

**Giving Birth to God:
The Virgin Empress Pulcheria and Imitation of Mary in
Early Christian Greek and Syriac Traditions**

Judith Mary Foster

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ABSTRACT

**Giving Birth to God:
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Judith Mary Foster

Since the 1970's, more attention has been paid to the early cult of the Mary, as well as to empresses in the Eastern Roman Empire. The Empress Pulcheria (399-453 C.E.), who was the granddaughter of Theodosius the Great, has been portrayed as the earthly image of Mary. This portrayal was in the context of the controversy over the title of Mary the Theotokos, or birth-giver of God, and was due to reports made by the Patriarch Nestorius and those sympathetic to him that Pulcheria had said that she had given birth to God.

This study investigates the reported claim in order to establish whether it represents the patristic teaching of giving birth to Christ. I will do this by providing a survey of the cult of Mary up to the early fifth century; second, examining the theological trends and socio-religious climate from the mid-fourth to early fifth centuries; third, considering the foundational spiritual traditions of the empress Pulcheria; fourth, reviewing the development of the mystical teaching of giving birth to Christ, through Eastern Syrian, Cappadocian-Alexandrian and Constantinopolitan theologians.

The thesis demonstrates that the mystical teaching of giving birth to Christ was indeed followed by male and female ascetics, wives and mothers who took Mary for their model. The practice was Christ-centered and reflected an individualistic spirituality and also a collective solidarity with women, the sick, suffering and the enslaved. The report that Pulcheria had given birth to God, specifically reflects the burgeoning conflict over the Theotokos title.

Your sowing, that is your works, will mount to heaven, will become works of light that will be compared to the brilliance and splendor of the stars...Even more, you may, if you are pure enough in intelligence, holy enough in body, immaculate enough by your acts, beget Christ himself.

Origen

Com. on Rom. IV, 6 (PG. XIV, 983C)

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1. Introduction

Goals of the Study

This study examines the spiritual aspect of a virgin empress who wielded power over the Eastern Roman Empire in the first half of the fifth century C.E. Pulcheria (399-453) was the granddaughter of the Roman Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395). She was also a holy woman, a consecrated virgin, who was in large measure responsible for the golden age of the Eastern Empire.

In her famous confrontation with the Patriarch Nestorius (d. c. 451), Pulcheria is reported to have claimed that she had given birth to God.

Even though it is unclear whether Pulcheria actually uttered these words, the documents cited below and the event they describe are generally considered reliable by scholars of Late Antiquity.¹ Moreover, the concept of 'giving birth to God' is of particular interest because it has not yet been investigated in relation to Pulcheria and the cult of Mary. There has been some suggestion by scholars of a deeper significance to the claim that has yet to be studied.² It is, as it were, a kind of grey area yet to be

¹ Kenneth Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria and the Eastern Roman Empire" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1973); Nicolas Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); John A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria The Christological Controversy Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1994). In his e-mail to me of September 11, 2006 George Bevan of the University of Toronto, a specialist in fifth-century Christology, recommended caution in the interpretation of these documents, due to the motives of the authors which may have been to cast Nestorius in a similar light to the exiled John Chrysostom who had been exiled partly due to Pulcheria's mother.

² Suggestion of a deeper significance to her claim is found especially in Cooper and McVey as will be outlined further in Chapter V.

discovered “one which a more sensitive approach to the sources may eventually illuminate.”³

The event happened at Easter in 428, soon after Nestorius came to occupy the patriarchal see of Constantinople, about three years before the Council of Ephesus. It is mentioned in the Bazaar of Heraclides,⁴ and the Letter to Cosmas.⁵ In these documents Pulcheria is reported as wishing to go beyond the chancel screen to the altar, to partake in Communion with her brother Theodosius II.⁶ Pulcheria’s once yearly participation was apparently something that was approved of by the previous patriarch Sisinnus (d. 427) and perhaps the patriarch Atticus (d. 425) as well. In any event, Nestorius apparently barred Pulcheria’s way and said: Only priests may come into the altar, she then is reported to have said: Why? Have I not given birth to God? To which he answered: You, you have given birth to Satan.⁷

³ Kate Cooper, “Contesting the Nativity: Wives, Virgins, and Pulcheria’s imitatio Mariae,” *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 19(1): 31-43, Spring 1998. 42.

⁴ Nestorius, *Bazaar of Heraclides* (ed. and trans. G. Drivers and L. Hodgson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1925) 103. Nestorius, *Le Livre D’Héraclide de Damas* (trans. F. Nau, Paris; Letouzey et Ané, 1910) 363-64.

⁵ *Letter to Cosmas*, PO 13 (trans. Francois Nau, Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1916) 279.

⁶ R.F. Hoddinott, *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia. A Study of the Origins and the Initial Development of East Christian Art* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1963) 76. The tradition of the emperor receiving Holy Communion within the sanctuary began with Theodosius I. However, Theodosius I changed this practice after Bishop Ambrose told him he must remain outside the rails. “At the end of the service which marked the public penitence of Theodosius for the Massacre of Thessalonica (392) the weeping emperor entered the sanctuary to lay his oblations upon the altar table. He then remained there, in accordance with the practice of Constantinople, to receive the bread and wine. Ambrose sent him a message by a deacon commanding him to withdraw: ‘The Emperor must worship with the rest of the laity outside the rails. The purple robe makes emperors only, not priests.’ The penitent Theodosius humbly obeyed and, on his return to Constantinople, insisted upon following the Ambrosian rule. To Nectarius, who remonstrated with him, he (Theodosius) is said to have replied, ‘With difficulty I have learned the difference between an emperor and a priest. It is hard for a ruler to meet with one willing to tell him the truth. Ambrose is the only man whom I consider worthy of the name of Bishop.’ The Massacre of Thessalonica sanctioned by Theodosius I allowed Gothic troops to massacre 7,000 men, women and children.”

⁷ Nestorius is reported to have done more than bar Pulcheria’s way. He apparently effaced a painting of her that was hung above the altar, removed her stole from the altar and accused her of having sexual relations with seven men.

In investigating the significance of the reported claim, this thesis wishes to provide a fuller picture of Pulcheria's spirituality, a picture that will also reflect to some degree the nature of the cult of Mary in Constantinople and environs. The working question is the following: Does the reported claim about Pulcheria having given birth to God signify the mystical patristic teaching of giving birth to Christ in imitation of Mary?

The teaching of 'giving birth to God'⁸ will be considered in a number of patristic documents beginning with Origen (d. ca. 250), Ps.-Macarius (mid-fourth century), Ephrem the Syrian (306-373), the Cappadocian Fathers, namely Basil (329-379), Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330-389) and Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-394), and Atticus (d. 425) and Proclus of Constantinople (d. 446).

Almost thirty years ago, Averil Cameron, an Oxford professor of late antique and Byzantine history, first drew attention to the need for more in-depth study of the early cult of Mary in particular the period before the Council of Ephesus of 431 C.E. Further study is needed to provide a counter-balance to the already existing literature centering on the history and interpretation of Marian doctrine.⁹ However, since it is often the doctrine which is shaped in response to an already existing practice, it is not really possible to examine one without the other.

In 1998 Kate Cooper wrote that: "The past decade has seen the beginning of a welcome new wave in Marian studies, one which takes the cult of the Virgin as a

⁸ For 20th century research on giving birth to god, see Hugo Rahner. "Die Gottesgeburt : Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi im Herzen des Gläubigen," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 59 (1935), 333-418. See also this theme in the theology of Meister Eckhart.

⁹ Averil Cameron, "The Theotokos in six-century Constantinople: A city finds its symbol." *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978) 79-108.

subject for detailed social-historical investigation."¹⁰ Of particular interest to Cooper are the studies, of Holum and Limberis on the role of early Byzantine empresses in the promotion of the Marian cult, hence, the appropriateness of the focus on the empress Pulcheria's spiritual life in order to discover more about the early cult of Mary¹¹.

In 2001, Leena Mari Peltomaa stated that the early church's image of Mary still awaited investigation.¹² Peltomaa's brainchild was the International Early Mariology Project.¹³ According to Peltomaa: "The reason that the image of Mary before Ephesus has not been investigated in detail, is because authentic or convincingly dated texts are lacking, and because the research interest has mainly been in the development after Ephesus." Perhaps Peltomaa's most challenging statement is that: "We do not know properly the views of the Fathers on Mary from the period before the Council of Ephesus."¹⁴ The present study proposes to address that gap by concentrating on pre-Ephesus, and on the texts of the Fathers.

¹⁰ Kate Cooper. "Contesting the Nativity: Wives, Virgins, and Pulcheria's imitation Mariae," *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 19 (1) (Spring 1998) 32. Other studies are mentioned: Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). David Hunter, "Helvidius, Jovinian, and the Virginité of Mary in Late Fourth-Century Rome", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1983), 47-71, and, on the social context of virginity, idem, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late Fourth-Century Rome," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987) 45-64.

¹¹ In addition to Holum and Limberis, there are the studies of Susan A Harvey such as "Theodora the 'Believing Queen': A study in Syriac Historiographical Tradition," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 4.2 (2001).

¹² Peltomaa, Leena Mari. *The Image of the Virgin in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill) 2001, 218.

¹³ The International Early Mariology Project, which organizes data on Mary from the first four centuries, is the brainchild of Dr Leena Mari Peltomaa, Institut für Byzantinistik und Neograzistik, Universität Wien, and has been developed in collaboration with Professor Pauline Allen, Director, Centre for Early Christian Studies, Australian Catholic University.

¹⁴ Idem., 126

It is with these comments in mind that I seek to enter into dialogue on the subject of the early cult of Mary by examining the kind of Christian life that may have been practiced by the virgin Empress¹⁵ Pulcheria.

Before outlining the chapter contents I would like to mention that there are few letters written by Pulcheria, so that we do not have a true idea of her personality nor of her inner life. However, I believe that much can be reconstructed by looking at her entourage and discovering which theological currents were circulating during her early lifetime.

Chapter I contains a review of literature and the description of the methodology used in this thesis. Chapter II is an overview of the cult of Mary and also her parallels with Eve, the Church, Isis and the development of the Theotokos. Chapter III is an introduction to Pulcheria's era, her identity and accomplishments, a survey of spiritual traditions and her documented devotion to Mary.¹⁶ Chapter IV is a survey of the theme of giving birth to God through the works of Origen, the Cappadocian Fathers, Ps.-Macarius and Ephrem, Atticus and Proclus of Constantinople.

¹⁵ There may be interesting correlations to be made between Pulcheria and Queen Elizabeth I, See Jaroslav Pelikan. *Mary Through the Centuries*, 161-162. See also Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977) and Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Houndmills: Macmillan 1995).

¹⁶ Theotokos or god-bearer is a name attributed to Mary which developed during the fourth century and gained importance in the fifth. It is still used today in the liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Review of Literature

For the scholarly work produced on the subject of Pulcheria in the past century we are indebted to the following scholars:¹⁷ Ada Teeten for her book published in 1907 in which she wished to recover Pulcheria's personality from oblivion; a book which modern scholars initially rely upon even though it suffers at times from the lack of

¹⁷ Antonia Atanassova, "Container of the Uncontainable God": Mary the Theotokos in the Nestorian Controversy." (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 2003).

Joseph Miroslaw Borowski, "Pulcheria, Empress of Byzantium: An investigation of the political and religious aspects of her reign 414-453 A.D." Ph.D. diss., (University of Kansas, 1975).

Nicholas Constat, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

Kate Cooper, "Contesting the Nativity: Wives, Virgins, and Pulcheria's imitatio Mariae." *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*. 19(1): 31-43, Spring 1998.

Kathleen McVey, "Ephrem the Syrian's Theology of Divine Indwelling and Aelia Pulcheria Augusta." *Studia patristica* 35, 458-65, 2001.

Kenneth Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria and the Eastern Roman Empire" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1973).

---- *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Domination in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.)

Marie Vasiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress: The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London, 1994).

---- "Identities and Images of the Theotokos" (Th.D. Harvard University, 1987).

John A McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria The Christological Controversy Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

Leena Mari Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

Shawn Ryan Swanson, "Aelia Pulcheria and Mary Theotokos: Fenestra et speculum" (M.A. thesis, Utah State University, 2004).

Ada Teetgen, *The Life and Times of the Empress Pulcheria AD 399 to AD 452 (53?)* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1907).

citations.¹⁸ Then, sixty-six years later in 1973, Kenneth Holum defended a thorough doctoral dissertation on Pulcheria in which he too tried to uncover Pulcheria's personality from the dry historical documents still extant. Holum subsequently wrote a book on the empresses of the Theodosian dynasty published in 1982. There is also Joseph Borowski's 1975 doctoral dissertation on the political and religious aspects of Pulcheria's reign, and Shawn Swanson's 2004 M.A. thesis.

Other scholars who have paid significant attention to Pulcheria are: Vasilliki Marie Limberis in her 1987 doctoral dissertation and subsequent book focusing on the Virgin Mary and Constantinople published in 1994. In addition, Antonia Atanassova devoted her 2003 doctoral dissertation to Mary the Theotokos in the Nestorian Controversy. Leena Marie Peltomaa produced a systematic study of the image of Mary which resulted in a new theory about the author and dating of the Akathistos Hymn¹⁹ to the period in between the Councils of Ephesus 431 C.E. and Chalcedon 451 C.E. She devotes some attention to Pulcheria, to the homilies of Proclus of Constantinople and to an analysis of pre-Ephesus mariological themes. Kathleen McVey produced a fascinating article on Ephrem the Syrian's hymns and their possible influence on Proclus and thus on Pulcheria. Another eminent scholar who has shown an interest in this

¹⁸ In the forward to her book, Ada Teetgen writes that: the period in which Pulcheria lived has been much studied, and in attempting to arrange an historical background whereby to throw into relief this shadowy Empress, the writer has been content to draw upon the common, obvious and well-accredited sources of information. It is because the pretensions of the book are modest that its pages are not strewn with references, and other evidences of original research. It has, in these respects, been built upon the labours of historians like Tillemont, Finlay, Hefele and others.

¹⁹ The Akathistos Hymn or Hymn to Mary is the most famous work of Byzantine hymnography. It has been a part of the Orthodox liturgy since the year 626. Although the established view was for a 6th century composition by Romanos the Melodist, certainty has not been established. Furthermore, several scholars notably Trypanis suggests: "The insistence on the Virgin as the Mother of God and the triumphant expressions of this suggests a date closer to the Council of Ephesus." See Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*. esp. Ch.3 and 4 in which she brings out three arguments in favour of the Ephesian theory: (1) The Role of the Virgin, (2) Christology (3) Salutations. See also, introduction in *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica. Cantica Genuina*, ed. P. Maas and C.A. Trypanis (Oxford, 1963), xi.

period is John Anthony McGuckin, who has included Pulcheria, in the context of the Nestorian controversy, in his book on Cyril of Alexandria (1994). Kate Cooper produced an in depth article based on Pulcheria's giving birth to God and found evidence of early pre-Nativity spiritual retreats for virgins and married women which led to giving birth to the Infant. Finally, Nicholas Conostas has written an insightful work on Proclus, an important figure during Pulcheria's reign, being the Patriarch Atticus' ghostwriter and secretary. Conostas has analyzed five of Proclus' homilies and provided extensive notes.

The production of a composite picture of Pulcheria's spirituality will be aided by the work of some of the scholars mentioned above who have developed particular theories about the nature and influence of Pulcheria's spirituality: Cooper (1998), McVey (2001), Peltomaa (2001), Conostas (2003).

Methodology

The methodology used in this study is the integral or holistic approach of church history. Although focusing mainly on religious contexts, I will touch on the social, cultural and political contexts in which Pulcheria's religious life was shaped. In order to understand the reported words 'giving birth to God', I am first of all providing an overview of the meaning of Mary as it emerged up to the early fifth century; followed by an unfolding of some of the details of the world in which she lived, especially the spiritual traditions of the Eastern Greek and Syriac Fathers.

I then take a look at Pulcheria's life, those who surrounded her, her vow of virginity which reflected solidarity with the vast number of virgins who flocked to Constantinople. I include her devotion to Mary the Theotokos as an element in the

ascetical life of the times in which she lived.²⁰ Then the theme of giving birth to God as a type of divine indwelling will be explored through the Greek and Syriac theological streams of the mid-fourth to early fifth century.

The process is lead by questions such as: Where did the notion of giving birth to God come from? Did it come from the Alexandrian School or was it also a development of the Antiochene School or School of Edessa? Did Pulcheria's reported claim reflect imitation of Mary, or in the context of the Eucharist as it was, did it reflect a link with the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit and divine indwelling at the Eucharist? Did Nestorius who was of the Antiochene School react to her words because he feared a form of asceticism engendered by Alexandrian influence?

Other angles which have to be taken into account are the various influences on Pulcheria, making it necessary to delve into Constantinopolitan monasticism and to its roots in Armenia under Eustathius of Sebaste and later in Cappadocia under Basil. And then the process has to consider the Syrian Oriental influence, in particular that of Eastern Syria²¹ and the works of Ephrem the Syrian and his use of female imagery and his possible influence on other theologians such as the Cappadocians and Proclus of Constantinople.

This study covers some of the exotic locations out of which Christianity developed and the people in them who were touched by the Spirit and who through

²⁰ In her article entitled "The Early Cult of the Virgin," found in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki, Benaki Museum, Athens, 2000, Averil Cameron is of the opinion that the personal veneration of the Virgin was in practice only after the Council of Ephesus and the recognition of her title as Theotokos. The real development would take place in the 6th century.

²¹ The Syriac area was Northern Mesopotamia and the adjoining province to the east of Adiabene. Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic, thought to have developed out of Edessa (Orhay) and its province Osrhoene. According to Murray, the Christianity of Aphrahat (Persian name, Frahat 270-345) and Ephrem represents a breakaway movement among the Jewish Community in Adiabene. See Murray, 4-8.

great sacrifice devoted themselves to the shaping of Christianity in the Eastern Roman Empire at the turn of the fourth and into the first quarter of the fifth century.

CHAPTER 3

MARY IN CONTEXT

The early cult of Mary is still a mysterious field of scholarship. The orthodox christology and mariology associated with Ephesus and Chalcedon have been studied prominently at the expense of pre-Ephesus and non-Chalcedon types of christologies. The search for early evidence of devotion to Mary before the fifth century is difficult to find. Evidence associated with the cults of saints in general would normally appear in such forms as: social practices such as asceticism, pilgrimage,²² burial sites; and in structures such as dedicated churches, shrines, and monasteries; and in material artifacts such as texts, relics, and sacred souvenirs.²³ In this chapter an overview of some this evidence is provided.

Mary's cult until the early fifth century

The first great theologian of Mary was Irenaeus of Lyons, originally from Asia Minor, (d.ca. 202). The foremost exponents of Mariology were, in the East, Ephrem the Syrian²⁴ and, in the West, Ambrose of Milan.²⁵

²² Jerusalem also had a feast of the Purification by the mid-fourth century. The legend of the Holy Family's sojourn in Hermopolis, Egypt appears as early as the fifth century in the writings of Palladius and Sozomen. This suggests an early pilgrimage site. (Palladius, *H. Laus.* 52(PG 34. 1137); Sozomen, *H.E.* 5. 22. (PG 67. 1281)

²³ Stephen J. Davis. *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) vi.

²⁴ For the Marian thought of Ephrem, see Edmund Beck, "Die Mariologie der echten Schriften Ephräms", *Oriens Christianus* 40 (1956):22-39; Ignacio Ortiz de Urbina, "La Vergine Maria nella teologia di S. Efrem, *Symposium Siriacum*, 1972 (Rome: Pont. Inst. Orient. Studiorum, 1974) 65-104.

²⁵ See Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999) n.1, 90 for the most exhaustive and up to date list of studies on the Marian doctrine of St Ambrose.

Official ecumenical statements concerning Mary were made at the Council Nicea (325 C.E.) where there is mention of imitation of Mary in relation to virginity recorded by the *gnomai* or proverbs of the Council: "You have the conduct of Mary, who is the type and image of the life that is proper to heaven."²⁶ Then at the Council of Ephesus I, the Third Ecumenical Council, the title Theotokos was "formally endorsed as an 'ecumenical' expression of the divinity of Jesus and as a sign of the special reverence that ought to be afforded to the Virgin Mother of God. The title Theotokos was reaffirmed at Chalcedon as 'ecumenical' theology."²⁷

Mary's womb became a Christian focus early on due to the proof needed to explain the Incarnation to pagans. For example, the true birth of Jesus from a real woman showed to Docetists in the early second century that He had a real human body.²⁸ Mary's persona developed also along with the need and ideal of the times, so that in the third and fourth centuries, although she is considered the Mother of the Lord, she is the ideal virgin.²⁹ The transition to Mary as the ideal mother, was made by the early fifth century, a time when women were told that they have been freed from the curse placed on Eve, and the symbolism of the womb as mind, heart or soul becomes the locus of salvation and symbol of growth of the church.

Mary became known through scriptural references, but more so through early Christian apocryphal literature: the early second century Syriac *Odes of Solomon* which

²⁶ Alexander of Alexandria at the Council of Nicea. Quoted by Athanasius in his *De virginitate*.

²⁷ John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 85, 330.

²⁸ Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion: From the Beginning to the Eve of the Reformation* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 33.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

Charlesworth considers to be the earliest Christian hymn-book³⁰ and which contain beautiful and mysterious hymns including a poetic description of Mary's childbirth;³¹ the second-century *Protoevangelium of James*, which is the basis of the virginity *in partu* doctrine and the feast of the Presentation; and the fifth-century Syriac *Transitus*, on which the Dormition of Mary was based. Furthermore, Mary appears in connection with the urban spirituality of virginity in the late third century, plays a role in the purification of souls through prayer, and appears in visions that bring the true faith.

The references to Mary in the canonical writings are infrequent. She is mentioned by name only twenty times. The Eve-Mary parallel, outlined further in this study, is an example of the crossover into the Old Testament for the development of meaning of Mary. It is within the Gospel of Luke that we find the fullest development of Mary's character and her story. By far the most important reference to Mary is her role in the mystical conception or Jesus' Incarnation which is included in the Nicene Creed. It is the Annunciation, to be found in the Gospel of Luke 1:26-38, in which Mary, though she was a virgin, would conceive Jesus in her womb by the Holy Spirit coming to her and God overshadowing her.³²

³⁰ See Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford:Clarendon, 1973). The Odes of Solomon consist of forty-two psalms. They are believed to have originated in either Antioch or Edessa and were originally written in Syriac. All scholars believe *The Odes* to be Christian. From <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk>. Accessed March 2, 2008.

³¹ Roberta Bondi, "The Spirituality of Syriac-speaking Christians," in Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff eds., *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century, World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* (New York: Crossroad, 1987) 157.

³² Lk 1:35-36 NRSV The angel said to her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

Another key scriptural reference is Isaiah 7:14, in which the prophet says that a 'virgin' shall give birth, was used as the proof that Jesus was divine.³³ "Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel." It is in the Infancy Narrative found in Matthew 1:22-23 that the church found support for seeing the prophet Isaiah's prophecy as being fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, as Immanuel or God with us, from his virgin mother.³⁴

The *Protoevangelium of James*, a treatise which depicts Mary's early life, was highly influential in the development of Mariology. It would seem that the unknown author's aim was to raise Mary's status to the level of the virgin-mother goddesses of the Greco-Roman world.³⁵ A few of the images that the text gives are as follows:

Her feet did not touch the ground until she was taken to the temple, her bedchamber was made into a sanctuary, and the "undefiled daughters of the Hebrews" attended her. Even after her marriage to Joseph she labored in the company of "pure virgins" at making a veil for the temple, much the same way that the girls of Athens worked at making the new *peplos* for the statue of the Virgin Athene.³⁶

It is in this treatise too that the virgin birth is emphasized. The story tells of how Mary's hymen was intact after the birth of Jesus. That Mary remained a virgin after the birth eventually became the doctrine of her perpetual virginity.³⁷ Mary's virginity was a sign that Jesus had a miraculous birth. While the non-scriptural elements introduced in

³³ It may be of some significance that Pulcheria dedicated a church to the Prophet Isaiah since there is a Marian connection.

³⁴ The meaning of Isaiah 7:14 would have related to 2 Sm 7:12-16 in which the Lord promises David that an ideal king will come. It is also linked to Isaiah 7:15, 17 and the preservation of Judah in the midst of distress. See New American Bible.

³⁵ Stephen Benko, *The Virgin Goddess: Studies in the Pagan Roots of Mariology* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1993) 202.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 202

³⁷ The perpetual virginity of Mary became an official teaching of the church: Mary was a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus.

the *Protoevangelium* are important, other literature demonstrates the direct influence of the canonical scriptures.

In early Christian literature, the *Apophthegmata Patrum* was highly influential in ascetical practice. It contains sayings of the desert monks of Egypt, Syria and Palestine in the fourth to sixth centuries. In these sayings there is an example of devotion to Mary related to Scripture:

Abba Isaac said: Once I was sitting with Abba Poemen, and I saw that he was in an ecstasy; and since I used to speak very openly with him, I made a prostration before him and asked him, Tell me, where were you? And he did not want to tell me. But when I pressed him, he replied: My thoughts were with St Mary the Mother of God, as she stood and wept at the Cross of the Savior; and I wish that I could always weep as much as she wept then.³⁸

The short passage from the *Apophthegmata Patrum* may indicate that the Mary of scripture was one of the main sources of knowledge about her. The primary education of monks, nuns and other Christians was indeed the Bible. Scriptural passages were also a justification for their chosen way of life. For example, in the *Life of Chariton*, Chariton's hagiographer suggests that it was Ps 45:10-11, that supported his desire for the anchoritic life: Be still, and know that I am God.³⁹

The passage from Abba Isaac also indicates that meditating on Mary was a way of leading someone to tears and an indication that Mary played a part in the purification of their soul.⁴⁰ For the ascetic, tears were an essential aspect in the spiritual purification process.

³⁸ Fr. Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1979) 88.

³⁹ L.Campagnano Di Segni. *Vita di Caritone* (Magnano 1990), 14.

⁴⁰ See also doaks.org/Holy Women. "Holy Women of Byzantium", *Dumbarton Oaks. Mary of Egypt* (d. 378 or 437). In paragraph 28 of her Vita, composed probably in the 7th century, there is another example of Mary and Tears: "In my mind I would stand in front of the icon of the Mother of God, my guarantor, and I would weep before Her, asking Her to chase away those thoughts that assailed my miserable soul in this way. When I had shed enough tears and had beaten my breast as hard as I could, I

In the Syriac *Liber Graduum* or *the Book of Steps* (late fourth to early fifth century), an anonymous collection of thirty discourses, or homilies, on the spiritual life, Discourse XVIII, "On the Tears of Prayer" instructs:

Thus it is appropriate for men who are in Christ to raise up their hands everywhere and in every place, without anger and without any evil thoughts [1 Tim. 2:8]; they should shed tears in their love and yearning for our Lord, waiting for when they shall come and see him face to face, as it is written: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God [Matt 5:8] in this world, as Paul said, as though in a mirror, in the eyes of our hearts we behold our Lord; but in that world, face to face [1 Cor 13:12].⁴¹

A late third-century reference to the urban spirituality of virgins in imitation of Mary, is found in a work by the pagan Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry (234?-305?), born in Tyre (modern Sur, Lebanon or Batanaea, modern Syria) who first studied in Athens then in Rome for six years from 263-269 under Plotinus.⁴² He had some very interesting observations to make with regard to Christian women. In the sphere in which he lived at the time of writing, presumably in Athens or Rome, female Christian vocation, mainly widows, did not lead to coenobitic life, but women lived in family settings or with friends.

Notably, Porphyry writes that the virgins say that they are filled by the Holy Spirit and that they see themselves as similar to Mary. It would appear from his observations that in the second half of the third century, the spirituality of virginity

used to see light shining everywhere around me. From that moment on, after that storm, I would feel constant tranquility deep inside me."

⁴¹ Deirdre Ann Dempsey, "The Phrase 'Purity of Heart' in Early Syriac Writings" in Harriet A. Luckman and Linda Kulzer eds., *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in honor of Juana Raasch, O.S.B.* (Minnesota: The Order of St. Benedict, 1999) 39-40.

⁴² Jeanne-Marie Demarolle, "*Les femmes chrétiennes vues par Porphyre*," in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, XIII, 1970, 41-47. Demarolle notes that scholars continue to depend on the fragments of Porphyry's treatise *Against the Christians* collected by A. von Harnack in his repertoire of 1916, for the *Abhandlungen de L'Academie de Berlin: Porphyrius "Gegen die Christen"*, 15 Bücher, Zeugnisse, Fragmente und Referate.

deepened. There was a shift in Christian virginity from 'asceticism' to a very elaborate 'spiritual symbolism' so that even pagans could not ignore such a deepening.⁴³

During the same period, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins or Treatise on Chastity* dated ca. 260-290, which is a Christian version of Plato's *Symposium*,⁴⁴ includes a hymn in which Mary is mentioned. Thekla (the virgin heroine) sings:

The parent of Your life, that unspotted Grace⁴⁵ and undefiled Virgin, bearing in her womb without the ministry of man, by an immaculate Conception, and who thus became suspected of having betrayed the marriage-bed, she O Blessed One, when pregnant, thus spoke:

Chorus: I keep myself pure for You, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet You.⁴⁶

The Banquet of the Ten Virgins was written in Lycia by Bishop Methodius of Olympus (d.311),⁴⁷ a critic of Origen's work, although like many theologians he also relied on it. *The Banquet* or *Symposium*, which includes twelve discourses, had great influence on ascetic thought in both the Eastern and Western churches.⁴⁸

Mary sometimes appears in visions, usually with someone else, for instance, St John, St Elizabeth or the angel Raphael.⁴⁹ Sometimes St John appears alone as in the

⁴³ Ibid. 46, n.40,41,42. Porphyry's perception of 3rd century urban spirituality of virgins can be confirmed in Christian documents: Athan. *Apol. Const.* 33 (PG 25, 640); *Const. apost.* 4,14,2.; PsAthan. *Virg.* 24 (PG 28, 280).

⁴⁴ McGuckin, *Handbook*, 352.

⁴⁵ Mt 1:18

⁴⁶ *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins or a Treatise on Chastity: Thekla Singing Decorously a Hymn*, Discourse XI, 2, 18). See also Method. *Symp. Hymn.* 18 (GCS 27, 135). From <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers.062311.htm>, accessed December 10, 2007.

⁴⁷ Methodius was bishop of Lycia which occupied the southwest coast of what is now Turkey. The population was probably made up of native Anatolians. The area was isolated due to its high mountains. It bordered Cappadocia.

⁴⁸ From <http://www.earlychurch.org.uk/methodius.php>, accessed December 10, 2007.

⁴⁹ In the fifth to sixth century Egyptian story of *Paese and Thekla*, Mary appears with John, Elizabeth and Raphael. Mary performs a priestly function and anoints Thekla with oil in preparation for her death.

apparition to the monk Hypatius, at which time St John came to advise the Emperor on Nestorius's future.⁵⁰

In what is termed the earliest Mariophany, found within a version of the late fourth-century *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus*⁵¹ by Gregory of Nyssa, Mary appears to Gregory, who was a student of Origen and later apostle of Pontus.⁵² The apparition is herewith described:

After Gregory Thaumaturgus prayed to God for a revelation about the mysteries of faith, he spent the night in deep thought, when suddenly a sort of human form appeared, an old man with the clothes of a saint; he looked old and very venerable due to the grace of his countenance. The old man motions to his right side, like Jesus did before Thomas. Stunned by this apparition Gregory got up from his bed and asked who this old man was and why he had come; but the man, calmed him and said that he had come on divine orders to explain the truth about the orthodox faith to him. Then, another form appeared, that of a woman, but she appeared more than human. A brilliant light accompanied her. It was the Mother of our Lord (μητρι του Κυριου) who appeared to ask St John the Evangelist to divulge the mystery of devotion to Gregory. Gregory heard them discussing the true faith in a clear and complete formula which Gregory wrote down. Later he preached this teaching in the Church.⁵³

In the mariophany Mary appears as more than human, accompanied by a brilliant light, something which would have contributed to her being seen as spiritually powerful and otherworldly. In addition, within the mariophony, Mary's role as provider

⁵⁰ Callinicos, *Vie d'Hypatios*. Hypatius was an important monastic figure in the early 5th century. The *Vita* describes him as a traditionalist. He was sympathetic to John Chrysostom.

⁵¹ Marek Starowieyski, "La plus ancienne description d'une mariophonie par Grégoire de Nysse" in *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spätantike*. Eds. Hubertus R. Drobner and Christoph Klock (Leiden : EJ Brill, 1990) 246. The details of the life of Gregory Thaumaturgus were transmitted orally. They were written down before Nicea and it is this version that probably was the source from which Gregory of Nyssa based his version. It exists in Syriac and Latin.

⁵² On the Mariology of Origen see Cipriano Vagaggini, "Maria nelle opera di Origene," *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 131 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientale, 1942) 158 n 91. Henri Crouzel, "La Théologie mariale d'Origène" in *Origène: Homélie sur St. Luc*, intro., SC 87 11-64. Gregory the Illuminator is also patron saint of Armenia.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 248 The mystery of devotion was a teaching on the Trinity.

or messenger of the true faith contributes to Mary as a model for women preachers and educators.⁵⁴

Mary-Eve

A significant Marian doctrine is the Eve-Mary parallel, originally formulated by the second-century Apologist Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho* 100.4-6) and developed by Irenaeus of Lyons (140/160-202) (*Adversus haereses* 3.22.4; 3.18.1; 5.19.1).⁵⁵

The lineage for this parallel then runs to Tertullian, Ephrem and to Gregory of Nyssa.

Importantly, there is also in the influential Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 387), the beginnings of a theology of woman:

At first, the feminine sex was obligated to give thanks to men, because Eve, born of Adam but not conceived by a mother, was in a certain sense born of man. Mary, instead, paid off the debt of gratitude; she did not give birth by means of a man, but by herself, virginally; through the working of the Holy Spirit and the power of God.⁵⁶

Luigi Gambero interprets Cyril's statement by saying that: "Cyril seems to want to say that the Blessed Virgin restored woman's dignity, reestablishing her position of equality with regard to man and ennobling her role as mother...women are not only partners of men but of God."⁵⁷

Mary's role in salvation is inherent to the Mary-Eve parallel. Irenaeus wrote that Mary by obeying became the cause of salvation: "And just as the human race was

⁵⁴ Today in the West there is a move to seeing Mary as the first disciple and as more of a human being than an elevated spiritual being. In McGuckin's *Handbook* there is an excellent outline of this more historical view of Mary in particular as teacher of the Torah. See also Elizabeth Johnson's *Truly Our Sister*. The popular Latin American cult of the virgin of Guadalupe is an example of the love expressed and the needs of the people for a powerful and compassionate supernatural female presence.

⁵⁵ McGuckin, *Handbook*, 350.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Gambero, 139. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 12, 29; PG 33, 761 B-C.

⁵⁷ Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 139.

bound to death because of a virgin (Eve), so it was set free from death by a Virgin, since the disobedience of one virgin was counterbalanced by a Virgin's obedience."⁵⁸

The parallel was developed in the fourth century through the works of Origen, by Ephrem the Syrian and Epiphanius of Salamis. The scriptural foundation is Paul's I Corinthians 15:21-22: "Since by man came death...in Christ shall all be made alive."

Through this parallel a correlation was made between Christ as the New Adam and Mary as the new Eve. Eve who was also a virgin had given birth to disobedience and death after listening to the serpent, while Mary had shown obedience in response to the angel Gabriel's announcement, by answering: "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). While Jesus is the New Adam who restores the *imago dei* to humankind, Mary also plays a vital part in the economy of salvation as the one who brings life into the world, the one who gives birth to the Son of God who conquers death.⁵⁹

Peltomaa concludes in her study that Mary as the Second Eve was the main frame of reference for pre-Ephesus speculation on the meaning of Mary.⁶⁰ It is through this parallel that Mary is associated not only with the christology of the Incarnation but with the resurrection of all humanity.

Mary's association with the Resurrection is very important. In the early fifth century, the Resurrection was the paramount event, especially within the Antiochian Syrian Church. The Resurrection was central to the Christian experience of being saved now and transformed in this world.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 54. Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 3, 22; PG 7, 959-60.

⁵⁹ Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 46-47.

⁶⁰ Peltomaa, *Images of Mary*, 216.

Mary-Church

In Origen, the Church is virgin and because of this it is capable of the mystical marriage or union with Christ, a union which is possible on an ecclesial as well as an individual level. Christ as Bridegroom is spouse of the Bride which is the virgin Church composed of virgins.⁶¹ The Mary-Church parallel is found in fourth century writings,⁶² for example in Epiphanius (ca. 315-403):

There is also one Virgin Mother, whom I love to call the Church. Alone, this mother (the Church) had no milk, because she alone did not become a woman. She is virgin and mother simultaneously; a virgin undefiled and a mother full of love. She draws her children to herself and nurses them with holy milk, that is, the Word for infants. She had no milk because the milk was this child, beautiful and familiar: the body of Christ.⁶³

The Church imitates Mary in the way that it claims to give birth to the Body of Christ, and to nurture all Christians. It is in Ephrem's *Hymns on the Nativity* 16, 9-11 that can be found the first reference in Christian literature to Mary as the Bride of Christ.⁶⁴

The Mary-Church parallel only really becomes emphasized in the first half of the 5th century by a student of Augustine named Quodvultdeus where he sees the woman clothed with the sun of Apocalypse 12 as Mary, the figure of the Church.⁶⁵

The parallel gained in importance in the early fifth century as the institutional church was beginning to harness religious experience away from spiritual individualism.

Murray touches on this parting of the ways in his book *Symbols of Church and*

⁶¹ Crouzel, Henri S.J. *Virginité et mariage selon Origène*, Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1962. 15, 25.

⁶² Gambero, 432. Epiphanius; Clement of Alexandria; Ephrem (too a degree); Gregory Nazianzen; Ambrose; Augustine; Isidore; Sedulius.

⁶³ Gambero, 71. *Paedagogus* 1,6; PG 8, 300-301; GCS 12, 115.

⁶⁴ Graef, Hilda. *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 58.

⁶⁵ Graef, *The Devotion to Our Lady*, New York: Hawthorn, 1963) 23.

Kingdom. He sees the lack of references to Mary as Church in the Syriac tradition as an underlying indication of the reason for the break-up of the Church in the near east. He finds evidence in Ephrem's writings that his view of virginity is a matter of personal union with Christ and does not have an ecclesiological dimension.⁶⁶

Meyendorff also suggests that the reason for the schism between ancient spiritual families of the East: (Syriac, Egyptian and Armenian) and the Greek and Roman West after the Christological controversies of the fifth century, was the dimension of ecclesial authority⁶⁷ versus "salvation through union with God in what is termed *theosis* or deification, rather than justification from sin and guilt. The Church [of the East] will necessarily be viewed primarily as a communion of free sons of God and only secondarily as an institution endowed with authority to govern and judge."⁶⁸

Murray also adds that the Syriac Judaeo-Christian tradition already had a feminine motherly principle within the Trinity, which was Holy Spirit or the Old Testament *shekhina* or divine presence. It was only with Ephrem that a transition appeared: "St Ephrem is a key transition-figure since we find in his writings both the Mother-Spirit and devotion to Our Lady."⁶⁹

To return to the Mary-Church parallel again, according to Graef, it is within this parallel that giving birth to Christ or becoming a mother of Christ is to be found, at

⁶⁶ Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*. Cf. John Zazoulas "The Early Christian Community" in *Christian Spirituality Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, v. 16 of *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* (New York: Crossroad, 1987) 28. Zazoulis says that: "Unlike other non-biblical forms of spirituality, which could be understood individualistically, Christian spirituality was ecclesial in its nature."

⁶⁷ John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979) 91.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 226.

⁶⁹ Robert Murray, "Mary, the Second Eve in the Early Syriac Fathers," in *Eastern Churches Review* III 4 (1971) 372-84.

least in the Latin West, for Augustine says: "Let the members of Christ give birth in mind, as Mary as a virgin gave birth to him in her womb; and thus you will be mothers of Christ."⁷⁰ This signals a connection "between Mary and individual members of the Church who must become other Marys by giving birth to Christ in their minds."⁷¹

Mary-Isis

It was in Alexandria that the centre for Isis worship existed at the beginning of the Christian era. There is no doubt that a temple devoted to *Isis Lactans* or Isis nursing Horus existed there.⁷² Originally an ancient Egyptian goddess, her cult took hold of vast areas of the Roman Empire.

According to Egyptian mythology, Isis' husband Osiris was dismembered and his remains scattered far and wide. She searched for his body parts and found everything except his phallus. She found a solution to this dilemma by creating one out of clay and saliva and proceeded to make use of it to conceive Horus. Her son is considered to be Osiris' rebirth or resurrection. Isis is seen as a virgin-mother because she gave birth like a man.⁷³ She was the sole vehicle of reproduction. In ancient times it was believed that only the male had reproductive qualities. Also, following on Philo's meaning,

⁷⁰ Graef, *The Devotion to Our Lady*, 21-22. Graef also comments that the Mary-Church parallel "was worked out far more carefully by the Latins than by the Greeks, who were much more preoccupied with metaphysical questions, while the Church as a visible institution played a greater part in the West."

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷² V. Tran Tam Tinh. *Isis Lactans*. Corpus des monuments Greco-Romains d'Isis allaitant Harpocrate (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973) 16.

⁷³ Corrington, "The Milk of Salvation: Redemption by the Mother in Late Antiquity and Early Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 82:4 (1989) 400. According to the Stele of Amon-Mose, Isis declared, "I have comported myself like a man, although I am a woman, to make thy name [Osiris] live upon the earth." See Le Corsu, *Isis*, 8; Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis*, 10; A. Moret, "La légende d'Osiris à l'époque thébaine," *Bulletin de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale* (1931) 725-50.

'virgin' means male.⁷⁴ This process of death and rebirth is passed on to everyone who dies. Originally, the early mythology of Isis recounted that she was the goddess of heaven who each day gave birth to the sun god.⁷⁵

Isis is often depicted seated on a throne with her son Horus on her lap, nursing him with her divine milk. Her divine milk is considered to be the source of Horus' life, longevity, salvation and divinity. "The divine milk is thus metaphorically the "medicine of immortality," through which not only kings and heroes, but the initiates of mystery religions are given life."⁷⁶

A strange reversal happens when Syriac theologians who were familiar with female deities, formulated Christian metaphorical language that gives the Father all the feminine qualities belonging to the mother goddess. In the Syriac *Odes of Solomon* the Father has breasts, the Holy Spirit milks the Father's breasts because they are full and his milk [or semen] which should not be released without a purpose [procreation] and then the womb of the virgin took the milk, and Mary like Isis brings forth "as a strong man."⁷⁷

The images of Isis and Horus are the model for the early image of Mary and Jesus. Well documented in Tinh's *Isis Lactans*, a third century image of Mary and Jesus on the wall of the Catacomb of St Priscilla in Rome, depicts Mary nursing Jesus. In the same catacomb there is another image of Jesus sitting on Mary's lap. A fifth century engraving on stone found in Fayum, Egypt, depicts Mary nursing the infant Jesus. The

⁷⁴ Corrington, 396.

⁷⁵ Tinh, 1.

⁷⁶ Corrington, 401.

⁷⁷ Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Women in Early Syrian Christianity," in Cameron and Kuhrt, eds., *Images of Women*, 289.

images of Mary nursing or *Maria lactans* are fewer in number. However, there are five sixth or seventh-century paintings in monastic cells found in Egypt.⁷⁸

In the opinion of Tram Tan Tinh “it is the image of the infant king who rules from his divine mother’s lap that forms the iconographic connection between Isis and Mary.”⁷⁹ It is from the throne or lap that the king is born. The throne gives birth to the pharaoh.⁸⁰

There is also a personality connection between Isis and Mary. Isis was also goddess of the home and effigies were placed on domestic altars. “It was all the women of Egypt, who by their constant imploring to the mother goddess and the divine child, finished by raising them to principal and essential divinities, preparing the ways to the cult of Mary and of the Child-Jesus.”⁸¹ The offering of an effigy to *Isis Lactans* in the form of an *ex-voto*, would have offered protection to the family, assurance of safe childbirth and defense of children from evil spirits.⁸²

As was the pagan practice of home shrines, Christians also used icons in the home in the second century. References to this practice and to its pagan antecedents are found in the *Acts of John* and Irenaeus’ *Against the Heresies* and in the early fourth century in Eusebius.⁸³

As just mentioned, an important quality of Isis is her ability to respond to people’s needs. In Auleius’s tale we find Isis saying: “I am here, having taken pity on

⁷⁸ Corrington, 411.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 411.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 399.

⁸¹ Ibid., 18, n.1. Perdrizet, *Terres cuites Fouquet*, XX. Attention should be drawn here to the shift from Jesus the man to Jesus the child or infant which occurred with the rise of the Theotokos.

⁸² Ibid., 2

⁸³ Thomas F. Mathews. “The Emperor and the Icon,” in *ActaNorv* 15 (2001), 167-8.

your misfortunes; I am here, with favor and with solace."⁸⁴ This responsive quality was also one of Mary's. For example, as seen below, at the end of the fourth century, the first recorded evidence in the Fathers of Mary's compassionate nature, is when Gregory of Nazianzus advises virgins to 'pray' to Mary for the strength to remain ascetical virgins.

With respect to women's prayers in general there was good reason for them to feel vulnerable. In the early Byzantine period women had a life expectancy of twenty four years because of the dangers of childbirth and as many as seventy per cent of the children died before reaching the age of five. Men lived, on average, until the age of thirty. At any given time, one-half of the population was under the age of twenty one and one-third was under 14.⁸⁵

Women in the Greco-Roman world were devotees of Isis. They sought refuge in Isis because she had the power to save and protect. Headstones in cemeteries in Egypt have shown that images of dead women dressed like Isis. This 'putting on' of the goddess is evidence of women imitating Isis in order to partake in her divinity. Salvation comes through imitation.⁸⁶

The Egyptian nurturing Mother Isis, who offered "an experience of salvation that created in its devotees a vital sense of the immediacy of the goddess' presence," was by the early fifth century acclaimed as the 'Virgin Mother of the God'.⁸⁷ Seeing the

⁸⁴ Apuleius of Madaura, 2nd century in his *Metamorphoses* (Met. 11.15).

⁸⁵ *Encyclopedia of the Byzantine Empire*, Jennifer Lawler (MacFarlan and Company. London, 2004) 189

⁸⁶ Corrington, 403.

⁸⁷ J.A. McGuckin "The Influence of the Isis Cult on St. Cyril of Alexandria's Christology," (Leeds) 298. Isis communicated in an oracular way. She conveyed tenderness and care for her children by healings. She would also care for their souls in the afterlife. The Isis religion was active especially in Alexandria and Ephesus.

Mary-Isis connection from a different perspective, after being identified over time with the Magna Mater⁸⁸ to Aphrodite (Venus) to Tyche (Fortuna),⁸⁹ it was now Isis' time to be identified with Mary.⁹⁰

Mary-Theotokos (Syriac, *Deipara*, the begetter of God, the mother of God)

While the theory that Mary replaced Isis as the female virgin-mother goddess is part of the development of the image of Mary, John McGuckin, however, advises caution in seeing the Isis-Mary synthesis as the main source of Mary's image.⁹¹ In Jaroslav Pelikan's opinion, "the history of the Theotokos does not in any direct way corroborate the facile modern theories about the 'mother-goddesses' of Graeco-Roman paganism and their supposed significance for the development of Christian Mariology."⁹²

In fact, the ongoing quest for historical and sociological strains, including subjects of interest to women which began in the 1970's, is relevant, not facile, and has

⁸⁸ The remains of the first Neolithic city (8th-7th millenia BCE) have been found in Catal Huyuk, Anatolia in central Turkey. From the archeological evidence, the Great Mother Goddess was an important figure. Her image was formed in an imposing statue. She is seated, some say that she is giving birth, either hand is on the head of a tiger. Yearly goddess pilgrimages are now organized which include a visit to Istanbul, Catal Huyuk and to Ephesus now named Selcuk to see the early (pre-Ephesus) Church of Mary called the House of Mary. See goddesspilgrimages.com.

⁸⁹ Limberis, "Identities and images of the Theotokos in the Akathistos Hymn," 21-30. Limberis writes that Tyche personified Constantinople in an allegorical way, but that Mary dwelt in the city and became its protectress.

⁹⁰ Thomas F. Mathews and Norman Muller, "Isis and Mary in early icons," in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed., Maria Vassilaki. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)

⁹¹ J.A. McGuckin. "The Paradox of the Virgin-Theotokos: Evangelism and Imperial politics in the Fifth Century Byzantine World," in *Maria* 2.1, (2001, 25. McGuckin refers to a book entitled *The Golden Bough* by J.G. Frazer (NY. 1975) which contains a listing of parallelisms between Mary and Isis. McGuckin remarks that it is typical of an inability to distinguish between vague syncretism, strategies of missionary dislocation, and historically accidental similarities.

⁹² Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 58.

uncovered a richness of meaning that has added to, not reduced the meaning of Mary.⁹³ However, Pelikan who sees Theotokos as purely a Christian development, is also of the opinion that Mary as Theotokos was "the greatest quantum leap in the whole history and language about Mary, even further than the Second Eve parallel."⁹⁴

The title 'Theotokos' (God-bearer),⁹⁵ which referred earlier to the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis, appears for the first time as far as we know in a troparion that seems to be from the end of the 3rd century and in a text of Hippolytus of Rome.⁹⁶ The troparion is known under the name *Sub Tuum Praesidium* ("Under your protection we seek refuge, O Theotokos") and can be found in the papyrus no. 470 from John Ryland's Library, Manchester.

Other alleged testimonies before the fourth century about the title "Theotokos," are recognized today as interpolations.⁹⁷ An example, that Socrates, the historian, asserted that Origen was the first to use the title Theotokos⁹⁸ to demonstrate Mary's

⁹³ See especially, Averil Cameron "The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople," from which the present study is inspired. She draws attention to the need for more detailed historical information at certain crucial periods. Her article centers on the period around 626 when Constantinople was under siege by the Avars and Persians. Cameron finds that Mary's main image or role is as intercessor.

⁹⁴ Pelikan, 57.

⁹⁵ See "Theotokos," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Dumbarton Oaks, Alexander P. Kazhdan et al., eds., vol.3 (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 2070.

⁹⁶ See Hippolytus, *Ad benedictione Jacobus I* (P.13.7). Yet this passage is omitted by Armenian and Georgian versions, and probably interpolated (cf. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, edited by G.W.H. Lampe [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961] 639).

⁹⁷ See Ren Laurentin, *Court Trait sur la Vierge Marie* (Paris: Lathielleux, 1968) 170.

⁹⁸ A search for the root *theotok* in the first six centuries revealed that the highest usage was in the works of Gregory of Nazianzus, followed in number by Ephrem (Greek translations and Greek works attributed to him) and then by Athanasius.

status as God-bearer in his defense of Jesus' humanity against the Docetists who maintained that Jesus' body was a mere appearance.⁹⁹

Furthermore, "it was the Logos theologians¹⁰⁰ who first recognized it as an important cipher for summarizing their vision, extrapolated from the Gospel of John 1:14 NRSV:"¹⁰¹ "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." Yet the first rigorously exact proof of the use of the title is that of Alexander of Alexandria in 325 A.D.: "Christ carried truly a body... [taken] from the Theotokos Mary."¹⁰² Another reference is found in Julian the Apostate's *Letter to the Galileans* as he criticizes the mid-4th century Christian 'superstition' of invoking the Theotokos.¹⁰³

Athanasius (ca. 295-373), in the face of resistance from Neo-Docetists and Arians, developed devotional language and practice for Mary the Theotokos as model of saintly perfection for virgins.¹⁰⁴ He also saw her as the chosen and commissioned, *chreia*, one who was guarantor of the true humanity of Jesus Christ, the uncreated Logos.

⁹⁹ Gambero, 72-74. According to Socrates, Origen explained his view on the use of the title Theotokos or Mother of God in his commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans (a lost fragment).

¹⁰⁰ Logos theology was developed by Theophilus, Athenagoras, Justin, and Tertullian, then again in the 3rd century by Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.

¹⁰¹ McCuckin, "The Paradox of the Virgin-Theotokos," 11.

¹⁰² Alexander of Alexandria, *Epist. ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum*, no.12, transmitted by Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.*, 1,1 (PG 82:908A), edited separately also in PG18:568C.

¹⁰³ Pelikan, 56. n.5 *Julian Against the Galileans* 262.

¹⁰⁴ See Athanasius, *Letter to the Virgins*. Perfection even for Mary was a progression through struggles, doubts and evil thoughts.

The Cappadocians used it against Appolinarians. "Gregory Nazianzen was the first author to propose the title Theotokos as a criterion of orthodoxy."¹⁰⁵ Following Origen, he writes: "If anyone does not admit that holy Mary is Mother of God (Theotókos), he is cut off from the Godhead."¹⁰⁶

Athanasius instituted a commemoration or *mnēmē* to the Theotokos, thought to be more than just a memorial, but a feast day perhaps the Sunday after the Nativity.¹⁰⁷ He also developed the doctrine that "even a creature could become deserving of worship by virtue of the indwelling of the Creator."¹⁰⁸

There is also an important relation between Mary the Theotokos and religious experience. From Origen to Athanasius then to Cyril in the early fifth century there passed a desire and need to formulate a Christian experience which would surpass Hellenist philosophy's notion of religious experience.¹⁰⁹ In his treatise *On the Incarnation* ch. 48, Athanasius wrote:

These things which we have said are no mere words: they are attested by actual experience. Anyone who likes may see the proof of glory in the virgins of Christ, and in the young men who practice chastity as part of their religion, and in the assurance of immortality in so great and glad a company of martyrs. Anyone, too, may put what we have said to the proof of experience in another way. In the very presence of the fraud of daemons and the imposture of the oracles and the wonders of magic, let him use the sign of the cross which they all mock at, and but speak the Name of Christ, and he shall see how through Him daemons are routed, oracles cease, and all magic and witchcraft is confounded.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Gambero, 161. *Letter 101*; PG 37, 177 C-180 A.

¹⁰⁶ The same idea is found in Origen.

¹⁰⁷ Pelikan, 61.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰⁹ McGuckin, "Influence of Isis Cult," 298. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch., 45-48, ed., R.W. Thomson. (Oxford: 1971) 247-257. Contains a blue-print for how the religion of Christ will displace all other cults.

¹¹⁰ St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. and ed. by a Religious of C.S.M.V. (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1963), 85.

In the early fifth century, Cyril of Alexandria's contribution to the raising of the status of Mary the Theotokos¹¹¹ was motivated in part by this great commitment to provide Christian religious experience.¹¹² It is through Mary as Mother of God that individual Christians can also play a role in advancing the cause of missionary evangelization.

Religious experience was not an end in itself, its goal was the experience of being saved. "The importance of the experience of salvation to early Christianity as a Greco-Roman religion is emphasized by Mircea Eliade in his statement that the principal characteristic of such religions was the promise of salvation."¹¹³

According to Carroll, the use of the title Theotokos would reveal something of the manner of devotion to Mary. He says: "The increasing popularity of the cult of Mary in the Eastern Churches by the fifth century and the increased usage of Mary as Theotokos, indicates an emphasis on her motherhood rather than her virginity."¹¹⁴

In summary, from earliest times Christians showed an interest in Mary for doctrinal and devotional reasons. In the second century Mary's womb became the focus of the true 'human' birth of Jesus. Later, in the third century, her virginity became the model for ascetics. Beginning in the mid-fourth century, through the Eve-Mary parallel, all women are raised 'spiritually' to an equal status with men and an aura of joy in motherhood begins. The Syriac Church had provided literature that was positive

¹¹¹ McGuckin, "Influence of Isis Cult," 297, identifies the word Theotokos as an Egyptian Christian theologoumenon whose main protagonists were: Origen, Peter, Alexander, Athanasius and Didymus. 297.

¹¹² Ibid, 297. McGuckin elaborates upon Cyril's concept of the Mia Physis as not just a technical term but it is a way of explaining the experience past and present within the church of the vibrant divine presence of Christ as a perceived power.

¹¹³ Corrington, "Milk of Salvation," 397.

¹¹⁴ Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) 19.

about the body and the use of the language of the womb became an important source of devotion and doctrine. The Mary-Church parallel helped to form the transition toward a more visible and authoritative institutional church. This also contributed to a division between the Eastern and Western churches, due to conceptions around spiritual individualism and ecclesial authority. The growth of Christianity across the Roman Empire meant that pagan religions had to be systematically repressed and that pagan philosophy be surpassed. The rise of Mary as the Theotokos, even though it implied a richness of theological meaning, was partly an evangelical weapon for the repression of pagan religion and the surpassing of pagan philosophy.

CHAPTER 4

PULCHERIA

Introduction

The Early Byzantine era, especially after the sack of Rome in 410 by Alaric the Visigoth, can be described as one of omnipresent anxiety. The traditional ancient gods were leaving, no longer there to provide comfort and order. The people were insecure. They experienced a kind of collective sense of dread.¹¹⁵ As a result, they welcomed the Marian hymns, homilies and the cult of Mary as divine mother. For “to the Byzantine, no natural bond of society could be as strong or as unambiguously good as was the double bond of the womb and of the nurturing breast.”¹¹⁶ In 412 construction began on the Theodosian Walls to protect the city from an immediate threat from the Huns. The walls “had projecting towers, and each tower had within it a chapel dedicated to the Theotokos.”¹¹⁷

Ephrem the Syrian’s hymns, filled with ‘womb talk’ about Mary and other chaste wombs, and his positive view of all women, especially virgins, were in circulation in Greek before the end of the fourth century.¹¹⁸ A shift in the perception of the human

¹¹⁵ Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 5

¹¹⁶ Peter Brown, “The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church” in *Christian Spirituality I*, 436

¹¹⁷ Limberis, citing Procopius *De Aed.* 6.7.16., The Wall of Theodosius II (built 412-440).

¹¹⁸ McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian Hymns*, 4. According to Sozomen the translation of Ephrem’s works into Greek began in Ephrem’s own lifetime.

body occurs. In Ephrem “the body is part of God’s creation and so should not be despised, let alone thought of as in any way evil.”¹¹⁹

Constantinople, formally dedicated as the Roman Capital in 330 C.E.,¹²⁰ was not only the New Rome, but the 'spiritual' New Jerusalem where, by the end of the fourth century, the resurrected life could be partially experienced in the present time. This period was marked by an increase in urban asceticism. Women especially were leaving home to travel to the big cities to practice the life of virginity.¹²¹ More and more monasteries were built to house them. Significantly, monastic life in the urban environment was coenobitic and geared to social services as well as to the life of prayer. Orphans, the destitute, the elderly and infirm were all treated with dignity by the monastic communities.

By the end of the fourth century, the Cappadocian Fathers had all passed away after making great contributions to the shaping of the church. Basil the Great died of exhaustion. Moreover, the Patriarch John Chrysostom had his priest's heart broken¹²² when all seemed to turn against him, including the monks who resisted his wish to integrate them into the hierarchy of the church as priests and deacons. This was a transitional time when the life of the Roman Empire, its philosophy, religion, literature

¹¹⁹ Brock, S. *The Luminous Eye*. 36. Also, <http://ministries.tliquest.net/theolog>, accessed August 6, 2006. “In the fourth century Macarian writings (Ps. Macarius or Symeon-Macarius), the more Biblical emphasis on the whole man was re-established. The pagan Greek emphasis (Origen and Evagrius of Pontus) made prayer an activity of the mind and intellect, whereas the Hebrew tradition followed by the hesychasts made prayer a function of the whole man: mind, emotions, will, and even body.” “Hesychasm” is a quality of stillness or silence. This term can be interpreted at many different levels: exteriorly, meaning solitude or withdrawal in a cell; interiorly, a certain return to oneself, inner silence, spiritual poverty, a listening to God.”

¹²⁰ The year 330 C.E. is the starting point for referring to the Roman Empire in the East as the Byzantine Empire or Byzantium.

¹²¹ This marks a change in the way of life of female ascetics. No longer were they wandering, they had a place to go to. In the mid-fourth century Athanasius had already been asking virgins to stay home and practice their Marian piety sedately.

¹²² Teetgen writes that Eudoxia referred to John as the priest.

and entertainment became increasingly subject to the Christian faith. Essentially, the belief was that for the empire to be victorious, the emperor and his family had to be deeply pious.

Through the piety of its monks, Armenia¹²³ became a contributor to the development of the Church in the Eastern Roman Empire.¹²⁴ Armenian spirituality is characterized as incarnational;¹²⁵ it cherishes the cult of the martyrs and like Basil stressed the importance of local church.¹²⁶ "In the late fourth century, Nerses I (the Great), educated in Caesarea of Cappadocia, adopted the ideals of the Caesarean Bishop Basil, in creating a structured Armenian monasticism with welfare institutions of all sorts."¹²⁷

Having lost three-quarters of its territory to Persia,¹²⁸ Lesser Armenia [Ancient Cilicia or now S. Turkey] proceeded to show allegiance to Constantinople. In this its foundational period Armenia assimilated three elements which also formed the emerging church in Constantinople:¹²⁹ The Cappadocian Fathers' theology and *praxis*,

¹²³ Armenia was the earliest Christian Kingdom established under King Tiridates who was christianized by Gregory Thaumaturgus, the Illuminator in 302. Armenia was ecclesiastically dependent on Caesarea, Palestine until the death of their patriarch Nerses in 374. See McGuckin, *Handbook*, 31.

¹²⁴ The presence of monks in Constantinople was due to followers of Eustathius of Sebaste (Armenia). Also, the spiritual father of the future patriarch Hypatius was Jonas, an Armenian missionary.

¹²⁵ Alexandrian incarnational theology (enhominization) became standard in the church through its adoption and promulgation by the fourth- and fifth-century ecumenical councils. See McGuckin, *Handbook*, 180-81.

¹²⁶ Boghos Levon Zekiyan, "Armenian Spirituality: Some Main Features and Inner Dynamics," *Worship Traditions in Armenia and the Neighboring Christian East*, 266.

¹²⁷ Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 1449.

¹²⁸ In 414 there began another era of persecution of Christians in Persia that lasted for thirty years. By 422 Christian refugees were fleeing to territories within the borders of the Roman Empire.

¹²⁹ Robert F. Taft, S.J. *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992) 19. "In the paleo-Byzantine or pre-Constantinian era until late fourth century, the liturgy of Byzantium was a typical Late Antique, Antiochene-type rite with no especially distinguishing traits. The

as well as the symbolic theology of Eastern Syria (Mesopotamia), and the Syrian form of the liturgy.¹³⁰

The Divine Liturgy (the Mass) that developed in Constantinople followed Antiochian teaching¹³¹ and is now categorized as the Cappadocian-Byzantine liturgical family.¹³² This liturgy was also accepted over time in the heart of the Empire in Asia Minor and Armenia. The liturgy itself was characterized by three strands of influence: Byzantine Christendom, penetrated by the Syrian liturgy and Persian ceremonial aspects.¹³³

This period has been identified as decisive in the formation of the Byzantine Church:

In a very real sense, one could locate the origins of the Byzantine Church, as we know it, in the period from 381-451 (from the Council of Constantinople to the Council of Chalcedon). It is from this same period that we first hear of Constantinopolitan liturgy in the homilies of its bishops Gregory Nazianzen (379-381), and especially John Chrysostom (398-404). From these giants we learn something about vigils, stations and litanies: (that is, the processions), preaching, psalmody and chanting (both responsorial and the newly devised antiphonal) and the Eucharist.¹³⁴

same was apparently the case with the early churches of Constantinople: neither the shape nor the symbolism of the rite or its buildings were distinguishably Byzantine." But in the last two decades of the fourth century, especially from the reign of Theodosius I (379-395) the beginning of the Byzantine Era, the rite of Constantinople began to acquire the stational character and theological lineaments that will mark its later history."

¹³⁰ H. Feulner, "Preparatory Rites after the Armenian Divine Liturgy," in Ervine, R. ed. *Worship Traditions in Armenia and Neighbouring Christian East* (St Vladimir's Press, 2006) 94. See also Taft, *The Byzantine Rite*, 19, regarding liturgical vision or what H.J.Schulz calls *Symbolgestalt* or symbolic matrix.

¹³¹ Antiochene teaching was in the Greek language. The common people in Antioch and in Syria in general would have spoken a denomination of Syriac. Western Syria was composed mainly of gentile Christians, while Eastern Syria was composed mainly of Jewish Christians.

¹³² *A New Dictionary of Liturgy & Worship* Ed. J.G. Davies. (London, SCM Press Ltd. 1986) 30. "The four early liturgical 'families' of Eastern Christianity fall into four groups, usually differentiated as: the Western Syrian, practiced in Antioch and Jerusalem; the Eastern Syrian or Chaldean, developed in northern Mesopotamia and Persia; the Cappadocian-Byzantine, accepted by Constantinople, Asia Minor and Armenia, later became the official Byzantine form; and the Coptic, or Egyptian, adopted by Egypt, Nubia and Ethiopia."

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 30. Byzantine civilization's three influences: Alexandrian-Hellenic; Roman; Oriental.

¹³⁴ Taft, *The Byzantine Rite*, 23.

The social situation affected the frequency of attendance at the Eucharist. Partaking of the Eucharist became an elitist activity and people were also frightened by the discourse of the awe and power of it. The move to increase the importance of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, was caused in part by the need to alter the imbalance and to include the majority of the Christian population in the most important sacrament after Baptism.¹³⁵

Also, Christianity was evolving in two distinct streams: one was the Eucharist-based, holistic and Incarnational spirituality of the pastoral church fathers, Ignatius and Irenaeus; the other was the mystical monastic stream of individual experience of Origen and later Ps.-Macarius, characterized by an existential transformation of the total human person, body, soul and spirit, into the experienced indwelling of the Trinity.¹³⁶ These two strands did not merge until the late sixth or early seventh century with the *Mystagogia* of Maximus the Confessor.¹³⁷

In Syria, after Ephrem's death in 373, the school at Edessa, once known as the Persian school, and known for its semitic symbolic theology, gradually assumed the theology of the Antiochian school. Ibas (d. 457) who was one of the school's instructors was responsible for translating Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentaries and spreading his Christological views. On the other hand, Rabbula, bishop of Edessa (412-435) took on Alexandrian Christology.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ John Meyendorff, "Eastern Liturgical Theology," *Christian Spirituality* I, 357.

¹³⁶ George S Maloney, S.J. ed. and trans. *Pseudo-Macarius: The fifty spiritual homilies and the Great Letter* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992) 2.

¹³⁷ John D. Zizioulas "The Early Christian Community", *Christian Spirituality* I, 42.

¹³⁸ From "patristic literature" *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 20 Jan. 2008 <http://0-search.eb.com.mercury.concordia.ca:80/eb/article-67686>.

The Messalians 'those who pray' [ecstatically] were a monastic movement thought to have developed in the mid-fourth century from the province of Osrhoene, Mesopotamia and then spread to Armenia, Lycaonia, and Pamphylia.¹³⁹ They were also known to be in Antioch. They were condemned at several councils and synods over the years 380 to 431, notably a synod at Constantinople in 426, under the imperial law against heretics of 428,¹⁴⁰ and the decree of the Council of Ephesus when parts of their *Ascetikon* were censured.¹⁴¹ The Messalian Controversy came to a climax in the 420's and 30's. The trial of one of their leaders Adelphius in Antioch is considered a major event in the sources.¹⁴²

Stewart (citing Gribomont) encapsulates the period when he says: "These were trying times for ecclesiastical authorities trying to regulate ascetical and monastic groups in the capital itself as well as throughout Asia Minor, and the Messalians were often suspect."¹⁴³ Those who resembled them in any way, were also labeled as heretics. The Messalians were known for their disdain of the sacraments and of manual labour; praying constantly; and for having charismatic experiences while praying.¹⁴⁴ They mixed male and female living conditions, had no possessions and begged in the streets.

¹³⁹ Columba Stewart, OSB. *Working the Earth of the Heart: The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1991) 36.

¹⁴⁰ This decree was brought in around the same time as the conflict between Nestorius and Pulcheria. Nestorius had come to Constantinople with the idea that he would wipe out the heretics and submit the monks to the church hierarchy. This decree was against the Manichaens, the Messalians, and the Arians. See Stewart, 47.

¹⁴¹ Stewart, 42

¹⁴² Stewart, 13

¹⁴³ Stewart also says that Basil was at pains to keep potentially separatist ascetical communities within the larger Church. See Stewart, 1.

¹⁴⁴ Stewart, 45. "In 426 Alexander and his *Akoimetoï* or sleepless monks, arrived in Constantinople but were soon chased away by the ecclesiastical authorities. Pulcheria came to their aid by sending a guard to protect them and permitted them to set up a monastery north of Constantinople on the Bosphorus."

Hymnography was being developed for the Great Church and for other church events. They needed to attract people and hymns were one of the key ways. Hymns of Ephrem and Marutha¹⁴⁵ could be heard in the Great Church.¹⁴⁶ Although Gregory of Nazianzus was not inclined to include music nor hymns in the liturgy, he did in the end write hymns, as did Auxentius who wrote *troparia* (short prayers to be sung).¹⁴⁷

Alexandria played an important role at this time, as it was still the most cultured city in the known world. As well as being the source of the Cappadocian Fathers' theology through Origen, Gregory the Illuminator and Athanasius, it competed with Antioch for influence over Constantinople. Alexandria showed its strength by bringing down two Antiochian Patriarchs of Constantinople, John Chrysostom and later Nestorius.

The Alexandrian Church gained influence through Cyril of Alexandria's organization of and contribution to the Council of Ephesus. Its strength was then reduced at the Council of Chalcedon when the *Tome of Leo* was presented by the Latin West. During this period Augustine (354-430) wrote his *Two Cities* and died in his room surrounded by his most cherished psalms written on the walls, a year before the Council of Ephesus.

From the time Constantine the Great legalized it in 313 C.E. Christianity was monopolized in the East by Arians and Neo-Arians who were not in accord with the

¹⁴⁵ Bishop of Vagrit in Mesopotamia and imperial envoy to Persia.

¹⁴⁶ Teegen, 111.

¹⁴⁷ *Vita S. Auxentii*, P.G. cxiv. C. 1412. A lesser known early 5th century Byzantine composer is Auxentius, who is credited as being in the forefront of Byzantine hymnography. He was a Syrian who came to Constantinople during the rule of Theodosius II. He was a member of the circle of Marcian, (Pulcheria's future husband), which was comprised of men who were all very devout Christians interested in the life of asceticism. Sometime in the years before the Council of Chalcedon Auxentius became a monk and left Constantinople to live in solitude. His solitude was short-lived due to the many pilgrims who visited him for healing, prayer and the chanting of his *Troparia*.

statements of the Council of Nicea (325 C.E.) The entry of Theodosius I represented a victory over the anti-Nicene factions and the re-establishment of a certain degree of uniformity in the Christian Roman Empire. A vision of Constantine's fed by the idea of the "Christian ideal" that emperors are responsible for unifying the Christian church and that they are 'actively' protected by God.¹⁴⁸ Even before Constantine, "Eastern theorists in the tradition of Origen and Eusebius tended to identify the Roman Empire with the immanent Kingdom of God and assigned the emperor a positive function in the spiritual renewal of humanity."¹⁴⁹

The idea of 'sacred kingship' in Europe developed out of the concept of *basilea* or female imperial dominion initiated by Theodosius I. It is a kingship where the king is mediator or even servant of God.¹⁵⁰ The divine character of this form of sacred kingship is connected not so much with the individual king as with the 'Institution' of kingship.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 6. "Eusebius of Caesarea's oration on the Tricennalia of Constantine: the emperor was God's vicar, commander of His armies, His bishop, revealing His will, ruling on earth like Christ ruled over the heavens. The Imperial cult that consisted worship of the divinity of the Roman Emperor developed in the Hellenistic world. After Constantine I converted, the imperial cult declined, but was revived into something similar e.g. the sacredness of imperial persons and the image placed on church altars."

¹⁴⁹ Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria," 16.

¹⁵⁰ The phenomenon of sacred kingship was known and described in ancient times by various travelers, including Aristotle in the 4th century BC and the 1st-century-BC Greek geographers and historians Strabo and Diodorus Siculus. The study of sacred kingship, however, was introduced when the British anthropologist Sir James Frazer published *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915). Among the many possible kinds of sacral kingdoms, there was a special type in which the king was regarded and revered as a god—the god-kingdom, a polity of which there were three forms: preliminary, primary, and secondary. The preliminary form exists in cultures in which the chieftain is regarded as divine. The primary form was the god-kingdom of the large empires of the ancient Middle East and East Asia, of ancient Iran, and of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and South America. The secondary form occurred in the Persian, Hellenistic (Greco-Roman cultural), and European empires. Between these three forms there are many transitional types. From "sacred kingship." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 17 Jan. 2008 <http://O-search.eb.com.mercury.concordia.ca:80/eb/article-38733>.

¹⁵¹ The institution was emphasized in Mesopotamia and China. The real lord of the city, the country, or the state remains the god, and the king remains in a subservient relationship to him. Even when the king possessed or disposed divine power and had sacral character and sacral duties, he remained subordinate to the god who selected him and put him into his regal position "sacred kingship." *Encyclopædia Britannica* 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online

“Theodosius the Great made it clear throughout, that the integrity of the Empire depended on himself and his family, including its women.”¹⁵²

One of the events that marked the period occurred in 415 about nine months after Pulcheria became Augusta.¹⁵³ This event was the murder of the virgin and teacher of Neoplatonist philosophy Hypatia of Alexandria (355-415). Her story is documented thoroughly by Maria Dzielska in her book *Hypatia of Alexandria*.

Hypatia, who was about sixty years old at the time, was very popular with wealthy, intellectual pagans and Christians from as far as Constantinople. They formed an exclusive circle and were guided by her to a religious experience of silence, mute ecstasy, and contemplation that could not be expressed.¹⁵⁴ After being accused of sorcery by Cyril of Alexandria,¹⁵⁵ his guard, the *parabolans*, accosted Hypatia, then, inside a church, they stripped her and tore at her body with shards of pottery until she died.¹⁵⁶

The tragic death of a pagan holy woman was motivated by political reasons,¹⁵⁷ and demonstrates clearly the vicious intensity of the rivalry over religious experience that existed for centuries past between Christians and pagans. “The goal of the “holy

¹⁵² Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 5

¹⁵³ Holum, “Aelia Pulcheria,” 125, dates her murder to the year 416.

¹⁵⁴ Dzielska, Maria, *Hypatia of Alexandria*. Translated by F.Lyra. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 105

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 93

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 94 Orestes who had been assigned to Alexandria as augustal prefect, civil governor of Egypt by the Court in Constantinople was one of those who frequented Hypatia. Also, Pulcheria and her administration had just brought in imperial anti-pagan legislation excluding all those “polluted with the error or rather crime of wholly pagan worship from the army and the administration.” During the same period anti-Jewish legislation forbade the construction of synagogues. See Holum “Aelia Pulcheria” 121-122.

men” of Alexandrian Neoplatonism in the fifth century was to achieve religious experience as the essential ideal of philosophy.”¹⁵⁸ The Alexandrian Neoplatonists like Hypatia were considered religious figures and were more representative of paganism in the fifth century than the followers of Isis.¹⁵⁹

Pulcheria’s Identity

Although her name means “beauty,” Pulcheria was not known for her physical beauty.¹⁶⁰ Her mother, Eudoxia, was considered beautiful. She was fair and blue-eyed of Frankish origin, also spirited, intelligent and politically wiser than her husband. Pulcheria’s famous sister-in-law, the Athenian Athenais, later baptized Eudocia, was also described as beautiful, highly educated, able to transform Scripture into classical verse, and spiritually-minded enough to befriend Melania the Younger.¹⁶¹

Pulcheria apparently took after her grandfather in character. She was intelligent, pious, courageous and moderate in her decision-making. She had inherited from her grandfather the Theodosian “dynamic impetus, the enhancement of women and the demilitarization of imperial ideology.”¹⁶² His enhancement of women can be

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 106

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 148-49. Cf. Karren, “Near Eastern Culture and Hellenic Paideia,” 16-17. See also, Bowerstock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, 60-61.

¹⁶⁰ The name Pulcheria is from the Latin *pulcher* meaning beauty, beautiful or fair. The name Aelia indicates the name of a Roman clan (from her grandmother Flacilla) and Augusta is her rank. Normally the title of Augusta was given only to the wife of an emperor after she had given birth to a child. However, at times it was given to sisters and daughters. Pulcheria was proclaimed regent on July 4, 414. Holm has found that she is also referred to as Aelia Flavia Pulcheria Augusta. Flavia would also have been the name of a Roman clan.

¹⁶¹ Melania’s almsgiving, fasting, prayer, humility and wisdom were known even in Constantinople. She visited the city and became good friends with the Empress Eudocia, Theodosius II’s wife, who accompanied her on visits to Jerusalem. Melania’s Vita says that she was very beneficial for all the inhabitants especially for the Christ-loving imperial women. See *Vitae Melaniae Junioris AnBoll* 22 (1903) 5-50.

¹⁶² Holm, *Theo. Empresses*, 79.

seen in his elevation of his wife Flacilla to empress, not only because of her ability to give him children for the dynasty, but because he considered that she would make an equal contribution to the rule of the empire by her strength and piety.

Holum powerfully encapsulates Pulcheria's influence by writing that:

"Pulcheria's piety toward Mary, certainly one of the most important elements in her character, led directly to the defeat of Nestorius (Ephesus), to a decisive turn in the history of eastern Christianity (Chalcedon) and the prominence of Mary in Byzantine civilization."¹⁶³

Her influence is attested in her organization of the Council of Ephesus (431) establishing that the title Theotokos was indeed orthodox, the Formula of Reunion in (433) of Syria and Egypt, and the Council Chalcedon (451) attempting to settle disturbance in the Byzantine, Syrian and Roman churches over the two natures of Christ and to subdue the influence of the Egyptian church. The Latin West went away satisfied, but not so in Byzantium.¹⁶⁴ Pulcheria died two years after the Council of Chalcedon.

Pulcheria was not only an imperial figure, but also a religious one. Continuing the tradition begun by her grandfather, she had to ensure that the empire remained orthodox, in line with the teachings of the neo-Nicene fathers. The ecclesiastical historian Sozomen ran out of words to describe Pulcheria's qualities. In the last years of

¹⁶³ Holum, *diss.* 120 n. 2. Cf. e.g. N.H. Baynes, "The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople," *Annolecta Bollondiana*; LXVII (1949), 171-77 = *Studies*, pp 254-60, esp. p 271 = 254: "...for the protection of Constantinople the constant pledge, the unfailing guarantee, was the succour and mediation of the Blessed Virgin, the city was her city" ; A. Wenger, "Foi et piété mariales à Byzance", *Maria*, V (1958), 923-81, esp. 925: "La civilization de Byzance est tout entière mariale."

¹⁶⁴ McGuckin, *Handbook*, 80.

her life, Pope Leo the Great wrote that Pulcheria had the zeal and spirit of a priest.¹⁶⁵ At the end of her life she was hailed as the light of orthodoxy, protectress of the faith,¹⁶⁶ the New Helena!

Her mother, Eudoxia, died in 404 and her father, Arcadius, in 408. Thus, the imperial children, one boy, Theodosius and three girls, Pulcheria, Arcadia and Marina were left orphaned.¹⁶⁷ Because Theodosius II was too young (7 years old) to take on the duties of Emperor after the death of their father, Pulcheria was chosen to lead the young dynasty.

A key person in Pulcheria's early life was Aurelian¹⁶⁸ who was a guide as well as a devout Christian who had the safeguarding of the Theodosian dynasty at heart. Aurelian had been in the service of both her grandfather and father. Although he was very old by that time, he became praetorian prefect soon after her enthronement. He had managed her mother Eudoxia's rise to power and was once again filling the void of male weakness¹⁶⁹ with a strong woman.

As a child Pulcheria would have remembered the anguish caused to the household and empire by the death of her mother in giving birth to a stillborn baby.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria," 317-318. After Pulcheria's death, Pope Leo wrote "I recognize in the princes of our time not only imperial potency but also priestly learning."

¹⁶⁶ Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, 57.

¹⁶⁷ The Prefect Aurelian served as the head of state until Pulcheria was proclaimed regent and given the rank of Augusta in 414, at the age of 15.

¹⁶⁸ Teetgen also mentions that Aurelian's family would have surrounded the youngsters after the death of their parents. On Aurelian, see Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria", 86.

¹⁶⁹ Pulcheria's father Arcadius was not a strong emperor and it seems that her brother Theodosius II was of the same character, light-hearted and not very engaged in the ruling of the empire.

¹⁷⁰ Eudoxia's labor and death was probably caused by hemorrhage and perhaps the result of an embryotomy, which was the practice of the dismemberment of a fetus in the uterus or vagina to facilitate delivery that is impossible. See "A tragic case of complicated labour in early Byzantium" the *European Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, J Lascaratos, D Lazaris, G Kreatsas. <http://ejog.org>. v. 105, (10 Oct, 2002) 1, 80-83.

Her mother's death was associated with the great conflict¹⁷¹ she had with the then Patriarch of Constantinople John Chrysostom who was sent into exile.

Although Eudoxia was not solely responsible for the ousting of the Patriarch, it was the guilt caused by her role in it that was thought to have played a part in provoking her death. For although Eudoxia was a devout Christian, like other aristocratic women of her era, she did not much appreciate John Chrysostom's frequent public berating of their behavior and dress and publicly calling Eudoxia both a Jezebel and a Herodias. According to Teetgen:

After the death of Eudoxia there had been a superstitious revulsion of feeling at court, and now those noblewomen like the most religious lady Salvina and Olympia[s], who throughout the recent troubles had remained firm adherents to St. John, were called upon to fill the offices of trust around the young princesses.¹⁷²

The superstitious element is due to Eudoxia having been taken over with fear about a rumor about her unborn child. In her desperation during labor, Eudoxia had asked her husband to call in a pagan healer; shortly after she lay dead with trinkets all over her chest.¹⁷³ Eudoxia had lost two children during this period and the deaths were associated with John Chrysostom.¹⁷⁴ The memory of Eudoxia's non compliance and

¹⁷¹ Although John Chrysostom had publically insulted Eudoxia, the politics behind the Synod of the Oak which exiled John Chrysostom were to a great extent based on the views of Cyril of Alexandria's uncle Theophilus. Two issues were involved. (1) Olympias, the wealthy deaconess was advised by John Chrysostom to cease donating money to Theophilus. (2) The Origenist Egyptian monks called the Tall Brothers (yes, they were four tall brothers, although their name also referred to the theological heights that they attained) had to flee Egypt during the Origenist Controversy. They were given hospitality by John Chrysostom, something that Theophilus did not like at all. John was charged with being Origenist.

¹⁷² Teetgen, *Life and Times*, 40. Olympias was exiled after John Chrysostom (d. 407) sometime after 404. It could be that Teetgen meant Olympia, who was Olympias's niece. She also writes that Salvina probably returned to Constantinople in 410 when the Huns invaded, so that which would have been six years after Eudoxia's death.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 33. Holum does not mention any details about a pagan healer.

¹⁷⁴ During the conflict Eudoxia also suffered the loss of the baby named Flacilla. See Holum "Aelia Pulcheia," 55. The second loss a stillbirth may have been a miscarriage rather than birth to a baby full term. See reference to the *European Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* above.

death may have been a contributing factor to Pulcheria and her sisters later adopting obedient behavior,¹⁷⁵ most obviously their public vow of consecrated virginity.

If Teetgen is correct about the lady Salvina's role as surrogate mother or even spiritual mother, it would mean that Pulcheria would have had first hand knowledge of the tradition of Jerome's women in Rome. From the reign of Pulcheria's grandfather, there was a surge in Christian literature and the circulation thereof. Pulcheria would have known the works of the eastern fathers Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers and Ephrem, as well as those of Jerome, Augustine and Ambrose and others.¹⁷⁶

As a youngster Pulcheria was an avid learner: she was taught both Latin and Greek and was enthusiastic in matters of religion. Sozomen reports that Pulcheria was responsible for the Christian education of her brother. She is said to have taught him about worship, ascetic discipline, works of philanthropy, and ensured that he had regular contact with holy men. He would have received lessons in Christian conduct through biblical and patristic texts rather than classical authors. Sozomen stresses that Pulcheria taught her brother piety and the life of prayer.¹⁷⁷

Echoing the model of coenobitic monasticism in the protection of orphans, Pulcheria changed the lifestyle of the court by turning the palace into a monastery, more in line with the demands of John Chrysostom. The imperial palace, which had been the focus of grand society in the days of her mother Eudoxia, took on the

¹⁷⁵ Obedience was one of the most desired qualities in the monastic life.

¹⁷⁶ Teetgen, 43

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in Holum, *Theo. Empresses*, 92. Sozomen *Hist. Eccl.* 9.1.

atmosphere of a cloister.¹⁷⁸ So, from her adolescence onward she was caught up in the world of monasticism in a leadership capacity.

At canonical hours day and night the emperor and his sisters came together to chant antiphons¹⁷⁹ and to recite passages of Scripture learned by heart.¹⁸⁰ They fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays,¹⁸¹ and the young women, following the precepts of church fathers, gave up such vanities as cosmetics, luxurious apparel, and the usual idleness of aristocratic females, to devote themselves to time at the loom and other household occupations suitable for "admirable" women and especially on works of charity, founding oratories, houses for the poor and destitute and monasteries and supporting inmates from their personal incomes.¹⁸²

As a little mother¹⁸³ to her brother the emperor, Pulcheria remained his main counselor and mediator during his entire reign, and assumed the title of Empress of the East, on his death in 450 C.E. This was the first time in the history of the Roman Empire

¹⁷⁸ Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria," 79.

¹⁷⁹ Wellesz, Egon. *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980. 171. The liturgy of the Divine office was as follows: Psalms, the Nine Odes or *Cantica*, certain ancient formulae, and the *Troparia*. In the 5th century Matins and Vespers ended with the singing of *Troperia* or short prayers composed by a contemporary hymnist.

¹⁸⁰ *A New Dictionary of Liturgy & Worship* Ed. J.G. Davies. (London: SCM Press Ltd. 1986) 126. The offices are mentioned in the Apostolic Constitutions (viii, c.34) and also the *Asceticon* or Rule of St. Basil. John Chrysostom added a Midnight Office for clerics and laics. Divine offices: Matins, Lauds and Vespers were the most important offices. These offices had their origin in the ancient Vigils. The Rule of Basil would have added three more, Terce, Sext, and None, inserted between Matins and Vespers.

¹⁸¹ "Christ fasted forty days in the desert, during which time He took neither food nor drink. Mt 4:2 "And [Christ] fasted forty days and forty nights." He told the Jews in the synagogue at Capernaum, In 6:51 "The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." Christians have abstained from eating meat on Fridays in commemoration of His passion and death since the First Century. In Christ's time, the Pharisees fasted twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. In His parable the Pharisee prayed, Lk 18:12 "I fast twice a week." Christians, following ancient Jewish traditions of fast and abstinence for penance, observed the law of fasting on Wednesdays and Friday abstinence from the time of Christ's Crucifixion. The *Didache* (Teachings of the Apostles), ch 8: "But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week. Rather, fast on the fourth day and the Preparation." (Wednesday and Friday). From <http://secondexodus.com/html/catholicdefinitions/fridayabstinence>, accessed January 20, 2008.

¹⁸² Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria," 80. Soc. 7.22 4-5; Soz. 9.1. 10-11, 3.1-2; Theod. *Hist eccl.* 5. 36.4; Theoph, 81 de Boor.

¹⁸³ As an elder sister whose parents had died she was a surrogate mother to Theodosius. She taught him many things including deportment and things an emperor should know such when not to laugh.

that a female reigned.¹⁸⁴ In view of the influence that Pulcheria held over her brother, she was essentially considered Empress of the East Roman world from 414 to 453.¹⁸⁵

Spiritual Traditions

Pulcheria's spiritual father,¹⁸⁶ Atticus, was born in Sebaste, Armenia, during the second half of the fourth century. As an Armenian, Atticus would have brought with him his traditions, which were of those of the Cappadocian Fathers, those of Eastern Syria and the liturgical tradition of Syria. If not by another route then, the Eastern Syrian School including the Marian theological poetry of Ephrem would have entered the palace and the Great Church through him.

Atticus was mild-mannered and not very well educated in the Greek language. He depended on his assistant Proclus for support in the writing of his sermons.¹⁸⁷ During his adolescence he is said to have entered a 'Pneumatomachian' (i.e. Eustathian) monastery. "Eustathian monasticism was marked by strong charitable concerns, which

¹⁸⁴ Theodosius II did not have a male child heir to the throne. Although in his doctoral dissertation, George Arthur Bevan mentions that, a boy named Arcadius was born to Eudocia, he writes that according to Cameron, "the child was illegitimate and this the discovery of his childhood friend Paulinus' paternity led Theodosius II to suppress all knowledge of his son." His wife Eudocia had been banished from court and her possible lover, Theo. II's childhood friend Paulinus, was executed. This child was baptized by Nestorius. See "The Case of Nestorius: Ecclesiastical Politics in the East, 428-451 C.E." University of Toronto, 2005. Also, A. Cameron, "The Empress and the Poet: Paganism and Politics at the Court of Theodosius II", *Yale Classical Studies*, 27, 217-289. In order to organize the Council of Chalcedon Pulcheria came out of her retreat and married Marcion in order to surmount the issue of a sole female on the throne.

¹⁸⁵ Teegen, 1.

¹⁸⁶ Both Teegen and Holum mention that Pulcheria's spiritual father was Atticus.

¹⁸⁷ Constat, 25.

may partly explain Atticus' commitment to a policy of social welfare and relief, evidenced in his *Ad Calliopium* preserved in Socrates.¹⁸⁸

It was only after 405 C.E. that, under the Patriarch Atticus, new monasteries were founded at Constantinople. Isaac the Syrian, for a short time before his death, and then Dalmatius, performed the roles of Archimandrite.¹⁸⁹ "Churches, shrines, and monasteries were built throughout the city and its environs, perhaps the most celebrated was that of the *Akoimetoï*, or 'Sleepless' monks, founded early in the fifth century. More were to follow."¹⁹⁰

Urban monasticism flourished in Constantinople. The monks of Constantinople were originally founded by followers of Eustathius of Sebaste. In the mid-fourth century Marathionius was the zealous director of hospices and monastic communities of men and women. The monastics were visible in the streets, ministering to the sick and poor. Their form of dress expressed humility, a heavy coat, belt and raw leather shoes. The women in their movement wore the same thing and cut their hair.¹⁹¹ They were known to be social activists, often having conflicts with and resisting the church authorities.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Constatas, 25 n. 66. On Eustathian monasticism, see Frazee, "Anatolian Asceticism" (1980); Garsoian, "Nerses le Grand" (1983); and Dagron, "Les moines et la ville" (1970), 246-53. See also Amadouni, "Des hieromones arméniens" (1958), 279-305.

¹⁸⁹ *Vita Hypatius*, 74 n. 1. Also, Archimandrite is the head of a monastery or a number of monasteries. Hypatius would be given the title of Archimandrite of the monasteries after Dalmatius's death. Also, the title for spiritual father is *gerontas* "elder" in Greek and *staretz* in Russian. Hegumen is the head of an autonomous monastery, although he need not be the spiritual father of the community. He is usually elected by the community. Hieromonk is a monk who is a priest

¹⁹⁰ Constatas, 28 n. 76. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*, 1/3 (1969) There were over thirty churches and monasteries founded around that time.

¹⁹¹ Vincent Desprez, *Le Monachisme Primitif: Des origines jusqu'au concile d'Ephèse*. Spiritualité Orientale, NO 72. (Abbaye de Bellefontaine. Begolles-en-Mauges, France 1998) 328. Their attire was something that Basil admired. Until the mid-fifth century they preferred to live in undefined communities.

¹⁹² Andrea Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) 154. John Chrysostom was severely disliked by these monks. He preferred that they either become ordained as deacons and priests or that they stay on

They had evolved through the years having taken on the Rules of Basil, and two Eustathians had helped Basil in constructing his city of the poor.

Basil the Great's principal contribution in the field of ecclesiastical doctrine was his teaching on the Holy Spirit. He continued in Athanasius' footsteps by his pro-Nicene stance and concern for church community. He combined the mysticism of Origen with practical church life.¹⁹³ Once Basil attained the status of bishop of Caesarea, Cappadocia, and after witnessing the great suffering caused by the earthquake that destroyed Nicea in 368 and the famine of 368-369; he requested money from philanthropists and bishops and land from pro-Arian emperor Valens and proceeded to build a city of the poor.¹⁹⁴ In tracing the origins of the city of the poor, Crislip has determined that Basil accumulated information about this type of work through his trip to Egypt where he witnessed the work of the monasteries of Pachomian coenobitism and the White Monastery federation on the Nile.

Basil had admired Eustathius of Sebaste's philosophy and social ministry,¹⁹⁵ but according to Crislip it is only the Egyptian monasteries that match the precise profile of Basil's city. His city was "a unique confluence of social services; a dedication to free, professional, inpatient medical care; and an insistence on the dignity of and

their mountain tops as anchorites. They would have had a hand in deposing him. In general, the monks were politically attuned to events, for example, Shenoute helped Cyril of Alexandria prepare for the Council of Ephesus in order to depose Nestorius.

¹⁹³ Charles Kannengiesser, "The Spiritual Message of the Great Fathers," *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, eds. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, (N.Y.: Crossroad, 1987) 68.

¹⁹⁴ Kannengiesser, "Spiritual Message," 68.

¹⁹⁵ Elm, Susanna. *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994) 135. Elm writes that: "The influence of Eustathius' teachings is virtually pervasive in all the written sources dealing with the early ascetic years of Basil and his family." See Elm, n. 64.

compassionate care for the sick."¹⁹⁶ What was particularly innovative with Basil's concept was the financial participation of the laity, other bishops and the emperor, which meant that the monasteries did not have to bear the entire economic burden, thus making it into a charitable mission of the church.¹⁹⁷

St. Basil's example was followed throughout the East: at Alexandria by St. John the Almsgiver (610); at Ephesus by the bishop, Brassianus; at Constantinople by St. John Chrysostom and others, notably St. Pulcheria, sister of Theodosius II, who founded "multa publica hospitum et pauperum domicilia."¹⁹⁸

Basil's vision encompassed the whole Church. In his *Moralia*, he presents the radical behavior expected of those wishing to lead the Christian life. In accordance with the portrait of community in Acts 4:32-37 where (v.32) "the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul" no one has possessions and all is shared and put at the feet of the apostles, Basil makes the same demand on the society in which he lived.¹⁹⁹ "A broadly comprehensive notion of Christian discipleship becomes key to his thought, according to which biblical theology, early church tradition (mainly deriving from Origen) and Greek philosophy join together in a synthesis."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Andrew T. Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital: Christian Monasticism & the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 142. Cf. Susanna Elm writes about the reputation of Eusthatus of Sebaste as "the central force, the dynamic figure behind ascetic development between 330-360." Elm, *Virgins of God*, 124.

¹⁹⁷ Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*, 141.

¹⁹⁸ See *Acta SS.*, XLIII. Also, "the most famous foundation was that of St. Basil at Caesarea in Cappadocia (369). This "Basiliad," as it was called, took on the dimensions of a city with its regular streets, buildings for different classes of patients, dwellings for physicians and nurses, workshop and industrial schools. St. Gregory of Nazianzus was deeply impressed by the extent and efficiency of this institution which he calls 'an easy ascent to heaven' and which he describes enthusiastically (Or. 39, "*In laudem Basilii*"; Or. fun. 'In Basil', P. G., XXXVI, 578-579)." From www.newadvent.org/cathen, accessed February 10, 2008.

¹⁹⁹ Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 741.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 741. Citing W.-D. Hauschild: *TRES*, 1980, 307.

As mentioned earlier, the Eastern Syrian tradition was favored by the Armenians. Hymns and other literary works were available in both in Syriac and Greek. McVey writes: "In his own lifetime and for a half-century thereafter Ephrem's method of biblical interpretation was the sole standard among Syriac writers."²⁰¹ Many other works written in Greek attributed to Ephrem had a monastic vision and were in wide circulation.

Syriac spirituality is characterized by a way of seeing and meditation upon the things of God. It entails a kind of double vision that sees, simultaneously, the visible, physical world and the hidden realities of God concealed within it which are conveyed through Scripture, Christ, the church, and the sacraments, by means of faith and the Holy Spirit.²⁰²

The Sons and Daughters of the Covenant were a Syrian phenomenon dating from the third century onwards. The members were trained in scripture and the intricacies of faith and were considered teachers. Their numbers were composed of consecrated virgins, but also included young unmarried women. Although, there is no evidence of such an organization in fifth century Constantinople,²⁰³ by the time of the Synod of 410, the Rabbula Canons²⁰⁴ which included legislation regarding the Daughters of the Covenant, the Canons were being adhered to in all Syriac communities east and west.

²⁰¹ McVey, *Hymns*, 3-4.

²⁰² Bondi, "The Spirituality of Syriac-speaking Christians," 157.

²⁰³ From the early fourth century the order of virgins was established which was known in Egypt, Asia Minor and Iberia. A formal public vow of virginity was taken which had to be kept throughout their lifetime. The virgins were married to Christ their Bridegroom. Susanna Elm has written in detail about this in detail in her *Virgins of God*.

²⁰⁴ Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Revisiting the Daughters of the Covenant: Women' Choirs and Sacred Song in Ancient Syriac Christianity," *Hugoye Journal of Syriac Studies* 8:2 (July 2005). Online, paragraph [3]. "Around the time the Rabbula Canons were collected, the Synod of 410 was convoked by Maruta of Maipherqat for the Church of the East in Persia. These canons appear to have been widely used among western and eastern Syriac communities. The Daughters of the Covenant were to be under the direction of a superior chosen from among them and made a deaconess for service at baptisms; under her supervision, they were to be instructed in Scripture and in psalmody."

The Daughters of the Covenant sang in the churches:

This practice contrasted sharply, for example, with the normal pattern of Greek and Latin civic churches to the west. These areas permitted women's singing in convent choirs, to be sure. But with the possible exception of Ambrose's cathedral in Milan, women's voices were excluded from choral participation in civic liturgical celebration.²⁰⁵

In the early sixth century Jacob of Serug's *Homily on Ephrem*, devotes one third to Ephrem's creation of choirs of women. "Jacob says, because in the task of composing hymns and homilies adequate for teaching God's truth, he [Ephrem] realized the eschatological significance of women's participation."²⁰⁶ An excerpt from Jacob's homily reads:

41. [O Ephrem] Your instruction opened the closed mouths of the daughters of Eve, and behold the gatherings of the glorious (church) resound with their melodies.²⁰⁷

Scholars searching for more likely influences on Pulcheria found that she apparently modeled herself on her grandmother Flacilla.²⁰⁸ As attested by Socrates and Sozomen, Pulcheria embraced her family's tradition of philanthropy "for the least of these,"²⁰⁹ founding houses of prayer, shelters for beggars and the homeless, and

²⁰⁵ Harvey, paragraph [3]

²⁰⁶ Harvey, paragraph [17]

²⁰⁷ Harvey, paragraph [17] "Taken from Amar, 'Metrical Homily,' v. 42, 34-5. 40. Our sisters also were strengthened by you (O Ephrem) to give praise, for women were not allowed to speak in church. (cf. 1Cor 14:34) 42. A new sight of women uttering the proclamation (*karuzutha*); And behold they are called teachers (*malpanyatha*) among the congregations. 43. Your teaching signifies an entirely new world; For yonder in the kingdom (of heaven), men and women are equal."

²⁰⁸ Holum, *Theo Empresses*, 22. Pulcheria's grandmother was Aelia Flacilla Augusta, the wife of Theodosius the Great and mother of a girl named Pulcheria who died at the age of 12 in 385 (see also Gregory of Nyssa's eulogy *Oratio consolatoria in Pulcheriam*, ed. Spira, pp. 461-63 (vol. IX Jaeger-Langerbeck).

²⁰⁹ Matthew 25:34-38: Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Esp.verse 40: Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of *the least of these* who are my brothers, you did it to me. NRSV (New Revised Standard Version).

monastic communities, and providing generously for their support from her personal income.”²¹⁰

The biblical phrase "for the least of these" is associated with Pulcheria's grandmother who was very active in performing acts of charity to the extent that even though she was an empress, she had personal contact with the poor.²¹¹ Theodosius I and Flacilla²¹² were both strong believers in the Nicene faith and she particularly demonstrated a remarkable devotion to relieving the sufferings of the people. Flacilla did more than just provide the financing for the building of hospitals and churches, she actually worked in the midst of the poor, preparing food, feeding them with her own hands and listening to their troubles.

Much of the information that has come down to us about the emperor's bride Flacilla is through Gregory of Nyssa's funeral oration²¹³ on the occasion of her death which echoes the role of Mary as New Eve.²¹⁴ Gregory writes of Flacilla's ministry:

²¹⁰ Holum, *Theo. Empresses*, 91

²¹¹ John Chrysostom, *Lettres à Olympias*, intro. and trans., Anne-Marie Malingrey (Paris: Eds. du Cerf, 1947), 13. The internal attitude accompanying acts of charity that the Fathers required of wealthy Christians of late antiquity was an attitude of the heart that is described as humble and truly fraternal. It was no doubt challenging for the wealthy to give alms and perform acts of charity accompanied by this attitude. The term *κενοδοξία* or vain glory was the first and foremost temptation to be avoided. This is found in John Chrysostom's Homily XXII on the Epistle to the Romans, in which he says: "Descend to their poverty, bear their poverty, stay with the poor as they make their rounds."

²¹² Flacilla married Theodosius I (c.376-378). They arrived from the Latin West in 379 with two children in tow.

²¹³ Holum believes that it was Gregory of Nyssa, in his funeral oration for Flacilla, who articulated the imperial ideology of *basilea*.

²¹⁴ See Greg. Nyss. *Oratio funebris in Flacillam Imperatricem*, ed. Spira, p. 481 (vol. IX Jaeger-Langerbeck). There is in Gregory's oration a mixing of Flacilla's identification with Mary, a merging of the person of the empress with Mary, something that carries over to Pulcheria. Language referring to the virgin as saviouress, indeed the mother as saviouress does not mean that they are the Saviour or that Mary is the Saviour, but that they share in making salvation accessible to Christians, something which is connected to the Mary-Eve parallel. Confirmation of the orthodoxy of Mary in salvation history stems from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed (First Council of Constantinople 381), confirmed at the Council of Chalcedon: "For us humans and for our salvation he came down from the heavens and became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary."

“Through her, how many have discovered the grace of resurrection for themselves, who, having died in the laws and received the sentence of Death, in her have been recalled to life?” This image of Flacilla’s spiritual power is extraordinary.

There were a number of other ascetic holy women for Pulcheria to imitate.²¹⁵

Two other women worth mentioning as representative of the foundational devotional tradition of Pulcheria’s life are Theodosia and Olympias:

Theodosia was the sister of Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (d. after 394). Both were maternal cousins of Gregory of Nazianzus. Amphilochius, to whom Basil devoted his treatise of the Holy Spirit, wrote works that reflect the teachings of the Cappadocian Fathers and that showed great devotion to Mary.²¹⁶

Theodosia would have been a near contemporary of Pulcheria’s grandmother Flacilla. She ministered in Basil’s city of the poor until she married²¹⁷ and moved to Constantinople where she formed a circle of women similar to Jerome’s group of ladies in Rome. Members of her group were known to be correspondents of John Chrysostom and it included women such as Adolia, Asella and Sabiniana. The center of interest for these women was the study of the Holy Scriptures. “Deep study of Holy Scriptures seems to have been the great way to intellectual and moral training for women.”²¹⁸

In Theodosia there is not only devotion to Scripture but an understanding of urban monasticism and its social ministry, a strong devotion to Mary due to her

²¹⁵ Ascetic women were praised by Palladius *Lausiaca History* 40, 41, 46, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 67. Theodoret, 3.9 Pulcheria, 5.19 Flacilla, 8.9 Olympias.

²¹⁶ See Ignacio Ortiz de Urbina, “Mariologia Amphilochii Iconiensis,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 23 (1957): 186–91.

²¹⁷ McGuckin, *Nazianzus*, 238. “Theodosia married the senator Ablabios, grandson of Constantine’s Praetorian Prefect, one of the grandest ‘old’ families of the new capital.”

²¹⁸ *Lettres à Olympias*, 9, (My translation).

relationship with her brother who preached on the New Eve who gives birth to the salvation of the world.²¹⁹ Theodosia was also very well informed of the Nicene cause through her contacts with her brother and with Gregory of Nazianzus himself.²²⁰

Another more famous woman associated with Constantinople is Olympias (b. 368 - exact date of death is unknown). She was an aristocrat, a widow, a deaconess, very wealthy, and a contemporary of Pulcheria's mother. She was the sister of senator Ablabios, and as such, she was Theodosia's sister-in-law. It was Theodosia who raised Olympias after she was orphaned. She was a close friend and defender of John Chrysostom.²²¹ Olympias had a niece named Olympia who is known to have been one of the women in Pulcheria's circle.²²²

In ca. 390, between the Church of Peace and the Great Church of Constantinople, Olympia built a big house to assist those who were in need. It served as a hospital and a hostel for bishops and priests in transit, as well as for many ascetics and virgins.²²³ Women and young girls, including her niece Olympia, helped her. Her convent had an adjoining wall to the archbishop's residence, and it was she who provided friendship, advice and daily sustenance to the patriarchs Nectarius and John Chrysostom.

²¹⁹ Gambero, 168.

²²⁰ Theodosia provided one of her villas to be used as a church for Gregory of Nazianzus so that he could preach in Constantinople prior to Theodosius I's entrance into the city.

²²¹ Chrysostom, 30-31. John Chrysostom died in exile in 407. The place of death was Comane, in the Pont. Olympias left Constantinople of her own accord and lived in Cyzique. The precise date and place of her death is unknown. Based on the *Dialogue* and *Lausiack History* of Palladius, it was likely sometime between 408 and 419.

²²² The niece, Olympia, was one of the powerful aristocratic women of Pulcheria's circle who assisted in the downfall of Nestorius.

²²³ Chrysostom, 14.

Gregory of Nazianzus wrote a long poem to Olympias entitled *Carmen ad Olympiadem* in honor of her wedding. In it he gives advice about following the ways of Theodosia: "May she be to you an example in her aliveness²²⁴ in speech and in action."²²⁵ The poem also deals with how to dress as a Christian woman, her conduct towards her husband, her household occupations and her outside relations.²²⁶ Gregory recommended that Olympias look to Theodosia²²⁷ for the teaching that she was looking for. Olympias was also influenced by Melania the Elder.²²⁸

The proximity of Olympias' house and the memory of her ascetic life would certainly have been impossible to ignore. The memory of the affection that Olympias and many Johnnites²²⁹ had for John Chrysostom would also have had an impact. It was in 438 that John Chrysostom's relics were brought back to Constantinople and ceremoniously deposited at the Church of the Apostles.²³⁰ So strong were the similarities

²²⁴ Coming from Basil, I think that this aliveness means that she is imbued with the Holy Spirit and that her speech and actions revealed this.

²²⁵ Gregory Nazianzus, "Carmen ad Olympiadem," P.G. 37, 1549. My translation.

²²⁶ *Lettres à Olympias*, 11. Apparently, this type of recommendation to women existed in classical literature e.g. Xenophon and Ischomaque. An example of one of the Fathers: "Jerome not only rails against make-up, jewelry, coiffed hair, and fine clothes, but virgin women were urged to not even bother with bathing. Ruether tells us that with the Fathers there was an "obsession with blotting out the female bodily image." See Roger Steven Evans, *Sex and Salvation: Virginity as a Soteriological Paradigm in Ancient Christianity* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 2003) 72.

²²⁷ As Theodosia was also involved in Basil's 'city of the poor' this would have been the tradition that Olympias adhered to in Constantinople.

²²⁸ Quoted in *Lettres à Olympias*, Pelladius, *Lausiaca History*, chs. XLVI, LIV, and LV.

²²⁹ The Johnnites were the supporters of John Chrysostom. They were very harshly treated after his exile was announced. Olympias too was treated harshly and accused of starting a fire which flared up from the Archbishop's throne and eventually destroyed the Palace of the Senate.

²³⁰ Quoted in Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, 53. Socrates 7.45; Theodoret 5.36. At the time Proclus was Patriarch and Hypatius had replaced Dalmatius as Archimandrite to the monks in and around Constantinople.

between Olympias and Pulcheria that the latter was referred to by Gilbert Dagron, as "Olympias become empress!"²³¹

The tradition that Pulcheria followed was no doubt similar to these women²³² who were influential, highly spiritual, concentrated on penitence²³³ and Scripture, and very active in the performance of acts of love, Christian αγάπη in the love of God and of their neighbors in the tradition of Basil's city of the poor.²³⁴ Devotion to Mary is linked more with Theodosia and her brother, it is based on Cappadocian theology and the New Eve theme that was in the air from the late 4th to early 5th centuries.²³⁵

Of course there would be differences, because Pulcheria was an empress, and her actions and words were larger than life. She was also a consecrated virgin and led

²³¹ Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 144 n 129.

²³² Limberis, "Identities and Images", 119 "In the cases of (other holy women) Eupraxia, Xene, and Matrona, they were able to defeat their own demons and perform miracles. They are called "manly" in strength. This is the nexus between the spiritual and material worlds. Their fame spread everywhere, and their spiritual power gave them worldly power". Limberis also found that in each of their *Vitae*, the nuptial theme of the Bride and Bridegroom is found.

²³³ Penitence in the form of very strict hours of prayer, fasting and neglect of the body was known of Olympias, but not of Pulcheria. Basil had advocated a more moderate approach to these practices and there is no mention that Pulcheria did not bathe.

²³⁴ *Lettres à Olympias*, 16. There was also a great amount of Christian literature about women ascetics. The Cult of Thekla was still gaining in popularity as were the stories of other women ascetics and martyrs. There are also stories from the Syriac tradition of women ascetics which demonstrate the severity within their asceticism. See S. Brock and S. Ashbrook Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley:University of California Press). "The Heavenly Bridegroom (Mt 22:1-14) was a favorite epithet for Christ in the Syrian Orient. Its use created a state of affairs where celibacy even in marriage was requested. An excerpt from the story of *Pelagia of Antioch* (p 60 in *Syriac Women*) shows what ascetics should aspire to: her astounding beauty had all faded away, her laughing and bright face that I had known had become ugly, her pretty eyes had become hollow and cavernous as the result of much fasting and the keeping of vigils. The joints of her holy bones, all fleshless, were visible beneath her skin through emaciation brought on by ascetic practices. Indeed the whole complexion of her body was coarse and dark like sackcloth, as the result of her strenuous penance."

²³⁵ In my research I have not detected any special devotion to Mary in either Olympias nor Melania the Younger. Neither is there special devotion to Mary shown in the *Vita Hypatius*, the biography of Hypatius. In the *Vita* there is only one mention of Mary, and it is as the Virgin Mary not as the Theotokos. The *Vita* was probably written a few years after Hypatius' death in 446, therefore 447-450. In the *Vita* there is mention of Hypatius' imitation of St Anthony and the author showed awareness of the *Macarian Homilies*.

her own community of nuns.²³⁶ The biblical phrase 'for the least of these' which was central to the spirituality of the previous generations would be supplemented by: "Whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother."

What always has to be held in mind throughout this study is the notion that Pulcheria, in the tradition of female imperial dominion, is perceived by the people as mediator between God and man. Her involvement and leadership in church life can be glimpsed from a few reports such as the following:

The Virgins sometimes took charge of the vigils in the Great Church.²³⁷ It was incumbent upon her to make public displays of her piety at the palace, at the liturgical services, and through the support of saints' cults in the city.²³⁸ Nestorius refused to continue [the Patriarch] Sisinnus's practice of entertaining Pulcheria and her nuns after Sunday communion for dinner in the Episcopal palace.²³⁹ According to Nicephorus Callistus, Pulcheria instituted a vigil for the Theotokos at the Chalkoprateia church each Wednesday with candles and a procession.²⁴⁰

An interesting aspect of church life during this period was that it was lived mostly out of doors, in the porticoed streets. According to Taft, it is only about one hundred years later, under the emperor Justinian who built Hagia Sophia, that the church building becomes significant.²⁴¹ The street processions were numerous and from the early 5th century under John Chrysostom they sang hymns and processed through

²³⁶ In *Theodosian Empresses* Holum does not consider Pulcheria to be a nun. She is a holy woman with a circle of pious aristocratic women. However, in the *Bazaar d'Heraclides* her retinue is called 'moniales'. The fact that she made a public declaration of her vow to virginity would be a declaration of a religious profession.

²³⁷ Quoted in Limberis, "Identities and Images," 124. Barhadbeshabba PO 9; 528.

²³⁸ Limberis, "Identities and Images," 108.

²³⁹ Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria", 192.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 133. This last detail would have been after the Council of Ephesus.

²⁴¹ Taft, *Byantine. Rite.*, 29.

the streets with candles ablaze.²⁴² The hymns that were available at the time were written by the Eastern Syrians Ephrem, Jacob of Nisibis, and Marutha,²⁴³ and by the Cappadocian Gregory of Nazianzus and the Syrian-Constantinopolitan Auxentius. The processions usually ended inside a church.

The reasons for the processions other than for imperial occasions were to participate in the cults of saints including the *adventus* of relics. Processions were also a way of drawing the population away from the hippodrome and other pagan activities. In addition to this, the population was led in processions on the occasions of dramatic events to give thanks for the protection after threats and natural disasters.²⁴⁴

A further report giving a glimpse of Pulcheria's spirituality comes from Sozomen who wrote that Pulcheria had visions and that she prized the relics of the heroic dead.²⁴⁵ There was a great influx of relics into Constantinople in the fifth century.²⁴⁶ Owning relics was a sign of prestige and represented a vital link with the martyrs themselves. Relics of martyrs or saints were believed to make real their physical presence and to be imbued with the power to heal, protect and answer prayers. "The martyrs became a channel through which God's grace could work, by offering themselves thus in perfect purity of heart."²⁴⁷

²⁴² Apparently, Ephrem and Athanasius also organized processions with hymns.

²⁴³ The Mesopotamian, Marutha of Maipherkat, bishop in Persia, wrote hymns on the Holy Eucharist, on the Cross and on saints. See Ralph Marcus, *The Harvard Theological Review*, 25:1 (Jan. 1932) 47-71.

²⁴⁴ Taft, *Byz Rite*, 30.

²⁴⁵ Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria", 106.

²⁴⁶ Basil of Caesarea is known to have downplayed the cult of the martyrs. Gregory of Nazianzus also bemoaned the popular piety of cult of the martyrs. See Kannengiesser "The Spirituality of the Fathers," *Christian Spirituality* 1, 70.

²⁴⁷ Sebastian Brock & Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*, Trans. Brock & Harvey (Berkeley: University of California Press), 18.

The remains of the apostle Andrew, St Luke, and St Timothy had already been transferred to the Church of the Holy Apostles early in Constantius' reign. In 392 the head of John the Baptist was taken to Constantinople. Theodosius, Pulcheria and their sisters presided over the arrivals of Sts Samuel, Joseph and Zechariah, and the building of the martyrion of St Anthimus. In the early 420s Pulcheria welcomed the arrival of St Lawrence and the Prophet Isaiah. She built churches for them, so that they could live among the populace close to her own palace.²⁴⁸

In addition to these she procured the relics of the proto-martyr Stephen from Jerusalem in 422 to help gain the "crown of victory" in the Persian campaign. The arrival of these relics was a spectacular event. It inspired what is thought to be a verse in a homily of Proclus: Stephen/the victory crown is in place, for the virgin empress has brought him into her bride-chamber.²⁴⁹

In 438 Theodosius I and Pulcheria arranged for the relics of John Chrysostom to be brought into the city, at which time they were ceremoniously deposited at the Church of the Apostles.²⁵⁰

Of the visions, Pulcheria had three of St Thyrsos who came to her in dreams to tell her that the relics of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste were hidden nearby. St Thyrsos or Thyrsus is remembered on December 14, and was martyred during the reign of Decius in 250.

For boldly professing himself a Christian and rebuking the governor Cumbricus, for worshipping sticks and stones as gods. Saint Thyrsus, after many horrible tortures was sentenced to be sawn asunder, but the saw would not cut and became so heavy in the executioner's hand that they could not move it; Saint Thyrsus then gave up his spirit at Appolonia in the Hellespont.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, 52.

²⁴⁹ Quoted in Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 108. PG, LXIII, 933; cf. Leroy, *Homilétique*, 158, identifying the text as a work of Proclus of Constantinople. The bride-chamber can also be a symbol for a church building.

²⁵⁰ Limberis, "Identities and Images," 108 n. 20. Socrates 7.45; Theodoret 5.36; *Chronographia* 92,93. Proclus would have been Patriarch at the time and Hypatius would have been the new archimandrite.

²⁵¹ From <http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/saints>, accessed January 14, 2008.

Probably the most important relics of this period were those of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste martyred in the year 320, remembered March 10, and which are a connection to Basil's family and also to Atticus:

The forty martyrs were an international group of Christian soldiers in the Roman army who were asked to sacrifice to the emperor Licinius. The Christian soldiers refused and as punishment in mid-winter they were made to strip naked and stand on an icy pond until they froze to death. As a temptation the Romans had a warm bath waiting for those who changed their mind. Only one soldier did, but he died in the warm water. A pagan Roman soldier, who was watching over the bath, suddenly had a vision of angels descending distributing gifts and precious garments (Ephrem adds with thirty nine crowns of victory) and he converted to the Christian faith. He then became the fortieth martyr by joining the others on the ice.²⁵²

A large amount of their relics were kept by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa's father and mother at a small church in Anneses. Their parents, Basil and Emmelia were buried beside these relics. A portion of the relics were later brought to Constantinople (434-436) where they accounted for several visions and miracles.²⁵³

Pulcheria-Mary

At the beginning of the fifth century virginity was becoming more and more prestigious. Constantinople was called 'the city of virgins'²⁵⁴ as female virgins flocked to the New Rome. They came to worship God alongside their emperor and empress.

²⁵² From <http://www.ewtn.com/library/Mary/40Mar>, accessed January 14, 2008. Also, of general interest from the same source: "In a number of countries a special dish is prepared once a year to honor the memory of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. In Armenia they eat forty stuffed wheat balls (whose ingredients are hard to come by in this country); in Greece as well the Forty Martyrs are honored by the eating of dishes that stress the number 40. There are pies made with forty layers of phyllo pastry, dishes consisting of forty pancakes or made with 40 kinds of wild herbs."

²⁵³ "The death of the Forty Martyrs is related in the following works: St. Basil's Homily on their festival, Hom. 20, t. 1, 453, and three discourses of St. Gregory of Nyssa, t. 2, p. 203, t. 3, 499, 504, followed by St. Ephrem. ed. Vatic. Gr. and Lat. t. 2, 341. St. Gaudentius, St. Chrysostom, quoted by Photius. See Tillemont, t. 5, 518. Ruinart, p. 523. Ceillier, t. 4, 162 Jos. Assemani in Cal. Univ. ad 11 Martii, t. 6, 172." <http://www.ewtn.com/library/Mary/40Mar>

²⁵⁴ Peltomaa, 72. n 119. In the 380's-390's female ascetics formed the order of virgins.

While in earlier times instructions with respect to virginity were addressed to both men and women, it was to females that the power to save was deemed to be given.²⁵⁵

The age could be described as one of the 'Ascetical Virgin,' and it was deeply rooted in the imitation of Mary,²⁵⁶ which was a mirror of her chaste birth-giving.²⁵⁷ The ideal picture of the mother of Jesus had already been painted by Athanasius who "insisted that a Christian must acquire the Marian virtues (*humilitas, gravitas, prudentia, spes, verecundia*) regardless of her or his social or geographical position."²⁵⁸

Thus, when Pulcheria was fourteen years old she broke with imperial tradition and took a lifetime vow of virginity along with her younger sisters Arcadia and Marina. Sozomen recorded that Pulcheria made it a public affair and that the central part of the elaborate ceremony held in the Great Church of Constantinople was the unveiling of a golden bejeweled altar dedicated with the inscription "on behalf of her own virginity and her brother's rule."²⁵⁹

This dedication encapsulates Pulcheria's belief that her vow of virginity would have salvific power over the continuation of the House of Theodosius and would save the Empire. One of the Canons of Athanasius reads that: "in every house of Christians, it is needful that there be a virgin, for the salvation of the whole house is [dependent on] that one virgin."²⁶⁰ In offering her virginity to God, Pulcheria believed that she was

²⁵⁵ Roger Steven Evans, *Sex and Salvation: Virginity as a Soteriological Paradigm in Ancient Christianity* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 2003) 158.

²⁵⁶ Peltomaa, 13.

²⁵⁷ Peltomaa, 216.

²⁵⁸ Peltomaa, 74. See Gianarelli (1989), 243.

²⁵⁹ Quoted in Kenneth Holum, *Theodosian Emperors*, 93. Sozomen 9.1. 3-4.

²⁶⁰ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) Canons of Athanasius 98.

protecting her house, which was her brother's rule, Constantinople, and the whole Eastern Roman Empire.

A scriptural passage which had a big impact on virginity was the Apostle Paul's instructions on the behavior of widows in I Timothy 5. It caused a surge in the number of virgins in the 3rd century, to the extent that it was noticeable to the pagans.²⁶¹

The encouragement to virginity or celibacy is found also in Matthew 19:10-12. This pericope is considered to contain Jesus' authentic words. John the Baptist, Jesus and some of his disciples renounced marriage with a view to the coming Kingdom of God. Virginity is a sign of the presence of the Kingdom, for in the future world the believer does not marry because he/she does not die (Mt 22: 30); the celibate anticipates the state of a resurrected one.²⁶²

From the mid-fourth century onwards patristic fathers from both East and West were encouraging women to remain virgins or, in the case of widows, to remain celibate. For example, Gregory of Nyssa wrote on the subject of virginity and spirituality in the following terms:

If you wish to learn all the trials of this married life, listen to those women who actually know it. How they congratulate themselves who have chosen from the first the virgin life, and have not had to learn by experience about the better way, that virginity is fortified against all these ills (i.e. death, suffering, and childbirth) it is always in the presence of the undying Bridegroom.²⁶³

A feminist interpretation of the encouragement to virginity is the fundamentally atrocious and painful idea promulgated by Aristotle, according to whom women are by nature incomplete humans. This negation of women is taken up

²⁶¹ Demarolle. "Les femmes chrétiennes vue par Porphyre", 42-44.

²⁶² Desprez. 92. In addition, the same encouragement to virginity is found in Luke 14, 26 and 18, 29) and is in the context of true discipleship.

²⁶³ See Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, NPNF 5:347.

by the Church Fathers. In her *Virgins of God: the Making of Asceticism in Late*

Antiquity, Susanna Elm says:

Many of the early Church Fathers argued that it was only through asceticism that a woman achieves 'male' virtue, and is thereby transformed into a 'manly' woman. She has not only achieved true equality with her counterparts, but has been transformed into an ideal, complete human being.²⁶⁴

Even Gregory of Nazianzus in his *Epitaph for His Mother*⁷⁰ and Gregory of Nyssa's *The Life of Macrina* were not exempt from such language. In the words of JoAnn McNamara, "such language betrays a deep-seated tendency to despise the [very] nature of women."²⁶⁵

An underlying issue with respect to female virginity is the inherent misogyny²⁶⁶ of the Fathers. In order to be equal to men who were deemed 'spiritual', women who are considered 'carnal' must deny their womanhood. The ways of denial of their sexuality include: refraining from childbirth and virtually becoming a man by changing their appearance, cutting their hair, covering their limbs and head with a veil, abstaining from the use of cosmetics and other adornments, and even adopting a manly way of walking and talking.²⁶⁷

Jerome's *Commentary on the Epistle to Ephesians 3.5* is quite clear about this view: "As long as a woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, she will cease to be a woman and will be called a man."

²⁶⁴ Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1994), 154.

²⁶⁵ JoAnn McNamara. "Sexual Equality and the Cult of Virginity in Early Christian Thought," in *Women in Early Christianity* ed. David M. Scholer (New York: Garland Press, 1993), 154.

²⁶⁶ No doubt the Fathers were in part victims of Greek philosophy, but at the same time they are responsible for the subjugation of women even today.

²⁶⁷ Brown, *Body and Society*, 267.

Ancient historians record that Pulcheria made the decision to take a vow of life-time virginity 'solely' because she wanted to safeguard her brother's rule. Sozomen, Socrates and Theodoret are in agreement that Pulcheria chose virginity because of political reasons. They say that Pulcheria was afraid that if she or her sisters married, the dynasty would be infiltrated by new men along with their extended families which meant that the Theodosian dynasty, her brother's rule and the Christian ascetic life that she desired to establish would be threatened.²⁶⁸

Pulcheria's call to virginity was considered a divine gift to the Theodosian Dynasty.²⁶⁹ Along with the traditional notion of "the call,"²⁷⁰ life-long virginity was considered a life to which one was called by God. The decision to accept life-long virginity was initiated by a divine calling and constituted a divine blessing.²⁷¹

According to Holum, "Pulcheria with the ecclesiastical historians and many other intellectuals believed that the Christian religion sanctioned her family's rule and demanded that she act to preserve it".²⁷² By becoming a 'manly' woman that is a virgin dedicated to God, Pulcheria would have added to her esteem in the eyes of those powerful in the church. Thus, Pulcheria would have more access to holy men who would advise her keeping to the orthodox way for the sake of the empire.

²⁶⁸ Holum, *Theodosian Emperresses*, 96 n 78.

²⁶⁹ Evans, *Sex and Salvation*, 103.

²⁷⁰ Idem., "New Testament references regarding 'the call' from God: Call to repentance in (Mt. 9:13); to discipleship in (Mt. 4:21); laborers to receive their reward in Mt. 20:8; invited guests to the wedding in (Mt. 22:3); the poor, maimed, lame and blind in (Lk. 14:13); both Jews and Gentiles (Rm. 9:24); believers to justification and glorification (Rom. 8:30); peace (1 Cor. 7:15); God's Kingdom and glory (1Thess. 2:12); in holiness (1Thess. 4:7); to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:14); holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9); out of darkness to His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9)."

²⁷¹ Evans, 103.

²⁷² Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria", 106.

The weight given to Pulcheria's political motives over the years has perhaps caused an imbalance in the historical treatment of her character and her role in history something which is being rectified in recent years as more attention is now being given to the early cult of Mary. In her systematic study Leena Mari Peltomaa argues that Holum's emphasis on, "the empress Pulcheria's personal motives for achieving her goals by means of her virginity,"²⁷³ is excessive.

More specifically, Peltomaa finds problematic Holum's view that Pulcheria used the devotion to the Virgin in order to empower her 'sacral basileus' or her sacred female imperial dominion. Peltomaa criticizes Holum for not taking into account the prevailing trend in the early 5th century, among the female population, of the imitation of the Virgin Mary.²⁷⁴ Peltomaa makes the point that the normal ascetical behavior at that time was in fact the imitation of Mary and that Pulcheria's behavior was not necessarily an exaggerated form of that imitation.²⁷⁵ In all fairness to Holum, he does admit that "Mary piety had already become one of the major enthusiasms of all Christendom."²⁷⁶

Apart from the influence of her spiritual father Atticus and her consecrated virginity in imitation of Mary, the most well-known Marian devotion that Pulcheria exhibited was her defense of the *Theotokos* in the Nestorian Controversy. But were

²⁷³ Peltomaa, 72.

²⁷⁴ Peltomaa, 72. There may also have been a tendency to avoid investigating the possibility of Pulcheria's "authentic" devotion due to her being of interest primarily to historians rather than to theologians. Then again, it is difficult to deny the fact that Pulcheria's motives were primarily political because this perception is recorded by Sozomen, Socrates and Theodoret.

²⁷⁵ Peltomaa, 51 n. 10.

²⁷⁶ Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 145.

there other earlier exhibitions of Pulcheria's piety to Mary that would give a fuller picture?

The earliest Constantinopolitan liturgical feast of Mary was instituted either under the Patriarch Atticus or his successor Sisinnus. It was on December 26th and termed a 'celebration of virginity' because the Virgin Theotokos had erased the sin of Eve.²⁷⁷

Pulcheria is known for building churches in honor of Mary. One which was built in pre-Ephesus years within the palace precincts and was the first Marian Church built in Constantinople. It was called the *Theotokos* "First –Founded" and was built close to the church that she built for the pro-martyr Stephen. Holum writes, that "clearly she intended its function to be imperial, to bring the Virgin, like Stephen into physical intimacy with the *basilea*."²⁷⁸

The dates of the construction of three other churches is sometimes disputed, but for the period between Ephesus and Chalcedon (431-451) is generally accepted. The churches were: the Blachernai which contained the Mary's shroud (veil), the Hodegoi contained an icon of Mary "the Guide" thought to have been painted by St Luke himself, and the Chalkoprataia housed the Mary's cincture.²⁷⁹

One of the most potentially revealing of Pulcheria's devotions is her reported ritual of placing her robe on the altar before the Eucharist. Evidence shows, that this

²⁷⁷ Quoted in in Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 145. Proc. *Serm.* 1.1-2 (ACO, I, 1, 1, 103-4) dated 428 by Theoph. a.m. 5923 (p 88 de Boor); cf. Jugie, *Mort*, pp 175-77. Holum quotes from the sermon, 155-56.

²⁷⁸ Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 143. Also 103, 107-108.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 142 and see n. 120 for further details.

ritual was also practiced by Olympias, Melania the Younger and Eudocia,²⁸⁰ although it seemed outrageous to Nestorius who is reported to have: “effaced Pulcheria’s portrait above the altar of the Great Church and removed her outer garment (στολή) from the holy table where it served as an altar cloth during the Eucharist.”²⁸¹

One ancient source described it as a ritual action that recalled Joseph of Arimathea, who provided the linen shroud in which the crucified body of Christ was wrapped.²⁸² For the Eastern Churches, the altar is symbolic of the tomb where Christ descended into Hell, but it also the symbolic site of the Resurrection, from which Christ rose along with Adam.

Associating Pulcheria’s gesture with her “time spent at the loom,” Constatas has interpreted her placing of her robe on the altar²⁸³ in this way:

If Pulcheria wove the robe used for an altar covering, the parallel is indeed striking: like her exemplar the Virgin Mary who wove a robe of flesh that was draped around the divinity, the virgin empress wove a robe of cloth that served both as a covering for the body of the altar and a shroud for the symbolic body of Christ.²⁸⁴

Ephrem’s *Hymn on the Nativity* 28.7, reads “She wove a garment for Him, but His glory extended over all [her] senses.” McVey notes that “Ephrem likes the image of Jesus’ body as a garment woven variously by Mary during her pregnancy, or by the

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 144. See n. 128 for further details. Olympias was a widow. Melania left her child and husband to live the life of asceticism. Eudocia was married to Theodosius II and a mother. This ritual may not be related to virginity.

²⁸¹ Holum, “Aelia Pulcheria,” 192.

²⁸² Quoted in Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 144 n 128. Isid. Pel. Ep. 1.1. 123 (PG, LXXVII, 264-65).

²⁸³ Holum, “Aelia Pulcheria,” 192. “Nestorius removed her outer garment from the holy table where it served as an altar cloth during communion.” n 2. Letter to Cosmas 5-7 (PW, XIII, 278; Barhadbesabba Arbaia 27 (PO, IX, 565-66); Abramowski, 70) The altar in question is the one that Pulcheria dedicated to the Great Church on the occasion of her vow of virginity. The robe would have been a linen *stola* with wool tapestry bands and silk embroidered (perhaps with jewels) appliqués probably depicting scenes from scripture. Information on ancient female dress obtained from: <http://gryph.com> and also of interest <http://womenpriests.org/mrpriest/gall>.

²⁸⁴ Constatas, 134. Constatas also argues in his book that Proclus took from Pulcheria’s activity the image of the loom and applied it to the divinity of Jesus.

Deity, cf. *Nativity* 21.5, "Divinity in the womb wove herself a garment," and the weaving of a new baptismal garment by the Holy Spirit, *Hymns of the Epiphany* 13.5.²⁸⁵

In his book entitled *The Luminous Eye: the Spiritual World Vision of St Ephrem the Syrian*, Brock explains that in Syriac tradition the robe of glory is associated with Matthew 22:1-14:

The robe of glory is the eschatological wedding garment which is received at baptism, but which must be kept unspotted for the eschatological wedding feast. The wedding feast belongs to sacred time to the eschaton, when the righteous, those who have 'preserved' their wedding garments spotless, will fully realize the existence of their eschatological robes of glory.²⁸⁶

The use of Bridegroom and Bride imagery²⁸⁷ was fully familiar to the churches. From the third century onwards both virgins and the Church were referred to as the brides of Christ. Perhaps then, Pulcheria's robe on the altar was symbolic of her spotless wedding garment and of her preparedness for the eschatological banquet with her Heavenly Bridegroom.

The altar was also the site of the sacrament of the Eucharist. As mentioned earlier, the institutional church was highlighting that religious experience of divine indwelling should take place in the context the Church at Baptism and the Eucharistic liturgy, in particular at the epiclesis or more precisely the anaphora,²⁸⁸ the words that

²⁸⁵ McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian Hymns*, 216 n. 618.

²⁸⁶ Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 94-95. Brock also explains that "the concept of an eschatological robe of glory is already found in Judaism of the inter-testamental period, and it is fully familiar to Ephrem."

²⁸⁷ It is reported that Nestorius would not honor Pulcheria as the Bride of Christ in his public prayers for the imperial house. See Nest. *Heracl*, 89 Nau. Elm, 118, n 31 cites Bas. Anc. *De virg.* 50 (768 and passim): "A virgin is the earthly spouse of the heavenly bridegroom Jesus Christ, with whom she will be united in a 'mystical wedding' in heaven---a wedding in the presence of God the Father, solemnized by Christ's favourite servant, John, surrounded by angels who will chant the *epithalamium*, the wedding song."

²⁸⁸ R. Taft, "Was the Eucharistic Anaphora Recited Secretly or Aloud?" in *Worship Traditions in Armenia and the Neighbouring Christian East*, 34. Epiclesis is the entire Eucharistic prayer. The anaphora

summon the Holy Spirit during the celebration. Perhaps her robe on the holy table made it such that it would be imbued with the Holy Spirit.

There are more associations. The robe is a metaphor for the body.²⁸⁹ In Ephrem he uses 'to put on the body' as a metaphor for the Incarnation. He [Christ] put on His mother's robe, her body, while I [Mary] put on his glory.²⁹⁰ Pulcheria could also have been imitating Mary by offering her body for Christ to put it on.

Another association is that the "figure of clothing is applied to God's election of the Church". In Ephrem's *Hymns on the Church* the Lord puts on the Church...and our Lord put on anew the body and rose again.²⁹¹ Pulcheria's robe would then have been symbolic of the Church. She was providing His Resurrection garment which is the Church.²⁹²

By looking at the way the Divine Liturgy unfolded at the time, Taft holds that it was the Antiochene mystagogy of Theodore of Mopsuestia, with its strong emphasis on the relation between the liturgical rites (mysteries) and the (historical) saving acts of

is the invocation of the Holy Spirit during the prayer. The use of the term epiclesis for the anaphora was common in this early period.

²⁸⁹ Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 86. "Ephrem and Syriac Christianity in general, evidently inherited this image of the primordial 'robe of light' or 'glory' from Jewish interpretations of Genesis 3:21, 'And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and He clothed them'. In the Targum tradition it is not 'garments of skin' but 'clothing of glory'. In the Jewish Midrash Rabba on Genesis it is not 'garments of skin' but 'garments of light'. We can be certain that the idea of primordial 'robe of glory' has its origin in Jewish speculation concerning Genesis 3:1; it will have reached Christian (and other) circles by way of the extensive apocryphal literature, now for the most part lost, that grew up around the figures of Adam and Eve in the early centuries of the Christian era."

²⁹⁰ McVey, *Ephrem's Hymns*, 154. Hymns on the Nativity 17.

²⁹¹ Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975) : 59-60.

²⁹² As mentioned earlier, in pagan worship 'putting on' of the goddess, was the practice of women imitating Isis in order to partake in her divinity. Salvation comes through imitation. With these ideas in mind, it would be fair to conclude that Pulcheria's gesture may not necessarily have meant only the imitation Joseph of Arimathea, but much more.

Christ's life, which dominated the Byzantine as well as the East Syrian liturgy.²⁹³ The character of the Liturgy is clearly described in a synopsis of Theodore's Homily 15:

We see Christ now as he is led away to his passion, and again later when he is stretched out on the altar to be immolated for us. This is why some of the deacons spread cloths on the altar which remind us of winding sheets, while others stand on either side and fan the air above the sacred body.²⁹⁴

While the essential symbolism is one of the tomb and the resurrection, it would appear that much more symbolism was in circulation. Hymns and homilies filled with symbolic poetic theology would have supplied enriching visions in the minds of the people.

In summary, the Theodosian dynasty played a key role in the maintenance and development of the Nicene orthodox faith and the notion of sacral kingship. Following in the footsteps of her grandfather, Theodosius the Great, Pulcheria emerged onto the world scene. Her image paralleled that of Mary, as she also was a young virgin and in a sense 'mother' to the emperor. To the Byzantine population she represented the comfort and security of an imperial mother, co-mediator of the divine. Although, Pulcheria has been criticized for taking on the image of Mary, she was in fact in solidarity with the contemporary asceticism of her day.

Pulcheria had many spiritual traditions to draw upon. She was aware of the developments in both the Eastern and the Western churches. Her spiritual father Atticus would have had a great influence on her. His Armenian origins would have made him sympathetic to the urban monastic tradition, Cappadocian theology which

²⁹³ Taft, *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995) 66-67. "It is beyond cavil that the New Testament presents this sacrificial meal as both the fulfillment of the Jewish Passover and a foreshadowing the messianic banquet of the new age." Also, "the symbol-system may have remoter origins, but it depends on an Antiochene hermeneutic. The influence of Jerusalem and the Church of the Anastasis situated over the sepulcher of Christ, meant that in smaller churches the apse became the sepulcher and the altar the tomb from which salvation comes forth into the world."

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 63. cf. E. Yarnold, *The Awe-inspiring Rites of Initiation. Baptismal Homilies of the Fourth Century* (Slough, 191).

belied the mysticism of Origen, the symbolic theology of Eastern Syria, most notably that of Ephrem and also the Antiochene Syrian liturgy. Evidence shows that she upheld a monastic lifestyle, in the spirit of Basil's city of the poor. In the air was the uplifting and liberating effect of Mary as the New Eve, resulting in all women being seen as saviours. The Daughters of the Covenant, Ephrem's choirs of women were an example of this new dignity. There was also a shift in the negative attitude towards women stemming from the positive image of the body provided by the Eastern Syriac tradition. The strength and piety of a number of holy women gave Pulcheria models to imitate. Theodosia in particular would have brought to Constantinople devotion to urban monasticism, and also devotion to Mary and a force for women's equality. Pulcheria had a great interest and devotion to the relics of martyrs and saints, most notably those of the proto-martyr Stephen, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and to Mary.

The cult of Mary intensified with the great numbers of virgins flocking to the city. Constantinople was 'the city of virgins'. Virginity held saving power for both the family and the empire. Pulcheria showed particular devotion to Mary not only by her virginity, but in the building of churches, the establishment of a feast of virginity on December 26 and the bringing of the garments of Mary to Constantinople, so that Mary's presence would live there. Pulcheria also showed a profound love for Christ, revealed by her vow of virginity, her care for the poor, support of monasteries, and her gesture of covering the altar upon which the Eucharist was celebrated with her robe, a multi-layered symbolic ritual practiced within the Antiochene Syrian liturgy. Throughout, there are symbols of victory through the presence of the relics or garments of martyrs and saints.

CHAPTER 5

ON GIVING BIRTH TO GOD

In the following chapter a survey of the theme of giving birth to God is made, all the while attempting to remain in the years prior to the Council of Ephesus 431 C.E. As the theme falls under the category of divine indwelling, the views on indwelling of the various fathers are also surveyed. The breadth, depth and heights of these theologians is impossible to cover in this brief format. This chapter is but a sampling of the beauty that lies within each of them. The purpose is to be able to make an assessment of the reported exchange between Nestorius and Pulcheria, more specifically to see whether Pulcheria's reported claim to have given birth to God, signifies the mystical patristic teaching of giving birth to Christ in imitation of Mary.

It is sometimes the case with historical documents that false reports are written in order to denigrate others depending on which side the writer wants to attack.²⁹⁵ Cooper writes that "the idea that Pulcheria claimed to have herself given birth to God is far more plausible historically than the accusation that she slept with seven men or with her brother Theodosius."²⁹⁶ Curiously, this particular caustic interchange and other of Nestorius' offences aimed at Pulcheria are not mentioned by Socrates or other

²⁹⁵ See S.A. Harvey "Theodora the 'Believing Queen': A study in Syriac Historiographical Tradition," *Hugoye Journal of Syriac Studies*. 4:2 (2001). "Here Christianity follows the inherited rhetorical traditions of classical antiquity. See, e.g., Fischler, "Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis;" and Averil Cameron, "Virginity as Metaphor: Women and the Rhetoric of Early Christianity," in *History as Text: the Writing of Ancient History*, ed. Averil Cameron (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 181-205. Cameron's argument is made more extensively in her masterful study *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), esp. at pp. 68-72 and 171-80. See also Virginia Burrus, "The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius, Epiphanius and Jerome," *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991), 229-48."

²⁹⁶ Cooper, 41.

contemporary writers.²⁹⁷ A number of scholars assuming the reports to be genuine have portrayed Pulcheria as actually taking on the persona of Mary the Theotokos, and that she had a singular devotion to the cult of the Theotokos.²⁹⁸

These views may be unbalanced, for as seen in this study Pulcheria was not an unreasonable person. She was not only occupied with the affairs of the empire, she continued Basil's model of radical urban monasticism and she loved the cult of the martyrs especially that of the proto-martyr Stephen of whom it was said 'she held in the bridal chamber of her soul.'²⁹⁹ Like many other virgins, she would have held Mary in high esteem as her model and guide, but as an empress she had a wide range of interests, devotions and commitments.

The Theotokos issue was initially caused by a reaction to Nestorius' abrasive demands on monks and women in limiting their freedom and by his violent attitude toward heretics.³⁰⁰ The issue of the Theotokos title itself was, on the part of Nestorius, a

²⁹⁷ Constatas, 50, n. 29. Nestorius, *Ad Cosmam*, 5-8 (ed. Nau, Heracleides, 363-64); cf. Briere, "La Legende," 20; Barhadbsabba, H.E., 27 (ed. Nau, PO 9.5, 565-66); and the *Suidae Lexicon*, s.v. "Pulcheria" (ed. Adler, 4:183, lines 1-21).

²⁹⁸ Eg. McVey, 459, cites Limberis, 50. "What is unique about Pulcheria is the extent to which she took her claim to be the Virgin Mary." Constatas, 5. "...the empress Pulcheria who modeled herself decisively on the image of Mary. Constatas, 348. "Anyone who challenged Pulcheria's legitimacy on the grounds that she was a woman risked insulting a woman who had redefined herself as the newest of the New Eves who by grace had become another Theotokos." In Kate Cooper's abstract for "Constesting the Nativity" she writes "Pulcheria is remembered as having claimed that her own virginal status allowed her to ritually re-enact the Nativity of Jesus."

²⁹⁹ Holum, TE, 108. PG, LXIII, 933; Stephen/the victory crown is in the palace, for the virgin empress has brought him into her bride-chamber. Identified as a text of Proclus by Leroy, *Homilétique*, 158.

³⁰⁰ The Nestorius controversy is complex. He came to Constantinople from Antioch as a rather naïve individual who was out of step with Constantinople and who was determined to root out the heretics (the period of Theodosius II was lenient towards heretics) and to get the monks off the streets and to get the women to stay at home. Pulcheria's circle of aristocratic women was also influential in Nestorius' downfall. Cyril of Alexandria entered the fray motivated by other reasons. He wanted to use the Theotokos as a way to outdo the pagans. He was angered at a report that had been made about him and brought to the attention of Nestorius. The attack on Nestorius was well organized. The Egyptian monks helped Cyril to prepare for Ephesus and probably roused the crowds to shout hail to the Theotokos. The use of the title Theotokos for Mary was in use wherever the Greek language was used. The Syrians were slower in raising Mary to such a status, so close to the divine. The Syrians, especially

problem consisting of his anti-pagan stance. He feared that the populace would make Mary into a goddess. "Nestorius said: I have already said many times that if any of you, or anyone else, be simple and prefer to use the Theotokos then I have no objection to the term---only do not make a goddess (*thea*) of the Virgin."³⁰¹ It was also his incomprehension of the longtime usage of the Greek term itself. Nestorius suggested the alternative use of *christotokos*, accentuating the humanity of Christ. The Theotokos was promoted by the Alexandrian stream, especially Cyril of Alexandria who, with the help of Proclus and Pulcheria raised Mary's profile to new heights.

In his interesting book entitled *Vox Populi: Popular Opinion and Violence in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century A.D.*, Timothy Gregory raises two issues of great importance surrounding the pre-Ephesus period. One is that he distinguishes between the veneration of Mary the Theotokos, who is closely tied to Christological questions, and the Mary who is venerated by the people for herself. He writes: "The people worshipped the Virgin as more than the instrument through which the Incarnation came about: they venerated her directly for herself and for the assistance she might give mankind."³⁰²

The second issue that Gregory raises is that the monks held Mary in very high regard. Shenoute and his Egyptian monks were instrumental in the preparations for the Council of Ephesus. Also, the Constantinopolitan archimandrite Dalmatius came out of his forty-year retreat to see the Emperor during the Council. Gregory writes:

those of the Antiochene School, stressed the humanity of Christ as well as of Mary. See T. Gregory, *Vox Populi* and G. Bevan, dissertation for objective accounts Nestorius and the Council of Ephesus.

³⁰¹ Timothy E. Gregory, *Vox Populi: Popular Opinion and Violence in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century A.D.* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979), 98.

³⁰² Gregory, *Vox Populi*, 99.

The Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries---with the notable exception of John Chrysostom---continued to pay increasing honor to Mary. More and more she was set as the ideal after which women, and more particularly, ascetics should strive. In this period, [pre-Ephesus] the monastic movement took the Virgin as its special patron, and it is not surprising to find the monks as the strongest defenders of her honor.³⁰³

Thus, the underpinning of the cult of Mary was the monastic movement. Earlier in this study there was mention of paintings of *Maria lactans*, Mary nursing the Child-Jesus, found in monastery cells in Egypt. In the *Akathistos Hymn* strophe 19.16 speaks of Mary as "the fair nursing-mother of virgins."³⁰⁴ The male as virgin was traditional language. It is primarily the soul, heart or mind that is virgin and chaste. The incorporation of male ascetics as practitioners of giving birth to Christ in imitation of Mary must not be forgotten.

Now the texts relating to giving birth should speak. In her study of the image of Mary to be found in the *Akathistos Hymn*,³⁰⁵ Peltomaa reports that Caro's survey of Greek homilies provides evidence that "fourth century homilies focus predominantly on the Annunciation; and that the homilies from the first half of the fifth century before the Ephesian period reflect the discourse of the Incarnation of the divine Logos."³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Gregory, *Vox Populi*, 98. n. 88 "Chrysostom, of course, was raised in the tradition of Antiochene Christianity. It is interesting that his sermons which do little to increase the honor paid to the Virgin appear not to have diminished his popularity in Constantinople." Also n. 88. See J. Hasse, "Die koptischen Quellen zum Konzil von Nicaea, *Studien zur Geschichte un Kultur des Altertums* 10, 4 (Pendenborn, 1920); A. Eberle, *Die Mariologie des H. Cyrillus von Alexandrien* (Freigurg, 1921) ; G. Soll, « Die Mariologie der Kappadozier in Lichte der Dogmengeschichte, » *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 131 (51), 178-88.

³⁰⁴ Peltomaa, 17.

³⁰⁵ Peltomaa reached the conclusion that the *Akathistos Hymn* was based on the theology of Gregory of Nyssa and that it was created in the period between Ephesus and Chalcedon.

³⁰⁶ Peltomaa, 66. See Caro, R. (ed) (1971-3) *La homiletica mariana griego en el siglo V*, 3 vols., Marian Library Studies, University of Dayton, OH. Caro has found that the homilies between 428 and 449 are centred around the two main issues of the Nestorian controversy, the Incarnation of the divine Logos and the mystery of the virgin or divine birth. Peltomaa has found that these two themes plus the Annunciation are the theological themes in the *Akathistos Hymn*.

A survey has also been made of the Syriac texts of Ps.-Macarius and Ephrem specifically looking for divine indwelling vocabulary. The majority of words in the Ps.-Macarius texts stress indwelling within the soul or heart by the Lord, Bridegroom, Divinity, or God. In Ephrem the majority of the words are related to the Incarnation of Christ as dwelling in Mary's womb or in a human body.³⁰⁷

The theme of 'giving birth to God' belongs under the heading of Divine Indwelling. There is a vast number of ways in which divine indwelling has been taught, recorded and experienced. The primary one for Christians is the Incarnation which was the great manifestation of the Spirit of God indwelling the human race and made tangible through the life and teachings of Jesus.

Athanasius set the course of the church by teaching that the possibility of continued indwelling is found through the Gospel narratives. "The founding intuition of Athanasius' spiritual message is [his] seminal perception of the immediate access provided by God for everyone in the church to the realities of the divine presence in the Gospel revelation."³⁰⁸ Full communion of individuals with God is possible and manifests itself in the fulfilled life of the church itself which in turn demonstrates the dynamism of the Holy Trinity.³⁰⁹

The subsequent discourse on divine indwelling, especially the individual's experience of giving birth to God, reflects a return to one of Origen's themes. It is also exemplary of the religious metaphorical language in circulation during the period,

³⁰⁷ Columba Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart: The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431*. See Appendix 9, Ps. Macarius (excluding non-theological uses) and Appendix 10, Ephrem (texts as surveyed), 295-296.

³⁰⁸ Charles Kannengieser "The Spiritual Message of the Great Fathers", *Christian Spirituality* 1, 63.

³⁰⁹ Lars Thunberg "The Human Person as Image of God," *Christian Spirituality* 1, 308.

which belies a mixture of cultural traditions notably Eastern Syrian and Cappadocian-Alexandrian.

Although Antiochene exegesis and theology was fading in Constantinople, it was at its height in Edessa, Eastern Syria (ca. 414-29).³¹⁰ McGuckin highlights that by 428 C.E. there had already been a generation of “Neo-Nicene synthesis of the Cappadocians [who] had been bringing the Alexandrian Christology of Origen softened and moderated, back into the public domain as Christianity’s dominant form of theological confession.”³¹¹

McVey’s article (2001), points ‘the way to the possibility that there are theological relations to the theme of ‘giving birth to God’ existing between Origen, the Cappadocian Fathers, Ephrem the Syrian, and Proclus of Constantinople. Brock also sees a similarity between Ephrem and the Cappadocian Fathers in particular Gregory of Nyssa. “It is at the level of the deep structures of their theological vision that Ephrem and the Cappadocian Fathers would appear to have much in common. They share the general religious language of the time, not confined to any one specific school of thought.”³¹²

Basil certainly had links with the Syrians. In his roles as metropolitan of Cappadocia and especially as exarch of Pontus, he had authority over half of Asia Minor. He was a great leader of bishops who he gathered together in support of

³¹⁰ Constatas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 94.

³¹¹ Anthony McGuckin, “The Paradox of the Virgin-Theotokos”, *Maria* (2001) 2.1 : 18. Regarding the crisis in the church over the *Theotokos* the reason for the violent response to Nestorius’ talk, from the Antiochene School, is due to the current familiarity with the Cappadocian-Alexandrian tradition. McGuckin explains that “it was shocking that Nestorius found the title *Theotokos* to be an overly pagan notion, and insisted on Mary’s creaturely status, and designated her son, the Christ, as a man who was: ‘The instrument of God’s action, and the vesture God chose to wear.’”

³¹² Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 148. Brock mentions that comparative studies of Ephrem and the Cappadocians (in particular Gregory of Nyssa) would be well worth undertaking.

orthodoxy. Gregory of Nyssa was in admiration of the wandering Mesopotamian monks that he met. As shown further below the theological influences ran in both directions. It is wrong to think that the Greeks were always influential over the Syrians, as if "the orientals were borrowing and bowdlerizing the arguments and writings of their great 'occidental' masters."³¹³

Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers

The Cappadocian Fathers are known to have been instrumental in the re-surfacing of Origen's thought, formulating it so that it would be an essential underpinning of neo-Nicene faith.³¹⁴ In Origen and the Logos theologians the term *theotokos* was used to help understand the work of the Logos in human beings. It is fair to say that from the outset Origen conceived of the possibility that all persons could become *theotokoi*, all humans could bear Christ as Mary did.³¹⁵

Hugo Rahner identified the three key events of spiritual generation found in Origen: (1) the eternal generation of the Logos by the Father, 2) the conception of that same Logos in Mary's womb, 3) the birth of Christ in the inner self of the Christian who

³¹³ D.G.K. Taylor, "Basil of Caesarea's Contacts with Syriac-speaking Christians," *Studia Patristica* 32: 213-219. Taylor underscores the fact that there were bilingual theologians who provided translations, which meant that access to each other's works and ideas was surprisingly rapid.

³¹⁴ Origen's defenders in the East were: Eusebius of Caesarea; Didymus the Blind, the head of the Catechetical school in Alexandria; Athanasius to some degree; and especially the Cappadocians. The Cappadocian Fathers did take a special interest in Origen. Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus on their return to Cappadocia from classical studies in Athens, compiled the *Philokalia* or short sayings of Origen.

³¹⁵ Crouzel, *Origen*. Trans. A.S. Worrall. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989) 124. "If the soul is to give birth to the Word, then Mary is its model 'and every soul, virgin and uncorrupted, which conceives by the Holy Spirit, so as to give birth to the Will of the Father, is the Mother of Jesus.'" See also Constat, 246. "If one could become God by grace (cf. John 10.34) and give birth to Christ [spiritually, as the Fathers suggested], then one had also become a 'Theotokos.'"

is newly baptized.³¹⁶ Crouzel identifies the idea of the birth and the growth of the Logos³¹⁷ in each soul as one of the great themes in Origen.³¹⁸ Origen includes both the church and the individual as possible Logos-bearers through two actions: by accepting the word of faith and by nurturing it by a graceful and pious life.³¹⁹ The concept of accommodating both individuals and the collective in this scheme indicates the dichotomy that existed early on between the individual and the church.

Origen is the first theologian to develop the patristic teaching on the birth of Christ in the believer's heart (or soul or mind). However, this theme was not Origen's innovation; it is found originally in Galatians 4:1: "My children, for whom I am again in labor until Christ be formed in you!" The theme is also found in *Writing to Diognetus* and in Hippolytus.³²⁰ It originates in the Hebrew Scriptures through the theophanies of Abraham, Moses, and Ezekiel.

The concept of 'giving birth to God'³²¹ can be traced to the nuptial themes developed by Origen.³²² His nuptial themes are the following: 1) The Bride and the Bridegroom or mystical marriage/union; 2) The wound of love; 3) Begetting or the birth

³¹⁶ McVey, "Ephrem the Syrian and Divine Indwelling," 460. Hugo Rahner, 'Die Gottesgeburt: Die Lehre der Kirchenvater von der Geburt Christi im Herzen des Glaubigen', ZKTH 59 (1935) pp 333-418, esp. pp 351-58. Rahner also cites the work of the two Gregory's. The initial indwelling takes place at Baptism. Cf. further in this study that Daniélou mentions that it is the Eucharist which is the locus for union with the Word.

³¹⁷ The Logos, the Word, the Will and Christ are often synonymous.

³¹⁸ Origène, *Homélies sur S. Luc. Texte latin et fragments grecs*. Intro., trans. and notes by Henri Crouzel, Francois Fournier and Pierre Périchon. (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1962) 40.

³¹⁹ McVey, 460. See Rahner reference in footnote above.

³²⁰ Crouzel, *Origen*, 124. Crouzel also says that the theme is close to that of the indwelling of Christ and of the Trinity in the soul to which there is several times testimony in Paul and in John.

³²¹ The name of God and Christ are often synonymous.

³²² Crouzel, *Origen*, 124.

and growth of Christ in the soul.³²³ It is this third nuptial theme that is of prime interest to this study although the mystical marriage also figures.

The birth of Christ in the soul is essentially bound up with the reception of the Word and in a certain way Jesus is thus being continually born in souls, a dynamic divine activity which constitutes the church. The critical importance of this in relation to soteriology is expressed by Origen who states several times in different but equivalent ways that "if the Christ is not born in me, I am shut out from salvation."³²⁴

The scriptural basis for giving birth to God in Origen is his interpretation of Matthew 12: 48-50:³²⁵ Jesus distances himself from his relatives according to the flesh and points to his disciples and declares that one who does the will of his Father in heaven to be his brother, his sister, and his mother.³²⁶ "In the ancient church the Gospel of Matthew had the greatest and most profound influence of all the New Testament writings."³²⁷ It is from this passage that Origen develops the idea of becoming a mother of Christ. According to Origen, the act of doing the Will of the Father means, giving birth to the divine Word, who is, in Himself, the Will of the Father.³²⁸

³²³ Crouzel, *Origen*, 121-124.

³²⁴ Crouzel, *Origen*, 125.

³²⁵ Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*. Trans. Robert R. Barr. (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K. 2002) : 120.

³²⁶ Schnackenburg, 120. Also, "The Gospel of Matthew retains its abiding value as the "church" work that gives Christians direction and guidance in this world. Indeed, its ethos is more current today than ever before in the requirements of the Sermon on the Mount, the image of the 'community of siblings' as the model of excellence, the confrontation with the seed of the Evil One, and its outlook on the consummation of world history. Driven forward by its self-understanding as salt of the earth and light of the world (5:13-16) and on the commission of the Risen One (28:16-20), the community of disciples of Jesus Christ knows that it has been sent into the world, and into the world it goes, in struggle and need, solace and hope, throughout all time, toward the goal appointed by its Lord." 11-12.

³²⁷ Schnackenburg, 11.

³²⁸ Gambero, 76.

Related to this theme is Origen's sub-theme on the fecundity of the chaste in imitation of Mary. This fecundity imitates that of Mary, Virgin and Mother. Origen says: "If the soul is to give birth to the Word, then Mary is its model 'and every soul, virgin and uncorrupted, which conceives by the Holy Spirit, so as to give birth to the Will of the Father, is the Mother of Jesus.'"³²⁹

Origen recommends chastity or better yet virginity to benefit fully from becoming a mother of Christ. However, he does mention that celibates and married couples may also give birth, but only if they are chaste. In Origen's *Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans* IV, 6, his words soar like a bird as he explains about begetting Christ ourselves:

Your sowing, that is your works, will mount to heaven, will become works of light that will be compared to the brilliance and splendor of the stars...Even more, you may, if you are pure enough in intelligence, holy enough in body, immaculate enough by your acts, beget Christ himself.³³⁰

Chastity for virgins and celibates entails continence. Married couples may engage in the act of procreation if they do so in a state of grace, in a tranquil spiritual manner and as a gift to Christ.³³¹ Importantly, Origen considers 'spiritual' virginity the only type of virginity that really counts.³³²

³²⁹ Quoted in Crouzel, *Origen*, 124. *FragmMt* 281; GCS XII/1.

³³⁰ Crouzel, Henri, *Virginité et Mariage selon Origène*. Museum Lessianum, section théologique no. 58. Desclée de Brouwer. Paris-Bruges, 1962. 126. "Ta semence, c'est à dire tes oeuvres, monteront jusqu'au ciel, deviendront oeuvres de lumières seront comparées à l'éclat et à la splendeur des étoiles...Bien plus, tu peux, si tu es assez pur d'intelligence, assez saint de corps, assez immaculé par tes actes, engendrer le Christ lui-même." (My translation) *Com. on Rom. IV, 6* (PG. XIV, 983C).

³³¹ Crouzel, *Virg. et mariage*, 79.

³³² Crouzel. *Virg. et mariage*, 109-127.

For Origen it is the Eucharist which provides the “sacramental” framework for union with the Word.³³³ However, Origen also writes about another framework, the “inner man” framework, which is that of a mystical experience not associated with the sacraments, but a spiritual love awoken by the Word, something that the inner man can engender by loving.³³⁴

The rituals that may have been practiced by virgins point perhaps to a framework of the ‘inner man’,³³⁵ and individual experience. However, further in this study Brock has found in Ephrem an association with Mary, the Incarnation and the Eucharist which signals something important about the character of Marian piety as being wrapped up in the sacrament of the Eucharist and therefore the collective experience.

The way for the “inner man” to engender a spiritual love is found also in Basil. If one looks for an equivalent to ‘giving birth to God’ or to ‘Christ’ in Basil, one finds that he teaches that one can bear the Holy Spirit. The ideal Christian is “one in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt and acted. It was this ‘Spirit-bearer’ who realized the truth of right belief which consisted also in right action, and who indeed, as a consequence, was ‘pure

³³³ Jean Daniélou, *Origène*, 79. “This mystical union with God takes place during the Eucharist. A trait in sacramental theology that has stayed within the Church of the Orient is the parallelism between the sacraments and mysticism. For Origen it is not the visible bread and wine that cause the union, it is the mystical bread and wine coming from the God-Word that feeds the hungry souls and it is the celestial wine that provides the mystical inebriation. The mystical experience is of a higher order than the Eucharist itself. This theology was developed by Gregory of Nyssa and found perfect expression in Nicolas Cabasilas.” (My translation) See also Mme Lot-Borodine: *La grâce déifiante des sacrements d’après Nicolas Cabasilas*. The Eucharist as secondary and continuous indwelling after baptism, is developed in Cyril of Alexandria.

³³⁴ This is associated with Origen’s doctrine of the spiritual senses that was developed further by Gregory of Nyssa and also in Ephrem the Syrian, who takes it further to include sensing in the physical body. Here is again the issue of individual mystical experience vs sacraments within the church which escalates in the early fifth century.

³³⁵ For example, the retreats associated with the *Subbara* or Annunciation in the weeks before the feast of the Nativity.

of heart."³³⁶ One can bear the Holy Spirit or be united with the Holy Spirit through baptism "by taking part in the death of Christ symbolized by the purification of baptism, after which it is the Spirit who operates to re-establish Paradise, the ascent to the kingdom of heaven, the return to God through the adoption of sons."³³⁷

Emulating St Anthony as described in the *Vita Antonii* ca. 357, by Athanasius, Basil desires to be a pneumatophor. "In Basil's ascetical writings, the ascetic is portrayed as a 'pneumatophor,' that is, as an active vessel and distributor of the Holy Spirit with all the accompanying gifts."³³⁸

There is evidence in Basil's Shorter Rules of his reliance on Origen's interpretation of Matthew 12:50. It is the use of the notion of "brother, sister, mother of Christ" applied in the practical context of ministering to the sick, poor, destitute, and infirm as a function of the church. It is a question from a woman:

Q. We who serve the sick are taught to serve them with such a disposition as if they were brothers of the Lord. Now if the man who receives our services cannot be given this title, how ought we to attend to him?

A: Since the Lord said: "Whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother:
If a man is not such as is described....Put away the wicked man from among yourselves. In this way those who serve will be free from doubt and all who live together will be in safety."³³⁹

Basil uses the title *Theotokos* for Mary. He sees Mary as the one who made it possible, by her holy virginity, for God to come down to join our race, and to dwell in us and become our intimate companion; the work being accomplished by the Holy Spirit

³³⁶ Harriet A. Luckman, "Basil of Caesarea and Purity of Heart," *Purity of Heart*, 89.

³³⁷ Luckman, 99. *De Spiritu Sancto* 15.36. SC 17.171.

³³⁸ Luckman, *Purity of Heart*, 97.

³³⁹ Quoted in Crislip, 117. *Basil of Caesarea*, RB 155, tr. Clarke.

and the overshadowing power of the Most High. The language of fecundity is also used by Basil as he teaches that Mary's womb is the workshop of our salvation.³⁴⁰

Basil balanced theology with pastoral action. His young brother Gregory of Nyssa became an ascetic, thinker and mystic. In fact "he elaborated the richest doctrine of Christian mysticism in the ancient Greek-speaking churches."³⁴¹ He is also considered to "stand at the summit of Cappadocian Mariology."³⁴²

Origen's theme of 'giving birth to God' can be found in Gregory's works. The "birth of Christ in the soul or heart was the first step toward restoration of the divine image, the *imago dei*." In Gregory of Nyssa's *De Virginitate II*, with a stress on purity, he clearly writes about the capacity of every soul to give birth to Christ:

For what happened corporeally in the case of the immaculate Mary, when the fullness of the divinity shone forth in Christ through her virginity, takes place also in every soul spiritually giving birth to Christ, although the Lord no longer effects a bodily presence.³⁴³

In Gregory, 'giving birth to Christ' is effectuated in function of the eschaton and of paradise regained.³⁴⁴ Even though it is the incarnate Christ who humans must imitate, by imitating Mary's virginity all souls shatter the power of death. Gregory wrote:

Just as at the time of Mary, the Mother of God, death who had been king from the time of Adam until then, when she was born, was shattered, being dashed against the fruit of virginity as if against a stone, so in every soul which through virginity rejects life

³⁴⁰ Gambero, 145. Gambero suggests that the best Marian works by Basil are *On the Holy Generation of Christ* and *Letter 260*. Mary's womb as the workshop of salvation is also found in Proclus of Constantinople. See 143, n 3 for a list of works on Basil's Marian thought.

³⁴¹ Kannengiesser, "The Spirituality of the Great Fathers", 71.

³⁴² Baechle, "Christological Roots of Cappadocian Mariology," *Diakonia* 34, (2005) 44.

³⁴³ Quoted in Baechle, 48. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* ch. 2, *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works*, FC 58, 11.

³⁴⁴ McVey, 460.

in the flesh, the power of death is somehow shattered and destroyed, since it cannot apply its goad to them.³⁴⁵

Nuptial language is found in Gregory's fifteen homilies on the Songs of Songs written between 386 and 391 which were dedicated to the lady Olympias.³⁴⁶ One wonders what the young Olympias would have thought reading in Homily 5 where he wonders about the sequence of the words: Arise, make haste, my love, my dove and come.³⁴⁷ His most important work on Christian perfection and holiness is the *Life of Moses* in which he theorizes about the pursuit of the likeness of God by the virtuous life.³⁴⁸

Gregory of Nyssa also uses nuptial language in his *Life of Macrina* in which he assists at the deathbed of his elder sister Macrina who is a virgin and monastic.³⁴⁹ She was an influential figure in the lives of her brothers. In the *Life* he portrays her as mystically enveloped in prayer and on her way to meet the Bridegroom.

Gregory of Nazianzus, orator, poet and ascetic, emphasized the link between giving birth to God and the Incarnation in the liturgical context of the Nativity. In the

³⁴⁵ Quoted in Baechle, 49. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, ch. 14, *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works*, FC 58, 49.

³⁴⁶ The lady Olympias was no doubt the same one who is described earlier in this study. Apparently, Gregory did not finish his work, it stopped abruptly at Song of Songs 6:9. One wonders whether he and she may have fallen in love. Of course, this is pure speculation, but it would not have been the first time that a committed ascetic would be wounded by the arrow of human love. Evagrius (345-398) fled Constantinople because he had become entangled in a love affair. He went to Melania the Elder for advice and she told him to go to the desert where his reputation as a great ascetic grew and where he spent the rest of his life. Sozomen wrote that "The imperial city proved a dangerous home for the young deacon. The wife of an ex-prefect conceived a guilty passion for him, which he returned. The husband's jealousy was awakened, and Evagrius only escaped assassination by a timely flight, being warned of his peril by a dream." Sozomen H.E. VI. 30. From <http://ccel.org/ccel/wace/biodict>, accessed March 12, 2008.

³⁴⁷ Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 2000) 80.

³⁴⁸ Meredith, 60.

³⁴⁹ Elm, 78. Gr. Nyss. VSM 6.

Church of the Anastasia he preached to the women present: "Christ was born of a Virgin; practice virginity, women, in order to become mothers of Christ!"³⁵⁰

Gregory of Nazianzus used the word *theosis* or deification very often in his works. In the words of Florovsky it means: "We are in intimate connection as human persons with the living God. To be with him is to dwell in him and to share his perfection."³⁵¹

McVey suggests that the concept of the Second Eve and the theme of giving birth to God are found together for the first time in the works of the two Gregories.³⁵² Gregory of Nyssa called Mary 'Mother of Life'³⁵³ and in Gregory of Nazianzus we find:

But after Christ was born of a chaste and virgin Mother, not bound by carnal chains and like unto God, virginity began to sanctify women and drive away the bitter Eve. It [virginity] took away the laws of the flesh, and, through the preaching of the gospel, the letter gave way to the spirit, and grace entered in.³⁵⁴

A glimpse into Gregory's dedication to women and to his Marian spirituality is his friendship with Theodosia. One of Theodosia's villas became the site of the church called Anastasia or Church of the Resurrection. Theodosia offered the villa to Gregory who used part of it to establish the Anastasia in 379, before he became Patriarch in 380. Theodosia and others had asked him to come to Constantinople which was then overrun with Arians, so that Gregory could gather the Nicene party, to promote the

³⁵⁰ Quoted in Peltomaa, 73. Or. "In Nativitatem, vel In Theophania," 38.1 PG 36: 313A.

³⁵¹ Quoted in Meredith, 48, n. 14. G. Florovsky, *Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century* (Paris, 1931).

³⁵² McVey writes that it was Holum who identified two strands of piety in the works of Atticus and Proclus, the Second Eve and the spiritual birth of Christ in the mind or soul of the believer. Holum, 139.

³⁵³ Graef, *The Devotion to Our Lady*, 20.

³⁵⁴ Quoted in Gambero, 165. Gregory Nazianzen, *Moral Poems I*, 189-208; PG 37, 537 A-538 A.

Nicene understanding of the Trinity and to help rid the city of Arians.³⁵⁵ Theodosia, Olympias and Thecla (an aristocratic woman) continued to support Gregory's church.

Of particular interest to this study is the mention of the Church of Anastasia as a place where through Mary divine power was shown: As recorded by Sozomen (d. 447/8):

Later, this little church became one of the most famous churches of the imperial city, and it is still famous today (i.e. c.443)³⁵⁶ not only because of the beauty and completeness of its structure, but also for the frequent favors that were received there through manifestations of divine power. For divine power (*theia dynamis*) was manifested there to persons both watchful and asleep, which brought relief to many oppressed by illness and other woes. It is believed that this power came from the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. For in such wise is she wont to appear.³⁵⁷

This testimony of Sozomen shows that a cult of Mary was likely practiced at the Church of Anastasia in Constantinople sometime during and after the time Gregory left the church to become Patriarch in 380, and a number of years before Sozomen died in 447/8. This would likely mean that the Church of Anastasia was associated with Mary in the years before the Council of Ephesus.³⁵⁸

In Gregory's *Oration 24 In Praise of Cyprian (of Carthage)* given on October 2, 379 in the Church of Anastasia³⁵⁹ he preached: "More than this, as one keeping in mind

³⁵⁵ Quoted in Gambero S.M. 161. *Storia ecclesiastica* 7, 5; PG 67, 1424-25.

³⁵⁶ It is difficult to discern what 'later' means for Sozomen. He began writing his *Church History* in ca. 443 so he means before that time.

³⁵⁷ Gambero, 161. *Storia ecclesiastica* 7, 5; PG 67, 1424-25.

³⁵⁸ John McGuckin writes that "In later years, perhaps beginning with extensions made by Nektarios, Gregory's successor, it was built up into a larger complex favored by the diplomatic classes. Anastasia was not the patronal saint of this church. Relics of St Anastasia Pharmakolytria rested there until taken to Rome in the time of Gregory the Great." However, McGuckin is unsure as to whether or not this information is about another church. It is possible that McGuckin has not come across the testimony of Sozomen. See p 241-242, McGuckin, *St Gregory of Nazianzus*.

³⁵⁹ Anthony McGuckin. *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*. Crestwood, N.Y. St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001. 251-252. Other orations given at Anastasia are: Orats. 20, 22, 32, 23,33, 21,34,41,27-31.

the following, and beseeching the Virgin Mary to assist any endangered virgin, the remedy of fasting and sleeping on the ground is offered.”³⁶⁰

Cooper writes that an undated, anonymous Latin document attributed to John Chrysostom and entitled *Liber ad Gregoriam*³⁶¹ is “a manual for matrons which has come down to us as a letter of spiritual direction to a lady-in-waiting at the court of Constantinople from the hand of John Chrysostom.”³⁶² It praises Saint Anasthasia as a model for matrons (married women):

And just as having despised majesty, he took on the form of a servant, so that he might assist us all, so you [Saint Anasthasia of Sirmium]³⁶³ yourself having despised the glory of nobility, took on an ignominy of person, so that you might be imitated by others, and so that you might provide a model of Christian endurance for all. You will receive everlasting glory as much because you set an example for the edification of all matrons as because of your martyrdom.³⁶⁴

Ps.- Macarius and Ephrem the Syrian

Pseudo-Macarius/Symeon of Mesopotamia is the anonymous author of the Macarian corpus. The corpus is comprised of fifty spiritual homilies, some letters and

³⁶⁰ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *In laudem Cypriani*, trans. C.G. Browne and J.E. Swallow, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996) ch. 11 (PG 35, 1181a).

³⁶¹ Cooper, 41, n 29. See also Kate Cooper, ‘Concord and Martyrdom: Gender, Community and the Uses of Christian Perfection,’ Diss. Princeton University, 1993, Appendix B: ‘The Date and Authorship of the *Liber ad Gregoriam*.’

³⁶² Cooper, 41. It may be worth considering that the *Liber ad Gregorium* could have been a book from Gregory of Nazianzus.

³⁶³ Saint Anasthasia of Sirmium was a Roman noble woman and married martyr of Sirmium, Dalmatia during the persecution of Diocletian ca. 304. St Anastasia probably became known to Pope Damasus and Gregory of Nazianzus after the last council at Sirmium. She became important in Rome because Pope Damasus (366-384) commissioned a mosaic of her image. Although Gregory’s Church was thought to mean the Resurrection, it could also have been dedicated to the martyr and patron saint of married women. Even today, the Holy Great-martyr Anastasia is celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox Church on the third day of the Preparation (for the Nativity), December 22. In the Roman Catholic Church her feast day is on December 25th.

³⁶⁴ Cooper, 41. *Liber ad Gregoriam* 5 (PLS 3, 227).

responses to questions.³⁶⁵ The author is thought to have been a highly educated north-eastern Syrian monk who wrote in Greek. Some of the works are signed Symeon of Mesopotamia who is an historical figure and was one of the [moderate] key leaders of the Messalians in the mid-fourth century.³⁶⁶ Ephrem expressed deep dislike of the Messalians. However, not all Mesopotamian monks were Messalians.

The Ps-Macarian texts contain many ideas expressed in symbolic language similar to Aphrahat's and Ephrem's and that found in the *Liber Graduum*.³⁶⁷ Similarities have also been found between Ps.-Macarius' *Great Letter* and Gregory of Nyssa's *De Instituto Christiano*.³⁶⁸ The writings were highly influential among the monastic communities, including the Cappadocian monks. In the *Vita Hypatius* there is evidence of awareness of the Ps.-Macarian writings. Hypatius was held in high esteem by Pulcheria and her brother the emperor.³⁶⁹ The texts are still read by Orthodox monks and non-monks today.³⁷⁰ The Ps-Macarian texts provide sustenance especially to the mystical monastic stream of individual experience.

³⁶⁵ The corpus has been extended in recent years, other homilies and letters are separated into four Collections. See Maloney, 5, 6.

³⁶⁶ *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, George A. Maloney, S.J., New York: Paulist Press, 1992) 7. Until the nineteenth century the Macarian Corpus was attributed to Macarius of Egypt. This was challenged in the 19th century by a monk at Mt Athos, named Neophytos Kavsokalivites, who corrected the view. "The religious universe is similar to that found in Syriac Christian literature. His scriptural texts are akin to the Syriac version of the Gospels, known as the *Diatessaron*. He uses certain apocrypha of Syrian origin and teaches points of doctrine that are typically Syrian, for example that the Holy Spirit is referred to as Mother."

³⁶⁷ Stewart, 10. "Ps.-Macarian writings are expression in Greek of a spiritual argot characteristic of Syriac Christianity. This language sounded unusual, excessive, and even dangerous when translated for a Hellenistic audience. The graphic and sensual metaphors employed by Ps.-Macarius jarred theologically sensitive ears which normally heard such language used sparingly and cautiously."

³⁶⁸ Maloney, 11.

³⁶⁹ Callinicos, *Vita Hypatius*, 38. On Theodosius II and his sisters' visit to Hypatius, 227-28.

³⁷⁰ Stewart, 4-5. "Over the centuries many others including: Gottfried Arnold, Johann Arndt, and John Wesley were students of the Ps.-Macarian texts, doubtless drawn to their strong emphasis on personal experience of Christ and Holy Spirit in warmth and in light."

Basil is known to have admired the deep spirituality of the heart of the monks of Mesopotamia and they in turn were influenced by his ideas on the Holy Spirit.³⁷¹

Both Basil and Ps.-Macarius called their followers Christians and not monks; an important distinction because both saw the ascetic way of life as the radical Christian life that all were meant to lead.

Divine indwelling in Ps.-Macarius is experienced through stages, and effected by the Lord, Bridegroom, Divinity, or God, of the Trinity dwelling within the soul or heart. The third and final stage is that of *apatheia*, freedom from passions or divinization and “was not inspired by contact with Egyptian monastic traditions, but belongs firmly within Syrian experiential spirituality.”³⁷² The emphasis is on the heart, ‘for divine grace writes on the tablets of the heart.’ It is “an affective spirituality which sought to integrate body, soul, and spirit in prayer to experience God’s indwelling presence in the purified Christian as a transforming light.”³⁷³

There do not seem to be any references to Mary in the Macarian Homilies. As was mentioned previously in this study the Spirit is feminine in Hebrew and Syriac and is referred to as Mother.³⁷⁴ Ps. Macarius’ spirituality centers on Jesus. In Homily 30:2-3 there is womb and birth language, here it is Christ who gives birth to mankind from the womb of the Spirit of the Godhead:

2. And all this labor and diligence of his [Our Lord, Jesus Christ’s] was done so that he might beget from himself and his very own nature children from his Spirit.

³⁷¹ Maloney, 9,10. “From Basil there also came a respect for sacraments and traditions through the teachings of the hierarchy, and an openness to the inner divine voice.”

³⁷² Stewart, 41.

³⁷³ Maloney, 4. The Taboric light as when Jesus was transfigured on Mt Tabor. Light can be found in Gregory of Nazianzus’ works, and God as darkness is found in Gregory of Nyssa.

³⁷⁴ Some say that the Spirit as feminine is erroneous, but if the Syrians also call the Spirit ‘Mother,’ it is clear that they perceived the Spirit as a truly feminine form.

He was pleased that they were to be born from above, of his own Godhead...so the Lord who loved mankind as his own image wished them to be born from his seed of the Godhead.

If any of them do not wish to come to such a birth and to be born of the womb of the Spirit of the Godhead, Christ receives much sorrow.

3. For the Lord wishes all to be considered worthy of this birth. For he died on behalf of all and he has called all to life. Indeed this life is the birth from above of God. Without this one cannot live as the Lord says: "Unless one will be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God: (Jn 3:3).³⁷⁵

Ephrem lived during same period as the Cappadocian Fathers and Symeon Macarius, although Ephrem was a generation older. There are similarities in language between Ps.-Macarius and Ephrem both of whom wrote out of the same Mesopotamian culture which provided a richness of metaphors gleaned from Jewish texts and literature of the ancient Sumerians.

Ephrem is celebrated by both Syrians and Greeks as the greatest poet-theologian of the 4th century. He is not strictly considered a Byzantine hymnographer, because his work was composed originally in Syriac.³⁷⁶ Robert Murray's *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* assesses Ephrem as the "true ancestor of Romanos and therefore of the Byzantine *Kontakion*, but also 'as the greatest poet of the patristic age and, perhaps, the only theologian-poet to rank beside Dante.'³⁷⁷

Trained under James, bishop of Nisibis (303-338) with whom he attended the Council of Nicaea. He then served under Bishop Vologesus (346-361). He left Nisibis,

³⁷⁵ Maloney, 190-91. This echoes Origen saying that: if the Christ is not born in me, I am shut out from salvation.

³⁷⁶ In a book entitled *Sacred Songs: Studies In Byzantine Hymnography*, the author Eva Catafygioutu Topping does not acknowledge Ephrem's great influence on Romanos whom she describes as "prince of and genius among the other poets (late 5th cent), who was also Syrian."

³⁷⁷ Robert Murray. *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, 31. See also his 'Ephrem Syrus', in *Catholic Dictionary of Theology*, ed. J.H. Crehan (London, 1967), 2: 220-3.

where he had taught, and went to Edessa along with many exiled Christians in 363 because of the Persian takeover: Bishop Jacob [James] of Nisibis founded the school in his city and appointed Mar Ephrem Exegete (chief professor) there; on the fall of Nisibis Ephrem moved to Edessa, opened a school there and had many disciples.³⁷⁸ Ephrem was a deacon and not a monk. "In his ecclesiology he followed the line of Eusebius of Caesaria. In theology he adhered to the teaching of the Council of Nicea."³⁷⁹

Brock surmises that Ephrem was an *Ihidaya* or solitary one. This term has many connotations, but is first seen attributed to Christ as the Only Begotten One.³⁸⁰ The *Ihidaya* is a holy concept in Syrian Christianity the existence of which confirms the centrality of imitation of Christ by ascetics and the priority given to the individual's experience of God. The use of Christ as the Only-begotten and of wombs giving birth to Christ can be found in Ephrem's *Hymns on Virginity* 6. 7-8:

The creation conceived His symbols; Mary conceived His limbs.
Therefore many wombs brought forth the Only-begotten.
The belly brought Him forth by travail, and the creation
also brought Him forth by symbols.³⁸¹

Ephrem's doctrinal hymns, teaching songs or *madrashê*, and his metrical homilies or *mêmrê* were translated during his lifetime and became influential in their Greek translations. They were based on biblical exegesis and it is believed that the context in which his works were used was often the Divine Liturgy, as gathered from Jerome who wrote that: "In some churches his [Ephrem's] writings were publicly recited

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 23.

³⁷⁹ Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 677. "Eusebius' exegetical method is positioned halfway between Alexandrian and Antiochene hermeneutics, he remains more inclined toward the former (C.Curti), his own attitude---no---surprise---is conformed to the dealings of the Spirit in scripture."

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 12-16.

³⁸¹ Quoted in Susan A Harvey, "Saint Ephrem on the Scent of Salvation" in *Journal of Theological Studies*, Oxford: OUP, April 1998) NS, vol. 49, pt 1, 112.

after the reading of the scriptures."³⁸² Also, similarities between the Cappadocians and Ephrem have been recognized, but there have been no systematic studies which could also show the influence on them in either direction.³⁸³

Ephrem's Mariological vocabulary was no doubt highly influential at a time when discourse on Mary's role in the Incarnation became increasingly important. His compassionate view of women, whether virgin or married mother, was radical and is echoed in the theological ideas of later Greek and Latin theologians.³⁸⁴

In Ephrem³⁸⁵ the theme of 'giving birth to God' is also in his concept of 'wombs of the chaste'. The Syriac word for womb is *ubba*.³⁸⁶ For Ephrem womb is also mind, soul or heart.

The Word of the Father came from His womb.
And put on a body in another womb:
The Word proceeded from one womb to another---
And chaste wombs are now filled with the Word:
Blessed is He who has resided in us.³⁸⁷

When Mary perceived Him, she forsook her bridegroom; behold, He dwells in chaste women if they have perceived Him.³⁸⁸

³⁸² Sidney H. Griffith, "Ephraem the Exegete (306-373)," *Biblical Commentary in the Works of Ephraem the Syrian*, in C. Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 1407. *Hyronymus*, 51. There does not appear to be concrete proof that Ephrem's hymns, 'teaching songs' or his homilies were used in either the Divine Liturgy or the offices in Constantinople in the early 5th century, the early service books have come down to us only in fragments. The hymns of Ephrem are still used today during Lent in the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

³⁸³ McVey, 463.

³⁸⁴ Although in depth studies have yet to be made it would seem that a connection with Ephrem may be found in Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria and perhaps even Ambrose of Milan and Augustine.

³⁸⁵ Robert Murray maintains that Ephrem did not know the Greek language. For insight into Ephrem's use of Greek philosophical concepts see: Ute Possekel, "*Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian*" (D.Phil. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1997).

³⁸⁶ *Ubba* is sometimes used for bosom.

³⁸⁷ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 171. Resurrection hymns (1:7). Brock explains that both Spirit *ruha d-qudsha* and divine Word, *melta*, Gk Logos, are both treated grammatically as a feminine.

³⁸⁸ McVey, *Hymns*, 99. *Hymns on the Nativity* 4. 132.

Ephrem situates the indwelling of Christ during the Feast of the Nativity inviting women to be mothers of Christ by remaining virgins. In the *Hymns on the Nativity*¹⁷, he writes of Mary speaking to her Son and she is also inviting “her fellow women, the sick, the suffering and the enslaved to come for comfort, healing and liberation to her Son.”³⁸⁹

Spoken by Mary:

5. Blessed is she, in whose heart and mind
You are: she is a royal palace,
Because of You, O Royal Son. She is the sanctuary
For You, the High Priest. She knows no worries
Or cares of home, or husband.

10. My Son, the free-born woman is also Your handmaiden
if she serves You, and the enslaved woman
in You is a freewoman. By You she is consoled
that she is a freed woman. Invisible emancipation
is placed in her bosom if she loves You.

11. Chaste women my Beloved desires
To dwell in you; and you too who are unclean
He wishes to make holy. The churches, too,
He wants to adorn. Son of the creator is He
Who has come to restore all creation.

13. Come all who are blind, receive light
Without payment; come you lame,
Receive back the use of your legs; you who
Are deaf and dumb,
Receive back the use of your voices;
All those whose hands are crippled shall also regain their use.³⁹⁰

Ephrem declares that it is in the mind that Christ dwells spiritually; for it too is a receptive womb.³⁹¹

Since the One conceived is the Glorious One, He stamped Himself

³⁸⁹ Brock, *Bride of Light*, 24.

³⁹⁰ Brock, *Bride of Light: Hymns on Mary from the Syriac Churches*. (St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (SEERI) Kerala, India, 1994), 25-26.

³⁹¹ McVey, *Hymns Res.* 2.6.

as if by a signet upon [Mary's] mind.
 After being born, He was [still] in [her]
 So that entirely gazing out from [her] members
 Was His brightness, and upon all of [her] He was stretched out.
 She wove a garment for Him, but His glory extended over all [her] senses.³⁹²

Brock notices the close links between Ephrem and later Syriac monastic writers in the parallelism which they all see between the Incarnation and the Eucharistic Epiclesis.³⁹³ "Mary's conception and birth-giving serves as the model for the interiorized conception and birth-giving that individual Christians may experience as a result of the 'overshadowing' of the Holy Spirit" [at the Eucharist].³⁹⁴

In the womb that bore you are Fire and Spirit,
 Fire and Spirit are in the river where you were baptized,
 Fire and Spirit are in our baptism too
 And in the Bread and cup are Fire and Spirit.³⁹⁵

Brock explains that the juxtaposition is caused by Mary's receptivity to the Holy Spirit and our receptivity to the sanctified Bread and Wine. "At every communion, the Christian needs to make Mary's reply to the angel his or her own. Only thus is the potential to sanctify possessed by the Bread and Wine to be realized."³⁹⁶

This notion is also found in calling Christ the Pearl,³⁹⁷ something that is also found in Proclus below. The ancients believed that it was lightning that caused pearls

³⁹² McVey, *Hymns*, Beck, *Nat.* 4. 130.

³⁹³ Brock explains that the Annunciation and epiclesis link is often associated with Alexandrian as opposed to Antiochene Christological thinking. And according to McGuckin, in Cyril of Alexandria, who was a contemporary of Proclus and Pulcheria, we find: "The physical interchange that occurs when the believer communicates with his Lord in the Eucharistic mysteries is no less than a metamorphosis---healing and salvation are given. Eucharistic theory is a key element of Cyril's anti-Nestorian thinking." See McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 188.

³⁹⁴ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*. 157. The emphasis on the Eucharist can be found in Cyril of Alexandria.

³⁹⁵ Brock, "Mary and the Eucharist: an oriental perspective" *Hymns of Faith* 10:17.

³⁹⁶ Brock, "Mary and Euch.," 55.

³⁹⁷ In Syriac texts Christ as the Pearl is used in relation to Christians individually. See Murray, *Symbols*, Index 3, 359.

to develop in oyster shells. So it was developed in Christian symbolism that the Fire of the Holy Spirit entered Mary's womb like lightning in the oyster shell and the Fire of the Holy Spirit created Christ the Pearl who fills the People at the Eucharist.³⁹⁸

In the luminosity of the pearl I saw the
Luminous One*
who cannot be perturbed; in its purity
is a wonderful symbol—the Body of our Lord,
wholly unsullied.

* *Shaphya*

Like the Manna which of its own sufficed
to fill the People, in place of other foods,
thanks to its tastiness, so too has the Pearl
filled me, replacing books (or Scripture).
and the reading and commenting on them.

Based on work by Martin Jugie,³⁹⁹ Cooper drew attention to the evidence of women's retreat during Advent which included both virgins and married women. This retreat was a re-enactment of the Incarnation at which women would spiritually give birth to the Infant in *imitatio mariae*. Jugie records that in 1933 he found the evidence in a Jacobite calendar of early Byzantine Antioch.⁴⁰⁰ Interestingly, Brock also identifies that: "In the Syriac liturgical tradition, both east and west, it is with the Sundays immediately before the Nativity that the Annunciation or *Subbara* is associated."⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ Conostas further explains that Christian women in Syria wore pearl earrings to symbolize the Incarnation. Also that Mary appropriated the attributes of her ancient counterparts, particularly 'shell-born Aphrodite' who was known in Syria as 'Lady of the Pearls.' In the Christian iconography of Ethiopia, Mary and Christ are frequently adorned with cowrie shells. See Conostas, 293 and n. 65.

³⁹⁹ Cooper, refers to M. Jugie, 'La première fête Mariale en Orient et en Occident: L'Avant primitif', *Echos d'Orient* 26 (1923), 129-52.

⁴⁰⁰ The Jacobites are followers of Jacob Baradeus the Syrian Monophysite bishop of Edessa from 542/3, d.ca. 578. The hierarchy of the Monophysite Church was composed mainly of Syrian monks. M. Jugie considers this pre-Christmas Marial feast and not the Assumption on August 15th, as the earliest. The Jacobite calendar reference is approx 100 years later than the period focused upon i.e. in relation to Pulcheria's lifetime.

⁴⁰¹ Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 109. Also, from <http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Advent>, accessed February 14, 2008: "In the calendars of the Oriental Churches, the period of preparation for the celebration of the manifestation (Advent) of divine salvation (Theophany) in the mysteries of Christmas-Epiphany of the Only Son of God, is markedly Marian in character. Attention is concentrated on

Cooper suggests that perhaps Pulcheria too organized such a ritual and special liturgy with the help of clergy.⁴⁰²

Cooper brings to light another Latin document, undated and anonymous, attributed to Jerome and entitled *Epistula ad Marcellam*.⁴⁰³ It seems to derive from Pelagian circles in Rome which had close contact with the East in the early fifth century. This document addresses the issues of a spiritual retreat for women, and the inclusion of married women in the ritual of giving birth to Christ or the Infant.

But perhaps you will say, why do you trouble me with a vain promise of hope? Only virgins can give birth to Christ. But I do not wish that you restrict the grace of God to the narrow confines of a single [type of] person. Look at where the Apostle says to sinners and prevaricators, 'Until Christ is formed in you'.

From this it is clear that the person who wishes to give birth to Christ must seek out a hidden and quiet place because even he [John the Baptist], who is the harbinger of His arrival, is said to have announced the news only in the desert...her who is about to give birth to the Infant should be found in the retreat of the monastery

We know the sacrament of this mystery [the Incarnation] to have been completed in the tenth month [December]...when we should imitate the groans of Mary in labor, so that just as within the dark portals of the womb, so within the hidden cell of the monastery, something can take shape which will abet our salvation...If the holy Mary gave forth the hope of her salvation with groans and sighs, how do you think we, whom the counsels of the serpent have deceived, will have to labor in order to imitate such a great thing?

Cooper asserts that the rise of the cult of the Virgin was not inevitable or mysterious, but that it depended upon social dynamics.⁴⁰⁴ Cooper proposes that these

preparation for the Lord's coming in the *Deipara* [the begetter of God, the mother of God]." For the Oriental Churches, all Marian mysteries are Christological mysteries since they refer to the mystery of our salvation in Christ. In the Coptic rite, are found hymns to the Theotokos or *Theotokia*. Among the Syrians, Advent is referred to as the *Subbara* or Annunciation, so as to highlight its Marian character. The Byzantine Rite prepares for Christmas with a whole series of Marian feasts and rituals."

⁴⁰² Pulcheria may have used the 'First Founded' Mary Church for this purpose.

⁴⁰³ Cooper, 38. n.1. Germain Morin, "Pages inédites de deux pseudo-Jérômes des environs de l'an 400" *Revue Benedictine* 40 (1928), pp. 289-318., pp. 298; Galatians 4:19. Dom Morin believed its author to be a woman. Virginia Burrus, 'Word and Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity' *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10 (1994) pp. 27-50 accepts Morin's arguments.

⁴⁰⁴ Copper acknowledges the work following scholars in the new wave (early 90's) of Marial studies in particular the cult of the Virgin Mary in social-historical context: David Hunter, 'Helvidius,

documents reveal that there may have been tension between married women and virgins. That there was a perceived danger that virginity was replacing the older power roles of women in the church associated with powerful female patrons of high social class.⁴⁰⁵ The documents are re-assuring married women that they too can give birth to Christ and encouraging them to join in the pre-Christmas *imitatio mariae* ritual retreat.⁴⁰⁶

Atticus and Proclus of Constantinople

No one knows the origins of Proclus,⁴⁰⁷ Atticus' secretary and ghostwriter who was elected Patriarch of Constantinople himself in 434. Some say that he was a native of Constantinople and as a very young man was already working alongside John Chrysostom. Unlike Atticus he was very well educated in rhetoric and languages. "Proclus' greatest achievement was proposing the image of Mary within a framework of great dignity; he accentuated her maternal power to such a degree that he opened the way for the considerable growth of Marian doctrine that occurred in the post-Ephesus Church."⁴⁰⁸

Proclus was not only a gifted orator, but he was also a theologian. His works represented Constantinopolitan theology, a synthesis of Eastern Syrian and Cappadocian-Alexandrian elements. However, in the years between Ephesus and

Jovinian, and the Virginity of Mary in Late Fourth-Century Rome', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993), pp. 47-71, and, on the social context of virginity, idem, 'Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late Fourth-Century Rome', *Theological Studies* 48 (1987), pp. 45-64. As well as Holum and Limberis.

⁴⁰⁵ Copper, 42.

⁴⁰⁶ Cooper, 31-43.

⁴⁰⁷ Greek names were very popular and did not necessarily reflect that the person spoke Greek.

⁴⁰⁸ Gambero, 257.

Chalcedon he also developed his Christology to satisfy the Antiochene stream because the unity of the churches was vital for Pulcheria and the Eastern Empire.⁴⁰⁹ The locus of divine indwelling for Proclus is baptism and the feast of the Epiphany.⁴¹⁰

Peltomaa concluded her study of *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, by saying that the Homilies of Proclus reveal the same themes as those of the *Akathistos Hymn* which are the Annunciation, the Incarnation of the Logos and the divine or virgin birth. It is considered to be a masterpiece of rhetoric, something of which Proclus was capable. Peltomaa thinks that the *Hymn* could have been composed or commissioned by Proclus sometime between the Council of Ephesus 431 and The Council of Chalcedon in 451. He died in 446.⁴¹¹

Peltomaa also writes that: "the striking feature of the homilies of the period of Ephesus is that the description of the Incarnation is focused on Mary's womb."⁴¹² In Proclus Mary's womb is mentioned innumerable times. Conostas adds that "rhetorical praises of sacred wombs had long been a part of the Constantinopolitan devotionalist tradition, and were particularly pronounced during the tenure of Atticus (404-426)."⁴¹³

Interestingly, McVey develops Holum's identification of two strands of piety to be found in the works of Atticus and Proclus: first, the Mariological theme of the Second

⁴⁰⁹ Conostas, 376. "The Christology of Proclus is a conscious and significant attempt to mediate between the rival positions of Alexandria and Antioch. With his emphasis on a 'single hypostasis in two natures,' Proclus stands mid-way between a monophysical confusion and a dualistic separation of divinity and humanity in the one person of Christ. Proclus was the first to affirm a unity of hypostasis while maintaining the fullness and integrity of the two natures."

⁴¹⁰ In Cyril of Alexandria, who was his contemporary, the locus of transformation is first baptism and then the Eucharist. The Eucharist was seen as the continuing way for Christians to receive divine indwelling through the Holy Spirit during the epiclesis.

⁴¹¹ Peltomaa, 216.

⁴¹² Peltomaa, 218.

⁴¹³ Conostas, 70.

Eve; secondly, the notion of the spiritual birth of Christ in the mind or soul of the believer.⁴¹⁴ McVey believes that these themes first occur in the works of Gregory of Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa. Furthermore, both these themes with the addition of a third one, female outspokenness, are found in the hymns of Ephrem.⁴¹⁵

McVey believes that the similarities between Proclus⁴¹⁶ and Ephrem suggest that Proclus' work depended very much on Ephrem. McVey writes that it is particularly the encouragement of virginal women to boldness that binds Proclus with Ephrem.⁴¹⁷

The fact that Atticus and Proclus knew Pulcheria personally makes investigating their works all the more meaningful. A monk of Armenian origin "[The Patriarch] Atticus is reckoned to be among the earliest Byzantine champions of the cult of the Virgin."⁴¹⁸ He wrote a Treatise on *Faith and Virginit*y for Pulcheria and her sisters, but it is lost. However, an early homily attributed to Atticus refers to women who give birth in Christ and who accept Him in the womb by faith:

And you women, who give birth in Christ and have cast off filth and have participated in the blessing of holy Mary, you too accept in the womb by faith Him who is born today of the Virgin; for holy Mary, having first purified by faith the temple of her

⁴¹⁴ Holum, *Empresses*, 139.

⁴¹⁵ McVey, "Ephrem the Syrian's Theology of Divine Indwelling", 459-460.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 464. With regard to the theological and literary similarities in Proclus and Ephrem, McVey makes two technical points: "1. They share an unusually strong affinity for a rhetorical style that might be described as 'extreme Asianism'. "Like Ephrem, Proclus is excessively fond of the devices of *isocola*, often with *homoioteleuton*, exclamations, rhetorical questions, apostrophe and word play. Both compose speeches for the Virgin Mary and other Biblical characters, but do not develop the type of dialogue soon to appear in the form of the Greek *kontakion* and the Syriac *sogitha*. 2. Regarding baptism Proclus espouses some views remarkable for a Greek writer but not uncommon in the Syriac Christian environment i.e. linking the Epiphany with the baptism of Christ in the Jordan...and the pre-eminence of Epiphany over the Nativity prefiguring and putting into action the sanctifying transformation of the cosmos by Christ..." For instance, in a sermon on the feast of the Epiphany, Proclus says: 'here (on the feast of the Epiphany) the Begetting Father bears witness from above to the baptized'.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 463.

⁴¹⁸ Constatas, 35. Atticus also produced the *Letter to Eupsychius* "which develops a theology of the virgin birth largely derived from the Gospel of Luke." See Constatas, 33.

womb then accepted into the temple the king of the ages, having made her members worthy of the kingdom.⁴¹⁹

Holum argues that Pulcheria's imitation of Mary was indeed related to power, but it was he who first signaled the correlation between Pulcheria's reported words and the mystical teaching of giving birth to God. Commenting on Atticus' *Treatise on Virginity* addressed to Pulcheria and her sisters, he wrote that:

(The Patriarch) Atticus must have urged the sisters specifically to achieve Mary's purity and certainty of faith. This was also traditional teaching. If they did so Christ would be born in them mystically just as the Divine Word had taken flesh in Mary's body.⁴²⁰

In another of his Feast of the Nativity homilies Atticus said:

Through Mary all women are blessed. No longer can the female be held to be under a curse, for this sex has a rank which lets it outdo even the angels in glory. Eve has been healed, the Egyptian woman passed over in silence. Delilah is entombed, Jezebel given to oblivion. Even Herodias herself no one mentions any longer.⁴²¹

What is noticeable here is the drastic difference between the Antiochian-Syrian, John Chrysostom's sermons, and that of the Armenian Atticus. Whereas John is calling the empress Eudoxia and her aristocratic friends Jezebels, Eves and Herodias, here in just a few years all women are being praised.

There may be something to be said for the role of the married aristocratic women who may have pressured the Church to find ways to praise all women. Pulcheria and her retinue of nuns were beyond reproach, and being virgins saved them from the belittling. However, high placed married women may have felt diminished by the lauding of virgins.

⁴¹⁹ Constat, 348. Trans. Thomson, "Slavonic Translation," 19; cf. Lebon, "Discours d'Atticus," 190; Briere, "Une homelie inedite" 181; and Holum TE, 139. This homily may have been written by Proclus. In the past it was conflated with the works of Atticus.

⁴²⁰ Holum, *Theodosian Emperresses*, 139. It was included in the literary catalogue of Gennadius of Marseille (ca 480).

⁴²¹ Holum, "Aelia Pulcheria," 116-117. Theodotus of Ancyra and Proclus of Constantinople also wrote on this theme.

According to Constatas, Proclus' Homily 5 "On the Holy Virgin Theotokos" was written during the tenure of Atticus (406-425), for a new feast of the Virgin Theotokos in early fifth century Constantinople, on December 26th. Proclus uses nuptial language and raises Mary above the other saints and martyrs.⁴²²

Count up the miracles, and marvel at the victory of the Virgin, for he whom all creation praises in fear and trembling she alone admitted ineffably into the bridal chamber of her womb.

On account of Mary all women are blessed. No longer does the female stand accused, for it has produced an offspring which surpasses even the angels in glory. ..And now the assembly of women is admired.

Mary is venerated for she became a mother, a servant, a cloud, a bridal chamber, and the ark of the Lord.⁴²³ You [Mary] alone were entrusted with the treasury of the pearl. A bridal chamber, for the Word of God pitched the tent of the mystery (of the incarnation) in her as in a wedding hall.⁴²⁴

Proclus ends with: Emmanuel 'God is with us' [in so many ways]...the baptismal font gives birth without tiring...and the churches are filled with crowds.⁴²⁵

Proclus' Homily 1 "On the Holy Virgin Theotokos" is considered the most famous homily to Mary in the early medieval church.⁴²⁶ It was given in the presence of Pulcheria and Nestorius the Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity, 430. Nestorius replied to it by saying that: "Whoever claims that God was born of Mary prostitutes the reputation of the faith, for the pagan will reply, a god who was born, died and buried, I cannot adore."⁴²⁷

⁴²² Constatas, 246.

⁴²³ Titles for Mary, such as Cloud and Ark were used in Syriac hymns on Mary. See Brock, *Bride of Light*, index of titles for Mary.

⁴²⁴ Constatas, 261-263. Proclus *Homily 5*.

⁴²⁵ Constatas, 262-264. An aspect that also has to be considered is the audience to which the preacher was preaching. Proclus like John Chrysostom was speaking to a comfortable class of people.

⁴²⁶ Holum, 156. Bauer, *Proklos*, 23 n. 3, 24 n. 1.

⁴²⁷ Holum, 136. Loofs *Nestoriana*, 337-338.

Peltomaa sees Homily 1 as evidence of the contemporary importance of virginity and chastity in this religious society. Proclus writes from the spiritual ground of Origen's idea of giving birth to God.⁴²⁸ In the year 430 C.E. Virgins are still being singled out as special in their identification with Mary who is the pure birth-giver of God. But nowhere does Proclus specifically use 'you too can become mothers of Christ' as did Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus. Proclus begins the homily with:

The Virgin's Festival, my brethren, summons us today to words of praise, and the present feast has benefits to bestow on those who assemble to keep it. And surely this is right, for its subject is chastity. What we celebrate is the pride of women and the glory of the female, thanks to the one who was at once mother and virgin. Lovely is the gathering!

Proclus continues with powerful language with pagan undertones of 'birth pangs':

So do not be ashamed of the birth pangs,⁴²⁹ O man! For they were the beginning of our salvation.

Further Proclus praises the womb of Mary and uses Syriac metaphorical titles for Christ the farmer, temple and priest:

O womb, in which was drawn up the bond that gave us all liberty! O belly, in which was forged the sword that defeated death! O field, in which Christ, nature's farmer, himself sprouted forth unsown as an ear of corn! O temple, in which God became a priest, not by changing his nature, but by his mercy clothing himself with him who was "according to the order of Melchizedek!"⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ Peltomaa, 106.

⁴²⁹ Proclus uses 'birth pangs' a number of times in his homily 1 and also homily 2. IV, 40-41. Although one may assume that the allusion is to Genesis 3, according to Constan "this word refers primarily to the labor and travail of childbirth, it also has a range of metaphorical applications, particularly in the context of Socratic maieutics; cf. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 148E, 151a, 210B; *Symposium*, 206E; and *Republic*, 6.490AB: 'To beget intellect and truth, attain knowledge and truly live and grow, and so find surcease from travail.' See Constan, 152. Another point to be made on this subject is that in 425 there was an influx of pagan intellectuals due to the new university and library established in Constantinople. The audience for his sermons must have included some of these people.

⁴³⁰ Constan, 139. Proclus, Homily 1. Also, the titles used for Christ, sword, farmer and priest. Priest is used as a title for Christ in Syriac as a sacrificial term in *Acts of Judas Thomas* and *Odes of Solomon* 20; farmer is used as a title for Christ in Syriac in relation to the church as a whole, found in Ephrem and Macarian Homilies. Ephrem writes on the sword of Phinehas (Numbers 25:7-8 and Nisibis 39. See Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 83. Titles for Mary as Field, Belly and Temple are also interesting and whole study in itself.

In Proclus' Homily 12 "On the Resurrection" (some evidence that it is assigned to the years 426-34) he includes an encomium to Pulcheria. He uses nuptial language⁴³¹ and likens the baptismal font to a womb that is mother of many. Proclus comes close to the theme of 'giving birth to Christ' when he writes that Pulcheria 'contains the crucified one in the bridal chamber of her soul,' and one assumes that he includes all of humanity in potentially being capable to doing the same.⁴³²

The title for Christ of Crucified One is used in John Chrysostom.⁴³³ The juxtaposition of 'crucified one' and 'bridal chamber of her soul' strikes one as being a synthesis of Antiochene and Cappadocian-Alexandrian/East Syrian christologies.

Marvel at the magnanimity of the empress which has provided spiritual blessings to all...she is a virgin who has consecrated herself to Christ, and through her piety she has distributed great wealth; she has mortified her flesh with respect to the passions, and contains the crucified one in the bridal chamber of her soul; and she herself marvels at the baptismal font that is both a virgin and the mother of many.⁴³⁴

⁴³¹ McVey, *Hymns*, 123 n. 265. Bridal imagery is associated especially with asceticism in early Syriac literature, e.g. the *Odes of Solomon*, *Acts of Thomas*, Aphrahat and Ephrem, cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 13142. Brock explains that "the term Bridal Chamber in Syriac liturgical texts is used very frequently as metaphor for the Eschatological Kingdom. The liturgical texts regularly associate the eschatological Bridal Chamber with the Parable of the Virgins from the Syriac Diatessaron Matt. 25:10. 'Prepare oil in your vessels and go forth to meet Him (sc. Christ the Bridegroom) in joy, for when He sees your lamps you shall enter with Him into the Bridal Chamber of Light [Wedding Banquet].' The bridal chamber describes many intimate meeting points between the divine and the earthly worlds, anticipations, as it were, in sacred time of the eschatological Bridal Chamber. Bridal chamber is synonymous with: the womb of Mary pregnant with the Divine Word, the cave in which Christ was born, the betrothal of Christ to the Church at His baptism, and the tomb of Christ. The bridal chamber can also appear in the context of the experience of individual Christians, at baptism, and at the Eucharist. [They are] events of realized eschatology, anticipations in sacred time of the eschatological Bridal Chamber. The Bride is the individual soul, Christ the Bridegroom and the bride chamber is the human body." See Brock "Some Distinctive Features in Syriac Liturgical Texts", 148-49.

⁴³² Holum, TE, 108. "The cross was the powerful symbol of victory death, the devil and the enemies of faith." The use of 'the crucified one' stresses the victory of Christ.

⁴³³ From <http://www.home.it.net.aut>. Accessed February 25, 2008. John Chrysostom "On the Cross of Christ": If you wish to be a follower of the Crucified One, dear brother, you must take up your cross and prepare yourself for a life of deprivation, sacrifice and struggle. Do not lose courage. Let not your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in Me... Do not be distressed or fearful" (John 14:1,27).

⁴³⁴ Constat, 348 n. 77. PG 65.788B. cf. Aubineau, "Ps.-Chrysostome", in *S. Stephanum* (1989), 14-15. In Holum's TE, 53, 59 he mentions that Nestorius would not honor Pulcheria as the bride of Christ in his prayers for the royal household and also that the term was used by Cyril of Alexandria with respect to Pulcheria and her sisters.

Pulcheria is portrayed in this same sermon preached on the Resurrection as the very model of the new redeemed woman,⁴³⁵ something that is reminiscent of Gregory of Nyssa's eulogy for Pulcheria's grandmother Flacilla mentioned earlier in this study.

She [Pulcheria] confesses that the tomb is the treasury of salvation. She finds glory in the cross, through which the old covenant was torn up.⁴³⁶ She embraces the death that sets us free from bondage. She proclaims the Resurrection, the greatest gift of the Crucified One. She wonders at the baptismal waters, virginal though mother of so many, from which the bright ones rise. She marvels at the mystery by which the devil suffered unexpected shipwreck. Such are the gifts of the Crucified One.⁴³⁷

In Proclus' Homily 4 "On the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ" (some evidence that it should be assigned to the years 426-34) his exuberance runs throughout. He celebrates the new life 'Resurrected life' to be found through Mary and, since she was a woman, all women are seen in her light. The priority previously given to virgins is now extended to the rest of humanity. He invites all to come running to the compassion of Christ and to salvation through the baptismal font, which is like a womb, mother of many.

Let women come running, for a woman has brought forth, not the flower of death, but has given birth to the fruit of life. Let virgins also come running, for a virgin has given birth, Let mothers come running, for through the Tree of Life a virgin mother has set aright the tree of disobedience. Let daughters come running for the obedience of a daughter has avenged the offence of maternal disobedience. Let fathers ...infants, shepherd, let kings, princes, consuls, private citizens come running...⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ McVey, "Ephrem the Syrian's Theology of Divine Indwelling," 459.

⁴³⁶ A comment like this would have pleased the Antiochenes.

⁴³⁷ Proclus, *Homily 12* PG 65.788-789, translated in Holum TE, 138. Also, the title for Christ, the 'the Crucified One' is not found in Murray's Table III on the Syriac titles of Christ. Nor in Brock's list of titles of Christ in *The Luminous Eye* and *The Bride of Light*. It was a term used by the Antiochene John Chrysostom.

⁴³⁸ Constat 229. Proclus *Homily 4* ll 30-39.

Also in Homily 4 Proclus very tenderly creates a scenario about the Nativity and again adds all of humanity in its various roles and genders to offer their most precious gifts. He writes simply that virgins offer Mary the Theotokos:

All creation brings its gifts to the child who has no [earthly] father: The Magi bear their gifts. Women offer Martha, widows offer Anna, barren women offer Elizabeth, and virgins offer Mary the Theotokos. The shepherds offer their hymns, the priests offer Symeon, and the children bring branches of psalms.⁴³⁹

In summary, the theme of 'giving birth to God' belongs under the category of Divine indwelling. It was developed by Origen and used in the fourth century as 'giving birth to Christ' by Ephrem the Syrian, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa in association with imitation of Mary. Basil and Ps.-Macarius develop it but in the guise of bearing the Holy Spirit and of Christ giving birth to us, not in conjunction with imitation of Mary, but in imitation of Christ. The theme is associated with the monastic life and of the individual ascetic life of male and female virgins, as well as married women. Chastity is seen as the essential quality for spiritual growth.

By the early fifth century Atticus uses the terminology of 'giving birth in Christ' and is known for his devotion to the cult of Mary. Proclus works from this same spiritual ground, but his homilies are more so about Mary's womb and her giving birth as the cause of emancipation for all women and all of humanity. He invites everyone to come to the church to meet the compassionate Christ, in the same way Mary invites everyone to come to her Son in Ephrem.

Pulcheria is described by Proclus as the model of the new redeemed woman who contains the Crucified One in the bridal chamber of her soul. Proclus' homilies extend this eschatological bride-chamber imagery to the crowds in the church. The

⁴³⁹ Constatas 235. Proclus *Homily 4 III*, 108.

members of the church become the brides of Christ. The move to a more church-oriented sacramental theology is seen in his advocating of baptism as the locus of divine indwelling. The theme of giving birth to Christ and the womb language associated with it is now reserved for Mary the Theotokos and for the baptismal font. Bride chamber language is used for the crowds in church whose souls can achieve a union with Christ in the Wedding Banquet in earthly or present time, which prefigures the eschatological banquet in sacred time.

The dependence of Proclus on Ephrem and Syriac metaphorical language is evident in his titles for Christ and for Mary, in his womb language, and great enthusiasm for all women. Proclus' frequent use of nuptial language is shared by many liturgical traditions. The use of the Crucified One and the bridal chamber are in the Antiochene tradition of John Chrysostom.

CONCLUSION

The Early Byzantine era can be described in a number of ways. The population was on average young and in need of security. There were efforts on the part of ecclesiastical authorities to subjugate the monastics. Underlying this there were the frameworks of the inner man and the church that caused fragmentation of the churches in the East. The tension between Christianity and pagan religion and philosophy was a matter of superiority of religious experience. It was the period in which the Byzantine Church was born. Origen's teaching on giving birth to Christ in imitation of Mary surfaced in the last quarter of the fourth century. Mary the Theotokos rose in the midst to provide a model for 'the Christian experience' accessible to all.

The transition from Mary the ideal virgin to Mary as the ideal mother was made by the early fifth century. This affected the view of motherhood in general, marking a fresh beginning of dignity for all women. Under the influence of the Syrian Orient, especially through Ephrem the Syrian, the language of the womb became characteristic of the theological language of period. With the move to institutionalization of the Church, Mary was raised to previously unheard of levels of dignity as the divine mother, Mary the Theotokos. Mary as the compassionate mother of the Christ-Child was also used in the struggle to outshine pagan religion and philosophy.

As Constantinople was endeavoring to become the center of Christianity in the East, one sees that Pulcheria's main interests were in contributing to its sacredness. Pulcheria was the leading virgin in Constantinople and further a field throughout the Eastern Roman Empire. Her spirituality was no doubt fed by the various traditions to

which she was exposed: the Greek Cappodocian-Alexandrian, the Eastern Syriac of Edessa and Mesopotamia, and the Antiochene Syrian. The Latin tradition was also accessible to her.

Pulcheria's devotion to Mary is seen by her building the first Marian church built in Constantinople and later more Marian churches along with the Marian relics. Her spiritual father the Patriarch Atticus, a pious Armenian monk, was known for his policy of social welfare and relief and his devotion to Mary. There is evidence that Pulcheria followed his guidance in these matters. Because of Armenia's assimilation of Eastern Syrian theology and exegesis, she would have been nourished by the metaphorical Marian theology of Ephrem. His influence also appeared in the form of his teaching songs and metrical homilies integrated into the Divine Liturgy which encouraged imitation of Mary and also characterized Mary as one who was in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable.

Basil's urban monastic model based upon that of Egyptian monasticism, was developed in Armenia, in Constantinople and elsewhere. The balance that he sought, which was one of contemplation "as a brother, sister, mother of Christ," and radical action, was probably also characteristic of Pulcheria's life and the life of ascetics who had espoused urban monasticism.

Pulcheria showed the zeal of priest. She had an understanding of theology, respect for the sacraments and for church hierarchy. She showed moderation in leadership, founded churches, hospitals and shelters, supported monasticism, acquired relics and helped her brother the emperor to develop a pious life of prayer and to keep abreast of the developments of the various churches. The cult of relics was important to her, especially those of the proto-martyr Stephen whose presence seemed to be on a par with Mary's in the years before Ephesus. Some of her main concerns were

continuation of the neo-Nicene faith, unification of the churches and although Pulcheria supported the various monastic movements, diplomatic assimilation of the ascetic and monastic movements into the church hierarchy.

There is evidence of a cultic practice specifically tied to the mystical teaching of giving birth to Christ in imitation of Mary. In Syrian and Latin documents there is evidence of pre-Nativity Feast retreats for virgins and married women during which they imitated Mary by giving birth to the Infant spiritually. The period before the Feast of the Nativity called *Subbara* or Annunciation was part of the Syrian liturgical calendar in both eastern and western Syria, and is something which provides a framework for this cultic practice. It would seem plausible that this practice occurred wider a field. Sites of Marian cultic practice in Constantinople, in places other than the monastic cells, were probably the Church of Anastasia and one would expect Pulcheria's 'First Founded' Marian Church and later the other churches which housed Mary's garments as relics.

Origen's nuptial sub-theme of 'giving birth to God' is a form of divine indwelling which was developed in Ephrem and to an extent in the Cappadocian Fathers, in particular Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. Basil applied it in a practical way and also advocated for the bearing of the Holy Spirit. In Ps.-Macarius it was rather Christ who gives birth to us. Related to 'giving birth to God' is the nuptial sub-theme of Bride and Bridegroom. Such language of the Bride as the human soul, body, or the Church and the Bridegroom as Christ is used extensively. Mary is integrated into both these themes as model of giving birth, or begetting Christ or becoming a mother Christ, as well as model of the Bride of Christ.

Among Pulcheria's contemporaries, Atticus revealed use of womb language in relation to virginity. Proclus, whose homilies straddle pre-Ephesus and pre-Chalcedon

years, does laud virgins and chastity, but does not, in the homilies surveyed, appear to invite virgins to specifically imitate Mary by giving birth to Christ. Instead, he lauds Mary's womb and invites the crowds to come to Church, to the baptismal font which is womb and mother and thus to meet Christ the Bridegroom. This would lead one to conclude that as the Council of Ephesus approached, theological language became more centered on Mary's divine motherhood and that virgins in a sense were partially eclipsed. Within the Mary-Church parallel can perhaps be found 'Mary as model for becoming mother of Christ;' because, the concept of spiritually giving birth to Christ was always, from the beginning, intended both for individuals as well as for the collective of the church.

The documents that reported that Pulcheria said she had given birth to God were written by Nestorius and his supporters, therefore open to question as to the underlying motives. They may have wanted to make her appear as though she took herself to be the Theotokos. Pulcheria, who paid careful attention to the theological currents of the time, and who was no doubt conversant with the metaphorical language of the day, would most probably not have applied the phrase to her self. One could give birth to Christ, but to give birth to God *per se* was reserved for Mary. In this period, especially in the decade before Ephesus, ecclesiastical pressure against Messalians meant that one had to be very careful about using the right kind of religious language and having the right kind of religious experience. Individual spiritual experiences were suspect. Church-related experiences, achieved through the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, were the safe kind. One might conclude that the reported claim about Pulcheria's birth-giving was specifically related to the burgeoning Theotokos crisis, and could be interpreted as an attack on Pulcheria, rather than tied to the mystical patristic teaching of giving birth to God itself.

The mysticism inherent in the imitation of Mary the Theotokos through an individual's giving birth to Christ is an example of a spirituality that belonged to both contemplation and to radical social action. The experience was potentially transformative of the whole person, Christ-centered and belonged to the *praxis* of the monastery as well as to the wider church. It was also biblically based, a synthesis of Egyptian and Eastern Syrian theologies, and was expressed by the imitation of monastics, through service to the poor and suffering. This is hinted at in Basil's use of Matthew 12:50, which is related to the church as a community of siblings, and which provided Origen with the inspiration for the theme itself: Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

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