

# CITY OF GOD

## THE CONCEPTION

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### THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

MANIFESTED TO MARY OF AGREDA  
FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MEN

*Translated from the Original Spanish*

BY

**FISCAR MARISON**

(Rev. Geo. J. Blatter)



AMI PRESS  
WASHINGTON, NEW JERSEY

## IMRPIMATUR

Santa Fe, New Mexico, February 9, 1949.

I gladly give my "Imprimatur" as of today, to the new edition of the work, "The City of God" by Sister Mary of Jesus, to be reprinted from the original authorized Spanish Edition of the year 1902 without change, and already bearing the Imprimatur of His Excellency, Most Reverend H. J. Aldering, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

✠ EDWIN V. BYRNE, D.D.,  
Archbishop of Santa Fe.

### **Publisher's Note**

*The Mystical City of God* by Maria of Agreda is one of several well-known narrations of the life of Christ based on private revelation. It can offer the reader good food for meditation. However, since Sacred Scripture and the Church's Magisterium provide the essentials of our Catholic Faith, revelations in this volume that go beyond these two foundations should be accepted only with human faith.

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The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima

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MYSTICAL  
CITY OF GOD

THE MIRACLE OF HIS OMNIPOTENCE  
AND THE ABYSS OF HIS GRACE  
THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE OF THE VIRGIN

MOTHER OF GOD

OUR QUEEN AND OUR LADY, MOST HOLY MARY  
EXPIATRIX OF THE FAULT OF EVE  
AND MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

Manifested in these later ages by that Lady to her handmaid

SISTER MARY OF JESUS

Superioress of the convent of the Immaculate Conception of the town  
of Agreda, of the province of Burgos in Spain, under  
obedience to the regular observance  
of the seraphic father

SAINT FRANCIS

For new enlightenment of the world, for rejoicing  
of the Catholic Church, and encouragement of men.

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*Translation from the Original Authorized Spanish Edition*

BY

FISCAR MARISON

Begun on the Feast of the Assumption

1902



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## SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER

### REVELATIONS

**N**OTHING that essentially differs from the teachings of the Catholic Church can rightfully be taught or believed by any man or under any pretext. Moreover, even the essential doctrines can be taught and expounded only in the sense and spirit approved, or at least not disapproved, by the Church. This at once will establish the position which private revelations, whether coming from Heaven or originating from hallucination, merely human or devilish, hold in the Church of God.

There can be no doubt that God can and does manifest to chosen souls hidden things in addition to what He teaches through the public ministry of His Church. It is also an accepted truth that He sometimes reveals them to his friends for the express purpose of communicating this extra knowledge to other well disposed persons through the natural and human means at the disposal of those receiving his revelations. These manifestations He invariably surrounds with enough evidence to satisfy all requirements of a cautious and well founded human belief. It follows naturally that whenever He thus surrounds private revelations with evidences of their heavenly origin, He will be pleased with a rational and loving belief and dissatisfied with a captious and obstinate unbelief of the facts or truths thus privately revealed. Where, however, these external evidences are wanting,

or wherever holy Church intimates the least direct or indirect disapproval, there any faith in private revelation would be not only foolish, but positively wrong.

#### FULL APPROVAL

The Church has as yet given no public and full approval to private revelations of any kind; nor will she ever do so, since that would be really an addition to the deposit of faith left by Christ. But tacitly and indirectly she has approved many private revelations, and among them the writings of Mary of Agreda. She could well do so, since there are no writings of that kind which exhibit more reliable human proofs of divine origin than the "Ciudad de Dios" of the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

The existence of the Bible justifies the query, whether there are not other books that have been written under supernatural guidance, though we know of course that none of them can ever have the same importance and authenticity as the Bible. For the Bible was provided as the record of the general revelations of God to mankind at all its stages to the end of times.

#### A VAST FIELD BETWEEN

Evidently there remains an immense domain of truths outside the range of natural human knowledge and not specially revealed in the Bible. You will at once say: that whole field is covered by the one true religion. Of course it is. The teaching and ministry of men especially appointed for that purpose, the practice and example of those eminent in the christian virtues, the writings of those versed in higher truths, are the ordinary means of spreading truth and leading men to their great

destiny. But besides all this, history proves that God, for special purposes, often grants to his friends higher insight into supernatural truths and facts, which, if at his command they are recorded in writing, are intended by Him as an additional source of higher knowledge and well deserve to be considered as private revelations.

#### EARMARKS OF DECEIT

Past ages simply teem with writings that claim to be derived from or based on divine revelation or inspiration. Many of them are clearly nothing but frauds, showing the signs of conscious or unconscious hallucination. Many again seem beyond mere natural human powers of insight, but at the same time in their authorship and tendencies show nothing divine or beneficent, thus proving that besides human error and malice the sinister and treacherous knowledge of malign spirits often finds its way into such writings. Ancient sorcery and magic and modern spiritism have their root in this sort of preternatural communication.

#### TO BE CLOSELY SCRUTINIZED

Hence it would be foolish not to demand the closest inquiry into anything put forward as private revelation. Fortunately it is easy to apply sure and un failing tests. All that is necessary, is to ascertain the character and motives of the writer and the result or drift of his writings. Mahomet proves himself an epileptic adventurer and his Koran a travesty of Judaism and Christianity, settling like a blight upon civilization. Joseph Smith and his companions turn out to be rebellious incendiaries and murderers and their book of Mormon a ridiculous fake, establishing a fanatic and bigamous theocracy.

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The fakir Dowie pretending prophecy, ends as a lunatic in a bankrupt Zion, yet leaving millions to his relatives. The humbugging Eddy, after crazy-quilting scraps from the Bible with shreds of Buddhism, Brahmanism and Theosophy, shuffles off her wrinkled coil amid a numerous following of dupes who rather expected her faked science to keep her perpetually alive or raise her up from the dead.

Is there any difficulty in discovering the fraud in revelations of such a kind? Yet they claim divine inspiration and very often contain passages which show sources of information and deceit not altogether human. The sinister manifestation of spiritism and the astounding information often furnished by mediums, are not all sleight of hand or illusion of the senses; some of these things can be explained only by assuming interference of a sinister spirit world.

### REALLY ANOTHER ARGUMENT FOR PRIVATE REVELATIONS

Would it not be absurd to concede the communication with evil spirits or departed souls, damned or otherwise, (and all reasonable people concede it), and deny the possibility of communing with the good spirits or souls and with God? Who would want to limit the power of God in this way? It will not do to claim that all the communication of God and the good spirits takes the ordinary course provided in the public ministry of the true religion. For it does not. Saint Paul saw things that he dared not reveal, though he was not slow in writing down his other revelations. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and the Infallibility was privately revealed many times before they were officially defined and accepted as self-understood truths by all

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reasonable men. Before these doctrines were defined, who had the greater prudence and insight? Those people who refused to believe these truths because they were privately revealed, or those who examined those revelations and finding them humanly credible, and not contrary to the true religion, simply accepted them as revealed by God? I should think the latter showed themselves ahead of their times and far more enlightened in their belief than the former, who persisted in a finical unbelief concerning all private revelations.

### NO DIFFICULTY TO DISTINGUISH THE TRUE FROM THE FALSE

If we find that the author of alleged private revelations has been a faithful adherent of the one true religion established by God, that he has led a good and blameless life, that his writings do not run counter to the Bible nor to the public teachings of the true Church, that he was not actuated by motives of selfish gain, pecuniary or otherwise, that the writings themselves tend toward the practice of perfection both as far as the writer as well as the reader is concerned, that they have not been openly disapproved by the Church; then certainly, if the information recorded is such that it would presuppose supernatural inspiration or direct communication with the higher world, we are not justified in immediately rejecting the writings as fraudulent. Closer examination may easily lead to reasonable certainty that they are privately revealed. But we all know that this acceptance can never mean anything more than a mere human belief, not the belief of faith, such as for instance is demanded by holy Scripture. In fact, as

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soon as any such writing lays claim to implicit faith, it certainly is no revelation and ought to be rejected at once as spurious.

### MARY OF AGREDA

She was the daughter of Francis Coronel and Catherine of Arana, born April 2, 1602, in the small town of Agreda near Tarazona in Spain. In 1617 she entered the convent of the discalced Franciscan Nuns in the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Agreda and took her vows one year later. In 1625 she was chosen abbess, much against her wishes, and, except during a short intermission, was re-elected every three years until she died, in 1665. The fame of her prudence and foresight, not only in the government of her convent but in other matters, soon spread outside the convent walls and persons of the highest rank in state and Church were eager to obtain her counsel in important affairs. King Philip IV visited her several times in her convent and corresponded with her about national affairs for many years.

But she was no less famous for her exalted virtues. In many respects her life was a faithful copy of that of St. Francis. The miracle of bilocation related of her is in fact more remarkable and lasted a longer time than that recorded anywhere in the lives of the saints. Her good sense, her truthfulness, her sincerity, her humility, her unselfish love of God and man eminently adapted her for the communication of messages from God to men.

### WHAT INDUCED HER TO WRITE

In all writing that lays claim to private revelation, the motives of the writer must be closely scrutinized. If it appears to be a self-imposed task, for selfish ends, pe-

cuniary or otherwise, tending to particularity in religious teachings or practice not approved by the established faith or written without knowledge or consultation of the rightful superiors, it ought to be rejected as spurious. God will reveal nothing for such purpose or under such circumstances, and He will permit human error and deceit and the sinister influence of hell to run their natural course. Nothing of all this appears in the writings of Mary of Agreda. Though she was urged interiorly and exteriorly to record the facts of history revealed to her concerning the Mother of God, she resisted for twelve years and was finally induced to write only through the positive commands of her superiors. Reluctantly she began her history in the year 1637 and finished it in the year 1645, continually asking to be relieved from the task because she thought herself unworthy. As soon as the insistence of her superiors relaxed and an error of judgment on the part of an outside confessor gave her a plausible excuse, she burned all her writings, thus destroying the labor of many years. When this came to the knowledge of the higher authorities and when they insisted on her rewriting the history which continued to be supernaturally made known to her, she again succeeded in delaying the task for ten years. Only the strictest command under obedience and the threat of censures finally induced her to write the manuscript which she began in 1655 and finished in 1665, and which is still preserved in the convent of Agreda.

#### WHY REVEALED TO A WOMAN

It is to be remembered that God's almighty power is restricted to no particular instrument; He creates out of nothing. In the case of Balaam, he used not only that

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wicked man but even his beast for special revelation. It does seem that He prefers women for private revelation. He chose men to reveal the great public truths of the Bible and to attend to the public teaching, but to women in the new law He seems to have consigned the task of private revelations. At least most of the known private revelations have been furnished us by women and not men. We must infer from this that they are better adapted for this work. In fact, no special learning or great natural insight is required of a messenger; such qualities might tend to corrupt or narrow down the inspired message to mere human proportions, whereas private revelation is given precisely for the purpose of communicating higher truths than can be known or understood naturally. Humility, great piety and love, deep faith are the requisites of God's special messengers. Women as a rule are more inclined to these virtues than men, and therefore are not so apt to trim the message of God down to their own natural powers of understanding. In choosing women for his special revelations He gives us to understand from the outset, that what He wishes to reveal is above the natural faculties of perception and insight of either man or woman.

### HOW WAS "CIUDAD" RECEIVED?

As soon as the "City of God" appeared in print it was welcomed and extolled as a most wonderful work. The different translations found no less enthusiastic welcome in nearly all the European countries. It secured the immediate approbation and encomium of the ordinaries, the universities, the learned and eminent men of christendom. There is probably no other book which was so closely scrutinized by those in authority, both civil and religious,



and afterwards so signally approved as the "City of God." By order of Innocent XI., Alexander VIII., Clement IX., Benedict XIII., and Benedict XIV. it was repeatedly subjected to the closest scrutiny and declared authentic, worthy of devout perusal and free from error. The title "Venerabilis" was conferred upon the author. A large sized volume would be required to record the praises and commendations written in favor of the great "City of God."

#### OPPOSITION

As the "City of God" so strenuously maintains the prerogatives of the Mother of God and the authority of the Popes, it was not to be expected that it should escape the malicious slander and intrigues of those tainted with Jansenism and Gallicanism. Many members of the Sorbonne in Paris were secret or open adherers of these sects at the time when the "Ciudad" was first published in French about the year 1678. The first translation in French was very inexact and contained many interpolations and false versions of the original. Dr. Louis Élias du Pin and Dr. Hideux of the Sorbonne made this translation the foundation of virulent attacks. Du Pin was called by Pope Clement XI. "Nequioris doctrinæ hominem," "A man of pernicious doctrines." Hideux turned out to be a rabid and fanatical Jansenist, cut off from the Church as a heretic. As they and other members of the Sorbonne succeeded in enlisting the sympathy of influential Gallican courtiers and church dignitaries, both in Paris and at Rome, they secured a clandestine prohibition of the "City of God," which appeared in the acts of the Congregation of the Office. When it was discovered, no one could be found who would dare stand

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sponsor for it, and immediately Pope Innocent XI., on November 9, 1681, annulled the act, positively decreeing that the "City of God" be freely spread among the clergy and laity. The very fact that this prohibition did not issue from the Index Commission but from a department not concerned with the examination of books, proves that it owes its insertion to Gallican intrigue, secretly extending even to high circles in Rome, and to the fair-minded, this sectarian attempt will be a convincing argument for the excellence and orthodoxy of the doctrines contained in the revelations of Mary of Agreda.

### MANY EDITIONS

The popularity and excellence of the great history of the Mother of God is also evidenced by its widespread diffusion. It has appeared in over sixty editions in Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, German, Latin, Arabic, Greek, and Polish. Does it not seem providential that the first English translation of this great work should have been reserved for our own times? No other language on the face of the earth is the medium of so many theories, sects and isms as the English language and the "City of God" is a most timely and efficient antidote for the epidemic of false doctrines, which is sweeping over all the earth, and affects especially the English-speaking portion of the human race.

### EXPECTATIONS OF THE TRANSLATOR

The translator and promoter of the "City of God" is confident that it will not be one of the books idly filling the shelves of libraries, but one which at the first cursory

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inspection will arouse the desire of further inquiry and lead to repeated and attentive perusal.

The translation herewith offered is as exact and as perfect a rendition of the original Spanish into English, as ten years of assiduous labor and a considerable experience in literary production give a right to expect. The subject-matter surely ought to secure for it a proper place in the more elevated ranks of English Literature.

May this first English translation, under the guidance of our holy faith, bring forth abundant fruits of the Spirit among English-speaking people in all parts of the world.

Feast of the Annunciation, 1912.

Fiscar Marison, South Chicago.



## APPROBATIONS

**T**HE first Pope officially to take notice of "Ciudad de Dios" was Pope Innocent XI, who, on July 3, 1686, in response to a series of virulent attacks and machinations of some members of the Sorbonne, known to be Jansenists, issued a breve permitting the publication and reading of the "Ciudad de Dios." Similar decrees were afterward issued by Popes Alexander VIII, Clement IX and Benedict XIII. These decrees were followed by two decrees of the Congregation of Rites, approved by Benedict XIV and Clement XIV, in which the authenticity of "Ciudad de Dios" as extant and written by the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus, is officially established. The great pope Benedict XIII, when he was archbishop of Benevent, used these revelations as material for a series of sermons on the Blessed Virgin. On Sept. 26, 1713, the bishop of Ceneda, Italy, objecting to the publication of the "City of God," was peremptorily ordered by the Holy Office to withdraw his objections as interfering with the decree of pope Innocent XI for the universal Church.

The process of canonization of Mary of Agreda was promoted by the Spanish bishops and other eminent men of the Church soon after her death in 1666. It has resulted so far in securing her the title of *Venerabilis*, thus clearing the way to her beatification, for which, let us hope, God will soon raise a promoter among the many pious and eminent men who hold in esteem her writings

and have learned of her holy life and of the miracles wrought at her tomb.

The Redemptorist Fathers published a new German translation in 1885, which was approved and highly recommended by the Bishop of Ratisbon in the following terms :

“We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approbation to the annotated translation of the Spanish original “Ciudad de Dios” of Mary of Jesus and recommend this book, which will surely edify all readers and be the occasion of great spiritual blessings.”

Ratisbon, September 29, 1885.

✠IGNATIUS, Bishop of Ratisbon.

Notable is the high recommendation of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Apost. Legate, Primate of Germany, etc.

“According to the decrees of Pope Innocent XI and Clement XI the book known as ‘Ciudad de Dios’ written by the Venerable Servant of God, Maria de Jesus, may be read by all the faithful.”

“A number of episcopal approbations, the recommendations of four renowned universities, namely, of Toulouse, Salamanca, Alcala and Louvain, and of prominent members of different orders, coincide in extolling the above-named work. The learned and pious Cardinal D’Aguirre says that he considers all the studies of fifty years of his previous life as of small consequence in comparison with the doctrines he found in this book, which in all things are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Fathers and Councils of the Church. The Venerable Superior-General of St. Sulpice, Abbé Emery, adds: “Only since I read the revelations of Mary of Agreda do I properly know Jesus and his Holy Mother.”

"We therefore do not hesitate—in granting our episcopal approbation to—"Ciudad de Dios"—and wish to recommend it to the faithful and especially to our clergy."

✠FRANZ ALBERT,  
Archbishop.

Archiepiscopal Chancery, Salzburg.

September 12, 1885.

A more recent official approbation of "Ciudad de Dios" is from the Bishop of Tarazona, prefacing the new edition of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo, chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immaculate Conception of Agreda, carefully and exactly to compare the manuscript which is to serve as copy for the printing of the new edition of the "City of God" now about to be published by the religious of the above-named convent, with the authenticated autograph manuscript of that work there preserved,—and having ascertained by a personal revision of a great part of the manuscript that the said priest has diligently and faithfully fulfilled this charge imposed upon him by us:

We now therefore certify that this present edition of 'Ciudad de Dios,' with the exception of a few mere orthographic modifications, is entirely conformable to the autograph of that work as composed and written by the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

Tarazona, April 7, 1911.

[Diocesan Seal]

✠JAMES, Bishop of Tarazona.

Finally follows the official approbation of the Right Reverend Bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese, where this English translation is published.

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father:—

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English translation of the work entitled 'Ciudad de Dios.' Wish-  
ing you every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Domino,

✠H. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

The author has made use of capital letters in the text slightly at variance with common usage, in order to avoid complication and secure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridgment they vary slightly.

City of God is divided into three Parts and eight Books. Part I contains Books 1 and 2. Part II contains Books 3, 4, 5 and 6. Part III contains Books 7 and 8. As circumstances compel a serial publication of the four volumes, the author judged it best to head these divisions as follow:

THE CONCEPTION, Books 1 and 2.

THE INCARNATION, Books 3 and 4.

THE TRANSFIXION, Books 5 and 6.

THE CORONATION, Books 7 and 8.



## The Conception

The Sacramental Mysteries wrought by the Most High in the Queen of Heaven from the Time of her Immaculate Conception until the Incarnation of the Word in her virginal Womb, and how much Merit She herself acquired through divine Grace by profiting from the Favors conferred upon Her during those first fifteen Years of her Life.



# INTRODUCTION

TO THE

## LIFE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

GIVING THE REASON FOR WRITING IT, AND EXPLAINING  
OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES IN CONNECTION THEREWITH.

1. I should not be astonished to hear myself condemned as audacious, foolhardy and presumptuous by any person who will begin to realize (if realized it can be) that I, a simple woman, who is of herself but sheer weakness and ignorance and who is, on account of her sins, most unworthy, has resolved and attempted to write of divine and supernatural things. This condemnation will be the more justified in these, our present times, in which the holy Church, our mother, is so abundantly supplied with teachers and holy men, so rich in doctrines of the holy Fathers and Doctors; in this our most opportune age, when even prudent and wise persons, full of holy zeal in the spiritual life, are disturbed and troubled at the least mention of a higher life, looking upon visions and revelations as most suspicious and dangerous paths for the pursuit of Christian perfection. If no excuse can be found for such an enterprise in itself, or even for attempting things that are so far above and superior to what man can hope to compass, and so far beyond all human capacities, then we can only conclude that to undertake them is either a sign of perverse judgment or the result of an activity far surpassing all the human power.

2. As faithful children of the holy Church we must

confess that all the mortals, not only with the use of all their natural powers, but with the simultaneous use of all the common and ordinary graces, are but incapable and, as it were, mute and ignorant weaklings for so difficult an undertaking as to explain and describe the hidden mysteries and magnificent sacraments which the powerful arm of the Most High has wrought in that Creature whom, as his Mother, He has designed to be an immense ocean of grace and privilege and the Depository of the greatest treasures of the Divinity. How incapable must our weakness acknowledge itself to be, when even the angelic spirits confess that words fail them when attempting to describe that which is so far above their thoughts and capacities. The life of this Phoenix among the works of God is a book so sealed up that none is found among all the creatures of heaven and earth, worthy to open it (Apoc. 4, 3). It is evident then, that only the powerful Lord can unseal it; He who made Her more perfect than all the creatures; or She herself, the Mistress, our Queen and Mother, who was worthy to receive and properly to appreciate her ineffable gifts. It is in her power to select suitable instruments, and such as for her glory seem capable of manifesting these gifts in the proportion, at the time, and in the manner serviceable to her Onlybegotten Son.

3. I would willingly maintain that these instruments can be no other than the teachers and learned saints of the Catholic Church, or the doctors of the schools, who have all taught the way of truth and life. But the thoughts and the judgments of the Most High are exalted as much above our own as heaven is exalted above the earth and no one knows his mind and no one can counsel Him in his works (Rom. 11, 34); He it is that holds the scales of the sanctuary in his hands (Apoc. 6,

5), and who weighs the winds (Job 28, 25); who grasps in his hands all the orbs (Is. 40, 12), and who, by the equity of his most holy counsels, disposes of all things with weight and measure (Wis. 11, 21), assigning to each one opportune time and place. He dispenses the light of wisdom (Ecclus. 24, 37) and by his most equitable bounty He distributes it, and no one can ascend to the heavens to draw it down (Baruch 3, 29), or fetch it from the clouds, or know its ways or investigate the hidden paths thereof (Baruch 3, 31). He alone observes it as it is in itself, and transfuses it as the vapor and emanation of his immense charity (Wis. 7, 25) as the brightness of his eternal light, as the flawless reflection and image of his eternal bounty, through holy souls among the nations in order to make them friends of the Most High and constitute them as Prophets (Wis. 7, 27). The Lord alone knows why and for what purpose He thus prepared me, the last of his creatures; why He thus called and raised me, obliged and compelled me, to write the life of his most holy Mother, our Queen and Lady.

4. It is beyond the prudent surmise of any man that, without this influence and power of the Most High, the thought of such a work should enter into a human heart, or such an enterprise should take shape in my mind. For I acknowledge and confess myself to be a weak woman, wanting in all virtue; therefore, it should be far from my thoughts to approach such a work, but equally as far from me to refuse it on my own account. In order that a just estimate may be had in this matter I will mention in simple truth something of that which happened to me regarding this history.

5 In the eighth year after the foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my life, obedience imposed upon me the office which I unworthily hold at the pres-

ent day, namely to be the abbess of this convent. I found myself much troubled, sorrowful and discouraged, because neither my age nor my inclinations were such as are requisite for governing and commanding, but they were rather such as befitted one who should be governed and obey. I knew also, that in order to invest me with this office a dispensation had been obtained. On account of these and other just reasons, the terrors with which the Most High has crucified me during all my life, were much augmented. In addition thereto God left me in dreadful doubt whether I was on the secure path or whether I should obtain or lose his friendship and grace.

6. In this tribulation I cried to the Lord with all my heart that He help me and if it be his will that I should be freed from this danger and burden. Although it is true that the Lord had prepared me sometime beforehand and commanded me to accept the office, and although when I tried to excuse myself on account of my pusillanimity, He always consoled me and reiterated his command, I nevertheless did not cease my petitions, but rather augmented them. For I perceived and understood in the Lord that, although He showed this to be his holy will, which I could not hinder, yet I was aware at the same time that he left me free to retire and resist, and, if I wished, to act according to my weakness as a creature and in the consciousness of my total insufficiency; such is the prudence of the Lord in his dealings with men. Relying on this kindness of the Lord, I increased my efforts to be relieved from this evident danger, which is so little estimated by our human nature with its bad habits and disorderly passions. The Lord, however, repeated continually that it was his will and He consoled me, admonishing me through his holy angels to obey.

7. I fled in this affliction to our Queen and Lady as

to my only refuge in all troubles, and after I had manifested to Her my way of life and my desires, She deigned to answer me in these sweetest of words: "My daughter, console thyself and do not be disturbed in thy heart on account of this labor; prepare thyself for it and I will be thy Mother and Superior, whom thou shalt obey; and the same I will be to thy subjects. I will supplement thy deficiencies and thou shalt be my agent, through whom the will of my Son and my God shall be fulfilled. In all thy temptations and troubles thou shalt take refuge with me, confer about them with me, and take the advice, which I will give thee in all things. Obey me, and I will favor thee and will continue to be attentive to thy affliction." These were the words of the Queen, as consoling as they were soothing to my soul. From that day on the Mother of mercy multiplied her mercies toward me, her slave; for She became more intimate with me and continued her intercourse with my soul, receiving me, listening to me, teaching me with ineffable condescension, giving me counsel and encouragement in my affliction, filling my soul with the light and knowledge of eternal life and commanding me to renew the vows of my profession in her presence. Finally this our most amiable Mother and Lady revealed Herself still more fully to her slave, withdrawing the veil from the hidden sacraments and magnificent mysteries which are contained, though unknown to mortals, in her most holy life. And, although this blessed and supernatural light was uninterrupted, and especially clear on her festival days and on other occasions when I was instructed in many mysteries; yet it was not so full, frequent and clear as that which was afterwards vouchsafed to me when She added the command that I write the history of her life according as her Majesty herself should dictate and inspire me. Particularly

on one of these festivals of the most holy Mary the Most High informed me that He had in reserve many hidden sacraments and blessings, which He had conferred upon this his heavenly Mother in the days of her pilgrimage and that it was his intention to manifest them to me, in order that I might write them down according to her guidance. This will of the Most High, though I resisted it, was continually present to my mind for the space of ten years, until I attempted the first writing of this divine history.

8. Consulting about my doubts with the holy princes and angels, whom the Most High had appointed to direct this work of writing the history of our Queen, and manifesting to them how great was my disturbance and affliction of heart and how stuttering and mute was my tongue for such an arduous task, they replied over and over again that it was the will of the Most High that I write the life of his most pure Mother and our Mistress. On one day especially, when I made many objections and declared to them my difficulties, and my incapability and great fears, they spoke to me these words: "With good reason thou fearest and art disturbed, O soul, doubttest and hesitatest in a matter, where we angels ourselves would do the same, as considering ourselves unable worthily to describe the high and magnificent doings of the Omnipotent in the Mother of Piety and our own Queen. But remember, dearest soul, that the firmament, the whole machinery of the world and all things created will sooner fail, than the words of the Most High. Many times He has promised to his creatures, and in the holy Scriptures it is recorded, that the obedient man shall speak of victories over his enemies and shall not be reprehensible in obeying (Prov. 21, 28). And when He created the first man and gave him the command not to eat



of the tree of knowledge, he established the virtue of obedience, and swearing He swore, in order to give greater assurance to man. For the Lord has repeatedly given such an oath; for instance, when He promised to Abraham that the Messiah should descend from his race, He added thereto the assurance of an oath (Gen. 22, 16); the same He did when He created the first man, assuring him that the obedient shall not err. He also repeated this oath, when He ordained that his most holy Son should die (Luke 1, 73); and He gave a like assurance to men that they, who should obey this second Adam, imitating Him in the obedience, by which He restored what the first lost through his disobedience, shall live forever and that the enemy shall have no part in them. Remember, Mary, that all obedience takes its rise from God as from its first and principal source, and we angels obey the power of his divine right hand and his most just will. We cannot contravene or ignore it, because we see the immutable being of God face to face and we perceive that his will is holy, pure and true, most equitable and just. Now this certainty, which we angels possess through the beatific vision, you mortals also possess in its proper proportion as wayfarers through the words of the Lord concerning your prelates and superiors: "He who hears you, hears Me; and who obeys you, obeys Me." (Luke 20, 16). Now since obedience is rendered on account of God, who is the principal Cause and who is the Superior of all, it is befitting to his almighty Providence that He take the consequences of obedience, whenever that which is commanded is not in itself sinful. Accordingly the Lord assures us of these things by an oath, and He will sooner cease to exist, though this is impossible, than that He will fail in his word. In the same way as the children proceed from their parents, and

all the living from Adam, multiplied from his natural being in his posterity; so also all superiors are constituted by God as by the supreme Lord on whose account we yield obedience to them; human beings to their living superiors, we angels to our higher hierarchies of the same nature, and all beings together, in their superiors, obey the eternal God. Remember now, that all of these have directed and commanded thee to do that, about which thou still hesitatest; if thou now shouldst begin to write by mistake, intending thereby to fulfill his commands in obedience, then the Most High would do with thy pen the same as He did with the knife of Abraham, when he was about to sacrifice his son Isaac, for on that occasion the Lord commanded one of us angels to withhold the arm and the knife. He did not thus command us to withhold thy pen, but has ordered us with lightest breath to speed it on, and while gazing on his Majesty, to direct and assist thee by illuminating thy intellect."

9. Such encouragement and instruction my holy angels and lords gave me at this time. On many other occasions the prince saint Michael informed me of the same wish and command of the Most High. By the continual enlightenments, favors and instructions of this great prince, I have understood great sacraments and mysteries of the Lord and of the Queen of heaven; for this angel was one of those, who guarded and assisted Her and who were delegated from the angelic choirs, as I will relate in its place (Part I, 201-206). He is at the same time the general patron and protector of the holy Church. He was a special witness and faithful minister of the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. This I have often heard of saint Michael himself, who showed me singular favors in my troubles and dangers, and has promised me his assistance and direction in this undertaking.

10. In addition to all this and other facts, which need not here be mentioned, and in addition to what I shall say farther on, the Lord has directly, in his own person, commanded and manifested to me his will many times, and in words which I shall presently repeat. He said to me one day on the festival of the Presentation of most holy Mary in the temple: "My spouse, many mysteries pertaining to my Mother and the saints have been made manifest in the Church militant; but many are still hidden, especially the interior secrets of their lives, and these I wish now to make known; and I desire thee to put them down in writing according as thou art directed by the most pure Mary. I will reveal and explain them to thee; for until now I have, according to the hidden designs of my wisdom, kept them in reserve, because the time for revealing them was not befitting or opportune to my Providence. Now, however, it is, and it is my will that thou write. Obey, soul!"

11. All these facts which I have mentioned, and many more which I could mention, would not have been urgent enough to rouse my will to an enterprise so arduous and so foreign to my condition, if to them had not been added the motive of obedience to my superiors, who are set to govern my soul and teach me the way of truth. For certainly my mistrusts and fears were not so unimportant as to permit me to come to a full decision without their commands in so great a matter, when in resolving upon others, also supernatural and vastly less difficult, I rely so much on the guidance of obedience. As an ignorant woman I have always sought this northstar, for it is a duty incumbent on all to test all things, even though they seem to be most noble and excellent beyond suspicion, by the approbation of the teachers and ministers of the holy Church. Such assurance I have been solicitous to pro-

cure for the direction of my soul, and more particularly in this undertaking of writing the life of the Queen of heaven. I have frequently tried to prevent my superiors from being moved by any accounts of my interior experiences, disguising, as much as I could, many things, and in tears begging the Lord to enlighten them and to fill them with mistrust against me, to watch over them lest they be deceived or lest they permit me to be deceived or misdirected. Many times I have desired that the very thought of allowing me to engage in this enterprise would fade from their minds.

12. I will also confess that the demon, availing himself of my natural dispositions and of my fears, has made great efforts to hinder this work by seeking to terrify and afflict me. He would no doubt have succeeded in keeping me from it if the zeal and persistence of my superiors had not counteracted my cowardice. In this persecution the Lord, the most pure Virgin and the holy angels often took occasion to renew their enlightenment, their tokens and wonders. Nevertheless, in spite of all this, I deferred, or to speak more appropriately, I resisted this undertaking many years; I refused compliance, as I will describe further on, not having the boldness to attempt the execution of something so far above all my powers. And I believe that this was not without special providence of his Majesty; for in the course of those years so many things have happened to me, and I may say, so many mysterious and various difficulties intervened, that I would not have been able to preserve the tranquillity and quiet of spirit, which is necessary for retaining the proper light and information; for not in all states of mind, though they are of the highest and most advanced, can the soul engage in that exalted activity which is **necessary** to correspond to such exquisite and delicate in-

fluences. In addition to this, there was still another reason, namely : During this protracted delay I could inform myself and assure myself of the truth of these things not only by means of the new enlightenment, which grew as time passed on, and by the prudence which experience gives, but also by the persevering insistence of the Lord, of the holy angels and of my superiors, under whose obedience I lived. Likewise an opportunity was given me to quiet my fears and misgivings, to overcome my cowardice and perplexity, and to trust that to the Lord, which I would not trust to my weakness.

13. Confiding then in the great virtue of obedience, I resolved in the name of the Lord and of my Queen and Mistress to lay aside my reluctance. I call this virtue great, not only because by it the most noble activities in the faculties of a creature, namely the mind, the judgment and free will, are offered as a holocaust to the Lord; but also because no other virtue ever assures success more unfailingly than obedience; for by it the creature then does not operate of itself alone, but also as an instrument of him that governs and commands. This was the assurance of Abraham, when he overcame the force of the natural love for his son Isaac (Gen. 22, 3). And if it was sufficient for such an act, and sufficient to detain the sun and the heavens in their swift course (Josue 10, 13), it can certainly be sufficient to influence the movement of the earth. Perchance if the hand of Oza had been guided by obedience, he would perhaps not have been punished as presumptuous in touching the ark. Well do I know that I am more unworthy than Oza in stretching out my hand to touch, not the lifeless and figurative ark of the old covenant, but the living Ark of the New Testament, which contained the manna of the Divinity, the source of grace and the New Law. But if I

remain silent, I fear with good reason to disobey most high commands, and I could exclaim with Isaias: "Woe is me because I kept my peace!" (Is. 6, 5). Therefore, O my Queen and Lady, it is better that thy benignant goodness and mercy and the blessings of thy liberal hand should shine forth through my base and unworthy efforts; it is better that I should experience thy blessings in obeying thy commands, than that I should fall into thy displeasure. It will be a work of thy clemency, O purest Mother, to raise the poor from the earth and to execute through a weak and unfit instrument, a work so difficult; for thereby Thou shalt magnify thy condescension and the graces which thy most holy Son communicates to Thee. Moreover Thou thereby shalt exclude that deceitful presumption, which might make us imagine that by human efforts, or by earthly prudence, or by the force and authority of deep discussion, this work is accomplished. Thou thereby showest, that by divine virtue Thou awakenest anew the hearts of the faithful, drawing them toward Thee, Thou fountain of kindness and mercy. Speak therefore, O Lady, that thy servant may hear with an ardent desire fully to obey Thee (I Kings 3, 19). But how can my desires ever reach or equal my indebtedness? A befitting response on my part will be impossible, but if it were possible, I would desire to give it. O powerful and exalted Queen, fulfill thy promises by manifesting to me thy graces and attributes, in order that thy greatness may be made known and heralded through the nations and generations. Speak, O Lady, for thy servant heareth; speak and magnify the Most High in the powerful and wonderful works, which his right hand performed for Thee in thy most profound humility. Let them flow from the hollow of his hands filled with hyacinths into thine (Cant. 5, 14), and from

thine to thy devout servants, in order that the angels may bless Him, the just magnify Him, and the sinners seek Him. Let all of them see the example of thy highest sanctity and purity, and by the grace of thy most holy Son, let me be favored with this mirror and efficacious rule, by which I can set my life in order. For this is to be the principal purpose and first object of my solicitude in writing thy life. This Thou hast repeatedly intimated to me, condescending to offer me a living pattern and a mirror without flaw, in which I should see and according to which I should adorn my soul, so as to become worthy to be thy daughter and the bride of thy most holy Son.

14. This shall be my whole object and intention; and therefore I shall not write as a teacher, but as a disciple; not as one instructing, but as one trying to learn, knowing that it is the duty of women to be silent in the holy Church, and to listen to the teachers (I Cor. 14, 34). But as an instrument of the Queen of heaven I will declare what She deigns to teach me and whatever She commands me; for all the souls are capable of receiving the Spirit, which her divine Son has promised to pour out over men of all conditions (Joel 2, 28). The souls are also able to communicate it in a befitting manner, whenever a higher authority acting according to the dispensations of Christ's Church so disposes. I am now convinced that the Church has authorized this history through my superiors. That I should err is possible, and to an ignorant woman, natural; but then I err, while obeying and not acting of my own free will; thus I remit myself and subject myself to those who are my guides and to the correction of the holy Catholic Church, to whose ministers I fly in all my difficulties. And I wish that my superior, teacher and confessor be a witness and a censor of this doctrine, which I receive, and also a

severe and vigilant judge of the manner in which I put it into practice, or fail in the fulfilling of the obligations consequent upon this blessing.

15. Pursuant to the will of the Lord and the command of obedience, I have written for the second time this heavenly history; for during the first writing of it, though the light by which I perceived the mysteries was abundant and fruitful in proportion as my shortcomings were great, my tongue was unequal to the task of finding the proper terms, and my pen not swift enough for a full statement. I omitted some things, and with the lapse of time and by the aid of new enlightenments, I found myself better prepared to write at this second time. Nevertheless there always remains much of what I understood and have seen, which I must leave unsaid; since to say all will never be possible. Besides these reasons, there was another known to me in the Lord, namely; That in my first writing my mind was much hindered from attending to the matter and arrangement of this work by my temptations and great fears. They raised such tempests of contrary thoughts and suggestions within me, that, deeming it the greatest presumption to have attempted such an arduous task, I concluded to burn it. And I believe that this did not happen without the permission of the Lord, for in the turbulency of my soul I could not present myself in a state entirely befitting and desirable to the Lord for writing and engraving into my heart and spirit his doctrine, as He commands me to do now and as can be seen from the following event.

16. On one of the festival days of the Purification of Our Lady, after having received the most holy Sacrament, I wished to celebrate this holy festival, which was the anniversary of my profession, with many acts of thanksgiving and of total resignation to the Most High,



who without any merits of mine had chosen me as his spouse. While I was thus exciting these affections, I felt in my interior a most powerful change accompanied by abundant light which raised me and urged me strongly and sweetly toward the knowledge of the essence of God, his goodness, perfections and attributes, and to the disclosing of my own misery (Wis. 8, 1). And these different things, which were placed before my understanding at one and the same time, produced in me various effects: The first was that all the attention of my mind and all my aspirations were raised on high; the other effect was, that I was humbled in mind to the very dust, in such a way that it seemed to take away my own existence. At the same time I felt a most vehement sorrow and contrition for my grievous sins, joined to the determination to amend and to renounce all worldly things, aspiring instead toward complete love of God. In these affects I remained as if annihilated, and the greatest pain seemed but consolation, and death, but life. The Lord having pity on my faintness, in sheer mercy, spoke to me: "Be not dismayed, my daughter and spouse, for in order to pardon, to wash and to purify thee from thy sins, I will apply my infinite merits and the blood, which I shed for thee; animate thyself to desire all perfection in imitation of the life of the most holy Mary. Write it a second time in order that thou mayest supply what was wanting and impress her doctrines on thy heart. Do not again irritate my justice, nor show thyself thankless for my mercy by burning what thou shalt have written, lest my indignation deprive thee of the light which, without thy merits, thou hast received for the manifestation of these mysteries."

17. I immediately thereupon saw the Mother of God, who also spoke to me: "My daughter, as yet thou hast

not derived becoming fruit for thy soul from the tree of life, which was offered thee in the writing of my history, nor didst thou enter into the substance of its contents. Thou hast scarcely yet thought of this hidden manna, nor hast thou attained that perfect and ultimate preparation, which the Almighty requires in order to engrave and imprint, in a proper manner, my virtues into thy soul. I am to give thee the befitting qualities and perfections for that which the divine right hand is to accomplish in thee. I have asked Him that, through my intercession and through the abundant graces conferred upon me, I be permitted to adorn thee and compose thy soul, so that thou mayest turn again to the writing of my life with less attention to the material and more to the spiritual and substantial part of it. Remove the hindrances which oppose the currents of divine grace flowing to thee from the Almighty through me and make thyself capable of readily accepting the full portion assigned to thee by the divine will. See that thou do not curtail or limit it by thy shortcomings and imperfections." Thereupon I saw that the divine Mother clothed me in a garment whiter than the snow and more shining than the sun; and She girded me with a most precious girdle and said: "This is a participation of my purity." I also asked for the infused science of the Lord, which should serve me as most beautiful hair for my adornment and for other precious gifts and presents, the value of which I saw and knew was great, but which I was not able fully to estimate. After having thus adorned me, the heavenly Lady said: "Work faithfully and earnestly to imitate me and to be my most perfect daughter, engendered of my spirit, nourished at my breast. I give thee my blessing, in order that in my name and under my direction and assistance thou mayest again resume thy writing."

18. The whole of this holy life of Mary is divided, for greater perspicuity, into three parts. The first treats of all that pertains to the first fifteen years of her life, from the moment of her most pure Conception until the moment when in her virginal womb the eternal Word assumed flesh, including all that the Most High performed for Mary during these years. The second part embraces the mystery of the Incarnation, the whole life of Christ our Lord, his Passion and Death and his Ascension into heaven, thus describing the life of our Queen in union with that of her divine Son and all that She did while living with Him. The third part contains the life of the Mother of grace during the time She lived alone, deprived of the companionship of Christ our Redeemer, until the happy hour of her transition, assumption and crowning as the Empress of heaven, where She is to live eternally as the Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. These three parts I subdivided into eight books, in order that they may be more convenient for use and always remain the subject of my thoughts, the spur of my will and my meditation day and night.

19. In order to say something of the time in which I wrote this heavenly history, it must be noticed that my father, brother Francis Coronel, and my mother, sister Catharine de Arana, my parents, founded in their own house this convent of the discalced nuns of the Immaculate Conception by the command and the will of God, which was declared to my mother, sister Catharine, in a special vision and revelation. This foundation took place on the octave of the Epiphany, January 13th, 1619. On the same day we took the habit, my mother and her two daughters; and my father took refuge in the order of our seraphic Father Saint Francis, in which two of his sons

had already been living as religious. There he took the habit, made his profession, lived an exemplary life, and died a most holy death. My mother and myself received the veil on the day of the Purification of the Queen of heaven, on the second of February, 1620. On account of the youth of the other daughter her profession was delayed. The Almighty in his sheer goodness favored our family so much, that all of us were consecrated to Him in the religious state. In the eighth year of the foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my age, in the year of our Lord 1627, holy obedience imposed upon me the office of abbess, which to this day I unworthily hold. During the first ten years of the time in which I held this office, I received many commands from the Most High and from the Queen of heaven to write her holy life, and I continued in fear and doubt to resist these heavenly commands during all that time until the year 1637, when I began to write it the first time. On finishing it, being full of fears and tribulations, and being so counseled by a confessor (who directed me during the absence of my regular confessor), I burned all the writing containing not only this history, but many other grave and mysterious matters; for he told me, that women should not write in the Church. I obeyed his commands promptly; but I had to endure most severe reproaches on this account from my superiors and from the confessor, who knew my whole life. In order to force me to rewrite this history, they threatened me with censures. The Most High and the Queen of heaven also repeated their commands that I obey. During this second writing, so abundant was the light concerning the divine Essence, so copious were the blessings of the divine right hand for the renewal and vivification of my soul in the teachings of my heavenly Mother, so perfect

were the instructions and so exalted were the sacraments communicated to me, that it was necessary to write another book in connection with this history, the title of which will be: "Laws of the Spouse; heights of his divine love and fruits gathered from the tree of life of most holy Mary, our Lady." By divine favor I begin re-writing this history on the eighth of December, 1655, on the day of the Immaculate Conception.



# BOOK ONE

**Treats of the Divine Fore-Ordainment of Christ and His Mother as the Highest Ideals of all Creation; of the Creation of the Angels and Men as their Servants; of the Lineage of the Just Men, Finally Resulting in the Immaculate Conception and Birth of the Queen of Heaven; and of Her Life up to Her Presentation in the Temple.**

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## CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING TWO SPECIAL VISIONS VOUCHSAFED TO MY SOUL, BY THE LORD AND CONCERNING OTHER ENLIGHTENMENTS AND MYSTERIES, WHICH COMPELLED ME TO WITHDRAW FROM EARTHLY THINGS AND RAISED MY SPIRIT TO DWELL ABOVE THE EARTH.

1. I confess to Thee (Matth. 11, 25) and magnify Thee, King Most High, that in thy exalted Majesty Thou hast hidden these high mysteries from the wise and from the teachers, and in thy condescension hast revealed them to me, the most insignificant and useless slave of thy Church, in order that Thou mayest be the more admired as the omnipotent Author of this history in proportion as its instrument is despicable and weak.

2. After I had overcome the above mentioned reluctance and disorderly fears which caused so much timid hesitation, lest I suffer shipwreck in that sea of marvels, the most exalted Lord caused me to feel a virtue from on high, strong, sweet, efficacious and gentle; an enlightenment which illumined the intellect, subjected the rebellious will, tranquillizing, directing, governing and attracting the whole range of interior and exterior senses, thus

subjecting my entire being to the will and pleasure of the Most High and directing it in all things toward his honor and glory alone. Being thus prepared, I heard a voice from the Almighty, which called me and raised me up toward Him, exalting my dwelling-place on high (Ecclus. 51, 13) and strengthening me against the lions, that hungrily roared about me in order to snatch my soul from the enjoyment of great blessings in the boundless mysteries of this holy Tabernacle and City of God. Surrounded by the sorrows of death and perdition (Ps. 17, 5) and beset by the flames of Sodom and Babylon, in which we live, it liberated me from the portals of sorrow, into which I was enticed to enter. My enemies, forming visions of fallacious and deceitful delights for the misleading of my senses and the capture of them by pretended pleasures, set their allurements about me, in order that I might blindly turn toward these flames and be consumed by them. But from all these snares, laid for my footsteps (Ps. 56, 7), the Most High has delivered me, elevating my spirit and teaching me by the most efficacious admonitions the way of perfection. He invited me to a life spiritualized and angelic, and obliged me to live so cautiously, that in the midst of the furnace, the fire touched me not (Eccli. 51, 6). He often liberated me from the impure tongue, when it sought to communicate to me its earthly fables (Ps. 118, 85). His Majesty invited me to rise from the dust and littleness of the law of sin, to resist the deflections of sin-infected nature and restrain its disorders, combatting them by his enlightening inspirations and raising myself above myself (Lam. 3, 28). He called me repeatedly, sometimes by the power of his omnipotence, sometimes with the correction of a Father, and at others with the love of a Spouse, saying: Arise, my dove, creation of my hands, make haste and come to Me (Cant. 2, 10),



who am the light and the way (John 8, 12), he that follows Me, walks not in darkness. Come to Me, who am the secure truth, and unchangeable holiness, to Me, who am the Powerful and the Wise, and the Teacher of those that follow wisdom (Wis. 7, 15).

3. These words were like arrows of sweet love, which filled me with admiration, reverence, knowledge and dread of my sins and of my vileness, so that I retired from his presence, shrunken and annihilated in the knowledge of my nothingness. And the Lord spoke to me: "Come, O soul, come to Me, who am thy omnipotent God, and although thou hast been a prodigal child and a sinner, arise from the earth and come to Me, thy Father; receive the stole of my friendship and the ring of a spouse."

4. Still remaining in that secure retreat of which I have spoken, I saw on a certain day, six angels, whom the Almighty had appointed to assist and guide me in this undertaking and in other dangers. Coming toward me, they purified and prepared my soul, and then presented me before the Lord. His Majesty gave to my interior being a new light and, as it were, a participation in glory, by which I was made capable and desirous of seeing and understanding the things, which are above the powers of a mere terrestrial creature. Soon after, two other angels, of a still higher order, appeared to me and I felt within me the power of the Lord by which they called me. I understood that they were most mysterious envoys and that they wished to reveal to me high and hidden sacraments. Eagerly I responded, and desirous of enjoying the blessing which they pointed out to me, I declared to them, how ardently I longed to see what they wished to show me and yet so mysteriously concealed from me. Then they at once answered with great seren-

ity: "Restrain thyself, O soul." I turned to the great princes of heaven and said: "Princes of the Almighty and messengers of the great King! Why do you now detain me contrary to my will and why do you defer my joy and my delight, after you have called me? What force is this of yours, and what power, which calls me, fills me with fervor, which allures and yet detains me, which attracts me to follow after the odor of my beloved Lord and of his ointments, and yet restrains me with strong bonds? Tell me the cause of all this!" They answered: "Because, in order to be instructed in all these mysteries, thou must needs, O soul, come with bare feet and despoiled of all thy desires and passions; for these mysteries do not accommodate or lend themselves to disordered inclinations. Take off thy shoes like Moses (Exodus 3, 5), for such was the command given to him before he could see the wonderful bush." "Princes of heaven and my lords," I answered, "much was asked of Moses, when he received the command to perform the works of an angel while yet living in mortal flesh: but he was a saint, and I am but a sinner full of miseries. My heart is disturbed and I am in conflict with the slavery and the oppression of sin, which I feel in my members, and which are opposed to the law of the spirit" (Rom. 7, 23). To which they rejoined: "Soul, it would indeed be for thee a most difficult enterprise, if thou hadst to execute it merely with thy own power; but the Most High, who wishes to see in thee this disposition, is powerful, and He will not deny to thee his help, if from thy heart thou ask his assistance and thou prepare thyself to receive it. And his power, which caused the bush to burn and at the same time prevented it from being consumed, can prevent also the fire of the passions which encompass and beset the soul, from consuming it, if it

truly desires to be saved. His Majesty asks for that which He desires, and can execute what He asks. Strengthened by Him, thou canst do that which He commands (Phil. 4, 13); take off thy shoes and weep in bitter sorrow, call out to Him from the bottom of thy heart, in order that thy prayers may be heard and thy desires fulfilled."

5. Presently I saw a most precious veil covering a treasure and my heart burned with desire to see it raised and to look upon the sacred mystery which I understood was hidden beneath. My desire was answered in the following manner: "Obey, O soul, in what was enjoined and commanded thee; despoil thyself of thyself, and then this mystery will be revealed to thee." I resolved to amend my life and to overcome my appetite; I sighed and wept with many aspirations from my inmost soul for the manifestation of this blessing. While I made my good resolves, the veil which covered the treasure, began to be lifted. Presently the veil fell entirely and my interior eyes saw what I shall not know how to describe in words. I saw a great and mysterious sign in heaven; I saw a Woman, a most beautiful Lady and Queen, crowned with the stars, clothed with the sun, and the moon was at her feet (Apoc. 12, 1). The holy angels spoke to me: "This is that blessed Woman, whom Saint John saw in the Apocalypse, and in whom are enclosed, deposited and sealed up the wonderful mysteries of the Redemption. So much has the most high and powerful God favored this Creature, that we, his angelic spirits, are full of astonishment. Contemplate and admire her prerogatives, record them in writing, because that is the purpose for which, according to the measure suitable to thy circumstances, they will be made manifest to thee." I was made to see such wonders, that the

greatness of them took away my speech, and my admiration of them suspended my other faculties; nor do I think that all the created beings in this mortal life will ever comprehend them, as will appear in the sequel of my discourse.

6. On another day, while my soul sweetly tarried in the aforesaid habitation, I heard a voice from the Most High saying: "My spouse, I desire that thou rouse thyself in earnest to seek Me, and to love Me with fervor; that thou make thy life more angelic than human, and that thou forget entirely the terrestrial affairs. I wish to raise thee as one that is poor from the dust, and as one full of need from the dunghill (Ps. 112, 7), so that, while I exalt thee, thou mayest humiliate thyself, and the nard of thy sweet odor may remain in my presence; knowing thy own misery, be thou convinced from the bottom of thy heart, that thou meritest for thyself only tribulation and humiliation. Consider my greatness and thy littleness; remember that I am just and holy; I deal with thee considerately, making use rather of my mercy and not chastising thee as thou deservest. Strive to build upon this foundation of humility all the other virtues in order to fulfill my wishes. I appoint my Virgin Mother to teach, correct and reprehend thee. She will spur thee onward and accompany thy footsteps according to my liking and pleasure."

7. While the Most High spoke to me the Queen stood near by; and the heavenly Princess disdained not to accept the office which his Majesty assigned to Her. She accepted it benignly and said to me: "My daughter; I desire that thou be my disciple and my companion, and I will be thy Teacher; but remember that thou must obey me courageously and from this day on no vestige of a daughter of Adam must be found in thee. My conduct

and my works during my pilgrimage on earth, and the wonders, which the arm of the Almighty wrought through me, shall be the mirror and the model of thy life." I prostrated myself before the throne of the King and Queen of the universe and I offered to obey Her in all things; I gave thanks to the Highest for the favor, which He, so much in excess of my merits, conferred upon me in giving me such a Guide and Protectress. Into Her hands I renewed the vows of my profession; I offered myself to Her and proposed to work anew at the amendment of my life. Again the Lord spoke to me: "Behold and see!" Turning I saw a most beautiful ladder with many rungs; around it were many angels, and a great number of them were ascending and descending upon it. His Majesty said to me: "This is the mysterious ladder of Jacob, the house of God and the portal of heaven (Gen. 28, 17); if thou wilt earnestly strive to live irreprehensible in my eyes, thou wilt ascend upon it to Me."

8. This promise incited my desires, set my will aflame and enraptured my spirit; with many tears I grieved, that I should be a burden to myself in my sinfulness (Job. 7, 20). I sighed for the end of my captivity and longed to arrive where there would be no obstacle to my love. In this anxiety I passed some days, trying to reform my life; I again made a general confession and corrected some of my imperfections. The vision of the ladder continued without intermission, but it was not explained to me. I made many promises to the Lord and proposed to free myself from all terrestrial things and to reserve the powers of my will entirely for his love, without allowing it to incline toward any creature, be it ever so small or unsuspecting; I repudiated all visible and sensible things. Having passed some days in these

affections and sentiments, I was informed by the Most High, that the ladder signified the life of the most Holy Virgin, its virtues and sacraments. His Majesty said to me: "I desire, my spouse, that thou ascend this stair of Jacob and enter through this door of heaven to acquire the knowledge of my attributes and occupy thyself in the contemplation of my Divinity. Arise then and walk, ascend by it to Me. These angels, which surround it and accompany it, are those that I appointed as the guardians of Mary, as the defenders and sentinels of the citadel of Sion. Consider Her attentively, and, meditating on her virtues, seek to imitate them." It seemed to me then, that I ascended the ladder and that I recognized the great wonders and the ineffable prodigies of the Lord in a mere Creature and the greatest sanctity and perfection of virtue ever worked by the arm of the Almighty. At the top of the ladder I saw the Lord of hosts and the Queen of all creation. They commanded me to glorify, exalt and praise Him on account of these great mysteries and to write down so much of them, as I might bring myself to understand. The exalted and high Lord gave me a law, written not only on tablets, as He gave to Moses (Exod. 31, 18), but one wrought by his omnipotent finger in order that it might be studied and observed (Ps. 1, 2). He moved my will so that in her presence I promised to overcome my repugnance and with her assistance to set about writing her history, paying attention to three things: First, to remember that the creature must ever seek to acknowledge the profound reverence due to God and to abase itself in proportion to the condescension of his Majesty toward men and that the effect of greater favors and benefits must be a greater fear, reverence, attention and humility; secondly, to be ever mindful of the obligation of all men, who are so for-

getful of their own salvation, to consider and learn what they owe to the Queen and Mother of piety on account of the part assumed by Her in the Redemption, to think of the love and the reverence which She showed to God and the honor in which we are to hold this great Lady; thirdly, to be willing to have my spiritual director, and if necessary the whole world, find out my littleness and vileness, and the small returns which I make for what I receive.

9. To these my protestations the most Holy Virgin answered: "My daughter, the world stands much in need of this doctrine, for it does not know, nor does it practice, the reverence due to the Lord omnipotent. On account of this ignorance his justice is provoked to afflict and humiliate men. They are sunken in their carelessness and filled with darkness, not knowing how to seek relief or attain to the light. This, however, is justly their lot, since they fail in the reverence and fear, which they ought to have." Besides this the Most High and the Queen gave me many other instructions, in order to make clear to me their will in regard to this work. It seemed to me temerity and want of charity toward myself, to reject the instruction which She had promised me for narrating the course of her most holy life. It seemed equally improper to put off the writing of it, since the Most High had intimated this as the fitting and opportune time, saying to me in this regard: "My daughter, when I sent my Onlybegotten, the world, with the exception of the few souls that served Me, was in worse condition than it ever had been since its beginning; for human nature is so imperfect that if it does not subject itself to the interior guidance of my light and to the fulfillment of the precepts of my ministers by sacrificing its own judgment and following Me, who am the way, the truth and

the life (John 14, 6), and by carefully observing my commandments in order not to lose my friendship, it will presently fall into the abyss of darkness and innumerable miseries, until it arrives at obstinacy in sin. From the creation and sin of the first man until I gave the law to Moses, men governed themselves according to their own inclinations and fell into many errors and sins (Rom. 8, 13). After having received the law, they again committed sin by not obeying it (John 7, 19) and thus they lived on, separating themselves more and more from truth and light and arriving at the state of complete forgetfulness. In fatherly love I sent them eternal salvation and a remedy for the incurable infirmities of human nature, thus justifying my cause. And just as I then chose the opportune time for the greater manifestation of my mercy, so I now select this time for showing toward them another very great favor. For now the hour has come and the opportune time to let men know the just cause of my anger, and they are now justly charged and convinced of their guilt. Now I will make manifest my indignation and exercise my justice and equity; I will show how well justified is my cause. In order that this may come to pass more speedily, and because it is now time that my mercy show itself more openly and because my love must not be idle, I will offer to them an opportune remedy, if they will but make use of it for returning again to my favor. Now, at this hour, when the world has arrived at so unfortunate a pass, and when, though the Word has become incarnate, mortals are more careless of their weal and seek it less; when the day of their transitory life passes swiftly at the setting of the sun of time; when the night of eternity is approaching closer and closer for the wicked and the day without a night is being born for the just; when the majority of



mortals are sinking deeper and deeper into the darkness of their ignorance and guilt, oppressing the just and mocking the children of God; when my holy and divine law is despised in the management of the iniquitous affairs of state, which are as hostile as they are contrary to my Providence; when the wicked least deserve my mercy; in these predestined times, I wish to open a portal for the just ones through which they can find access to my mercy; I wish to give them a light by which they can dispel the gloom that envelops the eyes of their minds. I wish to furnish them a suitable remedy for restoring them to my grace. Happy they who find it, and blessed they who shall appreciate its value, rich they who shall come upon this treasure, and blessed and very wise those who shall search into and shall understand its marvels and hidden mysteries. I desire to make known to mortals how much intercession of Her is worth, who brought restoration of life by giving mortal existence to the immortal God. As recompense I desire that they look upon the wonders wrought by my mighty arm in that pure Creature, as upon a mirror by which they can estimate their own ingratitude. I wish to make known to them much of that, which according to my high judgment is still hidden concerning the Mother of the Word."

10. "I have not revealed these mysteries in the primitive Church, because they are so great, that the faithful would have been lost in the contemplation and admiration of them at a time when it was more necessary to establish firmly the law of grace and of the Gospel. Although all mysteries of religion are in perfect harmony with each other, yet human ignorance might have suffered recoil and doubt at their magnitude, when faith in the Incarnation and Redemption and the precepts of the new law of the Gospel were yet in their beginnings.

On this same account the person of the incarnate Word said to his disciples at the last supper: "Many things have I to say to you; but you are not yet disposed to receive them" (John 6, 12). These words He addressed to all the world, for it was not yet capable of giving full obedience to the law of grace and full assent to the faith in the Son, much less was it prepared to be introduced into the mysteries of his Mother. But now, mankind has greater need for this manifestation, and this necessity urges Me to disregard their evil disposition. And if men would now seek to please Me by reverencing, believing, and studying the wonders, which are intimately connected with this Mother of Piety, and if they would all begin to solicit her intercession from their whole heart, the world would find some relief. I will not longer withhold from men this mystical City of refuge; describe and delineate it to them, as far as thy shortcomings allow. I do not intend that thy descriptions and declarations of the life of the Blessed Virgin shall be mere opinions or contemplations, but reliable truth. They that have ears to hear, let them hear. Let those who thirst come to the living waters and leave the dried-out cisterns; let those that are seeking for the light, follow it to the end. Thus speaks the Lord God Almighty!"

11. These are the words of the Most High on the occasion before mentioned. Obedient to the authority, which commands me, I will in the following chapter describe the manner in which I receive my information and enlightenment, and how I see the Lord. Thus complying with his orders, I will explain, once for all, the illuminations and the favors which are vouchsafed to me for this work and to which I will refer in the sequel of this history.

## CHAPTER II.

HOW THE LORD, IN THE STATE IN WHICH HE HAD PLACED ME, MANIFESTED TO ME THE MYSTERIES OF THE LIFE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

12. It seemed to me proper to preface this history with an explanatory chapter, describing and explaining once for all, as far as is given me and as far as I can, the manner in which the Lord manifested to me these wonders.

13. Ever since I have had the use of reason, I was conscious of especially one blessing, which in my estimation is the greatest of all those bestowed upon me by God's liberality; namely, a great and penetrating fear, lest I should lose Him. And this moved and urged me on to strive after the better and more secure way and to follow after it and implore it from the Lord day after day. He has wounded my flesh with the dart of fear of his judgments (Ps. 118, 120), and I live continually in the dreadful thought: Have I perhaps lost the friendship of the Most High or am I still in his friendship? My bread day and night have been the tears, which this fear has drawn from my eyes (Ps. 91, 4). On account of this dread, since it is more necessary than ever that the friends of the Lord should practice their virtues in secret and without ostentation, I have in these latter times begun to send up earnest and heartfelt prayers and petitions to the Lord, asking also the intercession of the Queen and Virgin, that I may be guided and led along the secure paths hidden from the eyes of men.

14. In answer to these repeated prayers the Lord said: "Do not fear, soul, nor afflict thyself; for I will give thee a state of mind and show thee a path of light and security, which only its Author himself could know of or even conceive. Whatever is exterior and dangerous shall leave thee today and thy treasure shall be altogether hidden. Take care of it on thy part and preserve it by a perfect life. I will direct thee toward a hidden path, unobstructed, unfailing and pure; walk thou in it." And presently I felt a change within me and a highly spiritualized state of mind. To my understanding was given a new light, which illuminated it and infused into it a knowledge of all things in God, and of his operations as they are in themselves and as they are known and seen by God, according to the measure of his communication. It is a knowledge of light, holy, sweet and pure, subtle, penetrating, sure and agile, causing love of good and hatred of evil. It is a breath of the power of God and an emanation of a most subtle light, which acts as a mirror for my understanding. Thus the higher faculties and the interior perception of my soul began to expand in their activity. For the Object, by means of the light which flashed from It, showed Itself to be infinite, though the perception of It remained limited and the understanding finite. It is a vision as it were of the Lord seated on a throne of great majesty, where, always within mortal limitation, I perceive his attributes distinctly. A veil, which seems like purest crystal intervenes, through which the wonderful attributes and perfections of God appear distinctly and clearly perceptible; yet this vision is not entire, immediate or intuitive, or entirely free from obstruction, but always comes through a medium, which is nothing else than this crystalline covering above mentioned. The perception of that which it covers is not

painful to the understanding, but is marvelous, because the mind is aware that what is perceived is infinite, and that the one who perceives is finite. The mind reposes in the hope of once possessing that which it perceives, and of once seeing the veil removed and the medium done away with, as soon as the soul shall have been freed from the mortality of the body (II Cor. 4, 6).

15. In this vision there are three different ways or degrees, according to the different methods, by which the divine Will communicates it and according to the dispositions of the human will. Sometimes He manifests Himself more clearly, at other times less. At times some mysteries are revealed to the exclusion of others of great importance. This difference is usually in accordance with the dispositions of the soul; for if the soul does not preserve itself in peace or if it is guilty of some fault, no matter how small, it will not experience this vision in its fullness. In the one I have described the Lord is perceived so plainly and so securely, that there is not the least room for doubt. However, the conviction of the real presence of God in the vision always precedes and impresses itself upon the mind, before one understands fully that which his Majesty speaks. And this knowledge produces a pleasing constraint, powerfully and efficaciously urging the soul onward to love, serve, and obey the Most High. In this vision great truths are made clear; how estimable virtue is, and what a valuable treasure is its exercise and preservation. The beauty and security of virtue is exhibited and a powerful impulse given toward the good, while a hatred and disgust toward evil and all disorderly inclinations fills the soul, very often entirely subduing them. As long as the soul enjoys this vision and does not lose it, it will never be conquered (Wis. 7, 30), because it gives life, security, fervor and

joy. Strongly and lovingly it calls and urges the soul onward, gives it lightness and alertness, and establishes the superior part of the being firmly above the inferior. Even the body becomes agile and spiritualized during such times, freeing itself from its grossness and weight.

16. And beginning to perceive and feel these delightful sensations, the soul lovingly calls out to the Most High: "Trahe me post Te" (Cant. 1, 3) let us run together; for, united to its Beloved, it does not any more feel the doings of this earthly life. Seeking to fly after the odor of the ointments of its Beloved, it begins to live more where it loves, than where it lives. Having already left behind its lower nature, it turns back only for the purpose of reforming it and curtailing its animal appetites of the passions. If at any time they seek to rise in rebellion, the soul will subdue them with alacrity, for already "not I live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 20).

17. To a certain extent, in all these holy operations and aspirations, is felt the assistance of the spirit of Christ, who is the God and the life of the soul (John 5, 11) and who is known as such by the fervor, by the enlightenment, by the holy desires, by the light, and by the facility of action inspired by Him. These are such, that only God can be the Author of them. One feels the uninterrupted activity of love which it causes, and of intimate conversation with God, living and continuous, which rivets the attention of the mind to the things of God and withdraws it from earthly things. Christ manifests Himself as living within the soul, exerting his power and dispersing the darkness by his light. This may be properly designated as standing in the entrance of the house of the Lord; for there the soul beholds the splendor emanating from the beaconlight of the Lamb of God (Apoc. 21, 23).

18. I do not say that this is the whole light, but it is part of it; and it consists in a knowledge superior to the capabilities and faculties of a creature. In furtherance of this vision the Most High animates the intellect by a certain subtlety and light, thus adapting it for the exalted knowledge. Moreover the knowledge thus given is accompanied by the certainty which is peculiar to faith, as experienced in regard to the more common truths of revelation. Faith accompanies the vision and the Omnipotent gives to the soul power to appreciate the value of the knowledge and the light, which He infuses. Its light is inextinguishable (Wis. 7, 10) and all good things and a nobility of great price come to me with it. This light goes before me, directing my ways (Wis. 8, 16) and I took possession of it unerringly, and I desired to communicate it without envy, nor have I concealed its excellence. It is a participation of the Divinity and its presence is a great delight and joy. It teaches great things freely and it disciplines the heart; with irresistible force it banishes and expels the deceitful things of this world, wherein, solely by looking upon them in this light, the spirit finds immeasurable bitterness. By it the soul leaves behind the perishable things and flies to the sacred refuge of eternal truths. It enters into the cellar of fermented wine (Cant. 2, 4) where the Most High orders in me most holy charity. And by it He urges me to be patient and without envy (I Cor. 13, 4), to be kind without offense, to be free from pride and ambition or anger, thinking ill of nobody and suffering and tolerating all things. Its voice is ever within me (Prov. 8, 1) and secretly warns me powerfully to do what is most holy and most pure, teaching me in all things; and if I fall short in the slightest degree, it reprehends me without ever passing over the smallest point.

19. This is the light, which at one and at the same time enlightens, raises to fervor, teaches and reprehends, chastens and enlivens, calls and deters, warns and compels, makes clear the distinction between good and evil, discloses the hidden and the profound, the length and the breadth (Eph. 3, 18); which reveals to me the world, its state, its inclinations, its deceits and the lies and fallacies of its lovers and clients. Above all, it teaches me to despise the world, to tread it under foot and to raise myself to the highest Lord and Governor of the universe. And in his Majesty I see and learn the ordering of all things (Wis. 7, 17), the power of the elements, the beginning, the middle and the end of time, its changes and variations, the onward course of the years, the harmony of all creatures and their innate qualities; all the secrets of men, their acts and their thoughts; how far they stray from the Lord; the dangers in which they live and the errors of their ways; the states and governments, their curtailed existence and their great instability, their beginning and their end, the true and the false principles which guide them. All this is learnt and seen distinctly in God through this light, even as far as pertains to the separate individuals and circumstances. But as soon as the soul descends to a lower condition and a more ordinary state, wherein it must make use only of the substance or acquired habit of this enlightenment and cannot enjoy its full splendor, this exalted knowledge of persons, of conditions, and of the secret thoughts before described is more circumscribed and limited. In this lower state I perceive only so much as is necessary to avoid danger and fly from sin, and to feel true compassion with other persons, though at the same time I am not permitted to speak clearly with any one about that which is revealed to me of their evil state. I could not do it if I tried, for



it seems as if I am made dumb, except at times, when the Author of this light gives me permission and commands me to admonish one of my neighbors. But even on such occasions I must not disclose the nature of my cognition, but I am constrained to speak to the heart, using plain arguments, simple, ordinary and charitable persuasion in God. At the same time I am urged to pray for their necessities, which for that object become known to me.

20. Although all these things were revealed to me with the greatest clearness, yet never has the Lord shown me the final ruin of any soul, which has damned itself. This knowledge is withheld from me by the providence of God, because He is so just, that He does not deem it befitting to reveal the damnation of a soul except for some great purpose; and if I were to come to the knowledge of such a great ruin, I think I should die of sorrow. This would doubtlessly be the effect of such a revelation, so great is the grief caused by the sight of a soul forever separated from God. I have besought Him not to show me any one who will damn himself. I would not refuse, at the cost of my life, to liberate any one who is in sin, nor would I object even to see the present state of such soul; but may I never see one, who is beyond redemption!

21. This light is given me, not that I may reveal my secrets in particular, but that I may make use of it with prudence and wisdom. Though it continues to be only accidental, it remains with me in the same way as some substance, that vivifies and comes from God himself; and in the manner of a habit, to insure the good government of my lower appetites and feelings. Moreover, in the superior part of my soul, I enjoy a vision and habitation of peace and I understand the mysteries and sacraments of the life of the Queen of heaven and of other mysteries of faith, which were thus continually made manifest and

present to me in this never failing light. And if at any time I descend, creaturelike, to attend to human affairs, the Lord presently calls me with a sweet yet rigorous severity and again draws my attention to his words and teachings and to the conscious meditation of these sacraments, graces and virtues, and to the exterior and interior works of the Virgin Mother, as I will explain farther on.

22. Thus, when in the state of enlightenment aforesaid, I see also and recognize the same Queen and Lady as She speaks with me; also the holy angels, their nature and excellence. Sometimes I see and recognize them in the Lord, at other times I see them in themselves; but with this difference that in seeing them in themselves, I descend to a lower grade of knowledge. I perceive also this difference, which results from the object and from the kind of knowledge. In this lower degree of vision I see, speak and listen to the holy princes; they converse with me and explain many of the mysteries, which the Lord has shown me. The Queen of heaven likewise manifests and propounds to me the mysteries of her most holy life and of its admirable events. With great clearness I recognize each one of these holy persons, feeling the divine effects, which each one excites in the soul.

23. But when I see these same persons in the Lord, I perceive them as through a mirror placed freely by His Majesty, in which He shows to me the saints according to his pleasure, with great clearness and producing most exalted effects in my soul. For this admirable light, the Lord himself becomes known, as also the Saints and their excellent virtues and wonderful works; likewise the manner in which they exercised these virtues by the help of the graces, that made them capable of all this (Philip 4, 13). In this state of knowledge the creature is more

abundantly and completely filled with a joy, that still further increases the power and satisfaction of the soul, and poises it as if on its center of gravity. For, the more intellectual and the less corporeal or imaginary the light, so much the more powerful and exalted are the effects, and so much the more substantial and certain is the knowledge attained. Yet also here there is a difference: for the vision or knowledge of God himself, of his attributes and his perfections is superior and its effects are most sweet and affable; while the vision and knowledge of the creatures, even in the Lord, is of an inferior order. This inferiority, it seems to me, arises in part from the soul itself; since its own vision is so limited, that it cannot attend to or perceive God so well, when seeing Him conjointly with creatures, as when seeing Him by Himself and without them. Also this vision of God by Himself is accompanied by a greater plenitude of joy than the vision of creatures in God. So delicate is this cognition of the Divinity, that to attend to any other thing in conjunction with it, impairs to a certain extent its clearness, at least so long as we shall be in our mortal state.

24. In the inferior state, which I have mentioned, I see the most holy virgin and the angels in themselves and their mode of teaching me, speaking to me, and enlightening me. I understand this to be similar to the mode in which the angels themselves enlighten, communicate and speak with each other, when the superior orders enlighten the inferior. The Lord is the first cause of this light, but the Queen who has received it in its highest plenitude, communicates it as through a channel to the superior part of my soul, so that I begin to know her excellence, her prerogatives and mysteries in the same manner as an inferior angel perceives that, which is com-

municated to him by the superior spirits. I recognize Her also by the doctrine which She teaches, by the efficacy peculiar to it, and by other qualities, which are felt and tasted and which indicate the purity, elevation and certainty of these visions. There, nothing impure, or obscure, or false, or suspected is met with; and nothing that is holy, pure and true is withheld from view. The same happens to me in its proper proportion, when conversing with the holy angels; for the Lord himself has often informed me, that they enlighten and communicate with me in the same manner as they converse with each other. Often it happens that the enlightenments pass through all these channels and conduits in succession: the Lord gives the intelligence or light, the most holy Virgin reveals it to me and the angels express it to me in words. At other times (and this is the most ordinary mode) the Lord communicates and teaches me his holy doctrine, sometimes the most holy Queen, and sometimes the holy angels. It also happens, that I receive only the understanding of things, and then I am left to find for myself the terms which befit that which I hold in the intelligence. In finding these terms I may err, if the Lord allows, for I am only an ignorant woman and I must rely on what I have heard. If any difficulties arise in the explanation of my visions, I take counsel with my master and spiritual guide, especially in more difficult and arduous matters.

25. In this condition and state I very seldom see corporeal visions, but imaginary visions I see sometimes; these are of a much lower grade than the exalted, more spiritual, or intellectual vision, of which I have until now spoken. But this I can assert with confidence: in all the spiritual enlightenments, which I receive, great and small, lower or higher, whether they come from the Lord, the

most blessed Virgin, or the holy angels, in all of them I obtain most abundant light and help of salvation, enabling me to see and know the truth and the possibility of greater perfection and sanctity. I feel within me a divine force, which compels me to seek the greater purity of my soul, and advancement in the grace of the Lord, which makes me ready to die for it and to act in all things according to greater perfection. With the help of the different grades and kinds of intelligence already described, I learn to know all the mysteries of the life of the Queen of heaven to the great advancement and rejoicing of my spirit. For this I thank the Almighty with my whole heart and mind, I magnify Him, I adore and praise Him as the all powerful and holy God, strong and admirable, worthy of honor, magnificence, glory and reverence through all the ages. Amen.

## CHAPTER III.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINITY, WHICH WAS CONFERRED UPON ME, AND OF THE DECREE OF THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

26. O King, most high and most wise Lord: How incomprehensible are thy judgments, and inscrutable thy ways (Rom. 11, 24)! Invincible God, enduring forever and whose beginning is unknown (Eccli. 18, 1)! Who can understand thy greatness and who can be worthy of thy most magnificent works, or who can tell Thee why Thou hast created them (Rom. 9, 20)? For Thou art exalted above all of them and our vision cannot reach Thee and our understanding cannot comprehend Thee. Mayest Thou be blest, magnificent King, because Thou has deigned to show me, thy slave and a vile worm of the earth, great sacraments and most sublime mysteries, exalting my habitation and raising my spirit to a height, in which I saw things unspeakable. I saw the Lord and Creator of all things; I perceived as it were the exaltedness of a Being existing in Itself, before It created any other thing; I do not know the manner in which It showed Itself to me, but I know what I saw and perceived. His Majesty, comprehending all things, is aware that, while I am speaking of his Deity, my thoughts stand still, my soul is troubled, my faculties cease their operations, and the superior part of my being deserts the lower and animal parts, despises that which is of the senses and flies toward its Beloved, leaving lifeless the body which it should keep alive. In these excursions and aban-

donments of love my eyes flow over in tears and my tongue becomes mute. O my most high and incomprehensible Lord, infinite Object of my understanding! How am I annihilated at the sight of Thee, the Measureless and the Eternal, and how my being grovels in the dust, scarcely knowing what I am! How can my insignificance and misery dare to admire thy magnificence and thy great majesty? Vivify, O Lord, my being; strengthen my vision and give the breath of life to my fear, so that I may be able to describe what I saw and thus obey thy command.

27. I saw the Most High, at the same time understanding how his Majesty is in Himself; I received a clear intelligence and a true perception of what is meant by a God, infinite in his substance and attributes, eternal, exalted above all, being three in Person, and one true God. Three in Person, because of the three activities of knowing, comprehending and loving each other; one, so as to secure the boon of eternal unity. It is the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Father is not made, nor created, nor begotten, nor can He be generated or have a beginning. I perceived, that the Son derives his origin from the Father alone by eternal generation; and that They are equal in their duration from eternity; and that He is begotten by the fecundity of the intelligence of the Father. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son through love. In their indivisible Trinity there is nothing which can be called first or last, greater or smaller: all three Persons are equally eternal and eternally equal; there is unity of essence in a trinity of persons. Nor are the Persons mingled in order to form one God, nor the divine substance separated or divided in order to form three Persons, being distinct as the Father, as the Son and as the

Holy Ghost. They are nevertheless one and the same Divinity, equal in Each is the glory, and majesty, the power, the eternity, the immensity, the wisdom and sanctity, and all the attributes. And though there are three Persons, in whom these infinite perfections subsist, He is the one and true God, the Holy, the Just, the Powerful, the Eternal and the Measureless.

28. I also obtained an understanding of the manner in which this Trinity comprehends Itself by simple vision, so that no new or distinct cognition is necessary: the Father knows that, which is known to the Son, and the Son and the Holy Ghost know that which is in the intelligence of the Father. I understood how they love One another with one and the same immense and eternal love; how there is a single, indivisible and equal oneness of intelligence, love and action, how there is one simple, incorporeal and indivisible nature, a divine essence of the true God, in which are joined and united all the perfections in their highest and in an infinite degree.

29. I learnt also to understand the quality of these perfections of the highest Lord: that He is beautiful without a blemish, great without quantity, good without need of qualification, eternal without the duration of time, strong without any weakness, living without touch of decay, true without deceit, present in all places, filling them without occupying them, existing in all things without occupying any space. There is no contradiction in his kindness, nor any defect in his wisdom. In his wisdom He is inscrutable, in his decrees He is terrible, in his judgments just, in his thoughts most hidden, in his words most true, in his works holy, in his riches affluent. To Him no space is too wide, no narrowness causes restraint, his will does not vary, the sorrowful does not cause Him pain, the past has not passed for Him, nor



does the future happen in regard to Him. O eternal Immensity, what illimitable expansion have I seen in Thee? What vastness do I see in thy infinite Being? Vision does not terminate, nor ever exhaust itself in thy abyss of being. This is the unchangeable Essence, the Being above all other beings, the most perfect sanctity, the most constant truth; this is the infinite, the length, the breadth, the height and the depth, glory and its cause, rest without fatigue, goodness immeasurable. All this I saw at the same time, but the power to describe it more fully fails me.

30. I saw the Lord as He was before He had created anything and with great astonishment I looked to see where was the throne of the Most High, for the empyrean heavens were not, nor the lower ones, nor did the sun exist, nor the moon, nor the other stars, nor the elements, only the Creator was, without any of his creatures. All was void, without presence of angels, or men or animals. I saw how of necessity it must be admitted, that God has his being in Himself, and that He stands in want or need of none of the created things. For He is as infinite in his attributes before as He is after creating them, and He will possess and hold these attributes during the whole of eternity, because they exist in Him as in an independent increated Essence. No perfection which is in itself purely and essentially such, can be wanting to his Divinity: for the Godhead is the only thing that is, and contains all the perfection of created beings in an eminent and ineffable manner. All the other beings, in so far as they exist, have their existence solely in that infinite Being, as effects in their cause.

31. I understood, that the Most High was in the quiescent state of his own being, when the three Persons

(according to our way of understanding things), decreed to communicate his perfections as a free gift. For greater clearness, I must remark, that God comprehends in Himself all things by one indivisible, most simple and instantaneous act. He does not go on from the understanding of one thing to the understanding of another like we do, distinguishing and perceiving first one thing by an act of the understanding, and after that proceeding to the knowledge of others by their connection with those already known. God knows them conjointly all at once, without before or after, since all are together and at once contained in the divine and uncreated knowledge and science, just as they are comprehended and enclosed in his infinite Being, as in their first beginning.

32. In this knowledge of God, which primarily is called the knowledge of pure intelligence (*scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*), we must, according to the natural precedence of the intelligence before the will, not overlook a certain succession, not indeed of time, but of nature. Hence we perceive that the act of intelligence preceded by its nature the act of the will. For in our way of reflecting on things, we think of the act of intelligence by itself, abstractedly from the decree of wishing to create anything. In this first stage or instant the three Persons through an act of intelligence confirmed the opportuneness of the work *ad extra* and of all creatures, which have been, are, and are to be.

33. Though I am unworthy to know the order which He followed, or which we, as men, are enabled to perceive in the decree of creation, his Majesty nevertheless deigned to take notice of a request, which I made in this regard. I petitioned Him to make known to me the place which was held by the Mother of God and our

Queen in the divine intelligence; and, as well as I can, I will state what He answered me and manifested to me and I will also say something of the order which I perceived by the help of God in these ideas. I divide them according to moments or instants, for it is impossible to accommodate the knowledge of this divine science to our capacity in any other way. This science is called the *science of vision*, constituting the divine ideas or images of the creatures, which God decreed to call into existence and which are a production of his mind. By them He knows creatures with an infinitely more precise knowledge, than we can ever have of them.

34. Although this divine knowledge is one, most simple and indivisible, nevertheless, since the things which I see are many, and since there is a certain order, by which some are first and some come after, it is necessary to divide the knowledge of God's intelligence and the knowledge of his will into many instants, or into many different acts, according as they correspond to the diverse orders of created things. For as some of the creatures hold their existence because of others, there is a dependence of one upon the other. Accordingly we say that God intended and decreed this before that, the one on account of the other; and that if He had not desired or included in the science of vision the one, He would not have desired the other. But by this way of speaking, we must not try to convey the meaning that God placed many acts of intelligence, or of the will; rather we must intend merely to indicate, that the creatures are dependent on each other and that they succeed one another. In order to be able to comprehend the manner of creation more easily, we apply the order of things as we see them objectively, to the acts of the divine intelligence and will in creating them.

## CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE DIVINE DECREES ARE CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO INSTANTS, AND WHAT GOD IN EACH DETERMINED TO COMMUNICATE AD EXTRA.

35. I understood, that this order comprises the following instants. The first instant is: God recognizing his infinite attributes and perfections together with the propensity and the ineffable inclination to communicate Himself outwardly. This knowledge of God as being communicative *ad extra* comes first. The Majesty of God, beholding the nature of his infinite perfections, their virtue and efficacy operating with magnificence, saw that it was just and most proper, and, as it were, a duty and a necessity, to communicate Himself and to follow that inclination of imparting and exercising his liberality and mercy, by distributing outside of Himself with magnificence the plenitude of the infinite treasures, contained in the Divinity. For, being infinite in all things, it is much more natural that He communicate gifts and graces, than that fire should ascend, or the stone should gravitate toward its center, or that the sun should diffuse its light. This unfathomable depth of perfections, this affluence of treasures, this impetuous infinity of riches, is set in motion by its own inclinations to communicate itself. At the same time God is in Himself conscious that to distribute gifts and graces, is not to diminish his riches, but to increase them in the only possible way, by giving an outlet to the inexhaustible fountain of his riches.

36. All this did God see in the first instant after the communication *ad intra* by means of the eternal emanations. Seeing this He found Himself, as it were, obliged, in Himself, to communicate Himself *ad extra*, perceiving that it was holy, just, merciful, and god-like to do so; hence nothing could impede Him. According to our mode of understanding, we can represent God to our minds as not being satisfied nor at rest with Himself until He reached the object of his desires, the creatures, where and with whom, by making them partakers of his divinity and perfections, He seeks his delight.

37. In this enlightenment and knowledge which I possess, two things hold my lukewarm heart in wonder and inflame it unto annihilation. The first is the inclination and urgent desire, which I see in God, and the strong will, to communicate his Divinity and the treasures of his grace. The second is the unspeakable and incomprehensible immensity of the good gifts, which I see He wishes to distribute according to this decree, assigning them for this purpose and yet remaining infinite, as if He had yet given nothing. In this desire and inclination, which fills his Majesty I see Him prepared to sanctify, justify, overwhelm with gifts and perfections all creatures together and each one in particular for itself. He would be ready to give to each of the creatures more than what is held by all the angels and seraphim together; even if all the drops in the ocean and the grains of sand on their shores, all the stars, the planets and the elements, and all creatures were capable of reason and of his gifts, they would receive them without measure, provided they would dispose themselves and place no obstacle toward receiving them. O fearful malice of sin, which alone is capable of holding up the impetuous stream of such great and eternal gifts!

38. The second instant was to confirm and determine the object and intention of this communication of the Divinity *ad extra*, namely, that it should redound to his greater glory and to the exaltation of his Majesty and the manifestation of his greatness. This his own exaltation God saw as the end, for which He would communicate Himself, make Himself known by his liberality in the distribution of his attributes, and set in motion his Omnipotence in order that He might be known, praised and glorified.

39. The third instant consisted in selecting and determining the order and arrangement, or the mode of this communication, so as to realize in an adequate manner the most exalted ends. The order namely, which it is proper should be maintained in regard to the communications of the Godhead and its divine attributes; so that this activity of the Lord may have its proper reasons and objects, and so that it might proceed with the most beautiful and admirable sequence, harmony and subordination. In this instant was decreed first of all, that the divine Word should assume flesh and should become visible. The perfection and the composition of the most holy humanity of Christ our Lord was decreed and modeled in the divine intelligence. Secondly, also were formed the ideals of the rest of men in imitation of the First. The divine mind prearranged the harmony and adornment of the human nature composed of an organic body and a vivifying soul, endowed with faculties to know and enjoy its Creator, to discern between good and evil, and with a free will to love that same Lord.

40. This hypostatic union of the second Person of the most holy Trinity I understood necessarily to have been the first incentive and object on account of which, before

all others, the divine intelligence and will issued *ad extra*; and the reasons are most exalted, so that I cannot explain. One of these reasons is, that God, having in Himself known and loved Himself, should, according to right order, know and love that, which approaches most intimately to his Divinity, as is the case in the hypostatic union. Another reason is, that the Divinity, having communicated Itself *ad intra*, should also communicate Itself *ad extra*; for thus the divine will and intention would begin to execute its works with the highest end in view, and his attributes would be communicated in the most beautiful order. The fire of the Divinity expended itself in its fullest measure on that which was most immediately connected with It, namely, the hypostatically united humanity; and his Divinity communicated Itself in the highest and most excellent degree to Him, who was to be closest to God in divine knowledge and love, and share the works and the glory of the Deity. For God (speaking according to our lowly comprehension) could not endanger the attainment of this end, since He alone could be an object proportionate and worthy of so wonderful an operation. It was also befitting and, as it were, necessary, that if God should create many creatures, He should create them in such harmony and subordination, as would be the most admirable and glorious within the reach of possibility. In conformity with this therefore, they must be subordinate to a supreme Chief, who should be as far as possible united immediately with God, so that through Him they may have communication and connection with his Divinity. For these and for other reasons (which I cannot explain), the dignity of the works of God could be provided for only by the Incarnation of the Word; through Him Creation should possess the most beautiful order, which without Him was impossible.

41. The fourth instant was to determine the gifts and graces, which were to be conferred upon the humanity of Christ, our Lord, in union with the Divinity. Here the Most High opened the liberal hands of his Omnipotence and his other attributes, in order to enrich the most sacred humanity and the soul of Christ with the highest possible plenitude of his gifts and graces. Then was fulfilled what afterward David said: "The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful" (Ps. 45, 5). When the stream of his gifts flowed toward the humanity of the Word, communicating to it all the infused science, the grace and goodness of which his blessed soul was capable, and which fitted that Being, which was to be God and true man, and at the same time, the Head of all creatures capable of grace and glory, in order that from this impetuous stream they might partake in the manner in which it afterwards really happened.

42. To this instant also, and, as it were, in natural sequence, pertain the decree and predestination of the Mother of the Divine Word incarnate; for here, I understand, was ordained that pure Creature before aught else whatever. Thus, before all other creatures, was She conceived in the divine mind, in such manner and such state as befitted and became the dignity, excellence and gifts of the humanity of her most holy Son. To Her flowed over, at once and immediately, the river of the Divinity and its attributes with all its impetuosity, in as far as a mere creature is capable and as is due to the dignity of the Mother of God.

43. In the knowledge of these exalted mysteries and decrees, I confess myself ravished in admiration and transported beyond my proper self. Perceiving this most holy and pure Creature formed and conceived in the divine mind from the beginning and before all the ages, I



joyously and exultingly magnify the Omnipotent for the admirable and mysterious decree, by which He formed for us such a pure and grand, such a mysterious and godlike Creature, worthy rather to be admired and praised by all beings, than to be described by any one. In my admiration I can say with St. Dionysius the Areopagite: "If faith would not instruct me, and if the understanding of what I see would not teach me, that it is God, who has conceived Her in his mind, and who alone could and can in his Omnipotence form such an image of his Divinity, if this all were not present to my mind, I might begin to doubt, whether the Virgin Mother contain not in Herself Divinity."

44. O what tears flowed from my eyes, and what sorrowful astonishment possessed my soul, to see that divine prodigy not acknowledged and that wonder of the Most High not manifest to all the mortals. Much is known of it, but much more is unknown, as this sealed book has not been opened. I am ravished in the perception of this tabernacle of God, and I perceive that the Author of it is more admirable in her creation, than in that of all the rest of the world, although the diversity of the creatures manifests the wonderful power of their Creator. In this Queen alone are comprehended and contained more treasures than in all the rest of things joined together, and the variety and the preciousness of her riches honor the Lord above all the multitudes of the other creatures.

45. Here (according to our way of understanding) the promise and, as it were, the contract was made with the Word as to the degree of sanctity, and perfection and the gifts and graces, which were to be possessed by Mary his Mother. Also as to the protection, support and defense, which was to be provided for this true City of God, in which his Majesty contemplated the graces and

merits, which She earned for Herself, as well as the fruits to be gathered for his people by the loving returns, which She was to make to his Majesty. In the same instant, and as it were in the third and last place, God determined to create a locality and an abode, where the incarnate Word and his Mother should converse and dwell. For Them primarily did He create the heaven and earth with its stars and elements and all that is contained in them. Secondly the intention and decree included the creation of the members, of which Jesus was to be the Head, and of whom He would be the King; in order that with kingly providence, all the necessary and befitting arrangements might be made beforehand.

46. I pass over to the fifth instant, although in reality I have found that, which I sought. In this fifth decree the creation of the angelic nature which is more excellent and more like unto the spiritual being of the Divinity, was determined upon, and at the same time the division or arrangement of the angelic hosts into nine choirs and three hierarchies, was provided and decreed. As they are created first of all for the glory of God, to assist before his divine Majesty and to know and love Him, so secondarily they are ordained to assist, glorify and honor, reverence and serve the deified humanity of the eternal Word, recognizing Him as Head, and honoring Him also in his Mother, the most holy Mary, Queen of these same angels. Commission was given to these angels, "to bear them up in their hands" in all their ways (Ps. 90, 12). In this instant Christ our Lord earned for them by his infinite merits, present and foreseen, all the grace, which they were to receive. He was constituted as their Head, Exemplar and supreme King, of whom they should be subjects. Even if the number of angels had been infinite, the merits of Christ our highest Good, would be abundantly sufficient to supply them all with grace.

47. To this instant belongs also the predestination of the good, and the reprobation of the bad angels. God saw in it, by means of his infinite science, all the works of the former and of the latter and the propriety of predestinating, by his free will and by his merciful liberality, those that would obey and give honor, and of reprobating by his justice those who would rise up against his Majesty in pride and disobedience on account of their disordered selflove. In the same instant also was decreed the creation of the empyrean heaven, for the manifestation of his glory and the reward of the good; also the earth and other heavenly bodies for the other creatures; moreover also in the center or depth of the earth, hell, for the punishment of the bad angels.

48. In the sixth instant was decreed the creation of a people and congregation of men for Christ, who was already formed in the divine mind and will, and according to whose image and likeness man was to be made, in order, that the incarnate Word might find brethren, similar but inferior to Himself and a people of his own nature, of whom He might be the Head. In this instant was determined the order of the creation of the whole human race, which was to begin from one man and woman and propagate itself, until the Virgin and her Son should be born in the predestined order. On account of the merits of Christ, our Savior, the graces and gifts were prearranged, and also original justice, if they would only preserve it. The fall of Adam was foreseen and in him that of all others, except of the Queen, who did not enter into this decree. As a remedy was it ordained, that the most holy humanity should be capable of suffering. The predestined were chosen by free grace, and the fore-known were reprobated with exact justice. All that was convenient and necessary for the conservation of the

human race and for obtaining the end of the Redemption and the Predestination, was preordained, without interfering with the free will of men; for such ordainment was more conformable to God's nature and to divine equity. There was no injustice done to them, for if with their free will they could sin, so also could they abstain from sin by means of grace and the light of reason. God violated the right of no one, since He forsook no one nor denied to any one that which is necessary. Since his law is written in the hearts of men, nobody is excused for not knowing and loving Him as the highest Good of all creation.

49. In the perception of these mysteries I saw with great clearness and force the high motives which caused God to manifest and magnify Himself and which should induce men to praise and adore the greatness of the Creator and Redeemer of all. I also saw how tardy they are in the acknowledgment of these obligations and in making return for these benefits; and I was made aware of the complaints and the indignation of the Most High on account of this forgetfulness. His Majesty commanded and exhorted me not to be guilty of such ingratitude, but to offer Him a sacrifice of praise, and a new song, and that I magnify Him in the name of all creatures.

50. O most high and incomprehensible Lord! Would that I had the love and the perfections of all the angels and the just in order to confess and praise worthily thy greatness! I acknowledge, great and mighty Lord, that such a vile creature as I cannot merit the memorable benefit of receiving this clear and exalted knowledge and light concerning thy exalted Majesty. At the sight of thy greatness I perceive my littleness, which before that happy hour was unknown to me; and I was ignorant of

the greatness and excellence of the virtue of humility, which is learnt in this science. I do not wish to say that I now possess that virtue, but neither can I deny that I have been shown the certain path which leads to it. Thy light, O most high Lord, illumines me and thy lamp shows me the paths (Ps. 118, 105), so that I see what I have been and what I am, and fear what I may become to be. Thou hast lighted up, most high King, my understanding and inflamed my will with its most exalted object. Thou hast entirely drawn me on to seek Thee, and I wish to make this known to all mortals in order that they may leave me in peace and I them: I am for my Beloved (Cant. 2, 16), and (although I am unworthy), my Beloved is for me. Strengthen then, O Lord, my weakness that I may run after Thee, and reaching Thee, I may never leave Thee or lose Thee.

51. Very short and stammering is this chapter, for of this matter many books could be written; but I refrain, because I do not know how to speak and I am an ignorant woman. My sole object has been to explain, how the Virgin Mother has been formed and preordained in the divine mind before the ages (Éccclus. 24, 14). That which I have seen over and above concerning this highest mystery, transforms my interior, and in silent admiration makes me praise the Author of such magnificence in company with the blessed, saying: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Sabaoth (Is. 6, 3).

## CHAPTER V.

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND IN PARTICULAR CONCERNING CHAPTER EIGHT OF THE PROVERBS, IN CONFIRMATION OF THE PRECEDING PAGES.

52. I will converse, O Lord, with Thy great Majesty, since Thou art the God of mercies, though I am only dust and ashes (Gen. 18, 17), and I will supplicate thy incomprehensible Immensity to look from thy exalted throne upon me, thy most vile and useless creature, and to be propitious to me by continuing to enlighten my understanding. Speak, O Lord, for thy servant heareth (I Reg. 3, 10). Then the Most High, the Corrector of the wise, spoke to me (Sap. 7, 15). He referred me to the eighth chapter of the Proverbs and gave me the understanding of its mysteries. First was given me the literal wording of the chapter, which is as follows (Prov. 8, 22):

53. Verse 22. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways before He made anything from the beginning."

23. "I was set up from eternity and of old, before the earth was made."

24. "The depths were not as yet and I was already conceived: neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out."

25. "The mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth."

26. "He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the earth."

27. "When He prepared the heavens, I was present: when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths."

28. "When He established the sky above and poised the fountains of the waters."

29. "When He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits: when He balanced the foundations of the earth."

30. "I was with Him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before Him all the times."

31. "Playing in the world: and my delights were to be with the children of men."

54. This is the portion of the Proverbs, of which the Most High gave me an understanding. I understood at first, that it treats of the ideas or decrees, which were in the Divine Mind before the Creation of the world; and that, in its literal sense, it speaks of the Person of the Incarnate Word and of his most holy Mother, while in its mystical sense it refers to the holy angels and prophets. For before decreeing or forming the ideals of the rest of the material creation, He formed and decreed their prototype, the most sacred humanity of Christ and of his purest Mother, and this is indicated by the first words.

55. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways." In God there are no ways, and his Divinity does not need them: but He made use of them, in order, that by them we may know Him and that all of us creatures, who are capable of knowing Him, may tend toward Him. In this beginning, before He formed any other ideal in

his mind, because He desired to create paths and open ways in his mind for the communication of the Divinity, He decreed, as a beginning, the formation of the humanity of the Word, who was to be the highway, by which the other creatures might come to the Father (Joan. 14, 6). Joined with this decree was that of his most holy Mother, through whom his Divinity was to enter into the world, becoming man and being born from Her as God and man; therefore it is said: "God possessed me" since both were possessed by his Majesty: for as to his Divinity, He was the possession, the property, and the treasure of the Father without possibility of separation, because Father and Son are One, of the same substance and Divinity with the Holy Ghost; and also as to his humanity, the Father possessed the Son; because He himself knew and decreed the plenitude of grace and glory, which He was to bestow upon it at the moment of its creation and its hypostatical union. Moreover, as this decree and possession was to be brought about by the mediation of the Mother, who was to conceive and bring forth the Word (since He did not decide to create it out of nothing, nor form his soul and body out of any other material), it followed that He possessed Her, who was to give Him the human form. Thus He possessed and claimed Her as his own in the same instant, providing with solicitude, that in the order of grace neither the human race nor any other, should have at any time a right or a part in Her. He alone retained the full right in Her as his portion, and so much his portion as the dignity of Mother required. She alone was to call Him Son, and She alone was to be called Mother, a Mother worthy of having an incarnate God for a Son. Now as all this far surpassed in dignity the whole creation, so did it also take the precedence in the mind of the supreme Creator. Hence He says:



56. "Before He made anything from the beginning, I was set up from eternity and of old." We, in our present state, conceive this eternity of God as an interminable time. But what were the things "of old," since none had been created? It is clear that the three Persons are here spoken of, namely, that She was foreseen from the eternal ages of the Divinity, by the Beings, which alone are ancient, namely, the indivisible Trinity (since all the rest, having a beginning, are recent), that She was foreseen when only the ancient Uncreated was, and before any ideals of the future creation were formed. Between these two extremes intervened the ideal of the hypostatic union which was to be verified *ad extra* through the intervention of most holy Mary. Both were ordained together, immediately next to God and before any other creature, and it was the most wonderful decree ever passed or ever to be passed. The first and most admirable image in the mind of God, next to the eternal generation, was that of Christ and next to it, that of his Mother.

57. And what other order could there be in God, in whom all that pertains to Him is present at one and the same time, so that no part of His being must await the perfection of another, or one perfection ever need succeed upon others? All is well ordered in his eternal nature, and so it was and will be forever. The new ordainment, however, was that the person of the Son should become incarnate and that from his deified humanity should begin the order of God's desires and of his decrees *ad extra*. He was to be the Head and Ideal of all other men and creatures; for this was the most appropriate order and harmony to be instituted among creatures, that they have One, who is the first and the highest, and that from Him should descend the order of all

nature, and in a special manner, of the mortals. First among them all, however, was the Mother of the Man-God, as the Supreme among mere creatures, following immediately upon Christ, and, through Him, upon the Divinity. Thus the conduits, which led the crystalline fountains of the Divinity from the eternal throne, meet first in the humanity of the Word and immediately thereafter in his holy Mother in the degree and in the manner, as it was possible for a mere creature, and as it was proper for the Mother of the Creator. It was equitable, that all the divine attributes should exert themselves in Her, without reserve, so far as She was capable; and that She be inferior only to Christ our Lord. She was to be superior in the degree of his incomparable graces to all the rest of the creatures, that are deserving of graces and gifts. This then was the order, so well instituted by the eternal wisdom: that all was to commence with Christ and his Mother. Therefore the text adds:

58. "Before the earth was made; and the depths were not as yet and I was already conceived." This earth was that of the first Adam; for before his creation was decreed, and before the abysses of the ideas *ad extra* were formed in the divine mind, the likenesses of Christ and of his Mother were already conceived. The forms are called abysses, because there is an infinite distance between the being of God and that of creatures. This distance was measured (speaking according to our own way of understanding), when the ideals of the creatures were formed; for then these very abysses were formed. Not only was the Word conceived before all these by eternal generation from the Father, but His temporal generation from the Virgin Mother full of grace, had already been decreed and conceived in the divine mind. Inasmuch as no efficacious and complete decree of this temporal gen-

eration could exist without at the same time including his Mother, and such a Mother, the most holy Mary, was then and there conceived within that beautiful Immensity, and Her eternal record was written in the bosom of the Divinity, in order that for all the ages it should never be blotted out. She was stamped and delineated in the mind of the eternal Artificer and possessed the inseparable embraces of his love.

59. "Neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out." The images and ideals of creatures had not yet sprung from their source and origin; for they had not yet broken from the fountains through the channels of God's goodness and mercy, through which the divine will was to be moved to create the universe and to communicate his divine attributes and perfections. In respect to the entire rest of the universe, these waters and fountains were still repressed and detained within the bounds of the immense ocean of the Divinity; in his own Being there were as yet no founts or currents for outward manifestation, not having until then met their proper object, namely, men. But when these were encountered, the sacred humanity of Christ and his Virgin Mother had already furnished proper objects of benevolence. And therefore it is added:

60. "The mountains with their huge bulk had not been established," for God had not as yet then decreed the creation of the high mountains, the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs or the other saints of great holiness, and this was not yet exerting its full weight and force in the mighty and sweet manner (Sap. 8, 1) in which God executes his counsels and great works. And not only before the mountains (which are the great saints) but also "before the hills I was brought forth," which are the orders of the holy angels. Before them the divine Mind

had conceived the most holy Humanity united hypostatically with the divine Word, and the Mother, who bore it. The Son and the Mother were conceived before the hierarchies of the angelic hosts, so, that, what David said in the eighth psalm, becomes intelligible: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lesser than the Angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor! Thou has set him over the works of thy hands; Thou hast subjected all things under his feet." Let all understand and know, that there is a Godman, who is above all angels and men, and that all are his inferiors and his servants, for being the first of men, He is God at the same time. He is the first in the divine Mind and in the divine Will, and with Him is associated and inseparably connected, one Woman and Virgin, his Mother, the exalted Queen of all creation.

61. And if man, as says the same psalm, was crowned with glory and was constituted above all the works of the hand of the Lord, it was because the Godman, his Chief, had merited both this crown, and also that, which is borne by the angels. The same psalm adds, that, after having made man a little less than the angels, He placed him over the works of his hands: yet these very angels were works of his hands. Thus David spoke to the whole human race, when he said: God made man a little less than the angels; but although man was inferior in his nature, one Man is found who is of superior make and is set over these same angels, who were works of the hand of God. This superiority is in the order of grace, not only as far as His Divinity united to the humanity is concerned, but also in regard to the humanity itself in so far as grace was conferred by the hypostatic union. In a proportionate degree his most holy

Mother likewise attained this superiority, just as some saints in virtue of the same incarnate Lord can reach a station and throne superior to that of the angels.

62. It is further said: "I was brought forth" or born, which means more than being conceived; for the latter refers to the divine intellect of the Blessed Trinity at the instant, when the Incarnation was known and, as it were, weighed in regard to its propriety. But to be brought forth refers to the act of the divine Will, which determined upon this work, for the most holy Trinity, in its divine councils, resolved upon the efficacious execution of this work by determining, and preliminarily putting into effect, the wonderful decree of the hypostatic union and of calling into being Mary most holy. That is the reason for using first the word "conceived" and then the words "brought forth," or born; for in reality the work was at first conceived and then immediately afterwards determined upon and willed.

63. "He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the (earth) world." Before the creation of the second earth, namely, the earthly paradise (the sense in which the earth is mentioned a second time), into which the first man, after he had been created from the first earth of the Damascene plains, was placed, and where he sinned, the sacred humanity of the Word and the material from which it was to spring, namely the Virgin, was determined upon. For it was necessary, that God should provide beforehand against her participating in sin and against her being in any way subject to it. The rivers and poles of the earth are the militant Church and the gifts of grace which were to flow from the sources of the Divinity. These were to flow toward all men and with efficacy to the saints and the foreknown. Fixed in God as in their pole or pivot and being dependent upon

Him they nevertheless move around Him in seeking after the virtues of faith, hope and charity, through which they sustain, vivify and direct themselves though yet entangled in human conversation. They are drawn toward their last end and toward the highest good, without swerving from the center about which they turn. Also the Sacraments and the institutions of the Church are here signified, her safety and stability, her beauty and sanctity without blot or wrinkle (Eph. 5, 27), for this is what is meant by this circumference and these rivers. Before the Most High prepared all this and ordained this mystical sphere and system, of which Christ was to be the center and head, He decreed the union of the Word with human nature, and foresaw his Mother, through whom He was to execute these wonders in the world.

64. "When he prepared the heavens, I was there." When He prepared and preordained the heaven and the reward, which was to be given to the just sons of the Church after their sojourn upon the earth, then already was decreed the union of the humanity with the Word, thereby meriting grace as their Head; and with Him his Mother most holy. Having destined the greater part of this grace for the Mother and the Son, He then disposed and arranged similar gifts of glory for the other saints.

65. "When with a certain law and compass he enclosed the depths," namely, when He decided to close the abysses of his Divinity in the person of the Son according to a certain law and measure, which no living being can ever compass or understand. He delineated this sphere and circumference, where none could nor ever can enter, except only the Word (since none but Himself can ever fill his place). For thus He was able to empty (Phil. 11, 7) and humiliate his Divinity in the humanity, then, both humanity and Divinity, in the womb

of the most holy Mary, afterwards, in the small quantity and species of the bread and wine, and finally, in the narrow space of sinful, mortal hearts. All this is indicated by the words: abysses, law and circle or limits. They are called "certain" on account of their vast bearing and also on account of the certainty, with which they were to be fulfilled (in spite of seeming impossibility), and on account of the difficulty of explaining them in words. It certainly did not appear feasible, that the Divinity should be subject to law, nor that It should enclose Itself within determined limits. But the wisdom and the power of that same Lord made it possible and has accomplished it by enclosing Himself in a designated created being.

66. "When he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of the waters; when he encompassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters, that they should not pass their limits." He calls here the just "heavens," for that is what they are, as God remains and dwells within them by grace, and through it, according to each one's disposition, gives them courage and firmness to rise above the earth as long as they are pilgrims. Afterwards He gives them a place and a dwelling in the heavenly Jerusalem according to their merits. For them He poised the fountains and has divided them, distributing to each one with equity. He weighs the gifts of glory, the virtues, the helps, and the perfections, according to the dispositions of his Wisdom. When He resolved to make the distributions of these waters of grace, He also resolved to give to the humanity united to the Divinity all the ocean of graces and gifts, which naturally flowed from the Divinity in its union with the Onlybegotten of the Father. Although this ocean was infinite, He placed confines to it, namely, the humanity, in which was to dwell the plenitude of the

Divinity (Col. 2, 9); and it was enclosed thirty-three years within these confines, in order that He might dwell among men, and in order that, what happened to the three Apostles on Tabor mount might not happen to all men. In the same moment in which this entire ocean and all the rivers of grace reached Christ our Lord as being nearest to the Deity, they also redounded in his most holy Mother as being nearest to her Onlybegotten Son. For without the Mother, and precisely such a Mother, the gifts and graces of her Son could not have been disposed of in such order and with such high perfection. Nor did the admirable harmony of the celestial and spiritual machinery, and the distribution of the gifts of the Church militant and triumphant rest on any other foundation.

67. "When he balanced the foundation of the earth, I was with him forming all things." The works *ad extra* are common to the three divine Persons, for They are one God, one wisdom, one power; therefore it was unavoidably necessary, that the Word, in whom according to the Divinity all things are made, should be in union with the Father in making them. But here more is meant, for also the incarnate Word was already present together with his most holy Mother in the divine Will. Thus, just as through the Word, as far as He is God, all things were made, so also for Him, in the first place and because He is the most noble and most worthy end, were created the foundations of the earth and all that is contained in it.

68. Therefore it is farther said: "And I was delighted every day, playing before him at all times, playing in the world." The incarnate Word diverted Himself at all times, because He knew all the ages and the lives of all the mortals, all being as one day in comparison with



eternity (Ps. 89, 4). He was delighted, because the whole course of Creation had found its end, for when the ultimate day with all its perfection should arrive, men were to enjoy the affluence of grace and the crown of glory. He diverted Himself as it were, counting the days, when He should descend from heaven to earth and assume human flesh. He knew that all the works and thoughts of men were like a play, wherein all is mere burlesque and deceit. He saw also the just, who, though so weak and limited in their capacity, nevertheless would be fit for the manifestation and communication of God's glory and perfections. He compared his immutability with the changefulness of men, and how He was nevertheless to act in concert with them. He delighted in his own works, and especially in those, which He ordained in his most holy Mother. He took a great delight in the prospect of assuming the form of man within Her and in making Her worthy of so great a privilege. And because the conception of these ideals and the efficacious decree of the divine Will in their regard were to be followed by their actual fulfillment, therefore the divine Word adds:

69. "And my delight is to be with the children of men." My recreation is to work for them and show them favors: my contentment is to die for them and my joy is to be their Teacher and their Redeemer. My delight is to raise the needy one from the dust and to unite Myself with the lowly one (Ps. 112, 7); my pleasure is to unbend my Divinity for this purpose, and to clothe it with human nature, to constrain and debase Myself, and to suspend the glory of my body in order to make Myself capable of suffering and of meriting for men the friendship of the Father; to be a Mediator between his most just indignation and the malice of men, and to be their Model and Head, whom they might imitate.

70. O eternal and incomprehensible Goodness! how am I ravished with admiration, when I compare the immensity of thy immutable Being with the insignificance of man! When I see thy eternal love mediating between two extremes of such immeasurable distance; a love infinite, for a creature so insignificant and at the same time so ungrateful! Oh, on what a low and debased object, O Lord, dost Thou cast thy eyes, and on what a noble Object can and should man fix his thought and his affection in beholding such a mystery! Filled with admiration and with sadness of heart, I lament over the unhappy state of men, their darkness and blindness, since they do not make any effort to understand how much thy Majesty has been beforehand in looking down upon them and in offering them true felicity with such great love and care as if thy own consisted in it.

71. All his works, and the disposition of them, as they were to be called into being, the Lord had in his mind *ab initio*, and He numbered and weighed them according to his equity and rectitude. He knew the constitution of the world before its creation, as it is written in the book of Wisdom (7, 18 Seq.). He knew the beginning, the middle and the end of time, the changes of the years and the courses of the ages, the disposition of the stars, the powers of the elements, the nature of animals, the wrath of wild beasts, the force of winds, the difference of plants, the virtues of roots and the thoughts of men. All He weighed and counted (Sap. 11, 21), not only that which is literally true of the rational and irrational creatures, but He preordained also all that which is signified mystically by these creatures. But as this comes not within my scope at present, I do not speak of it in this place.