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The Day of the Annunciation to Mary
(Luke 1:26-38)

God, eternal, living, mysterious God! No angel from Your throne can fathom the mysteries of Your Word, Your being and will, of your ways and works, but reverently yearn after them and on that account praise and laud You as the Three-times Holy [God]. How then should we men, we poor little worms in the dust, now be able to look into You? How should we foolish sucklings of flesh, whom the hated might of sin has made dismal with its gloom, be fit to see Your bright light?

O, so help us then, that we might yet be able to comprehend the blessed mysteries of Your grace, which our blinded reason does not perceive well enough to grasp, and to experience their heavenly power on our souls, and someday see and enjoy there what we here in the darkness of this life have struggled to believe here: the light of Your face. Hear us for the sake of Your divine glory. Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus!

A very common objection which the unbelievers of our day raise against the truth and the divine origin of Christianity is that Christianity holds to all kinds of incomprehensible mysteries, which an enlightened and clear-sighted man can no longer accept: for example, the mystery that God became a man in Christ and that, accordingly, Christ in an unfathomable way is both God and man in one person, the mystery that God has been reconciled through the suffering, death, and bloodshed of a Son with us men, and that now faith alone in this reconciliation saves and justifies us before God; the mystery that all decayed bodies of fallen men will be raised again someday; the mystery that Christ is present in the Lord's Supper with His body and blood, and that both are eaten by the communicants, etc.

So many now, for the sake of these and other mysteries that the Christian religion maintains, want to recognize the same not to be revealed from God, so foolish and unreasonable is the offense which they take concerning them.

Even the most unbelieving cannot honestly deny that nature itself, the entire visible world, is full of unexplainable mysteries. The world, for instance, is such a case; whether a man is of the opinion that existed already from eternity or created by God out of nothing thousands of years ago, it still is and remains in both cases for all an incomprehensible mystery. We see, further, how out of little grains of seeds stalks and stems with full ears, indeed great trees with branches, leaves, blossoms, and thousands of fruits—each wonderful—develop. What an incomprehensible mystery! We see further how the magnet pulls to itself a distant body by means of an invisible power, and how the electrical sparks travel in but a few moments by prescribed cables miles upon miles from one man to another. Each accordingly sees and believes that this happens, but who can explain it? And so it goes with regard to all the affairs of nature, so that similar things certainly have power that each one sees, knows, and believes, but who can identify the foundation of this invisible power at work in these visible things? No one!—"Into the inner working of the nature penetrates no created spirit," one of the greatest researchers in natural things comments entirely truly. Yet even the man

most arrogant in his reason must admit at least that not only all of nature around him here, but also he himself, is a mystery. His own origins are unclear to him, along with the union of his body and soul, and the working of all his senses. For that reason, he must believe that all these things that he holds to be true must be possible, since they are there, and so he believes without a doubt; but how these things are possible goes beyond his senses and thoughts.

Is it not foolish, since the man himself sees himself surrounded by clearly unexplainable mysteries in all of nature, yes, in his very self clearly incomprehensible mysteries are plainly evident, and accordingly must be believed? Is it indeed not foolish, therefore, to reject the Christian religion already on that account, because it also proclaims unexplainable mysteries to him?

And yet more, my beloved! You judge for yourselves: If God Himself has especially revealed something to men, can one do anything besides hold to these revealed mysteries? What would be the point of a revelation if it revealed to us something obvious, which we could already discover for ourselves with our own reason? What kind of god would it be who, when he revealed himself to men, said clearly petty, obvious things which those to whom he spoke could easily figure out for themselves? Such a god would have to be inferior to the mysterious man himself, such a god could not be the true God, could not possibly be the great, almighty, all-knowing Creator of heaven and earth. Far from that, then, that unexplainable mysteries in a religion should prove that this religion has not been revealed by God but must be false, it would rather become a definite indicator that a religion could not be one revealed by God if they do not disclose any unexplainable mysteries.

However, will the unbelievers not then object that the unexplainable mysteries of all religions should therefore be firmly held? [Will they not ask] whether all religions have thus been revealed from God Himself? I answer: All religions indeed hold to unexplainable things, but the so-called mysteries of other religions have plain indicators that they are invented by men or bear distinguishing marks of deception and lies, while, on the contrary, the mysteries of the Christian religion bear the most incontestable distinguishing marks that they are revealed by God Himself, or the seal of truth and divinity on them. For while the mysteries of all other religions are absurd, in bad taste, and reprehensible, those of the Christian religion are, on the contrary, divine, blessed, credible mysteries. Our festival Gospel for today requires me to place this before you today.

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, [27] to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" [29] But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. [30] And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

[34] And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

[35] And the angel answered 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 called holy—the Son of God.

[36] And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with God." [38] And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

In the Gospel today, we read the greatest of all the mysteries of the Christian religion, which is revealed to Mary, the mystery of the incarnation of God, and the mystery that she would be

blessed [*Gebendeiete*] among women, the one whom God had chosen for the execution of His mysterious plan. What does Mary now do? This wonder of divine wisdom, holiness, and life, she exclaims, not pondering something full of doubt, but full of astonishment: “How should that come to pass?” And at this the heavenly messenger pointed out to her: “Nothing is impossible with God,” and she then speaks, filled with the humility of faith and submission: “See, I am the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be unto me as you have said.”—She recognized also that each mystery is indeed incomprehensible, but also a blessed, marvelous, trustworthy thing. Accordingly, then, I place before you today:

Why the mysteries of the Christian religion are so trustworthy:

1. Because they are all so worthy of God.
2. Because none of them are impossible with God.

I.

Without a doubt it was, my beloved, the highest shame for God to believe that He had revealed mysteries were to be regarded either as pointless that, therefore, something only fit to please the curiosity of men, or as something childish, laughable, and tasteless, or as something which in the end lends itself to sin and vice. Since God is a wise, infinitely wise and holy Being, so also His mysteries must necessarily be the same, which He reveals by men to men so that they serve a wise, important end, suitable for divine love and wisdom, and move men to true salvation and, therefore, the honor of God.

We now hereafter examine the mysteries that are alleged [to be Christian mysteries] in the external Christian religion, but which are only superficial, and accordingly instantly seen abundantly clearly only to be nothing other than empty, fraudulent, godless inventions. How silly and at the same time most immoral, for example, the mysterious mythology of the otherwise so advanced Greeks and Romans is well-known. They had the impudence to ascribe to their gods themselves adultery and lewdness, and, on that basis, explain the origins of other gods. The renowned Roman philosopher Cicero, who for a long time occupied the office of a *augurs*, that is, a priest who had to study and then publicly practice the will of the gods, says that if he came across one of his colleagues on the street he would have to do himself violence to avoid betraying himself through laughter. The so-called mysteries of other heathen are no better, the Egyptians, Hindus in India, the Japanese, the Indians of our fatherland, and even the later Jews and Mohammedans. As far as this last one is concerned, they maintain, for example, that a piece of the moon once fell into the clothes of the founder of their religion, Mohamed, but that he had also once more hurled it back to heaven; further, that the grave of Mohamed floats in the air, and so forth. See, that is the way of the heathens' so-called religious mysteries.

How entirely different, on the contrary, are the mysteries of the Christian religion! Each one bears unmistakable heavenly speech and divine origin. They are all throughout worthy of God.

In all of Holy Scripture no mystery is contained that serves only for the amusement of human curiosity; no mystery that discloses something childish or laughable, that in any way lends support to the performance of sin. Each biblical or Christian mystery is, rather, of a sort that its revelation is beneficial for the true salvation of men, necessary for judging sin, and for the disclosure of the glory of God.

Let us only consider the mystery contained in the Gospel for today, which is the greatest, most wonderful, and incomprehensible mystery among all the mysteries of the Christian religion. For therein we are told how a virgin with the name Mary was informed by an angel from heaven that she would become the mother of a son by the power of the Most High and through the

overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, who would at the same time be the Son of the Most High and, therefore, be called “the Son of God.”

It is true, this is a mystery that far surpasses the senses and thoughts of all men, indeed, of all the angels and archangels. A man ponders the depths, heights, breadth, and length of this mystery only a little before it begins, as happens to one who wants to look into the flaming midday sun with the naked eye, to appear only darker with the more time he spends peering into it. But does this, my beloved, sometime make this mystery of the incarnation somehow unworthy of God?—Truly not! The same rather has all the makings of a great mystery entirely worthy of God.

It is truly worthy of divine wisdom, which does nothing useless, nothing unnecessary, but in everything it does has great and important aims. Each man must surely concede, since all men are sinful creatures, and since no man can establish, because of sin, a means by which and a way upon which a man, being a sinful creature, can become pleasing to God, blessed and righteous before God, that there is surely nothing more necessary for all people than that the way and means be revealed for them to be reconciled to Him and someday be saved be revealed to them. This means, however, is revealed in the mystery of the incarnation of God; for even the Holy Scriptures say as much, that God has become a man to make sinful, fallen men in opposition to God pleasing and blessed. What could then be more appropriate of the wisdom of God than this mystery, since it reveals a means through which one created by God for eternal life are also led by Him out of a completely fallen world back to their first original condition, to eternal life?

But is it perhaps the manner by which God, according to this mystery, wants to yet save fallen men that is unworthy of God? I must hereupon again also answer: Truly not! For consider: Would it indeed be unworthy of God if He, as He consider the majority of men, He paid no attention to the sins of men, overlooked the same as a weak human father would, and, in spite of that, nevertheless saved men and received them into His eternal fellowship. That would show neither true love nor holiness. For this reason then, that God Himself has become a man in order to be able to pay for the sins of men through His suffering and death and to pay in such a manner that all who believe can thus be saved,—thereby a holiness and, likewise, a love of God is revealed, the greatness of which, if the incarnation of God had not taken place, would never have been discovered, neither by men nor even by angels, nor considered, realized, or even simply suspected. For how great, how intact must the holiness and righteousness of God be since He only then, after all that had taken place, could forgive men, when first everything necessary had been done for the sins of all men and all the punishment required had been borne. And how great, how incomprehensibly great must the love of God be since He, when no creature could bear the punishment and atone for mankind’s sins, sent His own only-begotten Son Himself to become a man, laying all the sins of mankind upon Him, and has given Him over into disgrace, suffering, yes, into the bitter, excruciating death on the cross! It is true, God has thereby already revealed His holiness and righteousness in that He has given the law with its strong requirements and hard threats, in that He has hurled fallen men into need, misery, and death, and has allowed the terrifying punishment of the flood to come, as well as the overflow of Sodom and Gomorrah through a consuming fire from heaven and the frightening destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. But, on the contrary, what is that if we were to be told that God had still not been able to save a sinner, if His dear Son had not Himself borne the punishment of their sins? Moreover, it is true: God has already revealed His love in that He created men and gave the entire world with all its fullness of goods and pleasures to them as a gift, in that He also has preserved the human race in spite the fact that it fell away from Him until this very hour, in that He has abundantly provided for and splendidly ruled it. But, on the contrary, what is all that when we are told that God Himself has become a man in order, as a man, to reconcile all men with Himself through His life, suffering, and blood?

See, in the light of the mystery of the incarnation of God, God appears as a being of incomprehensible wisdom, of the highest holiness, and of eternal, boundless love. This mystery also glorifies God, since it gives to all the angels and archangels and all sainted men an inexhaustible theme to worship God eternally, to love Him eternally, to thank Him eternally, to praise Him eternally, and acclaim His as the all-knowing, supreme, infinitely loving—in short, the mystery of the incarnation thoroughly reveals God most importantly as the true God, as the highest good, as the being most worthy of praise and worship.

What mystery could thus be more worthy of God?

And indeed all the mysteries of God of the Old and New Testaments of Holy Scripture are of such a sort, the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, the mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, the mystery of the universal resurrection of the dead on the Last Day, the mystery of each wonder performed by God through His prophets and apostles.

Does a man, therefore, have grounds, on account of the incomprehensible mysteries contained in the Christian religion, to reject that religion?—No, they are rather the most magnificent evidence that the Christian religion is certainly a revelation of the great God Himself. Those who do not believe can only reject what they either do not know or remain the enemy of God, not humbling themselves before God, not wanting to let go of the sins that God wants to make atonement for through His incarnation, with a word, they do not want to be converted.

II.

Yet, my beloved, many unbelievers say they cannot believe the mysteries of the Christian religion on account of the fact that they are all impossible through and through.

The angel Gabriel address the basic foundation of this premise after he has wonderfully foretold the birth of Christ, establishing that “Nothing is impossible with God.” And we require nothing more for our own proof. For if nothing is impossible with God, then it is also true that no mystery from God that is proclaimed to us in Holy Scripture is impossible.

Or where is the man who wants to hazard saying that something is indeed impossible with God? Or that also what is impossible with men is also impossible with God, or appears to be impossible to them? For what is more impossible and incomprehensible to our human reason than to be called [into existence] as something out of nothing?—It is no doubt: Whoever denies that God is almighty likewise denies that there is a God, for to be God and to be almighty is one and the same thing. There are indeed in these last days of ours men who, since they cannot comprehend God, open their mouths and boldly and impiously call out clearly: “There is no God.” These men, so to speak, surpass Satan himself in derangement and depravity; indeed, that there is a God even Satan himself does not deny. To that point James writes: “You believe there is a God? You do well; the devil also believes and trembles.” Still, my beloved, to deny the existence of an almighty God is not only a horrible, more than satanic evil, but the one who denies God also fancies himself to be wise—indeed a great foolishness, a true insanity, manifest madness. Then what does an atheist or denier of God do? He wants to believe in no God, since he cannot comprehend Him; meanwhile, however, he who does not want to believe in God, who has created the world, believes much more unbelievable things, namely, that the great world whose arrangement is so full of wisdom originated by chance, or that the transitory world that is constantly changing itself is eternal, or that the entire dying clump of world is in itself God! But what can be more incomprehensible, more inexplicable, more awesome, mysterious and, at the same time, absurd and in bad taste than this atheistic article of faith? See, the atheist does not want to believe the blessed mysteries of the Christianity, but the most laughable and unreasonable pseudo-mysteries of his unbelief, that he believes!

Yet, one says, are there not things that the almighty God cannot do according to the Christian faith? For example, to sin, to undo what has happened, to work it so that two and two do

not equal four, and so forth? But, my beloved, do not let yourselves be duped, for to sin, to undo what has happened and the like, is not a power, but instead would be an impotence, a lie; that God cannot do these things is rather a proof of His perfection and not of His imperfection, a proof that He is able to do all things except to stop being the perfect, supreme God.

Thus what the angel of God said in our Gospel to Mary is and remains eternally true: “Nothing is impossible with God,” including all of those high, blessed mysteries that our holy Christian faith holds before us. Do not allow yourselves, my beloved, to be led to err in your faith through the miserable prattle of wishing to be wise men in these last times where all the wise saying of Scripture have been conformed to the this world full of mockers. The objections that the unbelievers raise in opposition to the faith often certainly appear at first glance to be almost conclusive, but when once considers the propositions of the unbelieving and the Christian faith, against which they are arranged point for point, one then sees that they are straw, with which they want to war against a heavenly fortress that is built upon the eternal rock of the wisdom, holiness, love and omnipotence of God. Be only confident! Against the revealed mysteries of our supreme religion the world has already so long now struggled, as a fallen world is inclined to do, with all its wisdom, cunning, intelligence, and power, but have they been unable to blot out the sun of [divine] revelation. No! It shines as brightly today as four thousand years earlier. Therefore, I repeat it, be only confident! In the future as well the mysteries of God will prevail over the pitiful wisdom of the world; indeed “heaven and earth will pass away, but the words of Jesus will not pass away.”

Therefore, let us only concerned about holding on to the treasure of revealed truth so that we, through the same, live in the faith and one day be saved. So that this happens, however, let us beseech the Lord, that He keeps us in His truth until the end, that nothing will, even in these last times, rob us of our crown. For:

With might of ours can naught be done;
Soon were our loss effected.
But for us fights the valiant one
Whom God Himself elected.
You ask, “Who is this?”
Jesus Christ it is,
The almighty Lord.
And there’s no other God;
He holds the field forever.