

Early Christian writings from the first centuries clearly define that the true church followed the Catholic doctrine on Mary

They highlight Mary : Mother of God, Ever Virgin, New Eve, Immaculate Conception, Assumption, Powerful Intercessor, Co-redemptrix, mother of all.

The Ascension of Isaiah (AD 70)

The Ascension of Isaiah is a Christian work, which was put together at the earliest in the second half of the 2nd century. It was intended to combat, in the manner of an ancient apocalypse, certain contemporary evils, the lack of discipline and the divisions in the Church. One cannot however fail to recognize that the work takes up traditions already in existence and makes them serve its purpose.

"[T]he report concerning the child was noised abroad in Bethlehem. Some said, 'The Virgin Mary has given birth before she was married two months.' And many said, 'She has not given birth; the midwife has not gone up to her, and we heard no cries of pain'" (Ascension of Isaiah 11 [A.D. 70]).

The Odes of Solomon [A.D. 80]

"So the Virgin became a mother with great mercies. And she labored and bore the Son, but without pain, because it did not occur without purpose. And she did not seek a midwife, because he caused her to give life. She bore as a strong man, with will . . ." (Odes of Solomon 19).

Protoevangelium of James (A.D. 120, less than sixty years after the conclusion of Mary's earthly life and the apostles)

The Infancy Narrative of James is also known as the Protevangelium of James, a work of about 120 A.D., speaks extensively about the perpetual virginity of Mary. The earliest known manuscript of the text was found in 1958; it is now kept in Geneva's Bodmer Library and the manuscript dates to the third century. This was written while there were still those living who had known and spoken with Mary and the Apostles. The *terminus a quo* is set by the use of Matthew and Luke. The *terminus ad quem* is set by a reference from Origen and by the Bodmer papyrus. Within this range, a dating in the middle of the second century is most likely. This dating is suggested by the prevalence of harmonies of Matthew and Luke at this time, as shown from Justin Martyr. The Infancy Gospel of James itself may have been dependent on a harmony of Matthew and Luke, but in any case it stands in the harmonizing spirit of the era before the four canonical gospels were considered to be sacred scripture. Since the Protoevangelium was not proposing the perpetual virginity of Mary as a new teaching, but rather as one already established, it is clear that this teaching goes back to the very beginning of the Church. Consider further, that if such an early work had in fact made a false claim about any "sons of Mary" it would have been quickly discredited by the witnesses of relatives and the community of early believers.

The first Adam and the first Eve did not remain virgins but populated the earth, yet the second Adam and the second Eve remained virgins all their lives in order to consecrate themselves to serving God full-time. Thus Jesus never married or had children. He did this so he could consecrate himself to serving God full-time.

In the same way, Mary was consecrated to the full-time service of God. The Protoevangelium of James records that Mary was one of the women who, like the prophetess Anna (Luke 2:36-37), lived celibate lives in the Temple in Jerusalem, serving as full-time prayer warriors -- the Old Testament equivalent of contemplative nuns. This document was written no later than A.D. 120, less than sixty years after the conclusion of Mary's earthly life and when memories of that life were still vivid in the minds of many.

This document records that Mary's birth was prophesied, her mother, St. Anne, vowed that she would devote the child to the service of the Lord, like Samuel had been by his mother (1 Sam. 1:11). Mary would thus serve the Lord at the Temple, as women had for centuries (1 Sam. 2:22), and as Anna the prophetess did at the time of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:36-37). A life of continual, devoted service to the Lord at the Temple meant that Mary was not able to live the ordinary life of a child-rearing mother, and so she was vowed to perpetual virginity. It records:

"And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by [St. Anne], saying, 'Anne! Anne! The Lord has heard your prayer, and you shall conceive and shall bring forth, and your seed shall be spoken of in all the world.' And Anne said, 'As the Lord my God lives, if I beget either male or female, I will bring it as a gift to the Lord my God, and it shall minister to him in the holy things all the days of its life.' . . . And [from the time she was three] Mary was in the temple of the Lord as if she were a dove that dwelt there" (Protoevangelium of James 4, 7 [A.D. 120]).

But because of considerations of ceremonial cleanliness, it was eventually necessary for Mary, a consecrated 'virgin of the Lord' to have a guardian or protector who would respect her vow of virginity. Thus according to the document Joseph, an elderly widower who already had children, was chosen (this also explains why Joseph was apparently dead by the time of Jesus' adult ministry, since he does not appear during it in the gospels and since Mary is entrusted to John at the crucifixion rather than to her husband Joseph). The document records:

"And when she was twelve years old there was held a council of priests, saying, 'Behold, Mary has reached the age of twelve years in the temple of the Lord. What then shall we do with her, lest perchance she defile the sanctuary of the Lord?' And they said to the high priest, 'You stand by the altar of the Lord; go in and pray concerning her, and whatever the Lord shall manifest to you, that also will we do.' . . . [A]nd he prayed concerning her, and behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him saying, 'Zechariah! Zechariah! Go out and assemble the widowers of the people and let them bring each his rod, and to

whomsoever the Lord shall show a sign, his wife shall she be. . . . And Joseph [was chosen] . . . And the priest said to Joseph, 'You have been chosen by lot to take into your keeping the Virgin of the Lord.' But Joseph refused, saying, 'I have children, and I am an old man, and she is a young girl'" (ibid. 8-9).

Joseph was required to respect Mary's vow of virginity, and just how seriously he was required to respect it is indicated by the fact that when she was discovered to be with child, he got in trouble with the Temple authorities, who thought he had defiled a virgin of the Lord.

"And Annas the scribe came to him [Joseph] . . . and saw that Mary was with child. And he ran away to the priest and said to him, 'Joseph, whom you did vouch for, has committed a grievous crime.' And the priest said, 'How so?' And he said, 'He has defiled the virgin whom he received out of the temple of the Lord and has married her by stealth'" (ibid. 15).

Mary was also accused of having forsaken the Lord by breaking her vow:

"And the priest said, 'Mary, why have you done this? And why have you brought your soul low and forgotten the Lord your God?' . . . And she wept bitterly saying, 'As the Lord my God lives, I am pure before him, and know not man'" (ibid.)

The understanding of this document that the brethren of the Lord were Jesus' step-brothers (children of Joseph) rather than half-brothers (children of Mary) was the most common one until the time of Jerome, who popularized the idea that they might have been cousins instead, since in Jewish idiom cousins were also referred to as "brethren."

Most Protestants are unaware of all this, but the Protestant Reformers themselves -- Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli -- honored the perpetual virginity of Mary and recognized it as the teaching of the Bible, as have more modern Protestants, such as the biblical and patristics scholar J. B. Lightfoot.

St. Justin (the) Martyr (AD 155)

St. Justin Martyr (c. 150) may have been the first writer to explicate the Eve-Mary parallel and antithesis, though it is strongly implicit in the Bible. Commonly regarded as the first Christian philosopher, this Palestinian, born of Pagan parents between 100 and 110, converted to Christianity about 133, probably at Ephesus, later passing to Rome where he taught and met martyrdom. His *apology* is dedicated to Emperor Antoninus, who ruled from 138-161. His *apology* may be dated internally from the statement in chapter 6 that "Christ was born one hundred and fifty years ago under Cyrenius." Since Quirinius entered office in the year 6 C.E. according to Josephus, the apology may be dated to the year 156 CE. His *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, c. 155, preceded St. Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* (c. 180-199) and *The Preaching of the Apostles* (c. 190-200) by several decades.

"[Jesus] became man by the Virgin so that the course which was taken by disobedience in the beginning through the agency of the serpent might be also the very course by which it would be put down. Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, for which reason the Holy One being born of her is the Son of God. And she replied 'Be it done unto me according to your word' [Luke 1:38]" (*Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 100 [A.D. 155]).

Irenaeus of Lyons (AD 189)

St. Irenaeus, whose name in Greek means man of peace and deserved his name according to Eusebius of Caesarea (*The Ecclesiastical History* 5, 24 [Harvard Univ Press, 1980], vol 1, p. 513). Irenaeus was born around 140 and became, in his youth, a pupil of St. Polycarp (c. 70-155), the Bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor, who was a disciple of St John the Apostle himself -- the caretaker of Mary, according to John 19:26-27). A fragment of a letter of Irenaeus mentions how as a boy he heard Polycarp speak of his conversations with John and others who had seen the Lord (William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol 1, p. 106). The Apostles appointed St. Polycarp to his see. Thus Irenaeus was a bishop taught by a bishop taught by one of the twelve original bishops. Irenaeus had friendships with other disciples of the Apostles (Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol 1, p. 288). While this sterling pedigree does not prove orthodoxy, it joins St. Irenaeus to the Apostles as few others -- with an unalloyed weld of silver. He was the second bishop of Lyons for twenty or thirty years in Gaul (now Lyons, France). A group later to be martyred under Emperor Antoninus (161-180) commended him to Eleutherus (also spelled Eleutherius), the Bishop of Rome (Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 5, 4, 2). St. Irenaeus himself died around 202.

St. Irenaeus wrote, for example, of Christ as the pure one opening purely that pure womb which regenerates men unto God (*Against Heresies* IV:33:11) -- words with which Irenaeus credited the Virgin's womb and assigns to her a universal motherhood. Writing of the "economy," that is, the plan of salvation, St. Irenaeus remarked "...without Joseph's action, Mary was the only one to cooperate in the economy..." (*Against Heresies* III:21:5; cited in Mark Miravalle, *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate -- Theological Foundations, Towards a Papal Definition?*, p. 178). Contemplate that. St. Irenaeus gave, with those words, a second century AD statement of belief that Mary had a unique role in the plan of salvation. Yet more remarkable, St. Irenaeus continued the Eve-Mary parallel and antithesis.

"The Virgin Mary, being obedient to his word, received from an angel the glad tidings that she would bear God" (*Against Heresies*, 5:19:1 [A.D. 189]).

"Consequently, then, Mary the Virgin is found to be obedient, saying, 'Behold, O Lord, your handmaid; be it done to me according to your word.' Eve, however, was disobedient, and, when yet a virgin, she did not obey. Just as she, who was then still a virgin although she had Adam for a husband—for in paradise they were both naked but were not ashamed; for, having been created only a short time, they had no understanding of the procreation of children, and it was necessary that they first come to maturity before beginning to multiply—having become disobedient, was made the cause of death for herself and for the whole human race; so also Mary, betrothed to a man but nevertheless still a virgin, being obedient, was made the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race. . . . Thus, the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith" (Against Heresies 3:22:24 [A.D. 189]).

"The Lord then was manifestly coming to his own things, and was sustaining them by means of that creation that is supported by himself. He was making a recapitulation of that disobedience that had occurred in connection with a tree, through the obedience that was upon a tree [i.e., the cross]. Furthermore, the original deception was to be done away with—the deception by which that virgin Eve (who was already espoused to a man) was unhappily misled. That this was to be overturned was happily announced through means of the truth by the angel to the Virgin Mary (who was also [espoused] to a man). . . . So if Eve disobeyed God, yet Mary was persuaded to be obedient to God. In this way, the Virgin Mary might become the advocate of the virgin Eve. And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so it is rescued by a virgin. Virginal disobedience has been balanced in the opposite scale by virginal obedience. For in the same way, the sin of the first created man received amendment by the correction of the First-Begotten" (ibid., 5:19:1 [A.D. 189]).

"Adam had to be recapitulated in Christ, so that death might be swallowed up in immortality, and Eve [had to be recapitulated] in Mary, so that the Virgin, having become another virgin's advocate, might destroy and abolish one virgin's disobedience by the obedience of another virgin." (Proof of the Apostolic Preaching (AD 190-200)33, Sources Chrétiennes 62 [Paris], pp. 83-86, in Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, p. 54).

Hippolytus (AD 200)

Hippolytus was a presbyter of the Church of Rome at the beginning of the third century. Eusebius says that he was bishop of a church somewhere and enumerates several of his writings (*Church History* VI.20.22).

St. Jerome likewise describes him as the bishop of an unknown see, gives a longer list of his writings, and says of one of his homilies that he delivered it in the presence of Origen, to whom he made direct reference (*Illustrious Men* 61).

"[T]o all generations they [the prophets] have pictured forth the grandest subjects for contemplation and for action. Thus, too, they preached of the advent of God in the flesh to the world, his advent by the spotless and God-bearing (theotokos) Mary in the way of birth and growth, and the manner of his life and conversation with men, and his manifestation by baptism, and the new birth that was to be to all men, and the regeneration by the laver [of baptism]" (Discourse on the End of the World I [A.D. 217]).

"He was the ark formed of incorruptible wood. For by this is signified that His tabernacle was exempt from putridity and corruption." Hippolytus, *Orations* In illud, Dominus pascit me (ante A.D. 235).

"For whereas the Word of God was without flesh, He took upon Himself the holy flesh by the holy Virgin, and prepared a robe which He wove for Himself, like a bridegroom, in the sufferings of the cross, in order that by uniting His own power with our mortal body, and by mixing the incorruptible with the corruptible, and the strong with the weak, He might save perishing man." Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and antiChrist*, 4 (A.D. 200).

Clement of Alexandria (AD 202)

Titus Flavius Clemens (c.150 – c. 215), known as Clement of Alexandria, was a Christian theologian who taught at the Catechetical School of Alexandria. A convert to Christianity, he was an educated man who was familiar with classical Greek philosophy and literature.

"But the Lord Christ, the fruit of the Virgin, did not pronounce the breasts of women blessed, nor selected them to give nourishment; but when the kind and loving Father had rained down the Word, Himself became spiritual nourishment to the good. O mystic marvel! The universal Father is one, and one the universal Word; and the Holy Spirit is one and the same everywhere, and one is the only virgin mother. I love to call her the Church. This mother, when alone, had not milk, because alone she was not a woman. But she is once virgin and mother—pure as a virgin, loving as a mother. And calling her children to her, she nurses them with holy milk, viz., with the Word for childhood. Therefore she had not milk; for the milk was this child fair and comely, the body of Christ, which nourishes by the Word the young brood, which the Lord Himself brought forth in throes of the flesh, which the Lord Himself swathed in His precious blood." Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, I:6 (A.D.202).

Tertullian (AD 210)

Tertullian was born in Carthage between 155-160 to a Roman family of pagan religion. After practicing law in Rome, he turned his talents in law, literature (both Greek and Latin) and philosophy to Christianity following his conversion around 193. St. Jerome described him as a priest though this is disputed. Tertullian was the first Christian author in Latin and the first writer to use Trinity and apply person to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, p. 61). He passed into Montanism, a rigorist and anti-clerical heresy, gradually around 206-213. He died after 220 and possibly as late as 250.

"And again, lest I depart from my argumentation on the name of Adam: Why is Christ called Adam by the apostle [Paul], if as man he was not of that earthly origin? But even reason defends this conclusion, that God recovered his image and likeness by a procedure similar to that in which he had been robbed of it by the devil. It was while Eve was still a virgin that the word of the devil crept in to erect an edifice of death. Likewise through a virgin the Word of God was introduced to set up a structure of life. Thus what had been laid waste in ruin by this sex was by the same sex reestablished in salvation.

Eve had believed the serpent; Mary believed Gabriel. That which the one destroyed by believing, the other, by believing, set straight" (The Flesh of Christ 17:4 [A.D. 210]).

"And indeed it was a virgin, about to marry once for all after her delivery, who gave birth to Christ, in order that each title of sanctity might be fulfilled in Christ's parentage, by means of a mother who was both virgin, and wife of one husband. Again, when He is presented as an infant in the temple, who is it who receives Him into his hands? Who is the first to recognize Him in spirit? A man just and circumspect,' and of course no digamist, (which is plain) even (from this consideration), lest (otherwise) Christ should presently be more worthily preached by a woman, an aged widow, and the wife of one man;' who, living devoted to the temple, was (already) giving in her own person a sufficient token what sort of persons ought to be the adherents to the spiritual temple,—that is, the Church. Such eye-witnesses the Lord in infancy found; no different ones had He in adult age."On Monogamy, 8 (A.D. 213).

Origen (AD 226)

Born in 185, Origen was barely seventeen when a bloody persecution of the Church of Alexandria broke out. Origen, most modest of writers, hardly ever alludes to himself in his own works; but Eusebius has devoted to him almost the entire sixth book of "Ecclesiastical History".

"The Book [the Protoevangelium] of James [records] that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary. Now those who say so wish to preserve the honor of Mary in virginity to the end, so that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word . . . might not know intercourse with a man after the Holy Spirit came into her and the power from on high overshadowed her. And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the firstfruit among men of the purity which consists in [perpetual] chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the firstfruit of virginity" (Commentary on Matthew 2:17 [A.D. 248]).

"This Virgin Mother of the Only-begotten of God, is called Mary, worthy of God, immaculate of the immaculate, one of the one." Origen, Homily I (A.D. 244).

"For if Mary, as those declare who with sound mind extol her, had no other son but Jesus, and yet Jesus says to His mother, Woman, behold thy son,' and not Behold you have this son also,' then He virtually said to her, Lo, this is Jesus, whom thou didst bear.' Is it not the case that every one who is perfect lives himself no longer, but Christ lives in him; and if Christ lives in him, then it is said of him to Mary, Behold thy son Christ.' What a mind, then, must we have to enable us to interpret in a worthy manner this work, though it be committed to the earthly treasure-house of common speech, of writing which any passer-by can read, and which can be heard when read aloud by any one who lends to it his bodily ears?" Commentary on John, 1:6 (A.D. 232).

"And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the first-fruit among men of the purity which consists in chastity, and Mary among women; for it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the first-fruit of virginity." Origen, Commentary on Matthew, 10:17 (A.D. 244).

"The first-fruits of all the Scriptures are the Gospels, and the first-fruit of the Gospels is the Gospel that John has given us. No one can understand the meaning of this Gospel unless he has rested upon the breast of Jesus and from Jesus has received Mary as his mother." Origen, In Johannis Evangelium, (AD 226) praef. 6; PG 14:34ab; Laurentin, A Short Treatise, pp. 72-73).

Sub Tuum Praesidium (AD 250)

Beneath thy protection (Latin: *Sub tuum praesidium*) is the oldest extant hymn to the Theotokos (Blessed Virgin Mary). The earliest text of this hymn was found in a Coptic Orthodox Christmas liturgy of the third century. It is written in Greek and dates to approximately 250. The *Sub Tuum*, which for long was considered a medieval prayer invoking the intercession of the Virgin Mary, but is now believed to have been prayed in the fourth or even the third century (c. 250 AD) following the discovery of a papyrus fragment from an early Greek version (O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 257). The accepted Latin version is commonly translated:

"Under your mercy we take refuge, O Mother of God. Do not reject our supplications in necessity, but deliver us from danger,[O you] alone pure and alone blessed." Sub Tuum Praesidium, From Rylands Papyrus, Egypt (3rd century).

Gregory the Wonderworker (AD 262)

St. Gregory was born in 213 at Neocaesarea. He entered the school of Origen at Caesarea, studied theology, were converted to Christianity by Origen, and became his disciple. Gregory about 238, was elected bishop of Neocaesarea. It soon became apparent that he was gifted with remarkable powers. He was so renowned for his miracles that he was surnamed Thaumaturgus (the wonderworker). It is reported that at his death at Neocaesarea, only seventeen unbelievers were left in the city.

"For Luke, in the inspired Gospel narratives, delivers a testimony not to Joseph only, but also to Mary, the Mother of God, and gives this account with reference to the very family and house of David" (Four Homilies I [A.D. 262]).

"It is our duty to present to God, like sacrifices, all the festivals and hymnal celebrations; and first of all, [the feast of] the Annunciation to the holy Mother of God, to wit, the salutation made to her by the angel, 'Hail, full of grace!'" (ibid., 2).

Mary...you know what the Patriarchs never knew; you have experienced what was never revealed to the Angels; you have heard what the Prophets never heard. In a word, all that was hidden from preceding generations was made known to you; even more, most of these wonders depended on you. (270 A.D., St. Gregory Thaumaturgus)

Peter of Alexandria (AD 305)

Became Bishop of Alexandria in 300; martyred Nov., 311. According to Philip of Sidetes he was at one time head of the famous catechetical school at Alexandria. His theological importance lies in the fact that he marked, very probably initiated, the reaction at Alexandria against extreme Origenism.

"They came to the church of the **most blessed Mother of God**, and **ever-virgin Mary**, which, as we began to say, he had constructed in the western quarter, in a suburb, for a cemetery of the martyrs" (The Genuine Acts of Peter of Alexandria [A.D. 305]).

Methodius (AD 305)

The Church Father and Saint **Methodius of Olympus** (died ca. 311) was a Christian bishop, ecclesiastical author, and martyr.

"While the old man [Simeon] was thus exultant, and rejoicing with exceeding great and holy joy, that which had before been spoken of in a figure by the prophet Isaiah, the **holy Mother of God** now manifestly fulfilled" (Oration on Simeon and Anna 7 [A.D. 305]).

"Hail to you forever, you **virgin Mother of God**, our unceasing joy, for unto you do I again return. . . . Hail, you fount of the Son's love for man. . . . Wherefore, we pray you, the most excellent among women, who boast in the confidence of your maternal honors, that you would unceasingly keep us in remembrance. O **holy Mother of God**, remember us, I say, who make our boast in you, and who in august hymns celebrate your memory, which will ever live, and never fade away" (ibid., 14).

Alexander of Alexandria (AD 324)

Alexander of Alexandria (died 326 or 328) was the nineteenth Patriarch of Alexandria from 313 to his death. During his patriarchate, he dealt with a number of issues relevant to a church's positions on issues facing the church. These included the dating of Easter, the actions of Meletius of Lycopolis, and the issue of Arianism among them. He was the leader of the opposition to Arianism at the First Council of Nicaea. He also is remembered for being the mentor of the man who would be his successor, Athanasius of Alexandria, who would become one of the leading Church fathers

"We acknowledge the resurrection of the dead, of which Jesus Christ our Lord became the firstling; he bore a body not in appearance but in truth derived from Mary the Mother of God" (Letter to All Non-Egyptian Bishops 12 [A.D.324]).

Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 350)

Cyril of Jerusalem was a distinguished theologian of the early Church (ca. 313 – 386). He is highly respected in the Palestinian Christian Community.

"The Father bears witness from heaven to his Son. The Holy Spirit bears witness, coming down bodily in the form of a dove. The archangel Gabriel bears witness, bringing the good tidings to Mary. The Virgin Mother of God bears witness" (Catechetical Lectures 10:19 [A.D. 350]).

St. Ephrem of Syria: Mary as Mediatrix and Dispensatrix (c. 306 - 373 AD)

St. Ephrem (or Ephraem, c. 306-373), the lyre of the Holy Spirit, a monk and a deacon, a prolific Syriac-language hymnographer and theologian of the 4th century, wrote in Syrian of the Virgin Mary according to a prayer ascribed to him: "After the Mediator thou art the mediatrix of the whole world..." (Oratio IV ad Deiparam, 4th Lesson of the Office of the Feast, cited in Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 211). In another prayer attributed to him, we read of Mary as the *dispensatrix* of all goods (William G. Most, *Mary in Our Life*, p. 34). On the similarities and contrasts of Eve and Mary, he wrote: "Mary and Eve, two people without guilt, two simple people, were identical. Later, however, one became the cause of our death, the other the cause of our life." (Op Syr II, 327; Ott, p. 201). St. Gregory, bishop of Nyssa (330-395), wrote in praise of St. Ephrem (Farmer, *Saints*, p. 143). For his voluminous works, the Church in 1920 named St. Ephrem a Doctor of the Church (ibid).

"Though still a virgin she carried a child in her womb, and the handmaid and work of his wisdom became the Mother of God" (Songs of Praise 1:20 [A.D. 351]).

"You alone and your Mother are more beautiful than any others, for there is no blemish in you nor any stains upon your Mother. Who of my children can compare in beauty to these?" (Nisibene Hymns 27:8 [A.D. 361]).

"Let woman praise Her, the pure Mary." Ephraim, Hymns on the Nativity, 15:23 (A.D. 370).

"The eye becomes pure when it is united with the light of the sun, and receives strength from its vigor and clarity from its splendor; it becomes radiant with its ardor and adorned with its beauty...In Mary, as in an eye, the Light has made a dwelling and purified her spirit, refined her thoughts, sanctified her mind, and transfigured her virginity." (Ephraem, *Hymns on the Church* 36:1-2; Gambero, page 110)

"Blessed are you also, Mary, whose name is great and exalted because of your Child. Indeed you were able to say how much and how and where the Great One, Who became small, dwelt in you." (Ephraem, *Hymns on the Nativity* 25:14; Gambero, page 111)

"Because the serpent had struck Eve with his claw, the foot of Mary bruised him." (Ephraem, *Diatessaron* 10:13; cf. *ibid* 2:2; also *Hymns on the Church* 37:5-7; Gambero, page 116-7)

Hilary of Poitiers (AD 354)

Hilary of Poitiers (c. 300 – c. 368) was Bishop of Poitiers and is a Doctor of the Church. He was sometimes referred to as the "Hammer of the Arians" (Latin: *Malleus Arianorum*) and the "Athanasius of the West".

"If they [the brethren of the Lord] had been Mary's sons and not those taken from Joseph's former marriage, she would never have been given over in the moment of the passion [crucifixion] to the apostle John as his mother, the Lord saying to each, 'Woman, behold your son,' and to John, 'Behold your mother' [John 19:26–27], as he bequeathed filial love to a disciple as a consolation to the one desolate" (Commentary on Matthew 1:4 [A.D. 354]).

"In what remains we have the appointment of the Father's will. The Virgin, the birth, the Body, then the Cross, the death, the visit to the lower world; these things are our salvation. For the sake of mankind the Son of God was born of the Virgin and of the Holy Ghost. In this process He ministered to Himself; by His own power—the power of God—which overshadowed her He sowed the beginning of His Body, and entered on the first stage of His life in the flesh. He did it that by His Incarnation He might take to Himself from the Virgin the fleshly nature, and that through this commingling there might come into being a hallowed Body of all humanity; that so through that Body which He was pleased to assume all mankind might be hid in Him, and He in return, through His unseen existence, be reproduced in all. Thus the invisible Image of God scorned not the shame which marks the beginnings of human life. He passed through every stage; through conception, birth, wailing, cradle and each successive humiliation. What worthy return can we make for so great a condescension? The One Only-begotten God, ineffably born of God, entered the Virgin's womb and grew and took the frame of poor humanity. He Who upholds the universe, within Whom and through Whom are all things, was brought forth by common childbirth; He at Whose voice Archangels and Angels tremble, and heaven and earth and all the elements of this world are melted, was heard in childish wailing. The Invisible and Incomprehensible, Whom sight and feeling and touch cannot gauge, was wrapped in a cradle." Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, 2:24-25 (A.D. 355).

Athanasius (AD 360)

Athanasius of Alexandria (b. ca. 296-298 – d. 2 May 373), was the 20th bishop of Alexandria. He is considered to be a renowned Christian theologian, a Church Father, the chief defender of Trinitarianism against Arianism, and a noted Egyptian leader of the fourth century. He is remembered for his role in the conflict with Arius and Arianism. In 325, at the age of 27, Athanasius had a leading role against the Arians in the First Council of Nicaea. At the time, he was a deacon and personal secretary of the 19th Bishop of Alexandria, Alexander. Nicaea was convoked by Constantine I in May–August 325 to address the Arian position that Jesus of Nazareth is of a distinct substance from the Father

"The Word begotten of the Father from on high, inexpressibly, inexplicably, incomprehensibly, and eternally, is he that is born in time here below of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God" (*The Incarnation of the Word of God* 8 [A.D. 365]).

"Let those, therefore, who deny that the Son is by nature from the Father and proper to his essence deny also that he took true human flesh from the ever-virgin Mary" (*Discourses Against the Arians* 2:70 [A.D. 360]).

"And the Angel on his appearance, himself confesses that he has been sent by his Lord; as Gabriel confessed in the case of Zacharias, and also in the case of Mary, bearer of God." Athanasius, *Orations* III, 14 (A.D. 362).

"O noble Virgin, truly you are greater than any other greatness. For who is your equal in greatness, O dwelling place of God the Word? To whom among all creatures shall I compare you, O Virgin? You are greater than them all O Covenant, clothed with purity instead of gold! You are the Ark in which is found the golden vessel containing the true manna, that is, the flesh in which divinity resides." Athanasius, *Homily of the Papyrus of Turin*, 71:216 (ante AD 373).

"And as the grace of the Triad is one, so also the Triad is indivisible. We can see this in regard to Saint Mary herself. The archangel Gabriel when sent to announce the coming of the Word upon her said, 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee', knowing that the Spirit was in the Word. Wherefore he added: 'and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.'" Athanasius, *To Serapion of Thmuis*, III:6 (A.D. 360).

John Chrysostom (AD 370)

John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), Archbishop of Constantinople, was an important Early Church Father. He is known for his eloquence in preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders, the *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, and his ascetic sensibilities. After his death in 407 (or, according to some sources, during his life) he was given the Greek epithet *chrysostomos*, meaning "golden mouthed" in English, and Anglicized to Chrysostom.

"And when he had taken her, he knew her not, till she had brought forth her first-born Son.' He hath here used the word till,' not that thou shouldest suspect that afterwards he did know her, but to inform thee that before the birth the Virgin was wholly untouched by man. But why then, it may be said, hath he used the word, till'? Because it is usual in Scripture often to do this, and to use this expression without reference to limited times. For so with respect to the ark likewise, it is said, The raven returned not till the earth was dried up.' And yet it did not return even after that time. And when discoursing also of God, the Scripture saith, From age until age Thou art,' not as fixing limits in this case. And again when it is preaching the Gospel beforehand, and saying, In his days shall righteousness flourish, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away,' it doth not set a limit to this fair part of creation. So then here likewise, it uses the word "till," to make certain what was before the birth, but as to what follows, it leaves thee to make the inference." Gospel of Matthew, V:5 (A.D. 370).

"Thus, what it was necessary for thee to learn of Him, this He Himself hath said; that the Virgin was untouched by man until the birth; but that which both was seen to be a consequence of the former statement, and was acknowledged, this in its turn he leaves for thee to perceive; namely, that not even after this, she having so become a mother, and having been counted worthy of a new sort of travail, and a child-bearing so strange, could that righteous man ever have endured to know her. For if he had known her, and had kept her in the place of a wife, how is it that our Lord commits her, as unprotected, and having no one, to His disciple, and commands him to take her to his own home? How then, one may say, are James and the others called His brethren? In the same kind of way as Joseph himself was supposed to be husband of Mary. For many were the veils provided, that the birth, being such as it was, might be for a time screened. Wherefore even John so called them, saying, For neither did His brethren believe in Him.' John Chrysostom, Gospel of Matthew, V:5 (A.D. 370).

"Why then after He had said, Mine hour is not yet come, and given her a denial, did He what His mother desired? Chiefly it was, that they who opposed Him, and thought that He was subject to the hour, might have sufficient proof that He was subject to no hour; for had He been so, how could He, before the proper hour was come, have done what He did? And in the next place, He did it to honor His mother, that He might not seem entirely to contradict and shame her that bare Him in the presence of so many; and also, that He might not be thought to want power, for she brought the servants to Him." (St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel According to St. John, Homily XXII).

Gregory of Nyssa (AD 370)

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335 – c. 395) (also known as Gregory Nyssen) was bishop of Nyssa from 372 to 376, and from 378 until his death.

"Just as, in the age of Mary the mother of God, he who had reigned from Adam to her time found, when he came to her and dashed his forces against the fruit of her virginity as against a rock, that he was shattered to pieces upon her, so in every soul which passes through this life in the flesh under the protection of virginity, the strength of death is in a manner broken and annulled, for he does not find the places upon which he may fix his sting." On Virginity, 14 (A.D. 370).

"It was, to divulge by the manner of His Incarnation this great secret; that purity is the only complete indication of the presence of God and of His coming, and that no one can in reality secure this for himself, unless he has altogether estranged himself from the passions of the flesh. What happened in the stainless Mary when the fullness of the Godhead which was in Christ shone out through her, that happens in every soul that leads by rule the virgin life." Gregory of Nyssa, On Virginity, 2 (A.D. 371).

"For it is said that he [Gregory the Wonderworker] heard the one who had appeared in womanly form exhorting John the Evangelist to explain to the young man the mystery of the true faith. John, in his turn, declared that he was completely willing to please the Mother of the Lord even in this matter and this was the one thing closest to his heart. And so the discussion coming to a close, and after they had made it quite clear and precise for him, the two disappeared from his sight." Gregory of Nyssa, On Gregory the WonderWorker (A.D. 380).

St. Epiphanius of Salamis: Mary as Mother of the Living (c. >310 - 403 AD)

St. Epiphanius (c. 315-403), a Palestinian born near Gaza who passed his youth in Egypt, was for many years a monk. Before his election in 367 as bishop of Constantia (now Salamis) on Cyprus, he founded a monastery near his birthplace over which he presided for some thirty years. His reputation for learning and sanctity induced the bishops of Cyprus to choose him, also in 367, as their metropolitan.

St. Epiphanius extended reflection on the Eve-Mary parallel and contrast when he applied to Mary the title *Mother of the Living* (Gen. 3:20) (O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 134). According to St. Epiphanius in a work completed in 377 AD (Quasten, *Patrology*, vol 3, p. 388),

"on appearances Eve is the mother of the living, but it is from Mary that life itself has been begotten for the world, that she should bring forth a living being, become his mother. Figuratively then...Mary has been called the Mother of the Living." (Panacea Against All Heresies, 78; O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 135).

"But here another wonder must be considered about Eve and Mary. Eve was for men an occasion of death and through her death entered the world; Mary was an occasion of life and through her life has been begotten for us. That is why the Son of God came into the world, and where sin has abounded grace has abounded all the more [Rom 5:20]. From where death came life came forward, so that life should come in the place of death, shutting out death which had come through the woman, and it was he who through a woman became life for us. And as Eve still a virgin sinned by disobedience, the obedience of grace came anew through the Virgin when the announcement was made of the descent from heaven and the appearance of eternal life." (Panacea Against All Heresies 78; O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 135).

"Being perfect at the side of the Father and incarnate among us, not in appearance but in truth, he [the Son] reshaped man to perfection in himself from Mary the Mother of God through the Holy Spirit" (The Man Well-Anchored 75 [A.D. 374]).

"We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things, both visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . . who for us men and for our salvation came down and took flesh, that is, was born perfectly of the holy ever-virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit" (The Man Well-Anchored 120 [A.D. 374]).

"And to holy Mary, [the title] 'Virgin' is invariably added, for that holy woman remains undefiled" (Medicine Chest Against All Heresies 78:6 [A.D. 375]).

"Whoever honors the Lord also honors the holy [vessel]; who instead dishonors the holy vessel also dishonors his Master. Mary herself is that holy Virgin, that is, the holy vessel" Epiphanius, Panarion, 78:21 (A.D. 377).

"If the Holy Virgin had died and was buried, her falling asleep would have been surrounded with honour, death would have found her pure, and her crown would have been a virginal one...Had she been martyred according to what is written: 'Thine own soul a sword shall pierce', then she would shine gloriously among the martyrs, and her holy body would have been declared blessed; for by her, did light come to the world." Epiphanius, Panarion, 78:23 (A.D. 377).

"Mary, the holy Virgin, is truly great before God and men. For how shall we not proclaim her great, who held within her the uncontainable One, whom neither heaven nor earth can contain?" Epiphanius, Panarion, 30:31 (ante A.D. 403).

"To pass on to the New Testament: If women were appointed by God to be priests or to perform any ministerial function in the Church, it was Mary herself who should have discharged the office of priest in the New Testament. She was thought worthy to welcome in her own womb the absolute Monarch and heaven's God, God's Son; her womb was prepared, in God's love for man and by an astounding mystery, as a temple and dwelling-place for the Lord's Incarnation." (Epiphanius, Panarion haer 79, n. 3)

"How will holy Mary not possess the kingdom of heaven with her flesh, since she was not unchaste, nor dissolute, nor did she ever commit adultery, and since she never did anything wrong as far as fleshly actions are concerned, but remained stainless?" (Panarion haer 42:12; PG 41:777B)

"Mary, the holy Virgin, is truly great before God and men. For how shall we not proclaim her great, who held within her the uncontainable One, whom neither heaven nor earth can contain?" (ibid 30:31; PG 41:460C)

Epiphanius was writing chapter 78 of his treatise *Panarion* against the "Antidicomarianites" (in particular those who denied the perpetual virginity of Mary), and chapter 79 against the "Kollyridians" (those who practiced exaggerated and aberrant forms of worship, such as offering a kind of bread [kollyra] as if to a god, directed to the Mother of the Lord).

Ambrose of Milan (c. 339 - 397 AD): Mary alone brought salvation, conceived the redemption of all (AD 377)

St. Ambrose (c. 337-397), well known today for, among other things, whatever part he had in the conversion in 386 of St. Augustine of Hippo, was consecrated Bishop of Milan in 374, one week or so after his baptism.

St. Ambrose viewed Mary's role in redemption in the context of the Incarnation:

"She was alone when the Holy Spirit came upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowed her. She was alone and she wrought the salvation of the world and conceived the redemption of all." (Ep 49, 2; PL 16:1154 [Migne]; O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 20).

"Mary's life should be for you a pictorial image of virginity. Her life is like a mirror reflecting the face of chastity and the form of virtue. Therein you may find a model for your own life . . . showing what to improve, what to imitate, what to hold fast to" (The Virgins 2:2:6 [A.D. 377]).

"The first thing which kindles ardor in learning is the greatness of the teacher. What is greater [to teach by example] than the Mother of God? What more glorious than she whom Glory Itself chose? What more chaste than she who bore a body without contact with another body? For why should I speak of her other virtues? She was a virgin not only in body but also in mind, who stained the sincerity of its disposition by no guile, who was humble in heart, grave in speech, prudent in mind, sparing of words, studious in reading, resting her hope not on uncertain riches, but on the prayer of the poor, intent on work, modest in discourse; wont to seek not man but God as the judge of her thoughts, to injure no one, to have goodwill towards all, to rise up before her elders, not to envy her equals, to avoid boastfulness, to follow reason, to love virtue. When did she pain her parents even by a look? When did she disagree with her neighbors? When did she despise the lowly? When did she avoid the needy?" (ibid., 2:2:7).

"Come, then, and search out your sheep, not through your servants or hired men, but do it yourself. Lift me up bodily and in the flesh, which is fallen in Adam. Lift me up not from Sarah but from Mary, a virgin not only undefiled, but a virgin whom grace had made inviolate, free of every stain of sin" (Commentary on Psalm 118:22-30 [A.D. 387]).

"Imitate her [Mary], holy mothers, who in her only dearly beloved Son set forth so great an example of material virtue; for neither have you sweeter children [than Jesus], nor did the Virgin seek the consolation of being able to bear another son" (Letters 63:111 [A.D. 388]).

"Mary, a Virgin not only undefiled but a Virgin whom grace has made inviolate, free of every stain of sin." Ambrose, Sermon 22:30 (A.D. 388).

"The first thing which kindles ardour in learning is the greatness of the teacher. What is greater than the Mother of God? What more glorious than she whom Glory Itself chose? What more chaste than she who bore a body without contact with another body? For why should I speak of her other virtues? She was a virgin not only in body but also in mind, who stained the sincerity of its disposition by no guile, who was humble in heart, grave in speech, prudent in mind, sparing of words, studious in reading, resting her hope not on uncertain riches, but on the prayer of the poor, intent on work, modest in discourse; wont to seek not man but God as the judge of her thoughts, to injure no one, to have goodwill towards all, to rise up before her elders, not to envy her equals, to avoid boastfulness, to follow reason, to love virtue." Ambrose, *On Virginité*, 2:15 (A.D. 377).

"Let, then, the life of Mary be as it were virginity itself, set forth in a likeness, from which, as from a mirror, the appearance of chastity and the form of virtue is reflected.... Nor would I hesitate to admit you to the altars of God, whose souls I would without hesitation call altars, on which Christ is daily offered for the redemption of the body. For if the virgin's body be a temple of God, what is her soul, which, the ashes, as it were, of the body being shaken off, once more uncovered by the hand of the Eternal Priest, exhales the vapor of the divine fire. Blessed virgins, who emit a fragrance through divine grace as gardens do through flowers, temples through religion, altars through the priest." Ambrose, *On Virginité* II:6,18 (A.D. 378).

"May the Christ from the height of the cross say also to each of you: There is your mother. May he say also to the Church: There is your son. Then we will begin to be children of the Church when we see the Christ triumphant on the cross." (Ambrose, *In Lucam VII*, 5; PL 15:1787; de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, p. 260).

"Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, facing the east; but it was closed. He said to me: This gate is to remain closed; it is not to be opened for anyone to enter by it; since the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it, it shall remain closed." ... Who is this gate, if not Mary? Is it not closed because she is a virgin? Mary is the gate through which Christ entered this world, when he was brought forth in the virginal birth and the manner of His birth did not break the seals of virginity [quando virginali fusus est partu, et genitalia virginitatis claustra non solvit]. (15) ... There is a gate of the womb, although it is not always closed; indeed only one was able to remain closed, that through which the One born of the Virgin came forth without the loss of genital intactness [per quam sine dispendio claustrorum genitalium virginis partus exivit]. (16) (St. Ambrose, in *De institutione virginum* introduced this mystery by quoting the beginning of the forty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel.)

Basil (AD 377)

Basil of Caesarea, also called Saint Basil the Great, (329 or 330 – January 1, 379) was the Greek bishop of Caesarea Mazaca in Cappadocia, Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). He was an influential theologian who supported the Nicene Creed and opposed the heresies of the early Christian church, fighting against both Arianism and the followers of Apollinaris of Laodicea. Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa are collectively referred to as the Cappadocian Fathers.

"The friends of Christ do not tolerate hearing that the Mother of God ever ceased to be a virgin" Basil, *Homily In Sanctum Christi generationem*, 5 (ante A.D. 379).

"And if the God-bearing flesh was not ordained to be assumed of the lump of Adam, what need was there of the Holy Virgin?" Basil, *To the Sozopolitans*, Epistle 261 (A.D. 377).

Gregory of Nazianz (AD 379)

Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329 – January 25 389 or 390) (also known as Gregory the Theologian or Gregory Nazianzen) was a 4th-century Archbishop of Constantinople. He is widely considered the most accomplished rhetorical stylist of the patristic age. Gregory made a significant impact on the shape of Trinitarian theology among both Greek- and Latin-speaking theologians, and he is remembered as the "Trinitarian Theologian". Along with the brothers Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, he is known as one of the Cappadocian Fathers.

"If anyone does not agree that holy Mary is Mother of God, he is at odds with the Godhead" (*Letter to Cledonius the Priest* 101 [A.D. 382]).

"Recalling these and other circumstances and imploring the Virgin Mary to bring assistance, since she, too, was a virgin and had been in danger, she entrusted herself to the remedy of fasting and sleeping on the ground." Gregory of Nazianzen, *Oration 24:11* (A.D. 379).

Jerome (AD 383)

Saint Jerome (c.347 – 30 September 420; also Hierom or Jerom) (Latin: Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus;) was a Roman Christian priest, confessor, theologian and historian, and who became a Doctor of the Church. He is best known for his translation of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate), and his list of writings is extensive.

"As to how a virgin became the Mother of God, he [Rufinus] has full knowledge; as to how he himself was born, he knows nothing" (*Against Rufinus* 2:10 [A.D. 401]).

"Do not marvel at the novelty of the thing, if a Virgin gives birth to God" (*Commentaries on Isaiah 3:7:15* [A.D. 409]).

"[Helvidius] produces Tertullian as a witness [to his view] and quotes Victorinus, bishop of Petavium. Of Tertullian, I say no more than that he did not belong to the Church. But as regards Victorinus, I assert what has already been proven from the gospel—that he [Victorinus] spoke of the brethren of the Lord not as being sons of Mary but brethren in the sense I have explained, that is to say, brethren in point of kinship, not by nature. [By discussing such

things we] are . . . following the tiny streams of opinion. Might I not array against you the whole series of ancient writers? Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and many other apostolic and eloquent men, who against [the heretics] Ebion, Theodotus of Byzantium, and Valentinus, held these same views and wrote volumes replete with wisdom. If you had ever read what they wrote, you would be a wiser man" (*Against Helvidius: The Perpetual Virginity of Mary* 19 [A.D. 383]).

"We believe that God was born of a virgin, because we read it. We do not believe that Mary was married after she brought forth her Son, because we do not read it. . . . You [Helvidius] say that Mary did not remain a virgin. As for myself, I claim that Joseph himself was a virgin, through Mary, so that a virgin Son might be born of a virginal wedlock" (*ibid.*, 21).

"There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a flower shall grow out of his roots.' The rod is the mother of the Lord—simple, pure, unsullied; drawing no germ of life from without but fruitful in singleness like God Himself...Set before you the blessed Mary, whose surpassing purity made her meet to be the mother of the Lord." Jerome, *To Eustochium*, Epistle 22:19,38 (A.D. 384).

Didymus the Blind (AD 386)

Didymus the Blind (alternatively spelled Dedimus or Didymous) (c. 313 – 398) was a Coptic Church theologian of Alexandria, whose famous Catechetical School he led for about half a century.

"It helps us to understand the terms 'first-born' and 'only-begotten' when the Evangelist tells that Mary remained a virgin 'until she brought forth her first-born son' [Matt. 1:25]; for neither did Mary, who is to be honored and praised above all others, marry anyone else, nor did she ever become the Mother of anyone else, but even after childbirth she remained always and forever an immaculate virgin" (*The Trinity* 3:4 [A.D. 386]).

Maximus of Turin (c. 380 - 465),

First known bishop of Turin, Italy. In 451 he attended the synod of Milan where northern Italian bishops accepted the letter of Pope Leo I which set forth the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation. Attended the the Synod of Rome in 465. Theological writer with 118 homilies, 116 sermons, and 6 treatises surviving.

"a worthy dwelling of God by virtue of her original grace," (*Hom 5, Incipit dictum ante Natale Domini*; PL 57:235D).

Pope Siricius I (AD 392)

Pope Siricius, Bishop of Rome from December 384 until his death on 26 November 399, was successor to Damasus I and was himself succeeded by Anastasius I. Siricius was elected Bishop of Rome unanimously, despite attempts by the Antipope Ursinus to promote himself. He was an active Pope, involved in the administration of the Church and the handling of various factions and viewpoints within it. He was the first Pope to issue decretals, the first of which was the *Directa Decretal* sent to Himerius of Tarragona. He was the author of two decrees concerning clerical celibacy.

"You had good reason to be horrified at the thought that another birth might issue from the same virginal womb from which Christ was born according to the flesh. For the Lord Jesus would never have chosen to be born of a virgin if he had ever judged that she would be so incontinent as to contaminate with the seed of human intercourse the birthplace of the Lord's body, that court of the eternal king" (*Letter to Bishop Anysius* [A.D. 392]).

Augustine (AD 396)

Augustine of Hippo (Latin: *Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis*; November 13, 354 – August 28, 430), also known as Augustine, St. Augustine, St. Austin, St. Augoustinos, ""St. Augustin", Blessed Augustine, or St. Augustine the Blessed, was Bishop of Hippo Regius (present-day Annaba, Algeria). He was a Latin philosopher and theologian from Roman Africa and generally considered as one of the greatest Christian thinkers of all times.

"Our Lord . . . was not averse to males, for he took the form of a male, nor to females, for of a female he was born. Besides, there is a great mystery here: that just as death comes to us through a woman, life is born to us through a woman; that the devil, defeated, would be tormented by each nature, feminine and masculine, as he had taken delight in the defection of both" (*Christian Combat* 22:24 [A.D. 396]).

"That one woman is both mother and virgin, not in spirit only but even in body. In spirit she is mother, not of our head, who is our Savior himself—of whom all, even she herself, are rightly called children of the bridegroom—but plainly she is the mother of us who are his members, because by love she has cooperated so that the faithful, who are the members of that head, might be born in the Church. In body, indeed, she is the Mother of that very head" (*Holy Virginity* 6:6 [A.D. 401]).

"Having excepted the holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom, on account of the honor of the Lord, I wish to have absolutely no question when treating of sins—for how do we know what abundance of grace for the total overcoming of sin was conferred upon her, who merited to conceive and bear him in whom there was no sin?—so, I say, with the exception of the Virgin, if we could have gathered together all those holy men and women, when they were living here, and had asked them whether they were without sin, what do we suppose would have been their answer?" (*Nature and Grace* 36:42 [A.D. 415]).

"With the exception, therefore, of the holy Virgin Mary, in whose case, out of respect for the Lord, I would have no question raised when there is talk of sin – for how do we know what further grace was conferred on her for absolute victory over sin, she who deserved to conceive and bear Him who obviously had no sin? – with the exception, then, of this Virgin, could we but gather together in their lifetime all those saints, men and women, and ask them whether they were free from sin, what in our opinion would have been their answer? ...No matter how remarkable their holiness in this body...they would have cried out with one voice: 'If we should say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us' [1 John 1:8]." (Augustine, *De natura et gratia*, cap 36, n. 42)

"Her virginity also itself was on this account more pleasing and accepted, in that it was not that Christ being conceived in her, rescued it beforehand from a husband who would violate it, Himself to preserve it; but, before He was conceived, chose it, already dedicated to God, as that from which to be born. This is shown by the words which Mary spake in answer to the Angel announcing to her conception; How, 'saith she, shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' Which assuredly she would not say, unless she had before vowed herself unto God as a virgin. But, because the habits of the Israelites as yet refused this, she was espoused to a just man, who would not take from her by violence, but rather guard against violent persons, what she had already vowed. Although, even if she had said this only, How shall this take place?' and had not added, seeing I know not a man,' certainly she would not have asked, how, being a female, she should give birth to her promised Son, if she had married with purpose of sexual intercourse. She might have been bidden also to continue a virgin, that in her by fitting miracle the Son of God should receive the form of a servant, but, being to be a pattern to holy virgins, lest it should be thought that she alone needed to be a virgin, who had obtained to conceive a child even without sexual intercourse, she dedicated her virginity to God, when as yet she knew not what she should conceive, in order that the imitation of a heavenly life in an earthly and mortal body should take place of vow, not of command; through love of choosing, not through necessity of doing service. Thus Christ by being born of a virgin, who, before she knew Who was to be born of her, had determined to continue a virgin, chose rather to approve, than to command, holy virginity. And thus, even in the female herself, in whom He took the form of a servant, He willed that virginity should be free." Augustine, *Of Holy Virginity*, 4 (A.D. 401).

"It was not the visible sun, but its invisible Creator who consecrated this day for us, when the Virgin Mother, fertile of womb and integral in her virginity, brought him forth, made visible for us, by whom, when he was invisible, she too was created. A Virgin conceiving, a Virgin bearing, a Virgin pregnant, a Virgin bringing forth, a Virgin perpetual. Why do you wonder at this, O man?" (Sermons 186:1 [A.D. 411]).

"Heretics called Antidicomarites are those who contradict the perpetual virginity of Mary and affirm that after Christ was born she was joined as one with her husband" (Heresies 56 [A.D. 428]).

"Give milk, Mother to him who is our food, give milk to the bread coming down from heaven ...give milk to him who made you such that he could be made fruitfulness in conception and in birth, did not take from you the ornament of virginity." Augustine, Sermon 369:1 (A.D. 430).

"That same power which brought the body of the young man through closed doors, brought the body of the infant forth from the inviolate womb of the mother."

Mary was that only one who merited to be called the Mother and Spouse of God. (St. Augustine [354-430], Sermon 208, on the Assumption)

Blessed Virgin Mary, who can worthily repay you with praise and thanksgiving for having rescued a fallen world by your generous consent? (St. Augustine 430 A.D.)

Theodore of Mopsuestia (AD 405)

Theodore the Interpreter (ca. 350 – 428) was bishop of Mopsuestia (modern Yakapinar) from 392 to 428 AD. He is also known as Theodore of Antioch, from the place of his birth and presbyterate. He is the best known representative of the middle School of Antioch of hermeneutics.

"When, therefore, they ask, 'Is Mary mother of man or Mother of God?' we answer, 'Both!' The one by the very nature of what was done and the other by relation. Mother of man because it was a man who was in the womb of Mary and who came forth from there, and the Mother of God because God was in the man who was born" (The Incarnation 15 [A.D. 405]).

Leporius (AD 426)

Leporius the presbyter, formerly monk afterwards presbyter, relying on purity, through his own free will and unaided effort, instead of depending on the help of God, began to follow the Pelagian doctrine. But having been admonished by the Gallican doctors, and corrected by Augustine in Africa, he wrote a book containing his retraction, in which he both acknowledges his error and returns thanks for his correction. At the same time in correction of his false view of the incarnation of Christ, he presented the Catholic view, acknowledging the single person of the Son of God, and the two natures existing in Christ in his substance.

"We confess, therefore, that our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, born of the Father before the ages, and in times most recent, made man of the Holy Spirit and the ever-virgin Mary" (Document of Amendment 3 [A.D. 426]).

Cyril of Alexandria (AD 427)

Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376 – 444) was the Patriarch of Alexandria from 412 to 444. He came to power when the city was at its height of influence and power within the Roman Empire. Cyril wrote extensively and was a leading protagonist in the Christological controversies of the later 4th and 5th centuries. He was a central figure in the First Council of Ephesus in 431, which led to the deposition of Nestorius as Patriarch of Constantinople. Cyril is counted among the Church Fathers and the Doctors of the Church, and his reputation within the Christian world has resulted in his titles *Pillar of Faith* and *Seal of all the Fathers*.

"I have been amazed that some are utterly in doubt as to whether or not the holy Virgin is able to be called the Mother of God. For if our Lord Jesus Christ is God, how should the holy Virgin who bore him not be the Mother of God?" (Letter to the Monks of Egypt I [A.D. 427]).

"This expression, however, 'the Word was made flesh' [John 1:14], can mean nothing else but that he partook of flesh and blood like to us; he made our body his own, and came forth man from a woman, not casting off his existence as God, or his generation of God the Father, but even in taking to himself flesh remaining what he was. This the declaration of the correct faith proclaims everywhere. This was the sentiment of the holy Fathers; therefore they ventured to call the holy Virgin 'the Mother of God,' not as if the nature of the Word or his divinity had its beginning from the holy Virgin, but because of her was born that holy body with a rational soul, to which the Word, being personally united, is said to be born according to the flesh" (First Letter to Nestorius [A.D. 430]).

"And since the holy Virgin corporeally brought forth God made one with flesh according to nature, for this reason we also call her Mother of God, not as if the nature of the Word had the beginning of its existence from the flesh" (Third Letter to Nestorius [A.D. 430]).

"If anyone will not confess that the Emmanuel is very God, and that therefore the holy Virgin is the Mother of God, inasmuch as in the flesh she bore the Word of God made flesh [John 1:14]: let him be anathema" (ibid.).

"[T]he Word himself, coming into the Blessed Virgin herself, assumed for himself his own temple from the substance of the Virgin and came forth from her a man in all that could be externally discerned, while interiorly he was true God. Therefore he kept his Mother a virgin even after her childbearing" (Against Those Who Do Not Wish to Confess That the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God 4 [A.D. 430]).

"Hail, Mary, you are the most precious creature in the whole world; hail, Mary, uncorrupt dove; hail, Mary, inextinguishable lamp; for from you was born the Sun of justice...through you, every faithful soul achieves salvation." Cyril of Alexandria, Homily 11 at Ephesus (A.D. 431).

"Hail to thee Mary, Mother of God, to whom in towns and villages and in island were founded churches of true believers." Cyril of Alexandria, Homily 11 (ante A.D. 444).

"When (the Word) took His most chaste body, animated by an intelligent soul, from the Holy Virgin, and came forth a Man, He did not cease to be God nor did He reject the dignity of His own preeminence; for in this, as I said, no change is known." (Against the Emperor Julian, 8)

John Cassian (AD 429)

Saint John Cassian (ca. 360 – 435), John the Ascetic, or John Cassian the Roman, was a Christian monk and theologian celebrated in both the Western and Eastern Churches for his mystical writings.

"Now, you heretic, you say (whoever you are who deny that God was born of **the Virgin**), that Mary, the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, cannot be called the **Mother of God**, but the Mother only of Christ and not of God—for no one, you say, gives birth to one older than herself. And concerning this utterly stupid argument . . . let us prove by divine testimonies both that Christ is God and that **Mary is the Mother of God**" (On the Incarnation of Christ Against Nestorius 2:2 [A.D. 429]).

"You cannot then help admitting that the grace comes from God. It is God, then, who has given it. But it has been given by our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ is God. But if he is God, as he certainly is, then she who bore God is **the Mother of God**" (ibid., 2:5).

Council of Ephesus (AD 431)

"We confess, then, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man, of a rational soul and a body, begotten before all ages from the Father in his Godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born of **Mary the Virgin** according to his humanity, one and the same consubstantial with the Father in Godhead and consubstantial with us in humanity, for a union of two natures took place. Therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of the unconfused union, we confess the **holy Virgin** to be the **Mother of God** because God the Word took flesh and became man and from his very conception united to himself the temple he took from her" (Formula of Union [A.D. 431]).

"If anyone will not confess that the Emmanuel is very God, and that therefore the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God (theotokos), inasmuch as in the flesh she bore the Word of God made flesh [as it is written, 'The Word was made flesh' let him be anathema." Council of Ephesus [Cyril's Epistle 17], Anathema I (A.D. 431).

St. Peter Chrysologus (c. 406 - 450 AD)

Archbishop of Ravenna and a Doctor of the Church, St. Peter Chrysologus (c. 400-450) -- the "Golden Preacher" -- was the name given to him in the ninth century, also commented on the Eve-Mary antithesis and the idea of recapitulation:

"The angel deals with Mary about salvation, because with Eve an angel [fallen] had dealt about ruin." (Serm 142; PL 52:579; O'Carroll, Theotokos, p. 284).

"Where are they who think that the Virgin's conception and giving birth to her child are to be likened to those of other woman? For, this latter case is one of the earth, and the Virgin's is one from heaven. The one case is a case of divine power; the other of human weakness. The one case occurs in a body subject to passion; the other in the tranquility of the divine Spirit and peace of the human body. The blood was still, and the flesh astonished; her members were put at rest, and her entire womb was quiescent during the visit of the Holy One, until the Author of flesh could take on His garment of flesh, and until He, who was not merely to restore the earth to man but also to give him heaven, could become a heavenly Man. The virgin conceives, the Virgin brings forth her child, and she remains a virgin." Peter Chrysoslogus, Sermon 117, (A.D. 432).

"The Virgin received Salvation so that she may give it back to the centuries." Peter Chrysologus, Sermon 140 (ante A.D. 450).

"Even before the angel [Gabriel] announced God's plan, the Virgin's dignity was announced by her name; for the Hebrew word Mary is rendered in Latin as *Domina* ['Lady']. Hence the angel calls her Lady, so that the fear proper to servitude might leave her, the Mother of the Master. For her Son's authority decreed and brought it about that she should be born and named Lady." (Peter C., *Sermo* 142:2; PL 52:570; Gambero, page 293-4)

"Blessed are you among women' (Luke 1:42). The Virgin is truly blessed, for she possessed the splendor of virginity and achieved the dignity of motherhood. She is truly blessed, for she merited the grace of a heavenly conception and wore the crown of integrity. She is truly blessed, for she received the glory of the divine Son and is queen of all chastity." (Peter C., (*Sermo* 143:7; PL 52:584; Gambero, page 294)

"Through Christ, she became the true Mother of all the living [cf. Gen 3:20], who in Adam had become the mother of all the dead. Christ willed to be born in this way, so that, as death came to all through Eve, so life might return to all through Mary. For Mary corresponds to the typology of the leaven, she bears its likeness, she authenticates the figure, since she receives the leaven of the Word from above and receives his human flesh into her virginal womb, and, in her virginal womb, she transfuses the heavenly man into the entire mass [of dough]." (Peter C., *Sermo* 99:5; PL 52:478-9; Gambero, page 298)

"The messenger flies swiftly to the spouse, in order to remove every attachment to a human marriage from God's spouse. He does not take the Virgin away from Joseph but simply restores her to Christ, to whom she had been promised when she was being formed in her mother's womb. Christ, then, takes his own bride; he does not steal someone else's. Nor does he cause any separation when he unites his own creature to himself, in a single body." (Peter C., *Sermo* 140:2 (A.D. 449); PL 52:576; Gambero, page 297)

Vincent of Lerins (AD 434)

Saint Vincent of Lérins (died c. 445) (in Latin, Vincentius) was a Gallic author of early Christian writings. An ecclesiastical writer in Southern Gaul in the fifth century. His work is much better known than his life. Almost all our information concerning him is contained in Gennadius, "De viris illustribus" (lxiv). He entered the monastery of Lérins (today Isle St. Honorat), where under the pseudonym of Peregrinus he wrote his "Commonitorium" (434). He died before 450, and probably shortly after 434.

"Nestorius, whose disease is of an opposite kind, while pretending that he holds two distinct substances in Christ, brings in of a sudden two persons, and with unheard-of wickedness would have two sons of God, two Christs,—one, God, the other, man; one, begotten of his Father, the other, born of his mother. For which reason he maintains that Saint Mary ought to be called, not the Mother of God, but the Mother of Christ" (The Notebooks 12[35] [A.D. 434]).

"For by the singular gift of Him who is our Lord and God, and withal, her own son, she is to be confessed most truly and most blessedly—The mother of God 'Theotocos,' but not in the sense in which it is imagined by a certain impious heresy which maintains, that she is to be called the Mother of God for no other reason than because she gave birth to that man who afterwards became God, just as we speak of a woman as the mother of a priest, or the mother of a bishop, meaning that she was such, not by giving birth to one already a priest or a bishop, but by giving birth to one who afterwards became a priest or a bishop. Not thus, I say, was the holy Mary 'Theotocos,' the mother of God, but rather, as was said before, because in her sacred womb was wrought that most sacred mystery whereby, on account of the singular and unique unity of Person, as the Word in flesh is flesh, so Man in God is God." Commonitory for the Antiquity and Universality of the Catholic Faith, 15 (A.D. 434).

Sozomen (AD 444)

Salminius Hermias Sozomenus (c. 400 – c. 450) was a historian of the Christian Church.

"Gregory of Nazianz presided over those who maintain the consubstantiality of the Holy Trinity, and assembled them together in a little dwelling, which had been altered into the form of a house of prayer, by those who held the same opinions and had a like form of worship. It subsequently became one of the most conspicuous in the city, and is so now, not only for the beauty and number of its structures, but also for the advantages accruing to it from the visible manifestations of God. For the power of God was there manifested, and was helpful both in waking visions and in dreams, often for the relief of many diseases and for those afflicted by some sudden transmutation in their affairs. The power was accredited to Mary, the Mother of God, the holy virgin, for she does manifest herself in this way" (Church History 7:5 [A.D. 444]).

Proclus of Constantinople (AD 446)

Saint Proclus (died July 446 or 447) was an Archbishop of Constantinople. He is venerated as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church. The friend and disciple of Saint John Chrysostom, Proclus became secretary to Archbishop Atticus of Constantinople (406–425), who ordained him deacon and priest. Atticus' successor, Sisinnius I (426–427), consecrated him Bishop of Cyzicus, but the people there refused to receive him, and he remained at Constantinople. On the death of Sisinnius, the famous Nestorius succeeded as Archbishop of Constantinople (428–431), and early in 429, on a festival of the Theotokos (Virgin Mary), Proclus preached his celebrated sermon on the Incarnation, which was later inserted in the beginning of the Acts of the Council of Ephesus.

"As he formed her without my stain of her own, so He proceeded from her contracting no stain." Homily I (ante A.D. 446).

"The Virgin's festival (parthenike panegyris) incites our tongue today to herald her praise ...handmaid and Mother, Virgin and heaven, the only bridge of God to men, the awful loom of the Incarnation, in which by some unspeakable way the garment of that union was woven, whereof the weaver is the Holy Ghost; and the spinner the overshadowing from on high; the wool the ancient fleece of Adam; the woof the undefiled flesh from the virgin, the weaver's shuttle the immense grace of Him who brought it about; the artificer the Word gliding through the hearing." Proclus of Constantinople, Homily I (ante A.D. 446).

"He came forth from her without any flaw, and made her for Himself without any stain."; And again: "Mary is the heavenly orb of a new creation, in whom the Sun of justice, ever shining, has vanished from her entire soul all the night of sin." (Proclus, Oratio I de Laudibus S. Mariae; PG 65:683B; Oratio 6; PG 68:758A)

"Thanks to her all women are blessed. It is not possible that woman should remain under her curse; to the contrary, she now has a reason to surpass even the glory of the angels. Eve has been healed....Today, a list of women is admired [Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, Deborah, etc]...Elizabeth is called blessed for having carried the Forerunner, who leapt for joy in her womb, and for having giving witness to grace; Mary is venerated, because she became the Mother, the cloud, the bridal chamber, and the Ark of the Lord." (Proclus, Homily 5:3; PG 65:720B; Gambero, page 256)

"O man, run through all creation with your thought, and see if there exists anything comparable to or greater than the holy Virgin, Mother of God. Circle the whole world, explore all the oceans, survey the air, question the skies, consider all the unseen powers, and see if there exists any other similar wonder in the whole creation...Count, then, the portents, and wonder at the superiority of the Virgin: she alone, in a way beyond words, received into her bridal chamber him before whom all creation kneels with fear and trembling." (Proclus, Homily 5:2; PG 65:717C-720A; Gambero, page 251)

Theodotus of Ancyra (AD 446)

Theodotus (died c. 445), Bishop of Ancyra (now Ankara, Turkey) in Asia Minor was one of the most prominent Fathers at the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) where he vigorously opposed his heretical friend Nestorius. Theodotus called the Virgin Mary the dispensatrix of good things (William G. Most, *Mary in Our Life*, p. 34).

"A virgin, innocent, spotless, free of all defect, untouched, unsullied, holy in soul and body, like a lily sprouting among thorns." Homily VI:11 (ante A.D. 446).

"Hail, our desirable gladness;

Hail, O rejoicing of the churches;

Hail, O name that breathes out sweetness;

Hail, face that radiates divinity and grace;

Hail, most venerable memory;

Hail, O spiritual and saving fleece;

Hail, O Mother of unsetting splendor, filled with light;

Hail, unstained Mother of holiness;

Hail, most limpid font of the life-giving wave;

Hail, new Mother, workshop of the birth.

Hail, ineffable Mother of a mystery beyond understanding;

Hail, new book of a new scripture, of which, as Isaiah tells, angels and men are faithful witnesses.

Hail, alabaster jar of sanctifying ointment;

Hail, best trader of the coin of virginity;

Hail, creature embracing your Creator;

Hail, little container containing the Uncontainable."

(Theodotus, Homily 4:3; PG 77:1391B-C; Gambero, page 267-8)

"In the place of Eve, an instrument of death, is chosen a Virgin, most pleasing to God and full of His grace, as an instrument of life. A Virgin included in woman's sex, but without a share in woman's fault. **A Virgin innocent; immaculate; free from all guilt; spotless; undefiled; holy in spirit and body; a lily among thorns.**" (Theodotus, Hom 6 in S. Deiparam, No 11; PG 77:1427A)

Another translation of above: "**Innocent virgin, spotless, without defect, untouched, unstained, holy in body and in soul, like a lily flower sprung among thorns, unschooled in the wickedness of Eve, unclouded by womanly vanity...**Even before the Nativity, she was consecrated to the Creator...Holy apprentice, guest in the Temple, disciple of the law, anointed by the Holy Spirit, clothed with divine grace as with a cloak, divinely wise in your mind; united to God in your heart...Praiseworthy in your speech, even more praiseworthy in your action...God in the eyes of men, better in the sight of God." (Theodotus, Hom 6:11; Gambero, page 268)

"What did the divine messenger do then? Perceiving the Virgin's interior dispositions and perspicacity in her outward appearance and admiring her just prudence, he began to weave her a kind of floral crown with two peaks: one of joy and one of blessing; then he addressed her in a thrilling speech of praise, lifting up his hand and crying out: **'Hail, O full of grace, the Lord is with you, you are blessed'** (Lk 1:28), **O most beautiful and most noble among women. The Lord is with you, O all-holy one, glorious and good. The Lord is with you, O worthy of praise, O incomparable, O more than glorious, all splendor, worthy of God, worthy of all blessedness....**Through you, Eve's odious condition is ended; through you, abjection has been destroyed; through you, error is dissolved; through you, sorrow is abolished; through you, condemnation has been erased. Through you, Eve has been redeemed. **He who is born of the holy [Virgin] is holy, holy and Lord of all the saints, holy and Giver of holiness.** Wondrous is he who generated the Woman of wonder; Ineffable is he who precedes the Woman beyond words; Son of the Most High is he who springs from this highest creature, he who appears, not by man's willing it, but by the power of the Holy Spirit; he who is born is not a mere man, but God, the incarnate Word." (Theodotus, *On the Mother of God and on the Nativity*; *Patrologia orientalis* 19:330-1; Gambero, page 271)

Pope Leo I (AD 450)

Pope Leo I, also known as Leo the Great (c. 391 or 400 – 10 November 461) was the Bishop of Rome—the Pope—of the Christian Church from 29 September 440 to his death on 10 November 461. He was an Italian aristocrat, and was the first pope to have been called "the Great". He is perhaps best known for having met Attila the Hun in 452 and persuading him to turn back from his invasion of Italy. He is also a Doctor of the Church, most remembered theologically for issuing the Tome of Leo, a document which was foundational to the debates of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. The Council of Chalcedon, the fourth ecumenical council, dealt primarily with Christology, and elucidated the orthodox definition of Christ's being as the hypostatic union of two natures—divine and human—united in one person, "with neither confusion nor division". The Council of Chalcedon gave rise to the first major schism in Christian history, the Monophysite schism.

"And by a new nativity He was begotten, conceived by a Virgin, born of a Virgin, without paternal desire, without injury to the mother's chastity: because such a birth as knew no taint of human flesh, became One who was to be the Saviour of men, while it possessed in itself the nature of human substance. For when God was born in the flesh, God Himself was the Father, as the archangel witnessed to the Blessed Virgin Mary: 'because the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee: and therefore, that which shall be born of thee shall be called holy, the Son of God.' The origin is different but the nature like: not by intercourse with man but by the power of God was it brought about: for a Virgin conceived, a Virgin bare, and a Virgin she remained...For the uncorrupt nature of Him that was born had to guard the primal virginity of the Mother, and the infused power of the Divine Spirit had to preserve in spotlessness and holiness that sanctuary which He had chosen for Himself: that Spirit (I say) who had determined to raise the fallen, to restore the broken, and by overcoming the allurements of the flesh to bestow on us in abundant measure the power of chastity: in order that the virginity which in others cannot be retained in child-bearing, might be attained by them at their second birth." Pope Leo the Great [regn. A.D. 440-461], in Sermon 22:2 (ante A.D. 461).

"Alone therefore among the sons of men the Lord Jesus was born innocent, because alone conceived without the pollution of carnal concupiscence." (Leo I [the Great], Sermon 25, cap 5; PL 54:211)

"For we would have been unable to overcome the author of sin and death had Christ not assumed our nature and made it his own. Sin cannot defile him, nor can death hold him. For he was conceived by the Holy Spirit within the womb of a Virgin Mother, who gave birth to him without losing her virginity, just as she had remained a virgin in conceiving him." (Leo I, Epistle 28:2; PL 54:759; Gambero, page 304-5 or 306)

"He foretold to the serpent that the woman's seed would come and crush his haughty and wicked head with his power (cf. Gen 3:15). The woman's seed is Christ, who was to come in the flesh as God and as man, born of the Virgin, to condemn the despoiler of the human race by his immaculate birth." (Leo I, Sermon 22:1; PL 54:194; Gambero, page 307)

"By the Spirit, Christ is born from the body of his unsullied Mother; by this same Spirit, the Christian is reborn from the womb of holy Church." (Leo I, Sermon 29:1; PL 54:227; Gambero, page 308)

Basil of Seleucia (AD 459)

Basil was Bishop of Seleucia in Isauria in Asia Minor near Antioch during the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) and until 458. He participated in the Latrocinium -- the den of thieves or Robber Synod -- of Ephesus in 449, for which he was regarded for a time as a supporter of Monophysite opinions (Catholic Encyclopedia, under Basil of Seleucia), but returned to orthodoxy at Chalcedon in 451. His Marian views, however, were not considered heretical. In a homily on the Annunciation, probably written in 449 at Constantinople, he described Mary thus:

"Set as mediatrix of God and men that the dividing element of hatred be taken away and heavenly and earthly [things] be made one..." (PG 85:5:444A; O'Carroll, Theotokos, p. 72).

"O virgin all holy, he who has said of you all that is honourable and glorious has not sinned against the truth, but remains unequal to your merit. Look down on us from above and be propitious to us. Lead us in peace and having brought us without shame to the throne of judgment, grant us a place at the right hand of your Son, that we may be borne off to heaven and sing with the angels to the uncreated, consubstantial Trinity." (PG 85:452AB; O'Carroll, Theotokos, p. 187).

"He who would **exalt the Holy Virgin and Mother of God**, will find a most ample subject for his praises....only those who have been intimately illuminated by the light of Divine Grace can worthily accord the praises which are due to the Mother of God....What fear ought to encompass me then, when I undertake to offer praise to the Mother of God; lest, through some indiscretion, I should utter words unsuited to her dignity...

"....my purpose is, as far as my power will allow, with the help of the Spirit who guides to things divine, even to pass by the choirs of angels with the leaders of their ranks, and to rise above the brightness of the Thrones, the honored dignity of the Dominations, the Principalities in their place of command, and the clear lustre of the Powers; and then the clear-sighted purity of the many-eyed Cherubim, and the six-winged Seraphim with their movements unrestrained on either side, and if there be any created being above these, I will not there stay my course or my longing desire, but will dare to fix my curious gaze intently, as far as is permitted for man in chains of flesh, and will contemplate the co-eternal brightness of the Father's glory, and encompassed and enlightened with that True Light, will begin the hymn of praise to the Mother of God there, from whence she became the Mother of God, and obtained that name and title....

"....the great mystery of the Mother of God transcends both speech and reason. When then I speak of the Mother of God incarnate, I will ascend to God by the help of prayer, and will seek Him for the guide of my speech, and will say to Him: O Lord Omnipotent, King of the whole creation, who, in an incomprehensible manner, dost infuse Thy spiritual light into incorporeal minds, illuminate my mind, that the subject set before me may be understood without error, may, when understood, be spoken with piety, and when spoken, may be received without hesitation...From what flowers of praise shall we cull a garland worthy of her? From her sprang the flower of Jesse; she clothed our race with glory and with honor. What encomiums can we offer her as she deserves, when everything of this world is beneath her merits? For if St. Paul pronounced these words of the other saints, that the world was not worthy of them, what shall we say of the mother of God, who shone with as great a splendor above the martyrs, as does the sun above the stars?

"It is clearly fitting we should greet her with these words of Solomon: 'Many daughters have wrought virtue, but thou hast risen above them all.' **O Sacred Virgin**, well may the angels exult through thee, destined as they are to the service of men, from whom, in former times, they turned away. And let Gabriel now rejoice, for to him is intrusted the message of the Divine Conception, and he stands before the Virgin in great honor. Wherefore, in joy and grace he auspiciously begins the message: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.'

"Hail, full of grace. Let thy face be joyful. For from thee shall the joy of all be born; and He shall take away their ancient execration, dissolve the empire of death, and give to all the hope of resurrection. Hail, full of grace. Most flourishing paradise of chastity; in which is planted the tree of life which shall produce for all the fruits of salvation; and from which the fountain of the gospels shall stream to all believers, in floods of mercy from their fourfold source and spring. Hail, full of grace. Mediatrix of God and men, through whom the middle wall of enmity is cleared away, and earthly things conjoined with those of heaven.

"The Lord is with thee. For thou art a temple truly worthy of God, and odoriferous with the aromatics of chastity. In thee shall dwell the great High Priest, who, according to the order of Melchisedec, is without father and mother – of God without mother, of thee without father...And **the most Holy Mother of the Lord of all**, the true Mother of God, pondering these things in her heart, as it is written, inbibed full draughts of joy within her, and as the greatness of her Son and her God revealed itself more and more to the eyes of her soul, her awe increased with her delight...

"See what a mystery is wrought in her, how it passes both thought and speech. Who then will not admire the vast power of the Mother of God? Who will not see how far she is lifted above the saints? For if God gave to His servants a grace so great, that by their very touch they healed the sick, and the mere casting of their shadows across the street could do the same thing; if Peter, I say, with his shadow, could heal the infirm; and if when men took the handkerchief which wiped the perspiration from Paul, they drove the devils away with it, how much power, think you, did He give His Mother?

"But if to the saints He has granted to do things so wonderful as these, what has He given to His Mother for her nursing? With what gifts has He adorned her? If Peter is called blessed, and the keys of heaven are entrusted to him, because he called Christ the Son of the living God, how must she not be more blessed than all, who deserved to hear Him whom Peter confessed? And if Paul is called a vessel of election, because he carried the august name of Christ over the earth, what vessel is the Mother of God, who did not merely contain the manna, like the golden urn, but who in her womb bore that bread – that heavenly bread, which is the nourishment and strength of the faithful?

"But I fear, lest, whilst prepared to say more concerning her, I should say little that is worthy of her dignity, and bring the more shame upon myself. Wherefore I draw in the sail of my discourse, and retire into the harbor of silence." (Basil of Seleucia, Orat in S. Dei Gentricem, Combefis; Ullathorne, The Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, page 14-18)

Antipater of Bostra (5th Century)

Antipater (died c. 458) was the Bishop of Bostra in Arabia sometime after the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). He was highly regarded by his civil and ecclesiastical contemporaries and his work was ordered as late as 540 to be read in the eastern churches to stop the spread of Origenistic heresies (Catholic Encyclopedia, under Antipater of Bostra). Antipater was cited as an approved author at the second Council of Nicaea in 787. In a homily in the context of the Annunciation he addressed the Virgin thus:

"Hail you who acceptably intercedes as a Mediatrix for mankind." (In S Joannem Bapt; PG 85:1772C; O'Carroll, Theotokos, p. 240).

St. Chrysippus of Jerusalem (5th Century)

St. Chrysippus (399-479), a Cappadocian by birth, was a monk in Jerusalem and late in life was ordained a priest about 455. In one homily, he presented the Eve-Mary parallel and antithesis and the recapitulation in a clever way, with these words from the devil:

"How does it happen that the instrument which became my helper in the beginning is now opposed to me? A woman brought it about that I should take the human race into tyranny and a woman has thrown me out from tyranny. The ancient Eve exalted me, the new one threw me down." (*Oratio in sanctam Mariam Deiparam*; PO [Migne] 19:340-341; O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 102).

Hesychius of Jerusalem (5th Century)

Hesychius (died after 451) was a monk and priest in Jerusalem, a revered teacher and exegete of Sacred Scripture, and a contemporary of the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) who outlived the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). His are the following words from a homily on Mary:

"The only-begotten Son of God, creator of the world, was borne by her as an infant, he who refashioned Adam, sanctified Eve, destroyed the dragon and opened paradise, keeping firm the virginal seal." (*Hom V de SS Deip I*; PG 93:1461; O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 171).

"Conspicuous among women, chosen from virgins, outstanding ornament of our nature, pride of our clay, who freed Eve from her disgrace, Adam from the penalty threatening him, cut down the dragon's insolence, she whom the smoke of our desire never reached, whom the worm of sensual pleasure has not spoiled either." (*Hom V de SS Deip I*; PG 93:1465, in O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 171).

Jacob of Sarug (AD 521)

Jacob of Serugh (his toponym is also spelled Serug or Sarug; c. 451 – 29 November 521), also called Mar Jacob, was one of the foremost Syriac poet-theologians among the Syriac, perhaps only second in stature to Ephrem the Syrian and equal to Narsai. Where his predecessor Ephrem is known as the 'Harp of the Spirit', Jacob is the 'Flute of the Spirit'. He is best known for his prodigious corpus of more than seven-hundred verse homilies, or *mêmrê*, of which only 225 have thus far been edited and published.

"[T]he very fact that God has elected her proves that none was ever holier than Mary, if any stain had disfigured her soul, if any other virgin had been purer and holier, God would have selected her and rejected Mary." Jacob of Sarug (ante A.D. 521).

Council of Constantinople II (AD 553)

"If anyone will not confess that the Word of God . . . came down from the heavens and was made flesh of holy and glorious Mary, mother of God and ever-virgin, and was born from her, let him be anathema" (*Anathemas Against the "Three Chapters" 2* [A.D. 553]).

Gregory of Tours (AD 584)

Saint Gregory of Tours (November 30, c. 538 – November 17, 594) was a Gallo-Roman historian and Bishop of Tours, which made him a leading prelate of Gaul. He wrote in form of late Vulgar Latin; however, it has been argued that this was a deliberate ploy to ensure his works would reach a wide audience. He is the main contemporary source for Merovingian history. His most notable work was his *Decem Libri Historiarum* or *Ten Books of Histories*, better known as the *Historia Francorum* ("History of the Franks"), a title given to it by later chroniclers, but he is also known for his credulous accounts of the miracles of saints, especially four books of the miracles of Martin of Tours.

"The course of this life having been completed by blessed Mary, when now she would be called from the world, all the apostles came together from their various regions to her house. And when they had heard that she was about to be taken from the world, they kept watch together with her. And behold, the Lord Jesus came with his angels, and, taking her soul, he gave it over to the angel Michael and withdrew. At daybreak, however, the apostles took up her body on a bier and placed it in a tomb, and they guarded it, expecting the Lord to come. And behold, again the Lord stood by them; the holy body having been received, he commanded that it be taken in a cloud into paradise, where now, rejoined to the soul, [Mary's body] rejoices with the Lord's chosen ones and is in the enjoyment of the good of an eternity that will never end" (*Eight Books of Miracles 1:4* [A.D. 584]).

"But Mary, the glorious Mother of Christ, who is believed to be a virgin both before and after she bore him, has, as we said above, been translated into paradise, amid the singing of the angelic choirs, whither the Lord preceded her" (*ibid.*, 1:8).

Pope Gregory I (AD 540-604)

"The most blessed and ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of God, can be called by this name, 'mountain'. Yes, she was a mountain, who by the dignity of her election has completely surpassed the height of every elect creature. Is Mary not a lofty mountain? For God, to achieve the conception of the eternal Word, raised the summit of her merits above the choirs of angels, up to the threshold of the Godhead. Isaiah said in a prophecy, 'In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house will be made the highest mountain' (Isa 2:2). And this mountain has been made the highest mountain, because Mary's height has shined out above all the saints. For, just as a mountain implies height, so the house signifies a dwelling place. Therefore she is called mountain and house, because she, illuminated by incomparable merits, prepared a holy womb for God's Only-begotten to dwell in.

"On the other hand, Mary would not have become a mountain raised above the peaks of the mountains had not the divine fecundity raised her above the angels. Further, she should not have become the Lord's house had not the divinity of the Word assumed humanity and come to dwell in her womb. Mary is justly called a mountain rich in fruits, because the best fruit was born from her, namely, a new man. And the prophet, considering how beautiful she is,

adorned in the glory of her fruitfulness, cries out: 'There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow from his roots' (Isa 11:1).

"David, exulting in the fruits of this mountain, says to God, 'Let the peoples praise you, O Lord, let all the peoples praise you. The earth has yielded its fruit' (Psalm 67:6-7). Yes, the earth has yielded its fruit, because the Virgin did not conceive her Son by man's doing but because the Holy Spirit stretched out his shadow over her. Therefore the Lord says to David, king and prophet, 'I will place the fruit of your womb upon your throne' (Psalm 132:11).

So says Isaiah, 'And the fruit of the earth shall be exalted' (Isa 4:2). For him whom the Virgin bore was not only a holy man but also the mighty God. Elizabeth refers to this fruit when she greets the Virgin and says, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb' (Luke 1:42). Mary is rightly called mountain of Ephrem because, while she is raised up by the ineffable dignity of the divine birth, the dry branches of the human condition flower again in the fruit of her womb." (Gregory I [the Great], In I Regum 1:5; PL 79:25-26; Gambero, page 371-2)

St. John Damascene (645-750):

"The serpent **never** entered that Paradise."

"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 wideness of the heavens...This heaven is clearly much more divine and awesome than the first. Indeed he who created the sun in the first heaven would himself be born of this second heaven, as the Sun of Justice....She is all beautiful, all near to God. For she, surpassing the cherubim, exalted beyond the seraphim, is placed near to God." (Homily on the Nativity 2, 3, 9 PG 96:664,676)

As it is admitted that the praises of Mary grow with the growth of the Christian community, we may conclude in brief that the veneration of and devotion to Mary began even in the time of the Apostles.

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