transitorily, at any rate. They admit too that she had the use of this infused knowledge on certain occasions, such as the incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension; also that she had the use of it for the purpose of acquiring a more perfect knowledge for the divine perfections and the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.[127]

The Mary-as-reader or Mary-as-student has more feminist implications because it opens the possibility of knowing God to anyone who would read scripture.

Applying the Thomistic Decision-Making Process to the Annunciation

To understand Mary's *fiat*, we have to apply the previous idea of immaculate decision making to Mary more specifically at the annunciation. We have established that "choice results from the decision or judgment which is, as it were, the conclusion of a practical syllogism."[128] Mary has already worked through the perfect syllogism that is implied in the

[126] Ronald F. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas: With Introduction, Notes, and Original Text Featuring the New Scholars Version Translation*, The Scholars Bible, vol. 2 (Polebridge Press, 1995), 44–47.
[127] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 94.
[128] *ST* I-II.Q13.A3.

text in *dielogizeto*[129] and in the proofs that Gabriel offers her that precede her consent. On consent, Aquinas says:

> But affection belongs to the appetitive power. Therefore consent [*consensus*] does also. I answer that, Consent [*consentire*] implies application of sense to something. Now it is proper to sense to take cognizance of things present; for the imagination apprehends the similitude of corporeal things, even in the absence of the things of which they bear the likeness; while the intellect apprehends universal ideas, which it can apprehend indifferently, whether the singulars be present or absent. And since the act of an appetitive power is a kind of inclination to the thing itself, the application of the appetitive power to the thing, in so far as it cleaves to it, gets by a kind of similitude, the name of sense, since, as it were, it acquires direct knowledge of the thing to which it cleaves, in so far as it takes complacency in it.[130]

In Aquinas's view, Mary's consent is rooted in her appetitive power. Mary as immaculate has a clearer intellect that allows her to more clearly see the good option. At the annunciation, Mary is not necessarily choosing between one good option and one bad option. Rather she is choosing between moving closer to God[131] (allowing the incarnation within her) and an option that would keep her spiritually static. Because of her clearer intellect, she sees accepting the incarnation as the better option, and therefore chooses it, thus consenting to the incarnation.

And finally, Aquinas writes, "The movement of the will follows the movement of the intellect."[132] Therefore, for Mary to have consented to the incarnation with her will, then she must have used her intellect in making the decision. Again, the necessity of Gabriel's proofs to her (and not Zechariah) highlights how her will and therefore intellect are engaged at the annunciation.

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[129] Douay-Rheims, Luke 1:19: "Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be."
[130] *ST* I-II.Q15.A1.
[131] In this instance, she has a choice to quite literally move *closer to God* since Jesus is first physically present on earth in her womb.
[132] *ST* I.Q82.A1.

These passages above demonstrate a few things. First, it is clear that Mary's decision to become Jesus's mother is one made with her mind as the will is part of her mind.[133] It must be her desire to become Jesus's mother since "desire is an act of will."[134] Applying Aquinas on grace[135] here would also mean that Mary does not need extra grace to make this decision because she is already full of grace. Also, Aquinas's claim that "choice results from the decision or judgment which is, as it were, the conclusion of a practical syllogism"[136] implies that Mary to have made this decision has reasoned with her intellect. In the next passage of decision making, we will examine how Mary intervenes at the Cana wedding to begin Jesus's ministry.

Mary Intervenes at the Cana Wedding Feast – John 2:1–11

Taking the canonical Gospels as a whole, Mary's actions at Cana come thirty years after the annunciation. Here the reader meets an older Mary, accustomed to being Jesus's mother and the Mother of God. The author of John's Gospel describes how early in Jesus's mission, she, Jesus and some of his disciples attend a wedding in which Mary intervenes to help the hosts and – I argue – begin Jesus's public ministry.

> On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman [*gynai*/*mulier*], what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come [*Mou hora oupō hēkei*/*Nondum venit hora mea*]." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you ["*Poiēsate ho legē humin*/*Quodcumque dixerit vobis, facite.*"] Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not

[133] *ST* I-II.Q10.A1, *De Trin*., X.11.
[134] *ST* I-II.Q13.A1.
[135] *ST* I-II.Q109.A3.
[136] *ST* I-II.Q13.A3.

> know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed [*episteusan*/*crediderunt*] in him.[137]

I propose in my feminist *gratia plena* reading of Cana, that Mary is not sinning in her request; that she is drawing on *habitual grace* as a result of "reading" Jesus; that she begins Jesus's journey to Calvary in her request which makes Cana an inversion of the annunciation.

In his exegesis, Raymond Brown, SS, frames Mary's question as a general request for help and not a request for a miracle.[138] Elizabeth Johnson frames Mary here as a liberation figure, bringing injustice to Jesus's intention through her role as intercessor.[139] I agree more with Johnson's interpretation though she is speaking of Mary in her mystical role as Mother of the Church. In the scene in John's Gospel, this moment emphasizes how Mary is paying attention to these last moments before Jesus's mission begins. This is key in my later argument that Mary's intervention is the impetus for Jesus to begin his public ministry.

One of the most controversial verses in this passage is Jesus's response to Mary's request: "Woman [*gynai*/*mulier*], what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come [*Mou hora oupō hēkei*/*Nondum venit hora mea*]."[140] John Moloney, SDB, considers the response a rebuke to Mary that also separates him from his earthly family before his ministry begins. He also argues that Mary's actions reflect her ignorance of the divine plan: "…nothing in the narrative explains how she can turn away from the rebuke of her son, correctly indicating that she has no knowledge or understanding of God's designs for his Son."[141] Moloney's interpretation makes sense when one considers John's Gospel in isolation; Mary has only just entered the narrative so how could she anticipate the divine plan? However, when read in the context of the Lukan infancy narratives, Mary is seen with more knowledge and agency, which I will discuss more in a moment.

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[137] NRSVCE, John 2:1–11.
[138] Raymond Edward Brown, SS, *The Gospel According to John*, The Anchor Bible (Doubleday, 1966), 1:98.
[139] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 290.
[140] NRSVCE, John 2:4.
[141] Francis J. Moloney, SDB, *The Gospel of John*, Rev. ed., ed. Daniel J. Harrington, SJ, Sacra Pagina Series, v. 4 (Liturgical Press, 2005), 67.

Raymond Brown is more charitable to Mary in his interpretation. He argues that "Woman [*gynai*/*mulier*]" is how Jesus addresses most women, citing Matthew 25:28, Luke 13:12, and John 4:21; 8:10; 20:13. Jesus addresses Mary the same way from the cross in John 19:26. He further argues that the author of John's Gospel does not disrespect Mary by calling her the "mother of Jesus" rather than Mary in the narrative. "Mother of Jesus" is – according to Brown – an honorific in her culture to Mary, being blessed to have a son. It also is meant to highlight the importance of Mary and Jesus's mother–son relationship. However, Brown also argues that his refusal is not a rejection of Mary as a person but rather her role: "Nor…is there a rejection of her as mother – what is being denied is a role, not a person. Jesus is placing himself beyond natural family relationships even as he demanded of his disciples (Matt xix 29)."[142]

It is important that Jesus is not rebuking Mary here because Jesus cannot be reprimanding immaculately conceived Mary of sin. This is particularly important in the Catholic understanding of Mary as immaculately conceived, but not for Protestant scholars. Evangelical theologian D.A. Carson argues that Jesus is rebuking Mary in his response to her and that this is part of his separating himself from his earthly family.[143] Presbyterian Biblical scholar Marianne Meye Thompson argues in a similar vein in her work *John: A Commentary*.[144]

Elizabeth Johnson argues that Jesus's addressing Mary as "woman" places Mary in the company of the other women he addresses as "woman" throughout the Gospels. While I respect Johnson's making Mary a more relatable figure to other women, I argue that this can still be done even in light of the Immaculate Conception.

Johnson takes a feminist reading of Mary's actions, writing,

> Because she persisted, a bountiful abundance soon flowed among the guests. Feminist reflection espies in her the kind of woman whose movements typically run counter to the expectations of idealized femininity. Far from silent, she speaks; far from passive, she acts; far from receptive to the orders of the male, she goes counter to his wishes, finally bringing him along with her; far from yielding to a grievous situation, she takes charge of

[142] Brown, SS, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:102.
[143] D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 171.
[144] Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 61.

> it, organizing matters to bring about benefit to those in need including herself.[145]

Brown's interpretation of the scene reflects his earlier claim that Mary is not anticipating a miracle:

> Why is Mary especially concerned and why does she turn to Jesus? Many have thought that she was asking for a miracle. However, there is no evidence of any previous miracles performed by Jesus, and there is nothing in the OT picture of the Messiah which would have led the Jews to expect him to work miracles on behalf of individuals (yet see vii 31). An expectation of miracles is more understandable if Jesus is thought of as the Prophet-like-Moses or as Elijah come back to life, for the OT attributed miracles to both Moses and Elijah.[146]

In the previous section I argued that from the annunciation on, Mary spends her life "reading" her son. Mary has a unique perspective of Jesus knowing him both as her Savior and as her son. When read in conjunction with the other Gospels, we meet Mary thirty years after the events of Luke 1 and 2. Jean Leclerq introduces the idea that Mary, having spent her life reading the Hebrew scriptures, spends her life after the annunciation "reading" Jesus's actions to understand him. At the annunciation, Mary had only the angel's message to apply to these scriptures to help her make this decision. But at Cana, Mary is drawing from about thirty years of "reading" Jesus to understand his actions. This would explain how Mary could take his response to her entreaty and intervene anyway.

This understanding of Mary's relationship to Jesus is also what makes her accessible to other Christians since they can also read the Word – both scripture and Jesus. These readers may not be able to know Jesus growing up during his earthly life as Mary did – given that the evangelists do not record anything about Jesus's life between ages twelve and thirty, this is especially true – but they can still read the Old Testament in the context of the New to find types of Jesus there as Leclerq suggests that Mary did.

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[145] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 289–90.
[146] Brown, SS, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:98.

Moloney's claim that Jesus's reaction to Mary's request is a rebuke falls flat when one considers that Jesus does intervene. As Johnson points out, his first miracle incorporating wine anticipates the crucifixion. This is obvious to the reader, but is it obvious to Mary? In the Matthean infancy narrative, the Magi bring gifts including myrrh – a plant commonly used in burial rights foreshadowing Christ's death. Assuming that Mary knew the Hebrew scriptures, she would have understood that the gift symbolized death.

Further, Mary has also heard Simeon's prophecy in which he says in part, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."[147] The reader understands that this will be her sorrow at the crucifixion, but did Mary?

Mary Begins Jesus's Ministry

Even though Jesus initially resists Mary's request, in the next instance he does as she asks and performs the miracle so there is clearly not as much emotional distance between mother and son. Like Brown, Robert G. Maccini also argues that the Cana scene is Jesus distancing himself from Mary: "Jesus' question to Mary, 'What do you have to do with me?'…is further indication of distancing and also signals his disapproval of her attempt to influence the course of his ministry by pressing him to perform public miracles that will hasten his hour (*hora*)—the hour of his death."[148] But Maccini's argument also reflects that Jesus understands that a public miracle will bring him closer to his crucifixion. After Jesus seemingly dismisses Mary, she tells the staff, "Do whatever he tells you,"[149] and Jesus performs the miracle that spares the couple and their families' social embarrassment and begins his public ministry. The author of John's Gospel notes this beginning, writing, "Jesus did this [miracle], the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."[150] Tina Beattie reflects on Mary's actions, writing,

> Mary knew, with an intuition born of years of prayer and closeness to God, that a crucial moment had arrived, that God was once again prompting her

[147] NRSVCE, Luke 2:34–35.
[148] Robert Gordon Maccini, *Her Testimony Is True: Women as Witnesses According to John*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament 125 (Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 106.
[149] NRSVCE, John 2:4.
[150] NRSVCE, John 2:11.

> to step into the unknown…She knew something of the cost involved in obeying at moments such as these. Just as once she had pushed her baby into a hostile world, so now she was being asked to push him into the public domain, away from the private world she had shared with him for thirty years…Jesus was initially reluctant. Perhaps he knew something of the agony ahead. Did he hope that for just a little longer it might be possible to enjoy the old ways of living?... Astonishingly, we must consider the possibility that once again, the history of the world hinged on Mary's decision…It was Mary who must utter the word that would allow God's will to be played out in history, that would allow him to reveal his glory to the world.[151]

Beattie's analysis strongly implies that Mary is aware that by asking Jesus to perform his first public miracle, she is beginning his public ministry and thus hastening his death. Based on Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:25–35 and his warning to her that a sword would pierce her heart, Mary is aware that Jesus's life will end in suffering. At the annunciation, Mary has to make another important decision to move the salvific narrative forward, but her decision at Cana is the inverse of her decision at the annunciation: in Mary's decision to become pregnant, she accepts Jesus into her personal life, and at Cana she lets him leave her personal life to begin his public ministry. If all of heaven awaits Mary's *fiat,*[152] then it also anticipates her instruction: "Do whatever he tells you."[153]

There is a case to be made that Jesus is joking with Mary in an attempt to diffuse her anxiety both about the situation and about the larger implications of beginning his mission. Catholic priest Gerald Arbuckle, SM, argues in his book *Laughing with God*: "Although there is no scholarly consensus about how to define it, most would agree on one thing: a sense of humor is a reaction to something incongruous. Humor emerges from the contradiction or 'double meanings' evoked by two differing definitions of the same reality."[154] Arbuckle discusses the Cana wedding in his analysis of humor in the Bible:

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[151] Tina Beattie, *Rediscovering Mary: Insights from the Gospels* (Triumph Books, 1995), 99–100.
[152] Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Homilies in Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, trans. Marie-Bernard Saïd (Gorgias Press, 2010), 53.
[153] NRSVCE, John 2:5.
[154] Gerald A. Arbuckle, SM, *Laughing with God: Humor Culture and Transformation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1966), xiii–xiv.

> Some incidents in the life of Jesus also display a comic quality. The wedding feast of Cana (John 2:1–11) contains several humorous plots. It is ironic that the first miracle recorded in John's Gospel is the changing of water into wine (John 2:11). One might humanly have expected that Jesus would reveal his divine power in something more dramatic and directly concerned with the salvation of souls; yet divine humor is not confined by human hopes. Moreover, the new wine not only was of superior quality but was so abundant that the couple could have set up a wine shop with the surplus![155]

Arbuckle does not engage with John 2:4 in his consideration of humor at Cana, but based on this we can see that humor is at play on the occasion. In his analysis on humor, Arbuckle defines different expressions and uses of humor. Based on his definitions, Jesus's response would be irony used to diffuse a situation. Arbuckle defines "irony" as "to say one thing and mean another, commonly the opposite."[156] In this scene, Jesus knows exactly what the lack of wine means for his mother and him: thus his response is the opposite of his meaning. The use would be to cope with the situation of beginning his mission that would lead to the cross: "Cynical, resigned, and often heartrending humor make deprivation and despair to some degree bearable. Humor helps people detach themselves from potentially depressing situations…The grim portrayal of personal and national lament is softened by the trust people have in God's paradoxical loving and supportive mercy."[157] Here Jesus, knowing the importance of this moment, tries to calm Mary by diffusing the moment.

Understanding this exchange between Mary and Jesus as one meant to be humorous does more than just illuminates Jesus's comedic skills. Rather, it highlights how Jesus is giving Mary a real choice in whether to begin his ministry at this time rather than another, later day. In doing so, it highlights how Mary is actively choosing to move the salvific narrative forward by asking her son to begin his ministry.

Applying the Thomistic Decision-Making Process to the Cana Wedding

At the Cana wedding feast, I propose that Mary receives habitual cooperating grace [*habitualis cooperans gratia*] that guides her as she creates the syllogism to intervene and ask

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[155] Arbuckle, SM, *Laughing with God: Humor Culture, and Transformation*, 26.
[156] Arbuckle, SM, *Laughing with God: Humor Culture, and Transformation*, 8.
[157] Arbuckle, SM, *Laughing with God: Humor Culture, and Transformation*, 15–16.

Jesus to perform his first public miracle. Habitual grace [*habitualis gratia*] is a "habitual gift from God" that implies the heart is already prepared to receive it.[158] Of cooperating grace [*gratia cooperans*] Aquinas writes, "But in that effect in which our mind [*mens*] both moves and is moved, the operation is not only attributed to God, but also to the soul; and it is with reference to this that we speak of 'cooperating grace.'"[159] Thus habitual cooperating grace is "the principle of meritorious works, which spring from the free-will."[160]

For Mary, habitual grace has stored up in her soul over the years. In the introduction I discussed how Mary's close proximity to Jesus, who is "principle of grace" [*principium gratiae*], means that she is constantly receiving grace from his presence which has been increasing her gracefulness since his conception.[161] Furthermore, I propose that Luke 2:52 can also apply to Mary.

The passage reads: "And Jesus increased in wisdom [*sophiā/sapientia*] and in years [*hēlikia/aetate*], and in divine and human favor [*chariti para Theō kai anthrōpois/gratia apud Deum et homines*]."[162] This passage is explicitly about Jesus, but in the context of immaculateness the notion of Jesus increasing in *gratia apud Deum* could also apply to Mary increasing in grace in Jesus's presence. This could be an increase in habitual grace since it is grace that continually comes from God for a prepared soul, which implies that it builds up over time. Thus, at Cana Mary has thirty years[163] of habitual grace from being in Jesus's presence from which she draws.

At the annunciation we meet a young woman, but at Cana we meet a woman thirty years older who is accustomed to not just being a mother but being the Mother of God and Jesus's mother in particular. These are three important distinctions to draw about Mary's motherhood. First, Mary is accustomed to motherhood by now. Second, she is accustomed to being the Mother of God and the overflow of grace given to her. Finally, she is accustomed to being Jesus's mother with the personality of his human nature. This is particularly important to remember when considering his seemingly unkind reaction to her request at John 2:4.

In the introduction I discussed how a person can only will themselves happiness and that Mary as immaculate perfectly wills happiness toward God. Thus any action she takes

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[158] *ST* I-II.Q112.A2.
[159] *ST* I-II.Q111.A2.
[160] *ST* I-II.Q111.A2.
[161] *ST* III.Q27.A5.
[162] NRSVCE Luke 2:52.
[163] In Luke 3:23, the author notes that Jesus begins his ministry at about thirty years old. The author of John's Gospel does not note Jesus's age at the beginning of his ministry at Cana, but it is reasonable to assume he was about thirty then to reflect what is in Luke's gospel.

must will her own happiness which because of her perfect will is God's happiness. Having argued that Mary's actions at Cana begin Jesus's public ministry which ultimately leads to his death, it seems as though Mary is willing her unhappiness. She knows that she will suffer because Simeon's prophecy tells her so. I propose that Mary does actually will her happiness at Cana by beginning Jesus's ministry because she anticipates God's glory which will be through the resurrection.

In his treatise on the fittingness of Christ's resurrection, Aquinas argues that Mary's proclamation in the Magnificat, "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly,"[164] reflects how Jesus humbles himself to humanity and death in order to rise in glory.[165] Aquinas limits his discussion to verse 52, but verses 54–55 are even more explicit about God's coming glory in the context of the Old Testament: "He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."[166] These lines are even clearer that Mary anticipates that her son – in some way – will be part of fulfilling God's covenant with Israel. Aquinas, with the benefit of twelve hundred years of hindsight, understands that Mary's words anticipate Jesus's resurrection after his crucifixion, but Mary only anticipates God's glory without knowing the particulars.

Mary does not understand explicitly that Jesus will die by crucifixion and will be resurrected body and soul three days after. Instead, she understands that she will suffer because of Jesus (as Simeon tells her), and her Magnificat reveals that she knows she will be glorified because of God: "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name."[167] Mary may not anticipate the resurrection per se, but she does anticipate God's glory by beginning Jesus's public ministry.

Mary's actions at Cana are not a sin. Jesus's remark "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come"[168] may be interpreted as a rebuke because Mary's actions constitute disobedience. Earlier in this chapter I argued – following Elizabeth Johnson's definition – that Mary is only obedient in that she is listening. At Cana, it appears that Mary is not listening, and thus disobeying, Jesus when he tells her that his hour has not

[164] NRSVCE, Luke 1:52.
[165] *ST* III.Q53.A1.
[166] NRSVCE, Luke 2:54-55.
[167] NRSVCE, Luke 1:48-49.
[168] NRSVCE, John 2:4.

yet come. However, Mary could be "listening" to her knowledge of Jesus that she has stored, while watching him grow up.

In Francis Moloney's exegesis, Mary is correct in trusting Jesus's word;[169] however, much of his interpretation of the scene rests on the idea that Mary is totally unaware of the events around her and that her actions reflect those of someone who is only reacting to his "rebuke" of her: "…nothing in the narrative explains how she can turn way from the rebuke of her son, correctly indicating that she has no knowledge or understanding of God's designs for his Son."[170] Moloney's interpretation reflects that of the Gospel of John alone, in which the Cana wedding is the first time the reader meets Mary (though she is never named and just referred to as Jesus's mother), but if we read John 2:1–11 in the context of Luke 1:26–38 and understand the events as singular narratives by two different authors, then we meet a Mary who is accustomed to moving in a world in which she must engage with divine actions without fully understanding, which makes Mary's immaculate decision making at Cana different from that at the annunciation.

Mary at Pentecost – Acts 1:14 and 2:1–4

Mary's final appearance in the canonical Bible comes at Pentecost in Acts 1:14 and 2:1–4, in which the author mentions her presence in the upper room with Jesus's other disciples. The author opens the book with an ascension narrative[171] and after Jesus's departure, the disciples returned to Jerusalem.[172] Mary's presence is included here: "All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers."[173] The author then recounts Matthias's election as the apostle to replace Judas Iscariot among the twelve.[174] The story continues in chapter two:

> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided

[169] Moloney, SDB, *The Gospel of John*, 68.
[170] Moloney, SDB, *The Gospel of John*, 67.
[171] Acts, 1:6–11.
[172] Acts, 1:12.
[173] NRSVCE, Acts 1:14.
[174] Acts, 1:12–26.

> tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them [*pantes*/*omnes*] were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.[175]

Beyond the mention that everyone present was speaking in tongues, the author does not describe Mary's personal experience of Pentecost. In his commentary on Acts, Luke Timothy Johnson draws the comparison between Mary being filled with the Holy Spirt at Pentecost and being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit at the annunciation.[176] In the section on Mary's annunciation I argue that the Holy Spirit impacts her as *gratia plena* by giving her grace [*gratia*] to give her *fiat* and then bringing the incarnation forth within her.

In her commentary on Pentecost, Elizabeth Johnson observes that the artistic tradition of Pentecost portrays the scene with Mary as the only woman present,[177] she argues that Mary and the other women present are key to the early Church: "Here at Pentecost, both historically and in the text of Acts, Mary lives among the women founders of the Church as well as the men."[178] Focusing on Mary in this statement, Johnson's interpretation reflects my argument that Jesus's actions at Calvary as portrayed in John's Gospel are a reversal of Cana. In the section on Mary at the crucifixion, I will argue that Jesus's giving Mary and John the Evangelist to each other symbolizes his giving Mary to the Church as mother. This moment of the crucifixion is the end of Mary's private life and the beginning of her public ministry in the early Church, anticipating her assumption and place as Mother of the Church. I will argue that this gift was a reversal of Mary's actions at Cana in which she gives Jesus over to his public life, anticipating his death.

Elizabeth Johnson is explicit in claiming that Mary, alongside these other women, is instrumental in guiding the early Church. Johnson imagines a Mary active in Jerusalem: "Perhaps she lived peaceably as a beloved old woman revered as the mother of the Messiah. Perhaps during the breaking of the bread, when listening to the women and men around the table ponder the meaning of her son's life, death, and resurrection, she shared her wisdom such as it was. Perhaps, too, she was an outspoken elder, weighing in with creative opinions about the incipient problems with the Gentiles and supporting the leadership in the

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[175] NRSVCE, Acts 2:1–4.
[176] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina Series 5 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 34.
[177] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 299.
[178] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 302.

community of women such as Mary Magdalene."[179] Johnson's creative rendering of post-Pentecost Mary supports the portrait I have drawn of her in this chapter as an intelligent, curious, and proactive figure in the salvation narrative.

For those who have read the Bible with a feminist lens as I have done above, it would be difficult to imagine the Mary of the annunciation – who perfectly trusted in grace and without male interference accepted the incarnation within her body – being inactive in the early Church. Similarly, the Mary of Cana who intervenes both to save some friends an embarrassing moment and to begin her son's public career must be active in the very Church she was so crucial in bringing about. Mary's journey – for the reader, at least – ends fittingly beside other women in the early Church. Her actions as I have demonstrated throughout this chapter show how women are capable of intellectually engaging with their own salvation, and in the upper room beside Jesus's other female disciples Mary gets to see for herself the payoff of the pondering and decisions she has made throughout her life.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how Mary intellectually engaged the events in her life and thus was an active figure in the salvific narrative. I developed much of this by using Aquinas's anthropology of the mind, which he wrote about maculate people's minds. By applying this anthropology to Mary, I have emphasized her shared humanity by demonstrating how her grace-fullness is compatible with Aquinas's system. Thus, her grace-fullness does not diminish her human intellect. Because of this I have demonstrated that through Mary women do not conform to Aristotle's belief that women are intellectually inferior.

In the next chapter, we will examine how Mary loves and emotes through her heart. Augustine establishes the link between seeking to know and love in *De Trinitate,* asking, "If a [person] then earnestly, enthusiastically, and persistently seeks to know this, can he be said to be without love? What does he love, in that case? It is quite certain that nothing can be loved unless it is known."[180] Now that we have seen how Mary seeks to know God through her intellect, we can now more effectively consider how she loves in the next chapter.

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[179] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 303.
[180] *De Trin.,* X.2. Translation has been modified for gender inclusivity.

Chapter Two: The Immaculate Heart of Mary

Introduction

This chapter explores Mary's immaculate heart and love during her earthly life. I have placed this chapter after the chapter on the immaculate mind because, Augustine argues, in *De Trinitate*, one must know someone in order to love them.[1] In *The History of Animals,* Aristotle describes women as softer, less spirited, and more compassionate than men.[2] To be soft or compassionate is not an inherently bad thing, but Aristotle uses this as part of his larger argument that women are passive. To combat this, I demonstrate in this chapter how Mary is neither overly emotional nor so in control of her emotions that she is emotionless.

I frame the chapter around the medieval art motif of Mary swooning at the crucifixion and argue that such a depiction does not reflect Mary as immaculately conceived because it shows her as overly emotional. I then define the term "heart" to demonstrate that in this chapter, Mary's heart should be understood as the seat of her love [*agapē*/*amor*] and emotions [*passiones animae*].[3] I then argue that Mary's love as immaculately conceived is best understood in the idea of love-as-friendship as defined by Aquinas. This framework allows me to highlight Mary's perfect loving relationship with God as well as her neighbor. Then, following my arguments in chapter one on the immaculate mind, I argue that Mary is capable of loving what she only partially understands, following Augustine's tradition.

As in chapters one and three, this chapter is structured around Bible verses that – I argue – make Mary's love and emotions most apparent. I use Luke 2:51 as a base for discussing Mary's love separate from other emotions, referring to it as "meditative love." I then discuss how Aquinas defines emotions [*passiones animae*], and I emphasize that the emotions are rooted in the "heart." I then discuss Mary's love in relation to other emotions. I begin with her love and anger [*ira*] when finding young Jesus in the Temple in Luke 2:48, and I argue that this is an example of righteous anger that does not detract from her meekness. Then I discuss Mary's love and sorrow [*dolor*]. I divide this discussion into two sections. First, I examine Mary as *anticipating* sorrowful love in Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:35 and discuss this passage's relation to the Immaculate Heart artistic tradition. I then

[1] *De Trin.,* X.1.
[2] *Historia Animalium*, 608.22–608b.20.
[3] I have only provided the Latin here because I am exclusively drawing from Aquinas's definitions of emotions.

discuss Mary as *fulfilling* sorrowful love in John 19:26–27 when Jesus gives Mary and John to each other from the cross and argue that – when read in the context of John 2:1–11 – this scene is the beginning of Mary's public life. This beginning of her public life begins – in a more particular way – her love for neighbor as friendship.

Chapter Problem

Rather than focus on a written source for this chapter's problem, we will examine the art historical motif of Mary's swoon at the foot of the cross in crucifixion scenes. These scenes have been used to convey Mary's grief, suggesting that she was so overwhelmed by sorrow that she became faint. This motif is used to convey how much she loves her son, but I will argue that contradicts Mary's immaculateness and contributes to the Aristotelean idea of women being overly emotional.

Figure 2: van der Weyden, The Descent from the Cross, c. 1435

As interest in the humanity and humility of Jesus increased in the medieval Church, so too did the interest in Mary's humanity increase. One of the most common ways for artists to engage with Mary's humanity was in depicting her swooning as she watches the crucifixion [Fig. 2]. The motif was initially developed in eleventh-century Byzantium and became popular in the Latin Church by the thirteenth century. The motif was meant to humanize Mary.[4]

In her article "The Pain of *Compassio*: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross," Amy Neff argues that the swoon was about reclaiming Mary's bodily humanity, writing, "Mary's body, after all, has been perceived in the modern times as a paragon of purity and virginity, seemingly sexless and untouched by the biological facts that affect the real lives of real women. In the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, however, Mary was not the saccharine-sweet plaster figurine sometimes seen in modern churches; she was perceived as a flesh-and-blood human being."[5] In her article Neff goes on to defend the medieval tradition of the swoon as a means of rediscovering the physically human Mary. While it is important to find the bodily humanity Mary shares with women (I explore this in greater depth in the next two

[4] Amy Neff, "The Pain of 'Compassio': Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross," *The Art Bulletin* 80, no. 2 (1998): 254.
[5] Neff, "The Pain of 'Compassio': Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross," 254.

chapters), the image of Mary swooning plays into the Aristotelean idea of women being more dramatic or emotional than men.

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, emphasizes that there was always harmony in Mary's faculties.[6] Later in his argument that Mary did not have concupiscence, he also argues that Mary's emotions never overwhelmed her intellect: "There could be no disordered movement in her sensitive nature, no escape of her sensibility from the previous control of reason and will."[7] Garrigou-Lagrange is not writing about the supposed swoon here, but it is applicable since for Mary to swoon, her sorrow would have had had to overwhelm her intellect. But based on Garrigou-Lagrange's argument, we can see that would be impossible. Because Mary has cooperated with God's will that has led him to this death, she is able to bear its intense conclusion. Furthermore, as we will see later in this chapter, Mary must be conscious during the crucifixion because of her interaction with Jesus and John (John 19:26–27). Furthermore, my argument that Mary did not swoon promotes a more feminist vision of Mary: that she is able to experience her emotions without being overpowered by them. This counteracts the narrative that women are ruled by their emotions.

However, by arguing that Mary's emotions never overwhelmed her I am not suggesting that she was totally emotionless. Garrigou-Lagrange shared this concern, writing, "And we may add that none of the acts she performed during her waking hours were indeliberate or machine-like, but all were under the control of her intellect and her grace-directed will."[8] Writing in the 1940s, Garrigou-Lagrange is concerned about an automaton-like Mary so in control that she is unfeeling. However, I think the contradiction to an overwrought Mary today is not the automaton, but a Mary who is serene, portrayed with a bland oatmeal-like love. Indeed, when reading popular Marian writing today, authors frequently describe Mary as "serene."

John Eudes (1601–1680), in his theology of Mary's heart, writes, "Mary's is a love that is mild and meek and knows not how to be severe or terrifying."[9] This is in a way true. There is not a strong case to be made portraying Mary as "severe or terrifying." However, as we will see later in this chapter, it is still possible to understand Mary as meek while also letting her experience emotions like anger.

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[6] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 49.
[7] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 64.
[8] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 106.
[9] John Eudes, *The Admirable Heart of Mary*, trans. Ruth Hauser and Charles Di Targiani (Immaculate Heart of Mary, 2007), 217.

Defining "Heart" in this Chapter

In this chapter I define "heart" [*kardia/cor*] as the seat of love [*agapē/amor*] and emotions [*passiones animae*], drawing on Aquinas's definition that love [*amor*] should be understood as the natural appetite toward good [*bonum*].[10] Later in this section I will argue that Aquinas concludes that *amor* and *caritas* can be understood in the same way. I again draw from Aquinas (who is, in turn, drawing on John Damascene) to define emotions as motions of the sensitive appetite in the soul [*anima*] to either good [*bonum*] or evil [*malum*].[11] Here I will provide a brief overview of the history of "heart" that reflects how I use "heart" in this thesis as drawn from Classical Greek and Latin, Biblical, Patristic and Thomistic precedent. However, my definitions of love [*amor*/*caritas*] and emotions [*passiones*] comes from Aquinas.

According to the Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon, in Classical Greek, *kardia* could mean "the seat of emotions and passions,"[12] particularly in poetry. The poet Sappho links the heart and love in a fragment: "Love [*eros*] shook my heart like a wind falling on oaks on a mountain."[13] In Euripides's play "Orestes," he uses the heart to express the title character's sadness: "O unhappy heart [*talaina kardia*]…."[14] This clearly shows the heart as the seat of love [*eros*] and emotions, specifically unhappiness.

In Classical Roman usage, the heart [*cor*] could be used to describe "the seat of feeling and emotion, etc. heart, soul, feeling."[15] Lewis and Short cite Plautus's (d. 184 BCE) *Captivi,* in which Hegio tells the gods, "You can see that they love [*amare*] each other from the heart [*corde*]."[16] The Oxford Latin Dictionary [OLD] agrees with this definition, calling the heart [*cor*] "the seat of character or emotions – the heart, spirit, feelings."[17] The OLD cites Plautus, *Amphityron*: "My hopes and chances of keeping my life lie buried in my breast [*pectore*]. There's not a bit of courage [*confidentia*] left in my heart [*corde*] I've lost it all…"[18] This classical usage demonstrates that the heart is the seat of love.

Unlike "mind" [*nous/mens*], the word "heart" [*kardia/cor*] does explicitly appear in the Gospels in relation to Mary, but there are many other references to the heart containing

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[10] *ST* I-II.Q26.A1.
[11] Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 29–30. *ST* I-II.Q22.A1–3.
[12] LSJ, *s.v.*, "*kardia*."
[13] Sappho, *Fragments*, 47.
[14] Euripides, "Orestes," 466.
[15] LS, *s.v.*, "cor, cordis."
[16] Plautus, "The Captives," 420.
[17] OLD, *s.v.*, "cor, cordis."
[18] Plautus, "Amphityron," 1054.

more than just love. I draw from The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [TDNT]: "In the heart, dwell feelings and emotions, desires and passions."[19] These include love such as in 2 Corinthians 7:3, "I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts [*kardiais/cordibus*], to die together and to live together."[20]; joy as in Acts 2:26, "therefore my heart [*kardia/cor*] was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope."[21]; and pain and sorrow as in John 16:6, "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts [*kardian/cor*]."[22] These biblical passages demonstrate that the heart contains emotions – even negative emotions – other than love.

Aquinas considers the heart in the physical, proper, and figurative sense. In the *Summa* he writes, "In every passion [*passione*] there is an increase or decrease in the natural movement of the heart [*cordis*], according as the heart [*cor*] is moved more or less intensely by contraction and dilatation; and hence it derives the character of passion [*passionis*]. But there is no need for passion [*passio*] to deviate always from the order of natural reason [*naturalis rationis*]."[23] In another passage of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas argues that love [*amor*] resides in the soul [*anima*]: "Natural love [*amor naturalis*] is not only in the powers of the vegetal soul [*animae vegeativae*], but in all the soul's [*animae*] powers, and also in all the parts of the body, and universally in all things…."[24] As I indicated in the thesis introduction, I place *anima* into either chapter on Mary's mind or heart depending on how it is used. Based on the previous definitions, it is appropriate to place *anima* understood as home of *amor* into this chapter on Mary's heart [*cor*].

To understand love rather than just the heart, Thomas Aquinas provides a clear definition:

> I answer that, We must needs assert that in God there is love [*amorem*]: because love [*amor*] is the first movement of the will and of every appetitive faculty. For since the acts of the will and of every appetitive faculty tend towards good and evil, as to their proper objects: and since good is essentially and especially the object of the will and the appetite, whereas evil is only the object secondarily and indirectly, as opposed to good…Love

[19] TDNT, Johannes Behm, *s.v.*, "kardia."
[20] NRSVCE, 2 Corinthians 7:3.
[21] NRSVCE, Acts 2:26.
[22] NRSVCE, John 16:6.
[23] *ST* I-II.Q24.A2.
[24] *ST* I-II.Q26.A1.Ad3.

> [*Amor*], however, regards good [*bonum*] universally, whether possessed or not. Hence love [*amor*] is naturally the first act of the will and appetite; for which reason all the other appetite movements presuppose love [*amorem*], as their root and origin. For nobody desires anything nor rejoices in anything, except as a good [*bonum*] that is loved [*amatum*]: nor is anything an object of hate [*odium*] except as opposed to the object of love [*amatae*]…Hence, in whomsoever there is will and appetite, there must also be love [*amorem*]: since if the first is wanting, all that follows is also wanting. Now it has been shown that will is in God, and hence we must attribute love [*amorem*] to Him.[25]

Aquinas also attributes love to an act of the will, which I established as part of the mind in chapter one. However, in this chapter I propose understanding "heart" as the seat of love as according to Aquinas's definition. In other words, the heart is that which seeks good universally and is the first root of all intentions.[26] Thus to finish these definitions I define love as primarily Aquinas does: as an appetitive power that longs for the good.[27]

Mary's Love for God as Friendship

The most effective way to consider Mary's love in the context of *gratia plena* is in Aquinas's reading of love [*caritas*] as friendship. To develop this idea I draw primarily from the works of Louis M. Hughes, OP, and Fergus Kerr, OP. Aquinas explains this concept in the *Summa* in which he lists three elements of friendship:

> I answer that, Charity signifies not only the love of God, but also a certain friendship with Him; which implies, besides love, a certain mutual return of love, together with mutual communion, as stated in *Ethic.* viii, 2. That this belongs to charity is evident from 1 Jn. 4:16: "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him," and from 1 Cor. 1:9, where it is written: "God is faithful, by Whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son." Now this fellowship of [a person] with God, which consists in a certain

[25] *ST* I.Q20.A1.
[26] *ST* I.Q20.A1.
[27] *ST* I-II.Q26.A1

> familiar colloquy with Him, is begun here, in this life, by grace, but will be perfected in the future life, by glory; each of which things we hold by faith and hope. Wherefore just as friendship with a person would be impossible, if one disbelieved in, or despaired of, the possibility of their fellowship or familiar colloquy; so too, friendship with God, which is charity, is impossible without faith, so as to believe in this fellowship and colloquy with God, and to hope to attain to this fellowship. Therefore charity is quite impossible without faith and hope.[28]

Hughes's analysis of Aquinas on charity as friendship considers three aspects of charity as defined by Aquinas. Here I review them and apply them to Mary. The first is that "One cannot have charity without also having faith and hope."[29] Mary must have faith and hope as we have seen from her interaction at the annunciation in which she has been hoping for the arrival of Israel's salvation and – after her *fiat* – her faith that God will overshadow her throughout her journey. The second requisite is "Charity is infused into us by the Holy Spirit."[30] Charity is clearly infused into Mary when she receives sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*] at the Immaculate Conception. The third point is "Charity, unlike faith and hope, cannot exist in the absence of sanctifying grace."[31] As I have already demonstrated, Mary has sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*] from the moment of conception.

Next, following Hughes's argument, we consider what friendship is. Aquinas's definition of friendship comes from his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which Hughes summarizes as: "…friendship can be defined as a benevolent love for another person which is reciprocated and of which both persons are aware."[32] Hughes then deconstructs this definition into three main parts: benevolence, reciprocation, and awareness. Let us consider each of these in relation to Mary.

As he discusses benevolence, Hughes stresses that this is not simply a feeling: "We regard our friend as 'another self' and consequently our feelings towards him will be precisely those feelings which we have toward ourselves."

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[28] *ST* I-II.Q65.A5. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[29] Louis M. Hughes, OP, "Charity as Friendship in the Theology of Saint Thomas," *Angelicum* 52, no. 2 (1975): 164.
[30] Hughes, OP, "Charity as Friendship in the Theology of Saint Thomas," 165.
[31] Hughes, OP, "Charity as Friendship in the Theology of Saint Thomas," 165.
[32] Hughes, OP, "Charity as Friendship in the Theology of Saint Thomas," 165.

Having considered benevolence in her relationship with God, let us consider the extent to which it is reciprocal. Hughes summarizes this as: "It takes two to make a friendship. No amount of love which one person has for another can be termed 'friendship' unless it produces a response of some sort, however meagre that may be."

Finally, Aquinas argues that two parties in a friendship must be aware of each other. Hughes summarizes this as: "Each must make his love known to the other before friendship can begin to exist." We spent the previous chapter considering how Mary knows God: first by reading scripture, then by Gabriel's message, and then in her personal relationship with Jesus.

Mary also fulfills Hughes's later requirement that the two parties in charitable friendship must share something. In Mary's early relationship with God (before the crucifixion) this shared thing is the salvation of the Israelites, and at the end of the chapter we will discuss how this shared thing changes at the crucifixion.

Claiming that Mary enjoys charitable friendship with God is not to claim that she is in any way divine. Rather it reflects how baptism – in Mary's case, the Immaculate Conception[33] – brings one closer to God.[34] Furthermore, as Hughes argues, Jesus's words in John 15:15 help bridge the gap between creator and creature: "I do not call you servants [*servos*/*doulous*] any longer, because the servant [*servus*/*doulos*] does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends [*amicos*/*philous*], because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father."[35] As I have demonstrated in chapter one, Mary does know — to the extent that she is able — what Jesus is doing thus, drawing deeper into charitable friendship with God.

This is particularly important in the Aristotelean context which would claim that women have lower faculties than men. Thus, they would not be able to love God (or anyone else) as perfectly as men.

> But if one's conception of God runs rather in a direction that is illuminated by the doctrine of the incarnation, including of course a proper doctrine of the Church, after the fashion which Thomas adumbrates in the *tertia pars* of the *Summa*, an entirely different perspective opens out. If God has shared

[33] I am not suggesting that Mary was baptized at the immaculate conception. Rather, as I have already argued, it was an infusion of sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*]. Baptism, according to Aquinas, is also an infusion of sanctifying grace (*ST* I-II.Q111.A1). The singular event of the immaculate conception and the sacrament of baptism are not the same, but it is a helpful parallel for bringing Mary into discussion on friendship with God in accordance with Hughes's argument.
[34] Hughes, OP, "Charity as Friendship in the Theology of Saint Thomas," 174.
[35] NRSVCE.

> his own goodness with human beings, so that this love is reciprocal, then they have become *good*: lovable, desirable, beautiful, intrinsically valuable. Each partner in the relationship loves the other for his or her *character* — for what the other most deeply and radically *is* in himself or herself. In such love neither partner is lost in or enslaved by the other. On the contrary: each loves the other precisely for the sake of his or her *otherness*. In such mutual respect for the separateness of each partner it is therefore at last possible for us to let God be *God* in the knowledge that God lets us be *us*. But this means, of course, that we have to live with each other — and God is no more securely in our control than we are in his, at least if by that we desire to be his favorite doll.[36]

Like the immaculate body and mind of Mary, the Immaculate heart should be understood in light of Mary being "full of grace" or *gratia plena*. Her heart, as the seat of her love [*amor*] and emotions [*passiones animaei*], is driven by her love. I propose that as immaculate, Mary's dominant emotion is love which in turn guides all of her other emotions. Aquinas's interpretation of love [*amor*] reflects my view of love being the root of Mary's other emotions [*passiones animae*]. Aquinas argues that love is the first of the concupiscible emotions, writing, "Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xiv, 7,9) that all the passions are caused by love: since 'love yearning for the beloved object, is desire; and, having and enjoying it, is joy.' Therefore, love is the first of the concupiscible passions."[37] Thus, when she experiences a seemingly negative emotion like anger, her love curbs the emotion, so it does not harden into hate. Conversely, when Mary is mourning at the cross, her love amplifies her sorrow [*tristitia* and *dolor*]. This interpretation acknowledges that Mary is driven by love without relinquishing her other emotions. Thus, she does not walk through life practically numb from anything but love; she experiences other emotions as in demonstrated in the Gospels.

Furthermore, Aquinas argues that emotions are not "morally bad because they are emotions. Some people have seemed to suggest that emotion is always a sign of moral weakness and always something that we should try to get rid of, yet this is not Aquinas's view."[38]

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[36] Fergus Kerr, OP, "Charity as Friendship," in *Language, Meaning and God*, ed. Brian Davies, OP (Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 21. Emphasis original.
[37] *ST* I-II.Q25.A2. In-text citations original.
[38] Brian Davies, OP, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 175.

As I argued in the thesis introduction and chapter one regarding Mary's mind, Mary does not suffer from concupiscence [*concupiscentia*]. This is because despite receiving sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*] that all people receive at baptism, Mary never has original sin as others do. Baptism takes away original sin but not concupiscence. Mary's unique grace-fullness enables her to love God and others more perfectly than a maculate person because she is not encumbered by sin or the desire for sin. Thus if love is willing the good of another, Mary can do that more perfectly because she does not have concupiscence or sin[39] to encumber her. Further, if she is perfectly united to Jesus through their hearts, then she can love others (will their good) more perfectly because of her heart-closeness with Jesus.

Furthermore, because God *is* love,[40] Mary more perfectly participates in God's nature through love. In the introduction I defined grace [*gratia*] in accordance with Aquinas as "nothing less than participation in the divine nature." If Mary is *gratia plena*, then she participates in the divine nature (though is not God herself), and if God is love, then Mary must also participate in the divine love as part of God's nature.

Finally, Mary's immaculate heart by her love is the most accessible part of her being. Mary's immaculate body is her own, and the only person who can partake in it is Jesus through her pregnancy with him. Another person cannot experience her physicality. Similarly Mary's mind is her own with her own processing, knowledge, and wisdom which we cannot access. Even though both of these parts of her being can have positive effects for women – on which I will expand in the next chapter – both are ultimately inaccessible.

However, love is the conduit through which one can reach Mary's immaculate heart. Augustine claims that love must always have an object: "For I do not love love unless I love it loving something, because there is no love where nothing is being loved. So then there are three, the lover, and what is being loved, and love."[41] Therefore Mary as lover needs an object to love which can only be connected by love itself. Maculate people can experience Mary's love through her intercession; they become the objects of her love when she acts as intercessor. Furthermore, the object of Mary's love is also God.

In my feminist interpretation, I frame Mary's immaculate love as powerful and fearsome. It is easy to frame love as something delicate or weak. This is particularly true of

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[39] In this thesis, sin should be understood as: "word, deed, or desire against God's law" (*ST* I-II.Q72.A1). Aquinas is quoting from *Contra Faustum* XX.27.
[40] 1 John 4:8.
[41] *De Trin.,* IX.2.

women's love since women are often reduced to the lesser sex. Eudes argues for this point in describing Mary's heart: "Mary's is a love that is mild and meek, and knows not how to be severe or terrifying."[42] Rather, I propose that because Mary, unencumbered by sin, is participating more perfectly than any other person in divine love and divine love is always understood as powerful, thus Mary's love, rooted in her immaculate heart, is the most powerful love that any human – save Jesus as God-man – has ever enjoyed.

Because of this particularity of Mary's heart and love, it is no wonder that her heart has drawn such interest and devotion over the centuries.

The Theology of the Immaculate Heart of Mary According to John Eudes

In *The Admirable Heart of Mary* Eudes distinguishes between Mary's heart in three different forms: the corporeal heart, the spiritual heart, and her heart as divine. The corporeal heart is primarily concerned with Mary's physical heart, which Eudes claims is the "principle of life."[43] He further defines it as the "heart of flesh…[as] the source of the human, material life of the Infant Jesus"[44] among other functions of the physical heart. Eudes designates the spiritual heart as the "intellectual element of her soul, comprising her memory, intelligence, will and the supreme point of her spirit."[45] He further categorizes the soul as the vegetative (that which is common with plants), the sensitive (that which is common with animals), and the intellectual (that which is common with the angels).[46]

I have largely covered the concerns of what Eudes considers Mary's spiritual heart in chapter one. In chapter three, I focus on the immaculate body of Mary – her corporeality. While I do not focus on Mary's physical heart in that chapter, I do consider the extent to which her grace-fullness affects her body. Therefore, I do not focus here on what Eudes calls Mary's corporeal heart because those concerns are handled in the next chapter. Thus, this chapter will focus on what Eudes calls Mary's divine heart, which I call Mary's immaculate heart.

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[42] Eudes, *The Admirable Heart of Mary*, 217.
[43] Eudes, *The Admirable Heart of Mary*, 14.
[44] Eudes, *The Admirable Heart of Mary*, 14.
[45] Eudes, *The Admirable Heart of Mary*, 20.
[46] Eudes, *The Admirable Heart of Mary*, 18.

On Meditative Immaculate Love in Luke 2:51

In this section, I will use Luke 2:51 to establish a baseline of Mary's love – in other words, I discuss her love in isolation before discussing it in connection with other emotions in the later sections. In Luke's Gospel the author concludes Jesus's childhood narrative after the story of Mary finding twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple after searching for him for three days.[47] The author concludes the narrative writing, "Then [Jesus] went down with [Mary and Joseph] and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured [*dietērei/conservabat*] all these things in her heart [*kardia/corde*]. And Jesus increased in wisdom [*sophia/sapientia*], and in years [*hēlikia/aetate*], and in divine and human favor [*chariti/gratia*]."[48] In this passage I propose that Mary holding these events in her heart is indicative of a daily meditative kind of love that is the underlying love of her divine maternity. Furthermore, I propose that while the author describes Jesus growing in wisdom, stature, and favor, the same can be said of Mary during this time and that her growing in *gratia* is filling her with the cooperative grace [*gratia cooperans*] that she will draw from at the crucifixion and Cana wedding. I am not suggesting that Luke 2:51 is the first instance when Mary loves her son. Rather, I propose it as a textual example of the daily love Mary had for her son. Later I apply Aquinas's interpretation of the contemplative life [*vita contemplativa*] to this passage to better illustrate Mary's daily love. I am not suggesting that Mary is living in the contemplative life in the way that Aquinas is describing, but that his description of it may give deeper understanding to Mary's life and love with and for Jesus.

Luke 2:51 is one of two explicit references to Mary's heart [*kardia/cor*] in the canonical Gospels. The other is Luke 2:19 which describes Mary's reactions to the shepherds adoring the Christ-child: "But Mary treasured [*synetērei/conservabat*] all these words and "pondered" [*sumballousa/conferens*] them in her heart [*kardia/corde*]."[49] Despite the explicit reference to Mary's heart [*kardia/corde*], I discussed this verse in chapter one on Mary's mind [*nous/mens*]. This is because there is a tradition of the heart [*kardia/cor*] as the seat of the mental faculty and the verb pondered [*symballousa/conferens*] can be understood as "bringing together" in both Greek and Latin. I argue that this "bringing together" reflects Augustine's definition of *conferens* as bringing together stored information from the

[47] In a later section on Mary's love and anger, I discuss her interaction with Jesus upon finding him in Luke 1:48.
[48] NRSVCE, Luke 2:51–52.
[49] NRSVCE, Luke 2:19.

memory.[50] Furthermore, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT) cites Luke 2:19 as an example of when *kardia* is used to describe the heart as "the seat of understanding, the source of thought and reflection."[51] For these reasons I discussed Luke 2:19 in the context of Mary's mind in chapter one despite its explicit reference to her heart [*kardia/cor*].

While the TDNT affirms my decision to put Luke 2:19 in chapter one on Mary's mind, the editors also consider the use of *kardia* in Luke 2:51 as an instance of *kardia* describing the seat of thought and understanding like in Luke 2:19.[52] In this instance I disagree with the TDNT and argue that within the bounds of this thesis, *kardia*/*cor* should be considered the place where "dwell feelings and emotions, desires and passions,"[53] because the verb "stored" [*dietērei/conservabat*] does not reflect Augustine's definition of thinking as bringing together information[54] like "pondered" [*sumballousa/conferens*] does.

Based on these definitions it is more correct to consider Luke 2:51 with the other verses in which the TDNT consider *kardia* as the seat of love: 2 Corinthians 6:11; 7:3 and Philippians 1:7. In 2 Corinthians 6:11, Paul writes "We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart [*kardia/cor*] is wide open to you,"[55] and in 7:3, "I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts [*kardiais/cordibus*], to die together and to live together."[56] In his exegesis, George H. Guthrie argues that Paul's remarks reflect his concern as their spiritual father[57] and "the condition of his heart before God."[58] In Philippians 1:7, Paul writes in his opening thanksgiving, "It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold [*echein/habeam*] me in your heart [*kardia/cordia*]…."[59] Moisés Silva writes, "The apostle first introduces this emotional note at a point that jars the expected logical progression of the sentence…This move is unnecessary, however, for both sides of this mutual affection are explicit and prominent in the verse."[60]

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[50] *De Trin*., XIII.26.
[51] TDNT, Johannes Behm, *s.v.,* "kardia."
[52] TDNT, Johannes Behm, *s.v.,* "kardia."
[53] TDNT, Johannes Behm, *s.v.,* "kardia."
[54] *De Trin*., XIII.26.
[55] NRSVCE, 2 Corinthians 6:11.
[56] NRSVCE, 2 Corinthians 7:3.
[57] George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015), 40.
[58] Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 43.
[59] NRSVCE, Philippians, 1:7.
[60] Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Baker Academic, 2005), 48.

Both Guthrie and Silva convey in their exegesis what I would like to convey about Mary's heart in this state of meditative immaculate love: the heart is not in the kind of exuberant joy/love of – for example – Acts 14:17.[61] Rather Luke 2:51, 2 Corinthians 6:11; 7:3, and Philippians 1:7 are all describing the ordinary, daily love one can have in their heart. Thus, Mary's meditative love in Luke 2:51 is the base love of Mary's heart as Mother of God, and because it is meditative love, it belongs in the chapter on her heart.

In his biblical exegesis, Francois Bovon argues that "Mary retains the same attitude as twelve years before."[62] This is a reference to the miraculous events surrounding Jesus's birth, but it could also specifically refer to Luke 2:19 and Luke 2:33, which recount Mary's reaction to the shepherds' arrival at the nativity and to Simeon's prophecy, respectively. Both instances depict Mary reacting to a miraculous event that is brought to her by an outsider: neither the shepherds nor Simeon are a part of her family, and she does not meet them again after the event. In the case Luke 2:51, it is not a stranger's but her son's words that cause her reaction. Because of this difference in relationship, Mary is described as "treasur[ing] all these things in her heart."[63] Here we see a Mary not pondering and reading her savior as we saw in Luke 2:19 but rather a mother keeping memories of her son.

Luke 2:51 could appear in a commentary on the dogma of the *Theotokos,* but here it must be used to consider Mary's divine maternity in the context of her immaculateness. I mention this because Elizabeth Johnson draws heavily on the maternity themes in this verse: "And, as Luke summarizes the years roll by, 'Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor before God and human beings.' It takes so much parenting for this to happen! It takes so much nourishing care for a newborn to negotiate the hazards of infancy and reach the second year of life."[64]

In the book *The Mother of the Savior* by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, the author argues that Mary increases in grace [*gratia*] throughout her life. In chapter one, I applied this idea to Mary's mind to argue that she spends her life with Jesus reading him both as her savior and as her son to understand from an intellectual plane. Luke 2:51 is an example of Mary increasing in grace [*gratia*] through love [*amor*/*charitas*] rather than through

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[61] NRSVCE Act 14:17: "…yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good – giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons and filling you with food and your hearts [*kardias/corda*] with joy [*euphrosynēs/laetitia*]." TDNT, "kardia."
[62] François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Christine M. Thomas, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Fortress Press, 2002), 115.
[63] NRSVCE, Luke 2:51.
[64] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 285.

intellectual exertion. This is an important distinction because it highlights that Mary's relationship with Jesus is not purely intellectual.

Elizabeth Johnson concludes: "Respecting her particularity, we remember her in solidarity with women everywhere whose life energies literally mother the next generation, and with all who use their generative powers to nurture and build up healthy lives in the social and natural worlds."[65] Johnson's point is important because it opens Mary's personal experience of mothering Jesus to all women who cultivate the next generation.[66] I would apply the similar experience of growing in grace [*gratia*] alongside Jesus is an experience available to every woman.[67] This is further proof that Mary's heart by her love is the most accessible part of her immaculateness. While no one else can relate to the personal experience of raising Jesus in his earthly life as Mary did, they can increase in love for him through grace.

Emotions [*Passiones*] in Aquinas's Thought

Aquinas also attributes love to an act of the will, which I established as part of the mind in chapter one. However, in this chapter I propose understanding "heart" as the seat, according to Aquinas's definition. In other words, the heart is that which seeks good universally and is the first root of all intentions.[68] Thus to finish these definitions I define love primarily as Aquinas does: as an appetitive power that longs for the good.[69] Furthermore, Aquinas argues that the passions reside in the heart [*cor*]: "In every passion there is an increase or decrease in the natural movement of the heart, according as the heart is moved more or less intensely by contraction and dilatation; and hence it derives the character of passion."[70]

In this chapter I am also subscribing to Aquinas's view and categories of emotions [*passiones animae*]. He distinguishes between concupiscible [*concupiscibilis*] and aggressive [*irascibilis*] emotions. He argues that:

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[65] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 286–87.
[66] Johnson's language is careful and does not suggest that only women who have given birth qualify for this experience.
[67] It is open to every Christian – male or female – but because of this thesis's focus on women's experience of Mary I prioritize them here.
[68] *ST* I.Q20.A1.
[69] *ST* I-II.Q26.A1
[70] *ST* I-II.Q24.A2.

> the irascible faculty is bestowed on animals, in order to remove the obstacles that hinder the concupiscible power from tending towards its object, either by making some good difficult to obtain, or by making some evil hard to avoid. The result is that all the irascible passions terminate in the concupiscible passions: and thus it is that even the passions which are in the irascible faculty are followed by joy and sadness which are in the concupiscible faculty.[71]

Colleen McCluskey in her article, "From Metaethics to Normative Ethics," links the passions to the intellect in Aquinas's thought.

> Aquinas locates the passions in what he calls the sensory appetite, which is an appetitive power responsive to sensory apprehension. Thus, the passions, strictly speaking, are associated with sensory perception, which is part of a human being's material nature and therefore not a rational power. The stimulation of a passion produces a corresponding corporal reaction. Nevertheless, Aquinas argues that the passions are responsive to the judgment and control of the rational powers of intellect and will. As such, he argues that the passions are indirectly rational. He identifies eleven passions: pleasure, sadness, love, hatred, desire, aversion, fear, daring, hope, despair, and anger.[72]

Further he sorts emotions into these two categories. For Aquinas, the concupiscible emotions are: love [*amor*] and hate [*odium*], desire [*desiderium*] and aversion [*fuga*] and joy [*gaudium*] and sorrow [*tristitia*] or pain [*dolor*]. The aggressive emotions are hope [*spes*] and despair [*desperatio*], confidence [*audacio*], fear [*timor*], and anger [*ira*].[73] In this chapter I will be primarily discussing Mary's love [*caritas*/*amor*], sorrow/pain [*tristitia*/*dolor*], and anger [*ira*] because these are best reflected in the Bible verses that I have selected for this chapter.

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[71] ST I-II.Q23.A1. Davies, OP, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae*, 173.
[72] Colleen McCluskey, "From Metaethics to Normative Ethics," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas Joseph White (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 259.
[73] Brian Davies, OP, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae*, 173.

In this section I draw from McCluskey's interpretation of Aquinas on the passions because she emphasizes his argument that the passions are involuntary and not necessarily sinful. She argues:

> In and of themselves, passions are involuntary. They arise in response to our interpretations of sense perception. If I see a bear in the woods, I am likely to experience the passion of fear. If I see a bear in the zoo, I am likely to feel pleasure. As such, passions are morally neutral because they are involuntary. I cannot help but feel such passions under these circumstances. But insofar as I can control my subsequent response to these feelings, Aquinas thinks that the passions are subject to and controllable by the powers that enable me to control my response.[74]

McCluskey, drawing on *ST* I-II.q24.a1, emphasizes that passions are involuntary and are thus neutral. Because they arise from sensory perception, it makes sense that Mary would experience them. Mary is different from maculate people in that she does not err into sin through her passions because of grace [*gratia*]. Aquinas argues that: "The passions of the soul, in so far as they are contrary to the order of reason, incline us to sin: but in so far as they are controlled by reason, they pertain to virtue."[75] Aquinas builds his argument as a contradiction to the Stoics who maintained that all emotions were evil. McCluskey expands on Aquinas's argument:

> Aquinas identifies two ways in which passions can move an agent to sin. First, passions can distract agents so that they do not consider what they ought to consider when deciding what to do. My passion for sweets can distract me from the fact that eating another piece of cake will make me feel sick. Second, passions can make actions that ordinarily would not look good to an agent appear attractive. Road rage is an obvious example. Nevertheless, a fully functional agent retains the capacity to resist these mechanisms; choosing to act on the basis of passion remains voluntary and therefore blameworthy.[76]

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[74] McCluskey, "From Metaethics to Normative Ethics," 259.
[75] *ST* I-II.Q24.A2.
[76] McCluskey, "From Metaethics to Normative Ethics," 277.

With this division, we can see how Mary does not err into sin with her emotions [*passiones*]. I propose that Mary as Immaculate, or *gratia plena*,[77] loves God perfectly above all things and loving God becomes more perfectly the first act of the will as Aquinas established in the *Summa* at I.Q20.A1. Because her love is the first act of the will, it is appropriate to consider the other emotions around her love, for instance sorrow, as secondary modifiers to her love. Mary's grace-fullness prevents her emotions [*passiones*] from overwhelming her intellect so that she could err into sin. For example, in Luke 2:48 when Mary scolds Jesus for getting lost when they find him in the Temple, Mary does not err into sin in her anger [*ira*].

Immaculate Love and Anger in Luke 2:48

Having discussed Mary's love in isolation, let us now consider it in relation to a seemingly negative emotion:[78] anger [*ira*]. Because of the prevalence of the *Mater Dolorosa* tradition, it can be easy to only associate Mary with sorrow. However, in keeping with this thesis's epigraph that "grace does not destroy nature but perfects it,"[79] it is important to attribute to Mary a full spectrum of human emotion. Part of this means confronting seemingly negative emotions including anger [*ira*].

In Luke 2:41–52, the author describes how Mary, Joseph, and Jesus with their extended family celebrated Passover in Jerusalem. As they return home, Mary and Joseph realize that Jesus is no longer with their party. They search for three days and find him the Temple with the elders: "When his parents saw him they were astonished [*exeplagēsan/admirati sunt*]; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety [*odunōmenoi/dolentes quaerebamus*].' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'"[80] Mary's word convey frustration, but I would go further and argue that she is angry with Jesus for getting lost.

Let us consider how Aquinas understands anger [*ira*] both in itself and what causes it. Aquinas discusses (and as we will see, to a certain extent defends anger) in the *Summa*. In his

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[77] Vulgate, Luke 1:28.
[78] Miner cites Lazarus, Richard S., and Lazarus, Bernice N., *Passion and Reason: Making Sense of Our Emotions* (Oxford University Press, 1996) as among those who consider anger as a negative emotion. Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 270.
[79] *ST* I.1.8. "*Gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit*."
[80] NRSVCE, Luke 2:48–49.

discussion he affirms that anger, like all other emotions is rooted in love: "But in this way, love [*amor*] may be called a general passion, as Augustine declares, because love is the primary root of all the other passions, as stated above." He further explains how anger is related to many other emotions at once: "But, in a third way, anger may be called a general passion, inasmuch as it is caused by a concurrence of several passions." Both of these points are important for this chapter even though Aquinas is writing about maculate people rather than Immaculate Mary. His first point demonstrates the appropriateness of discussing Mary's anger in the context of her Immaculate Heart, and the second point is an opening to discuss the other natural, human emotions that contribute to her anger.

In his book *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, Robert Miner summarizes Aquinas's understanding of the cause of anger: "Anger is caused by a perception of someone else as harmful to ourselves, along with a desire for vindication. Both elements are necessary conditions of anger."[81] Here we can see two clear directives Mary must fulfill to be angry when finding Jesus. The first is that she must believe some harm has been done to her by Jesus's actions. Mary is explicit about what has happened to her since Jesus went missing because she says to her son on finding him: "Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety [*ezētoumen/dolentes quaerebamus*]." Both Elizabeth Johnson and Luke Timothy Johnson highlight the author's use of *odynasthai* in describing Mary and Joseph's pain. Elizabeth Johnson argues that it "connotes severe mental pain or sadness, overwhelming anxiety."[82] Both scholars note that the Lukan author only uses this word in two other instances: Luke 16:24 and Acts 20:37–38.

Because of both Johnsons' insistence on Mary's severe mental anguish while looking for Jesus, the root of Mary's anger should be understood first as sorrow for losing Jesus and then her fear [*timor*] that something terrible had happened to her son, this fear being ultimately born out of her love for him. This line of argument keeps to Aquinas's original definition of anger as being tied to other emotions (here, fear) and rooted in love (Mary's love for her son).

Aquinas defines fear [*timor*] as a passion,[83] but for our purposes it is more useful to consider the object of fear which Aquinas contrasts with that of hope, writing, "The passions of the soul derive their species from their objects: hence that is a special passion, which has a special object. Now fear has a special object, as hope has. For just as the object of hope is a

[81] Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 278.
[82] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 283.
[83] *ST* I-II.Q41.A1.

future good, difficult but possible to obtain; so the object of fear is a future evil, difficult and irresistible. Consequently, fear is a special passion of the soul."[84] Aquinas's understanding of the object of fear being a future evil would explain Mary's fear while anxiously searching for Jesus. She is no doubt worried about finding him injured or, even worse, not finding him at all.

Mary's fear about what state she will find Jesus in thus morphs into anger upon finding him alive and well in the Temple. Thus it fulfills the first condition of anger in Aquinas's thought (as interpreted by Miner): in staying behind Jesus has caused Mary to fear, making his actions harmful to her.[85] She must now fulfill the second condition, which is "desire for vindication." This may initially seem like a call for hatred, but Aquinas differentiates them, thusly:

> The species and nature of a passion are taken from its object. Now the object of anger is the same in substance as the object of hatred; since, just as the hater wishes evil to him [or her] whom he [or she] hates, so does the angry [person] wish evil to him [or her] with whom he [or she] is angry. But there is a difference of aspect: for the hater wishes evil to his [or her] enemy, as evil, whereas the angry [person] wishes evil to him [or her] with whom he [or she] is angry, not as evil but in so far as it has an aspect of good, that is, in so far as he [or she] reckons it as just, since it is a means of vengeance. Wherefore also it has been said above (A2) that hatred implies application of evil to evil, whereas anger denotes application of good to evil. Now it is evident that to seek evil under the aspect of justice, is a lesser evil, than simply to seek evil to someone. Because to wish evil to someone under the aspect of justice, may be according to the virtue of justice, if it be in conformity with the order of reason; and anger fails only in this, that it does not obey the precept of reason in taking vengeance. Consequently it is evident that hatred is far worse and graver than anger.[86]

Based on this definition we can see that Mary in seeking "vindication" is actually seeking justice which is rooted in love and goodness. She secures this justice in two ways:

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[84] *ST* I-II.Q41.A2.
[85] I am not suggesting that Jesus is sinning in doing this as that would violate his divine nature.
[86] *ST* I-II.Q46.A6. In-text citation original. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.

first in her initial scolding in Luke 2:48 and in how she raises him into adulthood. This scene in Luke is the last of his infancy narratives so we cannot see the full ramifications of Mary's justice following her anger, but the author of Luke concludes the scene: "Then [Jesus] went down with [Mary and Joseph] and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them."[87] This suggests there were no further incidents like Jesus slipping away to the Temple, and perhaps part of this could have been Mary's doing, thus fulfilling the requirement that she seek justice/vindication.

Anger is not traditionally one of the emotions one would associate with Mary, and what I have presented here does not denigrate her as Immaculate in any way. This is because anger is natural (per Aquinas) and Jesus himself experienced anger.

> If, however, we consider the specific nature, i.e. the nature of this [person] as a rational being; then anger is more natural to [humanity] than desire, in so far as anger follows reason more than desire does. Wherefore the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* iv, 5) that "revenge" which pertains to anger "is more natural to [humanity] than meekness": for it is natural to everything to rise up against things contrary and hurtful. And if we consider the nature of the individual, in respect of his [or her] particular temperament, thus anger is more natural than desire; for the reason that anger is prone to ensue from the natural tendency to anger, more than desire, or any other passion, is to ensue from a natural tendency to desire, which tendencies result from a [person's] individual temperament.[88]

Aquinas addresses Jesus's relationship to the passions in part three of the *Summa* which Paul Gondreau explores in his book *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Aquinas affirms that Jesus did experience anger and, citing Augustine, references Jesus's driving out the money lenders in the Temple as an example of anger and specifically zealous anger [*ira per zelum*]. Let us explore John's account[89] of Jesus driving out the money changers.

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[87] NRSVCE, Luke 2:51.
[88] *ST* I-II.Q46.A5. In-text citation original. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[89] The cleansing of the Temple occurs in the other three canonical Gospels as well: Matthew 21:12–17, Mark 11:15–19, and Luke 19:45–48. Because Aquinas uses John's account in his explanation of Jesus's anger, I do so as well.

> The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."[90]

Aquinas writes: "Now it was said (A6) that sorrow could be in Christ. As to the desire of revenge it is sometimes with sin, i.e. when anyone seeks revenge beyond the order of reason: and in this way anger could not be in Christ, for this kind of anger is sinful. Sometimes, however, this desire is without sin – nay, is praiseworthy, e.g. when anyone seeks revenge according to justice, and this is zealous anger."[91]

Based on this consideration, we can see how Jesus experiences anger. First, he is moved to sorrow for how the Temple is being desecrated with the actions of the merchants and money changers inside. Seeking revenge but in the bounds of reason, he seeks justice. To enact justice, Jesus makes a whip and removes them from the Temple. Mary's anger in Luke 2 follows a similar pattern. First, she realizes that Jesus is not with their family leaving Jerusalem leading her to sorrow. She is then lead to fear for what evil could befall him. Upon finding him, she becomes angry for the pain he has caused her but within the bounds of reason.

In his assessment of Christ's anger, Aquinas argues that Jesus experiencing anger does not jeopardize his meekness. Aquinas is able to argue this because, as Gondreau argues, Aquinas assures the reader that anger is not a sin. Gondreau writes:

> To buttress this line of reasoning, Thomas reminds his reader that anger constitutes the proper subject matter of moral virtue of meekness, i.e., that meekness regulates feelings of anger unto the good of reason, and no virtue can exist if its very subject matter is entirely eradicated. Put another way, since virtue strikes the *mean* between the extremes of excess and defect, the

[90] NRSVCE, John 2:13–17.
[91] *ST* III.Q15.A9. In-text citation original.

> virtue of meekness involves *not* the total absence of anger (the extreme defect), but instead the *mean* of anger, i.e., anger ordered toward reason.[92]

Gondreau cites Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* here for his argument:

> Anger is a passion arising from many and various causes. Hence a [person] who is angry over the right things, with the right persons, and moreover in the right way, at the right time, and for the right interval is praised. He [or she] is a meek [person]. But if meekness is an object of praise, the meek [person] seeks to be undisturbed and not controlled by passion, but to be angry at the things and for the length of time that reason directs.[93]

Aquinas is making this argument in relation to Jesus, but since we have seen Mary experience anger for the sake of justice, then this gives us a new powerful way to consider Mary as "meek." Mary's meekness has historically been used to frame Mary as submissive and passive. But framing meekness as Aquinas does, gives Mary the space to experience anger which in turn demonstrates that she is active in her life and in the salvific narrative.

Immaculate Love and Sorrow

To discuss Mary's immaculate love and sorrow [*trisitia*] I examine Simeon's prophecy to her in Luke 2:35 and her witness to the crucifixion in John 19:26–27 as fulfillment of that prophecy. Understanding John 19:26–27 as the fulfillment of Luke 2:35 may be a traditional view, but it is less common in modern biblical exegesis because the events occur in different Gospels and Mary is not explicitly present at the cross in Luke's Gospel.[94] Raymond Brown argues, with Elizabeth Johnson in agreement, that the sword, a

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[92] Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Cluny Media, 2018), 389–99. Emphasis original.
[93] Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, Vol.1, I.4.4.13. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[94] Raymond Edward Brown, SS, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (Doubleday, 1993), 462; Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 280.

reference to Ezekiel 14:17,[95] is symbolic of spiritual discernment.[96] With Mark 3:31–35[97] in mind, Brown argues: "This interpretation make Simeon's prophecy of discriminatory judgment for Israel applicable to Mary as an individual Israelite, and more specifically applicable to her as a member of Jesus' family. If being an Israelite will not guarantee a share in Jesus' salvation, neither will being a member of his family."[98]

I understand that Brown (as a Biblical scholar) has interpreted Luke 2:35 this way: this interpretation does not put Mary at the cross in Luke's Gospel and it links Mary more clearly to Israel (a popular interpretation that I discussed in chapter one) through Ezekiel 14:17. However, within this thesis, I am not bound by the same restrictions that Brown is and will freely mix narratives from the canonical Gospels.[99] Particularly within the context of the Immaculate Conception and the *Mater Dolorosa* artistic tradition, I argue it is appropriate to consider John 19:26–27 as the fulfillment of Luke 2:35.

Anticipating Immaculate Sorrow – Simeon's Prophecy in Luke 2:35

In Luke 2:35, Mary and Joseph have taken Jesus to the Temple after his birth to fulfill Mosaic Law, and they meet Simeon, who prophesies about Jesus's future:

Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.[100]

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[95] "Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, 'Let a sword pass through the land,' and I cut off human beings and animals from it…." NRSVCE, Ezekiel 14:17.
[96] Brown, SS, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 464; Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 281.
[97] "Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.' And he replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'" NRSVCE Mark 3:31–35.
[98] Brown, SS, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 465.
[99] In chapter three, I go so far as to introduce more apocryphal stories into my analysis.
[100] NRSVCE, Luke 2:29–32.

I discussed in chapter one how the author recalls in verse 33 how Mary and Joseph were "amazed" [*thaumazontes*/*mirantes*] at Simeon's words and how this is part of Mary's reading of Jesus and the events in her life as part of her intellectual journey. In this chapter I focus on Simeon's prophecy to Mary in verses 34 and 35: "Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul [*psychēn*/*animam*] too.'"[101]

When Mary's soul [*pyschē*/*anima*] is explicitly referenced as it is in Luke 2:35 and in Luke 1:46,[102] it can be difficult then to place the reference into one of these categories. I have placed Luke 2:35 in the chapter on Mary's heart because of its influence on the Immaculate Heart's artistic tradition. The Immaculate Heart artistic tradition is also similar to the Mater Dolorosa tradition, which strengthens my argument for reading Luke 2:34–35 in tandem with John 19:26–27. The other reference to Mary's soul is at the visitation in Luke 1:46 when Mary proclaims "My soul [*psychē*/*anima*] magnifies the Lord…,"[103] leading into the rest of her Magnificat.[104] I placed this verse in the chapter on Mary's mind because I was exploring her mentality, specifically her sense of self, in that moment rather than her emotions.

As I argued above, I will be interpreting Luke 2:35 in the context of the crucifixion because it is plausible within my methodology and because it more effectively highlights Mary's immaculate love at the cross. Since there is a vast and varied interpretation of Luke 2:35,[105] drawing on the art historical traditions of the Immaculate Heart and the Mater Dolorosa may be more effective in conveying the emotional intensity of Luke 2:35 in the context of John 19:26–27.

The Immaculate Heart in Art

The image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary[106] has become ubiquitous in Catholic iconography. In the section on Simeon's prophecy for Mary in Luke 2:35, I defended using the passage in the chapter on Mary's heart. In the verse, the author of Luke's Gospel uses

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[101] NRSVCE, Luke 2:34–35.
[102] NRSVCE, Luke 1:46. "And Mary said, 'My soul [*psychē/anima*] magnifies the Lord…."
[103] NRSVCE, Luke 1:46.
[104] Luke 1:46-55.
[105] Brown, SS, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 462–63.
[106] It should be noted that the Immaculate Conception and the Immaculate Heart are separate traditions and did not develop at the same time. See John F. Murphy's *Immaculate Heart of Mary* and Kilian Healy's article, "The Theology of the Doctrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary" for more on this.

psuchē/anima rather than *kardia/cor*: "…and a sword will pierce your own soul [*psuchē*/*anima*] too."[107] I have argued that despite the text's direct reference to Mary's soul, artists have visualized this with the heart.

Leopold Kupelwieser's painting *The Heart of Mary* [Fig. 3] is representative of the Immaculate Heart's iconographic style. In the image, Mary is before a textured, gold-leaf background. Her gold-leaf halo has a radiant texture, setting it apart from the filigree style background. Mary wears a red tunic and her traditional blue mantel. On her chest is a rounded heart set against yellow and orange flames. The sword from Simeon's prophecy pierces the top of the heart and exits at the bottom left. An alternating pattern of pink roses and white lilies encircles the heart. Mary gazes out at the viewer while pressing her right hand to her chest and extending her left hand to the viewer.

Kupelwieser's painting demonstrates that there is an art historical precedent for my argument that Mary's heart through her love is the most accessible part of her immaculateness. Mary's eyeline and gestures in this image underscore this point. Mary's eyes are the most dominant part of the image. Kupelwieser uses the brightest highlight around her eyes implying, that Mary is looking at a light source in front of her. The lines of her halo and the filigree behind her – if they continued into her space – would converge at her eyes so that the viewer is drawn there.

Figure 3: Kupelwieser, The Heart of Mary, 19th century

Mary makes unabashed eye contact with the viewer in stark contrast to many annunciation scenes in which Mary looks away from the angel Gabriel. Here Mary, now removed from her earthly life, boldly engages the viewer.

Once the viewer returns Mary's gaze, their eyes travel down her face where her chin points directly to the hand pressed to her chest, then to the sword-pierced heart, and then to her extended hand. In these gestures, Mary conveys that both the sorrow and the triumph of her pierced heart are available to the viewer. Mary's heart was pierced in sorrow, but the viewer can see her reward in the encircling crown of flowers and flames.

[107] NRSVCE, Luke 2:35.

Inviting the viewer into her suffering and joy is reminiscent of Matthew 16:24–25 in which Jesus tells his disciples: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."[108] When Simeon delivers his prophecy of the sword that will pierce her heart, Mary's call to follow her son despite tribulation is renewed, a call to which she first consented at the annunciation. This suffering will culminate at the crucifixion. When Mary gestures to the viewer, she invites them to follow her son's command to take up their cross/sufferings and follow him as she has already done. The viewer is forewarned of the proceeding pain in the sword but consoled in the flower crown. This reversal of fortune is also reminiscent of the similar theme in Mary's Magnificat: "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly…." The Mary who stood at the foot of the cross witnessing her son's death[109] is now crowned with a gold halo, comforting those who trust in her son's message: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."[110]

Mary at the Crucifixion in John 19:26–27 – Fulfilling Immaculate Sorrow

The passion narrative appears in all four Gospels[111]. The synoptic Gospels do not name Mary there explicitly, instead referring to a group of women.[112] Only in John's Gospel does the author explicitly note her presence, but Mary is only called "mother" [*mētera*/*matrem*][113] in relation to Jesus. This mimics how the author calls Mary the "mother of Jesus"[114] [*mētēr Iēsou*/*mater Jesu*] at the Cana wedding feast.[115] I will return to this theme below. Because John's Gospel is the only one that explicitly notes Mary's presence – despite not using her name – and it includes the exchange with John at the cross, I have used this version of the passion narrative to discuss Mary's immaculate sorrow.

As Jesus is dying on the cross, he addresses his mother and the apostle John: "Near the foot of Jesus stood his mother ad his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary

[108] NRSVCE, Luke 16:24–25.
[109] John 19:25–27.
[110] NRSVCE, Matthew 5:4.
[111] Matthew 26–27; Mark 14–15; Luke 22–23; John 18–19.
[112] Matthew 27:55–56; Mark 15:40–41; Luke 23:49.
[113] NRSVCE, John 19:26.
[114] NRSVCE, John 2:1.
[115] John 2:1–11.

of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home."[116]

In the thesis introduction I discussed how Scotus argued that Mary's immaculateness made her more, and not less, dependent on Jesus's death and resurrection. Because he had given her the greatest gift of grace-fullness, she owed him the greatest debt.[117] I propose that at the crucifixion, Mary's grief is heightened because of her immense debt to him. She is watching his sacrifice for her – which is greater for her than for any other – play out. Though Mary does not know she is immaculately conceived, her perfect love would enable her to feel this acute sorrow even if she does not understand why.

Her perfect love both for her son and her God further contributes to her grief. Above I argued that Mary as immaculate is more perfectly able to enjoy and communicate God's love. This then contributes to her sorrow at the crucifixion because she is watching her son, with whom she has a maternal connection, suffer, but she is also watching her God suffer before her.

Grace at the Cross

In chapter one I discussed the wedding feast in Cana[118] and argued that Mary's intervention is her drawing on habitual grace [*gratia habitualis*] to ask Jesus to perform his first public miracle, which begins his public ministry and ultimately hastens his death. I argued that Mary's partial knowledge allows her to know that Jesus's life will end in suffering and death, but that she does not know the exact manner (that is, crucifixion) in which he will be killed. In viewing her watching his suffering and death she is drawing on both cooperating grace [*gratia cooperans]* and gratuitous grace [*gratia gratis data*].

Firstly, Mary is drawing on cooperating grace because it is the same grace that aids her at Cana, and the crucifixion is the fulfillment of Mary's actions at Cana. I argued in chapter two that Mary is drawing on cooperating grace at Cana rather than at the annunciation[119] because she has had thirty years to grow in her role as Jesus's mother. Thus she was more prepared to cooperate with God's plan and did not need operating grace [*gratia*

[116] John 19:25–27.
[117] Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, 45.
[118] John 2:1–11.
[119] In chapter one, I link the Cana wedding with the annunciation because I argue they both show Mary making decisions.

operans] to influence her will. At the crucifixion Mary then should also be drawing on cooperating grace because as she watches the scene she must accept and cooperate with God's will.

Secondly, I propose Mary is drawing on gratuitous grace because her presence at the cross has become an instructing testimony to loving and persevering in love for God in adversity. When Aquinas defines gratuitous grace he cites 1 Corinthians 12:8–10: "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of Spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues."[120] He provides this as example of how God gives people particular gifts to aid in the sanctification of others.[121] I have quoted 1 Corinthians to argue that although Mary's steadfast example at the cross does not match Paul and Aquinas's understandings of gratuitous grace, her actions should still be considered a sign of gratuitous grace.

Mary Begins Her Public Life at the Cross in the Context of Cana

Finally, I propose that Jesus's giving Mary and John to each other is a further turn of Mary's actions at Cana. In chapter one I argued that Mary's actions at Cana were an inversion of her *fiat* at the annunciation: her *fiat* welcomed Jesus into her personal life and her command to the servant "Do whatever he tells you"[122] released him from their personal sphere and into public ministry. Jesus's giving Mary and John to each other is a further turn of the annunciation and Cana wedding, but this time it is Jesus who is the actor as he sends Mary into the public and spiritual spheres – not the private. I argue he sends Mary into the public and private spheres and not the private because the *Mater Ecclesiae* tradition is rooted in John 19:26-27.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Vatican II constitution *Lumen Gentium* succinctly articulate the *Mater Ecclesiae* tradition. Based on Jesus giving Mary to John, this represents her motherhood to all believers: "The Son whom she brought forth is He whom

[120] NRSVCE, 1 Corinthians 12:8–10.
[121] Davies, OP, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae*, 226.
[122] NRSVCE, John 2:5.

God placed as the first-born among many brethren,[123] namely the faithful, in whose birth and education she cooperates with a maternal love."[124] Furthermore, the authors of both texts emphasize that Mary's role as Mother of the Church is strictly linked to her divine maternity: "Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it."[125] This passage from the CCC also cites *Lumen Gentium* which the authors then cite from John19:26–27:

> After this manner the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, grieving exceedingly with her only begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with His sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to His disciple with these words: 'Woman, behold thy son.'[126]

Having established that Mary's title *Mater Ecclesiae* is rooted in John 19:6-27, I argue that this tradition demonstrates that Jesus's commandment to her and John brings Mary into the public and spiritual spheres rather than making her a "kept woman" who must be sent to a new household. First, Jesus is sending Mary into the spiritual sphere because his Church is not confined to earth. Secondly, he is sending her into the public sphere because his Church does in-part dwell on earth in his disciples, and in the remainder of Mary's earthly life she is mother to the Church on earth with whom she can physically encounter. Thus to be Mother of her son's Church during her life she must involve some form of public ministry.

Van den Hengel writes, "It is generally accepted by exegetes today that the text does not mean that the disciple took her into his home or took physical care of her. The better translation is that he took the mother of Jesus 'into his own', that is, into the circle of

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[123] The authors of *Lumen Gentium* cite Romans 8:29 as support: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family." NRSVCE.
[124] LG, 63. Also cited in *CCC* 501.
[125] *CCC*, 964.
[126] LG, 58.

believers, into his spiritual space. Because of her work in the life of her son, the mother will have a proper place with the disciples."[127]

Elizabeth Johnson articulates a feminist interpretation of the scene: "Beholding each other in a new relationship, the mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple mark the birth of a new family of faith founded on the following of Jesus and his gracious God…Many biblical scholar today also note that the symmetry of the beholding between the woman and the man signals that neither is to be elevated above the other. Both are equal partners in the family of disciples, reflecting the Johannine community as a whole where to a great extent 'women and men were already on an equal level in the fold of the Good Shepherd.' In a word, the mother and the beloved disciple are representative of a larger group, the church."[128]

Framing John 19:26-27 as the beginning of Mary's public role in the Church becomes stronger when one considers her place among the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 1:14; 2:1–4) as discussed in chapter one. This may seem unlikely since that Pentecost scene is Mary's last appearance in the canonical Gospels. However, Elizabeth Johnson's interpretation of Mary as a leader in the early Church,[129] that there is reason to imagine Mary among the leaders of the early Church. But I would not limit John 19:26-27 as only beginning Mary's earthly ministry. Rather, I would propose that it continues, and is intensified, after her Assumption into her role as Mediatrix.

At the beginning of this chapter I argued that Mary enjoys charitable friendship with God throughout her life. Now, after arguing that Jesus's giving Mary to John from the cross is the beginning of her public life, I consider how Mary loves her neighbor. But Mary's neighbor is more than just those she encounters in her earthly life; after her assumption her remit expands to all Christians.

Mary because she loves God perfectly, can see the full humanity of others in a particular way. In his 2024 encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis writes on this theme of recognizing the heart in others: "We see, then, that in the heart of each person there is a mysterious connection between self-knowledge and openness to others, between the encounter with one's personal uniqueness and the willingness to give oneself to others. We become ourselves only to the extent that we acquire the ability to acknowledge others, while only those who can acknowledge and accept themselves are then able to encounter others."[130]

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[127] John van den Hengel SCJ, "Miriam of Nazareth: Between Symbol and History," in *The Feminist Companion to Mariology*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (T and T Clark, 2005), 143.
[128] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 295.
[129] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 302–3.
[130] Francis, *Dilexit Nos* (2024), 18.

Finally, there is awareness between Mary and others. During her earthly life, this is easily done: Mary would simply have to know a person and vice versa. While she is in heaven, a person can still know Mary through books (even in theses, like this one) and Mary can know a person on a deeper, more intimate level from heaven than she could on earth.

Earlier in the chapter I argued that the shared thing between Mary and God was the salvation of Mary's people, the Israelites. But from the cross, Mary's shared thing with God and humanity becomes bigger because they share a desire for the salvation of everyone not just the Israelites.

> Returning to 1 Corinthians 1:9, St. Thomas concludes from this text that God in calling us to fellowship with himself, is really sharing with us his own divine happiness. The friendship which must arise from this sharing can only be charity. The virtue of charity is thus seen to be friendship between God and [humanity], based on a sharing in the divine happiness. This is charity in its primary meaning, what one might call its "vertical dimension." However, each of us shares the divine beatitude not only with God, but with our fellow [human beings]. This gives rise to charity in its secondary meaning or in its "horizontal dimension," that is, fraternal charity. Charity thus goes beyond friendship between the individual and God and becomes as well, friendship for one's neighbor.[131]

In the chapter introduction I noted that I placed this chapter on Mary's heart after the one on her mind because Augustine argues that one cannot love what one does not understand.[132] I am not suggesting that Mary completely understands Jesus in her earthly life, but perfect understanding is not necessary for perfect love. In Stump's interpretation of Aquinas she argues: "Although the lover must desire as good for the beloved whatever it is he wants for the beloved, nothing in Aquinas's account requires that the lover understand that good as something which conduces to the beloved's flourishing. The lover need not understand that it does so in order for the lover to desire it as good for the beloved, since a person may fail to recognize the object of his desire under one or another description of it."[133]

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[131] Hughes, OP, "Charity as Friendship in the Theology of Saint Thomas," 170. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[132] *De Trin*., X.1.
[133] Eleonore Stump, "Love, By All Accounts," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 80, no. 2 (2006): 28.

Using the annunciation from chapter one as an example, Mary does not perfectly anticipate all that will come from her *fiat*. Nevertheless, she is capable of willing God's good by accepting the incarnation in accordance with his will. She also wills the good of the Israelites because her *fiat* brings about their salvation.

Mary at the Crucifixion in Art

In the chapter problem, I argued that depictions of Mary swooning at the cross were not compatible with this interpretation of the Immaculate Conception. In this section, I argue that the Pietà is compatible with the Immaculate Conception. The Pietà is a Christian art motif that depicts the dead body of Jesus in the lap or arms of Mary after the crucifixion. The motif developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries from the Deposition from the Cross motif which showed Jesus's body being taken down from the cross. Despite its popularity – the most famous example being Michelangelo's sculpture *Pietà* in Saint Peter's Basilica – Elizabeth Johnson notes that there is no biblical passage that depicts the scene: "It is interesting to note that the Gospels never describes Mary holding the body of her dead son when he is taken down form the cross. Yet the artistic image of the *pietà* truly captures the existential tone of inexpressible sadness at the heart of this event."[134] I agree with Johnson that the motif helps convey to the viewer Mary's sorrow at the scene, but I would go further and argue that it helps demonstrate the love-as-friendship in Mary's heart. To discuss this I will analyze two depictions of the Pietà from Western art: Michelangelo's sculptural *Pietà* (*c*. 1499) and William-Adolphe Bouguereau's painting *Pietà* (1876). These works realize the same theme in different mediums and from artists in working in different periods, but I will focus on how the artists let Mary interact with the viewer in different ways. To supplement this discussion, I adapt Sarah Stanbury's argument about Mary's gaze in medieval literature to these visual works of art.

Figure 4: Michelangelo, Pietà, 1498–1499

Michelangelo's *Pietà* [Fig. 4] depicts Mary seated and veiled with Jesus's body – naked except for a modesty cloth around his hips – across her lap.

[134] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 294.

Despite being hidden in drapes of fabric, the viewer can see that Mary's knees are spread so that her right knee supports Jesus's middle back, and her left knee supports his upper legs. This pose helps create the pyramidal shape of the scene that, I argue, is reminiscent of Mary's relationship with the Trinity. When Mary was pregnant with Jesus (notice how his torso sits now next to her womb), she held the entire Trinity within her.

Unlike in Bouguereau's painting, Mary gazes down at her son rather than out at the viewer. Michelangelo does not portray her weeping, but nevertheless the viewer is able to understand her sorrow. She gazes down at him with not quite peace but perhaps peaceful acceptance – this moment of sorrow is the culmination of her life with Jesus from her *fiat* to his giving Mary and John to each other from the cross. Because Mary looks down at her son, this sculpture more effectively portrays Mary's love for God.

Figure 5: Bouguereau, Pietà, 1876

Bouguereau's *Pieta* [Fig. 5] depicts Mary in a dark red dress with dark blue mantle and a swatch of a white scarf peeking out from her right shoulder. Here Jesus, wearing only a white breechcloth, sits more upright in Mary's lap so that his head rests against Mary's left shoulder.

Because this is a painting rather than a freestanding sculpture like Michelangelo's *Pietà*, Bouguereau can create more scenery. Mary and Jesus are surrounded by mourning angels and are themselves crowned with gilded halos. The supernaturalness of this background is contrasted with the realism of the foreground: the viewer can see Jesus's blood-soaked tunic,[135] crown of thorns,[136] and sponge and pitcher of vinegar.[137] This juxtaposition of the heavenly with the earthly is reminiscent of the duality of

[135] NRSVCE, John 19:23-24. "When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.'"

[136] NRSVCE, John 19:2-3. "And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face."

[137] NRSVCE, John 19:28-30. "After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

Mary's mourning: in the ordinary she is a mother grieving her son and in the extraordinary she is a creature mourning her savior.

Unlike in Michelangelo's *Pieta*, this Mary gazes directly at the viewer. There is no nuance to her emotion: her eyes, in darkness from her veil, are red and her lips are downturned. By looking out at the viewer Mary invites the viewer into her pain that is ultimately waiting for the triumph of Jesus's resurrection. This scene is like Leopold Kupelwieser's *The Heart of Mary* that I discussed earlier in this chapter. I argued that by pointing to her heart, Mary is reminding the viewer that they can only reach the peace of her love if they are willing to suffer for her son's sake. Bouguereau's Mary does the same but with her eyes. She does not need to point to a pierced heart because her whole demeanor as she holds Jesus's body conveys how she is pierced with sorrow. She seems to be reminding the viewer of Jesus's words in Matthew 16:24-25: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."[138] In this scene Mary is demonstrating that lived reality of sacrificing for the viewer.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that Mary loves God and all of humanity in friendship. This Thomist idea of love as friendship that I apply to Mary is possible for anyone: male or female, immaculate or maculate. Because of the universality of this principle, it refutes the Aristotelean notion that women are softer and more compassionate than men. This chapter also demonstrated that Mary is capable of a wide range of emotions including "negative" ones like anger [*ira*]. In this we have seen that Mary is neither overly emotional nor emotionless, which would yield a bland, oatmeal-like kind of love and emotion.

In chapters one and two, it was important to consider how Mary's grace-fullness affects her mind and heart, respectively. In doing so, I balanced Mary's uniqueness with her humanity. The next chapter on the immaculate body of Mary differs from this pattern because – as we will see – Mary's immaculateness does not impact her corporeality. In this argument, we find important commonalities between Mary and all women in their physical selves as we have already seen in their mental and emotional selves.

[138] NRSVCE, Matthew 16:24-25.

Chapter Three: The Immaculate Body of Mary

Introduction

Having developed a feminist theology of Mary's mind and heart, I turn now to Mary's immaculate body to complete the tripartite anthropology that I established in the thesis introduction. This chapter addresses Aristotle's most overt criticism of women: their (supposedly) malformed bodies. In this chapter I argue that Mary's body – which guarantees Jesus's humanity – functions like those of other women and that her grace-fullness does not shield her from physical experiences. Furthermore, by arguing that Mary has the same bodily experiences as other women, then Mary – whose body is crucial to God's salvific work – demonstrates that women's bodies are naturally not deformed.

I establish the chapter problem by examining a July 1960 monitum from the Holy See that decries crude language in recent scholarship about Mary's *in partu* virginity. In this chapter I define "body" [*sōma*/*corpus*] as the physical, sensing matter of Mary's humanity. As in the previous chapters, I use Greek and Latin Classical, Biblical, Patristic, and Thomistic usage to demonstrate a precedent for this definition. After this definition, I explain Mary's body in relation to her grace-fullness with a Thomistic framework to conclude that grace [*gratia*] does not alter her physicality, giving her more in common with maculate women.

As in the previous chapters, I discuss Mary's body in the context of scriptural passages. This chapter differs from the others, however, because I also incorporate passages from the apocryphal text the *Protoevangelium of James*. While the *Protoevangelium* is not part of the canon, it has still been highly influential on Marian devotion and art for centuries. Because of this influence I include a few references to it in this chapter inasmuch as its author is more interested in Mary's body than the canonical Gospels are. However, because it is an apocryphal text, I do not parse it as I have done to canonical passages.

My use of the *Protoevangelium* follows the approach of Pope Benedict XVI – writing when he was Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger –to the *Protoevangelium* that he describes in *Mary, The Church at the Source*. He characterizes it as a text "which dates back at least to the second century and, despite its numerous legendary elements, may also have preserved real

reminiscences….”[1] Benedict implies that because the text is relatively close to the apostolic age, it is possible that the text has some “reminiscences” that were passed down orally until they were written down in this text. He neither unequivocally endorses nor dismisses the text. My use of the *Protoevangelium* as a beginning point to some Marian devotions without parsing it reflects Benedict’s moderate attitude to the text.

Furthermore, the *Protoevangelium* was foundational to many artistic interpretations of Mary such as Anna and Joachim’s embrace at the gate in chapter four and the child Mary going into the Temple in chapter seven. The Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome includes a mosaic of Mary spinning the scarlet veil for the Temple in chapter ten. The Basilica’s mosaic – being in a papal basilica – demonstrates the legitimate importance of the visual tradition of the *Protoevangelium* despite its being apocryphal.

In this chapter I focus on four major aspects of Mary’s immaculate body. The first is Mary’s conception by sexual intercourse. Since the canonical Gospels do not portray Mary’s early life or the lives of her parents Anna and Joachim, I draw on the *Protoevangelium of James,* chapters 2–4. I argue that Anna and Joachim had sexual intercourse to conceive Mary as that would be fitting to preserve Jesus’s uniqueness in his asexual conception and to demonstrate that immaculateness can proceed from sexual intercourse. I illustrate this idea with the artistic tradition of Anna and Joachim’s kiss at the Temple gate,[2] which I argue, underscores the physicality of Mary’s conception.

In the next section, I argue that Mary endures pain while giving birth to Jesus. Luke 2:6–7 is the key biblical passage since it gives the most – though still comparatively little – information about Mary’s state while giving birth. I consider immaculate Mary in relation to Eve’s curse in Genesis 3:16, but argue that Isaiah 66:7 was more influential in the historical debate over whether Mary had a painful labor. I compare the woman giving birth without pain in Isaiah 66:7 and the woman with birthing pangs in Revelation 12:1–6. I then offer a physiological account of childbirth to conclude that Mary must have had labor pains. I also deconstruct Thomas Aquinas’s claim that Mary’s painless labor is a byproduct of her physical *in partu* virginity.[3] This is not a sign that she had original sin but that she has normal human anatomy and that, as in Genesis 3:16, childbearing is inherently painful.

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[1] Benedict XVI and Hans Urs von Balthasar, SJ, *Mary, the Church at the Source*, trans. Adrian Walker, A Communio Book (Ignatius Press, 2005), 94.
[2] *Protoevangelium of James* 4:8–9. Ronald F. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas: With Introduction, Notes, and Original Text Featuring the New Scholars Version Translation*, The Scholars Bible, vol. 2 (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1995), 39.
[3] *ST* III.Q35.A6.

Because of Aquinas's claim that Mary's painless childbirth is from her *in partu* virginity, I deconstruct the notion that Mary's hymen (the medical name for physical virginity) is necessary for her *in partu* virginity. While discussion of Mary's *in partu* virginity is a part of the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity, it is still useful to consider this in light of her immaculateness because it is the kind of miraculous event that one could tie to Mary's special status as immaculate. In that section I examine Luke 1:34 and Isaiah 7:14 and chapter 20 from the *Protoevangelium of James*.

In the final section, I argue that Mary menstruated. For this I draw from the *Protoevangelium of James* chapter 8 which states that Mary had to leave her early life in the Temple because of her menarche. I argue that Mary's menstruation did not detract from her immaculateness since Christianity does not have purity laws about menstruation, and I argue that Mary was not bound by Levitical purity laws.

Chapter Problem

In the modern Church, an Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference does not reveal itself by denying Mary natural bodily functions. Instead, it becomes about suppressing frank, unromantic conversations about women's bodies. Having outlined the structure of this chapter, I turn now to the chapter problem which demonstrates why there is need for a feminist theology of Mary's body. In 1952, Austrian priest Albert Mitterer published *Dogma und Biologie der Heiligen Familie,*[4] in which he argued that the state of Mary's hymen was unnecessary for the dogma of her perpetual virginity. Mitterer uses modern biology to refute Thomas Aquinas's claim that it was Mary's hymen that gave her a painless childbirth. He further argues that denying Mary this physical experience actually undermines her motherhood because it does not allow her body to physically change in the course of childbirth.[5]

In his discussion of *viringitas in partu* René Laurentin, in *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary,* lists Mitter's *Dogma und Biologie* as the first of several works in the mid-twentieth century that applied modern biology to this idea of physical virginity. Laurentin

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[4] To my knowledge this book is not available in an English translation. For Mitterer's argument I draw primarily on Dermot Ryan's book chapter "Perpetual Virginity" in *Mother of the Redeemer: Aspects of Dogma and Devotion* (ed. Kevin McNamara) published in 1960.

[5] Dermot Ryan, "Perpetual Virginity," in *Mother of the Redeemer: Aspects of Doctrine and Devotion*, ed. Kevin McNamara (Sheed and Ward, 1960), 124.

then gives the Holy See's response to this discourse on Mary's *in partu* virginity, which came as a monitum that was circulated among bishops rather than being officially published.[6] It read:

> This supreme Congregation [The Holy Office] has often observed recently, and with deep concern, that theological works are being published in which the delicate question of Mary's virginity *in partu* is discussed with a deplorable crudeness of expression and, what is more serious, in flagrant contradiction to the doctrinal tradition of the Church and to the sense of respect the faithful have…[The Holy Office] see[s] to it that for the future the publication of such dissertations on this problem be prohibited.[7]

One of the works cited by Laurentin as a catalyst for the Holy See's monitum is the article "A Doctor Considers the Birth of Jesus" by the medical doctor Clifford E. L. Henry. In the article, Henry uses practical language that one would expect of a physician (though at times I think erred into romantic euphemisms). The following passage, in which Henry discusses Mary giving birth vaginally, which would have altered her hymen, reflects his writing style: "To be in harmony with a belief that the intra-uterine life was as a human, it is reasonable to believe that there was no departure from normal channels. Sustaining this conjecture there is the matter of disposal of the secundines incidental to pregnancy; they no doubt passed through normal channels."[8] I would argue that Henry's language borders on the romantic rather than the crude since he uses the term "normal channels" rather than "vaginal birth." Furthermore, the word "hymen," which is the antomical term for "physical virginity" in a woman, does not appear in his article even though he is discussing her *in partu* physical virginity at the conclusion.

The Holy See's monitum raises two issues for the reader: first, the crude language used to discuss Mary's *in partu* virginity and second, how these discussions contradict the dogma of perpetual virginity. I propose that both of these issues raised by the Holy See have an important place in my feminist interpretation of the immaculate body. I disagree with the Holy See over the issue of "crudeness of language." Mitterer (as reported by Ryan) and

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[6] René Laurentin, *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, trans. Charles Neumann (Ami Press, 1991), 324–28.
[7] *Montium*, July 1960. Reproduced in Laurentin, *A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, 328–329.
[8] Clifford E. L. Henry, "A Doctor Considers the Birth of Jesus," *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 54, no. 3 (1953): 223.

Henry do not use crude language but rather just frank and rather unromantic language. I argued that Henry did not go far enough in his unromantic descriptions of Mary giving birth. However, Henry's language could be regarded as crude compared to the *Catechism of the Council of Trent,* which likens Mary giving birth with an unaffected hymen to how sun shines through glass without breaking it.[9]

I am not proposing that theologians should use crude language when discussing Mary's body in any way. Rather, I argue that using frank, unromantic language will make Mary's body more relatable to women's bodies. By frank and unromantic language, I mean modern medical terminology like "hymen" rather than "physical virginity" or "*virginitas in partu*." The theme of un-romanticizing Mary will play a greater role in the next chapter in which I argue against romantic feminism (the child of this Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference) when describing Mary and women. Furthermore, women in particular should be encouraged to have these frank, unromantic conversations about Mary's body and their own both in and out of scholarship. In doing so women can bring their own experiences to those of Mary to make her a more approachable, human figure.

To the monitum's second point, I argue that posing Mary as a human woman with a human body does not contract tradition but rather enhances the tradition of Mary as the guarantor of Jesus's humanity. The monitum implies that these unromantic discussions about Mary's hymen lead to the degradation of the dogma of her perpetual virginity by denying her physical *in partu* virginity. As I will argue later in this chapter, claiming that Mary's hymen tore while she was giving birth to Jesus does not denigrate her perpetual virginity because virginity is not solely the purview of the body. Applying the Holy See's concerns to the other issues discussed in this chapter also demonstrates how the need for a realistic, unromantic portrait of Mary's body does not call into question the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Rather, my feminist interpretation of Mary's body demonstrates the extent to which grace [*gratia*] does not affect the body.

Defining "Body" in this Chapter

"Body" [*sōma*/*corpus*] should be understood as the physical, sensing matter of Mary's humanity. Lewis and Short define *corpus* as "any object composed of materials perceptible

[9] Pius V, *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, trans. John A. McHugh, OP, and Charles J. Callan, OP (South Bend, IN: Marian Publications, 1972), 45–46.

by the senses, body, substance…in general a body, whether living or lifeless."[10] The OLD defines *corpus* as "the body of a [human] or beast…the body as distinct from, or the abode of, the life or soul."[11]BDAG defines *sōma* as "the body of a human being or an animal…the living body."[12] They cite John 2:21 as an example of such usage: "But [Jesus] was speaking of the temple of his body [*sōmatos*]."[13] LSJ defines *soma* as "body…of [a human being]."[14]

In *Augustine Through the Ages*, Allan D Fitzgerald, OSA summarizes Augustine's thought on the body as:

> Corpus could refer to any corporeal entity. Everybody has *mensura*, *numerum*, and *pondus*, that is, a body is anything which is moveable in time and place and is thus distinguished from soul, which moves in time, and from God, who does not move (ep. 18.2). Body, as extended in three dimensions, contrasts with spirit, which is whole wherever it is.[15]

Augustine's consolation to the raped women in *City of God* – that their hearts did not consent even though their bodies had been violated – further demonstrates how he viewed the body as a distinct entity from the soul.[16]

Aquinas, in defining the body in relation to the soul, writes:

> It is manifest that not every principle of vital action is a soul, for then the eye would be a soul, as it is a principle of vision; and the same might be applied to the other instruments of the soul: but it is the "first" principle of life, which we call the soul. Now, though a body may be a principle of life, or to be a living thing, as the heart is a principle of life in an animal, yet nothing corporeal can be the first principle of life. For it is clear that to be a principle of life, or to be a living thing, does not belong to a body as such; since, if that were the case, every body would be a living thing, or a principle of life. Therefore, a body is competent to be a living thing or even a principle

[10] LS, *s.v.,* "corpus."
[11] OLD, *s.v.,* "corpus." Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[12] BDAG, *s.v.,* "sōma."
[13] NRSVCE, John 2:21.
[14] LSJ, *s.v.,* "sōma." Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[15] Allan A. Fitzgerald, OSA, "Body," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan A Fitzgerald, OSA (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).
[16] *Civ. Dei*, 1.18.

> of life, as "such" a body. Now that it is actually such a body, it owes to some principle which is called its act. Therefore, the soul, which is the first principle of life, is not a body, but the act of a body; thus heat, which is the principle of calefaction, is not a body, but an act of a body.[17]

Based on these definitions, it is appropriate to define "body" [*sōma*/*corpus*] as the physical, sensing matter of a human being.

Relationship Between the Immaculate Body and the Immaculate Soul

Having defined "body," we can see that while Mary's body and soul are joined to create her humanity, her immaculateness did not imbue her body with special privileges. In the sections below I will demonstrate that Mary endures a normal bodily humanity, based on canonical texts and Sacred Tradition and modern biology because grace does not destroy nature.[18] In doing so, we can understand the immaculate body. In the previous two chapters, I have demonstrated how grace [*gratia*] impacts Mary's mind and heart. In this chapter, I argue that Mary's grace-fullness does not give her supernatural bodily functions. Aquinas establishes that grace is a quality[19] of the soul: "God is the life of the soul after the manner of an efficient cause; but the soul is the life of the body after the manner of a formal cause. Now there is no medium between form and matter, since the form, of itself, 'informs' the matter or subject; whereas the agent 'informs' the subject, not by its substance, but by the form, which it causes in the matter."[20] Furthermore, many saints have demonstrated how a healthy soul does not necessarily give someone a healthy body. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) and Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–1897) – both saints – are just two examples of women who were spiritually healthy in their lifetimes, but still frequently endured physical illness.

One could argue that based on the "motto" of the Immaculists (*potuit, decuit, ergo fecit*) that God could have preserved Mary from painful bodily sensations as a gift of her immaculateness. However, Jesus had to experience natural human sensations. Joseph Wawrykrow in his discussion on grace in Aquinas's theology summarizes Aquinas's understanding of Christ's physical life: "Basically, Aquinas ascribes those perfections and

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[17] *ST* I.Q75.A1.
[18] Cf. *ST* I.Q1.A8.
[19] *ST* I-II.Q110.A2.
[20] *ST* I-II.Q110.A1.

those defects to Christ that will further his salvific work, confirm his genuine humanity, and allow him to serve as the moral exemplar of other humans who aspire to God as end. And he denies to Christ those defects that would put his salvific work in jeopardy. Thus, Christ was without the defect of sin, and did not have the consequence of sin that is concupiscence."[21]

Aquinas gives three reasons why it was fitting for Jesus to endure "human infirmities and defects" [*humanis infirmitatibus et defectibus*]: first, so that he might make reparations for humans' sins by taking on the punishments of sin; second, to encourage belief in the incarnation; and third, so that in enduring small pains, Jesus could be an example of patience.[22] I apply Aquinas's arguments about why Jesus endured these infirmities and defects to why Mary had to endure them and how this enhances her immaculateness.

As I argued in chapter one, Mary does not know she is immaculately conceived following the argument of Elizabeth Johnson's which rests on the fact that Mary does not have miraculous privileges: "…even if she did [know she was immaculately conceived], it would not lift her feet off the ground. Understood as the personal, living, self-communication of God's Spirit to Mary at the outset of her life, the Immaculate Conception does not extract her from the challenges that come with life on this planet."[23]

To the first point, Mary is not making reparations on behalf of humanity as Jesus is;[24] she is as dependent on his salvific work – arguably even more so[25] – as the rest of humanity. Aquinas's justification is that Jesus had to endure the punishments of sin though not sin itself: "But these bodily defects, to wit, death, hunger, thirst, and the like, are the punishment of sin, which was brought into the world by Adam, according to Romans 5:12: 'By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death.'"[26]

To the second point, Aquinas argues that taking on these infirmities would make the incarnation more believable: "For since human nature is known to men only as it is subject to these defects, if the Son of God had assumed human nature without these defects, He would not have seemed to be [a] true [human], nor to have true, but imaginary, flesh…."[27] This demonstrates why Mary must have endured pains like labor pains. Aquinas's point is about

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[21] Wawrykow, "Grace," 214.
[22] *ST* III.Q14.A1.
[23] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 112.
[24] One could argue that Mary is making secondary reparations in accordance with the proposed fifth Marian dogma of Mary as Co-Redemptrix, but this topic is too far outside the scope of this thesis to be discussed here. See Mark Miravalle, "Mary's Cooperation in Redemption and the Immaculate Conception" (2008) in *Marian Studies* volume 59 for more on this topic.
[25] Scotus, *Four Questions on Mary*, 45.
[26] *ST* III.Q14.A1.
[27] *ST* III.Q14.A1. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.

how Jesus's endurance is to inspire others to belief in the incarnation. Implicit in Aquinas's argument is the understanding that the incarnation – Jesus as the second person of the Trinity assuming a human nature – is a complex and difficult concept for believers to imagine. Thus, in experiencing human infirmities and inconveniences, Jesus can demonstrate his humanity and make it easier for people to understand. If Jesus does this as God-man, then Mary, as fully human, must also experience these infirmities and defects as well.

To the third point, Aquinas argues that this makes Jesus "an example of patience by valiantly bearing up against human passibility and defects."[28] This point from Aquinas emphasizes a relational nature to Jesus's body that is applicable to Mary. In his argument, Aquinas cites Hebrews 12:3 which states, "Consider [Jesus] who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart."[29] Imitating Christ is a long-standing tradition in Christianity, as is imitating Mary.[30]

In chapter four I will expand on how Catholic women can imitate Mary, but in this chapter I emphasize how women can bond with Mary through bodily experiences. In the article "Band of mothers: Childbirth as a female bonding experience," Tara Tasuji *et al*. argue that women who experience difficult childbearing experiences bond through "indirect evidence of shared experience" since childbirth is typically done in isolation, away from other mothers. In other words, the mothers do not have to be in the same room giving birth simultaneously for this bond to take place. The authors use the term "identity fusion" defined as "a visceral sense of oneness with the group."[31] This study is limited to women who had given birth, but the findings could be applicable to women going through similar bodily rites of passage like puberty, menarche, menopause. I am not suggesting that a woman's identity should be narrowed to her body alone, rather that her body is an important element in her personal journey.

By embracing a version of Mary in which she is allowed natural bodily functions like menstruation and labor pains, she can become a relatable figure for women enduring those things. She can participate in the "identity fusion," Tasuji *et al*. described because while all women do not have to be present at the nativity to sympathize with her pain, they can still bond through shared experience. If women are meant to imitate Mary, then this is more easily

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[28] *ST* III.Q14.A1.
[29] NRSVCE.
[30] Cf. Ambrose of Milan, *Ambrose*, trans. Boniface Ramsey OP, The Early Church Fathers, ed. Carol Harrison (Routledge, 1997); Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Mary*, ed. Albin de Cigla, trans. A Dominican Sister [*sic*] (Angelico Press, 2020).
[31] Tara Tasuji et al., "Band of Mothers: Childbirth as a Female Bonding Experience," *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 10 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240175.

done when she can be seen as a model in unpleasant moments like menstruation and childbirth. To borrow from Karen O'Donnell's imagining a menopausal Mary who could be invoked as Our Lady of the Hot Flushes,[32] we can imagine a Mary invoked by young girls in puberty praying to Our Lady of the Menarche and women in labor praying to Our Lady of Labor.[33]

Conceived by Sexual Intercourse – *The Protoevangelium of James* 4

Despite the definition of the Immaculate Conception in *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pius IX does not officially define whether Mary was immaculately conceived through sexual or asexual reproduction. The canonical Gospels do not record any of Mary's early life before the incarnation or anything about her parents. The youngest the reader can encounter Mary is at the annunciation in Luke 1:26–38 and in Matthew 1:18–25, which recounts the nativity from Joseph's perspective. The *Protoevangelium of James* imagines how Mary's parents – named Anna and Joachim in the text – conceive and raise Mary. The author's rendition of the story mirrors Elizabeth's struggles to conceive in old age.

In the *Protoevangelium* the author recounts how Mary's mother Anna laments that she cannot get pregnant: "Poor me! Who gave birth to me? What sort of womb bore me? For I was born under a curse in the eyes of the people of Israel."[34] Then an angel appears to her saying, "Anna, Anna, the Lord God has heard your prayer. You *will conceive* and give birth, and your child will be talked about all over the world."[35] Anna promises she will offer the child to God when two more angels appear to tell her that her husband Joachim who has been fasting in the desert for forty days: "Look, your husband Joachim is coming with his flocks. You see, a messenger of the Lord had come down to Joachim and said, 'Joachim, Joachim, the Lord God has heard your prayer. Get down from there. Look, your wife Anna *is*

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[32] Karen O'Donnell, "Mary the Crone," in *From the Shores of Silence: Conversations in Feminist Practical Theology*, ed. Ashley Cocksworth et al. (SCM Press, 2023), 137–38.

[33] Cf. This pain and relationship to the Passion is reminiscent of how Felicity gives birth in The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicity: "Immediately after their prayer her pains came upon her, and when, with the difficulty natural to an eight months' delivery, in the labour of bringing forth she was sorrowing, some one of the servants of the Cataractarii said to her, 'You who are in such suffering now, what will you do when you are thrown to the beasts, which you despised when you refused to sacrifice?' And she replied, 'Now it is I that suffer what I suffer; but then there will be another in me, who will suffer for me, because I also am about to suffer for Him.'" Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., "The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicity," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, trans. R. E. Wallis, Online, vol. 3 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885), 2.

[34] *Protoevangelium of James* 3:2. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 37. In popular devotion, Anna is patron saint of women struggling with infertility.

[35] *Protoevangelium of James* 4:1. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 37. Emphasis mine.

pregnant."[36] The author describes their joyful meeting: "And so Joachim came with his flocks, while Anna stood at the gate [of the Temple]. Then she spotted Joachim approaching with his flocks and rushed out and threw her arms around his neck: 'Now I know that the Lord God has blessed me greatly. This widow is no longer a widow, and I, once childless, am now pregnant!' And Joachim rested the first day at home."[37]

I argued in the chapter introduction that because this was an apocryphal text, I would not be analyzing it in the same detailed way that I have done for the canonical Gospels. This methodology is particularly important to this chapter to establish that Mary had a sexual conception by her parents. In the passages above I emphasized the change in tense: when the angel speaks to Anna it is in the future tense ("You *will conceive*…"), but when the angels relay the message Joachim received it is in the present tense ("…your wife Anna *is pregnant*."). This sequence appears to imply that Anna becomes miraculously pregnant over the course of the conversation.

Ronald F. Hock, whose translation of the *Protoevangelium of James* I use in this chapter, notes the discrepancies between the manuscripts and that scholars are divided. Hock argues that because the author is trying to emphasize Mary's purity throughout the text, they would want to portray Mary with a miraculous conception.[38] Robert J. Miller argues for the miraculous conception of Mary that will foreshadow Mary's miraculous conception of Jesus later.[39] Both Miller and Hock refute the theory that 4:10, "And Joachim rested the first day at home," is a reference to Anna and Joachim having intercourse to conceive. Hock argues, "Such a connotation is possible but unlikely given the use of the same word in 15:1, where it definitely has no such meaning."[40] I would propose that Miller and Hock's textual exegesis reflects the limitations of their methodology. However, in my methodology that incorporates art historical evidence and systematic theology, I argue that Mary was conceived sexually.

[36] *Protoevangelium of James* 4:3–4. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 39. Emphasis mine.
[37] *Protoevangelium of James*, 4:8-10. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and* Thomas, 39.
[38] Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 39.
[39] Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels: The Scholars Version*, 4th ed (Polebridge Press, 2010), 367.
[40] Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 39.

I propose that *Protoevangelium* 4:10 could be understood as sexual conception in light of the kiss at the gate artistic motif found in early popular depictions of Mary's conception when Anna and Joachim kiss before the Temple gate.[41] Giotto's fresco of Anna and Joachim's meeting titled *Meeting at the Golden Gate* [Fig. 5] contains many elements common to the motif: Anna and Joachim meeting outside a structure while a crowd looks on. Giotto, more so than other depictions, emphasizes Anna and Joachim's physicality by depicting them fully embracing and kissing.

Figure 6: Giotto, Meeting at the Golden Gate, 1303–1306

The physicality of the scene drawn from the text inspires a different reading of 4:10 that portrays Anna and Joachim conceiving Mary sexually. In this way the embrace (or kiss in Giotto's depiction) functions like a metonymy for their sexual intercourse. Beyond this reading of the *Protoevangelium of James*, there is also a mystical tradition of Mary's conception through sexual intercourse which we will later explore through the revelations of Birgitta of Sweden.

Medical Understanding of Sexual Conception

Sexual conception can occur in the middle of a woman's reproductive cycle when an ovary releases a healthy ovum into the fallopian tubes. During sexual intercourse, 250 to 400 million sperm are released into the vagina and must journey to meet the ovum through hostile conditions. If a healthy sperm meets the healthy ovum, conception occurs. The sperm penetrates the protein layer outside the ovum, and fertilization occurs: "Once the sperm gets to the plasma membrane, the egg resumes meiosis and forms a nucleus with half the number of chromosomes and a second polar body. The climax of all this effort is the union of the nuclei of the sperm and the egg…The zygote, the beginning of a new individual, has been formed."[42]

Throughout her explanation of conception, Ethel Sloane emphasizes the unlikelihood of conception. A sperm must travel seven thousand times its own length to reach the ovum. If

[41] Boss, "The Development of the Doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception," 221.
[42] Ethel Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 3rd ed. (Delmar Publishers Inc., 1993), 358–59.

vagina is too acidic, sperm will not be able to survive, and if the cervical mucus is too thick, it can also make conception more difficult.[43] This highlights how even a natural, sexual conception can still be unlikely.

Historical Defenders of Mary's Sexual Conception

One of the earliest defenders of Mary being conceived sexually was John Damascene (*c*.675–*c*.749). He implies Mary was conceived through sexual intercourse in his homily on the nativity, writing, "O blessed loins of Joachim, whence the all-pure seed was poured out! O glorious womb of Anna, in which the most holy fetus grew and was formed, silently increasing! O womb in which was conceived the living heaven, wider than the wilderness of the heavens."[44] John's language is quite explicit, speaking openly about Joachim's seed and Anna's womb. Particularly by praising Joachim's seed we can see how he considered Joachim an active participant in conceiving Mary. This means that John supports the notion of Mary being conceived sexually.

In the *Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden,* Birgitta recounts her visions of Christ and Mary. This revelation occurs when Mary appears to Birgitta to explain her conception. It is helpful because it confirms that Mary was conceived through sexual intercourse, which distinguishes the immaculate conception from the incarnation. Of her conception, Mary tells Birgitta:

> [God] joined my father and mother in so chaste a marriage that there was no more chaste couple then to be found. They never desired to come together except in accordance with the Law, solely for the sake of procreation. When an angel announced to them that they would give birth to the Virgin from whom the salvation of the world would come, they would rather have died than come together in carnal love; lust had died in them. But, I assure you, out of divine charity and on account of the angel's message they did come together in the flesh, not out of concupiscence but against their will and out of love for God. In this way my flesh was put together from their seed through divine love. When my body had been

[43] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 358.
[44] Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, trans. Thomas Buffer (Ignatius Press, 1999), 402.

> formed, God sent the created soul into it from his divinity; the soul was immediately sanctified along with the body, and the angels watched over and ministered to it day and night. It is impossible to tell you what a great joy came over my mother when my soul had been sanctified and joined to its body.[45]

In these revelations, Mary via Birgitta makes explicit that her parents, Anna and Joachim, came together physically in sexual relation to conceive her. Furthermore, her notion that they had intercourse after the angel's message could be a reference to the angels in the *Protoevangelium of James* which would support such an interpretation of 4:10. Birgitta's account of her vision also emphasizes that Anna and Joachim did not experience lust during intercourse. This is perhaps not relatable for a maculate man and woman conceiving a child, but it does not lessen the importance of sexuality in Mary's immaculate conception.

Mary as the Guarantor of Jesus's Humanity

Throughout this thesis I have emphasized Mary's humanity in relation to women to demonstrate her relatability. However, in relation to Jesus Mary's humanity becomes about guaranteeing Jesus's humanity because she is his human parent. One of the key ways that Mary and Jesus are different is their different conceptions: Jesus is conceived asexually by Mary and the Holy Spirit while Mary is conceived sexually by Anna and Joachim. Arguing that Mary was conceived sexually but that this conception was immaculate both affirms her humanity and affirms Jesus's unique dual God-man personhood.

Mary being conceived sexually as all others have been – save Jesus – affirms her humanity in relation to both maculate women and Jesus as God-man. By being conceived sexually, Mary has another thing in common with the maculate women who are meant to emulate her. But she also affirms Jesus's uniqueness as being the only person to be conceived asexually through divine means.

Aquinas affirmed that Mary was the guarantor of Jesus's humanity, writing, "But the Blessed Virgin Mary was nearest to Christ in His humanity: because He received His human nature from her."[46] In *Mary Through the Centuries*, Jaroslav Pelikan frames the historical

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[45] Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, ed. Bridget Morris, trans. Denis Searby (Oxford University Press, 2006), 1:22.
[46] *ST* III.Q27.A5.

investment in Mary's humanity as a response to Docetism, an early heresy that claimed Jesus was not fully human. "Salvation depended on the true and complete humanity of Christ in his life and death; that true and complete humanity depended in turn on his having had a mother who was truly and completely human."[47] Here Pelikan succinctly impresses what was at stake on the reader: salvation itself depends on Mary being completely human.

Furthermore, emphasizing Mary as guarantor of Jesus's humanity, emphasizes her creature/creator relationship with God rather than the female–male dynamic that has been damaging to women. Jesus's male humanity is guaranteed by a woman, allowing Mary to defy the Aristotelean notion that the female body is inferior to the male. Only through her natural human body (warts and all) can Jesus's male human body be brought about – a body which would bring salvation to humanity.

Sexual Intercourse Leading to the Immaculate Conception

It is a credit to the sacrament of marriage that the immaculate conception resulted from sexual intercourse. While I am not suggesting that Anna and Joachim were sacramentally married, their marriage can still be a model for couples sacramentally married. Christianity has a history of disparaging marriage to the advantage of virginity. Jerome (*c*.342–420) writes, "I praise wedlock, I praise marriage, but it is because they give me virgins."[48] Around 1200 the Church – inspired by Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7:5[49] – developed an elaborate calendar to guide married couples on the appropriate days and seasons for sex. Sex was forbidden on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturday nights, and Sundays as well as during Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Though there were variations in restrictions between different countries, the average number of days when sex was permitted was around ninety-three days out of the year.[50] This practice demonstrates how even within the bounds of sacramental marriage, sex was still a delicate, regulated practice. Arguing that Mary as immaculate can be conceived through sexual intercourse, affirms the sacredness of the human body and the sexual act. Mary's description of her conception through Birgitta

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[47] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (Yale University Press, 1996), 50.
[48] Jerome, "Letter 22," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, and W.G. Martley, Online, vol. 6 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893), 20, https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001022.htm.
[49] NRSVCE, "Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."
[50] John W. Baldwin, *Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200*, Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 177.

describes how her parents did not want to have sex to conceiver her. This also supports my earlier argument that Christianity has a complicated relationship with sexual intercourse.

This interpretation of sexual intercourse leading to the holiest conception in salvation history – save that of Jesus – should be an encouragement to women in the marriage vocation that sexual intercourse can lead to holiness. This holiness came from Mary's particular circumstances of God creating her *gratia plena*.[51]

Pain During Childbirth – Luke 2:6–7, Revelation 12:12, and Genesis 3:16

Having established that Mary conceived through sexual intercourse, I argue that Mary endured labor pains while giving birth to Jesus. First, I will examine Luke 2:6–7 which describes Mary giving birth to Jesus, though the author does not comment on Mary's state during labor. I then present a medical interpretation of childbirth to demonstrate that the pain that comes from childbirth is natural due to the physiological constraints of the human body. After this I compare Isaiah's prophecy in 66:7 that the woman birthing the salvation of Zion did so without pain and the woman of Revelation 12 who does give birth in pain to conclude that the Revelation reading supersedes the Isaiah prophecy. I then consider Mary as immaculate in the context of God's curse to Eve at the Fall in which he told her that her pain would increase in childbirth.[52] I conclude that Mary did endure labor pains while birthing Jesus and that rather than undermining her immaculateness, this enhances it. Finally, I refute Aquinas's argument that Mary would have had a painless childbirth because of her untorn hymen (*virginitas in partu*).

Mary Gives Birth – Luke 2:6–7

In Luke's Gospel,[53] the author describes Jesus's birth occurring in Bethlehem because of the emperor's census[54]: "[Joseph] went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to

[51] For more on early Christian thought on sex in marriage see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Lower than the Angels: A History of Sex and Christianity* (Allen Lane, 2014), 119–30.
[52] Genesis, 3:16.
[53] I will be including only the Lukan nativity account since it is more focused on Mary than the Matthean account in 1:18–2:23.
[54] Luke 2:1–5.

deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."[55] The author describing Mary as wrapping up the infant Jesus herself would become a major part of the debate over Mary's pain during the nativity as we will see.

In his commentary on the scene, Luke Timothy Johnson does not give an explicit opinion on whether Mary had labor pains. However, in his commentary on the entirety of the birth narrative (Luke 2:1–20) he argues that the Lukan author is contrasting Mary and Joseph's poverty with the heavenly interventions: "The contrast, then, between the angelic panoply and the earthly reality is sharp; no wonder Mary 'turned these events over' in her heart, seeking to understand them."[56] This implies that while the shepherds' visit was extraordinary, the birth itself was ordinary, which would preclude the birth from an extraordinary event like Mary laboring without pain. Thus, implicitly Johnson shows how Mary had an ordinary, painful labor in his interpretation of Luke's nativity narrative.

Like Luke Timothy Johnson, Elizabeth Johnson argues that the Lukan birth narrative is meant to express how poor Mary and Joseph were. She also emphasizes how doubly disenfranchised Mary was, being both poor *and* a woman. Johnson is more explicit than the previous Johnson in asserting that Mary endured a painful labor. She argues that the Lukan author's statement "And she gave birth" did not imply in any way "such escape from the human condition."[57] She goes on to argue that "For Luke this religious interpretation does not counteract the idea that Mary traveled deep into the experience common to women who bring forth a new person out of their own bodies, even at risk of their own death…Real blood was shed at this delivery…laboring in childbirth for the first time. And it was holy."[58] That Johnson interprets of the scene frames the real messiness of labor not as a detraction from its importance but as an asset is important to this argument.[59]

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[55] NRSVCE, Luke 2:5–7.
[56] Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 52.
[57] Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 277.
[58] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 277.
[59] In the popular book *A Catholic Mother's Companion to Pregnancy: Walking with Mary from Conception to Baptism,* author Sarah A. Reinhard does not offer a strong opinion on whether Mary had labor pains, citing "theological arguments both ways." She encourages the reader to unite her pain with that of Jesus on the cross rather than making a stronger claim about Mary having labor pains, which would surely be more useful to the reader. But Reinhard does assure the reader that she can confidently walk with Mary during labor (179–183).

Medical Understanding of Childbirth and Resulting Pain

To understand how and why women like Mary experience pain while giving birth, I will apply Ethel Sloane's three-part description of labor pain from her book *Biology of Women*: uterine contractions, cervical dilation, and vaginal and perineal (the tissue between the vaginal opening and anus) stretching. In this section, I will examine each of these painful experiences in turn to demonstrate that to give birth vaginally Mary must have experienced each of these sensations and thus endured pain in labor.

Uterine contractions occur because before labor begins the fetus will "drop" into the true pelvis which then causes the cervix to begin to shorten. Throughout pregnancy the uterus has divided into two sections, an upper and lower. During labor the upper part of the uterus becomes the "active muscular contracting part responsible for delivery"[60] which, as it contracts and shortens, will push the fetus out of the vaginal opening.

As the uterus separates into upper and lower corpus so that the upper can facilitate uterine contractions, the lower corpus elongates and thins as the cervix fills with bloods and thus softens. Contractions will then eventually cause the cervix to shorten and become part of the lower uterus.[61] In the first stage of labor, the cervix must dilate to ten centimeters to allow the fetus head (the largest part) to pass through. Sloane argues that one of the most difficult parts of labor is at the end of the first stage when the cervix reaches full dilation. It is the shortest part of labor – lasting about an hour – and uterine contractions are painful and strong.[62]

During the second stage of labor as the fetus is in the birth canal, uterine contraction open the vagina to move the fetus through.[63] The head – with a maximum diameter of ten centimeters – will put pressure on the rectum, bladder, and local tissues.[64] "Crowning" occurs when the baby's head stays visible in the vagina even as contractions continue.[65] The stage when the head "crowns" is known colloquially as the "ring of fire," further alluding to the pain. Once the head is out of the vagina, the rest of the body can egress more easily.[66] Sloane likens the fetus moving through the birth canal as "the felling of having a bowling ball move

[60] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 408.
[61] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 408.
[62] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 410–11.
[63] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 411.
[64] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 415.
[65] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 411.
[66] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 412.

slowly through the pelvis."[67] This metaphor highlights how the size of the baby – particularly its ten-centimeter head – is a major part of the pain that the women endure.

Based on this outline of the pain from contractions, cervix dilation, and vaginal and perineal stretching, we can infer that Mary experienced pain from these three factors. I established earlier in this chapter that Mary as fully human must have a fully human body and that Jesus – whose humanity Mary guarantees – also has a fully human body as God-man. Because of these parameters, Mary and Jesus must both have human bodies bound by the same biological constraints as a maculately conceived person. Therefore, Mary's uterus must have contracted, her cervix must have dilated, and her vagina and perineum must have stretched to birth Jesus who must have had a ten-centimeters-wide head. Thus, Mary's pain at the nativity is not a curse from Eve's disobedience but a natural effect of the biological process of giving birth.

Dermot Ryan, following Albert Mitterer's argument, interprets Luke 2:6 as the beginning of Mary's labor. The author of Luke writes, "While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child."[68] Mitterer's interpretation of Luke 2:6 is more realistic than Henry's, who frames it as feminine intuition: "Mary, through that mysterious intuition common to women in many things, knew her time for delivery was near."[69] From a biological standpoint, Mary most likely knew her time to deliver had come when contractions began and her "water broke." Sloane argues that labor has begun when "the contractions become painful, less than ten minutes apart, last 30–90 seconds and are in regular frequency."[70] These early contractions can lead to the forewaters that cushion the fetus's head in the amniotic and chorionic sac bursting. This leads to a small drainage of amniotic fluid leaving the woman's body. This process is colloquially described as a woman's "water breaking."[71] Thus there is no need for a feminine "mysterious intuition."

One prominent explanation for Mary not having labor pains is that the author of Luke explicitly mentions that Mary swaddled Jesus herself after birthing him: "And [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."[72] Theologians have argued that for Mary to

[67] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 415.
[68] NRSVCE, Luke 2:7
[69] Henry, "A Doctor Considers the Birth of Jesus," 222.
[70] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 409.
[71] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 409.
[72] NRSVCE, Luke 2:7.

have enough energy to tend to her baby after giving birth, she must have birthed him without pain.

Drawing Albert Mitterer's *Dogma und Biologie*, Ryan sees the Lukan author's explicit reference to Mary, rather than a midwife, tending to Jesus immediately after birth as a sign that she had a painless birth.[73] In other words, her labor could not have been so exhausting or painful if she has the energy to take care of her son immediately after labor.

However, Mary would have likely experienced a rush of the "stress hormone" cortisol during and after birth that would have given her enough energy to wrap up her son after giving birth. In labor cortisol can rise up to ten times the normal amount while a woman is in labor. Women who experience high levels of cortisol can also experience a more painful childbirth, but high levels can also induce a euphoric feeling up to twenty-four hours postpartum.[74] This euphoric feeling would give Mary enough energy to swaddle Jesus – a relatively unlaborious task – even after a painful childbirth. Considering that cortisol would have given Mary the energy to wrap Jesus herself after birth, this historical argument is no longer applicable. Now, let us consider some of the Biblical arguments about Mary in labor.

Genesis 3:16

In Genesis, the author recounts Adam and Eve's original innocence in the Garden of Eden.[75] Eve eats from the tree of knowledge of good and evil at the behest of the devil-snake. Adam then eats from the tree at her behest.[76] When God learns of their sin, he casts them out of Eden with curses.[77] To Eve he says in part, "I will greatly increase [*multiplicabo*] your pangs [*aerumnas*] in childbearing; in pain [*dolore*] you shall bring forth children…."[78]

Before the more formal debate about the Immaculate Conception began in the eleventh century,[79] Mary and Eve were closely bound by the Church Fathers. Justin Martyr (*c.*100–*c.*165) was one of the first to portray Mary in relation to Eve:

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[73] Ryan, "Perpetual Virginity," 125–26.
[74] Sarah J Buckley, "Hormonal Physiology of Childbearing: Evidence and Implications for Women, Babies, and Maternity Care," National Partnership for Women and Families, 2015, 121.
[75] Genesis 2.
[76] Genesis 3:1–7.
[77] Genesis 3:8–15.
[78] NRSVCE, Genesis 3:16.
[79] Adams, "The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: A Thought-Experiment in Medieval Philosophical Theology," 133.

> …He became [human] by the Virgin, in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her: wherefore also the Holy Thing begotten of her is the Son of God; and she replied, 'Be it unto me according to thy word." And by her has He been born, to whom we have proved so many scriptures refer, and by whom God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him; but works deliverance from death to those who repent of their wickedness and believe upon Him.[80]

Irenaeus (*c.*125–*c.*202) creates a similar picture of Mary and Eve, but he is more explicit than Justin Martyr in framing Mary as obedient and Eve as disobedient:

> In accordance with this design, Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." But Eve was disobedient; for she did not obey when as yet she was a virgin. And even as she, having indeed a husband, Adam, but being nevertheless as yet a virgin (for in Paradise "they were both naked, and were not ashamed," inasmuch as they, having been created a short time previously, had no understanding of the procreation of children: for it was necessary that they should first come to adult age, and then multiply from that time onward), having become disobedient, was made the cause of death, both to herself and to the entire human race… And thus also it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith.[81]

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[80] A. Cleveland Coxe, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, LL.D., vol. 1 (T and T Clark, 1996), 100. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[81] Coxe, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus,* III:20.

The Mary–Eve dichotomy was a popular theme in Patristic Mariology. Gregory of Nyssa (*c*.335–*c*.394), however, added the element of Mary not enduring labor pains in comparison to Eve.[82] In his commentary on Song of Songs 5:8–12, Gregory writes,

> For as the Virgin did not know how the God-receiving body came to be in her body, by the same token she did not experience childbirth, the prophecy attesting that her birth pangs were painless. For Isaiah says: "Before she was in painful labor she gave birth and bore a male" (Is 66:7). Hence he was set apart and altered the natural sequence of things at both ends, neither originating in pleasure nor coming forth at the cost of pain. Furthermore, this is logical and not beyond likelihood. For since she who by sinning brought death down on human nature was condemned to bear children in pain and distress, it was surely necessary and right that the mother of life should originate her childbearing in joy and with joy bring the birth to its completion. "Rejoice, O favored one," said the archangel to her (Luke 1:28) – by his word casting out the pain assigned from the beginning to childbearing because of sin.[83]

I will set aside this except as a scripture commentary and instead examine it as Marian theology. Despite Eve's curse in Genesis 3:16,[84] much of the historical conversation around Mary's childbirth pain (or lack thereof) is actually rooted in Isaiah 66:7. Gregory is drawing from Isaiah 66:7, which I consider in relation to Revelation 12:2.

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[82] Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (Sheed and Ward, 1963), 52.
[83] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, trans. Richard A. Norris (Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 411. In-text citation original.
[84] In my discussion on Mary's labor pains, I focus more on Isaiah 66:7 following Gregory of Nyssa's homily on the Song of Songs because it is one of the earliest recorded arguments on Mary's labor. Karl Rahner, SJ, engages directly Genesis 3:16 to argue that Mary had labor pains because she was—like Jesus—a model for human suffering. He writes: "If, and to the extent that Gen. 3:16 is to be taken, therefore, in the sense that the pains of birth are an expression and manifestation of the universal situation of sin in mankind, the birth of Jesus from Mary is not in itself such that it needs to be made an exception to this law. So far as the naturalness of Jesus' birth is concerned, it must be emphasized once more that it also includes the fact that Jesus came into the world through the natural process of human birth." Karl Rahner, SJ, *Theological Investigations: Theology, Anthropology, Christology*, trans. David Bourke (Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1975), 193.

Isaiah 66:7 and Revelation 12:12[85]

Gregory of Nyssa (d. ca. 394) was one of the first to argue that Mary did not endure pain while giving birth. In his thirteenth homily on the Song of Songs which is a commentary on Song 5:8-12, Gregory cites Isaiah 66:7 (quoted in the homily excerpt below) as a sign that Mary did not suffer pain while giving birth.

> For since the terms "virginity" and "childbirth" are inconsistent when used of the same person, it is not right to speak of parturition in the case of a woman who is pure and without experience of marriage. But just as a son was given to us without a father, so too the child was born apart from parturition. For as the virgin did not know how the God receiving body came to be in her body, by the same token she did not experience childbirth, the prophecy attesting that her birth pangs were painless. For Isaiah says: "Before she was in painful labor, she gave birth and bore a male" (Isa 66:7). Hence, he was set apart and altered the natural sequence of things at both ends, neither originating in pleasure nor coming at the cost of pain.[86]

Isaiah 66:7 clearly states that the woman in question gives birth before the pain begins. However, Gregory then inadvertently uses the verse to undercut Jesus's humanity because in the next line he argues that this verse is proof of Jesus altering the natural sequence. Having already explored how Mary is the guarantor of Jesus's humanity and why this is so important for his salvific work, Gregory's argument implodes on itself. Setting aside Isaiah 66:7, Revelation 12:2 offers Biblical confirmation of Mary's labor pains.

Revelation 12 describes a woman laboring to give birth while a dragon waits to eat her child: "A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth."[87] In his commentary on Revelation, Wilfrid J Harrington, OP, notes the relationship pf 12:2 to Genesis 3:16 and Isaiah 66:7. However, for

[85] Micah 4:9–10 also describes a woman in a painful labor: Has your counselor perished, that pangs have seized you like a woman in labor? Writhe and groan, O daughter Zion, like a woman in labor…" (NRSVCE).
[86] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, 411.
[87] NRSVCE, Revelation 12:1–2.

Harrington, the text is about "travailing Israel," and he does not offer a Mariological interpretation.[88]

Despite Harrington's interpretation, there is a long historical precedent for interpreting the woman of Revelation 12 as Mary. Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403) may be the first person to associate Mary with the woman of Revelation 12,[89] which he does in his consideration of how Mary's earthly life ended which would contribute to later developments in the dogma of the Assumption. This connection between Mary and the woman of Revelation 12 is important because it is a counterargument to the woman of Isaiah 66:7.

Figure 7: Velázquez, The Immaculate Conception, 1618

Furthermore, the author of Revelation's description of the woman as "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" became key iconographic symbols for Mary as the Immaculate Conception in art from the seventeenth century onward. This imagery supplanted images of Anna and Joachim kissing at the Temple gate. It was meant to symbolize how "Mary was conceived in the mind of God before the foundation of the world."[90] The Spanish painter Diego Velázquez's *The Immaculate Conception* is a key example of this style [Fig. 7]. In his realization, Mary stands with her hands in prayer and her eyes downcast. She stands on a full moon, and twelve stars form a circle above her head in the shape of a round Renaissance-style halo. Velázquez is less literal in his interpretation of Mary wearing the sun. Instead, she wears a pink gown with the traditional blue mantel, and the sun sits behind her silhouetting her on either side with a warm, yellow glow. Because of these elements, the viewer can clearly see the allusions to Revelation 12, and this painting is indicative of the key Biblical elements common to the Immaculate Conception motif in art.

Because of the precedent of the New Testament over the Old in Christian teaching and because of Revelation 12's importance for the Marian artistic tradition, we can see that the labor pains of the woman in Revelation 12:2 outweigh the lack of labors pain in the

[88] Wilfrid Harrington, OP, *Revelation*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, SJ, vol. 16, Sacra Pagina Series (The Liturgical Press, 1993), 128–30.
[89] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, 126.
[90] Boss, "The Development of the Doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception," 222–24.

woman in Isaiah 66:7. Therefore, we can conclude that based on Revelation 12:2, Mary births Jesus while experiencing labor pains.

Thomas Aquinas on Mary's Pain at the Nativity

Thomas Aquinas argues that Mary did not experience pain during childbirth because of her hymen, writing,

> The pains of childbirth are caused by the infant opening the passage from the womb. Now it has been said above (Q28, A2, Replies to objections), that Christ came forth from the closed womb of His Mother, and, consequently, without opening the passage. Consequently there was no pain in that birth, as neither was there any corruption; on the contrary, there was much joy therein for that God-Man "was born into the world" … .[91]

Aquinas clearly argues that women endure pain while giving birth because of how the baby stretches the cervix and vagina (though, of course, he is not using such anatomical language).[92] But it is Mary's *fiat* at the annunciation that allows for Jesus's incarnation to take place within her body, and it is her body that births him. Thus, it is logical that Mary would endure the human infirmity of labor pains while giving birth to the son who would endure infirmities to (in part) inspire belief in his incarnation. By enduring pain Mary – the guarantor of Jesus's humanity – helps her son inspire belief in his incarnation by enduring the natural human pain that is a part of childbirth.

As recently as the Council of Trent and its subsequent catechism, the Church has declared that Mary endured a painless childbirth. The Trent Catechism states, "From Eve we are born *children of wrath*; from Mary we have received Jesus Christ, and through Him are regenerated children of grace. To Eve it was said: *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children*. Mary was exempt from this law, for preserving her virginal integrity inviolate she brought forth Jesus the Son of God without experiencing … any sense of pain."[93] The Catechism's

[91] *ST* III.Q35.A6. In-text citations original.
[92] However, this argument largely falls apart when one considers that any woman – except Mary – would have had her body "opened" through the sexual intercourse necessary to conceive a child in the first place. Therefore, there would be no need for the child to open the mother's womb while she is giving birth.
[93] Pius V, *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, 46.

link between Mary's painless childbirth and her intact hymen clearly draws from Aquinas's argument quoted above.

Aquinas's and the resulting Tridentine belief that Mary's supposed painless labor resulted from her *in partu* virginity is an interesting intersection between the Immaculate Conception and the dogma of Mary's Perpetual Virginity. Because of this link between the immaculate body and her virginity, I will discuss her *virginitas in partu* in the *gratia plena* context in the next section.

Mary's *In Partu* Virginity

In the thesis introduction I noted that the most effective way to examine the four Marian dogmas was to do so within and without each other; that is, viewing each one in isolation while also inviting moments when elements of the dogmas intertwine. I argued that this creates a more cohesive, human portrait of Mary as defined by formal dogma. Mary's *virginitas in partu* in relation to the Immaculate Conception is such an instance. Mary's perpetual virginity was affirmed in 449 in Leo I's "Tome" and states that Mary was a virgin before [*ante partum*], during [*in partu*], and after [*post partum*] Jesus's birth.[94] In Luke 1:34, Mary asserts her virginity when she questions the angel Gabriel about becoming pregnant since she has not been with a man. The Roman Catholic Church upholds Mary's virginity after Jesus's birth, claiming that Mary did not have other children after giving birth.[95]

Here I will discuss Mary's *in partu* virginity in relation to the immaculate body even though it is more accurately the purview of the Perpetual Virginity dogma rather than the Immaculate Conception. Because of Aquinas's argument that Jesus did not open his mother's womb (in other words, did not disturb her hymen or physical virginity) and that this gave her a painless labor which I quoted above,[96] it is appropriate to discuss this in relation to the immaculate body. Furthermore, because of the connections historically and theologically between Mary's sexual purity and her goodness or immaculateness, it is beneficial to discuss her *in partu* virginity.

Theologians and Church documents have politely referred to Mary's untorn hymen as her *virginitas in partu.* The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* uses a romantic metaphor to

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[94] Leo I, *Select Sermons of St. Leo the Great on the incarnation; with His Twenty-Eigth Epistle Called the "Tome,"* trans. William Bright, D.D. (London: J. Masters and Company, 1886), 28.1–2.
[95] *CCC*, 500.
[96] *ST* III.Q35.A6.

describe Mary's untorn hymen: "…just as the rays of the sun penetrate without breaking or injuring in the least the solid substance of glass, so after a like but more exalted manner did Jesus Christ come forth from His mother's womb without injury to her maternal virginity."[97] In my research on this topic, I have not come across a theologian who uses the term "hymen" when describing Mary's *in partu* virginity. This excerpt from the Trent Catechism reflects the kind of romantic language used to discuss her hymen.

Mary's Hymen in the *Protoevangelium of James* 19–20

The canonical Gospels do not comment on the state of Mary's hymen after giving birth, but the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James* is much more explicit in affirming that Mary's hymen was unaltered after giving birth. The author, who includes a midwife at the nativity,[98] writes:

> And the midwife left the cave and met Salome and said to her, "Salome, Salome, let me tell you about a new marvel: a virgin has given birth, and you know that's impossible!" And Salome replied, "As the Lord my God lives, unless I insert my finger and examine her, I will never believe that a virgin has given birth."[99] The midwife entered and said, "Mary, position yourself for an examination. You are facing a serious test." And so Mary, when she heard these instructions, positioned herself, and Salome inserted her finger into Mary. And then Salome cried aloud and said, 'I'll be damned because of my transgression and my disbelief; I have put the living God on trial. Look! My hand is disappearing! It's being consumed by flames![100]

As Salome's hand shrivels, she repents, and an angel appears telling her to hold the infant Jesus to be healed. She does so, saying, "I'll worship him because he's been born to be the king of Israel."[101] Then her hand is restored, and she leaves the Holy Family.[102]

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[97] Pius V, *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, 45–46.
[98] *Protoevangelium of James*, 19. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 67-69.
[99] Hock notes that this language mirrors that of "Doubting" Thomas in John 20:24-29. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas,* 69.
[100] *Protoevangelium of James*, 19:18–20:4. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 67-69.
[101] *Protoevangelium of James*, 20:10. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 69.
[102] This is subtly alluded to in the nativity scene mosaic in the Monreale Cathedral in Sicily. In it, to the right of Mary with the swaddled Jesus, a woman dips her finger in a pool of water.

In the above section, on Mary being conceived sexually, I included the *Protoevangelium of James* in analysis and argued that 4:10 should be interpreted as sexual intercourse between Anna and Joachim. This furthered the interpretation that Mary is conceived in the natural, human manner, shoring up her full humanity to guarantee it for Jesus. In this passage on Mary's hymen, it is appropriate to dismiss the passage as a whole rather than conform it to my feminist interpretation. The passage relies on Mary's hymen being mystically unchanged while giving birth. Furthermore, it relies on the hymen as an accurate indicator of Mary's sexual history. In the section below I refute both of these ideas while still maintaining Mary's *in partu* virginity in the dogma of perpetual virginity.

A Medical Understanding of the Hymen

Before considering the theology of Mary's *in partu* virginity, let us define from an anatomical standpoint what the Church is proclaiming. The Church is describing what today would be anatomically understood as the hymen. Ethel Sloane defines the hymen, located around the vaginal opening, as, "a small, insignificant membrane with no known function."[103] Despite emphasizing to the reader the unknown need for the hymen, Sloane admits that it has cultural significance regarding a woman's virginity: "It is commonly believed that [the hymen] tears at first coitus, that copious and visible bleeding occurs, and the virgin has been 'deflowered'…If no bleeding occurs, this is taken as evidence of nonvirginity…All of this is nonsense. An intact hymen is not proof of virginity; a ruptured hymen is not indicative that sexual intercourse has occurred…."[104]The first time a woman has penetrative sex the hymen may tear and bleed. Since Mary does not have penetrative sex before childbirth,[105] her hymen remains intact. Therefore, it should tear when she births Jesus vaginally: her hymen must tear.

In these short lines, Sloane reveals the problem of Mary's *in partu* virginity. Until at least the twentieth century, people largely believed that the hymen was an accurate indicator of sexual purity, which is why the Church has put so much value on her hymen remaining unaffected while birthing a baby. Having assumed that Mary gave birth vaginally, we can assume that her hymen was torn in this fashion. However, because the hymen as Sloane has argued is not an accurate indicator of a woman's sexual history, the dogma of perpetual virginity can remain even if one separates it from the state of Mary's hymen. It would be

[103] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 37.
[104] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 37.
[105] Luke 1:34.

impossible for the hymen to be unaffected by giving birth vaginally. After vaginal birth, the hymen remains but is no longer continuously connected around the rim of the vaginal opening and is separated (torn) at random intervals.[106] Having assumed that Mary gave birth vaginally, we can assume that her hymen was torn in this fashion.

The Church, particularly under the banner of Aquinas, has championed a fruitful relationship between science and faith. It would not do doctrinal harm to recant the notion that Mary's hymen was integral to Mary's perpetual virginity. The dogma of the perpetual virginity would still be valid, emphasizing that spiritual virginity was the core of virginal identity rather than a useless bit of membrane at the vaginal opening.

Since I have argued that the hymen is not an accurate sign of virginity, one could argue that God could miraculously leave Mary's hymen intact. Given the Immaculist motto "*Potuit, decuit, ergo fecit*,"it would be plausible in this argument. However, Mary's hymen remaining unaffected while giving birth would be a physically impossible feat for maculate women to follow. It would also undermine Mary's role as guarantor of Jesus's humanity.

In *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, Tina Beattie defends the tradition of Mary's physical *in partu* virginity. Beattie argues:

> Mary's perpetual virginity affirms woman's eternal liberation from the power of the phallus. The virgin birth is a Christological symbol relating to the incarnation, but Mary's virginity is also an anthropological symbol relating to the redemption of women from the consequences of the fall. In Mary's case, the potential ambivalence of the unruptured hymen resolves itself into an affirmation of woman's integrity and freedom.[107]

I agree with Beattie broadly that Mary's virginity should be empowering for women and would add that any part of Mary's identity should empower women. And it is clear from this that Beattie finds real strength in Mary's unruptured hymen. However, her argument relies on a mystical understanding of Mary's hymen being miraculously preserved which ultimately undermines Mary's natural humanity and thus her relationship with women.

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[106] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 51.
[107] Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 178.

Defending Unromantic Language about Mary's Body

To discuss Mary's (or any woman's) hymen is delicate work that must be done respectfully, and the Church enforces this. In the chapter introduction I deconstructed the 1960 monitum that rebuked those who used crude language to discuss Mary's body. In Laurentin's discussion of the monitum, he cites Clifford E. L. Henry's article "A Doctor Consider the Birth of Jesus" as an example of such crude language that sparked the rebuke. Reading Henry's article, published in 1953, the reader is struck by how respectful the wording is. The word "hymen" does not appear as it does numerous times in this chapter. If work like Henry's article was considered inappropriate, then this chapter, which is even more explicit, would also be considered inappropriate.

My use of explicit, unromantic language about Mary's hymen is not to shock the reader. Rather I use it as a way to emphasize Mary's humanity which she shares with women. The Church needs to have unromantic and frank discussions about Mary's body to accurately portray her humanity and relatability.

The current *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "The deepening of faith in the virginial motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made [human]. In fact, Christ's birth 'did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it.'"[108] The language in this Catechism is less romantic and specific than the Tridentine Catechism. One could interpret "virginal integrity" in the spiritual sense, in which case it would be correct.

Mary and Menstruation

In this final section, I argue that Mary menstruated from menarche to menopause. In doing so, we can see how Mary as Immaculate endured what is a normal occurrence for many women and see how the same reproductive cycle that brings about the seeming uncleanliness of menstruation also brought about the physical humanity of Jesus.[109]

Mary's menstruation has a complex relationship with the development of the Immaculate Conception dogma because it was believed that menstruation, being the "curse of Eve" would not have happened to Mary being preserved from original sin. The Dominican

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[108] *CCC*, 499. Quoting LG 57. Text has been modified for gender inclusivity.
[109] For more on the medieval relationship between holiness and menstruation, see: Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1987), 189–218.

Order followed Aquinas in denying the Immaculate Conception and instead promoted the cult of Mary's breast milk. Breast milk was believed to be menstrual blood in a different form. So, by claiming Mary nursed Jesus, it was implied she had also menstruated and was thus not immaculately conceived.[110] Charles T. Wood summarizes this contradiction:

> Most simply put, the specifics of Marian theology would seem to deny the very possibility of a regular menstrual cycle. For how, using the standard assumptions of the Middle Ages, could thinkers ever have logically reconciled the phenomenon of menstruation with what were taken to be the known facts of Mary's case? If she had had "no spot and possibly it was this apparent pun which led believers to think that The Song of Songs had foretold her coming – she was not subject, presumably, to the curse of Eve.[111]

Mary Menstruates – *Protoevangelium of James* 8

In the *Protoevangelium of James* the author portrays Mary going to live and serve in the Temple from the age of three.[112] Chapter eight describes how Mary lived in the Temple, "fed there like a dove, receiving her food from the hand of a heavenly messenger."[113] Mary's mystical life in the Temple must end, however, when she reaches the age of menarche. The author writes, "When [Mary] turned twelve, however, there was a meeting of priests. 'Look,' they said, 'Mary has turned twelve in the temple of the Lord. What should we do with her so she won't pollute the sanctuary of the Lord our God?'"[114] The priests decide that the widowers of the town should assemble to find a husband for Mary among them.[115] Joseph is selected when a dove springs forth from his blessed staff.[116] Hock offers little commentary on Mary's menarche other than to say that her presence in the Temple after she begins menstruating would pollute her and thus make the Temple unclean.[117]

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[110] Charles T. Wood, "The Doctor's Dilemma: Sin, Salvation, and the Menstrual Cycle in Medieval Thought," *Speculum* 56, no. 4 (1981): 721; Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 256–57.
[111] Wood, "The Doctor's Dilemma: Sin, Salvation, and the Menstrual Cycle in Medieval Thought," 718–19.
[112] *Protoevangelium of James*, 7. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 45.
[113] *Protoevangelium of James*, 8:2. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 47.
[114] *Protoevangelium of James*, 8:3-4. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 47.
[115] *Protoevangelium of James*, 8:6-9. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 47.
[116] *Protoevangelium of James*, 9:1-7. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 49.
[117] Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, 47.

Medical Understanding of Menstruation

Having discussed the theological considerations of menstruation, let us understand from a medical perspective what menstruation is before considering it theologically. Menstruation is part of the female reproductive, cycle so I will discuss it in the context of the other stages. While the cycle technically begins with menstruation, let us instead begin with ovulation.

Ovulation occurs when the body releases a surge of estrogen causing an ovary to release an ovum (egg), which is sucked into the fallopian tubes where it could be fertilized. If fertilization does not occur, the egg will break down.[118] The menstrual phase occurs when the egg and uterine lining break down and are expelled from the body through the cervix and vagina as sterile blood and tissue.[119] When menstruation finishes, the uterus rebuilds its lining in anticipation of the next ovum that may or may not be fertilized, and the process repeats itself.[120]

The reproductive cycle makes it clear that ovulation and menstruation are linked. Even if the ovum is fertilized in a given month, for the majority of a woman's life, her ovulation will end with menstruation of an unfertilized egg. This connection emphasizes how intertwined new life and death (of the unfertilized ovum) are in the woman's body.

Mary – who conceived Jesus in her body, carried him to term, and gave birth naturally – would have experienced a reproductive cycle. To be Jesus's mother bodily as I just outlined, one of her ovaries must have released the ovum that eventually became Jesus's human body.[121] If her body produced the ovum that became Jesus's flesh, then it must also have produced ovum that would be unfertilized resulting in menstruation.[122]

Mary as Unbound by Levitical Purity Laws Because of the Immaculate Conception

Hock's commentary on concerns over Mary's menarche polluting the Temple has ramifications when one considers how Mary has been called "The Ark of the Covenant." The Biblical parallel between Mary and the Ark of the Covenant comes from 2 Samuel 6:9 and

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[118] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 92–93.
[119] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 70 and 94.
[120] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 94.
[121] I will not debate here a medical understanding of the asexual incarnation since it is beyond the scope of this thesis.
[122] We can also see how there is no link between breast milk and menstruation.

Luke 1:43. The author of 2 Samuel describes David's reaction to the Ark of the Covenant coming to Jerusalem. After God strikes down Uzzah for touching the Ark: "David was afraid of the Lord that day and said, 'How can the ark of the Lord ever come to me?'"[123] While David greets the Ark in fear, Elizabeth greets Mary with joy. Elizabeth, after feeling John leap in her womb, cries: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?"[124] For Mary to be the new Ark of the Covenant, she cannot have been ritually impure (according to Leviticus 15), since one always had to be clean to be in the Holy of Holies, where the Ark resided.[125]

If we assume that as a biological necessity, Mary did menstruate from menarche to menopause, then the question takes us back to Leviticus 15, which makes clear that a woman who menstruates is unclean according to Jewish law. This then raises the question: can the immaculately conceived Mary ever have been considered unclean under Jewish law? I propose that Mary as immaculately conceived was never bound by Jewish law because she was conceived in sanctifying grace. In the introduction, based on John Duns Scotus's Mariology, I argued that Mary is preserved from original sin by an infusion of sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*] that Thomas Aquinas argues is what the soul receives at baptism which unites the soul to God.[126] Because of this sanctifying grace that begins her existence as full of grace [*gratia plena*], Mary may have observed Jewish law but was never bound by it. Thus, whenever she menstruated (which she must have done so that her body could produce the ovum that gave Jesus his flesh) she was never unclean before God despite Leviticus 15.

Mary – as a Jewish woman who menstruates – is an important model for Christian women who menstruate because of her significance in the Christian tradition. The issue of women's purity while menstruating has been a contentious topic in the Church for centuries. Pope Gregory (*c*.540–604) commanded that menstruating women could enter churches and receive communion while menstruating. He writes,

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[123] NRSVCE, 2 Samuel 6:9.
[124] NRSVCE, Luke 1:42–43.
[125] Wood notes with some irony that at the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth, Israel – believed to be the historical place where Gabriel appeared to Mary – the Franciscans who run the basilica lead visitors to a tub believed to be where Mary would have had ritual baths, or mikvah. Wood, "The Doctor's Dilemma: Sin, Salvation, and the Menstrual Cycle in Medieval Thought," 723.
[126] *ST* I-II.Q111.A1.

> But a woman should not be forbidden to enter church during these times [menstrual periods]; for the workings of nature cannot be considered culpable, and it is not just that she should be refused admittance, since her condition is beyond her control. We know that a woman who suffered an issue of blood, humbly approaching behind our Lord, touched the hem of his robe and was at once healed of her sickness. If, therefore, this woman was right to touch our Lord's robe, why may not one who suffers nature's course be permitted to enter the church of God? . . . For hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and weariness originate in this infirmity of our nature…[127]

Gregory's argument on the way in which menstruation (like hunger or thirst) is a part of human nature. Wood contrasts Gregory's writing with that of infamous Dominican priests and witch-hunters Heinrich Kramer (*c*.1430–1505) and Jacob Sprenger (*c*.1436–1495) in the *Malleus Maleficarum*: "But the natural reason [that women are more drawn to superstition] is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her carnal abominations."[128]

Wood treats Gregory's allowing menstruating women into church as the final word on the matter, writing, "On the contrary, its [Gregory's letter] quiet sanity marks a milestone in the history of women, a milestone which announced that henceforth Christianity was abandoning all those demeaning taboos with which most earlier cultures had invested menstruation, thereby limiting the freedom of half of their people."[129] However, Doris M. Kieser nuances the impact of Gregory's letter for women in the Church today. She writes,

> A remedy for the invisibility of menstruation in contemporary theology is complex: inviting a male hierarchical structure to address a particularly female sexual phenomenon is unlikely to yield the preferred solution. This situation might then be an appropriate impetus for the church as an institution more actively to invite diverse females into the dialogue and development of Catholic sexual teaching and theology, and to decision-making roles within the structure of the church.[130]

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[127] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. R. E. Latham, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, Rev. ed, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), I.27.
[128] Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger*, trans. Montague Summers (Dover Publications, 1971), 44.
[129] Wood, "The Doctor's Dilemma: Sin, Salvation, and the Menstrual Cycle in Medieval Thought," 726.
[130] Doris M. Kieser, "The Female Body in Catholic Theology: Menstruation, Reproduction, and Autonomy," *Horizons* 44, no. 1 (2017): 21.

Kieser's call for the Church to develop a better understanding of menstruation is a further demonstration of why more conversation by women is needed in the Church today.

Conclusion

This chapter directly refuted the Aristotelean idea that women's bodies are malformed by arguing that Mary has a natural human body as any woman does and that grace does not grant her special physical privileges. Mary is the guarantor of Jesus's humanity as his only human parent, and it is her body that forms Jesus's body in her womb. Therefore, if Mary's body can experience natural processes like menstruation, labor pain, and a torn hymen then any woman who experiences these knows that her body is not lesser than a man's.

This chapter, like chapters one and two, demonstrates that Mary's immaculateness is not a barrier between her and maculate women. In the next chapter we will examine Mary's relationship with maculate women in greater detail. This will demonstrate how my constructive theology of the Immaculate Conception can refute modern misogynistic theology and benefit women.

Chapter Four: Immaculate Mary and Maculate Women

Introduction

In the previous three chapters, I have detailed how Mary's immaculateness impacted her daily life by examining Gospel passages and key apocryphal texts. This process has illuminated ways in which her humanity comes through because of – and not despite – her immaculateness. In this chapter I propose that contrary to Marina Warner's argument that Mary is unreachable, Immaculate Mary can be an effective model for maculate[1] Catholic women when the romantic feminism described below is stripped away from both Mary and women. In the thesis introduction, I argued the Immaculate Conception was important for feminist Catholic theological scholarship because past scholars have argued that the dogma separates Mary from the plights of maculate women. This quotation from Marina Warner reflects this kind of literature: "As the icon of the ideal, the Virgin affirms the inferiority of the human lot. Soaring above the men and women who pray to her, the Virgin conceived without sin underscores rather than alleviates pain and anxiety and accentuates the feelings of sinfulness."[2] This thesis refutes rhetoric like this because I have demonstrated that the Immaculate Conception does not separate Mary from women; rather, it makes her a perfect foil for the misogyny in an Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference.

In this chapter, I demonstrate in practical terms how my feminist interpretation of the Immaculate Conception benefits Catholic women. To borrow the structure from chapter one, the first three chapters are the speculative knowledge of the Immaculate Conception (considering the inoperableness of Mary's grace-fullness), but this chapter is akin to practical knowledge of the Immaculate Conception (considering the operable place of women in relation to the Immaculate Conception).

Chapter Problem – Immaculate Mary and Me

After reading the first three chapters, laden with sources, it is easy to assume that these conversations about Mary happen only in academic circles. But the Church's understanding of Mary has real ramifications for the lives of women. I know because they did

[1] Those conceived in original sin unlike Mary who is immaculately conceived.
[2] Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 259.

for me. I grew up as a "Cradle Catholic" (meaning I was baptized as an infant) in a Roman Catholic community and school system in Alabama in the United States. Our city was part of the Archdiocese of Mobile.

In elementary school (ages five to twelve) our teachers framed Mary as a kind mother. At this school, we attended Mass every week, had adoration once a month as older students, a "living rosary" twice a year, and Stations of the Cross at least once during Lent. At the end of every weekly Mass, our principal would dismiss us after we genuflected and said collectively, "Jesus, I love you." Being children, we were not taught the deeper issues of Catholic theology beyond what was required for us to understand the sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist, since most of us received those sacraments for the first time at age seven. There was a statue of Mary in every classroom, standing on a dome with a snake underfoot, her eyes cast down, and her hands open before her. As an adult I recognized this as a motif in art depicting Mary as the Immaculate Conception. Every year the school would have a May Crowning led by the seven-year-old students who had just made their First Communions.

By middle school (ages twelve to fourteen), my and my friends' relationships with Mary changed in large part because of puberty. Chastity and abstinence were now key themes in our theology classes, and our (changing) bodies became a source of fear. I remember a friend's sister would not use a tampon on her period because her mother told her it would "take her virginity." I cannot help but wonder if things would have been different had we not been taught to prize Mary's physical virginity so keenly. Gone was the child-like devotion of genuflection and "Jesus, I love you." Our new principal's theology that she passed on to us was one rooted in guilt and shame. We once had a school assembly to listen to a graphic account of the crucifixion. This may have been done to inspire us to appreciate Christ's sacrifice, but it was more effective in making us feel worse about ourselves. During this time, we girls began to bond by exchanging stories about our bodies – period horror stories and sympathetic grumblings about cramps. A girl could pass you a tampon with a sympathetic nod (though we only ever did this when the boys were not around since it was all embarrassing).

During this time, our teachers held a school assembly which separated the boys and the girls. In our assembly, a teacher took a couple of pieces of cello-tape and tapped them on several girls' arms. They tried to tape the two pieces together and showed how easy it was to pull them apart because touching so many people had made them dirty. They then stuck together two clean pieces of tape which – being clean – were impossible to pull apart. They

then explained that this was a metaphor for sexual purity: people who did not have sex before marriage would have a stronger, unbreakable marriage because they were "clean." People who had multiple sexual partners before marriage were "dirty" and because of their sexual experience their marriages would be weaker and more likely to end in divorce.

In high school (ages fourteen to eighteen) the overall theme of guilt continued, but now accompanied by systematic theology. The irony that we really only began studying Catholic theology and history in detail *after* confirmation is not lost on me. The classes were effective – even as a doctoral student I draw on what I was taught in those classes. But as we learned, Mary became an increasingly distant figure. She was no longer the sweet mother from childhood; now she was a formidable virgin, immaculately conceived. And – we believed – she could not relate to us as we struggled with sexuality as teenagers. In the worst-case scenario, Mary was upheld as the perfect ideal that none of could live to. A theology teacher once told our class that the girls should not take pain medication when we were menstruating because any pain from the experience was a "gift from God." I do not know if he meant that we were meant to offer up our pain to God or if this was somehow part of our inheritance from Eve, but it was frustrating either way. Immaculate Mary was almost unreachable by this point. She was now a judge for us girls, and our school really split the girls between the "Madonnas" and the "Whores." Neither group had it easy, and Mary was not a comfort to either group. We deemed Mary too sheltered and boring to understand what we were going through.

As I have written this thesis over the last four years, I have wondered if our early experiences of Catholicism would have been different if we had been taught a more feminist interpretation of Mary in a Catholic school. The most glaring case would have been for our bodies, which were largely treated as places of fear and if not fear, then sin. Growing up in the 2000s meant we benefitted from the "girl power" culture of the late 1990s. We were never taught that women were intellectually lesser than men, but the intellectuals our teachers upheld were men and most often St. Thomas Aquinas in particular. Mary was upheld as "Seat of Wisdom," but never as an intelligent person herself. What if we had invoked Mary in making decisions as in Luke 1:38? What if we had venerated Mary as instigator who took matters into her own hands while following God's will as in John 2:1–11? In our churches rather than in school, we saw women in the supporting act. We watched as women kept our parishes and schools running, but their power was always second to the priests.

I think it is Mary's immaculate love that could have done the most for us growing up. I have argued in this thesis for framing Mary's love as the most accessible way to her heart

and thus to Christ. Having grown up in a culture of guilt and shame, I think its only antidote is love –to have known that Mary loved us as children, as guilt-ridden tweens, and even when we were young adults and had disregarded Mary as boring.

The leading Catholic figures were – as you can imagine – the popes.[3] I was in school during for the end of Pope John Paul II's pontificate and all of Pope Benedict XVI's. When Pope Benedict XVI was elected, I was in fifth grade, and our afternoon classes were cancelled so we could all watch his first appearance on the loggia on television together. Despite the fact that we lived thousands of miles away from Vatican City, the pope was always a familiar figure in part because his photo was always in the school next to a photo of our archbishop. Pope Francis transcended this even more as he captured the public's imagination in a way the world had not seen since the early days of Pope John Paul II's papacy. Later in the chapter, I will weigh how the most recent pontiffs have furthered women's roles in the Church. Before doing that, however, I argue that this Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference has taken a new form since at least the twentieth century.

Romantic Feminism – Child of an Aristotelean-Influenced Theology of Sexual Difference

In the thesis introduction, I argued that an Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference was the source of much of the misogyny women have faced in the Church. Aristotle cast women as "matter" to men's "form" during reproduction.[4] Aristotle also extended his characterizations about men and women into the social realm as well, framing women as passive, soft, and more compassionate, and men as active, wilder, and less cunning.[5] Thanks to Aquinas, these ideas were adapted into Christian theology. Apart from the theological implications I deconstructed in the previous three chapters, it would be easy to argue that an Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference has been largely neutralized as a threat for Catholic women today. With the new medical understanding of women's

[3] In high school our field house was "The Pope John Paul II Field House," and it was a popular make-out spot during football games. When John Paul II was canonized, the school updated the signage to denote his sainthood.
[4] Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, II.732a.5–12. Emphasis original.
[5] Aristotle, *Historia Animalium*.VIII(IX).608.22–608b.16.

bodies, no one could really think that women were "matter" while men were "form." Furthermore, the Church affirms the equal dignity of men and women in the Catechism:

> Man and woman have been created, which is to say, willed by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. "Being man" or "being woman" is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. [cf. Gen 2:7, 22] Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity "in the image of God". In their "being-man" and "being-woman", they reflect the Creator's wisdom and goodness.[6]

Despite the Catechism's assertion that both men and women were made in the image and likeness of God, Rosemary Radford Ruether identified and defined a type of feminism in the twentieth-century Church that I will go on to argue is a new manifestation of an Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference: romantic feminism. She explained this as:

> Romanticism comes close to reversing the traditional patriarchal correlation of *imago dei* and fallen humanity with spiritual maleness and carnal femaleness. Instead it is the female who represents, a in a purer and less ambiguous way, the original goodness of humanity as *imago dei*. This does not mean that men do not also possess this good human nature originally. But because they have to enter the sphere of power, competition, and sin, the good human nature becomes obscured in men. Men, as makers of history, take on the nature of historical humanity characterized by force and domination. Women, as those forbidden to enter the sphere of force and domination, retain more of the original purity and goodness of human nature. Women, shielded from history, are *less fallen* than men [emphasis Ruether]. They are more capable of *altruistic, loving, self-giving life, less prone to the sins of egoism* [emphasis mine] that are a sinful but necessary part of historical existence.[7]

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[6] *CCC*, 369.
[7] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 105.

Romantic feminism, in Ruether's view, brings women closer to God, but in doing so keeps them away from earthly power. On the surface, this is a reversal of Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference that gave men the closeness to form/spirit/God while women were to contend with matter/earth. However, despite this change, men are still the ones afforded power and action while women must sit on the sideline – even though their seats are now closer to God. Because of its insistence on men remaining the active party while women remain passive, romantic feminism is the child of this Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference. One of the greatest purveyors of romantic feminism was Pope John Paul II.

The Romantic Feminism of John Paul II

Mary's special relationship with women is quite literally written into the Church. When Mary's sees Elizabeth at the Visitation, Elizabeth greets her: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb."[8] The historical relationship between Mary and women is incredibly long, befitting a thesis of its own.[9] With this in mind, I will focus only on how the most recent popes (from 1974 onward) have discussed Mary and what their relationship with Catholic women has been like and demonstrate how succeeding popes have done little to further the aims of *Marialis Cultus*.

Pope John Paul I succeeded Paul VI in 1978, but because his pontificate was cut so short due to his sudden death, he did not produce any major writings. Pope John Paul II[10] succeeded him later that same year. John Paul II was perhaps one of the most vocal promoters of Marian devotion among the modern popes. His pontifical coat of arms bore a letter "M" in the bottom right corner as a tribute to her, and he was known to write "*totus tuus*" ["totally yours"] on his personal papers in tribute to Mary. The phrase also served as his

[8] NRSVCE, Luke 1:42.
[9] One of the most humorous examples of this is from Ambrose of Milan (d. 397) in *Concerning Virginity* writing: "There was nothing harsh in her eyes, nothing forward in her words, nothing unbecoming in her behavior. Her gestures were not abrupt, her gait was not slack, her voice was not pert: her bodily appearance itself was the image of her soul and an indicator of her virtuousness… Leaving her home was something unknown to her, except when she went to church…" (93). His last mention that she did not leave home except for worship (Ramsey notes Ambrose has [Jewish] Mary going to church before such a practice existed) is particularly humorous because Mary is constantly travelling in the Gospels: after the annunciation she visits Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–56), gives birth in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1–12;Luke 2:1–20), flees to Egypt (Matthew 2:13–18), goes to Cana for a wedding (John 2:1–11), and is in Jerusalem when Jesus is crucified (John 19:25–27).
[10] Lived: 1920–2005. Papacy: 1978–2005. Canonized in 2014 by Pope Francis.

pontifical motto. On 13 May 1981, Mehmet Ali Ağca attempted to assassinate the pontiff while he was being driven around St. Peter's Square. John Paul II attributed his survival to Our Lady of Fatima, bringing one of the bullets to her shrine where it is now encased in the crown of Mary statue there. These examples show how personally invested John Paul II was in Mary's promotion, and he produced three major publications on Mary during his pontificate. However, as I will demonstrate in the next section, none of these documents promotes Paul VI's view of Mary and women to the extent that his work highlights a new iteration of an Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference. This topic is so large and important, I have given it its own section.

John Paul II's theological legacy looms large across the early twenty-first century, and his theology of Mary and her relationship to Catholic women provides a lens with which to understand the Church's current view. John Paul II wrote three major works on Mary and women: a 1987 encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, an apostolic letter in 1988 called *Mulieris Dignatatem*,[11] and the 1995 *Letter to Women*. To demonstrate the late pontiff's attitude, I present several passages from each of these three works to conclude that his romantic feminism ultimately furthers the narratives of women's passivity.

In *Redemptoris Mater*, John Paul II emphasizes Mary's role as Mother of God. Iin doing so, he emphasizes Mary's femaleness (mother) in relation to Jesus's maleness (son). Throughout the work, he also emphasizes how Mary issues her *fiat* with "the full submission of the intellect and will" and how she "abandons herself" to God's will.[12] This takes on a new dimension when we consider how the pope has emphasized Mary and Jesus's gendered roles so that he is implicitly framing this as a woman submitting to a man. He summarizes the "Marian dimension" as follows:

> This Marian dimension of Christian life takes on special importance in relation to women and their status. In fact, femininity has a unique relationship with the Mother of the Redeemer, a subject which can be studied in greater depth elsewhere. Here I simply wish to note that the figure of Mary of Nazareth sheds light on womanhood as such by the very fact that God, in the sublime event of the incarnation of his Son, entrusted himself to the ministry, the free and active ministry of a woman. It can thus be said

[11] *Redemptoris Mater* and *Mulieris Dignatatem* book end his "Year of Mary."
[12] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 1987, 14, 15, 18, and 26.

> that women, by looking to Mary, find in her the secret of living their femininity with dignity and of achieving their own true advancement. In the light of Mary, the Church sees in the face of women the reflection of a beauty which mirrors the loftiest sentiments of which the human heart is capable: the self-offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work; the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement.[13]

In this passage, despite calling Mary's *fiat* a total submission, John Paul II calls Mary's ministry "free and active," but this is ultimately undercut by his claim that women mirror "the loftiest sentiments of which the human heart is capable." He lists these as love, strength in sorrow, devotion to work, and "the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement" – whatever that means. But these traits that he describes are those which all Christians – female *and male* – are called to. By claiming women just naturally have them he engages in the romantic feminist idea of women as mystically closer to God.

In his next encyclical *Mulieris Dignatatem*, John Paul II discusses women more directly, but also uses Mary as a guide for women and womanhood. He ties a woman's dignity to her relationship to love, writing, "A woman's dignity is closely connected with the love which she receives by the very reason of her femininity; it is likewise connected with the love which she gives in return. The truth about the person and about love is thus confirmed."[14] This is an important idea, but it is undercut because he uses it to set up his next argument about the importance of motherhood for women:

> A woman is strong because of her awareness of this entrusting [of bearing human life], strong because of the fact that God "entrusts the human being to her," always and in every way, even in the situations of social discrimination in which she may find herself. This awareness and this fundamental vocation speak to women of the dignity which they receive

[13] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 46.
[14] John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988), 30.

> from God himself, and this makes them "strong" and strengthens their vocation.[15]

Later in the passage John Paul II casts the "perfect woman" as one who supports those around. Implicitly, he is drawing on the idea of mothers being the emotional supporters of their families by placing this idea after his discussion of motherhood. He writes:

> Thus the "perfect woman" (cf. Prov 31:10) becomes an irreplaceable support and source of spiritual strength for other people, who perceive the great energies of her spirit. These "perfect women" are owed much by their families, and sometimes by whole nations.[16]

It is helpful to recognize and praise all that women have given the world as supporters. But in his praise, John Paul II does nothing to argue that women should move beyond the supporting (passive) role, seemingly content that women remain in that role.

The final major work of John Paul II's we are going to discuss is his 1993 *Letter to Women*.[17] This letter was published nearly a decade after the previous two encyclicals, and thus it reflects some development in how John Paul II speaks to women. Most notably, in the opening he thanks women who are mothers, wives, daughters, those who work, and those in consecrated life.[18] This is a marked change from *Mulieris Dignatatem,* in which he focuses so much on women as mothers. However, this is almost immediately undercut by his final thanks: "Thank you, everywoman, for the simple fact of being a woman! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic."[19]

As the letter progresses, he discusses his complementarian theology of men and women: "The creation of woman is thus marked from the outset by the principle of help: a help which is not one-sided but mutual. Woman complements man, just as man complements

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[15] John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 30.
[16] John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 30.
[17] This letter largely came about because of the Holy See's involvement at the 1994 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and it was seen as the Holy See's attempt to covertly sway proceedings at the conference following criticism for their over-involvement at an earlier UN conference in Cairo. The Holy See was and remains a Non-Member State Permanent Observer (rather than an NGO) at the UN. For more on this see Abdullah, Yasmin. "The Holy See at United Nations Conferences: State or Church?" *Columbia Law Review* 96, no. 7 (1996): 1835–75.
[18] John Paul II, *Letter to Women* (Vatican City, 1995), 2.
[19] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 2.

woman: men and women are complementary. Womanhood expresses the 'human' as much as manhood does, but in a different and complementary way."[20] He applies this idea to Mary's role in the Gospels, writing:

> The Church sees in Mary the highest expression of the "feminine genius" and she finds in her a source of constant inspiration. Mary called herself the "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38). Through obedience to the Word of God she accepted her lofty yet not easy vocation as wife and mother in the family of Nazareth. Putting herself at God's service, she also put herself at the service of others: a service of love. Precisely through this service Mary was able to experience in her life a mysterious, but authentic "reign." It is not by chance that she is invoked as "Queen of heaven and earth." The entire community of believers thus invokes her; many nations and peoples call upon her as their "Queen." For her, "to reign" is to serve! Her service is "to reign"![21]

This passage furthers the narrative from *Mulieris Dignatatem* that John Paul II casts women in the supporting role and – rather than argue this is an insult to women's humanity – tells women to find power in it. This passage strongly contrasts with the text below, in which he reaffirms his commitment to the all-male priesthood:

> In this perspective of "service" – which, when it is carried out with freedom, reciprocity and love, expresses the truly "royal" nature of mankind – one can also appreciate that the presence of a certain diversity of roles is in no way prejudicial to women, provided that this diversity is not the result of an arbitrary imposition, but is rather an expression of what is specific to being male and female. This issue also has a particular application within the Church. If Christ – by his free and sovereign choice, clearly attested to by the Gospel and by the Church's constant Tradition – entrusted only to men the task of being an "icon" of his countenance as "shepherd" and

[20] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 7.
[21] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 10.

> "bridegroom" of the Church through the exercise of the ministerial priesthood, this in no way detracts from the role of women, or for that matter from the role of the other members of the Church who are not ordained to the sacred ministry, since all share equally in the dignity proper to the "common priesthood" based on Baptism.[22]

This *Letter to Women* was published the year John Paul II published *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis,* in which he affirmed that the priesthood would be reserved only for men. In this last passage we can see the pontiff reinforcing this argument and contrasting it with "arbitrary imposition" that may keep women from traditionally male roles.

One of the major themes to draw from these examples of John Paul II's romantic feminism is how he continually casts Mary and women in the supporting, passive role. He praises the "feminine genius" but never defines clearly what "feminine" is. Angela Sutton compares John Paul's theology of women in *Muliberis Dignatatem* and *Theology of the Body* to that of Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Sutton argues that more so that the other two theologians, John Paul emphasizes that women, like men, are made in God's image and in portraying the male–female dynamic is comparatively "egalitarian."[23] Sutton argues that John Paul's frame of men and women is more progressive than Barth and Balthasar since John Paul emphasizes that a husband and a wife must submit to each other rather than the husband dominating his wife.[24]

Despite praising John Paul's egalitarian model of complementarianism, Sutton contends that in his *Theology of the Body* John Paul still considers the feminine-female as passive to the masculine-male. Drawing on a passage from *Mulieris Dignatatem*[25] Sutton argues:

> While the man's love does not imply that the woman is an altogether passive partner, since she is called to respond to him, there nevertheless seems to be an order within the relationship. The primacy of initiative seems to be

[22] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 11.
[23] Angeta Sutton, "The Complementarity and Symbolism of the Two Sexes: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Paul II," *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1010 (2006): 419.
[24] Sutton, "The Complementarity and Symbolism of the Two Sexes: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Paul II," 428.
[25] "The calling of woman into existence at man's side as a 'helper fit for him' (Gn 2:18) in the 'unity of the two' provides the visible world of creatures with particular conditions so that 'the love of God may be poured into the hearts' of the beings created in His image. The Bridegroom is the one who loves. The Bride is loved: it is she who receives love, in order to love in return." John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 106.

> ascribed to man. Yet it should be noted that John Paul II puts a greater emphasis on reciprocity in the manwoman relationship of love and marriage than does either Barth or Balthasar. This … is especially evident in his understanding of male domination as the symptom of a disordered manwoman relationship.[26]

With these considerations in mind, it is appropriate to focus Ruether's definition of romantic feminism not on women's closeness to the *Imago Dei* but on "retain[ing] more of the original purity and goodness of human nature"[27] which for John Paul finds expression in women's passivity in relation to men – a passivity that all humans are called to exhibit in relation to God. This has further complications because, as Tina Beattie argues, men can move between the masculine–active and the feminine-passive since they are active in relation to women but passive in relation to God.[28] This implies that despite keeping the "goodness of human nature," women do not experience the total human experience of masculine-activity as men can experience feminine-passivity. Based on his *Letter*, his two Marian encyclicals, and his *Theology of the Body,* John Paul frames the feminine as the passive to the masculine's active, culminating in his romantic feminist frame for Mary and women.

My feminist interpretation of Mary breaks this feminine-passivity because Mary, in being immaculately conceived and thus grace-full, is more God-like than a maculate man. This is because she is *gratia plena,* and drawing on Aquinas's definition of grace as being nothing less than participation in the divine nature,[29] Mary can then participate in the masculine-active. And if – as John Paul writes – Mary is the "highest expression of the 'feminine genius,'" then women would be more like Mary if they could move between the feminine-passive and the masculine active as Mary does.

The texts I will discuss in the tripartite anthropology of women reflect this idea as the feminine-passive and masculine-active, portraying Mary and women as figures who should uplift men rather than seek to uplift themselves. This is particularly evident in the selected texts from Gerald Vann, OP, and Carrie Gress who argue that women's roles in Christianity are not for the sake of their own active roles in the Church, but to lead men and children to salvation. In understanding Mary as the exemplar for women moving between the feminine-

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[26] Sutton, "The Complementarity and Symbolism of the Two Sexes: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Paul II," 129.
[27] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 105.
[28] Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 76.
[29] *ST* I-II.Q112.Q1.

passive and the masculine-active as men do, then women can be both active participants in their faith and acknowledge their passivity before God.

Pope Benedict XVI[30] succeeded John Paul II in 2005, and there was a marked shift from the pastoral style of John Paul II to Benedict XVI's more academic tone. Unlike his predecessor, Benedict XVI did not release any encyclicals focused solely on Mary or women. In his first papal encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, the pontiff uses Mary as the conclusion to his discussion on love. He initially praises her lowliness and conformity to God's will, but then praises the way in which the Magnificat reflects her relationship to the Word of God: "The Magnificat – a portrait, so to speak, of her soul – is entirely woven from threads of Holy scripture, threads drawn from the Word of God. Here we see how completely at home Mary is with the Word of God, with ease she moves in and out of it. She speaks and thinks with the Word of God; the Word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the Word of God."[31]

Also during his pontificate, the Vatican released new guidelines on its handling of priests who were accused of sexual abuse. In the document, the Church also listed out other sins that they considered as grave as pedophilia such as heresy and apostasy. Female ordination to priesthood was also listed as a sin that would be comparable to pedophilia.[32] Rosemary Radford Ruether comments: "But the underlying assumption of this bizarre comparison is that the application of the rite of priestly ordination to the inappropriate female body violates the sacrament itself in a way that is similar to normatively celibate male priests violating children sexually."[33]

Pope Francis[34] succeeded Benedict XVI in 2013, following the latter's decision to retire as pope. In his papacy, Pope Francis did not publish an encyclical or other major work on Mary beyond the book *Ave Maria: The Mystery of the Most Beloved Prayer*, but Francis has said and done much regarding women in the Church.

In remarks to the International Theological Commission, Francis noted that there were five women (of the thirty-person commission), which was the most that commission had ever had. It was reported, "That number, the pope said, is 'not so many.' The women, he

[30] Lived: 1927–2022. Papacy: 2005–2013.
[31] Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), 41.
[32] Rachel Donadio, "Vatican Revises Abuse Process, but Causes Stir," *The New York Times*, July 15, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/16/world/europe/16vatican.html.
[33] Ruether, "Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives," 89.
[34] Lived: 1936–2025. Papacy: 2013–2025.

said, 'are the strawberry on the cake, but we want more.'"[35] The patronizing language Francis used – likening women to strawberries – was criticized in the media.[36]

However, in a 2022 interview with the editors of *America* magazine, Pope Francis spoke in favor of the different ministries of the Marian and Petrine Churches: "Yes, one has to be in the Marian principle, which is more important. Woman is more, she looks more like the church, which is mother and spouse. I believe that we have too often failed in our catechesis when explaining these things. We have relied too much on the administrative principle to explain it, which in the long term does not work."[37] Francis does not explicitly uphold Mary as a model for Catholic women, but by discussing the Marian principle of the Church in relationship to women, the relationship is present. Francis's claim that "Woman is more" reflects Ruether's definition of romantic feminists portraying women as somehow purer and closer to God.

Francis did take concrete steps to better recognize women's place in the Church. In 2021, he issued the motu proprio *Spiritus Domini* in which he codified that a person's involvement in lay ministries (for example, serving as a lector or acolyte) was predicated on baptism and was thus open to all those who had received this sacrament whether male or female.[38] In the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2021–2024) – commonly called the Synod on Synodality – Francis made headlines by appointing Sr. Nathalie Becquart, XMCJ, as undersecretary to the Vatican's General Secretariat of the Synod, which meant she was entitled to vote in the proceedings. Francis also allowed all women at the Synod meetings to vote, which was the first time women were given this opportunity.[39] In early 2025, Francis named Sr. Simona Brambilla as head of the Dicastery for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (DICLSAL). She is the first woman to lead a dicastery in the Roman Curia.[40]

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[35] Joshua J McElwee, "Pope Tells Vatican Theological Commission to Respect Diverse Views," *National Catholic Reporter*, December 5, 2014, Digital Edition, https://www.ncronline.org/news/theology/pope-tells-vatican-theological-commission-respect-diverse-views.
[36] Heidi Schlumpf, "Pope Francis' Legacy on Women a Mixed Bag," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 23, 2025, Online Edition, https://www.ncronline.org/news/pope-francis-legacy-women-mixed-bag.
[37] America Editors, "Exclusive: Pope Francis Discusses Ukraine, U.S. Bishops and More," *America: The Jesuit Review* (New York), November 28, 2022.
[38] Francis, *Spiritus Domini*, 15 January 2021.
[39] Chris Herlinger, "Sr. Nathalie Becquart: 'Yes, Yes, I Will Be Voting' at Synod on Synodality," *Global Sisters Report* (Kansas City, MO), March 31, 2023, https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/sr-nathalie-becquart-yes-yes-i-will-be-voting-synod-synodality.
[40] Hannah Brockhaus, "Pope Francis Appoints First-Ever Woman to Head Vatican Dicastery," *Catholic News Agency*, January 6, 2025, Online Edition, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/261395/pope-francis-appoints-first-ever-woman-to-head-vatican-dicastery.

One of the major topics of the Synod was whether the permanent diaconate should be open to women. However, in a move that many considered to contradict the synodal spirit of the proceedings, Francis directly rejected the possibility of women deacons in an interview with journalist Norah O'Donnell of the American broadcasting company CBS on the program "60 Minutes." O'Donnell asked him: "I understand you have said no to women as priests, but you are studying the idea of women as deacons. Is that something you're open to?" Francis responded: "If it is deacons with Holy Orders, no. But women have always had, I would say, the function of deaconesses without being deacons, right? Women are of great service as women, not as ministers, as ministers in this regard, within the Holy Orders."[41] Colleen Dulle, in her article on the matter, quotes from Phyllis Zagano (citing her as "one of the foremost experts on the female diaconate in the Catholic Church), in a statement to *America*: "Surely Pope Francis did not intend to shut down several decades of study and ignore the import of Spirit-led discernment, which he has been so keen to emphasize as the modus operandi of the Catholic Church."[42]

This statement from Francis demonstrates how feminist theology of Mary like this thesis is needed in the Church today. Following his death in April 2025, Francis was succeeded by Pope Leo XIV. At the time of writing, he has not produced any major writing on Mary or women, but he did keep Sr. Simona Brambilla's appointment as head of DICLSAL and appointed Sr. Tiziana Merletti, SFP, to fill her vacated role as secretary to the same dicastery.[43] While it is still too early to know how the new pontiff will engage women in the Church, his continuing Sr. Brambilla's appointment is an encouraging sign for women.

John Paul II's romantic feminism ultimately moved the Church's mission further away from Paul VI's Mariology. His successors have engaged with women in different ways. Benedict XVI did not make any major changes, but Francis did take steps to give women more power in the Roman Curia in his appointments. In the next section, we will examine recent misogynistic theology, and I will demonstrate how it reflects the romantic feminism that I drew in John Paul II's work.

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[41] Colleen Dulle, "Pope Francis Says No to Women Deacons in '60 Minutes' Interview," *America: The Jesuit Review*, May 21, 2024, Online Edition, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2024/05/21/pope-francis-60-minutes-women-deacons-247995. [41] Francis gave his responses in Spanish so quotations are by an unnamed translator.

[42] Colleen Dulle, "Pope Francis Says No to Women Deacons in '60 Minutes' Interview."

[43] Catholic News Service, "Pope Leo Names Religious Sister in First Top-Level Roman Curia Appointment," *America: The Jesuit Review*, May 22, 2025, Online Edition, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2025/05/22/pope-leo-religious-dicasery-sister-tiziana-merletti-250760#:~:text=Sister%20Merletti%2C%20a%20member%20of,Life%20throughout%20the%20Latin%20Church.%E2%80%9D.

Mary and the Minds of Maculate Women

In chapter one, I refuted the Aristotelean notion that women were intellectually inferior to men by demonstrating how Mary is intellectually engaged in the salvific events in her life. In this section we examine how more recent examples of romantic feminism in theology undermine women in a new but similar way. In these excerpts from Gertrud von le Fort, Joyce Little, and Gerald Vann, OP, I draw on how they portray Mary and women as hidden and passive. I refute these characterizations with examples from chapter one that show Mary is intellectually active, arguing that my interpretation is more empowering for women.

On Mary and Women's Silence

In *The Eternal Woman*, Gertrud von le Fort explores the symbolic significance of women, using Mary as the primary symbol of womanhood.[44] Von le Fort (1876–1971) was a German writer and adult convert to Catholicism. The passage below comes from her consideration of great works of art as signs of God's beauty and power. She cites European cathedrals as proof: "As all these cathedrals were built for God's glory alone, so at the same time, in the consciousness of their builders, they were built by God."[45] Von le Fort then argues that women function similarly to these cathedrals in relation to God:

> God is hidden— a silent, an invisible God. In his creation, he remains in a sense anonymous. This helps us to comprehend our previous assertion, that the power which collaborates also cocreates. Woman, therefore, as the hidden collaborator, represents the anonymity of God; she represents it as the one side of all that is creative. Man, however, participates in this quality insofar as he is in alignment with woman's activity; for only in the working together of both the anonymous and the perceptible forces is the totality of creativeness consummate.[46]

[44] Gertrud Von Le Fort, *The Eternal Woman: The Timeless Meaning of the Feminine* (Ignatius Press, 2010), 16–19.
[45] Von Le Fort, *The Eternal Woman: The Timeless Meaning of the Feminine*, 50.
[46] Von Le Fort, *The Eternal Woman: The Timeless Meaning of the Feminine*, 50.

Von le Fort has selectively framed her argument about God's (in)visibility in the world reflecting the romantic feminist idea that even in closeness to God women are still passive. One could argue that during Mary's lifetime, God was visible and active constantly through the life of Jesus. God the Father reveals himself in the Gospels at Jesus's baptism when the clouds open and they hear the voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."[47] After the ascension,[48] God continues his visibility at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit appears as tongues of fire above Mary and the apostles' heads. This experience then causes the apostles to go out preaching.[49]

In chapter one I framed Mary's *Magnificat* as a loud, joyful expression of Mary's love for God and as a hint as to how she understood her role in salvation history. In her *Magnificat* as in her *fiat* at the annunciation and her intervention at Cana, I highlighted how Mary actively and vocally participates in salvation history. My feminist portrayal of Mary is a direct rebuke to Von Le Fort's perception that women need to be silent creators to mimic God when they can be active participants imitating both God and Mary. Von le Fort's argument is also inaccurate since the Church upholds women as teachers. The four female Doctors of the Church – Catherine of Siena,[50] Teresa of Avila,[51] Thérèse of Lisieux,[52] and Hildegard of Bingen[53] – are clear examples of the Church elevating intellectual women as models and teachers.

Drawing on my feminist interpretation of Mary encourages women to not be relegated not be silent in the Church. If Mary is not a sufficient model, then a woman could look to one of the female Doctors of the Church as an example of Catholic women not remaining silent within the Church. The issue of women's silence is particularly prescient in the Church today because of the Synod on Synodality where women were given the opportunity to vote in the proceedings for the first time.

On Mary and Women's Special Knowledge

As I was researching this chapter with my argument about Mary's grace-full intellect in mind, I expected to encounter more themes in contemporary theology about women being

[47] Quotation from NRSVCE Matthew 3:17; Jesus's baptism also occurs in Mark 1:9–11 and Luke 2:21–22.
[48] Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1:6–11.
[49] Acts 1:12–14; 2:1–4.
[50] Canonized in 1460 and made Doctor in 1970.
[51] Canonized in 1622 and made Doctor in 1970.
[52] Canonized in 1925 and made Doctor in 1997.
[53] Canonized (equivalent canonization) and made Doctor in 2012.

less intelligent than men. Instead, I found people arguing that women have a special intellect unique to their sex. While this can seem complimentary, claiming that women have special knowledge reflects the romantic feminism I examined in John Paul's theology earlier in the chapter. Joyce Little (1944–2021) was a professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas in Houston in the United States at the time of her death; in her article, "Mary and Feminist Theology," she articulates this idea of special knowledge that then brings about special responsibility. Little does not *explicitly* mention special knowledge, but her claim that women are responsible for the "deeper" things hints at that idea.

> If men by and large have been entrusted with responsibility for the prominent, public achievements of our history, that is not because they are superior to women. It is because women by and large have been entrusted with responsibility for the deeper and therefore much more hidden achievements of our daily lives, and even more perhaps, for the small and ordinary needs of our daily lives. To the woman who points out 'They have no wine' is entrusted the enormous responsibility of attending to those who have no food, no water, no clothing, no shelter, no family, no friends.[54]

Here Little plays up the romantic feminist notion that women are more caring than men as they are closer to God and away from power. Little does not explicitly mention Mary in this passage, but she draws Mary in by referencing Mary's intervention at the Cana wedding in John 2:1–11: "They have no wine." In chapter one on Mary's immaculate mind, I argued that Mary draws on habitual grace [*gratia habitualis*] at Cana. This leads her to intervene and in doing so to begin Jesus's public ministry that leads him to the cross. Having heard Simeon's prophecy,[55] Mary anticipates her and her son's suffering without knowing the details of what is to come. Despite this, she intervenes anyway. I argued that Mary is drawing on habitual grace in particular to contrast Mary's decision to intervene at Cana with her decision to accept the incarnation (her *fiat*) at the annunciation by arguing that Mary is now much more familiar with being mother of Jesus and thus mother of God. She can rely on a "store" of grace within her for this important moment.

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[54] Joyce A. Little, "Mary and Feminist Theology," *Thought* 62, no. 247 (1987): 356–57.
[55] Luke 2:33-35.

Despite arguing that grace [*gratia*] plays a role in Mary's actions, I am not suggesting that Mary, or any woman, has a deeper or special knowledge of other needs because of their womanhood. A key part of my feminist *gratia plena* theology that I discussed in the thesis introduction is that the graces Mary receives are the same graces God can give to anyone. Because my thesis is primarily focused on Catholic women, I emphasized that those Catholic women share in Mary's grace-fullness when they receive God's grace, but in the context of Little's argument, I will expand the scope to include men. The grace that lets Mary intervene is the same grace that could reside in anyone – woman or man – to intervene and stop the suffering or remedy the misfortune of others.

In *Truly Our Sister*, Elizabeth Johnson frames Mary's intervention in liberation and feminist terms in Mary's role as mediator: "From this angle, [Mary] stands in solidarity with women around the world who struggle for social justice for themselves and their children, especially daughters…Uttering these words ['They have no wine'], women can be empowered to turn away from socialized lack of self-esteem and docile acceptance of marginalization to engage instead in critical praxis on behalf of their own good."[56] Johnson's interpretation of John 2:1–11 frames women's role in social justice as an empowering necessity in the world rather than the important but hidden work of Little's argument.

Pope Francis referenced (in his interview with Norah O'Donnell) to women being "of great service as women" [57] belies the unpaid emotional labor roles that so many women take on in churches that relates back to their supposed "special knowledge." Francis's reference to women being "of great service as women" belies the unpaid emotional labor roles that so many women take on in churches that relates back to their supposed "special knowledge." As Rosemary Radford Ruether notes, "…there is no biological connection between female sexual organs and the capacity to be intuitive, caring, or nurturing."[58] Ruether's point alludes to the importance of caring for others for all Christians and not just women.

On Mary and Women's Initiative

In chapter one I argued that Mary's intervention should be considered her initiating her son's ministry. I further argued that Jesus's response to her request that he help with the

[56] Johnson, CSJ, *Truly Our Sister*, 290.
[57] Colleen Dulle, "Pope Francis Says No to Women Deacons in '60 Minutes' Interview," *America: The Jesuit Review*, May 21, 2024, Online Edition, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2024/05/21/pope-francis-60-minutes-women-deacons-247995.
[58] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 111.

depleting wine stores, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?"[59] is not a refusal because he does eventually perform the miracle at her behest.[60]

In *The Water and the Fire*, Gerald Vann, OP (1906–1963), who was a Dominican priest in the English Province, argues that Mary is a model for women to encourage men to take initiative rather than taking initiative themselves. This reflects the romantic feminist notion that women are kept away from power in an effort to preserve their innocence. He writes,

> So to Mary in her stillness comes the announcement which is the summons to both suffering and glory, and her reply is "so be it"; and her vocation is henceforth to love and work and suffer for the fulfillment of [Jesus's] vocation; and she does not command or urge, she suggests: "they have no wine"…The role of woman is to suggest and inspire: not to act but to inspire man to act; not to command and take the initiative, but to give him the courage and strength and wisdom to save himself.[61]

Through the feminist lens of the annunciation and Cana, we can understand that Mary is not passive in either scenario. At the annunciation Mary engages the angel before she acquiesces. At Cana Mary does not merely "suggest"; she intervenes. Even after Jesus's seeming refusal, she goes to the staff to carry out her desire, and by performing the miracle, Jesus fulfills his mother's wishes.

In the feminist interpretation, Vann's next point about women acting to inspire and encourage men to act rather than acting themselves as based on Mary is no longer viable. Mary shows her own initiative and even continues to act despite her son's initial reluctance. If women were to follow Mary's model, they would be more active and driven and not less.

Furthermore, Vann's argument reflects the confusion between Mary and Jesus as a woman-man dynamic when it is more accurately a creature-creator dynamic. At Cana, Mary's intervention is not about a woman pushing a man to act because only a man can do so. Rather, it is about an immaculate creature moving her creator and savior to begin his salvific work. This is like the dynamic of the annunciation that is often misunderstood as a woman submitting to a man when it is a creature cooperating with her creator.

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[59] NRSVCE, John 2:4.
[60] John 2:7–9.
[61] Gerald Vann, OP, *The Water and the Fire* (Collins, 1953), 137.

Vann's argument about women reflects Rosemary Radford Ruether's claim that every relationship has a feminine–passive element: "The femininity of the soul to Christ was the apex of a whole system of masculine rule and feminine submission that included the submission of the laity to the clergy, servants to masters, and of course, wives to husbands."[62] Framing Mary as a model of women's initiative and encouraging women to take initiative would give women the space to be the active person in a dynamic with men.

Mary and the Hearts of Maculate Women

In chapter two, I constructed an image of Mary's love and emotions that showed she was neither overly emotional nor wholly devoid of emotion, and part of this involved a demonstration that she experienced anger [*ira*], which is not traditionally associated with Mary. In this section I demonstrate – through excerpts from Carrie Gress's work – how romantic feminism portrays Mary and women as simply beautiful and devoid of "unfeminine" traits like anger. I respond with examples from chapter two to refute this characterization of love.

On Mary and Women's Love

My focus on Mary's heart naturally led to consideration of how she, as immaculate, loves and is loved. In chapter two I argued that Mary's love is not gentle, but rather is fierce and powerful. This is most evident in her presence at the cross in John 19:25–27, which is traditionally understood as the sword (of sorrow) that pierces her heart from Simeon's prophecy.[63]

In her book *The Anti-Mary Exposed: Rescuing Culture from Toxic Femininity*, Carrie Gress argues that the existence of an Anti-Christ implies that there is also an Anti-Mary spirit destroying traditional womanhood.[64] Gress earned her doctorate in philosophy at the Catholic University of America and – at the time of writing – is a fellow at the think-tank Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, DC. Later in the book, Gress argues for a view of female love that is rooted in beauty and gentleness:

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[62] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 149.
[63] Luke 2:35.
[64] Carrie Gress, *The Anti-Mary Exposed: Rescuing the Culture from Toxic Femininity* (St. Benedict Press LLC, 2019), 13–14.

> Women's beauty isn't meant to fuel our vanity; it is meant both to reflect the goodness and love of God and also draw those around us to him through our gifts. The beauty— both of body and soul— has arguably been the most powerful evangelical force for Christianity in history. Why? Because men crave it, look for it, and want it permanently in their lives.[65]

I agree with Gress that there is beauty in God's love. However, I disagree with Gress's implication that women's beauty as reflecting God's love is only powerful because of how men react to it and is not powerful in itself. This again reflects the romantic feminist argument that women are purer. Gress defines women's beauty to highlight this supposed purity.

In this chapter, Gress argues that Mary – based on the accounts of visionaries like Bernadette Soubirous – is the most beautiful woman ever,[66] and this was key because "it is the outward expression of her complete perfection emanating from God's beauty."[67] Gress's argument links God's love with physical and spiritual beauty for the post-assumption Mary. This distinction that Mary's beauty comes through visions is key because Mary's physical appearance is never mentioned by the gospel authors, and they never portray her as being concerned for her appearance. Gress explicitly links Mary's beauty with that of women:

> Like all of God's gifts, Our Lady's beauty isn't meant just for her. Even if her beauty surpasses all others, she isn't the only woman made to be beautiful. True beauty is not an unattainable ideal, nor is it simply a temptation to vanity. Rather, beauty is what God wills for women. He has placed in women the desire for beauty so that we can reveal his beauty to the world. Women have a unique gift to draw men and children to them— and through them to God— through their beauty.[68]

Implicit in Gress's argument is the link between female beauty and female love. God is love and so to draw "men and children" to God is to bring them to participate in his love.

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[65] Gress, *The Anti-Mary Exposed*, 87.
[66] Gress, *The Anti-Mary Exposed*, 84.
[67] Gress, *The Anti-Mary Exposed*, 84.
[68] Gress, *The Anti-Mary Exposed*, 85.

This argument also demonstrates that according to Gress, women's role in Christianity is to bring others to God. This is problematic for two reasons. First, it implies that women's love for God exists only to bring men and children to God. It does not exist for them alone. Secondly, her argument implies that only women are conduits for God's love and beauty for others when all Christians – including men and children – are called to evangelize.

Beauty and love are not contrary to feminism as Gress argues throughout *The Anti-Mary Exposed*. And one can look to Mary's earthly life as proof of love that is not delicate or outwardly beautiful. In chapter two, I argued that Mary's presence at the cross is one of the most powerful outward signs of her love. That does not necessarily make it beautiful in the framework of Gress's argument. I also argued in the chapter that Mary's presence at the crucifixion was her living out Jesus's call to pick up one's cross and follow him.[69] One looking to Mary at the cross would not be moved by beauty but by sympathy for her sorrow.

Karen O'Donnell has posited a view of Mary as Crone. Drawing on Maximus the Confessor's *The Life of the Virgin,* which includes stories of Mary's life after the crucifixion, O'Donnell imagines a menopausal Mary at the cross who in old age would bring wisdom to the early Church.[70] She then develops a liturgical form for blessing older women as they enter the "Crone" phase of later life[71] (leaving behind the "Maiden" and the "Mother").[72] Following Nicola Slee's theological poetry,[73] O'Donnell concludes with her own poem to "Our Lady of hot Flushes," which includes, "Our Lady of hot flushes/pray for us now as we frantically flap/at our reddened faces and pull our shirts away from/our slick breasts."[74] O'Donnell's vision of Mary does not emphasize physical beauty – and arguably rejects it with images of sweaty bodies and red faces. Nevertheless, one can imagine Mary in such a state at the crucifixion, and it does not detract from her love. Mary and all women do not need to be beautiful to spread God's love. And their love is not only a tool for conversion. Women's love can exist for the sake of their own love for God. By framing Mary's immaculateness as her relationship to God alone, women's love can be about their relationships to God alone rather than making it only a tool for the conversion of men and children as Gress suggests.[75]

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[69] Matthew 16:24.
[70] O'Donnell, "Mary the Crone," 133.
[71] O'Donnell, "Mary the Crone," 136–37.
[72] O'Donnell, "Mary the Crone," 133.
[73] Nicola Slee, *The Book of Mary* (SPCK, 2007).
[74] O'Donnell, "Mary the Crone," 138.
[75] Gress, *The Anti-Mary Exposed*, 85.

On Mary and Women's Anger

In chapter two I argued that Mary's frustration when finding a young, missing Jesus in the Temple verges into anger when she exclaims, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."[76] To claim that Mary was angry in this instance does not denigrate her immaculateness because it shows that she can enjoy a full range of human emotion as immaculate, which further highlights her relatability through her humanity.

In *The Anti-Mary Exposed*, Carrie Gress also criticizes first- and second-wave feminism for its supposed satanic and witchcraft origins and its founders' goals of destroying the family.[77] Later in the book she proposes Mary as the "antidote" to the wickedness of feminism. While noting that Mary is not "weak and saccharine, she is no wilting daisy," Gress then frames Mary as the quiet opposition to feminist leaders' bravado:

> One of the reasons Our Lady is wildly neglected is because her type of empowerment isn't clothed in the typical garb: she isn't outspoken, assertive, or intimidating; she isn't protesting topless in the streets; and she isn't donning a pink hat to show her power and conformity to feminist fads…Few are willing to tell women to be obedient, humble, submissive, and meek, which is probably why we don't hear it very often.[78]

Gress's condemnation of female protest – a public and organized kind of female anger – as anti-Marian is incorrect in the context of Luke 2:35. Gress's reference to "donning a pink hat" is a clear reference to the "Pussyhats" worn at the 2017 Women's March on Washington to protest Donald Trump's inauguration as President of the United States.[79] The protests were largely considered an expression of female anger over Trump's election.

According to Gress this protest does not reflect Mary's virtues of obedience, humility, submissiveness, and meekness. Earlier in this chapter I argued against characterizing Mary with qualities such as these because they do not actually describe her actions in the Gospels. I will not repeat that argument here, but rather focus on Gress's condemnation of female anger

[76] NRSVCE, Luke 2:48.
[77] Gress, *The Anti-Mary Exposed*, 46–48.
[78] Gress, *The Anti-Mary Exposed*, 71.
[79] The 2019 edition of this book that I cite includes an image of the march on its cover.

as anti-Marian by using the 2017 Women's March on Washington as a concrete, recent example of collective female anger.

Mary's anger comes about for a legitimate purpose: she has spent three days searching for her twelve-year-old son (and we can image her fearing the worst) only to find him safe in the Temple. The stress of losing him justifies her reaction: "Child, why have you treated us like this?" She exhibits a righteous anger because she has legitimate reason to be angry. And, as in the Magnificat[80] and her intervention at Cana,[81] Mary is not demonstrating meekness or obedience here. And in the context of the Magnificat and Cana, her angry reaction does not seem out of character.

The protestors in the Women's March on Washington exhibit a similar justified anger. Their protest was aimed against Donald Trump's inauguration, which had taken place the day before. During the presidential race in 2016, Trump faced criticism for misogynistic comments made in a resurfaced *Access Hollywood* video from 2006 in which he boasted about grabbing women by the "pussy."[82] Thousands of women, outraged that a man who had made such comments was just sworn in as president, marched in the American capital city, Washington, D.C.[83]

A feminist interpretation of Mary's reaction on finding Jesus as anger has two purposes: it demonstrates that as immaculate Mary has a full range of human emotions that includes those that may seem negative like anger and because even immaculate Mary experiences justifiable anger, maculate women can do the same.

Mary and the Bodies of Maculate Women

In this section I address modern misconceptions about Mary and women's bodies from Pope John Paul II and Bryce Andrew Sibley. They pick up on the romantic feminist notion of women's bodies being somehow purer (by women being closer to God) and are reluctant to allow women to have unromantic bodies. In refuting their arguments with ideas

[80] Luke 1:46-55.
[81] John 2:1-11.
[82] Fahrenthold, "Trump Recorded Having Extremely Lewd Conversation about Women in 2005," *Washington Post*, October 7, 2016, Gale Academic OneFile, https://link-gale-com.eux.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/A465882296/AONE?u=ed_itw&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=d913c257.
[83] Scott Malone and Ginger Gibson, "In Challenge to Trump, Women Protesters Swarm Streets across U.S.," *Reuters*, January 22, 2017, Online Edition, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-women-idUSKBN1550DW/.

from chapter three about the biological realities of women's bodies, I demonstrate how their work does not reflect modern understanding of women's bodies.

On Mary and the Hymen

In chapter three I deconstructed the notion that Mary's physical virginity – hymen – is necessary for the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity. I included her *in partu virginitas* in this thesis on Mary's Immaculate Conception because Aquinas claims that Mary's untorn hymen allows her to give birth without pain.[84] Pain during the nativity is a key part of discussion around Mary's immaculate body so it seemed appropriate to discuss *in partu* virginity within the context of the Immaculate Conception.

In the 1982 book *Love and Responsibility*, John Paul II advises the reader on love and sexuality, reflecting themes from his theology of the body. In the penultimate section, "Justice Towards the Creator," he discusses spiritual virginity and physical virginity, writing,

> "Virgin" means "untouched" – we speak in this sense of virgin forest for instance. Applied to a man or a woman "virgin" means untouched, intact from the sexual point of view. Virginity even finds expression in the physical make-up of a woman. Sexual intercourse destroys this physical virginity: as soon as a woman gives herself to a man she ceases to be a virgin.[85]

John Paul II, perhaps because of his tendency toward romantic feminism, does not use the explicit term for the virginity which "finds expression in the physical make-up of a woman," but the reader can surmise that he is talking about the hymen. His claim that first sexual intercourse (presumably penis-in-vagina intercourse) destroys this virginity is most likely an allusion to the claim that a woman's hymen is "broken" the first time she has penetrative sex. Thus, John Paul II is furthering the debunked claim that the state of a woman's hymen is indicative of her (non-)sexual past.

In chapter three, I argued that the state of a woman's hymen is not an indicator of sexual experience. Contemporary women's health specialists have argued that the hymen – a small bit of tissue that lines the vaginal opening – is not a reliable indicator of sexual

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[84] *ST* III.Q34.A6.
[85] John Paul II, *Love and Responsibility* (Harper Collins, 1982), 250.

experience because it can tear during some forms of exercise like riding a bike. Its biological function is unknown.[86]

Because of these biological considerations, John Paul is incorrect in claiming that physical virginity is part of a woman's anatomy. In chapter three I rejected the role of the hymen in the definition of Mary's perpetual virginity because, following Augustine, virginity is rooted in spirituality and will rather than physicality.[87] Though John Paul does not mention Mary here, she is implicitly included in this group as a woman. Arguably John Paul does not need to discuss Mary because the Church has already affirmed her perpetual virginity.[88]

I noted that from the Church's perspective a woman would not be considered a virgin if she had had non-penetrative sex. Such experience would not damage her hymen, but it would be classified as "sex" per the Church's definition. John Paul acknowledges that virginity is more than just the hymen:

> We should not, however, suppose that physical virginity or celibacy is the essence of virginity. Physical virginity is a factor favoring spiritual virginity, and also the result of this. It is possible to remain physically virginal to the end of one's days without this physical virginity ever becoming spiritual virginity. Those who choose spiritual virginity, on the other hand, remain in that state as long as they preserve physical virginity.[89]

Virginity was and remains a complex topic for Catholic women in relation to Mary. Mary – so often called the Blessed Virgin –occupies a near-impossible place as virgin *and* mother. It can be difficult then for women who choose to have sexual relations to find a comfort with Mary. Cahal Daly asserts: "Mary's virginity is the highest peak of the history of the female sex."[90] Elizabeth Johnson counters, ""The highest peak of the history of female sexuality is its non-use."[91]

I propose that my feminist interpretation of the Immaculate Conception could benefit women's experience of Mary's *in partu* virginity. By removing the status of the hymen from our understanding of virginity (including Mary's) we can emphasize the spiritual component

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[86] Sloane, *Biology of Women*, 37–38.
[87] *Civitas Dei*, 1.18.
[88] *CCC*, 499.
[89] John Paul II, *Love and Responsibility*, 252.
[90] Cahal Daly, "Mary and the Vocation of Women (I)," *The Furrow* 25, no. 12 (1974): 647–59.
[91] Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 127.

of virginity that John Paul acknowledges. I think the most direct and affective way to do this is to address Catholic purity culture.

Purity culture and its Catholic subculture is an immense field that I cannot fully cover here, but I propose that in communities that center conversations about sexual health around Mary, it would be beneficial to emphasize that Mary's hymen is not an integral part to her perpetual virginity. Breanne Fahs's study of American purity culture highlights how girls are taught that they are the passive actor who must resist the intense sexual aggression of boys. She also highlights how many young people who make chastity pledges are more likely to engage in anal and oral sex and not consider this "losing" their virginity. They are also more likely to contract sexually transmitted diseases through these oral and anal sexual experiences because they are also less likely to know how to use birth control.[92] This belief in purity culture that the only "real sex" is penis-in-vagina penetrative sex[93] could have ramifications in Mary. If the Church accepted that "physical virginity" is a myth and reframed Mary's *in partu* virginity as a spiritual virginity that she carries throughout her life, then purity culture could refrain from teaching girls about this myth.

Furthermore, Johnson notes, "In an age when women are discovering their own sexuality and becoming comfortable with the gift it indeed is, such an ideal embodied in Mary is emphatically rejected…the image of [Mary's] virginity has functioned to impede the integration of women's sexuality into the goal of wholeness."[94] This is where immaculateness has the advantage over perpetual virginity in relatability. As I argued in the introduction, Mary's immaculateness provides a map for a woman that emphasizes their place as "creature." Because a relationship with God does not depend on other factors like sexual past or childbearing, immaculateness can be an easier and more universal path for women to relate to God through Mary.

On Mary and Menstruation

In the introduction to this chapter, I noted that I was using a mix of peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed materials to engage with sources intended for popular audiences since this chapter focuses on Mary's relationship to Catholic women. With this in mind, I refute the

[92] Breanne Fahs, "Daddy's Little Girls: On the Perils of Chastity Clubs, Purity Balls, and Ritualized Abstinence," *Frontiers* 31, no. 3 (2010): 125.
[93] Fahs, "Daddy's Little Girls: On the Perils of Chastity Clubs, Purity Balls, and Ritualized Abstinence," 124–25.
[94] Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 127–28.

blog post "Mary and Menstruation" from the University of Dayton's[95] blog "All About Mary," where scholars and laypeople can discuss Mary in an intellectual but informal setting. In this post, Bryce Andrew Sibley uses a scriptural and theological methodology to argue that Mary could not have menstruated because doing so would have made her ritually[96] unclean. He argues that – in light of her immaculate conception – she can never have been unclean and unable to enter the Temple and be away from God because of it. He writes:

> …we know, as a dogma of faith that Mary was a virgin, before, during, and after the birth of Christ—not just spiritually, but physically. This would seem to make her exempt from the impurities mentioned in Leviticus 12 for women after childbirth. So if she did not bleed (or have discharge, although this might be disputed by some theologians) as a result of her pregnancy and birth, then why would she have menstruated?...The second observation, and a crucial one, is that from what has been said so far, it can be seen that the fundamental question here is not so much if Mary menstruated, but if she could have been considered ritually impure. For one to admit of menstruation, one must admit that she would have been ritually impure during the course of her life.[97]

In chapter three I argued that Mary as Jesus's human mother must have menstruated because menstruation is a sign of her body releasing the ovum that would be necessary to conceive and carry Jesus. I will not recount that argument here to refute Sibley, but his application of Jewish purity law to Mary – the first Christian – could be mistakenly applied to Catholic women as well. Popular discussion about Mary's menstruation (or lack thereof) can have ramifications for Catholic women.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated in practical terms how my constructive theology of the Immaculate Conception can benefit women facing romantic feminist arguments in the

[95] The University of Dayton is home to the International Marian Research Institute.
[96] Leviticus 15.
[97] Bryce Andrew Sibley, "Menstruation and Mary," All About Mary, 2011, https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/m/menstruation-and-mary.php.

Church today. I framed romantic feminism as the child of an Aristotelean-based theology of difference between the sexes because it places women in the passive role – not because of deformity, but because of their being closer to God. I used Pope John Paul II's major writings on women to illustrate this since his work contradicts Paul VI's *Marialis Cultus*. Having established the link between the Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference and romantic feminism, I reviewed more recent theology that denigrates women and refuted it with the arguments from the preceding chapters.

In the conclusion, I will close the thesis with my new Marian model for women. I also present my contributions to the field and consider how this thesis may be the starting place for potential future research.

Conclusion

A New Marian Model for Women

I opened this thesis with Pope Paul VI's *Marialis Cultus*. The late pontiff called for the Church to reconsider how Mary could be a model for women as they found greater equality inside and outside the home. He went so far as to teach the Church that it should be quite normal for new generations to consider what Marian interpretation should mean for them.[1] I wrote this thesis to take up this gauntlet that Paul VI puts down in this exhortation. This thesis had two goals that were intertwined: to refute the misogyny in Aristotelian biology and to argue that Mary – with a grace-full human nature – unties the knot of unfounded Aristotelian biology for the sake of all women. In accomplishing these aims, I have constructed a new Marian model for women that allows them to be active participants in their salvation as Mary is active in hers. I – following the structure of this thesis – have considered this new Marian model in mind, heart, and body.

I have demonstrated how Mary can be an intellectual model for women. Aristotle argues that women are intellectually inferior to men, but the Mary I present in this thesis is intellectually capable, not through mystically imparted knowledge, but through the natural processes that all humans experience. Not only is Mary able to navigate normal moral decision making but also decisions that move the salvific narrative forward. Furthermore, Mary must make these decisions without perfect knowledge, as Jesus did. In this way she a more effective model for the rest of humanity who must make moral decisions without perfect information.[2] In doing so, she is a model of "reading" God through scripture and grace [*gratia*]

Chapter two became the basis for the notion that Mary is neither overly emotional nor emotionless. When he was writing in the 1940s, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange maintained she was not so in control of her emotions that she was "machine-like."[3] I would argue that popular and academic portrayals of Mary have moved beyond this concern to the extent that there is a risk of portraying with her a bland, oatmeal-like passive love. This is not the Mary

[1] Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 36.
[2] I attended the unpublished paper "Virgin Most Prudent: Practical Wisdom and the Mother of God" by Gregory Pine, OP, in 2024 (given in partnership with the Thomistic Institute) in which he considers a similar line of thought but emphasizes the virtue of prudence rather than the Immaculate Conception.
[3] Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, 106.

we have seen in this thesis. Furthermore, Mary can also be a model for female anger, which is far less common (even, non-existent) in Marian devotion. Anger has been considered an "unladylike" emotion, but Mary legitimizes this natural emotion for women to experience. Mary's anger is righteous and a need for justice for her sorrow at losing Jesus. In this way she can be a model for women who are righteously angry. Furthermore, as Gondreau has drawn out from Aquinas,[4] Mary's experience of anger enhances rather than negates her model of meekness.

Mary's body can also be a positive model for women's bodies because as I have demonstrated, Mary's body is neither mystical not mysterious but simply human. Mary's body – after Jesus's – is perhaps the most important body in Christianity. By demystifying her body and speaking in frank terms about the different bodily processes that Mary's body would have gone through, I have also demystified women's bodies since no woman could have a more mystical body than Mary.

The image that best represents this new Marian model is Sandro Botticelli's *The Madonna of the Magnificat* [Fig. 8]. In this *tondo* we see Mary with the child Jesus in her lap and five angels surrounding and crowning her with a delicate gold tiara. In contrast to the annunciation scenes that portray Mary reading scripture that we discussed in chapter one, this Mary is writing scripture. Her hand is poised with a pen in an inkwell, ready to complete her Magnificat on the book in front of her. Mary has gone from reader to writer, furthering her active role in the salvific narrative.

Figure 8: Botticelli, Madonna of the Magnificat, c. 1438

Past art-historical analysis has emphasized Mary's passivity, arguing that Mary is dependent on the child Jesus to guide her hand.[5] However – like the Bible passages we considered in this thesis – we can look at the same scene that so many others

[4] Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 389–99.
[5] Susan Schibanoff, "Botticelli's Madonna Del Magnificat: Constructing the Woman Writer in Early Humanist History," *PMLA* 109, no. 2 (1994): 192.

have considered, but this time with a feminist methodology, we can see the same image in a new way. While Jesus's hand *does* rest on his mother's hand, it is gently placed, suggesting that he is not forcing Mary to write against her will. However, even if one interprets the image as Jesus guiding Mary, we can understand this is not done in a male–female dynamic, but rather as creator/savior–creature/saved dynamic. This is particularly important given that Mary is writing the Magnificat where she invokes God as her savior. In seeing Mary as a creature saved by Jesus's salvific work, we acknowledge her full humanity. In doing this for Mary, we can do this for all women, and women can do it for themselves.

Chapter Summaries

The new Marian model for women I outlined above was born from the tripartite anthropology structured around Mary's mind, heart, and body. Here I will review those chapters in greater detail to consider how each contributed to the "New Marian Model" above.

Chapter one, on the immaculate mind of Mary, demonstrated that Mary was an active, intellectually engaged figure in the salvific narrative. In my interpretation, the Magnificat is Mary's statement of self that reveals how she understands herself and her relationship to God. This was in contrast with the historical interpretation that sees her speaking as a representative of Israel, while my interpretation prioritizes Mary's individuality. Next I considered moments in Mary's life in which she is shown contemplating, which I likened to the speculative intellect [*intellectus speculativus*] in Aquinas's thought. These moments were Mary's reaction to the shepherds at the nativity in Luke 2:17–20, and Mary's wonder at Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:33 also added another layer to our understanding of Mary seeking to understand her son when we interpret wonder [*admiratio*] as a search for deeper meaning. The next section built on Mary's speculative intellect and focused on the practical intellect [*intellectus practicus*] understood as immaculate decision making. To develop immaculate decision making, I applied Mary's grace-fullness to Aquinas's syllogism theory of decision making to demonstrate that she could make perfect decisions without infused knowledge. Then I examined Mary's *fiat* at the annunciation as an intellectual decision rooted in grace by applying the same syllogism theory to the moment. I then applied the decision-making process to Mary's intervention at Cana to argue that Mary is pushing Jesus to begin his ministry rather than traditional interpretations which argue that Jesus is separating himself

from his earthly family at Cana. All of these passages demonstrate how Mary – as a woman – is capable of intellectually participating in the salvific narrative.

Chapter two focused on the immaculate heart of Mary to argue that she was neither overly emotional nor so ordered that she lacked emotion altogether. To do this, I framed Mary's love for God as friendship in accordance with Thomist thought. I then interpreted the conclusion to the passage about Mary finding Jesus in the Temple as meditative love to discuss Mary's love for Jesus on its own. Then I considered Mary's love in relation to other emotions [*passiones animae*], specifically anger [*ira*] and sorrow [*tristitia*]. Aquinas's understanding of anger shows that it is not a negative or harmful emotion, so it does not diminish Mary's immaculateness that (as I argue) she is angry upon finding Jesus in the Temple in Luke 2:48. My discussion of anger in particular dismantles the Aristotelean notion of women being more naturally passive than men. In the next section, I consider Mary's immaculate sorrow as anticipated in Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:35 that is fulfilled at the crucifixion in John 19:26–27. I argue that when we read Jesus and Mary's exchange at the cross in the context of Mary beginning Jesus's public life at Cana, Jesus is beginning Mary's public life at the cross. All of this demonstrates that Mary is never overly emotional but clearly enjoys a rich emotional life.

Chapter three most explicitly answers the misconceptions of women's biology by focusing on the immaculate body of Mary. Unlike the previous two chapters, in which I exclusively drew from the canonical Gospels, in this chapter I argued that it was appropriate to use selections from the *Protoevangelium of James*. This chapter systematically dismantled common misconceptions about Mary's body by applying modern biology to each issue. First I argued that Mary was conceived through sexual intercourse by her parents, Anna and Joachim, as described in chapter four of the *Protoevangelium*. This is important because it demonstrates that something as holy as the immaculate conception can come from sex. It also ensures that only Jesus is conceived asexually – setting him apart and emphasizing that Mary is the guarantor of his humanity. Next I argued that Mary experienced pain while giving birth to Jesus. This in no way diminishes her immaculateness but rather emphasizes her shared humanity with other women in going through the same painful experience that all mothers go through. In response to Aquinas's argument that Mary has a painless labor because of her intact hymen, I argued that Mary's hymen would have torn while giving birth and that this in no way denigrates her perpetual virginity. Finally, I argued that Mary menstruated, which led me to suggest that Mary's immaculate conception – being like baptism – would have unbound her from Levitical purity law.

Having dismantled the constraints of an Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference for Mary in the first three chapters, I focused in chapter four on the child of this theology of sexual difference – romantic feminism. Rosemary Radford Ruether defines "romantic feminism" as the belief that women are purer and closer to God. My research emphasizes the link between the two by arguing that rather than being a reversal of this Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference, romantic feminism is only a different way of dehumanizing women. To demonstrate this, I applied Ruther's definition of romantic feminism to the encyclicals of John Paul II on Mary and women. I then applied the same understanding of romantic feminism to recent misogynistic literature to demonstrate how prevalent romantic feminism is and how my feminist interpretation of the Immaculate Conception dismantles this literature. Because of this, I have shown that my research is the antidote to both traditional Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference (as seen in the first three chapters) and its successor in romantic feminism (as seen in chapter four).

Contributions to the Field

In this section – with the literature review in mind – I demonstrate how this thesis has furthered feminist Mariological discourse by filling in the gaps in the literature that I highlighted in the introduction. Here I demonstrate how this thesis effectively: brings the Immaculate Conception into feminist Mariology; furthers the feminist notion that Mary is not a feminine-passive figure before a masculine-active God; shows that Thomistic theology can be used to discuss this historically Franciscan dogma; and demonstrating that Thomistic theology can be an effective methodology for feminist literature.

In the literature review, I highlighted how feminist theologians have largely either dismissed or ignored the Immaculate Conception, but this thesis has demonstrated how the dogma can empower women. In doing so, I have centered the Immaculate Conception into feminist Mariological discourse to an extent that has not been done before. Feminist theologians have been reluctant to engage the Immaculate Conception in such a way for fear that the dogma inherently separates Mary too far from humanity to be useful in empowering women. However, I have demonstrated that the Immaculate Conception does not separate Mary as severely from women as previously believed.

The feminist theologians in the literature also highlighted how historically Mary has been portrayed as the feminine-passive before a masculine-active God. These theologians have offered their own solutions to this problem, and I have effectively demonstrated how the

Immaculate Conception disrupts this dynamic because it allows one to focus on Mary's place as creature before her creator God. The Immaculate Conception is a unique opportunity (when compared to the other three Marian dogmas) to discuss grace, nature, and the anthropology of women. Because these are not necessarily gendered areas of study, it has allowed me to draw out how Mary is a creature.

Furthermore, I have intertwined the arguments for Mary's full humanity with seeking to bring women into full humanity in defiance of an Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference to the benefit of both. By focusing on Mary's humanity, I have disrupted the feminine–masculine dynamic traditionally assigned to her and God, respectively. This dynamic between Mary and God has also exacerbated the same alignment between women and men. In disrupting the archetypal relationship of this dynamic, I have delegitimized the dynamic between women and men in the hope that it will empower women.

In the literature review I also highlighted how Édouard Hugon, OP, and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, used a Thomistic methodology to discuss what has historically been a Franciscan/Scotist tradition. While I noted several instances in which my argument diverged from those of Hugon and Garrigou-Lagrange, their work was still an important precedent for applying Thomism to the Immaculate Conception.

Also – following Mary Daly's argument that Aquinas is both the problem *and* the solution – I have demonstrated how a Thomistic argument can further feminist Mariology. I have used Thomistic theology throughout this thesis to demonstrate that Mary defies the Aristotelean-influenced theology of sexual difference that Aquinas favored. In doing so, I highlighted the humanity of Mary and women.

Implications for Future Research

In this section I consider future research implications that could follow this thesis. I first consider how my research could impact future research on the other three Marian dogmas and then argue that this thesis could begin a new Marian model for men as I have just done for women. In future research I would like to apply constructive feminist *gratia plena* theology to the other three Marian dogmas: Perpetual Virginity, Divine Maternity, and Assumption. In this thesis, I have honored Mary's uniqueness as the Immaculate Conception while also bringing out her common humanity to the benefit of Catholic women. As I consider the other three Marian dogmas, I will demonstrate how Mary is unique in these instances, but also how one could still emphasize her humanity in each of these dogmas

The dogma of Mary's Perpetual Virginity intersected with the Immaculate Conception in chapter three of this thesis when I discussed Mary's *in partu* virginity. This is only one part of the dogma of the Perpetual Virginity with the other components being her ante-partum and post-partum virginity. I justified including Mary's *in partu* virginity in this thesis because Aquinas's defense of her painless childbirth rested on her having a miraculously untorn hymen. In future research, I would propose considering Mary's ante-partum and post-partum virginity with her *in partu* virginity in the context of *gratia plena* and her humanity. This project would allow one to consider Mary's purity as sinless in the context of her purity as a virgin. My research in chapter four revealed the toxicity of Catholic purity culture, and further research on Mary's perpetual virginity could help deconstruct that.

In chapter three I argued that because of the biological reality of childbirth, Mary's hymen must have torn while birthing Jesus. However, I argued that this did not diminish her perpetual virginity, but rather emphasized her humanity. Since Mary's unaffected hymen is perhaps the most mystical element of the dogma, my interpretation that separates Mary's hymen from the dogma can make Mary's perpetual virginity more natural and more easily imitated, particularly for women in religious life.

Mary's perpetual virginity becomes more complex and impossible to imitate when one considers it alongside her divine maternity. Tina Beattie discusses this relationship: "Such beliefs [like virginal motherhood or God incarnate] challenge us to think differently and to think difference differently, to escape the knowledge of good and evil that condemns us to a world of oppositional relationships, and to discover a reconciling language of harmony and relationality in multiple differences."[6] Beattie's spirit of not fighting but embracing such seemingly incompatible ideas like virginal motherhood is complementary to how I have emphasized Mary's humanity while discussing her Immaculate Conception in this thesis. It demonstrates that my discussion of the seeming incompatibility of the Immaculate Conception with Mary's humanity could be applicable to existing discussion on Mary's virginal motherhood.

My thesis could also benefit discussion of Mary's divine motherhood separate from her perpetual virginity. Like Mary's perpetual virginity, her divine motherhood is not a singular moment but an ongoing state. Much of her motherhood is covered in this thesis in the context of her immaculate conception, like her reaction to finding Jesus in the temple in Luke 2:41–47 and her intervention at Cana in John 2:1–11. However, it would still be useful

[6] Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*, 126.

to consider these same moments through the lens of her motherhood rather than her immaculate conception. Furthermore, considering Mary's divine maternity but nuanced with the immaculate conception could alleviate, Elizabeth Johnson's critique of an over-emphasis on Mary's motherhood.[7] Applying *gratia plena* to her divine motherhood could also be an opportunity to discuss motherhood in more general terms and to help further dispel the image of Mary as submissive woman – as she is held up in popular advice manuals for Catholic mothers.

This thesis – in emphasizing Mary's human body – could also be useful for further research on the Assumption that acknowledges Mary's aging. Karen O'Donnell in her book chapter "Mary as Crone" applies a feminist reading to Maximus the Confessor's *The Life of the Virgin*. In it, O'Donnell draws out references to Mary's aging (emphasizing the toll aging takes on her body)[8] as she continues Jesus's mission after his ascension and before her own assumption. O'Donnell frames this as Mary's (and women's) involvement in the early Church.[9] My research on the immaculate body could contribute to work like O'Donnell's because it acknowledges Mary's unique status as immaculately conceived while also emphasizing her humanity through her human body. Much of this thesis focused on Mary's bodily humanity in menstruating and giving birth but there are opportunities to expand my conclusions about the immaculate body to Mary's menopausal years.

Mary-as-crone has interesting art-historical ramifications, as O'Donnell notes,[10] because in so many paintings of the assumption, Mary is portrayed as a young woman when she would have been (at the very least) middle-aged by the end of her life. Peter Paul Ruebens's depiction is one such image that portrays Mary at the assumption as a young woman [Fig. 9]. I selected this painting because, unlike others, it gives a less obstructed view of Mary's face which we can see Mary's youthful appearance that does not give any indication of aging.

Figure 9: Rubens, The Assumption of the Virgin Mary, 1626

There is also potential in a Thomistic interpretation of the assumption. Aquinas argues that the separation of the body and soul in death is unnatural.[11] This reflects his

[7] Johnson, CSJ, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," 128–29.
[8] O'Donnell, "Mary the Crone," 10.
[9] O'Donnell, "Mary the Crone," 6–7.
[10] O'Donnell, "Mary the Crone," 15.
[11] *ST* II-II.Q16.A.1.

anthropology of human beings being composed of a body and a soul.[12]I have argued throughout this thesis that Mary's grace-fullness enhances rather than diminishes her humanity, based on Aquinas's claim in ST I.Q8.1; therefore, her soul cannot separate from her body in an unnatural act because her grace-fullness would not allow it. I propose then framing the dormition as a time when Mary's body transforms into her resurrected body. In other words, the human functions of her body would shut down, but her soul would never leave her body so that she is assumed into heaven body and soul. Based on a Thomistic reading of the dormition and the assumption that I outlined above, Mary could also be a model or guide for the dying in the way that she has been for pregnant women.[13]

Much of this thesis has been a feminist focus on Mary's place as role model for Catholic women. In future research I would like to consider the implications of a feminist interpretation for Catholic men. Many of the virtues that I framed around Mary and Catholic women could also be applicable to men, such as her obedience and meekness. This work is particularly applicable now as – according to the 2022 Scottish census –among young people practicing any religion, Roman Catholicism is the most popular.

Much of this thesis has been about justifying women's full humanity in defiance of the Aristotelean-based theology of sexual difference: I did this to disrupt the passive–active dynamic that scholarship has noted has often bled into women's relationships with men. Catholic men may, then, have to redefine their relationships with Mary and women.

Closing

In this thesis I have effectively demonstrated that the Immaculate Conception deserves a place in feminist Mariological scholarship. Because the Immaculate Conception encompasses themes of grace, nature, and anthropology, it has been an effective means to argue that Mary is fully human with a grace-full nature and that because – not in spite – of this she is best placed to represent women against the unfounded, misogynistic biology of Aristotle. Mary represents the best of what all women have to offer the Church and the world. *Gratia non tollit naturum sed perficit – Maria Immaculata non tollit mulieres sed eas perficit.*

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[12] *ST* I.Q76.

[13] Sarah A Reinhard's popular book *A Catholic Mother's Companion to Pregnancy: Walking with Mary: Walking with Mary from Conception to Baptism* (2012) is an example of resources that invoke Mary as a guide for pregnant women.

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Appendix A: Images

Figure 1

Jean Bourdichon (1457–1521)

The Annunciation

c. 1480-1485

Leaf of Katherine Hours, Ms. 6 (84.ML.746), fol. 27

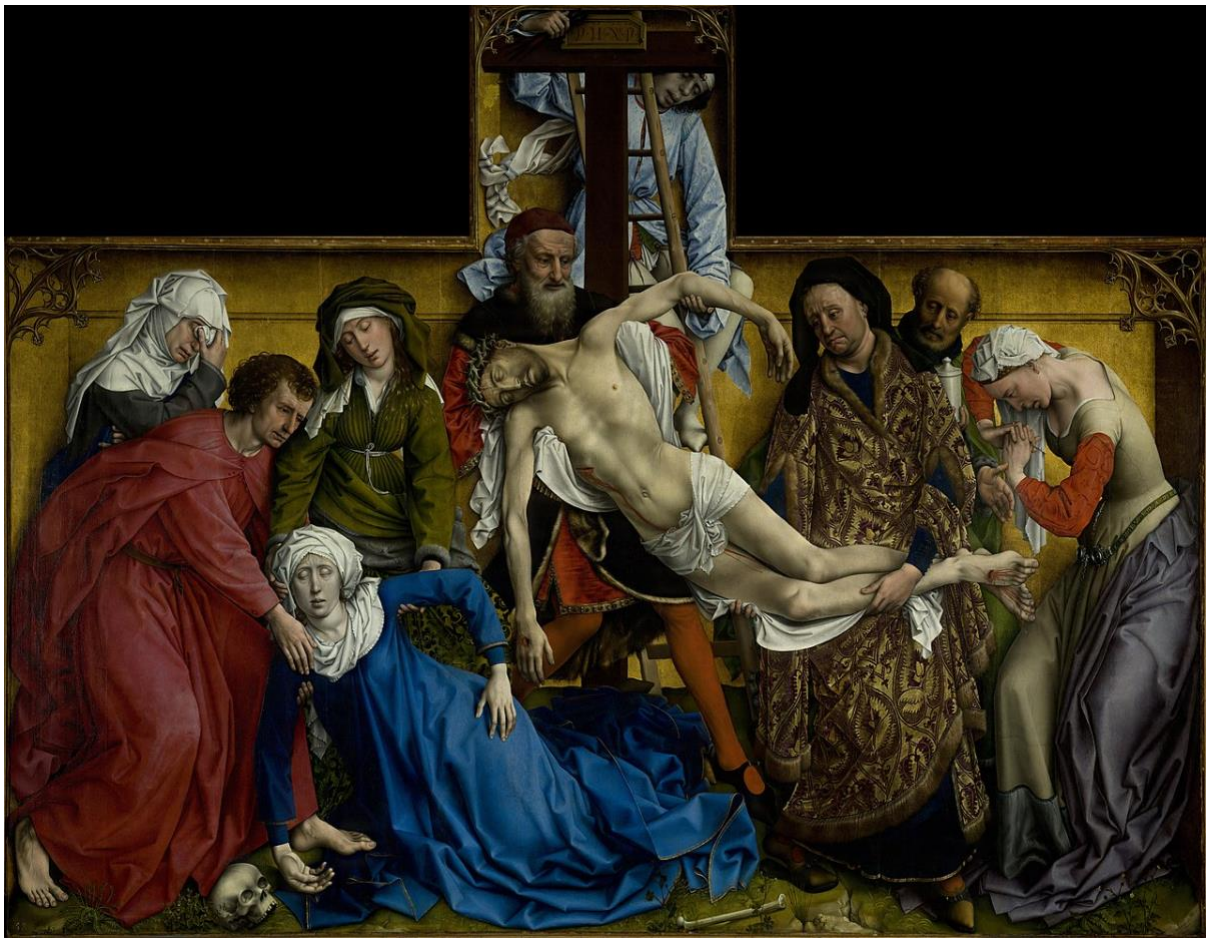
Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA, United States

Public domain

Accessed 13 July 2025

https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103S0P

Figure 2



Rogier van der Weyden (1399 or 1400–1464)

The Descent from the Cross

c. 1435

Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Public Domain

Accessed 13 July 2025

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El_Descendimiento,_by_Rogier_van_der_Weyden,_from_Prado_in_Google_Earth.jpg#/media/File:El_Descendimiento,_by_Rogier_van_der_Weyden,_from_Prado_in_Google_Earth.jpg/3

Figure 3

Leopold Kupelwieser (1796–1862)

The Heart of Mary

19th century

Peterskirche, Innere Stadt, Austria

Accessed 13 July 2025

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fa/Immaculate_Heart_of_Mary.jpg

Figure 4

Michelangelo (1475–1564)

Pietà

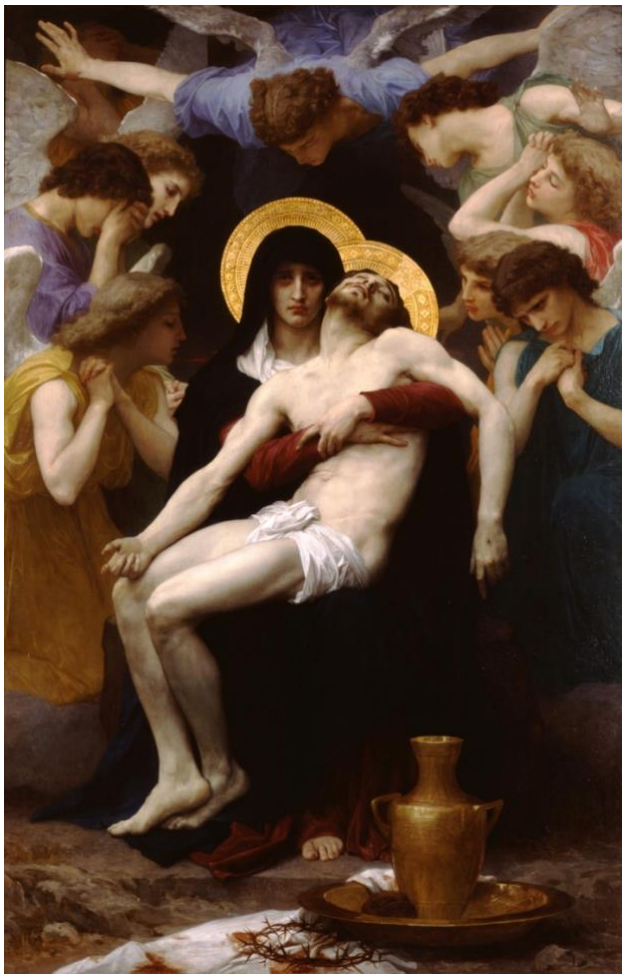
1498–1499

Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City

Accessed 13 July 2025

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/65/Pieta_de_Michelangelo_-_Vaticano.jpg

Figure 5



William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825–1905)

Pietà

1876

Private collection, France

Public domain

Accessed 13 July 2025

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bc/William-Adolphe_Bouguereau_%281825-1905%29_-_Pieta_%281876%29.jpg

Figure 6

Giotto (1266–1337)

No. 6 Scenes from the Life of Joachim: Meeting at the Golden Gate

1303–1306

Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy

Accessed 13 July 2025

Public domain

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giotto_di_Bondone_-_No._6_Scenes_from_the_Life_of_Joachim_-_6._Meeting_at_the_Golden_Gate_-_WGA09176.jpg#/media/File:Giotto_di_Bondone_-_No._6_Scenes_from_the_Life_of_Joachim_-_6._Meeting_at_the_Golden_Gate_-_WGA09176.jpg/2

Figure 7

Diego Velázquez (1599–1660)

The Immaculate Conception

1618

National Gallery, London, United Kingdom

Public Domain

Accessed 15 July 2025

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Virgin_Mary_-_Diego_Velazquez.jpg#/media/File:10_Inmaculada_Concepci%C3%B3n_(National_Gallery_de_Londres,_c._1618).jpg

Figure 8

Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510)

Madonna of the Magnificat

c. 1438

Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy

Public domain

Accessed 13 July 2025

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/04/Magnificat_Madonna_-_Botticelli_%28uffici%29_b.jpg

Figure 9

Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640)

The Assumption of the Virgin Mary

1626

Cathedral of Our Lady, Antwerp, Belgium

Accessed 13 July 2025

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d3/Rubens%2C_Mari%C3%A4_Himmelfahrt_%28Antwerpen%29.jpg