

The Society for Ecumenical Studies & the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Andrewes And The Caroline Divines' Teaching On The Blessed Virgin Mary

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Neither are we unmindful to bless Thee, for the most holy, pure, highly blessed, the Mother of God, Mary the eternal Virgin, with all the Saints. (1)

So prayed Lancelot Andrewes in the Orthodox tradition frequently.

Andrewes, who ended his life as bishop of Winchester, and the Caroline Divines, who followed him in the seventeenth century, held the Blessed Virgin Mary in that same light as the third oecumenical council at Ephesus in 431 and of the Orthodox tradition. *Theotokos* was the official title given to Mary at Ephesus, although it had been in use since the time of Origen. She is the Mother of the Word, which became incarnate in order to bring salvation to all peoples, and as such is never venerated by herself but always with her Son. The Orthodox and the Caroline Divines also recognised two other significant titles for our Lady: *All-holy (Panagia)*, meaning that Mary, although subject to the effects of original sin, was free from actual sin; and *ever-Virgin (Aeiparthenos)*, meaning that Mary's virginity was perpetual. Of all these, the first, *Theotokos*, was the most important for these Caroline Divines as it is for the Orthodox.

Andrewes illustrated this in his Christmas sermons. For example, in his sermon for 1609, taking as his text Galatians 4.4-5, 'But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law', Mary is honoured with her Son. Christ was "made of her"; He is the flesh of her flesh"; and He is "made of her very substance": (2)

And so have we here now in one both twain His natures. 'God sent His Son' - there His divine; 'made of a woman,' - here His human nature. That, from the bosom of His Father before all worlds; this, from the womb of His mother in the world. So that as from eternity God His Father might say that verse of the Psalm, *Filius Meus es Tu, hodie genui te* - 'Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee': so, in 'the fulness of time' might the Virgin His mother no less truly, *Filius meus es Tu, hodie peperisti te* - 'Thou art my Son, this day have I brought Thee into the world.' (3)

In this sermon he also explained that by Mary's obedience we have become brothers and sisters of Christ:

And here now at this word, 'made of a woman,' He beginneth to concern us somewhat. There groweth an alliance between us; for we also are made of a woman. And our hope is as He will not be confounded to be counted *inter natus mulierum*: no more will He be, saith the Apostle, to say, *in medio fratrum*, 'to acknowledge us His brethren.' And so by this time He growth somewhat near us.

Furthermore Mary was depicted as the universal Mother, the Mother of all peoples when God the Son was "made of a woman" and took our nature:

This now is full for the union with our nature to be 'made of a woman'. As the verity of His conception is in this *factum ex muliere*, so the purity is in this, that it is but *ex muliere*, and no more; of the Virgin alone by the power of the Holy Ghost, without mixture of fleshly generation. By virtue whereof no original soil was in Him. Just born He was, and *Iusto non est*

lex posita, 'no law for the just' - no law could touch Him. And so we never the better for *factum ex muliere*. (4)

In his Nativity sermon for 1614 with its text from Isaiah, *Behold a virgin shall conceive*, he emphasised the roles of Mary as both *Mater* and *Virgo*:

To conceive this conceiving, to join these two, a virgin, and yet conceive or bear; or conceive and bear, and yet be a virgin. For before the birth, yes, before the conceiving come, the virginity is gone. True - in nature, but this is a sign, and so above nature. And in reason so. ... For what God can do faith can believe, reason cannot comprehend. ... And here are both. And where they meet, they make no less a miracle than *Mater* and *Virgo*. (5)

Andrewes also indicated that in Mary's reply to the Angel we see humanity saying 'yes' to God and thus the blessed Maid exemplifies the response of faithful obedience to God. She is also the supreme expression of what it means for all human beings to have a vocation:

This we are to hold; to conceive is more than to receive. It is so to receive as we yield somewhat of our own also. A vessel is not said to conceive the liquor that is put into it. Why? because it yieldeth nothing from itself. The blessed Virgin is, and therefore is because she did. She did both give and take. Give of her own substance whereof His body was framed; and take or receive power from the Holy Spirit, whereby was supplied the office and efficacy [= life-giving] of the masculine seed. This is *concipiet*.(6)

Furthermore in this sermon Andrewes portrayed the Virgin Mary as *pneumataphora* or Spirit- bearer - the carrier of the Holy Spirit

The blessed Virgin herself while she stood upon a reason, upon *quia non cognosco virum*, asked, 'How it might be?' but rested in the Angel's resolution, and so let us. Which was of two sorts; first, that the Holy Ghost

should be the Agent in it, and 'the power of the Most High bring it to pass.'
That which of itself seemeth not credible, put the Author to it, put to ex
Spiritu Sancto, and it will seem not incredible.

He then depicted the operation of the Spirit in the life of Mary's cousin,
Elizabeth:

Specially, and that is the second, if we set another by it as unlikely as it,
and done though; as this *ecce* of the Virgin's the Angel exemplifies by
another *ecce* of Zachary's, in a manner as hard, which yet fell out at the
same time. For Elizabeth being barren, first by nature, then by age, and
so wanting power to conceive – she was then 'gone six months with child.'
Now the want of power to conceive is no less material to hinder the
conception every way, than want of soil no less than the want of seed. He
that could supply that could also this. He that do it without one, do it
without the other. They were cousins, the blessed Virgin and she; and
their signs were so too. One of them made credible by the other. But I ask
St. Paul's question, 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible?' ... The
God of nature is not bound to the rules of nature, we say the same. And
yet, even in nature, we see it made not altogether incredible. The light
passing through a body, the body yet remaining whole - and it is put
therefore into the verse to pattern this, *Luce penetratur, &c.* 'The light
cometh through the glass, yet the glass is not perished.' No more than the
light of Heaven by His passage violate any whit the virginity of His
mother, if we allow God the Maker of the light to do as much as the light
He hath made. (7)

Andrewes depicted Mary's overshadowing of the Spirit as a foretaste of
sacramental life. Her womb is the forerunner of the womb of the Church as the
bearer of Christ. In the former our Lord took our human nature and in the latter
we participate 'of His divine nature'.

And this indeed was the chief end of His being 'with us;' to give us a *posse fieri*,
a capacity,

a power to be made the sons of God, by being born again of water and of the Spirit; for *Originem quam sumpsit ex utero Virginis posuit in fonte Baptismatis*, the same original that Himself took in the womb of the Virgin to us-ward, the same has He placed for us in the fountain of Baptism to God-ward. Well therefore call the womb of the Church *suotoicon* [= corresponding] to the Virgin's womb, with a power given it of *concipiet et pariet filios* to God. So His being conceived and born the Son of man does conceive and bring forth (*filiatio, filiationem*) our being born, our being the sons of God. His participation of our human, our participation of His Divine, nature. (8)

Andrewes also used the Orthodox phraseology for the Mother of God, 'More honourable than the Cherubim, and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim', in his preaching. For example, in his Christmas Day sermon in 1605, Andrewes, overwhelmed that God would take upon himself our nature rather than the angels', expostulated:

And we, unworthy, wretched men that we are, above and before the Angels, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and all the Principalities, and Thrones, in this dignity. This being beyond the rules and reach of all reason is surely a matter of astonishment. (9)

Jeremy Taylor, who suffered much for his faith during the Commonwealth period, and who was noted for his casuistic writings, in *The Great Exemplar* wrote of the holy maid affectionately and tenderly as the exemplar of holy living. 'She was a person of rare sanctity', 'a great imitator of angelical purity.' As Mary was thus of 'excellent disposition', she received 'the greatest honour that ever was done to the daughters of men': (10)

Her employment was holy and pious, her person young, her years florid and springing, her body chaste, her mind humble, and a rare repository of divine graces. She was full of grace and excellencies; and God poured upon her a full measure of honour, in making her the mother of the Messiah: for the

‘angel came to her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.’ (11)

Taylor suggested that it was Mary's deep penetrating stillness that enabled the Holy Spirit to be so overpowering:

She was carried like a full vessel, without the violent tossings of a tempestuous passion, or the wrecks of a stormy imagination: and as the power of the Holy Ghost did descend upon her like rain into a fleece of wool, without any obstreperous noise or violences to nature, but only the extraordinariness of an exaltation, so her spirit received it with the gentleness and tranquility fitting for the entertainment of the spirit of love, and a quietness symbolical to the holy guest of her spotless womb, the Lamb of God. (12)

By her deep stillness and piety that led to her perfection, Taylor suggested that this blessed maid is the model for the ‘devout woman in her closet, [who prays] with much zeal and affection for the conversion of souls.’ So our dear Lady, who ‘arrived to her perfections by the means of a quiet and silent piety,’ teaches us it is

The silent affections, the splendours of an internal devotion, the union of love, humility and obedience, the daily offices of prayer and praises sung to God, the acts of faith and fear, of patience and meekness, of hope and reverence, repentance and charity, and those graces which walk in a veil and silence, make great ascents to God, and as sure progress to favours and a crown as the more ostentatious and laborious exercises of a more solemn religion.

Thus those women who follow Mary shine ‘like stars in glory.’ (13) Taylor depicted Mary as being ‘the joy of all creation’, as expressed in the Liturgy of St Basil and in the *Akathistos Hymn*:

When the blessed Virgin was so ascertained, that she should be a mother and a maid, and that two glories, like the two luminaries of heaven, should

meet in her, that she might in such a way become the mother of her Lord, that she might with better advantages be his servant, then all hopes and her desires received such satisfaction, and filled all the corners of her so much, as indeed it was fain to make room for its reception. But she to whom the greatest things of religion, and the transportations of devotion, were made familiar, by the assiduity and piety of her daily practices, howsoever she was full of joy. (14)

She who was the temple of the Lord is filled with the joyfulness of God's loving compassion which overflows to all:

But the joys that the Virgin Mother had, were such as concerned all the world; and part of them which was her peculiar, she would not conceal from persons apt to their entertainment, but go publish God's mercy towards her to another holy person, that they might join in the praises of God; as knowing that it may be convenient to represent our personal necessities in private, yet God's gracious returns and the blessings he makes to descend on us, are more fit, when there is no personal danger collaterally appendant, to be published in the communion of saints; that the hopes of others may receive increase, that their faith may grow up to become excellent and great, and the praises of God may be sung aloud, till the sound strike at heaven, and join with the hallelujahs, which the morning stars in their orbs pay to their great Creator. (15)

On visiting her cousin Elizabeth, Mary's haste was in proportion to her joy 'to pay the first fruits of her thanks and joy, and to lay all her glory at His feet, whose humble handmaid she was, in the greatest honour of being His blessed mother.'(16)

Just 'as to conceive by the Holy Ghost was glorious', so the bringing forth of 'the fruits of the Spirit is joyful, and full of felicities' for the holy Virgin, 'as there was no sin in the conception'. Christ was born 'without doing violence to the virginal and pure body of His mother.' He left 'her virginity entire to be as a seal, that none might open the gate of that sanctuary.' 'As soon as He was born', the angels

presented the Child to His Mother 'who could not but receive Him with a joy next to the rejoicing of glory and beatific vision, [of] ... her son, who was ... of greater beauty than the sun, purer than angels, more loving than the seraphims, as dear as the eye and heart of God, where He was from eternity engraven, His beloved and His only-begotten.' (17)

At the birth of her Son, the holy Virgin exemplified that 'maternal care which mothers should perform toward their children':

When the holy Virgin now perceived that the expectation of the nations was arrived at the very doors of revelation and entrance into the world, she brought forth the holy Jesus ... She had no ministers to attend but angels, and neither her poverty nor her piety would permit her to provide other nurses, but herself did the offices of a tender and pious parent. She kissed Him and worshipped Him, and thanked Him that He would be born of her; and she suckled Him, and bound Him in her arms and swaddling bands; and when she had represented to God her first scene of joy and eucharist, she softly laid Him in the manger, till her desires and His own necessities called her to take Him and to rock Him softly in her arms. (18)

Henry Thorndike - who was also ejected from his parish and Fellowship of Trinity College, Cambridge, in the 1640's - saw Mary as the climax of that prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. She followed the prophets who were inspired by the Spirit of God, when that same Spirit overshadowed her for the conception of the Word. Thus the union of humanity and the Word is made possible through the agency of the Holy Spirit and Mary's consent:

The Holy Ghost, overshadowing the blessed Virgin, not only works the conception of a Son, but dwells for ever, according to the fulness of the Godhead, in the Manhood so conceived; as by the nature of the Godhead, planted in the Word, Which then came to dwell in the Manhood so conceived. (19)

Of all the Caroline Divines it was Mark Frank who honoured Mary very specially. Frank was yet another divine who was ejected from his Fellowship during the 1640's (from Pembroke Hall, Cambridge), although he was reinstated at the Restoration. For Frank, Mary is indeed blessed, favoured and endowed with grace so as to fulfil her vocation: 'Blessed she indeed that was the conduit of so great blessings, though blessed most in the bearing him in her soul, much more than bearing him in her body'; 'Blessed in her going out and in her coming in, the Lord still being with her; the good treasure of heaven still open to her, showering down upon her, and the earth filled with the blessings, which she brought into the world when she brought forth the Son of God'; 'She is highly favoured enough that her Lord and Son is with her and she with him: she would be no higher sharer'. But more blessed is her humble spirit:

Blessed is the virgin soul, more blessed than others, in St Paul's opinion: blessed the humble spirit above all. For God hath exalted the humble and meek, the humble handmaid better than the proudest lady. Blessed the devout affection that is always watching for her Lord in prayer and meditations; none so happy, so blessed, as she; the Lord comes to none so soon as such. (20)

Frank indicated that Gabriel's Ave to Mary was significant in the role of salvation as it is '*Eva* spelled backwards; all Eve's ill-spun web unravelled, undone, rolled backward by the conception of this blessed Virgin ... temporal and eternal woes taken all away; nothing but joy and salvation to us if we will hear it with the blessed Virgin and accept it.' (21)

Mary's feast days were thus held in high esteem by the Caroline divines. In his Whitsun sermon for 1610, Andrewes preached that 'All the feasts begin at [the] annunciation when [the Holy Spirit] descended on the Blessed Virgin, whereby the Son of God did take our nature, the nature of man.' (22) Referring to the Annunciation, Frank announced 'We call it our Lady-day ... and the text will tell ... why.' Like Andrewes, whom we have seen in his 1605 Christmas day sermon declare that 'the Virgin His Mother' could truly say 'Thou art my Son, this

day I brought Thee into the world,' so Frank too spoke of Lady-day as also being the Lord-day. Above all it is the day when Mary becomes 'blessed among women' and 'highly favoured' by God:

Indeed, *Dominus tecum* is the chief business; the Lord Christ's being with her, that which the Church especially commemorates in the day. Her being 'blessed,' and all our being blessed, 'highly favoured,' or favoured at all, either men or women being so, all our hail, all our health, and peace, and joy, all the angels' visits to us, or kind words, all our conferences with heaven, all our titles and honours in heaven and earth, that are worth the naming, come only from it. For *Dominus tecum* cannot come without them; he cannot come to us but we must be so, must be highly favoured in it, and blessed by it. So the Incarnation of Christ, and the Annunciation of the blessed Virgin - his being incarnate of her, and her blessedness by him. and all our blessedness in him with her, make it as well our Lord's as our Lady's day. More his, because his being Lord made her a Lady, else a poor carpenter's wife, God knows; all her worthiness and honour, as all ours, is from him; and we to take heed to-day, or any day, of parting them; or so remembering her, as to forget him; or so blessing her, as to take away any of our blessing him; any of his worship, to give to her. Let her blessedness, the respect we give her, be *inter mulieres*, 'among women' still; such as is fit and proportionate to weak creatures, not due and proper only to the Creator, that *Dominus tecum*, Christ in her be the business: that we take pattern by the Angel, to give her no more than is her due, yet to be sure to give her that though, and particularly upon the day. (23)

Frank also explained how useful it was for Lady Day to fall sometimes in Lent, and how a feast of joy and 'surely no fasting work' could be kept appropriately at such a time. It is because this feast is like a beacon at that solemn time when the Christian is reflecting on sin and expressing sorrow for it. 'So it can never come more welcome to us, than even then when we are sighing and groaning under them; never can angel come more acceptably than at such time, with such a message as "All hail, thou art highly favoured. blessed art thou." ' (24)

At the time of her Visitation Taylor described the holy Maid as 'She, who was now full of God, bearing God in her virgin womb, and the Holy Spirit in her heart, who had also overshadowed her, enabling her to a supernatural and miraculous conception, arose with haste and gladness to communicate that joy which was designed for the world.'

Taylor suggested that there was never any 'more joy and ecstasy' in heaven than when these two mothers met. Indeed the 'Holy Spirit made the meeting a festival' as these two blessed women exalted in their thanksgivings. In his description of the Visitation Taylor gives it a liturgical setting:

It is not easy to imagine what a collision of joys was at this blessed meeting: two mothers of two great princes, the greatest that was born of woman, and the other was his Lord, and these made mothers by two miracles, met together with joy and mysteriousness; where the mother of our Lord were to visit the mother of his servant, and the Holy Ghost made the meeting a festival, and descended upon Elizabeth, and she prophesied. Never but in heaven was there more joy and ecstasy. The persons ... meeting together to compare and unite their joys and their eucharist, and then made prophetic and inspired, must needs have discoursed like seraphim and the most ecstasied order of intelligences; for all the faculties of nature were turned into grace, and expressed in their way the excellent solemnity. 'For it came to pass when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.' (25)

The blessed Virgin Mary hearing her cousin full of spirit and prophecy, calling her blessed, and praising her faith, and confirming her joy, instantly sang her hymn to God, returning those praises, which she received, to him to whom they did appertain. For so we should worship God with all our praises, being willing upon no other condition to extend our hand to receive our own honour, but that with the other we might transmit to God; that as God is honoured in all his creatures, so he may be honoured in us too; looking upon the graces which God hath given us, but as greater

instruments and abilities to serve him, being none of ours, but talents which are entrusted into our hands to be improved. (26)

It is no wonder, commented Taylor, that since that meeting the Church has shared that exaltation in the song of Mary, whilst Elizabeth's greetings to her cousin are echoed countless times each day.

Even at Christmas, which is not specifically a feast of our Lady, she is highly exalted, already evident in Andrewes' Nativity sermons. Frank too shared this exaltation:

I shall not need to tell you who this 'she', or who this 'him'. The day rises with it in its wings. This day wrote it with the first ray of the morning sun upon the posts of the world. The angels sung it in their choirs, the morning stars together in their courses. The Virgin Mother, the Eternal Son. The most blessed among women, the fairest of the sons of men. The woman clothed with the sun, the sun compassed with a woman. She the gate of heaven, he the King of Glory that came forth. She the mother of the everlasting God, he God without a mother; God blessed for evermore. Great persons as ever met upon a day. (27)

And

The pure virgin pious soul is this *she* who brings forth Christ; the nourishing and cherishing of Him and all His gifts and graces, is this wrapping Him in swaddling clothes; they laying up His word, His promises and precepts in our hearts, is the laying Him in the manger. (28)

Forty days after Christmas, the Purification of our Lady and the Presentation of Christ in the temple are celebrated. ' "When the days of [the blessed Virgin's] purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished," forty days after Christ's nativity, this day, just then, "they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord." ' So for Christ's presentation 'he was brought here [the temple] by a virgin; and I know not how he can be brought by any better.' On this feast

Frank described Mary as the 'most pure and immaculate Virgin'. 'The holy Virgin, who needed no purification for this childbirth, (as not conceiving, as the text runs, *suscepto semine* [= by human seed begotten],) must be purified before she come, though to bring an offering as pure as purity itself. So is God's method and order, so he requires it "after the custom of the law", it is said here; and were there no reason else, church-law, and custom in church business, in all reason should carry it.' (29)

Taylor also emphasised Mary's purity, but above all her humility, in exposing herself to 'public opinion' by obeying the Mosaic law for purification, though she was sinless:

The holy virgin mother, according to the law of Moses, at the expiration of a certain time came to the temple to be purified. Although in her sacred parturition she had contracted no legal impurity, yet she exposed herself to the public opinion and common reputation and still amongst all generations she is in all circumstances accounted blessed, and her reputation no tittle altered, save only that it is made the more sacred by this testimony of her humility. ... The holy Virgin from these acts (of which in signification she had no need, because she sinned not in conception nor was impure in the production) expressed other virtues besides obedience, such as were humble thoughts of herself, devotions and reverence to public sanctions, religion and charity which were like the pure leaves of the whitest lily, fit to represent the beauties of her innocence, but were veiled and shadowed by that sacramental of the Mosaic law. (30)

In thankfulness for the honour of being the Mother of her Lord, Mary presented her Son to God:

The holy Virgin received the greatest favour that any of the daughters of Adam ever did; and knowing from whence and for whose glory she had received it, returns the holy Jesus in a present to God again; for she had nothing so precious as Himself to make oblation of. (31)

Taylor also highlighted that the cost of being the Mother of God would be bitter anguish for Mary, as illustrated in Simeon's prophecy:

The excellent favour of being the mother of God might be crowned with the reward of martyrdom, and a mother's love be raised up to an excellency great enough to make her suffer: the bitterness of being transfixed with His love and sorrow, as with a sword. (32)

On Good Friday too Mary has her place. Taylor described Mary's sufferings at the Crucifixion in a similar vein to the Annunciation. Her strength to bear her grief came once again from that inner and deep stillness which she manifested at the conception of her Son:

By the cross of Christ stood the holy Virgin-mother, upon whom old Simeon's prophecy was now verified; for now she felt 'a sword piercing through her very soul', she stood without clamour and womanish noises; sad, silent, and with a modest grief; deep as the waters of the abyss, but smooth as the face of a pool; full of love, and patience, and sorrow and hope. Now she was put to it to make use of all those excellent discourses her holy Son had used to build up her spirit, and fortify it against this day. Now she felt the blessings and strengths of faith; and she passed from the griefs of the passion to the expectation of the resurrection; and she rested in this death, as in a sad remedy; for she knew it reconciled God with all the world. But her hope drew a veil before her sorrow, and though her grief was great enough to swallow her up, yet her love was greater, and did swallow up her grief. (33)

Taylor portrayed the holy Mother as being instrumental in caring for her Son's body:

After her Son's death she had Him taken from the cross, and once the nails had been removed, 'she kissed, and embraced ... her dead son'. She bathed 'His cold body with her warm tears, and makes clean the surface of the wounds; and, delivering a winding napkin to Joseph of Arimathea, gave

to him in charge to enwrap the body, and embalm it, to compose it to the grave, and to do it all the rites of funeral.' (34)

Mary is the chief of saints for Andrewes, Taylor, Frank and other Caroline Divines. Undoubtedly they gave to our Lady the dignity and reverence that befitted the Mother of God who was conceived without corruption. That she was honoured for herself was illustrated in the various names that have been given to her. Frank listed some of those titles given to her by the saints of old: 'Maria is *maris stella*, says S. Bede, a fit name for the mother of the bright Morning Star that rises out of the vast sea of God's infinite and endless love.' Another name came from the Syriac '*domina*, "a lady", a name yet retained, and given to her by all Christians; our Lady, or the Lady Mother of our Lord.' From 'Petrus Saminai, *de monte et altitudine Dei*, highly exalted, as you would say, like the mountain of God, in which he would vouchsafe to dwell, after a more miraculous manner than in every Sion, his "own holy mount." ' 'St Ambrose called her '*Deus ex genere meo*', 'God of my kin;' as if by her very name she was designed to have God born of her, to be *Deipara* as the Church, against all heretics, has ever styled her the Mother of God.' Frank, like Andrewes, was critical of how little respect was given to her, who 'is above the greatest we here meet with upon earth', by their contemporaries: 'The Romanists make little less of her than a goddess', whilst Puritans and Dissenters do not even make her 'a good woman', let alone call her 'blessed'. (35)

How the Caroline Divines felt is best expressed in this beautiful prose of Frank from his Annunciation sermon:

Give we her in God's name the honour due to her. God hath styled her 'blessed' by the Angel, by Elizabeth; commanded all generations to call her so, and they hitherto have done it, and let us do it too. Indeed, some of late have overdone it; yet let us not therefore underdo it, but do it as we hear the Angel and the first Christians did it; account of her and speak of her as the most blessed among women, one 'highly favoured,' most 'highly' too. But all the while give *Dominus tecum* all the glory, the whole glory of all to him; give her the honour and blessedness of the chief of the saints, him only the glory that she is so, and that by her conceiving and bringing our

Saviour into the world we are made heirs, and shall one day be partakers of the blessedness she enjoys, when the Lord shall be with us too, and we need no angel at all to tell us so. (36)

In regard to praying to her, or Mary praying for us, some Caroline Divines reluctantly declined to think so, as evident in this poem by the poet-priest, George Herbert:

Not out of envie or maliciousnesse
Do I forbear to crave your special aid
I would address
My vows to thee most gladly, blessed Maid,
And Mother of my God, in my distress.
Thou art the holy mine: whence came the gold,
The great restorative for all decay
In young and old;
Thou art the cabinet where the jewell lay:
Chiefly to thee would I my soul unfold:
But now (alas!) I dare not; for our King,
Whom we do all jointly adore and praise,
Bids no such thing. (37)

However, Andrewes, Taylor and Donne all believed in Mary's prayers. For Andrewes, 'the Virgins key of Prayer, accompanied with the prayers of all Gods people in all ages opened the Heaven of Heavens.' Taylor, in writing his sermon on *The Annunciation* in *The Great Exemplar*, stated, 'And possibly her prayers obtained energy and force to my sermon, and made the ground fruitful, and the seed spring up to life eternal .' (38)

John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in the 1620s, was ever grateful for the prayers of the fair Maid. (39)

For that faire blessed Mother-maid,
Whose flesh redeem'd us; that she-Cherubin,

Which unlock'd Paradise, and made
One claime for innocence, and disseiz'd sinne.
Whose wombe was a strange heav'n for there
God cloathe's himselfe, and grew,
Our zealous thanks wee poure. As her deeds were
Our helps, so are her prayers; nor can she sue
In vaine, who hath such titles unto you. (40)

What was also important for these divines was that Mary acts as the model and example for us all, especially if we 'dispose ourselves' to her example of 'chastity, humility and devotion'. 'The pure and virgin soul, the humble spirit, the devout affection, will be also highly favoured.' (41)

Frank concluded his Annunciation sermon by suggesting that it is in the receiving of the blessed Sacrament that we are assuredly highly favoured and blessed and 'made blessed Marys':

There he is strangely with us, highly favours us, exceedingly blesses us; there we are all made blessed Marys, and become mothers, sisters, and brothers of our Lord, whilst we hear his word and conceive it in us; whilst we believe him who is the Word, and receive him too into us. There angels come to us on heavenly errands, and there our Lord indeed is with us; and we are blessed, and the angels hovering all about to peep into those holy mysteries, think us so, call us so. There graces pour down in abundance on us, there grace is in its fullest plenty, there his highest favours are bestowed upon us, there we are filled with grace, unless we hinder it, and shall hereafter in the strength of it be exalted into glory, there to sit down with this blessed Virgin and all the saints and angels, and sing praise, and honour, and glory, to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.(42)

References

1. *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, eds. J. Bliss and J. P. Wilson, 11 Vols. (Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Oxford, 1841-54), afterwards referred to as Andrewes, Vol. 11, p. 295.
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