

FR. STANISŁAW KOBIELUS

THE CORAL ALTAR WITH THE APOCALYPTIC WOMAN  
IN THE TREASURY OF ST MARY'S BASILICA IN KRAKOW.  
THEOLOGICAL CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

St Mary's Basilica's treasury boasts a portable coral altar dated to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a gift from Maria Josepha, the wife of King Augustus III. The altar is the work of one of the Sicilian workshops (perhaps in Trapani). Embraced in a gilded structure and decorated with enamel and corals, in the centre it encloses the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary standing on the crescent moon in a radial coral glory, surrounded by Marian symbols. On the other side, there is an engraved figure of an angel playing the violin.<sup>1</sup>

The field between the octagonal frame of the altar and the frame of the halo with the figure of Mary is filled with seven symbolic scenes, referring to Mary's unique vocation in the work of human salvation: *Corona stellarum duodecim*, *Electa ut Sol*, *Pulchra ut Luna*, *Cedrus exaltata*, *Fons signatus*, *Hortus conclusus*, *Oliva speciosa*, *Rosa plantata*, *Puteus aquarum viventium*, *Turris Davidica*.

The above qualities are taken from the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

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FR. Prof. Dr Hab. STANISŁAW KOBIELUS—*emeritus* professor of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw; e-mail: [kobielus1939@gmail.com](mailto:kobielus1939@gmail.com)

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<sup>1</sup> *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce* [Catalogue of monuments of history in Poland], vol. IV: *Miasto Kraków. Kościoły i klasztory śródmieścia* [The city of Krakow. Churches and monasteries of the downtown area], 1, Adam Bochnak, Jan Samek, ed. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1971), 40, Part 2, ill. 176; *Kościół Mariacki w Krakowie*, Adam Bujak, Michał Rożek, ed. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sport i Turystyka, 1987), ill. 176.

I. COSMIC ATTRIBUTES OF THE VIRGIN OF THE APOCALYPSE  
CORONA STELLARUM DUODECIM (Rv 12, 1)<sup>2</sup>

In the centre of the shrine from Krakow there is the image of the Virgin of the Apocalypse. This is borne out by her astronomical attributes enumerated in the Apocalypse of St John the Apostle: “Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, robed with the sun, standing on the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rv 12, 1).

In astronomy, a star is a celestial body that is a concentration of matter; the energy released in it is emitted in the form of visible light. According to Revelation 12, 1, the Virgin of the Apocalypse has a crown of twelve stars on her head. This fragment of the Apocalypse concerning the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary had a rich symbolic tradition. First of all, the 12 stars in the crown pointed to the twelve Apostles,<sup>3</sup> who were present at the moment of death of the Mother of God. The apocrypha concerning the dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary account for the history of Her assumption. First there was an announcement of the presence of the apostles: “Having said that, he commanded her to pass on the prayer to the apostles: ‘They will come to you, as I have already told you, and they will sing before you and bury you’.” The following fragment testifies to their presence during Mary’s burial: “As soon as it had struck, suddenly the Apostles were transported on clouds from the ends of the earth to the door of Mary [’s house]. There were twelve of them and sat on clouds. First Peter, second Paul—he, too, was transported on a cloud; he was included among the Apostles as he had then received the rudiments of the faith. Then all the other Apostles met on clouds and arrived at the door of Mary [’s house], greeted one another, looked at one another and wondered in amazement how they came to meet.”<sup>4</sup>

Other starry terms were also linked to the person of Mary: *Stella Splendida* (Rv 22, 16), *Stella Matutina* (Sir 50, 6, Rv 22, 16), *Stella Maris*.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Vulgate Rv 12; 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Istae duodecim stellae, duodecim Apostoli intelligi possunt. Auctor incertus (Augustinus Hipponensis?), Expositio in Apocalypsim B. JOANNIS, PL 35, 2434; Duodecim stellae quibus corona aptatur, duodecim sunt apostoli, per quos primo caput Ecclesiae, id est Christus, victoriam reportavit. Stellae autem vocantur, quia tenebras ignorantiae ratio veritatis illustrat. ALCUINUS, Commentariorum in Apocalypsin, PL 100, 1153.*

<sup>4</sup> “Apokryfy o odejściu Maryi. Transitus” [Apocrypha of Mary’s departure. Transitus], in *Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu*, transl. and ed. Marek Starowieyski, Part 1 (Kraków: WAM, 2003), 785–789.

The last title harks back to the Egyptian goddess Isis, called the Star of the sea, and was ascribed to the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>5</sup>

As many medieval exegetes, such as Bede the Venerable or Haymo from Halberstadt, a term taken out of the context of the Apocalypse (Rv 22; 16) *Stella splendida*, refers first and foremost to Christ: *Ipse atque Christus est stella splendida, quia ipse est lux vera illuminans omnem hominem*<sup>6</sup>—“Christ, too, is a shining star, since He is the true light illuminating each person,” and only then does it apply to Mary. She received brightness from blask the Sun—Christ.<sup>7</sup> Such references are also put forth by Petrus Damianus:

Aurora velut fulgida,  
Ad coeli meat culmina,  
Ut sol Maria splendida,  
Tanquam luna pulcherrima.<sup>8</sup>

In turn, the term *Stella matutina*—the morning Star, is referred by the exegetes directly to Mary. For example, Thomas Cisterciensis observes: *Ipsa enim fuit stella matutina in nativitate*<sup>9</sup>—“She was the morning star during nativity.”

*Stella maris*, the star of the sea, is another term used in reference to the Virgin Mary, since She protects us and directs us “at the sea of this world,” and through her merits and prayers she leads us to the port of salvation.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The Ephesus Council of 431 announced the dogma of the Divine Maternity of the Holy Virgin Mary, who received the title *Theotokos*—the Mother of God.

<sup>6</sup> Jn 1,9. *Christus est stella matutina, qui, nocte saeculi transacta, lucem vitae sanctis promittit et pandit aeternam.* BEDA, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, PL 93, 140; HAYMO HALBERSTATENSIS, *Expositionis in Apocalypsin B. Joannis libri septem*, PL 117, 1219.

<sup>7</sup> *Maria splendida Solis quem peperit.* THOMAS CISTERCIENSIS, JOANNES ALGRINUS, *Cantica canticorum*, PL 206, 858; *Maria splendida sole; est enim «mulier amicta sole, et luna sub pedibus ejus.* THOMAS CISTERCIENSIS, JOANNES ALGRINUS, *Cantica canticorum*, PL 206, 858.

<sup>8</sup> PETRUS DAMIANUS, *Carmina et preces*, PL 145, 934.

<sup>9</sup> *Ipsa enim fuit stella matutina in nativitate, luna plena in Christi conceptione, sol refulgens in assumptione, arcus refulgens inter nebulas gratiae, in vitae sanctae conversatione. Vel etiam inter sanctos erit in generali resurrectione. Stellas legimus plures. Est enim stella vespertina, sunt stellae nocturnae, est stella matutina. Prima fuit Eva; secunda antiquorum Patrum vita gloriosa; tertia fuit Maria. Prima fuit in principio, sed exstincta est cadens, et introducens noctem culpae et poenae; secundae fulserunt in nocte adversitatis virtute patientiae; tertia fulsit gratia, in medio nebulae legis Mosaicae. Thomae Cisterciensis monachi in Cantica Canticorum eruditissimi commentarii*, PL 206, 652.

<sup>10</sup> *Stella maris est beata virgo Maria, quae in mari hujus seculi nos regit et protegit, et meritis suis cum precibus ducit ad portum salutis.* ABSALON SPRINCKIRSBACENSIS, *Sermones festivos et cum primis utiles et eruditi*, PL 211, 273.

While Mary is called *Stella maris*, it is Christ who is the one who gives her the light so that she might be as the sun.<sup>11</sup> Paschasius Radbertus (ca. 790–865), a Carolingian era theologian, a Benedictine abbot of Corba, wrote that Mary, the *stella maris*, who shines among stormy waters, follows the faith and customs so that we might not drown in the waves of the deluge. So that, illuminated by her, we might believe Christ, the salvation of the world born of Her. She is the land promised to our Fathers, in symbolic and allegorical terms.<sup>12</sup>

A hymn to the Virgin Mary was composed most probably in the 8<sup>th</sup> c.; the term *Stella maris* testifies to the time of its origin:

Ave, maris stella,  
Dei Mater alma,  
Atque semper Virgo  
Felix coeli porta.

Hail, O Star of the ocean,  
God's own Mother blest,  
ever sinless Virgin,  
gate of heav'nly rest.<sup>13</sup>

According to others, the crown of stars is symbolic of the origins of the Church,<sup>14</sup> while Bede the Venerable sees it as a metaphor of the victory of the rulers.<sup>15</sup>

As early as antiquity, “twelve” was a number of the division of space and time. It divided the sky into 12 zones, with 12 signs of the Zodiac corresponding to the 12 months, hence it is a symbol of the universe in its inner

<sup>11</sup> *Maria interpretatur stella maris. Lumen solis magis lucet quam stellarum. Sol justitiae Dominus, ut ait propheta: Orietur vobis sol justitiae (Malach. IV): quod est Christus. Illuminavit sol iste stellam, id est, Mariam, ut esset sicut sol.* AUCTOR INCERTUS, *Breviarium in Psalmos*, PL 26, 873; *Maria autem Hebraice stella maris, Syriace vero domina vocatur; et merito, quia et totius mundi Dominum, et lucem saeculis meruit generare perennem.* BEDA, *In Lucae Evangelium expositio*, PL 92, 316.

<sup>12</sup> *Quod ut fiat, stella maris, sive illuminatrix Maria, inter fluctivagas undas pelagi, fide ac moribus sequenda est, ne mergamur undis diluvii; sed per eam illuminemur, ut Christum natum ex ea pro salute totius mundi credamus. Haec igitur illa terra est, quae Patribus in figura et aenigmate repromittitur.* PASCHASIUS RADBERTUS, *Expositio in Evangelium Matthaei*, PL 120, 94.

<sup>13</sup> After: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ave\\_Maris\\_Stella](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ave_Maris_Stella).

<sup>14</sup> *Et in capite ejus corona stellarum duodecim, id est Ecclesiae; duodenario apostolorum numero primordia dicit fundatae mox Ecclesiae, decorari.* PRIMASIUS ADRUMETANENSIS, *Primasii commentariorum super Apocalypsim B. Joannis libri quinque*, PL 68, 873.

<sup>15</sup> *Et in capite ejus corona stellarum duodecim. Quamvis et victoriam possit significare regnantis.* BEDA, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, PL 93, 176.

fullness. Moreover, it is the result of multiplication of the elements (air, fire, earth, water) by three alchemical bases: salt, sulphur and mercury.

The order of numbers represented presence in the world of God's Wisdom. A number was the foundation of the order of existence. The creation of numbers was the creation of things—*Sed creatio numerorum rerum est creatio*.<sup>16</sup> *Creare* also meant *ordinare*, according to a number. This is what the prophet Baruch wrote: "The stars shine joyfully at their posts; when he calls them, they answer, 'Here we are'; they shine to delight their Creator. It is he who is our God" (Bar 3, 34-36). In turn, the Sage Balaam blesses Israel and prophesies about the Messiah: "I see him—but not in the present. I perceive him—but not close at hand: a star is emerging from Jacob, a sceptre is rising from Israel" (Nm 24, 17). In art, the six-pointed star was often the symbol of the Virgin Mary. Two superimposed triangles were meant to demonstrate the intermediary role of Mary between heaven and earth.<sup>17</sup>

Tertullian in his *Adversus Marcionem* analyses the symbolism of the number "twelve": "For I see the symbolism of this number in the Creator: twelve springs in Elim and twelve precious stones in the priestly ephod of Aaron and twelve stones chosen from the Jordan by Joshua and put into the Ark of the Covenant. As many Apostles were foretold by these things as sources and rivers, which were to irrigate the pagan world, formerly dry and desert, because it had no knowledge of God, as Isaiah said: 'I will deliver the rivers into the wilderness,' and then as precious stones they would lighten up the holy garment of the Church, which Christ the High Priest of the Father donned, and then as solid stones of faith, which the true Joshua, Jesus, took out of the current of the Jordan and put in the treasury of his Testament."<sup>18</sup>

In the Old Testament, and later in Christianity, "twelve" was a number of election, *numerus electionis*: in the Judaist period it referred to 12 sons of Jacob, 12 generations of Israel that made up the chosen people, 12 sources in Elim, twelve precious stones on the ephod of the high priest, 12 stones

<sup>16</sup> *Quoniam autem unitas omnem numerum creat, numerus autem infinitus est, necesse est unitatem non habere finem suae potentiae; unitas igitur est omnipotens in creatione numerorum. Sed creatio numerorum rerum est creatio. Unitas igitur omnipotens est in rerum creatione. At quod est omnipotens in rerum creatione, illud unice et simpliciter omnipotens est. Unitas igitur omnipotens. Unitatem igitur deitatem esse necesse est.* TEODORYK Z CHARTRES, "De sex dierum operibus", *Breslauer Studien zur historischen Theologie* 8 (1926): 109\*.

<sup>17</sup> Manfred LURKER, *Słownik obrazów i symboli biblijnych* [Dictionary of biblical images and symbols], transl. Kazimierz Romaniuk (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pallottinum, 1989), 65.

<sup>18</sup> TERTULIAN, *Przeciw Marcjonowi* [Adversus Marcionem], transl. Stefan Ryzner (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ATK, 1994), 169.

selected from the Jordan by Joshua. In the Christian period, it meant 12 apostles chosen by Christ, often represented in early medieval art as lambs around Christ.

Furthermore, the Heavenly Jerusalem from the Apocalypse of St. John has twelve foundations, the sides of the City of God have twelve thousand stadia, while twelve squared is 144, which multiplied by 1,000 gives the number of the chosen ones from the Apocalypse, and therefore 12 may represent the triumphant Church. In addition, the Apocalypse mentions twelve thrones and Twelve Seated Men. Medieval symbolists, among other things for the above reasons, considered the number twelve to be perfect<sup>19</sup>.

Pope Innocent III in his Sermon One about the Apostles gave a similarly extensive commentary on the number “twelve”: “The number twelve is sanctified in twelve apostles, twelve prophets, twelve patriarchs, twelve scouts, twelve princes, twelve generations, twelve sources, twelve stones, twelve thrones, twelve hours, twelve months, twelve years, twelve signs, twelve stars, twelve precious stones, twelve gates, twelve cornerstones, twelve foundations, twelve wands, twelve beds, twelve baskets, twelve charms, twelve vessels, twelve mortars, twelve oxen, twelve lambs, twelve lambs, twelve rams. For it is a very abundant number composed of two sixes, which signify the perfection of thought and work, both of mind and of body. Moreover, three multiplied by four and four multiplied by three signifies faith in the undivided Trinity and the teachings of the four Evangelists. Add to this the three general theological virtues and three social virtues of the five senses, which relate to the flesh, and seven multiplied by two, which relate to the spirit.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The arguments of “secular wisdom” were supported by Gottfried of Admont (*Senarius numerus, qui ex perfectio constat, perfectionem significat*, PL 174, 229).

<sup>20</sup> *Duodenarius enim numerus est sacratus in duodecim apostolis, duodecim prophetis, duodecim patriarchis; in duodecim exploratoribus, duodecim principibus, duodecim tribubus; in duodecim fontibus, duodecim lapidibus, duodecim sedibus; in duodecim horis, duodecim mensibus, duodecim annis; in duodecim signis, duodecim stellis, duodecim gemmis; in duodecim portis, duodecim angulis, et duodecim fundamentis; in duodecim virgis, duodecim cubitis, et duodecim cophinis; in duodecim phialis, duodecim acetabulis et duodecim mortariolis; in duodecim bubus, duodecim leviculis, et duodecim arietibus. Est autem numerus superabundans, constans ex duobus senariis, signantibus perfectionem cogitationis et operis, sive mentis et corporis, ex trinario multiplicato per quaternarium, et quaternario per trinarium, signantibus fidem individuae Trinitatis, et quatuor Evangeliorum doctrinam. Sive tres virtutes catholicas theologicas, et quatuor virtutes politicas, ex quinario sensuum, quae spectant ad corpus, et septenario duorum, quae spectant ad spiritum. INNOCENTII III, Sermo I, De apostolis, PL 217, 599–600. Possibly, the last combination concerns the seven sacraments and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

It is worth noting here that in the Christian interpretation of the symbolic meanings of the number “six” two trends should be distinguished. The first, Augustinian, in which God chose the number “six” because of its perfection, and the second, in which the number “six” gained its perfection because God chose it for the act of creation. According to St. Augustine, God chose this number because of its perfection. Gregory the Great (d. 604) applied the number “six” to signify the perfection of a good work, not because he was prompted to do so by secular wisdom, assigning the perfection of that number to its inner structure,<sup>21</sup> but because God completed the act of creation within six days.<sup>22</sup>

Stars seemed to be intermediaries between God and Earth. In the culture of ancient Babylon and Assyria, stars were considered a manifestation of divine powers. The ancient Egyptians called the stars the court entourage of Osiris.<sup>23</sup>

In the Middle Ages, a very strong combination of ancient, Judaic and Christian symbolism of numbers could be observed with a tendency to treat biblical symbolism as a starting point.<sup>24</sup> The numerical principles formulated in the Scriptures concerned the principles of wisdom, and the order of numbers represented the presence in the world of God’s Wisdom. A number was the foundation of the order of things, and its removal was identified with the annihilation of all that exists.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The number “six” was e.g. a sum total and a result of multiplication of its components ( $1+2+3=6$ ;  $1 \times 2 \times 3=6$ ), which made it perfect. Otto BETZ, *Das Geheimnis der Zahlen* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1989), 87.

<sup>22</sup> *Saepe iam diximus senario numero perfectionem boni operis designari non illud sequentes quod conati sunt hujus saeculi sapientes astruere, dicentes idcirco senarium numerum esse perfectum, quia suo ordine numeratus perficitur, ut cum unus, duo, tres dicuntur, senarius numerus impleatur; vel quia in tribus partibus dividitur, id est sexta, tertia et dimidia, videlicet in uno, duobus et tribus; sed idcirco senarium numerum dicimus esse perfectum, quia, sicut paulo ante dictum est, sexto die perfecit Deus omnia opera sua.* RABANUS MAURUS, *Incipiunt commentaria in Ezechielem*, PL 110, 915.

<sup>23</sup> Manfred LURKER, *Słownik obrazów*, 64.

<sup>24</sup> Ernst R. CURTIUS, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: A. Francke Verlag, 1954), 503. Gematria and the Kaballah played a significant role in mathematical theology. John Reuchlin (d. 1522) proved in his *De arte cabbalistica* that three paths lead one to know God: moral truths, natural truths and finally mathematical truths. Stefan SWIEŻAWSKI, *Dzieje filozofii europejskiej w XV wieku* [History of European philosophy of the 15<sup>th</sup> c.], vol. II (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ATK, 1974), 245.

<sup>25</sup> *Tolle numerum a rebus omnibus, et omnia pereunt* wrote Hraban Maur. PL 107, 671.

## AMICTA SOLE (Rv 12, 1)

The central figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary's coral altar is adorned with a double solar halo according to the text of the Apocalypse 12, 1—*Mulier Amicta Sole*—a woman clothed with the sun. However, it is worthwhile to refer to the opinion of St. Ambrose, who wrote in *Hexaemeron*: “Therefore do not consider the sun a god. [...] Do not, therefore, recklessly entrust yourself to such a great radiance of the sun, though it is the eye of the world, the allure of the day, the splendour of the sky, the beauty of nature, the jewel of creation. [...] If the Sun is so nice, this associate and partaker of nature, how good is the Sun of righteousness.”<sup>26</sup> That same author in a passage of his *Commentary to Psalm XVIII* observed: “Because the great grace of the Church and the great rewards of faithfulness invite us, let us anticipate the rising sun, let us run to meet it before it calls: Behold, here I am (Is 58, 9). The sun of righteousness desires to be anticipated and is waiting for someone to be ahead of it.”<sup>27</sup>

People are not satisfied with the name God or Jesus. When they want to show their gratitude or joy, they come up with new names that they think are more beautiful, more suitable for the circumstances, for the moment they are living through. One such example is the passage from Malachi's prophecy 4:2: “And the sun of righteousness and health in his wings will rise up unto you who fear my name.” Another text, which in the messianic sense calls Christ the Sun-the East, is a passage from the hymn of Zachariah: “because of the faithful love of our God in which the rising Sun has come from on high to visit us” (Lk 1, 78).<sup>28</sup>

The Sun is then identified with Christ—*Sol iustitiae*, the Sun confirms Christ's *deitas*, while the Moon indicates His *humanitas*. The Church is clad in Christ, her Spouse,<sup>29</sup> yet this expression was also referred to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

<sup>26</sup> AMBROSE, *Hexaemeron*, transl. Władysław Szoldrski, in *Pisma starochrześcijańskich pisarzy*, vol. IV (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ATK, 1969), 116.

<sup>27</sup> *Cum ergo tanta Ecclesiae gratia, tanta nos praemia devotionis invitent, praeviamus orientem solem, occurramus ad ejus ortus, antequam dicat: „Ecce adsum (Isa., LVIII, 9)”. Vult se praeveneri Sol justitiae, et ut praeveniatur, exspectat.* S. AMBROSII, *Expositio in psalmum CXVIII*, PL, 15, 1217.

<sup>28</sup> *Per viscera misericordiae Dei nostri in quibus visitavit nos oriens ex alto* (Lk 1; 78). See Zec 6, 12: “Here is the man whose name is the Branch—*Ecce vir, Oriens nomen ejus.*”

<sup>29</sup> *Ecclesia circumdata Christo sponso suo.* See Stanisław KOBIELUS, “Idea Niebiańskiej Jerozolimy w dekoracji monumentalnej kościoła Św. Anny w Krakowie” [The idea of Heavenly Jerusalem in the monumental decoration of the Church of St. Anne in Krakow], in IDEM, *Dzieło sztuki. Dzieło wiary* (Ząbki: Apostolicum, 2002), 93.



Smaragdus, the abbot of the Benedictine monastery of St. Michael said that “God is called the Father of lights, because through him both invisible lights were created, which are angels, of which God said at the beginning: Let there be light, and the souls of those of whom Jesus said: You are the light of the world. Likewise, the visible sun, the moon and the stars, and generally speaking all have been made lights.”<sup>30</sup>

The soul in search of light is symbolised by a lizard, which was believed to have eyes as bright as the sun.<sup>31</sup> Physiologus calls it a sunny lizard—*saúra kaloúmenh*. It can look for a sunny place for a long time, and there it likes to warm up by staying still, and when it finds this spot, it is delighted. When it loses sight because of old age, it may regain it by looking at the rising sun until it regains its vision.<sup>32</sup>

Great respect for the sun had an old tradition in the pagan Roman Empire. The Church’s response to this was to oppose Christ as the Sun. Christian speculation on this subject developed between the second and sixth centuries, resulting in numerous liturgical and literary texts, and later contributing to early Christian art.

Paulinus of Nola called Christ the true Apollo; others applied such names as: our Sun, the new Sun, the eternal Sun, the wonderful Sun, the Sun of Resurrection, the Sun which knows no sunset.

The pagan term *Dies Solis* was thus given a Christian interpretation. This is how, among others, Hieronymus did it: “*Dies dominica, dies resurrectionis, dies Christianorum, dies nostra est, unde et dominica dicitur: quia Dominus in ea victor ascendit ad Patrem. Quod si a gentibus dies Solis vocatur, et hoc nos libentissime confitemur: hodie enim lux mundi orta est, hodie sol iustitiae ortus est in cuius pennis est sanitas.*”<sup>33</sup> The Christian cult of Christ as the Sun developed so much that until the sixth century it supplanted the pagan solar speculation and Sun worship.

<sup>30</sup> *Pater luminum dicitur Deus, quia ab ipso sive invisibilium luminum, ut sunt angeli, de quibus in principio dixit Deus: Fiat lux, sive animalium illarum quibus ait Jesus: Vos estis lux mundi. Seu visibilium solis et lunae et stellarum, generaliter omnia facta sunt lumina.* SMARAGDUS ABBAS MONASTERII S. MICHAELIS, *Incipiunt collectiones. Dominica tertia post oct. Paschae. Epistola beati Jacobi apostoli*, cap. I, PL 102, 294. See also Jas 1; 17.

<sup>31</sup> *Est volatile animal quod lacerta dicitur, utrisque oculis clara ut sol.* Auctor incertus (HUGO DE FOLIETO?), *De bestiis et aliis rebus*, PL 177, 74.

<sup>32</sup> Ursula TREU, *Physiologus. Naturkunde in frühchristlicher Deutung* (Hanau: Verlag Werner Dausien, 1998), 9; ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De animalibus libri I–XXVI*, vol. I–II, hrsg. Hermann Stadler (Münster i. W.: Aschendorff, 1916–1920), 1569.

<sup>33</sup> Auctor incertus (HIERONYMUS STRIDONENSIS?), *Epistola XXII, seu explanatio in Psalmum CXVII*, PL 30, 212.

A great example of the presence of the Sun in early Christian iconography is a mosaic from the third century in the Julius Mausoleum under the Vatican Basilica. It depicts Helios-Sol on a chariot.

And finally, another set of “sunny” representations are the images of Christ's Transfiguration on the Mount, where His face brightened up like the sun: “Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There, in their presence, he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light” (Mt 17, 2).

#### LUNA SUB PEDIBUS EJUS (Rv 12, 1)

The moon was associated with the person of Our Lady; it was laid under her feet not to be trampled upon, but to lighten and sustain the “Woman,” the symbol of the Church of the Old and New Covenants.<sup>34</sup> In this case, it means foundation, a base. But there is also a second variant of interpretation of his presence: The Church is unchangeable because she is constant in her faith, in her teachings, customs, persecutions, martyrdom, and therefore Mary as Ecclesia tramples the moon as a symbol of unsteadiness. In this version, therefore, the moon does not enlighten the Woman, but is trampled on.

The basis for this understanding of the Moon is its symbolism of the transition from death to life, from life to death (its appearance and disappearance, enlargement or reduction). Here we can refer to a fragment from the Book of Sirah: “The conversation of the devout is wisdom at all times, but the fool is as changeable as the moon” (Sir 27, 12).

Due to its changeability in the Jewish tradition, the moon was a symbol of the Jewish nation, which wandered through the desert, constantly changing its way and place. Adam was the first to err. Cain, after killing Abel, became a forced “wanderer” (Gn 4, 14).

Maximus of Turin wrote: “You change like the moon when in stupidity and misunderstanding at its movement you become a blasphemer, even though you were a Christian. The sacrilege of the Creator is made when you attribute weakness to His creation. So you change like the moon when you have just shone with piety and faith, and now you are falling into the weakness of

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<sup>34</sup> Ludwik STEFANIAK, *Interpretacja 12 rozdziału Apokalipsy św. Jana w świetle historii egzegezy* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1957), 49.

infidelity. You change like the moon when your brain discards wisdom like the ball of the moon loses light. In truth, a little darkness of the clouds obscures the moon, and the darkest darkness of the mind falls upon you.”<sup>35</sup>

In the *luna*, chastity is associated with fertility, just as in Mary, virginity is associated with motherhood. As every living creature grows under the influence of the moon, so does Mary’s mediation and intercession seek graces for the just and for sinners. The growth of plants was dependent on the stages of the Moon.

Another basis for symbolic arguments about the moon and the sun is their mutual relationship based on the fact that the moon is devoid of its own light; it shines with light reflected from the sun.

Certain and clear ideas on this subject date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the moon appears almost with a “full face”; and since the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the moon was shown as a crescent, with a female face, sometimes held by angels. In the illustrated copy of *Speculum humanae salvationis* from around 1350, the crescent moon was given a male face.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, an image emerged of the Madonna on the moon by herself. The oldest sculptural representation with a female lunar mask dates back to the first quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It can symbolize the defeated demon, Turk, Adam, Old Testament, Synagogue. The head in the crescent can symbolize Eve, as opposed to Mary.

The face can be shown in different ways: up front, in profile, wrapped in a scarf or veil; it can be beautiful or ugly.

Pope Sixtus IV (1471–1484) granted an indulgence to the faithful praying in front of an image of the Madonna on the moon; as a result this period in history was the heyday of this iconographic convention.

According to St. Ambrose, “The Moon foreshadowed the mystery of Christ. It is nothing but small, the thing that Christ recognized as his sign; it is not a small thing that is an image of the beloved Church, as the prophet pointed out when saying: ‘His righteousness and abundance of peace will rise in the days until the moon is lost.’ [...] And the Church looking down from above has, like the moon, its frequent shortages and rises. But it grows both through losses and through them it deserves to grow. When it decreases because of persecution, it is crowned by the martyrdom of the followers. The Church is the true moon, for she borrows from her brother’s light the

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<sup>35</sup> MAKSYM Z TURYN, *Zabobonne praktyki chrześcijan podczas zaćmienia księżyca*, in Andrzej BOBER, *Antologia patrystyczna* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 1965), 253.

constant light of immortality and grace. For the Church does not shine with her light, but with Christ, and receives her light from the sun of righteousness, so that she can say: 'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.' You are fortunate indeed, moon, to have deserved such a great honour. I would not call you fortunate because of the new moon, but because you are an image of the Church, you serve with your new moon, but you are loved by us as an image."<sup>36</sup>

## II. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS ARISING FROM THE VOCATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

### CEDRUS EXALTATA<sup>37</sup>

*Quasi cedrus exaltata sum in Libano* (Sir 24, 17)—"I am exalted like a cedar in Lebanon". This is the main reference from the Old Testament to the figure of Mary, whose symbols were placed in the coral shrine.

The cedar tree and its wood are multifaceted symbols, both positive and negative. The woods on the mountains of Lebanon were famous for their magnificence; the author of the Psalms used them to demonstrate the might of God, who "breaks cedars" (Ps 28, 5). In the Old Testament the cedar, known as "the glory of Lebanon," was symbolic of immortality, wisdom and a just man.<sup>38</sup> In the metaphoric message of the prophesy of Ezekiel, Egypt was likened to a cedar, which was shown as a symbol of majesty and height (Am 2, 9), eminence, beauty of Eden, decoration, and its shadow offered safety. The cedar tree is moreover a symbol of a fall (Ez 31, 1–18), fertility (Ps 91, 13), and pride (Ps 28, 5).

For the prophet Isaiah, the cedar is a symbol of welfare, with eschatological undertones: "I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set junipers in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the LORD has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it" (Is 41, 19–20).

<sup>36</sup> AMBROŻY, *Hexaameron*, 136–137.

<sup>37</sup> According to the Vulgate, Pnp 4, 12; Latin *cedrus*; English *cedar*; French *cèdre*; German *die Zeder*.

<sup>38</sup> Manfred LURKER, *Słownik obrazów*, 30.

The very name Lebanon was seen by some exegetes as *dealbatio*, or whitening, cleansing. For them, it symbolized a man who was sprinkled with a hyssop of grace and whitewashed over snow, a just man who, like a cedar, rises up to exalted things and hopes that through earthly affairs he will be able to achieve what belongs to heaven.<sup>39</sup> Cedars symbolise Christ himself,<sup>40</sup> the Church<sup>41</sup> and His chosen ones, who grow and bear fruit within Him. Hugo de S. Victore ascribed moreover to Lebanon cedars characteristics such as: beauty, slenderness, not being subject to decay,<sup>42</sup> aroma, freedom from being eaten by worms,<sup>43</sup> and Bede the Venerable added to the above an unmatched charm of virtues.<sup>44</sup>

According to the Book of Leviticus: “These are the regulations for any diseased person at the time of their ceremonial cleansing, when they are brought to the priest: The priest is to go outside the camp and examine them. If they have been healed of their defiling skin disease, the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the person to be cleansed” (Lev 14, 2–4)<sup>45</sup>. The Old Testament law was referred to Mary in a passage from the *Hours of Our Lady*: “Oh, palm of patience, oh, cedar of purity” (Hymn for the Sext). According to Gregory the Great, cedars mean the promised heaven: “A cedar that smells and doesn’t rot by nature is rightly promised to us.”<sup>46</sup> Ciry of Alexandria

<sup>39</sup> *Cedrus arbor est Libani montis. Libanus interpretatur dealbatio, et figurat illum qui est hyssopo gratiae aspersus et super nivem dealbatus. Cedrus autem arbor Libani, quae in altum se surgit, et ad sublimia se extollit, spem designat justi, qui se a terrenis ad coelestia speranda sublimiter extendit. Auctor incertus (HUGO DE S. VICTORE?), Sermones, PL 177, 935.*

<sup>40</sup> *Per cedrum intelligimus Christum, HUGO DE S. VICTORE, PL 177, 26.*

<sup>41</sup> *Nempe cedrus Christum sive sanctam Ecclesiam mystice significat. RABANUS MAURUS, De universo, PL 111, 517.*

<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the Venerable Bede: *Cedrus namque arbor est imputribilis omnino naturae, odoris jucundi, aspectus nitidi, serpentes accensa nidore fugans ac perimens. BEDA, De templo Salomonis, PL 91, 755. Also HUGO DE S. VICTORE: Cedrus autem est arbor imputrescibilis, odore et aspectu jucunda, serpentes fugans et perimens accensa. HUGO DE S. VICTORE, De diversis, PL 177, 870.*

<sup>43</sup> *Hae sunt cedri, quae crescunt in monte Libano, et significant electos qui crescunt et fructificant per Christum et in Christo. Libanus enim qui candidatio dicitur, Christum significat, qui ex munda virgine processit sine omni peccati labe. Haec ligna sunt pulchra, procera, imputribilia, odorifera, a vermibus illaesa, et significant sanctos. RICHARDUS S. VICTORIS, Explicatio in Cantica canticorum, PL 196, 443.*

<sup>44</sup> *Diximus de cedro, quod insuperabilem virtutum venustatem signaret. BEDA, De templo Salomonis, PL 91, 759.*

<sup>45</sup> See also Lb 19, 6.

<sup>46</sup> GRZEGORZ WIELKI, *Homilie na Ewangelie*, transl. Władysław Szoldrski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ATK, 1969), 135.

also compared a cedar to the body of Christ, which does not rot, like cedar wood.<sup>47</sup> Cedar resin extracted from the cone as essential oil is used for medicinal purposes and protects against decay.<sup>48</sup>

Analysis of exegetical texts shows that a cedar was first of all symbolic of the Blessed Virgin Mary's beauty and in a figurative sense was linked to Her: "I am exalted like a cedar in Lebanon" (Sir 24, 17). Moreover, a cedar foreshadowed the immaculate conception of the Mother of God<sup>49</sup> and made snakes retreat; in many images representing the Immaculate Conception, Mary tramples a snake underfoot.

#### FONS SIGNATUS (Sg 4, 12)<sup>50</sup>

A text from The Song of Songs is a source that inspires another image in the shrine from the treasury of the Church of St. May in Krakow: "You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain" (Sg 4, 12).<sup>51</sup>

Locking up is also a kind of sealing, as Isaiah observes: "For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say, 'Read this, please,' they will answer, 'I can't; it is sealed'" (Is 29, 11).<sup>52</sup>

A fountain, a baptismal font are to remind us of Paradise. Originally, the water of life was the source of paradise, which was separated by four streams: Tiger, Euphrates, Pison and Gihon (Gn 2, 6–10). Philon of Alexandria recollects: "Through the four rivers, Scripture wants to mark the individual virtues. There are four of them—prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice. The four branches mark the individual virtues. Virtue in the general

<sup>47</sup> Hans BIEDERMANN, *Knaurs Lexikon der Symbole* (München: Knaur, 1989), 501.

<sup>48</sup> Zenon ZIÓLKOWSKI, *Biblijny komentarz do Godzinek* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawniczo-Poligraficzna "Adam", 2009), 75.

<sup>49</sup> *Recte igitur beata Dei Genitrix arbor Libani fuit, quia de saeculo praesentis carnis originem habuit. Sed ipsius Libani altitudinem se ad alta subrigens excessit, quia cunctam mundi gloriam suarum sublimitate virtutum inaestimabiliter transcendit. Quae imputribilis quoque fuit, dum virgo incorrupta permanens mater existit. Bene denique se sicut cedrum exaltatam dixit, dum inviolata semper existens, et primum per gratiam et postmodum per gloriam prae omnibus creaturis se sublimatam vidit.* HUGO DE S. VICTORE, *Sermones*, PL 177, 1026.

<sup>50</sup> According to the Vulgate, Pnp 4, 12.

<sup>51</sup> *Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa hortus conclusus fons signatus* (Pnp 4, 12).

<sup>52</sup> *Et erit vobis visio omnium sicut verba libri signati quem cum dederint scienti litteras dicent lege istum et respondebit non possum signatus est enim* (Is 29, 11).

sense therefore originates in Eden.”<sup>53</sup> Four virtues, known as cardinal ones, a legacy of Greek antiquity, are, then one of the first stages of development of Christian perfection, or rebirth.

Hugo de S. Victore observed that a source of them is a pious soul, which may flow yet always remains the same, incessantly reborn in God. A source never stops to provide water; it grows on Divine love and helps to grow in the love of the neighbour.<sup>54</sup>

This is a birth of water and spirit according to Christ: “Jesus said: Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (J 3, 5).

In the Gospels of Lothar<sup>55</sup> we can find an image of *Maiestas Domini* (ill. 3) in a mandorla, flanked by the symbols of the Evangelists and a legend: “Quattuor hic rutilant uno de fonte fluentes Matthei Marci Lucae libri atque Iohannis.” The four books that shine like gold, by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, flow out of a single source.

The primary source is the person of Christ; Hrabanus Maurus observes: “A river flowing out of Paradise carries an image of Christ who takes his origin in the Father, and in Him waters his Church by words of teaching and the gift of Baptism.”<sup>56</sup> Ambrose of Milan, in turn, wrote that the source which irrigated Paradise is Jesus Christ himself. He is the source of everlasting life, like the Father. He is called the source and the river, which irrigate the tree from the Garden of Eden, which bears fruit and gives everlasting life. a source like this can be the human soul; Salomon writes about it as follows: “Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well” (Prv 5, 15).<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, as St. Ambrose further wrote, the source of

<sup>53</sup> FILON ALEKSANDRYJSKI, *Pisma*, vol. I, transl. Leon Joachimowicz (Warszawa: PAX, 1986), 100.

<sup>54</sup> *Fons est anima devota quae manat et fluit, semper nova oritur, quia semper in Deo renovatur. Meditatur enim, vel operatur bonum, vel desiderio ad anteriora fertur. Fons iste non cessat ebullire, et erumpere ad Dei amorem, ad proprium exerescere, et dilatari ad proximi dilectionem.* RICHARDUS S. VICTORIS, *In Cantica canticorum explicatio*, PL 196, 491.

<sup>55</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms lat. 266, fol2v. Gopels of Lothar I, 849–851.

<sup>56</sup> *Fluvius de paradiso exiens, imaginem portat Christi de paterno fonte fluentis, qui irrigat Ecclesiam suam verbo praedicationis et dono baptismi.* HRABANUS MAURUS, *Incipiunt commentaria in Genesim*, PL 107, 479.

<sup>57</sup> *Erat fons qui irrigaret paradisum. Qui fons, nisi Dominus Jesus-Christus! Fons vitae aeternae est, sicut et Pater; quia scriptum est: Quoniam apud te fons vitae (Ps 35, 10). Denique, flumina de ventre ejus fluent aquae vitae (J 7, 38). Et fons legitur, et fluvius legitur qui irrigat paradisi lignum fructuosum, quod ferat fructum in vitam aeternam. Hic ergo fons, sicut legisti, fons enim inquit, procedit ex Eden, id est, in anima tua fons est. Unde Salomon ait: Bibe aquam de tuis vasis, et de puteorum tuorum fontibus (Prv 5, 15). Hic est fons qui procedit ex illa exerci-*

life is Wisdom, the source of spiritual grace, the source of the many virtues that lead man to eternal life.<sup>58</sup>

#### HORTUS CONCLUSUS (Sg 4, 12)<sup>59</sup>

In many cultures and religions of the East, the preservation of gardens was considered as a way of sustaining the idea of paradise lost. Such images, purged of polytheism, were adapted by the Bible in an anthropomorphic convention, where God enters into a dialogue with Adam and Eve, punishes them with expulsion and prohibition of access. The description of paradise in the Book of Genesis inspired later images of gardens in other books of the Old Testament. The Song of Songs is a convincing example of this. The interest in paradise as a garden of God had an impact on the special development of garden art in the Middle Ages in religious communities. The agrarian lifestyle of some religious orders made them particularly sensitive to the biblical history of paradise as a garden, its cultivation, protection and irrigation, recommended by God.

In the Middle Ages, Benedictines and Cistercians, in particular, spread the culture of garden maintenance in Europe. Monastic communities founded at that time envisaged on its premises several types of gardens: the Abbot's garden, the fruit orchard, the vegetable garden, the herb garden, and the flower garden. In addition, herbariums, chateau gardens, lady's gardens, love gardens, rosaria, and rural gardens were created. The knowledge about gardens was spread, among others, by medieval encyclopaedists, mainly from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, who derived from various religious communities. Extensive compilation works were created mainly on the subject of the medicinal properties of plants, less frequently informing about their symbolism.<sup>60</sup>

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*tata ut plena voluptatis anima: hic fons qui irrigat paradysum, hoc est, virtutes animae eminentissimo merito pullulantis.* AMBROSSIUS MEDIOLANENSIS, *Liber de paradiso*, PL 14, 280.

<sup>58</sup> *Sicut ergo fons vitae est Sapientia, fons gratiae spiritalis: ita fons virtutum est caeterarum, quae nos ad aeternae cursum dirigunt vitae.* AMBROSSIUS MEDIOLANENSIS, *Liber de paradiso*, PL 14, 280; see PAUL A. UNDERWOOD, "The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950): 47.

<sup>59</sup> According to the Vulgate Pnp 4, 12; Latin *hortus*; English *Garden*; French *jardin*; German *der Garten*.

<sup>60</sup> Stanisław KOBIELUS, *Człowiek i ogród rajski w kulturze religijnej średniowiecza* [The human person and the Garden of Eden in the religious culture of the middle ages] (Warszawa: PAX, 1997), 145.



Furthermore, every new grave of a deceased monk buried in a monastery cemetery encapsulated the idea of a garden, further updated by the rhythm of the seasons. The model was the tomb of Christ, located in the garden near Golgotha. This is well reflected in the miniature from the Egbert Code. Some Christophanies after the resurrection also took place in the garden, an example being the dialogue between Christ and Mary Magdalene.

The garden was also often used in metaphors. It was mainly related to the person of Our Lady, emphasizing two main aspects: Our Lady in literary texts understood on a metaphorical level as a garden and Our Lady within a garden, considered in the iconographic aspect.<sup>61</sup> Popular in art were the images of an enclosed garden, symbolic of the virginity of Our Lady.

Literature, too, addressed the topic quite frequently. A text of *Hymnus ad beatam Virginem Mariam* includes the following verses which give evidence to the bond between Mary and Jesus:

Virgo, hortus tu conclusus,  
Ave, rosa caritatis,  
In te mansit gloriosus,  
(Tu) viola humilitatis,  
In te fuit graciosus,  
Lilium es castitatis,  
In te Christus virtuosus,  
Radix tu virginitatis.<sup>62</sup>

Virgin, you are an enclosed garden,  
Hail, the rose of charity,  
You enclosed the glorious one,  
You are a violet of humility,  
You hosted the most beloved one,  
You are the lily of chastity,  
You harbour the virtuous Christ,  
And the root of virginity.

The iconographic convention of an enclosed garden has always been an opportunity to present lush vegetation. It was the place where the Blessed Virgin Mary sat, referred to among others as the Cedar or the Olive. This is reflected in the verses of a fourteenth-century author:

<sup>61</sup> Heimo REINITZER, *Der verschlossene Garten. Der Garten Marias in Mittelalter* (Wolfenbüttel: : Herzog August Bibliothek, 1982), 10.

<sup>62</sup> *Analecta*, vol. 41, 218, <https://archive.org/stream/analectahymnicam41drev/analectahymnicam41drevdjvu.txt> (access: 22.12.2016).

Gaude cedrus exaltata,  
in amore radicata,  
oliva semper viridis,  
ramis jocunda floridis.

Hortus clausus et amoenus,  
omni flore semper plenus,  
quem totum singulariter  
auster perflavit suaviter.<sup>63</sup>

Rejoice, an exalted cedar,  
Taking its roots in love,  
An olive ever green,  
A branch lavished with joy.

An enclosed and agreeable garden,  
Always with flowers galore,  
Which is all, especially at noon,  
Embraced by the sweetest breeze.

In medieval poetry describing the content of “gardens of pleasure,” large quantities of plants were mentioned, whose symbolic content referred to Christ, understood as Solomon, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary as His Throne.

Therefore, gardens, usually called *rosaria*, depicting the Mother of God sitting within them, often in the *hortus conclusus* convention, were probably painted on the basis of actually existing monastery or secular gardens. A combination of the sacred and the profane took place here, which was not extremely rare in art. Flowers, trees, fruits, herbs and above all typological objects and events were used to show the theological truths about the incarnation, motherhood, virginity and the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

#### OLIVA SPECIOSA (Sir 24, 19)<sup>64</sup>

A search for and analysis of the symbolic content of an olive tree must take into account its wood, branches, fruit and oil pressed from it. All of these characteristics have been repeatedly put to practical use in the Holy Scriptures. Since ancient times, the olive tree has been dedicated to Zeus, while the olive branch in ancient Rome was an attribute of the personifica-

<sup>63</sup> Heimo REINITZER, *Der verschlossene Garten*, 29.

<sup>64</sup> According to the Vulgate, Sir 24, 19.

tion of Peace. According to Pliny the Elder, the Athenians crowned triumphant victors with a wreath of olive branches.<sup>65</sup> Wrestlers anointed their bodies before a contest with olive oil, stored in vessels known as *lekythos*. Statues of gods were carved in olive wood.

In the Promised Land, the destination of the Israelites, only three trees were mentioned: fig, pomegranate and olive (Deut 8, 8). Olive wood was used for some doors and doorframes in the Temple of Solomon; they featured carved figures of cherubim and palm trees (1 Kgs 6, 32–33). Branches of wild olive trees were used by the Israelites to put up tents for the traditional Feast of Tabernacles (Ne 8, 15).

In the Bible, olive oil was applied in a number of situations, as food, lighting material (Lev 24, 2; Mt 25, 3–4), oil for anointing the body, especially the face, which was of significance in the dry Palestinian climate (Dn 13, 17; Ps 103, 15; Mt 6, 17). Olive oil was a core ingredient of an oil for the anointment of the high priest (Ex 30, 24–25), symbolic of welfare, and a poor olive harvest was a result of the disobedience of the Jewish people to Yahve (Deut 28, 40).

It was moreover a symbol of glory (Hos 14, 7), adoption of the chosen people by Yahve (Jr 11, 16), Divine blessing (Jr 31, 12; Jl 2, 24), Divine Wisdom which indicates the path to justice (Sir 24, 19).<sup>66</sup> The biblical term *oliva fructifera* point to it being a symbol of fertility (Ps 51, 10; see 127, 3).

A passage from the Song of Songs: “Draw me in your footsteps! Let us run. Delicate is the fragrance of your perfumes, your name is an oil poured out” (Sg 1, 3), is a call of the Bride to her Beloved. In the East, fragrances were enhanced by being mixed with premium kinds of olive oil.

A reference to the text of Psalm 45, 8–9: “You love justice and hate wrongdoing; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellow kings” shows a special significance of the oil of gladness.

The *Hours of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary* stress the idea of an essential oil, a reference to the name of Mary: “Draw me in your footsteps! Let us run. Delicate is the fragrance of your perfumes. Your name is an oil poured out, and that is why girls love you” (Sg 1, 3). The author of the text paraphrases the above text: “Like an oil poured out, oh Mary, is Your Name” (Sg 1, 3).

<sup>65</sup> *Athenae quoque victores olea coronant.* PLINIUS, *Naturalis historia*, XV, 19.

<sup>66</sup> *Oliva, proprie. Dicitur sapientia divina.* ALANUS DE INSULIS, *Distinctiones dictionum theologicalium*, PL 210, 881.

In the scene of the Annunciation painted by Simone Martini (Galeria Uffizi), the Archangel Gabriel both holds an olive twig, but also wears an olive wreath on the head. He received the attribute as a harbinger of peace and of the New Covenant; this was a reference to the patriarch Noah, to whom a dove sent out from the ark brought an olive branch as a symbol of peace and Divine mercy.

Olive oil was symbolic of Divine mercy<sup>67</sup> not only because it was used to dress wounds, but by virtue of its name, since the Greek word ἔλεος means mercy.<sup>68</sup> Honorius of Autun mentions as many as six properties of olive oil: it is an oil of mercy, a sign of peace, strengthens the sick, heals wounds, use used in lamps to provide light, and surpasses all other liquids. Because of all these features it is symbolic of Christ, our mercy and peace (Eph 2, 14), strengthens the sick with His instruction, heals the wounds of sin, shows light through signs and miracles, and towers over all the other saints.<sup>69</sup>

Honorius of Autun, in turn, wrote in reference to the words *Quasi oliva speciosa in campis*: “Olive means mercy; a field is fallow land and means virgins, not ploughed by the power of male yoke. Among them there is precisely pure *Χριστοτόκος* decorative field olive. It exudes an oil of gladness and mercy, which heals our sicknesses and anoints one with the oil of glory of the heavenly kingdom.”<sup>70</sup> Mary is like an olive in the midst of the field of this world, preserves the beauty of virtues, verdant with holy thoughts,

<sup>67</sup> *Oliua enim significat misericordiam, ut in Zacharia III-o: uidi, et ecce candelabrum aureum totum et due oliue super illud, una a dextris lampadis et alia a sinistris.* THOMAS DE CHOBHAM, *Sermones, Sermo 11*, linea 228.

<sup>68</sup> *Oliua namque misericordiam domini solet in scripturis significare non solummodo pro similitudine fructus cuius suauis et leni uulnera curantur unctione uerum etiam pro ipso suo nomine quod tractum est a graeco ἔλεος quod latine dicitur misericordia.* RUPERTUS TUITIENSIS, *Commentarium in Apocalypsim Iohannis apostoli*, lib. 6, cap. (s.s.) 11, col. 1025, linea 55.

<sup>69</sup> *Item oleum habet sex insignia. Oleum enim dicitur misericordiae, et oleum est signum pacis, et oleum fovet infirmos, et sanat vulnera, et lumen lucernis ministrat, et omnibus liquoribus supereminet. Hoc Christum designat, qui est nostra misericordia, et pax nostra, qui nos infirmos praedicando fovit, vulnera peccatorum per sua vulnera curavit, signis et miraculis lumen praebuit, omnibus sanctis supereminet.* HONORIUS AUGUSTODUNENSIS, *Expositio in Cantica canticorum*, PL 172, 364.

<sup>70</sup> *Quasi oliva speciosa in campis. Oleum significat misericordiam; campus autem est terra inarata, et significat virgines, quae non sunt sulcatae per virilis amplexus vomeres. In quibus est casta *Χριστοτόκος* valde speciosa, ut in campis oliva decora; de qua profluxit oleum gaudii et misericordiae, quod nos sanans ab infirmitate, ungit in regnum coelestis gloriae.* HONORIUS AUGUSTODUNENSIS, *Sigillum beatae mariae ubi exponuntur cantica canticorum*, PL 172, 499.

bearing fruit with good deeds, bearing for us the fruit of eternal happiness, fertile with heavenly oil, i.e. the grace of the Holy Spirit.<sup>71</sup>

Mary as a fruit-bearing olive blessed by God was juxtaposed with Eve, likened to a barren willow.<sup>72</sup> The Cistercian monk Adam of Perseigne wrote that the Blessed Virgin Mary was an olive tree which bore fruit with the sweetness of anointment; her birth was an olive. She was a fertile olive tree, the Mother of Mercy. Of Her flows fertile olive oil, offering the fullness of grace, Mother of Christ provided anointment with mercy.<sup>73</sup>

In the liturgical medieval poetry, the Blessed Virgin Mary was called *Oliva speciosa*:

Salve, Virgo, florens rosa,  
Tu oliva speciosa,  
Portans nobis pacis ramum,  
Hostis qui collisti hamum.<sup>74</sup>

Hail, Virgin, a flowery rose,  
You are a comely olive,  
Bearing us a branch of peace,  
A destroyer of the enemy's lance.

An olive moreover stands for the Church, who blooms and bears fruit irrespective of the season of the year; Her first fruit is Christ. Also the people of God is the olive from which the conceited branches of the Jews were

<sup>71</sup> *Haec est quasi oliva in amplitudine hujus mundi, velut in medio campi, speciositatem virtutum retinens, sanctis cogitationibus virens, bonis operibus florens; nobis fructum aeternae beatitudinis pariens, coelesti oleo fecunda, id est Spiritus sancti gratia.* ALANUS DE INSULIS, *De sancta Maria*, PL 210, 248.

<sup>72</sup> *Eva fuit salix infructuosa, Maria oliva fructifera cui benedixit Dominus.* BERNARDUS CLARAEUALLENSIS, *Sententiae*, series 3, *sententia* 87, vol. 6, 2, pag. 127, linea 9.

<sup>73</sup> *Virginem nostram olivam dixerimus, erit oleum partus ejus. Virgo sane nostra est «oliva speciosa in campis» [...] ex qua «speciosus forma prae filiis hominum (Psal. XLIV)» nascitur sanctae suavitas unctionis. [...] In his campis est oliva fructifera, mater misericordiae Virgo Maria. De oliva profluit pinguedo olei, fundit gratiae plenitudinem, misericordiae unctionem profert mater Christi.* ADAMUS PERSENIAE, PL 211, 753; *Oleum significat misericordiam. Fons olei de terra fluxit, quia fons misericordiae de Virgine emanavit.* Honorius Augustodunensis, *Elucidarium*, PL 172, 1124; *Oliva igitur nostra, id est, beata Dei Genitrix, distillavit oleum effusum simpliciter viventibus: oleum purissimum, fortiter operantibus: oleum laetitia, ardentem amantibus: oleum unctionis, id est misericordiae criminosis post lapsum redeuntibus.* ABSALON SPRINCKIRSBACENSIS, *Sermones*, PL 211, 267.

<sup>74</sup> *Analecta*, vol. 29, 26, <https://archive.org/stream/analectahymnicam29drev#page/26/mode/2up> (access: 21.12.2016); por. *Domina nostra exaltatur [...] quasi oliva speciosa in campis, secundum affluentiam pietatis.* PETRUS CELLENSIS, *Sermones*, PL 202, 851.

broken off, and in their place was implanted the humble wild olive of the Gentiles.<sup>75</sup> Rabanus Maur, too, observed that the olive stands for the Church who, grafted on the fields of the entire world, represents the universe; anointed by holy chrism, it sanctifies the faithful through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Through this oil, the weak and the sick strengthen themselves, receive the light of grace. The inner love of works of mercy is often indicated, because the Psalmist says: “But I, like a flourishing olive tree in the house of God, put my trust in God’s faithful love, for ever and ever” (Ps 52, 8).<sup>76</sup>

According to St. Paul the Apostle, Israel became a wild, infertile olive, the branches of which were broken off because of their lack of faith. Those who believe in Christ, the people of the New Covenant, have a share in the fat of the old olive, but should not be exalted for this reason, for they too, because of pride, may face a similar fate (Rom 11, 17–24). Aurelius Prudentius in a didactic poem *Apotheosis* presents the same problem which was earlier mentioned by St. Paul:

Ah, a tree once green and with a fertile branch,  
An olive root, with once a juicy fruit!  
Behold, this trunk is verdant with an olive graft,  
A wild olive is covered by an alien bark.  
Take pity on yourself! Because the forest olive  
Strain, shooting from an alien root, far from proud,  
Warns you to remember your family’s descent,  
And cease to darken its leaves with colour, with no reluctance  
Letting branches from within the trunk shoot towards the sky.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Id est Ecclesia, sicut oliva, quae hieme et aestate viret, fructifera, de cujus germine Christus est. Populus Dei est ista oliva, de qua fracti sunt superbi rami, id est Judaei, et insertus est humilis oleaster de gentibus.* PETRUS LOMBARDUS, *Commentaria in psalmos*, PL 191, 498.

<sup>76</sup> *Et quid per olivam, nisi sancta Ecclesia designatur? quae in campis totius mundi transplantata decore orbem universum illustrat, et Spiritus sancti gratia per unctionem sacri chrismae sanctificat credentes; per olei namque pinguedinem, qua et lassi atque infirmi artus recreantur, et gratia praestatur luminis, interna saepe dilectio mentis et opus misericordiae designatur. Hinc etenim Psalmista: “Ego autem sicut oliva fructifera in domo Domini: speravi in misericordia Dei mei in aeternum et in saeculum saeculi”* (Psal. LI) RABANUS MAURUS, *Commentariorum in ecclesiasticum libri decem*, PL 109, 931.

<sup>77</sup> AURELIUS PRUDENCIUS KLEMENS, *Poezje* [Poetry], transl. Mieczysław Brożek (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ATK, 1987), 94. PRUDENTIUS, *Preface. Daily Round. Divinity of Christ. Origin of Sin. Fight for Mansoul. Against Symmachus I.* transl. Henry J. Thomson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949).

Olive oil was moreover a symbol of piety, while an olive of peace and a peaceful mind,<sup>78</sup> wealth and earthly delights. In Muslim symbolism, an olive was symbolic of the paradise of the elect.<sup>79</sup>

Olive oil was part of the chrism and the holy oils used in some sacraments and blessings of objects. The oil of the sick, the oil of the catechumens and the chrism continue to be blessed on Holy Thursday during the Chrism Mass in cathedrals. It is worth quoting at least the following passages from the prayers of dedication and consecration: “Send down from heaven, we pray, your Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, upon the rich substance of this Oil, which you were pleased to bring forth from vigorous green trees to restore our bodies” and “O Lord, we pray, that by your blessing you may graciously sanctify the rich substance of this Oil you have created, and permeate it with the strength of the Holy Spirit. For those to be reborn through the spiritual bath of Baptism, make the Chrism you have created a holy sign of the fullness of life and salvation.”<sup>80</sup>

The medieval mystic and theologian from the Netherlands Jan van Ruusbroec observed that God wished to make holyoils from an olive tree: “A tree is called olea, its fruit an olive, and olive oil is the juice extracted from the fruit. The olive tree is the Divine Father; the fruit is His Son, Jesus Christ, God and man; olive oil extracted from the fruit is the Divine and human love and grace. In Scripture, the olive tree is called the noble and fine tree of peace. The Father gave us His Son as the fruit of eternal peace. The Son through the Holy Spirit offered to us Himself to the press of the Jews so that He flowed as the holy oil that can make us all holy and happy if we so desire.”<sup>81</sup>

Medieval authors also emphasized the universal meaning of olive oil. Olive oil had three properties: it relieved pain, provided nutrition and burned in God’s temple. Similarly, the spiritual virtue of piety has three characteristics: it relieves pain, because it comes to the aid of the poor, comforts the

<sup>78</sup> *Hoc oleum est devotio. Oliva quae est signum pacis, designat tranquillitatem cordis.* THOMAS CISTERCIENSIS, JOANNES ALGRINUS, *Commentaria in Cantica canticorum*, PL 206, 215.

<sup>79</sup> Jean CHEVALIER, Alain GHEERBRANT, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, vol. III (Paris: Seghers, 1974), 313–314; Xavier LEON-DUFOUR, *Słownik Nowego Testamentu* [Dictionary of the New Testament], transl. Kazimierz Romaniuk (Warszawa, Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1981), 453.

<sup>80</sup> *Mszal rzymski dla diecezji polskich* [Roman missal for Polish dioceses] (Poznań: Pallottinum, 1986), 121, 125.

<sup>81</sup> JAN VAN RUUSBROEC, *Dziela* [Works], vol. II., transl. Maria Lew-Dylewski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, 2002), 168.

small-minded, strengthens the sad, instructs the wandering, and encourages the improvement of criminals.<sup>82</sup>

The decoration of numerous olive lamps in early Christianity was a testimony to how deeply the contents of the Gospel or the doctrine of the Church, as expressed by symbols, could penetrate into the life of a Christian. The abundance of subject matter first resulted from the ancient pagan tradition. Christianity added its iconography and used this lighting equipment to express its truths.

Among the pilgrims in Jerusalem, the oil from the lamps burning in front of the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre enjoyed special respect. Pilgrims could take small quantities of it with them in special bottles, which sometimes had a very interesting decoration. The olive lamps used to illuminate the underground catacombs were also decorated and had their unique iconography.

Not only an olive with its sacred undertones but also the Mount of Olives was of special importance for early Christian pilgrims. This is how one pilgrim, Egeria, reflects on that: "When the faithful are dispatched from the greater church, singing hymns they lead the bishop to Anastasis, and when everything is completed, as it is customary on the days of the Lord at Anastasis and Martyrium, after the concluding rites, each one goes to his house to eat quickly, so that all may be ready at seven o'clock in the church at Eleona, that is, at the Mount of Olives, with a grotto where the Lord preached. At seven o'clock the whole congregation climb the Mount of Olives, that is to say, the church in Eleona. The bishop sits down and the hymns and antiphones appropriate to that day and place are recited, as are the readings. When the ninth hour comes, they ascend singing anthems to Imbomon, that is, to the place from which the Lord ascended into heaven, and there they sit."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Sicut enim oleum olivarum ad usum triplicem se extendit, quia dolores mitigat, corpora pascit, et ardet in templo Dei: sic et spiritaliter virtus pietatis ad tria se habet. Ipsa enim dolores mitigat, quoniam subvenit miseris, consolatur pusillanimes, tristes confortat, ignorantes erudit, corrigit delinquentes.* ABSALON SPRINCKIRSBACENSIS, *De adventu domini*, PL 211, 96.

<sup>83</sup> EGERIA, *Pielgrzymka do miejsc świętych*, transl. Piotr Iwaszkiewicz, in *Do Ziemi Świętej. Najstarsze opisy pielgrzymek do Ziemi Świętej IV–VIII w.* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010), 178.



ROSA PLANTATA<sup>84</sup>

Personal Wisdom presented in the Book of Sirach was in Christianity linked to the figure of Mary, Mother of the Messiah: *In voce dicit obaudite me divini fructus et quasi rosa plantata super rivum aquarum fructificate* (Sir 39, 17)—“Listen to me, my faithful children: open up your petals, like roses planted near running waters” (Sir 39, 17). She was the *rosa plantata*, or a rose planted near running waters.

In the ancient world, the rose was a flower symbolic of pride and love. As one legend had it, it was supposedly created during the birth of Venus. Another story indicates that red roses grew out of the blood shed by Adonis, when he was torn apart by a boar.<sup>85</sup> During their feasts, Romans hung a rose at the ceiling to remind those present never to badmouth the absent. This was a rose of silence. Moreover, a rose was symbolic of a secret; to confide a secret in someone was to talk *sub rosa*.<sup>86</sup> It was also a symbol of rebirth after death and therefore roses were placed in Antiquity on tombs of the dead<sup>87</sup>. In the old Roman worship of the dead, so-called *Rosaria*, or commemorative celebrations were held.<sup>88</sup> As of medieval times, burial grounds were also called *rosa gardens*.<sup>89</sup>

In many Latin hymns, the Blessed Virgin Mary is called: *rosa, rosa speciosa, rosa coeli, rosa mystica*.<sup>90</sup> In paradise, as legend has it, roses had no thorns, which grew only after the postlapsarian times. Basil the Great wrote in *Hexaemeron* that a rose prior to the fall of man had no thorns, which were added to its beauty to remind man that bliss is invariably mixed with sadness and that the earth, which grows thorns and brambles, has been cursed.<sup>91</sup> The

<sup>84</sup> According to Vulgate, Sir 39, 17.

<sup>85</sup> Hans BIEDERMANN, *Knaurs Lexikon*, 365.

<sup>86</sup> Manfred LURKER, *Symbol, Mythos und Legende in der deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, Bd. CCCXIV (Baden-Baden–Strasbourg: Verlag Heitz, 1958), 25.

<sup>87</sup> This is implied by the Latin poet Propertius Sextus (b. 50 BC), in his *Elegiae: Molliter et tenera poneret ossa rosa*—I she laid by bones on a cushion of delicate rose petals. PROPERTIUS, *Elegiae*, 1, 17, after: <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/propertius1.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Lidia WINNICZUK, *Ludzie, zwyczaje, obyczaje starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu* [People, customs and morals of ancient Greece and Rome] (Warszawa: PWN, 1983), 243.

<sup>89</sup> Rudolf GROSS, *Dlaczego czerwień jest barwą miłości* [Why is red the colour of love], transl. Anna Porębska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Fimowe, 1990), 39–40.

<sup>90</sup> Elisabeth WOLFFHARDT, “Beiträge zur Pflanzensymbolik,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft* 8, no 3/4 (1954): 180.

<sup>91</sup> *Hinc beatus Basilius in libro quem facit de operibus sex dierum, qui Grece «Exameron» appellatur, dicit quod ante peccatum «erat rosa sine spina, postea autem pulcritudini huius floris*

same idea can be observed in St. Ambrose in *Hexaameron*, where the author says: “Once among earthly flowers without thorns, a rose grew, the most beautiful flower shone with spring charm, without causing any annoyance. Later, however, the beautiful flower was surrounded by thorns—as if it were a mirror of human life, in which the pleasure of its activities is pricked by the thorns of concern, which are adjacent to them.”<sup>92</sup> Because of this, Mary as free from the original sin was called *rosa spina carens*. In medieval poetry Mary was also referred to as *peccatorum medicina*—the Medicine of the sick, especially in verses of a greeting: *Ave rosa sine spina, peccatorum medicina*—Hail, rose without thorns, Medicine of the sick.<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, a hymn by Pope Innocent III includes an image of Mary as the Medicine of the sick:

Ipse tuo me precatu,  
A peccatis cunctis tergat,  
Ne infernus me demergat.  
Eia rosa sine spina,  
Peccatorum medicina.  
Pro me Deum interpella,  
Ut me salvet a procella  
Hujus mundi tam immundi.<sup>94</sup>

Intercede for me with the Creator,  
So that He may cleanse me of my sins  
And Hell may not destroy me.  
Haste, rose without a thorn,  
Medicine of the sick.  
Intercede for me with God,  
So that He may free me from the turmoil  
Of this grossly impure world.<sup>95</sup>

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*spina coniugata est, ut iocundo voluptatis iuxta habeamus adiacentem tristitiam, rememorantes illius peccati propter quod terra nobis spinas ac tribulos oriri facere condemnata est».* SALIMBENE DE ADAM, *Cronica*, pag. 152, linea 22, (fol. ms. 251, col. d).

<sup>92</sup> AMBROŻY, *Hexaameron*, 100.

<sup>93</sup> See Małgorzata ŻAK, *Kompozycje przyrody w ikonografii maryjnej na wybranych przykładach malarstwa niderlandzkiego i niemieckiego XV do połowy XVI wieku. Kultura zdrowia duchowego i fizycznego w Europie schyłku średniowiecza i początku renesansu*, Lublin 2013, 149; <http://www.documenta-catholica.eu/1198-1216-%20SS%20Innocentius%20III%20-%20Hymnus%20-%20MLT.pdf>.

<sup>94</sup> *Innocentii III papae hymnus De Christo et beatissima Virgine Maria dignissima Matre ejus: Ad quem certas et magnas contulit remissiones et indulgentias*. PL 217, 919.

<sup>95</sup> <http://niedziela.pl/wydruk/122731?ra=nd> (access: 22.12.2016).

All authors drew attention to the thorny character of the rose. Even Aristotle wondered why roses that are more spiky emit a more intense fragrance: “Why do those roses in which the centres are rough smell sweeter than those in which they are smooth? Is it because those roses smell sweetest which partake most of the natural characteristics of the rose? Now the rose is naturally thorny, and so it smells sweeter when its characteristics are more natural.”<sup>96</sup>

Traces of the conviction that Mary is a rose with no thorns can be found also in the Baroque period. The Loreto Chapel of the abbey Cistercian church in Krzeszów Kamiennogórski there is a statue of Our Lady of Loreto carved by Georg Schrötter (d. 1717), with a legend at the feet: *Ave rosa sine spina, peccatorum medicina*.

Dante in his *Divine Comedy* turns to Beatrice as follows:

Why doth my face thus  
Enamour thee, as that thou dost not turn  
Unto the beautiful garden, blossoming  
Beneath the rays of Christ? Here is the Rose,  
Wherein the Word Divine was made incarnate.<sup>97</sup>

The purple hue of the rose was demonstrated by Christ in His blood shed during His Passion.<sup>98</sup> Spring flowers of the rose ere fittingly linked to the blood of the martyrs, especially in the early Church,<sup>99</sup> since roses are born during a fight.<sup>100</sup> The Benedictine theologian from the monastery in Corba, Paschasius Radbertus, wrote that the divinity in Christ is like a scent in a rose; it can be sensed before one sees Him and it exudes the fragrances of virtues before He is found.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>96</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Mechanics*, Book XII, in: *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. II, The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press), 1408–1409.

<sup>97</sup> ALIGHIERI DANTE, *The Divine Comedy*, transl. Henry F. Cary (New York: P.F. Collier & Son Company, 1909–1914), XXIII, 70–74.

<sup>98</sup> *Chrystus in sanguine passionis rosae ruborem ostendit*. RABANUS MAURUS, *De laudibus Sanctae Crucis*, PL 107, 213.

<sup>99</sup> *Quid per flores rosarum in diebus veris, nisi martyrum sanguis in virore nascentis Ecclesiae exprimitur*. RABANUS MAURUS, *Commentaria in Ecclesiasticum*, PL 109, 1115.

<sup>100</sup> *Signat geminum martyrii genus, quo in passionibus Ecclesia adornatur, ut sit candidus actione, rubicundus sanguine. Ipse enim membrorum flosculis vernans, in pace lilia gignit, bello rosas*. WALAFRIDUS STRABO, *Evangelium secundum Lucam*, PL 114, 344.

<sup>101</sup> *Cujus in eo divinitas sicut in rosa odor, antequam videretur, sentiebatur, et antequam inveniretur, fragrabat in odoribus virtutum suarum*. PASCHASIUS RADBERTUS, *Expositio in Matthaeum*, PL 120, 693.

The stem of the rose in the lower part is thorny, but in the upper part it blooms. Similarly, Christ—the bottom is surrounded by thorns of tribulation, while the top is crowned with honour and glory. At the bottom it is pricked by suffering, but at the top decorated with a rose—a flower of royal dignity.<sup>102</sup>

The text from the Book of Sirach: “I extolled like a palm in Kades and like a rose bush in Jericho” (Sir 24, 18), primarily linked to Divine Wisdom, was associated by exegetes also with the person of the Mother of God. If a rose expresses passion through its red colour, then by planting it, it also expresses compassion both in the body and in the heart. Our Lady can therefore be regarded as a rose bush planted in Jericho as the city of the moon, which means that she radiates in a special way with the virtue of co-suffering among the shortcomings of present life and during Jesus’ death on the cross.<sup>103</sup> As the rose is the most beautiful among the flowers, so Mary is the most beautiful among women.<sup>104</sup> Jericho, associated with the moon, was symbolic of the Church, where the rose stood for martyrs, whose suffering is surpassed by that of Mary, like a rose surpasses other flowers by its colour purple.<sup>105</sup> However, as Albert the Great indicated, she did not colour itself with Her own blood, but with the blood of Her Son Jesus.<sup>106</sup> The Blessed

<sup>102</sup> *Plantatio rosae, et ipsa inferius est spinosa, superius autem florida, sic et Christus est inferius tribulationum spinis circumdatus, atque superius gloria et honore coronatus. [...] Et in hoc rosae est assimilatus, videlicet humilis, et punctionibus passionum obsitus, sed tandem superius flore purpureo dignitatis regiae decoratus.* ANSELMUS CANTUARIENSIS, *Homiliae et exhortationes*, PL 158, 590.

<sup>103</sup> *Rosa quae rubet, apte designat passionem. Et si rosa in eo quod rubet exprimit passionem, ergo in eo quod plantatur congrue designat compassionem. Compassio in corde, passio in corpore. Compassio latet, passio patet. Rosa itaque plantatur, quando compassio cordi infigitur; florem rubentem producit quando in effectum passionis procedit. Jericho luna interpretatur, et pro defectu carnis aut defectu saeculi praesentis ponitur. Patet itaque quod Dei Genitrix quasi plantatio rosae in Jericho exstitit, quia in defectu saeculi praesentis virtute compassionis excellenter et singulariter enituit.* AUCTOR INCERTUS, *Sermones*, PL 177, 1027–1028; *Domina nostra [...] quasi plantatio rosae in Jericho, secundum mortificationem carnis et compassionem Filii in cruce pendentis.* PETRUS CELLENSIS, *Sermones*, PL 201, 851.

<sup>104</sup> *Sic enim rosa pulcherrima florum, sic Maria pulcherrima mulierum.* HELINANDUS FRIGIDI MONTIS, *Sermones*, PL 212, 644.

<sup>105</sup> *Jericho dicitur luna, id est Ecclesia, in qua rosa significat martyres, quos omnes sancta θεοτόκος eminentia suae passionis ita transcendit, ut rosa alios flores rubedine praecellit.* HONORIUS AUGUSTODUNENSIS, *Sigillum Mariae*, PL 172, 498.

<sup>106</sup> *Ipsa vero non suo sanguine, sed sanguine Filii rubricata*—quoted after: Mirella L. ANCONA, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance* (New York: Published by the College Art Association of America in conjunction with the Art bulletin, 1957), 339.

Virgin Mary was, therefore, a martyr<sup>107</sup> and a virgin unlike any other virgins, and a rose of heavenly delight.<sup>108</sup> This is how a fifteenth-century poet depicted it:

Sicut rosa floribus  
Praeest flos colore,  
Cunctis sic virginibus  
Maria decore.

...

Rosae ruben folium  
Indicat, quod gladium  
Passa Simeonis.<sup>109</sup>

Like the rose surpasses  
All flowers with its hue,  
Mary's beauty surpasses  
That of all other maidens.'

...

A purple rose leaf  
Shows that it has suffered  
The sword of Simeon.

An excerpt from the Book of Sirach 24, 18: *Quasi palma exaltata sum in Cades et quasi plantatio rosae in Hiericho* was commented by Alan of Lille as follows: "A rose planted in Jericho grows more beautifully, smells better, dons more exquisite red and envelops itself longer with its beauty. If Jericho stands for Defectus, then the Blessed Virgin, like a rose planted in the poverty of human nature, becomes for the other women more magnificent by virtue, a more beautiful red by her patience among earthly tribulations, and exuding a scent of good deeds."<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> *Beata autem Dei Genitrix virgo et martyr fuit.* HONORIUS AUGUSTODUNENSIS, *Sigillum Mariae*, PL 172, 517.

<sup>108</sup> *Maria, virginum virgo singularis, rosa coelicae amoenitatis.* ANSELMUS CANTUARIENSIS, *Meditationes et orationes*, PL 158, 778.

<sup>109</sup> *Analecta*, vol. 42, p. 94, [http://www.forgottenbooks.com/readbook\\_text/Christianus\\_Campo\\_liliensis\\_1500008747/367](http://www.forgottenbooks.com/readbook_text/Christianus_Campo_liliensis_1500008747/367) (access: 21.12.2016).

<sup>110</sup> *Haec est quasi plantatio rosae in Jericho. Rosa in Jericho plantata, oritur pulchrior, redolet fragrantior, majori rubore vestitur, diutius sua pulchritudine coloratur. Cum ergo Jericho interpretatur defectus, beata Virgo quasi quaedam rosa in defectus humanae naturae plantata, fuit caeteris mulieribus virtute formosior, rubore terrenarum tribulationum per patientiam venustior, odore bonorum operum redolentior.* ALANUS DE INSULIS, *De sancta Maria*, PL 210, 248.

Although the most unambiguous symbol of the martyrdom of Christians was the red of roses,<sup>111</sup> the torment of the martyrs was also indicated by the oil pressed from the rose. Whoever reads the description of martyrs' suffering is like one anointing his head with oil.<sup>112</sup> Ildephonsus, Archbishop of Toledo (d. 667), enumerating the values of the rose, writes that she is above all the flowers and, moreover, that she is delightful because of her goodness, her beautiful and graceful appearance, her wonderful fragrance, and her ability to cure various ailments, all of which can be applied to the Virgin Mary. Mary, however, is not a simple rose that withers and perishes after flowering, but a paradise rose held in hand by the King of Heaven.<sup>113</sup>

Four elements were distinguished in the rose: temperament, shape, white or red colour and fragrance. Therefore, by nature, the rose could symbolize the elimination of defects, by the shape of love, by colour, and by purity and suffering or co-suffering. All these qualities can be attributed to the Mother of God. Moreover, since the Jewish people can be compared to thorns, Mary can be compared to a rose flower. And just as the thorns produced the rose flower, so did the Jewish people produce Mary.<sup>114</sup>

In turn, Mary the Rosebush, gave birth to the Rose and Flower of the World, Christ.<sup>115</sup> Authors often compared and contrasted Eve and Mary, the second Eve: Eve was a thorn, Mary flourished with a rose. Eve was a thorn and inflicted suffering, Mary was a rose that alleviated pain, Eve was a thorn

<sup>111</sup> *Rubor quippe rosarum sanguinem designat martyrum.* MARTINUS LEGIONENSIS, *Sermones*, PL 208, 612.

<sup>112</sup> *Rosaceum vero oleum est cruor martyrum. Dum enim passiones sanctorum legis, oleo rosaceo caput unguis.* HUGO DE FLIETO, *De medicina animae*, PL 176, 1199.

<sup>113</sup> *Rosa enim flos florum per excellentiam est vocata; aspectu est valde placens et grata, in redolentia mire est oblectabilis, proficua et utilis in medicina, quae omnia optime tibi conveniunt, Virgo grata. Sed tu, Domina, non es rosa mundi, quae statim post ortum arescit et deficit; sed tu es rosa paradisi, quae gestaris in manu Regis coeli.* HILDEFONSUS TOLETANUS, *De corona Virginis*, PL 96, 302.

<sup>114</sup> *Sed quia diximus quomodo gens Judaica spinae comparetur, dicamus quomodo beata Maria per rosam, id est ipsum florem significetur. In rosa quatuor discerni posse videntur, scilicet natura, forma, color et odor. Natura est rosa frigida, forma lata, colore alba aut rubra, odore grata. Per naturam ergo significat vitiorum extinctionem, per formam charitatem, per colorem puritatem et passionem, vel certe compassionem. Per odorem bonam opinionem. Quae cuncta, excepta corporali passione, beatæ Mariae, cujus hodie nativitatem celebramus, rectissime congruunt. Nam, ut caetera, quae satis nota sunt, taceam, virtutem compassionis beata Maria habuit, quia ejus animam, sicut scriptum est, doloris gladius pertransivit (Luc. II). Igitur, sicut supra dictum est, Judaea est spina, Maria rosa. Et sicut spina rosam, sic Judaea Mariam genuit, dum illa crudelis hanc misericordiam edidit.* AUCTOR INCERTUS, *Sermones*, PL 177, 1104.

<sup>115</sup> [Maria] *Plantatio rosae fuit, quia rosam genuit et florem mundi Christum.* HELINANDUS FRIGIDI MONTIS, *Sermones*, PL 212, 644.

that instilled death in all, while Mary was a rose that restored to all the legacy that offered salvation. Mary was a white rose due to Her virginity, and a red one due to Her love; white through Her body, purple through Her mind, white through her imitation of virtue, purple through the avoidance of iniquity, white due to the cleansing of emotions, red due to the mortification of the body, white due to the love of God, purple due to the commiseration with the neighbour.<sup>116</sup>

The red of the rose moreover meant humility,<sup>117</sup> patience,<sup>118</sup> and due to the fiery colour a rose was a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who was revealed in fire.<sup>119</sup> The following analogy was used: like the dark thorns are embedded in a rose stalk, evil people live among the virtuous, Satan among the Angels, Judas among the Apostles.<sup>120</sup> Two properties of the rose, scent and thorns, were moreover used to demonstrate the dispositions of the two sons of Adam—Abel and Cain. As the rose spreads a scent, so Abel was chosen, and Cain as a thorn, rejected.<sup>121</sup> The rose, in contrast, can be a symbol of marital fidelity or unfaithfulness. In the hand of an angel, it directed one towards paradise. According to medieval tradition, Our Lady gives a rose to small children who are about to die as a symbol of eternity, as a symbol of heaven, where the scent is similar to that of roses.

Raban Maurus, referring to the Book of Wisdom: “crown ourselves with rosebuds before they wither; no meadow excluded from our orgy; let us leave the signs of our revelry everywhere, since this is our portion, this our lot!” (Wis 2, 8) observed that a rose is moreover a symbol of the bliss of

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<sup>116</sup> *Eva ergo spina fuit, Maria rosa exstitit: Eva spina, vulnerando; Maria rosa, omnium affectus mulcendo. Eva spina, infigens omnibus mortem: Maria rosa, reddens salutiferam omnibus sortem. [...] Maria autem rosa fuit candida per virginitatem, rubicunda per charitatem: candida, carne; rubicunda, mente: candida, virtutem sectando; rubicunda, vitia calcando: candida, affectum purificando; rubicunda, actum carnalem mortificando: candida, Deum diligendo; rubicunda, proximo compatiendo.* AUCTOR INCERTUS, PL 184, 1020. The subject of Mary as a second Eve is discussed in a monograph by Ernst Guldán (*Eva und Maria eine Antithese als Bildmotiv* (Graz–Köln: Verlag Hermann Bohlaus, 1966).

<sup>117</sup> *Rubor rosae verecundiam significat.* HILDEBERTUS CENOMANENSIS, *Sermones de tempore*, PL 171, 484.

<sup>118</sup> *Patientia est in rosa.* HUGO DE S. VICTORE, *Miscellanea*, PL 177, 572.

<sup>119</sup> *Flos campi est rosa, quae est ignei coloris ad designandum Spiritum sanctum, qui in igne apparuit.* THOMAS CISTERCIENSIS, JOANNES ALGRINUS, *Commentaria in Cantica canticorum*, PL 206, 183.

<sup>120</sup> *Spina inter rosas, est malus inter bonos, Satan inter angelos, Judas inter apostolos.* HELINANDUS FRIGIDI MONTIS, *Sermones*, PL 212, 646.

<sup>121</sup> *Rosa quae redolet crescit cum spina quae pungit. Duos quippe filios habuit primus homo; sed unus horum electus est, alter reprobus fuit.* GREGORIUS I, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, PL 76, 1286.

earthly life,<sup>122</sup> and according to the Cistercian Helinand from the Abbey of Frigidus Mons—Cold Mount, it may have stood for any solace, both carnal and spiritual.<sup>123</sup>

Pope Innocent III in his homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, or the *Laetare* Sunday, explains why he was blessing and showing to the people a golden rose in the Holy Rood Basilica. The flower contains three elements: gold, musk and balm. Through the balm, musk gets connected to gold. In this way he symbolically accounts for the truth that Christ has a tripartite substance: divinity, body and soul. Through the soul, the body connects with the deity, for the nature of the deity is so subtle that it has to use a rational spirit to unite with the body taken from the earth's ashes. The Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the vicar of the Saviour and the successor of St. Peter, the vicar of Christ.<sup>124</sup>

In the decoration of margins of medieval manuscripts, rose flowers were often used, while in paintings made in their studios artists often presented rose gardens, so-called rosaria, and the Blessed Virgin Mary sitting in them on a turf bench can be interpreted as being present in the *hortus conclusus*.<sup>125</sup>

#### PUTEUS AQUARUM VIVENTIUM (Sg 4, 15)<sup>126</sup>

This is another passage from the Song of Songs which refers to the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is not the only text linked to the tradition of presence and function of the well in the waterless desert areas traversed by the Chosen People. On their way through the desert, the Israelites were accompanied by wells, whose waters were a special gift from Yahweh. One notable place in this respect was the biblical Elim, where the Israelites set up

<sup>122</sup> *Per rosas delectationes vitae praesentis, ut in libro Sapientiae: «Coronemus nos rosis, antequam marcescant».* RABANUS MAURUS, *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam*, PL 112, 1040.

<sup>123</sup> *Nomine rosae consolatio qualiscunque, sive carnalis, sive spiritualis.* HELINANDUS FRIGIDI MONTIS, *Sermones*, PL 212, 646.

<sup>124</sup> *Triplex est autem in hoc flore materia, videlicet, aurum, muscus, balsamum. Sed mediante balsamo muscus conjungitur auro. Quia triplex est in Christo substantia: deitas, corpus, et anima. Sed mediante anima corpus conjungitur deitati: quia tantae subtilitatis est divina natura, ut corpori de limo terrae formato non congrueret uniri, nisi rationali spiritu mediante. Bajulus hujus floris, vicarius est Salvatoris, Romanus videlicet pontifex, successor utique Petri, vicarius Jesu Christi.* INNOCENTIUS III, *Sermones de tempore*, PL 217, 395.

<sup>125</sup> Małgorzata ŻAK, *Kompozycje przyrody*, 216–217.

<sup>126</sup> After the Vulgate, Sg 4, 15.



a camp over twelve springs.<sup>127</sup> Psalm 22, 2–3 mentions Yahweh as a Shepherd, who led the Chosen People to the waters of repose.<sup>128</sup> Midrashes for the aforementioned Psalm 22 and numerous haggadas developed the idea of an oasis, a metaphor of paradise. A well in an oasis was surrounded by various vegetation, mainly aromatic herbs.<sup>129</sup>

A full picture of the wealth of a garden is provided in a passage from the Song of Songs: “Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates with the fruits of the orchard. Cypress with spikenard. Spikenard and saffron, sweet cane and cinnamon, with all the trees of Lebanon, myrrh and aloes with all the chief perfumes. The fountain of gardens: the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Lebanon” (Sg 4, 13–15).<sup>130</sup>

The fountain of gardens: the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Lebanon—these waters were redirected by the Church from Lebanon and washes sins in them. With this power of the pure source of the Holy Spirit, the Bride came from Lebanon, and with the power of faith she travels the world and reaches the Kingdom. For some, she is the source, and for others, she is the well.<sup>131</sup>

St. Ambrose wrote elsewhere in his Commentary on the Song of Songs that if you penetrate the greatness of the mystery, you will see the well as wisdom, and if you wish to have an abundant love that is greater and more abundant than faith and hope, then it will become the source for you, because then love will gush forth and you can immediately have it and irrigate a garden rich in spiritual fruits.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>127</sup> See Ex 15, 27.

<sup>128</sup> “In grassy meadows he lets me lie. By tranquil streams he leads me to restore my spirit” (Ps 22, 2–3).

<sup>129</sup> Germain BIENAIME, “Un retour du paradis dans le désert de l’Exode selon une tradition juive,” in *La création dans l’Orient ancien. Congrès de l’ACFEB*, Lille 1985, 442.

<sup>130</sup> *Emissiones tuae paradisus malorum punicorum cum pomorum fructibus cypri cum nardo nardus et crocus fistula et cinnamomum cum universis lignis Libani murra et aloes cum omnibus primis unguentis fons hortorum puteus aquarum viventium quae fluunt impetu de Libano* (Sg 4, 13–15).

<sup>131</sup> *Fons hortorum, puteus aquarum viventium, et impetus descendens a Libano. Hos impetus Ecclesia deduxit a Libano, hoc impetu diluuntur peccata, hoc impetu puri fontis Spiritus sancti adfuit a Libano Sponsa, et a principio fidei transivit saeculum, et pertransivit ad regnum. Aliis fons est, aliis puteus pro captu nostro gratia spiritalis.* AMBROSIUS MEDIOLANENSIS, *Commentarius in cantica canticorum*, PL 15, 1915.

<sup>132</sup> *Etenim si mysteriorum altitudinem persequaris, puteus tibi videtur tamquam in profundo sita mystica esse sapientia: si vero haurire velis affluentiam charitatis, quae major et uberius est, quam fides et spes, tunc tibi fons est. Exuberat enim charitas, ut et haurire eam cominus, et rigare ejus affluentia hortum tuum possis, spiritalibus fructibus redundantem.* AMBROSIUS MEDIOLANENSIS, *Commentarius in cantica canticorum*, PL 15, 1915.

The source for gardens is the original Church, which irrigates with the truth of knowledge gardens, that is, the Churches scattered all over the world; it is also the well of living waters, because the knowledge of truth, which is the Church, is for some as a visible source, for others as a well, when it hides and which it is not easy to draw water. There is a difference between a spring and a well, because the spring is accessible in depth and outwards, while the well is only hidden in depth. The Church is therefore both a source and a well.<sup>133</sup>

A well is a mystery of contemplation, as the Book of Genesis has it, since the Church has in abundance of good works and mysteries of life-giving contemplation. The well is Holy Scripture, as the Book of Genesis has it: “out in the open, he saw a well with three flocks of sheep lying beside it” (Gn 29, 2).<sup>134</sup>

The source of the waters is the depth of the meaning of God's law, which lies in the letter of the law like water in the depths of a well. Its waters are alive because they are made alive by those who understand them spiritually and they flow down abundantly from Lebanon, which is a Jewish nation. Lebanon means purification, because the Jewish people are purified by God's worship. For this reason, the streams of law and the teaching of the prophets flow out of this Lebanon current and thanks to the spiritual efforts of the apostles are preserved in the Church of the Gentiles.<sup>135</sup>

The well of living waters is Christ himself, who is the Wisdom of Holy Scripture<sup>136</sup>. The source of the waters and the well of living waters flowing

<sup>133</sup> *Fons hortorum ipsa est primitiva Ecclesia, quae veritatis scientia hortos, id est Ecclesias per universum mundum disseminatas irrigat, ipsa est et puteus aquarum viventium, quia scientia veritatis, quae est Ecclesia, in quibusdam quasi fons est ubi patet, in quibusdam quasi puteus ubi latet, et ad liquidum ubi percipi non potest. Nam inter fontem et puteum hoc distat quod fons est in imo et in superficie terrae dicitur esse, puteus vero semper est in imo. Ecclesia ergo fons est et puteus.* HAYMO HALBERSTATENSIS, *Commentarium in cantica canticorum*, PL 117, 324.

<sup>134</sup> *Puteum est secretum contemplationis, ut in Cantico: «Fons hortorum, puteus aquarum viventium» quod sancta Ecclesia fecunditatem habet bonorum operum, et secretum contemplationum vitalium. Puteus, sacra Scriptura, ut in Genesi: «Videt puteum in agro, tresque greges ovium accubentes».* RABANI MAURI, *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam*, PL 112, 1035.

<sup>135</sup> *Puteus autem aquarum est profunda lex divinatorum sensuum, qui latent in legis littera, ut in profundo puteo aqua. Quae aquae sunt viventes, quia eos vivere faciunt, qui eas spiritualiter intelligunt. Hae aquae fluunt cum impetu de Libano, quia veniunt cum abundantia de Judaico populo. Libanus enim dicitur dealbatio, et intelligitur Judaicus populus, divino cultu dealbatus. De hoc Libano fluentia legis et prophetarum fluxerunt, et per apostolos cum impetu in Ecclesia gentium manaverunt, qui Scripturas abunde spiritualiter exposuerunt.* HONORIUS AUGUSTODUNENSIS, *Incipit Epistola Honorii Doctoris Eximii Super cantica canticorum*, PL 172, 427.

<sup>136</sup> *Et puteus aquarum viventium, id est Christus, qui est sapientia sanctarum Scripturarum.* HONORIUS AUGUSTODUNENSIS, *Sigillum Beatae Mariae ubi exponuntur Cantica canticorum*, PL 172, 508.

out of Lebanon is a new paradise, new vegetation, planted by the same God who planted the old paradise.<sup>137</sup>

Although Christian piety is supported by the mediation of all the saints, the fullness of grace of the human race in a special way derives from the intercession of Mary and springs like a well of living waters from heavenly Lebanon.<sup>138</sup>

The illustration with an image of a well, accompanying the altar, is a form of summary of the elements that make up the traditional image of a well—a coral bowl or a magic bowl replacing a well’s timbers, into which a container for drawing water is immersed, hung on a crane by means of a rope dragged through a pulley.

#### TURRIS DAVIDICA—TURRIS EBURNEA

For a long time, ivory was considered an extremely valuable material in artistic craftsmanship. In Psalm 44, 9 ivory is mentioned as a symbol of luxury and excess: “Myrrh and stacte and cassia perfume thy garments, from the ivory houses”. Once every three years ships from Tarsus brought ivory to the court of Solomon—*dentes elephantorum* (1 Kgs 10, 22). It was used e.g. to build the throne of Solomon: “Then the king made a great throne covered with ivory and overlaid with fine gold” (1 Kgs 10, 18).

In ancient literature, the tower was built either of ivory or pewter. The Roman lyrical poet Horace has a *turris aenea* in the original:

Inclusam Danaen turris aenea  
robustaeque fores et vigilum canum  
tristes excubiae munierant satis  
nocturnis ab adulteris.

For prisoned Danae a brazen tower.  
And doors of oak, and surly watch of wakeful dogs,  
Had been sufficient garrison against  
Nocturnal paramours.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>137</sup> *Fons hortorum, puteus aquarum viventium, quae fluunt impetu de Libano.* » *Ecce novus paradus, novae plantationes, quas plantavit unus idemque antiqui paradisi plantator Dominus Deus.* RUPERTUS TUITIENSIS, *In Cantica canticorum De incarnatione domini commentariorum*, PL 168, 895.

<sup>138</sup> *Licet enim Christiana pietas omnium sanctorum patrociniis juvetur, specialiter tamen plenitudo gratiae humano generi ex tua intercessione, quasi puteus aquarum viventium de Libano coelesti copiosius emicat.* BERNARDUS CLARAEVALLENSIS, *Tractatus ad laudem Gloriosae V. Matris*, PL 182, 1147.

<sup>139</sup> QUINTUS HORACIUS FLACCUS, *The Odes of Horace*, transl. Edward R. Garnsey (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1907), 171.

In turn, Vergil in *The Aeneid* mentions only an ivory tower:

Two gates the silent house of Sleep adorn;  
Of polish'd ivory this, that of transparent horn:  
True visions thro' transparent horn arise;  
Thro' polish'd ivory pass deluding lies.<sup>140</sup>

Mary was linked to two towers: *Turris Davidica* and *Turris eburnea*. The Tower of David was defensive, decorated with shields, as mentioned in the Song of Songs (Sg 4, 4): “Your neck is like a tower of David, built with courses of stone; on it hand a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.” Shields and courses of stone are references to the virtues of Mary—they enhance the sense of security of those seeking her succour. Moreover, a tower erected upon a rock was a symbol of power and perseverance (Ps 60, 4; Prv 18, 10).

Ivory was used by the author of the Song of Songs to demonstrate the unique beauty of the body of the Bride and the Beloved. This is how he saw it: “Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon” (Sg 7, 4); “My breasts are like towers” (Sg 8, 10); the neck of the Bride was like an ivory tower (Sg 5, 14; 7, 4). The witness of ivory implied the purity<sup>141</sup> and the virginity of St. Mary,<sup>142</sup> and besides the lives of patriarchs, impeccability of body and fortitude.<sup>143</sup> Since the exegesis of the book used, e.g. a typological method, its metaphor was primarily linked with Christ and the Church<sup>144</sup> and only then with the person of the Mother of God.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>140</sup> PUBLIUS VERGILIUS MARO, *The Aeneid*, transl. John Dryden (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1756), online access <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.6.vi.html> (VI, 393–396).

<sup>141</sup> *Ebur decorem castitatis, qua a corruptione peccati carnis immunis in carne permansit, indicat.* BEDA, *Allegorica expositio in Cantica canticorum*, PL 91, 1168; *Significat autem ebur pudicitiae continentiam.* RABANUS MAURUS, *De universo*, PL 111, 464.

<sup>142</sup> *Per ebur vero quod frigidae naturae est, sacrosancta tua virginitas.* PHILIPPUS DE HARVENG, *Moralitates in Cantica canticorum*, PL 203, 520.

<sup>143</sup> *Ebur est vita sanctorum Patrum, ut in Jeremia: «Rubicundiores ebore antiquo» (Thren. IV, 7), sanctiores quod erant antiqui patres. Ebur, incorruptio carnis Christi, ut in Cantico: «Venter ejus eburneus» (Cant. V, 14), id est, corpus ejus a corruptione peccati alienum. [...] Ebur, fortitudo, ut in libris Regum: «Fecit Salomon thronum» (I Reg. X, 18), quod noster pacificus de fortitudine sanctorum suam Ecclesiam construxit.* RABANUS MAURUS, *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam*, PL 112, 913–914.

<sup>144</sup> *Haec turris David, qui interpretatur manu fortis, et significat Christum qui nos confortat, ut in Christo omnia possimus, et in quo omnis aedificatio constructa crescit et proficit.* RICHARDUS S. VICTORIS, *Explicatio in Cantica canticorum*, PL 196, 467. *Turris David sancta Ecclesia est, sive perfectio vel doctrina sanctorum, quae non a se, sed a Christo est. Collum ipsi sunt praedicatores, quorum et constantia eadem civitas firma est, et undique inexpugnabilis.* ANGELOMUS LUXOVENSIS,

The neck is like an ivory tower, because the teachers of the Church are her pride through the power and beauty of their lives, which appear like ivory, and like a tower protect the City of God from the fury of its enemies. The neck is Christ, the head of the divinity, the body of the Church. The word is given through the throat, the food is sent to the body, moistened with saliva, because through Christ, the Word of the Father, which He is, it is revealed to the world.<sup>146</sup>

The Tower of David is the Holy Church, the perfection and teaching of the saints, whose power derives not of herself, but from Christ. The neck are Her teachers, whose perseverance is unquestionable and therefore invincible.<sup>147</sup> Like the Virgin, the Church, similarly to the Tower of David, spies the enemy from afar and downplays him and does not escape, while the enemy takes fright and runs away.<sup>148</sup>

In the Litany of Loreto, composed as early as the 12th century, we find the terms: *Turris Davidica*—the Tower of David and *Turris eburnea*—Ivory Tower, taken from the Song of Songs (4, 4; 7, 4). There is a Latin legend on an illustration from the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (original of 1324–in-cunabula of 1500), under the tower: *Hec turris davidica baris*<sup>149</sup> *significat Mariam*—The tower of David is symbolic of Mary.

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*Enarrationes in Cantica canticorum*, PL 115, 607; *Bene igitur sicut turris David collum sanctae Ecclesiae dicitur*. GREGORIUS I, *Expositio super Cantica canticorum*, PL 79, 509.

<sup>145</sup> Ludwik STEFANIAK, *Interpretacja*, 37.

<sup>146</sup> *Hoc collum sicut turris eburnea, quia doctores Ecclesiae praestant ornatum et robur, et pulchritudinem suae vitae, qua cunctis candidos se velut ebur ostendunt, et civitatem Dei quasi turris ab impetu hostium defendunt. Collum Christus est, caput divinitas, corpus Ecclesia. Per collum verbum emittitur. Cibus ad corpus trajicitur, saliva glutitur. Quia per Christum Verbum patris quod ipse est, mundo manifestatur*. THOMAS CISTERCIENSIS, JOANNES ALGRINUS, *Cantica canticorum*, PL 206, 706.

<sup>147</sup> *Turris David sancta Ecclesia est, sive perfectio vel doctrina sanctorum, quae non a se, sed a Christo est. Collum ipsi sunt praedicatores, quorum et constantia eadem civitas firma est, et undique inexpugnabilis. Angelomi Luxoviensis Monachi Enarrationes in cantica canticorum*. PL 115, 607.

<sup>148</sup> *Sic et Virgo instar turris Davidicae, a longe hostem prospicit, imo despicit, et non curat, ad cuius intuitum horret ille et refugit, et in proposito confidentiae non perdurat; et quidquid minarum vel fraudium praesumpserit machinari, eliditur, et in se reliditur malitia praesumentis, tantum horrorem incutit, tam potenter repercutit hostem facies intuentis*. PHILIPPI AB HARVENG BONAE SPEI ABBATIS, *Commentaria in cantica canticorum*. Liber quartus, PL 203, 373.

<sup>149</sup> Herod the Great had a magnificent castle erected on the site of the Tower of Baris or Birah, *Turris domus* (see 1 Mc 13, 53; Neh 2, 8). See JÓZEF FLAWIUSZ, *Wojna żydowska*, transl. Józef Radożycki (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza “Rytm,” 1992), 330 (V, v, 8); JÓZEF FLAWIUSZ, *Dawne dzieje Izraela*, ed. Eugeniusz Dąbrowski (Poznań–Warszawa–Lublin: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1962), 745–746 (XV, XI, 5).

## DECORATION

The altar is decorated with corals densely imbedded in free places on its surface. The figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary, surrounded by symbolic signs, is framed by corals. In addition, corals arranged in rosettes of flowers and single flowers make up an ornament filled with white enamel. Among the floral, geometrically composed elements there were also four, winged angel's heads, one of which was additionally enclosed between the horns of the crescent. Wings are characteristic attributes of angels, symbol of their heavenly mission, speed, momentum and a sign that they have nothing earthly in them.

Since the Renaissance and in 18<sup>th</sup>-century religious art, these little angels were often reduced to winged heads. The head was supposed to indicate their intelligence, while the wings were supposed to indicate their ability to instantly move from place to place. Tertullian wrote in *Apologeticus* that both angels and demons are winged. Therefore, they are instantaneously present wherever they want since the entire world seems to be one for them. They are believed to move with divine speed as they know no matter.<sup>150</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Shrines, holy water fonts and other liturgical objects made of coral and held in Polish museum collections, were most often purchased by Polish tourists visiting south Italy during Mannerism and Baroque.<sup>151</sup>

Red coral was most gracious as a decorative material and its abundance was justified by its presence in the Mediterranean, particularly along the western shores of Italy and the coasts of Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily and the Aeolian Islands.<sup>152</sup> For this reason, Italian craftsmen, having access to red

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<sup>150</sup> *Omnis spiritus ales est, hoc angeli et daemones. Igitur momento ubique sunt: totus orbis illis locus unus est; quid ubique geratur, tam facile sciunt, quam enuntiant. Velocitas divinitas creditur, quia substantia ignoratur.* TERTULLIANUS, *Apologeticus adversus gentes pro christianis*, PL 1, 407–408.

<sup>151</sup> In the collection of the Museum of the Warsaw Archdiocese there is a coral holy water font with the figure of St. Barbara, and in the Diocesan Museum in Płock there is a coral holy water font with the scene of the Resurrection and Passion decoration. In the monastery collections of the Benedictine monks in Staniątka there is an altar with a coral decoration.

<sup>152</sup> Isidore of Seville, when describing Italy, wrote: *Gignit gemmas syrtitem, lyncurium, et corallium.* On another occasion, when defining Sicily, he observed: *Parturit et mare ejus corallium.* PL 82, 507, 518.

coral, have long been famous for their ornaments in this very material. Products from the workshops of Trapani, Naples, Genoa and other cities in the vicinity, manufacturing multiple exquisite coral decorations, were especially popular. The shrine from the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Krakow is most likely a product of those studios.

Marian themes, like Annunciation, Assumption and the Virgin of the Apocalypse, was a frequent iconographic motif of coral items. The object from Krakow is an apotheosis of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the strength of a passage from the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle: “Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, robed with the sun, standing on the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rv 12, 1). The figure of Mary in an octagonal frame is depicted with cosmic attributes: twelve stars around her head, dressed in a sunny radiant gloria and a sickle of the moon under her feet. Around her there are eight symbolic biblical signs, combined in an exegetical tradition with her vocation to be the Mother of the Messiah.

The term *Cedrus exaltata*, a cedar, is seen in the Bible as a symbol of majesty, highness, elevation, the beauty of paradise, and security, while *Fons signatus* is a sealed wellspring, enclosed and accessible only to the elect, for the Mother of the Son of God chosen by God. *Hortus conclusus* is a symbol of inviolable virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, while *Oliva speciosa* is indicative of Mary’s mercy, Her astonishing fertility, inner tranquillity and a gift of assuaging suffering. *Rosa plantata* is a metaphor of wisdom, love and in Mary—of a medicine for sinners. *Puteus aquarum viventium*, a well of living waters, points to the intercession and intermediary role of Mary with respect to people redeemed by Jesus, Her Son. *Turris eburnea*—an Ivory Tower, is yet another attribute of the beauty of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Her immaculate body and fortitude.

Biblical metaphors referring to Mary are encapsulated in a short text by St. Ambrose of Milan *The Consecration of a Virgin and the Perpetual Virginity of Mary*.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> AMBROŻY, “Na oblóczyny dziewicy—wykład o wiecznym dziewictwie Najświętszej Maryi” [*The Consecration of a Virgin and the Perpetual Virginity of Mary*], in *Ojcowie Kościoła łacińscy. Teksty o Matce Bożej*, vol. II, transl. Wojciech Kania (Niepokalanów: Wydawnictwo Ojców Franciszkanów, 1981), 56–57, 60.

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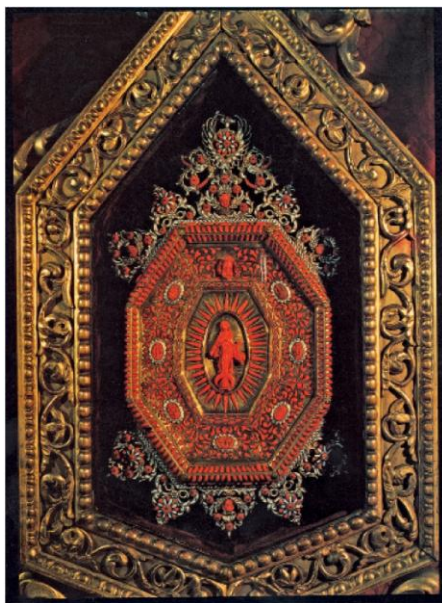
THE CORAL ALTAR WITH THE APOCALYPTIC WOMAN  
IN THE TREASURY OF ST MARY'S BASILICA IN KRAKOW  
THEOLOGICAL CONTENTS

Summary

In Polish museum collections there are a few objects made of coral or decorated with it. They are, among others, altars, holy water fonts, crucifixes and other liturgical items. Most often they were bought during Poles' travels to Italy in the Mannerism and Baroque epochs. St Mary's Basilica's treasury boasts of a portable coral altar dated to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a gift from Maria Josepha, the wife of King Augustus III. It has a golden frame and is embellished with enamel and coral. Its centre features the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary standing on a crescent, in a radiant coral glory, surrounded by Marian symbols. It is an apotheosis of the Blessed Virgin Mary based on a fragment of the Apocalypse of St John. The figure of Mary is presented with her cosmic attributes: twelve stars around her head; she is clothed with a radiant glory; and she has a crescent under her feet. Around her seven symbolic biblical signs are presented, ones connected in the exegetic tradition with her being the mother of the Messiah. The term *Cedrus exaltata*—is perceived as the symbol of majesty, sublimity, loftiness, paradisaical beauty, safety. *Fons signatus* is a sealed spring, an enclosed one, accessible only to the Mother of God's Son, chosen by God. *Hortus conclusus* is the symbol of St Mary's virginity. *Oliva speciosa* points to St Mary's charity, her extraordinary fertility, inner peace, the gift of relieving sufferings. *Rosa plantata* is a metaphor of wisdom, love, medicine for sinners. *Puteus aquarum viventium*, a well of living waters, indicates St Mary's mediation for people redeemed by Jesus. *Turris eburnea*—the ivory tower is another feature of the Virgin Mary's beauty, of her immaculate body and fortitude.

**Key words:** St Mary's cosmic attributes; the number 12; St Mary's biblical attributes; cedar; spring; garden; olive; rose; well; tower.

*Translated by Marcin Turski*



1. Shrine, set in a gilt frame—photo A. BUJAK, after: A. BUJAK, M. ROZEK, *Kościół Mariacki w Krakowie*, Warszawa 1987, ill. 176.



2. Shrine with no frame.



3. Shrine centre.



4. Twelve stars around the head of the Blessed Virgin Mary.





5. Blessed Virgin Mary in a radiant aureola.



6. The moon under the feet of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



7. *Cedrus exaltata*.



8. *Fons signatus*.

9. *Hortus conclusus.*10. *Oliva speciosa.*





11. *Rosa plantata*.



12. *Puteus aquarum viventium*.



13. *Turris Davidica—Turris eburnea.*



14. Fragment of decoration—top 1.



15. Fragment of decoration—top 2.



16. Fragment of decoration—top 3.





17. Fragment of decoration.



18. Fragment of decoration—bottom.



19. Scene of the Annunciation on a coral holy water font (fragment), after: <http://catania.livesicilia.it/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/coralli2.jpg> (access: 20.12.2016).





20. A coral holy water font with the scene of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the images of the mysteries of the Rosary, Trapani, 17<sup>th</sup> c., after: [http://www.altomani.com/viewdoc.asp?co\\_id=643](http://www.altomani.com/viewdoc.asp?co_id=643) (access: 20.12.2016).



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