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THE KNOWLEDGE OF MARY

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THE

# KNOWLEDGE OF MARY.

BY

REV. J. DE CONCILIO,

PASTOR OF ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, JERSEY CITY, \*

*AUTHOR OF "CATHOLICITY AND PANTHEISM."*



**COLL. CHRISTI REGIS**

**BIB. MAJ.**

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TO THE  
RT. REV. MICHAEL A. CORRIGAN, D.D.,  
BISHOP OF NEWARK,  
AS A TOKEN OF ESTEEM AND REGARD FOR HIS MANY PERSONAL AND  
EPISCOPAL VIRTUES,  
THIS BOOK,  
ON A SUBJECT SO DEAR TO HIS HEART,  
IS HUMBLY INSCRIBED  
BY THE AUTHOR.

**JESUITS**  
*Upper Canada Province*





## PREFACE.

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A NEW book on the Blessed Virgin, when there are so many on the same subject ?

We might answer, in the words of St. Augustine, "that it is useful that many should write books different in style but not in faith, even about the same questions, in order that the truth may reach many, some in one way and some in another."

In the second place, we might answer that this book is a necessary part of our former work on *Catholicity and Pantheism*, though it may seem to have very little to do with it. It has a most necessary connection with it, and is one of its principal parts. For Mary is the best refutation of pantheism, this universal error of our time. The substance of this error is to absorb the finite in the infinite, and, consequently, to abolish, to do away with all created agency. Now, Mary, as we shall prove, represents created agency in its grandest, sublimest, and most magnificent expression. She represents created agency in all the mysteries of God relating to the creature. She is, therefore, the best and most convincing refutation of pantheism, the rock against which the mighty waves of this universal error must exhaust their force.

Pantheism, in pretending to exalt humanity, degrades it and deprives it of everything that causes its glory. Mary, the grandest specimen of human nature, exhibits human personality

in its most colossal proportions, and is the glory, the pride, the magnificence of our race, and we can exclaim, as once the Jews of old: "Thou, the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the magnificence of our people."

But is it true that a new book on the Blessed Virgin is not wanted? There are many books in English about the Blessed Virgin, but some are too superficial to satisfy all minds; some are deeper, but are limited to some particular point, such as the great work of Father Faber, *The Foot of the Cross*. We know of no book in English which treats of Mary scientifically, and at the same time in a manner clear enough to be understood by such as have had some education and some reading. We call that book superficial, no matter what its bulk may be, which, after being read through, and after eliminating from it all the unnecessary verbiage and all pious sentiments, does not add a new idea of the subject it treats of than that which any one may acquire by reading his catechism; and oftentimes it happens that such a book does not give that idea as clearly as may be had by the catechism. Of books such as we describe now there are many in English treating of the Blessed Virgin. Now, we insist that such books are not sufficient to our Catholic people; that a great many of them want more than that. They want some book which may treat of Mary in manner the least unworthy of her; they want a book which may put before them, as clearly as the subject may admit, the magnificent destiny to which God destined her, and which is, as it were, the foundation on which rests all her grandeur, and serves as a scientific principle from which to deduce all her sublime gifts and privileges; a book which may point out her place in the whole system of God's wonderful works, and how

she filled that place, and of what grandeur it was productive to her, and what benefits accrued to mankind therefrom. In a book like this Mary would be seen to the best advantage; for she would be seen not only in herself and, as it were, isolated, but in all her grand relations, as one placed next to the centre of all God's works, and occupying the most important part assigned to the creature, and extending her agency and influence all over the universe; and all this, not by assertions, but in a scientific manner, every quality and prerogative and relation being deduced from one grand principle. Such a book as this, in minds that can at all study and reflect, is calculated to build their devotions toward Mary upon a strong and solid foundation. For how enlightened and deeply rooted and solid must devotion to Mary become in one who has been able to investigate the reason and principle of Mary's grandeur, who has analyzed this greatness in itself, and who has calculated the perfections needed for supporting and adorning this dignity, and who has compared it with all other dignities, and studied it in all its consequences and relations? The mind becomes satisfied with such knowledge; it expands under it, it clings to it with a tenacity that nothing can shake; and the consequence will be a high esteem and deep-rooted veneration for such a subject and an intense devotion to it. Catholics in other countries have a number of books like the one described. The great work in French of Nicholas, *La Vierge Marie*, has gone we know not through how many editions, and has been translated into German and Italian. The first edition of the great work of Castelplanio, *Maria, nel Consiglio dell' Eterno*, was exhausted a few days after publication.

We see no reason why Catholics in this country should not have a book attempting something of the same kind which the above-mentioned authors have done so well. Assuredly there is a large portion of our Catholics who can appreciate it and read it with profit and advantage; and to suppose that all Catholics in this country can do no better than to read the superficial books which are put before them, that they could not understand it if something deeper and more scientific were presented to them, and that they all must be treated like children in the knowledge of their faith, is to offer an insult to a great portion of our Catholic people unwarranted by the facts.

In the full confidence, therefore, that something of the kind will be hailed with pleasure and read with profit we have written this little work. We have written it with fear and trembling, but at the same time with childlike trust in that magnificent Mother—with fear and trembling, because every one acquainted with this matter can understand the difficulty of the subject; and though we have left nothing undone to prepare ourselves for such a task, yet it is useless to remark that no labor, however hard, could suffice to do justice to the magnitude of the subject. When young we used to have the habit of reading every day something on Mary, and we never cared for emotional books which did not build their practice of devotion to Mary on the basis of a solid knowledge of her. Since we have been a priest all the moments we could spare from other duties we have consecrated to this subject; and we can safely say that we have read every book worth reading treating of Mary, so that we can assert that there is no thought or idea redounding to her glory written by others which will not be found in our book. And here we want to

acknowledge, once for all, that the construction, the logical order of the book is our own ; the matter has been furnished by others, among whom we shall mention De Vega, Micchoviensis, Nicholas, Castelplanio, Segneri, Ventura, and others.

May this little effort of our love for a subject so grand, which has charmed us all our life long, and which will, we trust in Mary, be our hope and our joy in death, do the good it is calculated to produce ; and may all Catholics, all our younger brethren in the ministry, for whom it is specially intended, study it carefully and patiently, and they will feel the grandeur and sublimity of the faith which they preach ; they will obtain a solid foundation for that sweet and tender love which burns in their bosom for Mary ; they will acquire facility in preaching that devotion, in inculcating it, in every way and by every means at their disposal ; and may some one (and there are many bright intellects among them) try to do better than we could do, and write a work on Mary which, for science, for eloquence, for beauty of style and language, may shame our own, and then our heart will be content, for then our shame will be the glory of our Mother.

JERSEY CITY, August 15, 1876.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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I. FORTY centuries had passed over mankind from the Fall to the coming of Christ. They had been forty centuries of ignorance, of mental aberrations, and of a degradation sunk to the lowest possible degree. The doom which had befallen our first parents, when the angel of God thrust them out of Paradise, was a vivid image of the state of their minds. On being cast out of that garden of delights they must have felt as if they were leaving the midday splendor of the sun for darkness most appalling. Their hearts must have sunk within them and become saturated with—steeped in—desolation and abandonment. They knew not whither to go or what to do. Their quiet and happy possession of life had passed away, never to return. Something like this must have been the state of their minds with regard to divine truths. That vivid splendor of grace, that sunshine of divine knowledge resting upon their intellect, that clearness of perception of, that taste, so to speak, for, divine truths, that luminary set in the midst of their soul, guiding them surely and safely, had passed away, and they felt as if they were groping their way in darkness and in the shadow of death.

It was the same with their will. That untrammelled, free exercise of that faculty, that easy direction to what was right and just, that sweet, happy, almost natural bent for virtue, had been lost, and it required an effort, a struggle, a conflict henceforth to practise virtue. And not only had they lost that

clearness of perception of the truth, that undoubted guide, that easy way of practising virtue, but they saw, to their horror and dismay, that they had lost all power and supremacy over their inferior instincts, which rose against them with tremendous force, presented to them objects so filthy and abominable, so contrary to their intellectual and spiritual instincts, and that with such an attractiveness as almost to entice the intellect to pronounce them as man's true and only good, as to draw the will almost irresistibly to embrace them. They saw they had not the strength to stand the seduction. They were conscious they were degraded in mind, heart, and body. Darkness had obscured their minds, a powerful and vigorous love for sensuous-objects had debased the will, and they felt as if their spiritual nature had given way to be nothing but flesh and to love nothing higher than the sensible.

This darkness and degradation went on increasing, as centuries and generations rolled by, like a swift and powerful torrent which nothing can resist. The universal flood swept all living generations away but the family of one just man; for the degradation of man had increased beyond redemption. But the descendants of that just one soon imitated the former generations. The true idea of God was lost; the lowest and most abominable instincts of man were made the principles of morality, as they were personified into so many gods, and the utterest and extreme perfection of degradation was reached. To love the sensible, the corporal, the sensuous is degrading; but to wed together that remnant of knowledge which humanity had of God with the sensual, so as to make it God, and to put one's guide of life in the imitation of such a God, and one's final happiness in the possession of such a God, is the highest possible aberration of the mind, the utterest degradation of the heart. After that there can be nothing worse but intellectual and moral death. When man has attributed divine nature and perfections to incest in Jupiter and Juno, to abominations against nature in Adonis, to the most unbridled lust in

Venus, to debauchery in Bacchus, to brutal force in Mars, and to a thousand most degrading things—when man has come to believe that the highest honor he can pay his God is to practise these things, he can sink no lower into the depth of error and degradation. He is morally dead. God preserved one nation from this utter debasement; but in spite of all the invention of a sweet, ever-watchful Providence, in spite of all the miracles of almighty power, in spite of all the threats and chastisements of an angry and ready Justice, they were continually falling into the errors and practices of paganism. The knowledge and love of God, then, had almost passed away from the world forty centuries after its creation.

II. It was next to impossible that mankind could be brought back to that knowledge and love, because, first, man being naturally made up of body and soul, it was most difficult for him to believe in and to love a merely *spiritual* God. Idolatry, as it has been remarked by some Fathers, was not altogether an aberration, but an instinct also. Man could not do with an invisible God. He wanted some God who could enter into his feelings, who could sympathize with him; some God whom he could touch and hear and see; some God whose sensible image he could have continually before his eyes.

Secondly, because, man being steeped in the sensible and the corporal by sin, it was yet more difficult for him to snatch his mind and heart from the sensible and to set them on the invisible and hidden God.

III. There was one possible means of salvation for humanity—a visible God, a God-Man, an Emmanuel. God's wisdom was to call man back to his knowledge and love by means of his natural instincts and of his very aberrations—to take man in his weak point. Man could perceive and love nothing but the corporal and the sensible. God determined that his only-begotten Son, the Word, the substantial image of his infinite perfections, his very thought of himself—that Word by whom he made all things—should join himself to flesh, should become man,

and through that humanity, true and undoubted, visible and tangible, sympathizing and suffering, entice man back to his knowledge and love.

Jesus Christ came ; and though he preached mysteries most impervious to human reason, most humiliating to man's pride ; though he preached self-abnegation, the sacrifice of every unruly instinct ; though the apostles, in obedience to their vocation, preached purity before the temples of Venus and Diana, virginity before the temple of Juno ; though they preached humanity and philanthropy in the forum and in the amphitheatre, humility before the colossal monuments of Roman grandeur, poverty before the spoils of all nations brought to the capital by the Roman soldiers, and fraternity before the triumphal car of the victor preceded by the crowd of unhappy prisoners destined to slavery, they succeeded. Christianity spread like an electric spark throughout the known world ; idols and superstitions fell at the voice of the apostles ; and those who but yesterday were pampering their bodies in the public baths, satisfying their most debasing appetites in the temples of their gods, feasting on animals fed by human flesh and blood, lolling in the public forum, assisting at the spectacle of the gladiators in the amphitheatre, were seen to-day, in the darkness of the catacombs, worshipping a crucified Jew and preparing for their own crucifixion, dying of hunger in the dreadful prisons of the malefactor, appearing in the forum as criminals, and becoming themselves a spectacle of obloquy, of scorn, of derision in the public places, and a prey to the beasts of the amphitheatre, and dying a martyr's death.

What propagated Christianity so rapidly and so universally ? It was the grace of God, it was the preaching of the apostles, it was the wondrous miracles they performed—assuredly it was all this. But it was also the internal structure of the mystery of the Incarnation, on which Christianity is based, and of which it is the extension and circumference, that effected it. Man wanted a visible, tangible God ; man



wanted a God-Man like himself, with human nature and faculties, with human feelings, human sympathy, human sufferings. He had been yearning after such a God for forty centuries. So strong had been that craving and that aspiration that, for want of a true God-Man, he had created to himself gods of all sensible objects around him; he had raised his very passions to that dignity. The *theophanies*, or the manifestations of some divine attribute clothed, so to speak, in sensible apparel had not been sufficient for the Jewish people; and that same people, who had adored the angel one and three at Mambre, who had seen the lightnings and been terrified by the thunders of Sinai, who could speak to God at the foot of the ark, who had seen his column following them and guiding them during the night, and sheltering them from the Eastern heats during the day, who had eaten of the manna, and who had seen God's shadow in the cloud which took possession of Solomon's temple, were not satisfied with all this; they went after the gods of the Gentiles, for they, like all humanity, wanted a true, visible, tangible God.

Christ, and Christ alone, the God-Man, the Emmanuel, could bring back humanity to the knowledge and love of the invisible God; and the reason why Christianity spread so rapidly and took such deep root in man's nature, is because it preaches a corporal God, and because it is itself a *fac-simile*, a continuation and extension, of the Incarnation; for when we speak of Christianity we mean that living body called the Church, which is nothing less than Christ himself, under his sacramental presence, traversing centuries and generations, and teaching and giving life and grace to humanity in all times and places. For any other kind of pretended Christianity, not incarnate in an organized, living body soon loses the knowledge of God; witness Protestantism, the history of which is the history of the gradual loss of God's knowledge in himself and his attributes in relation with man and his destiny.

IV. But it is to be borne in mind that the world owes this

knowledge and love of the invisible God, along with all its consequences, to one grand created personality—Mary, the immaculate Mother of the Incarnate God, because she clothed him with human nature; and we must call the attention of our readers to the wonderful display of God's wisdom in this mystery—that of causing his Son to take his human nature from a Virgin Mother.

If he had created a body for his Son to which he would have joined a human soul, as he did with Adam, a new humanity would have been exhibited to the world, and doubts might have arisen as to the truth and reality of this new humanity. But having caused his Son to be conceived and born of a woman of the seed of Adam—*Factum ex muliere*, not only is this Son exhibited to us as having our humanity, but in such a manner as to preclude all doubts which might be thrown on the truth and reality of that humanity, so that it is impossible, after such dispensation, to suppose it fictitious or phenomenal. And when our Lord, throughout the Gospel, is pleased to call himself the Son of man, and to insist on that title, he is continually bringing forth proofs of his true humanity by alluding to his conception from Mary.

On the other hand, the conception of Christ in Mary, effected without injury to her virginal purity, but by a supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, sufficiently points out his divine personality and dignity.

It was Mary, therefore, who brought back the knowledge and love of the invisible God by rendering God corporal and human.

V. And it is Mary who renders him always visible in the Church. Her divine maternity is the safeguard of the dogma of the Incarnation upon which everything depends. Once her divine maternity is known and admitted, no possible mistake can be made as to the mystery of the Incarnation and redemption; and, therefore, her sublime dignity is the beacon of light placed upon the summit of the mountain of God's

Church, guiding humanity towards the true knowledge and love of God.

We shall insist on this point, as it enhances the importance of the knowledge of Mary in a religious point of view. Man required a God-Man for two reasons: 1st. To rescue him from ignorance and degradation, and to bring him back to the knowledge of the invisible God. 2d. To satisfy the justice of God, outraged by the sins of man. Without a God-Man both objects could not be attained. The second could not be attained, because a real satisfaction to be given to God for sin implied the necessity of infinite personality able to give God an infinite honor, and at the same time that this infinite person should be man also, as man was the culprit.

The first also required a God-Man. Man was so steeped in sensible things that none but a man like himself, except in sin, could entice him away, and none but God could bring him from the knowledge of himself as man to the knowledge of himself as God. It required a God-Man—true man with body and soul like ours, and true God with his divine nature and perfections: a twofold nature human and divine, in the unity of one divine personality. Take away any of these three elements, and you take away the reasons for which Christ is necessary. If he is not man, he can neither suffer for man nor attract him. If he is not God, his sufferings and attractions are of no avail. If both his natures do not subsist in one divine personality, but each nature has a personality of its own, they are two distinct persons, one human, the other divine, and neither of them can answer the purpose of humanity. This knowledge of the economy of the Incarnation is most necessary, and Mary's divine maternity is the shield of this knowledge. The Mother of God keeps whole and intact the mystery of the Incarnation. Because if you deny that the fruit of her conception is God, then Christ is man only and cannot fulfil the aspirations of humanity. If you deny that Mary conceived a man-God, that the term of her conception

was a human nature, subsisting of the personality of the Word, and admit, between the human nature and the divine nature, only a moral union, such as exists between God and any just man, then Mary is no longer the mother of God, and he whom she conceived is a human person and cannot answer the purpose of humanity. But keep safe the divine maternity of Mary, and you admit once and for ever the true conditions of the mystery of the Incarnation, and will see the truth of that saying of St. Cyril of Alexandria, that Mary is the shield of the orthodox faith.

A sketch of all the heresies will convince us of this truth.

All the heresies of the first five centuries of the Church may be reduced principally to two, which have, up to our times, taken a thousand forms and modifications. The first is that held by the Docetes, who denied the humanity of our Lord. Overcome by the wonderful miracles of his life, on seeing the stupendous effects of his grace in the conversion of nations, they could not bring themselves to believe him to be a man, but asserted him to be God appearing among men under the phenomenal and fictitious form of man. The second is that held by the Ebionites, who held that God could not abase himself so far as to die for man, and therefore insisted that he was a man, and nothing more. To these two principal errors succeeded Nestorianism and Eutychianism. The first held that the union between the divine person of the Word and human nature was merely a moral union, different in degree from the union which exists between God and any just man, as it asserted that the union between the Word and human nature was the greatest possible moral union, but identical in kind. Eutychianism, in its opposition to this error, fell into an opposite extreme, holding that the union between the Word and the humanity of our Lord was not only personal, but had gone so far as to mix up both natures.

The Fathers of the Church, in refuting all these heresies, entrenched themselves within the bastion of the true concep-

tion of the Word in Mary. They laid down the principle that Mary was the true, real Mother of God, and that, therefore, his humanity was true, against the Docetes; that he was very God, against the Ebionites; that the union between the Word and human nature was a personal union, otherwise Mary would have conceived a man, but not a God-Man, against Nestorianism; and that Eutychianism was false, as it destroyed both natures in its endeavor to mix them both.

VI. The world to-day is nearly in the same condition as when the apostles set out to preach the Gospel of peace, and has lost the knowledge and love of the invisible God. A glance at the history of modern error will suffice to make good this assertion.

The history of error is made up of a chain of negations which took its rise in Protestantism and has reached the last link in our own times. Protestantism having, as its fundamental principle, constituted the human mind the sole judge of the supernatural and the superintelligible, set out by denying certain dogmas of the Catholic Church as impossible and absurd—such as the dogma of the Eucharist, or the union of Christ with the elements of bread and wine effected by the substance of these elements being changed into the body and blood of Christ, or by denying the dogma of the relation of God's Spirit with his Church.

Having taken such a giant stride, the human mind saw that to stop there was both illogical and arbitrary. Protestants said: "The union of Christ with the elements of bread and wine is impossible." Socinians urged, with greater show of reason: "The union between the Word and human nature is equally as impossible and absurd, and therefore we must sweep away the mystery of the Incarnation." "But if the union of the Word with human nature is impossible," said Rationalism, "can any supernatural union or relations between God and man be possible? Certainly not; therefore let us do away with grace and the supernatural. But, going deeper into the analysis of

old and preconceived opinions, is it true that there can be any real union between the infinite and the finite, in the sense that the finite is a substance distinct from, and infinitely inferior to, God? The idea of such a finite substance being created is absurd, and, therefore, let us do away with creation." This was the last legitimate consequence of the principle of free examination.

But how, after this, to account for the existence of the universe? Here pantheism takes the field and endeavors to reconstruct the whole building which the unbridled reason of man, the first-born of Protestantism, has gradually pulled down by means of negation after negation.

The existence of the universe could be easily accounted for, if the Catholic idea of the infinite were true—that is, the idea of a being naturally and essentially so, the abyss of all perfections, the uttermost actuality conceivable. It is natural that, if we admit such an idea, if we allow that God is the fulness of being, actuality itself, infinite reality and perfection; that he is intelligence itself in the state of personality, in the highest possible perfection; that in intelligencing himself the Thought which he conceives of himself is also in the state of personality; and that, both loving each other, the product of this mutual love is love itself in the highest possible perfection, a distinct personality, the term of the life of the infinite—it follows that, God being complete in himself and absolutely independent, if he creates he must do so freely, and the object created must be a substance essentially distinct from his nature, and, therefore, finite. But God, says pantheism, is no such thing. The infinite is the highest possible *minimum* of reality, which is akin to nothing—that which is and is not; because reality and actuality necessarily mean determination, definiteness, limit, and if the infinite were at all real, and not akin to nothing, it would no longer be infinite, but finite. This idea of the infinite accounts for the universe, because there lies in this maximum of indetermination and indefiniteness a neces-

sary instinct or force to limit itself to grow. In this instinct we find the reason of the universe and its history. The first effort which the infinite makes to unfold itself is the minimum of being almost as indefinite and vague as itself, and explains the chaotic state of the universe for so many centuries, and corresponds to the account of the Bible that the earth was void and empty, and darkness was over the face of the deep.

By a more powerful effort and struggle after so many centuries the infinite assumes the first limited form—matter and the mineral world. From matter it sprang into life and showed itself in the vegetal world; then it acquired by a further effort the sensation of life and manifested itself in the animal kingdom; and, finally, it attained knowledge in humanity. This is the real Trinity. The infinite developing itself—first moment or stage; acquiring knowledge in humanity—second stage; the universe and humanity—third stage.

Every one can understand that this knowledge was progressive and started from its minimum degree—from that which is nearer to sensation and to the imaginative faculty than to the intellect. Hence the rational life of primitive nations is more poetical and artistic than philosophical; because in these primitive times of the life of the infinite the senses and the imagination predominate over the reasoning faculties. By another effort the infinite tries to disengage itself from the thralldom of the senses and the imagination, and begins rational analysis, and hence the philosophical periods, always more or less progressive, among nations. There is a stage in which this philosophical progress is carried to its utmost perfection, and it is when the infinite or humanity acquires the consciousness of itself and of its infinite powers. This marks an epoch in its life; it is the Incarnation, the real Christ and Christianity—that is, humanity—which has arrived at the knowledge and consciousness of its infinite powers. The superiority of Christianity over former religions is evident from the fact that in the latter humanity had no consciousness of its infinite powers, whereas

in the former it has. Christian civilization is modelled after, and is a consequence of, that fundamental idea. Hence Christian civilization is based upon the absolute equality of every one in natural, social, familiar, civil, and political rights, because all individualities are but forms of one infinite humanity, and hence communion of goods, of women, of authority, etc.

But if the infinite is necessarily impelled, as explained, to develop itself, how are we to explain evil, physical as well as moral?

Physical evil originates in a necessary conflict or clashing of natural forces, the weaker of which must necessarily succumb before the stronger. As to moral evil, it does not exist, except in the idea of those who admit a supreme principle of morality and personal accountability based upon personal liberty; but as such do not exist but in name, as everything is done by absolute necessity of being, it follows that there can be no moral evil, as there can be no moral obligation. The only obligation resting upon the individual as well as humanity is the harmonious development of all natural forces and instincts, which forms the progress of humanity in its ever-ascending scale.

I think that by this sketch of the history of modern error, which we have sounded to its very depths, our readers can be convinced of our assertion that the world to-day is in the same, if not worse, state in which it was when the apostles broached the first tidings of individual and social regeneration. For we had done nothing but give the summary and quintessence of all the systems of errors. It seems to us as if we had been rehearsing the Syllabus given forth by the immortal pontiff so long and so gloriously occupying the chair of the fisherman. For pantheism, which is held wholly or in part by all who are not strictly Catholics, is the distortion of every truth. It distorts the idea of God, of his attributes, of the Trinity, of creation, of the Incarnation, of grace, of the Church, of the sacraments. It distorts the idea of a creature and of man, taking especial care to do away with all idea of future life, of human liberty, of moral responsibility, and substituting



force for moral law. It distorts every idea of society, familiar, civil, or political, and substitutes for them communism, and socialism, and state idolatry, or the absolute supremacy of brute force; it matters not whether the force resides in an emperor and in his minister, or in the mob, rabble, and scum of a great city.

That all these doctrines are believed in, carried into practice, by the individual, by society, by states, is a fact too evident to require any other than a slight allusion.

The knowledge and love of the infinite and invisible God has passed away from the modern world. And what is to bring it back? Who is to make God visible again to man, to society? Who is to save society from that abyss to which it is hastening with giant step, and of which it has reached the very brink? Who is to regenerate the individual, the family, the state? In great part the same magnificent personality who made God visible once—the glorious Mother of God. Mary has to save man and society to-day as she did the heathen world. The gifts of God are without repentance; as she was privileged to save the world once from the chaos of heathenism, even so must she have the privilege to save the world to-day from the chaos of errors and absurdities brought on by a most licentious reason, and from the sink of corruption, which has reached its lowest depth. Mary yesterday, to-day, and for ever; she is the dawn, the harbinger of the divine Sun of justice. This is not merely our individual opinion; it is a consequence of the dogma of her divine maternity. As she brought Jesus Christ to the world once, it is through her that he must come to the world again and for ever. This opinion is shared in by the best and holiest writers of our day. It is the opinion of Pius the Ninth. To stem the torrent of error and corruption inundating the world he declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and probably was going to declare the truth of her assumption into heaven, if the agents of evil had not stopped the Vatican Council in its progress. He knows better than any one that Mary brought Jesus to the world, and Mary

must bring him back to every soul, to the family, to society, to humanity.

The foregoing ideas will explain the object of this little work—the knowledge of Mary.

Mary must bring Jesus to every soul that has him not, to the family, to society. Therefore Mary must be honored, loved with a love above any other except that of Jesus; and to do this we must know her well—know her sublime dignity, her grand agency in the mystery of our redemption, her graces, her virtues, her merits, her agency in the salvation of every one of us. Upon this, and upon this alone, can a true devotion and a true love for Mary be founded; for then it will be founded upon a rock. The very fact of studying her will give us a true and perfectly accurate idea of all we must believe. For Mary is the epitome, the recapitulation of Catholic theology. She is the living expression of it; her glorious maternity is the most condensed formula of all our dogmas. For every religious truth consists in the relation of the infinite with the finite, of the human and divine, by means of Christ, who is infinite and finite, God and man, at the same time, and who unites to himself, as a member of a body of which he is the head, every one who wishes to enter the temple of universal truth. Every error consists more or less in falsifying the relation between the infinite and the finite, or, in other words, the notion of Christ, the type of such relation. Now, it was in Mary that Jesus Christ became what he is—God-Man in the unity of a divine personality. Mary, therefore, is the exact demonstration of Jesus Christ, the most condensed formula of all truth. By knowing Mary, therefore, we know all Catholic theology. She brings light with her, as her name of morning star indicates; and by loving her in proportion to our knowledge of her—of her colossal dignity, of her immense privileges, of her untold benefits—we shall have Jesus Christ back to us in every relation of life and in death. The whole knowledge of Mary will be divided into several books. In the first we shall

endeavor to find out the supreme principle of this science by examining the plan of the works of God and seeking the place that Mary holds in this plan. This will be the supreme principle from which all the privileges of Mary flow ; and after having studied it in itself, we shall point out the graces and prerogatives which were necessary to fit her for her dignity ; and, finally, we shall study her in the consequences which flow from that dignity when looked at in relation to God, to humanity, and to herself ; and we shall conclude by calling upon our readers to love and to venerate her in proportion to her dignity, in itself and its consequences.



BOOK FIRST.

*MARY'S PLACE IN THE DIVINE PLAN OF  
THE UNIVERSE.*



## CHAPTER I.

### PLAN OF THE UNIVERSE.

It would be impossible to make our readers conceive the sublime place which Mary holds in the whole system of God's works, without putting before their eyes a brief and condensed view of the whole plan of the universe. Thus, by forming a general idea of the object and end of the design, by remarking how each part is fitted by nature and faculties for the place destined for it, by observing the relations which each part holds with the others, and how they all result in a most harmonious whole and conspire towards the attainment of the general end, the reader will be enabled to perceive at once Mary's place in the plan, her glorious and magnificent destiny, and the relations she bears with all the parts of that sublime hymn which God has sung to his infinite perfections.

For the sake of clearness we will present this view in the following articles.

### ARTICLE I.

*Was there a Plan in the Mind of God when He created the Universe?*

GOD is infinitely independent and sufficient in himself. He is before all ages. Unity, fecundity, and distinction are the laws of his being, which are manifested to us by the contemplation of the highest mystery of God—the Trinity. The Father, unborn and unbegotten, engendering the Word, his natural offspring, the Father and the Son loving each other eternally and breathing the Holy Ghost, express the law of *fecundity*. The Father in virtue of the relation of conceiver, natural and essential to him, the Son in force of the relation of conception, both in consequence of being the active principle in the production of the Holy Ghost, the latter in virtue of the passive relation of being breathed forth by both, mark and lay down the law of *distinction*. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, subsisting in the one indivisible, infinite, divine nature, proclaim the law of unity. God, therefore, is not a

solitary being dependent on any one to be happy. He lives an interior, essential life. He forms a true and divine society with himself, and rests and is blissful eternally in the conversation and in the embrace of the one and threefold divine love. The Son satisfies in God the infinite craving after knowledge. The Holy Ghost fills up the aspiration after infinite love, and terminates the sphere of fecundity in the interior life of the Godhead.

But the Holy Ghost is love, and love is diffusive and out-pouring. The substantial Love, the third Person in the Godhead, could not produce any effect in the internal life of God, but was capable of producing innumerable effects outside of God; because, as St. Bonaventure remarks, it behooves divine goodness to pour itself out in three different ways—by generation, by spiration, and by creation. The first belongs exclusively to the Father, the second to the Father and to the Son; the third belongs to all three divine Persons, but is in a particular manner attributed to the Holy Ghost, in consequence of the characteristic constituent of his personality, and forms his exterior fecundity. It is common to the Father under the relation of principle and origin, as the source and supreme beginning of all things; to the Son in the relation of archetype and pattern, as the supreme beauty and typical form of all things; to the Holy Ghost in the relation of final cause, as the supreme good. Goodness, therefore, inasmuch as it can be communicated by creation,\* constitutes the external fecundity of the Holy Ghost.

From these principles it follows that, considering creation with reference to God, we find it both absolutely *free* and *most agreeable* and *befitting*—absolutely free, because God is all-sufficient and independent in himself, and blessed from all eternity in the society of his divine Persons; most befitting, inasmuch as goodness is naturally and essentially diffusive, and loves to pour itself out and to manifest itself visibly; most

\* We mean by creation whatever God does outside himself.



agreeable, because the myriads of creatures which could be called into existence would adore and love this divine goodness, and a new canticle would be raised outside of God expressing his infinite excellence. What was, therefore, wanted that creation should take place? The divine nature, as infinite being, was the typical cause, the pattern of innumerable creations: in the Father was the power of creating; in the Son the wisdom to sketch, dispose, and put in order; in the Holy Ghost love to execute. Nothing was wanting but the will to effect it, and this was supplied by divine goodness, which loved to pour itself out.

But goodness, in decreeing creation, must have had an object in view, something which it wanted to attain, some result it wished to arrive at. This is evident from the fact that no intelligent being can act without a reason; otherwise it would act at random or through ignorance, and not as intelligent. This can never be said of God, who is not only intelligent, but intelligence itself—that is to say, he cannot be conceived by our mind without being supposed to be intelligence. Men cannot be moved to act but under the inspiration of a preconceived plan, which is the end moving the will, and is really the principle and the cause of the act, which is elicited by the will. Can we deny of God what we attribute to the least of men?

A divine plan is nothing else but the object which God intends to attain in the production of things outside himself. Therefore there is a divine plan of the universe.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Nature of the Plan.*

We have purposely alluded to the internal organization of the Holy Trinity, in order to pave the way for an explanation of the plan of the universe. Because the external fecundity of the Holy Ghost must trace out the same laws which govern the internal organism of God's life, though the determination

to create or not to create be entirely and absolutely free—the same laws, because the work must reveal the artist, and must receive from his thought its form and physiognomy; and God cannot look outside of himself in the production of things, but must look into himself as the supreme reason of every type.

Though the determination be free; because no reason, internal or external, can oblige the most independent and absolute being to act outside himself. An act of divine sovereignty and independence must, therefore, be the first principle of things; and this act once freely determined upon and the end proposed, the decree of the means becomes necessary. And as a thing is not called means except inasmuch as it is conducive to the end, the latter, in the intention of the agent, precedes the other and acts as adviser and counsellor. From which it appears that the divine plan or the end prescribes the work to be effected, and not otherwise. Hence, to become acquainted with the work we must ascend to the end; otherwise if we ignored the intention we could not accurately and thoroughly know the work, and might easily be mistaken as to its nature. As in the productions of art the typical form in the mind of the artist determines the lineaments, the features, and the proportions of the work which he desires to effect, and its perfection is judged and calculated by a comparison of the work with the original type, so the intention of God determines the nature of the work and impresses upon it its divine features, in order that it may express and depict whatever he designed to sketch out.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Conditions of this End.*

This end must have one essential condition: it must be worthy of God and fully adequate to the expansion of goodness.

Now, what could be worthy of God except himself? God,

therefore, could have no other but himself in view to render the Holy Ghost productive outside himself. But he had already, by means of his interior fecundity, attained the fullness of life, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost saw and enjoyed their infinite loveliness and bliss, and all three, immutable in the same ecstasy of love, could not see or understand anything capable of increasing even one degree that infinite hymn of praise which they sang to themselves.

How can we reconcile this fundamental truth of the intrinsic and essential glory of God, in no wise progressive and perfectible, with the other that God can have no other but himself in view when he decrees the production of his external works? The Scriptures peremptorily affirm that God has done all things for himself.

Both these truths, apparently opposed to each other, are reconciled by observing that God cannot draw from anything outside himself the motives of his determination, which are found in his own nature, in so much as, when he acts outwardly, he but follows the movements of that infinite goodness which tends to manifest and communicate itself. The increase, therefore, of his intrinsic glory not being the object of the divine plan, it follows that he can act for himself inasmuch as he can manifest and display his infinite excellence and communicate it as he sets it forth. The manifestation, then, and communication of the divine goodness are the object of the exterior work. The first regards God; the second the term of his action; both in intimate connection with each other, as God cannot manifest himself except he communicates himself, and cannot communicate himself except by manifesting himself. Now, this goodness cannot be manifested or communicated except by creation in its strict sense, as an act creating substances out of nothing. Creation, therefore, enters into the design of God as means indispensable to an end. This is the first manifestation and communication of the divine goodness. Fecundity, unity, and variety are the laws which govern it.

Two beings shall have an existence, one nearest to God—the *Angel*; the other nearest to nothingness—*Matter*. The celestial world and the terrestrial, with their innumerable beings, shall be an image of the distinction and fecundity of God. Next will be a third term, the symbol of unity and harmony, which will unite in itself these two orders of distinct beings so radically separated—*Man*, partaking of matter, by which he is connected with the inferior world, and partaking of the Spirit, by which he is associated with the superior world; body and soul at the same time, one operating upon the other, and knit together by the bond of one subsistence. In his undivided personality he shall gather all the gifts of spirits and all the forces of matter, and in him shall be solved the mystery of universal unity. Thus was creation planned out that God might receive from it the meed of praise and glory. But did the Holy Ghost rest in nature, or did he select creation as an indispensable preparation for a more elevated and admirable plan?

Creation certainly cannot glorify God as he deserves. Insensible and animal natures are not capable of that praise which emanates from conviction and love, nor of that glory which rests on the intellect and will. It is man to whom these natures are directed, and for whom they were made; who is endowed with intelligence and will; who must, as the mediator of natural creation, render to God the homage of his adoration and love for himself and for inferior creatures. But is the canticle which man can raise worthy of God? Is this manifestation and communication which divine goodness has so far made sufficient to satisfy its infinite aspiration? God is infinite; the creature is finite. The distance between it and God is that which passes between reality and that which is next to nothingness. Therefore the canticle which can be raised to God by substantial creation is not worthy of him. The canticle of God himself is alone worthy of him, as he deserves the adoration of none inferior to himself.

Herein must lie the whole skill of divine goodness—that is, in forming a being to which we could attribute the quality of adorer, implying the homage and worship of an inferior to a superior, and the absolute perfection of a divine adorer exacting a strict equality with the adored.

Could God be at the same time *equal* and *inferior* to himself—*inferior* to adore himself, *equal* to adore himself infinitely and worthily?

#### ARTICLE IV.

*Solution of the Problem—Incarnation and its Conditions.*

We cannot seek the solution of this problem in God simply as God, or in the creature simply as creature. So long as God keeps within himself, so to speak, he cannot have any relation of inferiority or superiority; and so long as the creature remains isolated and concentrated in itself it cannot worthily glorify the Creator. It possesses the first element of adoration, inferiority, but lacks its perfection—that is, equality with God. God possesses the perfection of adoration, that is, equality with the adored—but has not the first element, inferiority. To communicate to the creature equality with God, and to God the inferiority of the creature; to make the creature God, and God the creature—therein lay the whole secret: how to glorify God worthily, from which would spring an infinite exaltation for the creature.

This could not be effected by means of a substantial mixture or change of the creature into God and God into the creature. These two extremes must remain distinct but not separated, and from the union of which would result that being in one respect inferior to God and in another fully equal to him.

Nor would any sort of union do; but such is required as would reduce both extremes to a unity so strict and intimate as just to stop short of the substantial distinction of their

nature—a union which would render the actions radically proceeding from either nature attributable to one infinite, divine principle. Because if the creature in this union acted isolated and not as centred in the divine principle, the act of adoration would remain finite and could never infinitely glorify the Creator. It is necessary, therefore, that, in force of this union, the uncreated principle should hold sway over the created principle, so that the natural faculties of the latter should be elevated and divinized by the former, so as to cause the operations proceeding from both to exchange denomination, and be not all from the uncreated nor all from the created principle, but be called and be in reality all of the one and the other in consequence of the union to which the divine principle would have reduced them.

Is this union possible? Is it not contrary to his divine majesty to lower himself to the level of his own work, so as to lift it up to the dignity of his own principle? Far from it; on the contrary, as St. Bonaventure remarks, it denotes nobleness and perfection; because as God, being eternally good, did not derogate from his majesty in communicating his goodness to creation in time, notwithstanding that the creature is infinitely inferior to that same goodness, so neither did he derogate from his infinite majesty when he made over his infinite personal being to the creature.

Nor does this imply change or dependence; because in the same manner as he created without change or dependence, so does he remain unchanged and master of himself by raising up the creature to the dignity of his personal being.

But it must be remarked that this union implies an admirable dispensation both as to the person who effects the union and as to the nature which is united.

As regards the nature to be elevated, it cannot be a new creature made on purpose to be associated with God, because in that case the first creation would be a stranger to that union, and would not render to God an infinite homage

nor be partaker of the fulness of the divine goodness. The *means*, therefore, of returning praise to the Creator, and which rescues the creature from its natural incapacity, must be drawn from *some part of the first creation*, and that of the nobler kind, such as the rational creature. And though rational creature implies angels and men, this union should be made in human nature, and not in the angelic; otherwise the elevation and sublimation would have been confined to spiritual nature, and would have excluded all inferior creatures, which would have remained outside the union, and could not have taken part in glorifying their Creator. It required, therefore, some nature which should be an epitome, an abridgment of universal creation, and that nature is the human, which has been called the microcosmos, or little world, in consequence of its embracing all the elements scattered over creation.

As regards the person with whom the union was to be contracted, it could not fall with more propriety on any other than the Word, who is the natural mediator of creation, and by whom all things were made, as the efficient archetype.

The Word could not assume a human person. He should take a body and a soul, he should be possessed of a human will as well as a divine will, but he could not take human personality, which means a complete, full, and independent principle of action; because, were the Word of God to do so, there were in him two full, complete, and independent principles of action, and that would destroy the unity of the adorer; it would imply a moral and not a personal union, because in that case the Word would have a human nature in its full individual being, incommunicable and independent, and a divine nature in its full individual being, incommunicable and independent. We should have then man and God, two individuals and two persons, but not the Man-God, two natures in one personality; the personal union would be wanting by which to divinize the actions of man, and the true idea of an infinite adoration would vanish. In a word, the plan of the Incarnation required that

the Word should lower himself so as to become true man from true man, as he is true God from true God, and that the human nature should have no personality of its own, but should subsist in the personality of the Word.

## ARTICLE V.

### *Reasons for the Incarnation.*

Will God effect this sublime union? It certainly was most agreeable and befitting to his divine goodness, as St. Thomas, with all the doctors, proves. The nature of God is the very essence of goodness. Now, it belongs to goodness to communicate, to pour itself out, and to infinite goodness to communicate itself in an infinite manner, or at least in a manner beyond which it could not possibly be conceived to go. Now, the Incarnation would be exactly the best, the grandest, the sublimest, the utterest outpouring of infinite goodness.

This mystery, therefore, is the most agreeable to infinite goodness. But we have proved that the end of creation was the manifestation and communication of divine goodness.

The Incarnation, therefore, is the best means to attain the end of creation.

Another reason is drawn from considering that creation is intended to give expression to the fecundity of the Holy Ghost. The Father by his intrinsic fecundity engenders from all eternity a Son perfectly equal to him, and consequently infinite. The Father and the Son, in their mutual, everlasting love, breathe the Holy Ghost, also perfectly equal to both, and therefore infinite. Here the series of the eternal generations of the Godhead closes. The Holy Ghost, therefore, is alone, in the internal productions, fruitless and barren, and becomes fruitful *ad extra* by means of creation, which may be said to be the fruit of the fecundity of the Holy Ghost, as the end of creation is exactly to manifest divine goodness the very personal constituent of the Holy Ghost. Now, why should not



his eternal fecundity terminate in a divine person also, and thus cause the term of his fecundity *ad extra* and the act of creation to be elevated to an infinite dignity?

These reasons, though not proving the necessity of the Incarnation in the sense of the optimists—because we have not proved that the end of the external act is and must necessarily be the best possible manifestation of divine goodness—yet they prove the extreme agreeableness of the Incarnation with that end. If God, in determining to create, had proposed to himself the best possible manifestation of his goodness, the Incarnation would be a necessity, as a means is necessary to an end; but reason, in proving that the end of the external action is the manifestation and communication of goodness, cannot at the same time make it evident that it must be the best possible; on the contrary, it shows that the best possible cannot be had; hence reason cannot prove that the Incarnation is necessary as means to an end.

It proves only the extreme agreeableness between the end of the external action and the Incarnation. On the other hand we know by revelation that such was the plan determined upon by God.

## ARTICLE VI.

### *Consequences of the Incarnation in regard to God.*

The first and supreme consequence of the Incarnation in reference to God is that, through this sublime and loving mystery, he can receive\* from his creation a homage and a worship truly worthy of him, as we shall have occasion several times in this work to fully develop and demonstrate. Hence, as we shall also show, it raised the external and temporal religion to the full and complete dignity of that eternal religion which forms the bliss and jubilee of that torrent of infinite life which flows in the bosom of the Infinite.

## ARTICLE VII.

*Consequences of the Incarnation with regard to created Persons.*

The hypostatic union necessarily implies in the human nature of our Lord two other distinct gifts. The first is the beatific vision and possession of God, which may be called in one word glorification; the other is sanctifying grace, which is not different in nature from glorification, but identical, varying only in the sense that one is complete and perfect; the other is germinal and on the way to development, but both implying a personal communication of the Godhead to the creature short of the hypostatic, which puts in the creature a new energy and a new power distinct in nature from and above all the energies and powers within the sphere of substantial creation. This new energy and new power is, as it were, divided into three supernatural faculties—intelligence, hope, and love. The supernatural intelligence is put in personal communication with the Godhead as infinite intelligibility. Supernatural hope is put in personal communication with the Godhead as infinite veracity and infallible executor of his promises. The supernatural will is put in personal communication with the Godhead as infinite goodness.

When this new energy and power is fully developed and receives the last complement, which is called the beatific light and possession, then it becomes glorification.

The human nature of our Lord, in consequence of the hypostatic union, possessed sanctification and glorification in their utterest perfection, as any one may easily understand on reflecting on the nature of that most intimate of all unions, beyond which it is impossible for God even to exalt a finite nature.

But are human personalities to be total strangers to that sanctification and glorification, and have no part whatever in that sublime elevation to which their nature has been raised by union with the Word? If God had not proposed to

effect the Incarnation, all created personalities would have a natural end for their ultimate perfection and development; but once having decreed that mystery, in order to sing to himself a canticle of glory worthy of his infinite excellence, and having determined, in consequence, to raise in Christ the universal creation to an infinite dignity, he decreed also to make created personalities partakers of the elevation of universal creation, and to unite them all in him by imparting to them sanctification and glorification; and thus the end of created personalities became supernatural—that is, resulted in the beatific vision and possession of God.

#### ARTICLE VIII.

##### *The Fall and Redemption.*

The plan of God, then, was the following: To effect spirits, matter, and man, and to ask from them a tribute and a meed of praise worthy of him. This they could not do without becoming infinite and at the same time keep their finite nature. God resolved the problem by the Incarnation, through which he exalted universal creation, as abridged and recapitulated in human nature, to an infinite dignity—to glorification and sanctification; and, in order to connect and unite created personalities to the God-Man, he extended sanctification and glorification. So that the whole creation, sanctified, glorified, and subsisting in the subsistence of the Word, created personalities united to the Word by sanctification and glorification, were enabled to raise to God a hymn truly worthy of him, and the end of the external action was to be attained in the utterest possible perfection—the manifestation and communication of the infinite perfections of God.

But God from all eternity foresaw a new agent which could enter into the plan of the external action. This new agent originated in the free will of created personalities, which could detach itself from good and follow evil; and this,

as far as human personalities are concerned, would cut off human nature from God, cause it to forfeit all supernatural gifts, and most deeply wound nature in itself and all its faculties.

God foresaw this new agent. In his omnipotence he could have prevented it from existing and from acting; but he consulted his wisdom before interfering with his power, and he saw that, by letting this new agent have full play, the end of the external action—that is to say, the manifestation and communication of his infinite goodness—would be infinitely better attained, as it would enhance both that manifestation and communication; and he resolved to let this new agent enter into his creative plan, and willed that the Incarnation should be modified and take the aspect and form of Redemption. Our readers will permit us to dwell at a greater length upon this modification of God's plan.

Contemplating the plan of the universe apart from the existence of evil, the mind is delighted at its grandeur, its magnificence, and its beauty. God determines to manifest and to communicate his infinite excellence in the best possible manner. He creates, accordingly, innumerable creatures under three different heads—pure spirits, inorganic matter, and incarnate spirits—under the laws of proportion and unity, to represent his infinite unity. But this does not satisfy the aspiration of his goodness, and therefore he sets about effecting the best and the grandest of his works. He unites the Word, the Mediator in the eternal life of God, with the whole external works of his hands, as recapitulated and abridged in human nature, the natural mediator of creation, and thus raises the whole creation to infinite dignity by a participation of the bliss of the Infinite through an immediate intuition and possession of the God-head. He calls created persons to the same participation, so that the whole universe, nature and personalities, may partake of the bliss of God, and form one society with the three divine Persons. What can there be more beautiful and more magnificent? But evil came to destroy all the grandeur,

beauty, and harmony of the plan, and broke off all society between God and created personalities, and hence, with inferior creatures, lost for created persons all supernatural gifts, and made an inroad even in their natural faculties. Why did God permit all this? He could certainly have prevented it. Some philosophers answer that he could not have prevented it without doing injury to human liberty, once that the latter had determined to detach itself from good to follow evil. But this answer, which might satisfy a philosopher who has not the light of faith, cannot satisfy a Catholic philosopher. There is such a thing as *efficacious grace*, which, without doing the least injury to created liberty, nevertheless so acts upon that faculty as to cause it infallibly to obey its own ends. That God, therefore, might prevent evil from entering into creation, nothing more was necessary than to use his efficacious grace with our first parents, and thus attain his own object without depriving them of the great boon of freedom. God, therefore, could have prevented evil. But, without entering into the question whether he was bound to do so—which he certainly was not, except conditionally, by a previous decree on his part—we must ask the question, Was it befitting for him to do so? Did it accord with the requirements of his wisdom? Did it chime with his other attributes? We say, No, and prove it briefly in the following manner: The plan of God in his external action was the best possible manifestation and communication of his infinite excellence by the incorporation of his divine Son in human nature.

But the permission of evil enhanced in an indefinite manner the manifestation and communication of God's infinite excellence, both as regards God, as regards Christ, and in reference also to created persons. Therefore wisdom was obliged to let this new agent enter into the universe and have its full play. That it enhanced the manifestation and communication of the divine attributes is evident from the reflection that it is a greater condescension on the part of divine good-

ness to yield itself to a fallen, ungrateful, inimical nature than to a righteous one. It was more glorious to infinite goodness that a God, infinite and eternal himself, should be sacrificed and immolated to the honor and glory of that same goodness.

It was more glorious for Christ, since it laid open to the contemplation and admiration of all future ages, and to eternity, the unutterable depths of devotedness and love which were hid in his bosom for that creation which he had made.

It was more glorious and beneficial to created persons, since evil, by introducing in the universe the law of strife and heroism, enhanced and intensified the worth of their personal acts and increased their glorification (1).

God, therefore, saw from all eternity this new agent; he calculated the good it would occasion, and decreed to allow it full play, to enhance the good of his external action. We may therefore recapitulate the plan of the universe as follows:

End: The greatest possible manifestation and communication of divine goodness.

Preliminary means: Creation of substances, spiritual, material, and composite—angels, matter, and men.

Best means to the object: The hypostatic union of the Word with human nature.

Effects of the Incarnation with regard to God: Infinite glory and honor.

With regard to created nature: Universal deification.

With regard to personalities: Deification of their nature in Christ, and beatific union with the Trinity through their union with Christ by sanctification.

God foresees the fall, and permits it, in order to enhance all these effects by Redemption.

## CHAPTER II.

CONNECTION OF THE PRECEDING THOUGHTS WITH MARY.

### ARTICLE I.

*Necessity of the Word taking Human Nature from the Race already existing.*

THE Word of God, in accordance to the plan which we have developed, is to become man and to be introduced in his creation. But in what way shall he enter creation? Of whom shall he take human nature?

The power of God must create that spirit, that human soul, which is destined to the sublime privilege and grace of the personal union with the Word. But the flesh, the body, which that soul must animate—from whom shall it be taken? It could not, like the first creation, be made out of nothing; for in that case it would be a stranger to the primitive creation, and the latter would not partake of the exaltation of this new creature—the very thing which it is intended to effect—and, having been put out of its centre by the fall, it could not consequently be restored to its former state.

The flesh, therefore, must be taken from a pre-existing nature—that is, from humanity, which will be worked in the first father for this end, and be transfused and reproduced, in virtue of the generative principle, through a long series of generations. Hence the God-Man will be the result of two generations—one eternal, the other temporal; the first from God, the second from man; true God from true God, true man from true man.

## ARTICLE II.

*Necessity of the Word taking Human Nature from a Virgin Mother.*

Various are the reasons why the human nature of our Lord should be taken from a *woman*, and this woman a *virgin*, who should conceive him without any co-operation of man.

As to the first, God wishing to communicate himself to humanity, it was befitting that in this communication he should honor both sexes, in order *not* to distinguish them by a predilection so far marked as to suggest the idea that one of them was of much less worth than the other.

The Word of God united himself to human nature in the *male sex*, and consequently the latter was raised to a dignity inexpressible and inconceivable. If, then, the female sex had been left out in the plan of the Incarnation, it would argue a too marked and a too great and distinct preference. It was befitting, therefore, that as the male sex was honored by being assumed to the personal union of the Word, the female should be honored by being chosen to be the mother of the God-Man. "That no sex," says St. Augustine, "should think itself despised, he took upon him the male sex, born of *woman*. Such dispensation honored both sexes, male and female, and showed that both were cherished by God, what he assumed, and that by whom he assumed it, elevating the man and being born of woman."

As to the second, it was meet that this woman should conceive the God-Man, not by the aid of man, but by an extraordinary operation of the Holy Ghost, and in the full and complete possession of her virginity.

First, because the temporal generation was obliged to be like unto the eternal. The Word in the eternal generation is called the Son of God, and has a Father in heaven; by the temporal generation he shall be called the Son of Man, but shall not have man as father. The eternal generation was from a father without a mother; the temporal shall be from a mother without



a human father. And the reason of this analogy between the two generations is so evident as to strike any one who gives to it a little reflection. Christ, the God-Man, is not an adopted Son of God, but purely and strictly the true and natural Son of God, the same as the eternal Word; because the hypostatic union by which Christ is God is nothing different from the eternal generation of the Word from the Father, but rather is the extension, so to speak, of that generation—or, to express it more accurately, is the permanence of that generation. God the Father throws into the bosom of Mary that same identical Word whom he begets perennially, and who unites to him in a personal bond of union the human nature which the mother administers. Hence Christ, the result of that personal union in both natures, is the natural son of the Father. If, therefore, Mary had conceived Christ by the aid of man, this man would be really and truly the father of the Word incarnate, and there would result the incongruity of two different persons claiming paternity over our Lord, which is repugnant to all our ideas of fitness, and offensive to the rights of the eternal Father.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Predestination of Mary.*

It is evident, from all we have so far discussed, that Mary's destiny is intertwined with that of Jesus Christ; that the same decree which determined the Incarnation disposed of the destiny of Mary. In the design of God, and in his decree, we cannot conceive the Incarnation without supposing Mary. God, in decreeing the personal union of the Word with human nature, determined also, for reasons already explained, that this nature should not be created out of nothing, but that it should be taken from the race already created. He willed, moreover, that the human person who should administer the body to his Son should be a woman, and that woman a *virgin*. It is clear, therefore, from all these statements, that the Incar-

nation cannot be understood or conceived possible, according to the plan selected by God, without the divine maternity of Mary, and that our Lord cannot be supposed to exist or to be possible without supposing Mary ; that the one destiny carries the other after it ; that both must stand or fall together. *It is not good for man to be alone.* The second Adam cannot exist without the second Eve ; nor the second Abraham, the father of a new generation of believers, without the second Sara ; nor the ladder uniting heaven and earth together without the earth to rest upon ; nor the flower of Aaron without the rod to grow from ; nor the manna or the tablet of the law without the ark to hold them ; nor the mercy-seat without the temple ; nor the rod spoken of by Isaias without the root of Jesse ; nor the Emmanuel without the Virgin to conceive him. Mary, in the eternal thought of God, lived and breathed in the light of mother of the divine Word, and as an active instrument in the effecting of this masterpiece of divine wisdom and goodness.

## CHAPTER III.

HOW MARY COULD BE THE MOTHER OF GOD.

### ARTICLE I.

*Statement of the Difficulty.*

THE great difficulty against the dogma of the maternity of Mary can be expressed in a popular way as follows: It is evident that Mary did not, and could not, administer and furnish anything of her own in the Incarnation of the Son of God, beyond that portion of her blood which went to form the body of our Lord. She had not, and could not have, any part in the conception of the divine Person; otherwise it would follow that a creature conceived a God, that the finite conceived the Infinite, that nothingness conceived the Fulness and Plenitude of Being. Hence Mary can be called the mother of God only in a loose sense, and, as it were, by a metaphor, and not in a strict literal sense. For the same reason always that it is absurd to suppose that an effect could be infinitely superior to its cause, as this could go against the very principle of contradiction. Now, our Lord's person is infinite; he is the Godhead. Mary, it is acknowledged on all hands, is a finite person—a creature, therefore, infinitely inferior to God. If she really conceived God, we would then have the absurdity of an effect infinitely superior in nature to its cause.

Now, the only and exclusive cause of the difficulty consists in our failing to understand how Mary, though a creature, though finite, though infinitely inferior in nature and dignity to the divine person of the Word, could really and truly conceive

in her immaculate womb the second Person of the Blessed Trinity without at all effecting, or being supposed to effect, the same divine Person. For in the difficulty there seems to be lurking the idea that Mary must have had an effective agency in the production of the divine person of the Word in order to deserve to be, and to be called, the mother of God.

We shall explain the manner how Mary could be the mother of God in the following articles.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Different Grades of Union between God and Man.*

We may reduce all possible grades of union between God and man to the following :

1st. A substantial union ; and it is that which exists between God and his creatures. It arises from the very fact that God is the creator, and the creature the effect of his creation.

This is a relation of union absolutely necessary and indispensable, without which the creature could not exist for a single instant. When an artist performs a work, there certainly arises a relation between him and his work. That relation is not substantial in this sense: that, if the artist ceased all action upon his work, the work also would cease to exist ; because the work exists substantially, independent of the artist. The artist has *not* made the substance or the matter of his work ; he has only given it its present form. But the case is quite different with God's works. He creates both the substance and the form, and consequently, if he were to withdraw his action from his creature, the latter would that very instant cease to exist, as being deprived of the very principle of its existence. A finite being has not in itself the principle or the reason of its existence ; for otherwise it would not be finite and contingent, but infinite and necessary. Wherein, then, lie the principle and reason of the existence of a finite being ? In the creative action of God. So long, then, as the creative

action continues, so long continue the principle and the reason of the existence of the finite. The moment that action ceases, that very moment the finite being has no longer in itself any reason for its existence, and must cease to be.

The same thing must be said of the action of the creature which we have said of its existence. The finite being is not, like the infinite, a *pure act*—that is, one whose very essence is action—but a substance, with the power of a further and ulterior development. It has power to act, but its essence is not action itself, and would remain so for ever—that is, with the power of acting without ever doing the action—if not influenced and moved to action by another being already in action. That the creature, therefore, may act, it requires that God should prompt it to action, help it during the action and in the completion of the action.

The first substantial union, then, between God and the creature is that which springs from the relation which God has with the creature, as its beginning and origin, its preserver, and its aid in the development of its faculties; and this must be understood not only of the natural but also of the supernatural order.

The supernatural order is the sublimation of the natural, and God, in raising one to that order, produces a new being and entity, but accidental, not substantial, which he engrafts upon the natural essence. This being is in its turn endowed with three supernatural faculties or activities in the way of development. This new being, with its activities, requires also to be preserved by the same action which originates it, and must be aided in the explication of its activities, for the same reasons which we have given for the natural order.

The first bond of union, therefore, which exists between God and substantial creation exists also between him and the creature raised to the supernatural order. Let us distinguish its elements more accurately, and give an exact definition of it. So far as we can fathom it, it is composed of three elements :

1st. The action which produces the entity or the being—in the natural order this being the substance ; in the supernatural, the modification engrafted upon the substance.

2d. The continuation and permanence of the same action, keeping and preserving the being.

3d. The action with which God enlightens the understanding and strengthens and fortifies the will to aid them in their action.\*

Here a very interesting question might be raised as to whether this first union which obtains between God and the creature, both in the natural and supernatural order, admits of degrees.

As to the natural order, metaphysicians are not agreed in determining whether the difference which exists between individuals originates from their possessing a greater intensity of being, or whether it springs from the development of their faculties, or, in men, from difference in their organization. We leave this question to whom it may concern.

As to the supernatural order, the same question might be raised, and could be formulated as follows: Does the first supernatural entity which is engrafted upon the natural essence when a person is raised to the supernatural order admit of more or less degrees of intensity of being, or is it given in the same intensity to all, and increased by the effort of development?

Confining the question to such persons as in the reception of such grace cannot perform any personal act, such as infants—for there is no doubt that this grace may vary when the person who is raised to the supernatural state is an adult, and can prepare himself with more or less intensity of acts—we are inclined to think that it does admit of great variety of degrees. In fact, all theologians admit that the first sanctifying grace granted to the Mother of God was far superior in intensity of being to that granted to any other person. But

\* We confine our discourse to spiritual beings.

whether this is only an exception, or can be taken as a general principle (to which we are inclined to assent), cannot be determined. It is certain, and held as a Catholic doctrine, that in the development it admits of an immense variety of degrees. Now, let us study how this development is obtained, in order that we may fix some general points in this variety. The supernatural being or quality breaks, as it were, into three different activities or virtues—supernatural intelligence or faith, supernatural confidence, and supernatural will. Now, the development of these three virtues, as regards the action of God upon them, consists in enlightening the supernatural intelligence, in increasing the feeling of desire and trust, in strengthening the supernatural will for good. Consequently, the greater or less amount of light to the mind, the greater or less feeling of the divine goodness and trustworthiness, the greater or less strength and energy to the will determines the degrees of supernatural development. There are several distinct stages marked down by theologians in consequence of the greater or less intensity of this action of God upon the faculties, and we shall have occasion to speak of them in a subsequent book.

The first union, then, which exists between God and his creatures, whether we speak of the natural or the supernatural order, is that which produces the being and its faculties; that which preserves both in existence, and that which develops those faculties and brings them to perfection.

But this union, even when carried to its highest point, does not exempt the creature from failing. The light given to the mind is not so effulgent but it may admit the possibility and existence of error, which is the necessary condition of the finite. The will is not so strengthened but it may occasionally fall short of the object it aims at, and fall into imperfections. We may suppose a higher union between God and the creature, marking it as a second mode of union between the infinite and the finite. The conditions of this union would be

on the part of God the bestowing of a light on the intelligence of the creature so great and overwhelming, and an energy given to the will so powerful and efficacious, as to render impossible all error in the intelligence and all failing in the will, and consequently to prevent all possibility of separation between the creature gifted with such a union and the infinite.

This mode of union was granted to some saints, and, above all, to the incomparable Mother of God, and is called, in theological language, *confirmation* in grace. In these saints sanctifying grace was permanent; their intellect enjoyed such overwhelming divine light as to render impossible the slightest error in their mind; their will was so fortified by the divine power as to exclude the slightest possible deviation from the rule of right, and exclude the most minute and most imperceptible fault or imperfection.

But there is another mode of union—the greatest and the highest possible—and it takes place when God is not only permanently united to the creature by sanctifying grace, and by enlightening the intellect and fortifying the will, so as to exclude all error and imperfections, but when he takes such a hold of the creature, binds it to him in such intimate, close, overwhelming union, that the creature ceases to be its own, loses all ownership of itself, even the responsibility of its acts, and becomes all God's. This is called personal, or hypostatic, union, and takes place when a divine Person takes human nature to himself by a bond so strict and intimate as to leave human nature no personality of its own, but makes it enjoy the divine personality as its own personality, and consequently causes it to lose all ownership of itself and all attribution and solidarity of its actions. This was the union which took place between the Son of God and human nature. The human nature in Christ never had a personality of its own, never existed for a moment with a personality of its own, but the moment it existed it was united to the divine personality



of the Word, and consequently never owned itself, never bore the responsibility of its action. It never was a *man*, but a *Man-God*; and its actions were never human, but human-divine, or *theandric*. In a word, it was the divine person of the Son that concreted, individualized, and personified the human nature of Christ.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Solution of the Difficulty.*

Now, we can easily answer the enquiry, How can Mary be the Mother of God? once we have laid down the doctrine of the personal union between human nature and the second divine Person.

When do we say that a woman conceives, and what is meant by conception? When a certain amount of matter which the female furnishes, aided by male fecundation, is united to a human soul created by God, so as to form one single individuality of the two natures, matter and spirit, and one human person, then we say that a woman has conceived.

This is true in physiology as well as in philosophy. In physiology it is admitted by all modern physiologists that animation takes place at the same moment as the fecundation by the male, when the female is in proper condition to be fecundated. In other words, the matter administered by the female does not begin the process of the formation of a human individual merely by the fecundation of the male, but must at the same time be united to the spiritual principle created by God; so that conception, physiologically speaking, implies three elements—the matter administered by the female in a condition fit for fecundation, the fecundation by the male, and the spiritual principle which is united to that matter at the same moment of the fecundation.

In philosophy, because if conception did not imply these three elements just mentioned—that is, a matter fecundated by the male, and united hypostatically or personally to a spiritual principle—it would follow that a woman would at first conceive nothing but a material thing—an inorganic thing—and that afterwards that inorganic thing would be deprived of its individuality by the union of the spiritual principle, and become a human individuality and a human person. In other words, the term of the conception of a woman would not be a human person, but an inorganic being altogether unfit for any process of organization; whereas in the true philosophical doctrine a woman administers the matter, this matter is fecundated by the male, and at the same immediate instant that matter thus fecundated is united hypostatically to the spiritual principle, and the woman is said to conceive a man—that is, the term of her conception is a human person, and she is called a mother. In the other case, the term of her conception being only an inorganic individuality, she could not in any proper sense be called the mother of a man. This doctrine gives us an insight into the conception of Mary, which is to be understood as follows: The Word of God united that portion of her immaculate flesh which was the substratum of his body to himself with a personal union. Again, he created a human soul, which he destined for himself, and united it personally to his divine person. There were, therefore, body and soul, each united hypostatically to the Word; but not as yet, so to speak, united with each other, and no conception had so far taken place.

The union of the body and soul already united to the Word takes place at length, and Mary conceives. What is the result, the term, the product of her conception? Not a human person, because the body and soul of Christ never had an individuality or subsistence of their own, but were concreted in, individualized by, the *Word*. Then a divine person, because the term, the result of the conception of Mary, was a human

body and a human soul, not subsisting in themselves, but con-  
creted, individualized, personified, so to speak, by the Eternal  
Word. Had the matter which was taken from Mary's spotless  
body been first united to a soul, so as to be a human indi-  
vidual and a human person, Mary would have conceived a  
man, but not God, even if that man had afterwards been  
deprived of his human personality and united to the second  
Person. But such was not the case; the body and soul of  
Christ *were united* hypostatically to the Word *singly* before  
they were united to each other so as to form human nature.  
When they *were* united they formed a human nature, to be  
sure, but concreted and individualized by a divine person.  
Now, the union of soul and body in the womb of the mother  
is called conception. Mary, then, conceived the human nature  
of Christ when his soul and body were united together in her  
immaculate cloister. But this soul and body which were  
united together in Mary, and which formed the human nature  
of Christ, did not subsist in their own individuality, but in that  
of the Word; they were terminated, personified by the Word.  
Therefore Mary conceived the personality of the Word, or, in  
other words, a human nature terminated by the Word, a  
human nature which was God; and therefore she is *truly* and  
*really* and *emphatically* speaking the *Mother of God*.

We wish to remark here that when we say first and after-  
wards, etc., in describing the conception of Mary and the  
genesis of the hypostatic union, we by no means intend to  
imply time or succession, but simply to describe the order of  
ideas and to mark the distinction of moments in that great  
mystery. Thus, when we say that the Word united himself  
hypostatically first to the body and to the soul *singly*, before  
they were united together so as to form a human nature, we  
mean to mark the distinction and the order of moments in the  
action of God; but it is unnecessary for us to remark that they  
took place simultaneously, and without an instant of time or  
succession between them.

We think we have explained how Mary is the Mother of God in manner sufficiently clear to such as are versed in these matters. For the sake of such as are not sufficiently acquainted with these matters we shall try to put our argument in another form.

We start from the principle that a woman is called the mother of a man inasmuch as she conceives him. Now, when can a woman be said to conceive a man? Is it when she ministers the matter out of which the body of man is to be formed? Certainly not, because the matter alone does not form the man. We call, then, a woman a mother when she conceives a human person. And when does she conceive a human person? When a spiritual principle or a human soul is united hypostatically to the matter which the woman furnishes.

A woman, then, is called man's mother because the matter which she furnishes to be fecundated by the male is terminated in a human person by a union with a spiritual principle.

It matters not that a woman who becomes a mother has nothing at all to do with the spiritual principle, which is created immediately by God; it is sufficient that the term, the result of her conception is a human personality, that she may acquire the title and the rights of a mother.

If, therefore, we could suppose a woman blessed among women, from whose spotless flesh the Word should take a portion and unite it hypostatically to himself, and unite that same portion to a human soul also personally wedded to him, and that that union should take place in the womb of the same blessed one, it would follow that such a woman would conceive a body and soul united together by the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, a body and soul united hypostatically to a divine person—to God; that she would conceive a God; and that, therefore, she should have the title and the rights of Mother of God.

It is true she would have nothing to do with the production

of God, which would be an absurdity, but she would have all to do in conceiving a nature united hypostatically to a divine person at the same moment of the conception, and she would be entitled to the name and rights of Mother of God, not by producing God, but by conceiving a nature which is God by *union*—a nature which would not subsist or be concrete and individualized except through that union.

Such was the case in Mary. And we shall give no heed to the objections stated in the beginning of the chapter, as they all vanish when the manner according to which Mary can be the Mother of God is understood.

God, therefore, could establish in his divine plan a mother of the Word incarnate. He could mark down in his design that sublime dignity of a divine maternity. A Mother of God is possible in the same manner as a Man-God is possible, in the same manner as the universe can become infinite—not in the pantheistic sense, not in an ontological sense, but by incorporation. There could be a Mother of God, not in the sense of a creature producing as an efficient cause a God—for God *is*, and cannot be produced—but a creature can be the Mother of God in the sense that she can furnish that amount of matter which every mother furnishes, and that same matter can be joined to a human soul by both being incorporated hypostatically with a divine person.

Having cleared our way, we go deeper into the study of the divine plan, and raise the inquiry now, In what manner was Mary called to be the Mother of God? how was she called to perform her part in the economy of the mystery of the Incarnation and all its consequences?

We shall answer our inquiry in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PASSIVE AND ACTIVE CO-OPERATION.

The very fact that Mary enters into the divine plan as one of its necessary elements shows that her ministry and her co-operation was in some manner or other required. But in what manner? Was she to become Mother of God without being apprised of the mystery intended to be enacted in her womb, and consequently without at all being consulted in the matter? or was she to be the Mother of God with previous knowledge of the divine fact to be accomplished in her, and after her free and voluntary consent thereto?

Absolutely speaking, God was free to choose. In selecting the mother for his Incarnate Son he might have willed that her ministry should be no higher than that of simply furnishing out of her substance that portion which, joined to a human soul, was to be terminated by the second divine Person, without being at all aware of, or being made acquainted with, the destiny or future character or particular nature of her offspring. Just as any human mother knows nothing whatever of the character, disposition, destiny of the child she conceives, so might Mary likewise have conceived Jesus.

God, in this supposition, would also have taken that same substance necessary for the accomplishment of the Incarnation without consulting Mary's will in the least, and without, consequently, any consent or adhesion on her part.

This would be merely a passive co-operation. But God might otherwise have acted. He might have required of the intended mother of his Son not a passive but an active co-operation, the nature of which would be made of these three necessary elements:

- 1st. That previously to the execution and accomplishment of the Incarnation, and consequently previously to her conception, she should have full and ample knowledge of the dignity of her offspring, of his future destiny, and of all his relations with the plan of the universe.
- 2d. That previously to the conception of the God-Man she should be consulted as to her willingness or unwillingness that the mystery should be accomplished in *her*.
- 3d. That she should be consulted as to her willingness or unwillingness that such a mystery should be accomplished at *all*; and, in the supposition of her dissent, that the mystery should *not* be enacted.

God, as we have intimated, might have acted either way, and chosen either the passive or the active co-operation; and we must here investigate which of

them it behoved his infinite wisdom to select, leaving it for another chapter to prove, according to the Scripture and the tradition of the Fathers, which of them he did, in fact, select.

But as the conditions of the active co-operation and its elements may seem astounding, we shall first institute a philosophical inquiry into the possibility of such co-operation in the following articles.

## ARTICLE I.

### *Possibility of Active Co-operation.*

THE reader will have remarked that the first two elements of what we have called active co-operation have reference to Mary as she is individually and personally concerned in the destiny to which she was raised. They imply that, before actually becoming Mother of God, she should be apprised of the mystery intended to be effected in her womb and of the part required of her, and that she should freely consent to play that part.

None can see any repugnance or incongruity in this: that God should give the human personality selected to be the mother of his Son previous knowledge of the intended mystery, and ask her free adhesion to it. On the contrary, whether we regard the circumstances surrounding this mystery or the respect God pays to human personality, we find many reasons of fitness compelling us to admit such a thing.

Mary's conception of the Word was to be accompanied by means of three most extraordinary and most astounding circumstances: 1st. She was to conceive a Man-God. 2d. She was to conceive him without the agency of *man*. 3d. The whole conception was to be the work of the Holy Ghost acting in a most marvellous and wondrous way in her soul. It would, therefore, have been unbecoming—it would have been most startling to Mary—if all these things had been enacted in her without her previous knowledge. "It was befitting," says St. Leo the Great (Serm. i. *de Nativitate*), "that the royal Virgin should conceive the divine-human offspring first in the

mind, and then in the body, lest, ignorant of the divine counsels, she should have been terrified at the unusual effects."

It was befitting, also, that Mary should be apprised of the mystery, and give her free adhesion and consent beforehand, because God always respects, in all his dealings with men, human liberty and human personality, and he would have nothing from man, though his own previous gift, without his free consent.

Finally, the nature of the mystery of the Incarnation requiring on the part of Mary a great personal union with God, and consequently most astounding virtues, it was necessary that before its accomplishment she should be apprised of it and consulted, in order that she might, as far as lay in her power, prepare for such intimate and such marvellous union.

It is evident, therefore, that there can be no difficulty in admitting the possibility of the first two elements of active co-operation.

The third element only causes the difficulty, as it seems repugnant to all our ideas of God and of the creature. It says that before the realization of the mystery of the Incarnation it was necessary to consult Mary as to her willingness or unwillingness that the mystery should take place at *all*; and that, in case of refusal and dissent on her part, the mystery should not be accomplished. It is clear that this last element changes the question altogether. The first two are simply personal matters, as they regard Mary as individually concerned whether previous knowledge and consent was required that the mystery should take place in *her*. Mary might, absolutely speaking, have refused to take part in that mystery—refused to allow it to be accomplished in her womb—and another woman could have been chosen in her stead, and the mystery would have been accomplished all the same, and this other woman would have been the blessed of all generations.

But the third element makes the consent of Mary so necessary that if it had been refused the Incarnation could not have



taken place at all. This would seem to imply that God, in the effectuation of his works, is dependent upon the will of a creature, and that he is no longer the supreme, absolute, independent master of his action. Is such co-operation possible? Is it necessary?

## ARTICLE II.

### *Possibility of the Third Element.*

Every one at all conversant with such matters can see at once that, if this kind of co-operation were taken in an absolute sense, it could not be supposed possible. Who could say, without destroying the absolute, supreme, and independent sovereignty of God over his action and over his creatures, that he could not, in an absolute sense, effect the Incarnation, in itself and in all its relations, without the consent of a creature? This would change natures, and make the creature God and God the creature. In what sense, then, can such co-operation be conceived possible, except in a relative sense—that is, relatively to a decree that God himself has made for reasons well known to, and worthy of, his infinite wisdom?

No creature, then, in an absolute sense, can interfere with the action of God, and no consent is required on the part of any one who is less than God for anything God may choose to do. But God himself may put a limit, if he lists, to his freedom of action; he may himself set to any of his works some conditions depending upon the free-will of a creature—conditions which, if verified, he will do the work; if not fulfilled, he will abstain from effecting.

It is in this sense we understand the possibility of this co-operation. God certainly might have effected the Incarnation without the co-operation of any creature, but he might also have decreed that he would not effect it, except and upon the express condition that the woman whom he would select for the mother of his Son should be fully and amply apprised of the nature of the work in all its relations and effects, and

should thoroughly, so far as a creature may, understand it and see the part she was called to take in it, and after all this be free to give or withhold her consent, and, upon the supposition of a refusal, that the work should not be done at all.

There is no repugnance in this supposition to any of our ideas of God; there is no injury done to any of his attributes, no attempt made against his supreme and independent sovereignty. In the supposition it is God who limits his action; it is he who puts conditions to himself, and who can say that he may not do so consistently with his supremacy?

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Necessity of this Co-operation.*

But is such co-operation necessary? It is, in the same sense. If God had preferred another plan it might not have been necessary; but he having chosen the present plan of the universe, that co-operation becomes necessary as an integral part of it, as an element without which there might be another universe, but not the universe intended by God.

What we may be allowed to do is to inquire into the reasons which may have moved God to adopt such a plan, in order to understand and to admire the wisdom and goodness of God.

But before we proceed upon this investigation we must make one remark, which has its proper place here.

Whosoever was to be elected to the dignity of being the Mother of God would naturally be the *human* head of the race.

The Incarnate Word is naturally the head of the race, but he is the divine head of the race, as he is God. The human head of the race could be no other than a human person, and this would naturally be that grand personality who was to comprehend in herself all the best possible perfections of the race, as he is the head of anything who comprehends in himself all the perfections required for that thing.

## CHAPTER V.

### REASONS FOR SUCH CO-OPERATION.

THE first reason which demands such co-operation is taken from the conduct which the wisdom of God constantly holds in effecting any union with his creatures. As we have elsewhere remarked, there is a necessary union between us and God by the very fact of creation. The creature, by its very essence, is united to the Creator by an absolute necessity of its being; for the creature is necessarily finite and contingent, and therefore, in itself, indifferent to be or not to be, and the only reason of its actual being lies in the immanence of the creative act of God. Should that act cease, that very moment the creature would be deprived of the reason of its being and cease to be. The first and substantial union, therefore, between the creature and the Creator is necessarily established by the very fact of creation and its permanence, and in those creatures who are endowed with reason and free-will it exists independently of any consent or co-operation on their part.

But after this first and substantial union it is the *law* of the wisdom of God not to effect any other union with his rational creatures, except and upon the express condition of their voluntary and free consent.

What is the reason for such a law?

There are many reasons which could account for it, but the principal one originates in the metaphysical nature of union, which is the more excellent and the more perfect in proportion as the parties contracting the union are in the fullest and most untrammelled exercise of their liberty. A union in which one party has no freedom of action, but is constrained to embrace, does not deserve the name of union. This is

especially true when it is question of unequal union—that in which one of the parties communicates and the other receives, in which one condescends and lowers himself by the union and the other is exalted thereby. On the part of the one who communicates himself and his goods the sublimity and the pre-eminent excellence of the communication lies in the delicacy of not forcing that good upon the other, but in respecting his personal independence; and on the part of the inferior the freedom and untrammelled liberty of accepting or rejecting that communication implies the exquisite pleasure and the sense of owing that good in a certain respect to one's self, to a personal act of making it, as it were, its own by the choice, and enhances the gratitude towards the other party.

In one word, the perfect freedom of accepting or rejecting a union of any kind implies, on the part of the superior, the very perfection of communication, as it does not force itself upon the other, but respects its independence, and gives the inferior the choice, as it were, by its own consent, to owe that good to one's self; and on the part of the inferior a proper appreciation not only of the good itself, but of the delicacy with which it was given, and enhances the gratitude. Hence the sublime words of the Scripture describing the general law of the wisdom of God in dealing with his rational creatures: "*Cum magna reverentia disponit nos.*"

Now, the Incarnation is the greatest of all unions, the model union, the union by excellence. It must, consequently, have been effected after the model of all unions between God and the creature—that of the agreement and consent of two wills, the divine and the human. But how has human nature been called upon to consent to the Incarnation, and allow itself to be taken hold of by the Eternal Word? In Christ there is but one person in two natures, the second Person of the Trinity. God alone, therefore, has willed the Incarnation in Christ. This should not be taken in the sense that man is not to be found in Christ. Man is there complete, body and soul.

There was consequently in him a human will as well as all the other faculties of human nature, and hence two wills, as he had two natures—one human, the other divine. But the human nature was not accompanied by a human personality which could exercise it; it was exercised by the only person in Christ, who was the *Word*. This can be easily understood. The will is a general faculty of our nature, which ought not to be confounded with personality, which exercises it. “To will,” says St. John Damascene with great philosophical acumen, “belongs to every man, and is a general faculty of our nature; but to will this or that in one manner or the other is different in every man and belongs to personality.” Now, the Son of God took human will, as it is, a consequence of human nature, like all other properties belonging to the latter, but his divine personality alone could concrete that will and give it determination. His divine personality alone could make that will real and individualize its acts.

This theory explains how, in the act of the Incarnation, the human nature of Christ could not co-operate of itself with that union. It was seized at the very instant of its conception and united to the person of the *Word*. It was never a human person, and therefore it could not elicit a personal act of consent or adhesion.

What! shall this consent, the essential condition of every union, fail in the greatest mystery, such as the Incarnation, in this sovereign union of God with the world, the foundation principle and source of all unions which constitute the universal society of the elect, the corner-stone of the spiritual edifice of all believing intelligences? This would be the absurd conclusion and the monstrous anomaly in the system of those who should refuse to see that this condition of adhesion is admirably obtained by the ministry of the mother of the Incarnate *Word*. In fact, the human personality which we do not find in Christ to contract the union of our nature with his divine person is to be found in his mother, and it is she,

as the human head of the race, who is destined to give in behalf of human nature, in behalf of universal creation, in behalf of the finite, that consent to the union of human nature with the divine Word, of the creature with the Creator.

The Incarnation, says the Angel of the Schools, was a *spiritual bridal* between human nature and the Son of God, and therefore by means of the Annunciation the consent of the Virgin was required in behalf and in lieu of the whole human race: *Ut ostenderetur esse quoddam spirituale matrimonium inter Filium Dei et humanam naturam, et ideo per Annuntiationem expectabatur consensus Virginis loco totius humanæ naturæ* (tertia pars, qu. xxx. art. i.) This consent of the Virgin Mother to the Incarnation, as a representative of the whole human race, was necessary for another reason, arising from the end of the Incarnation and from the law presiding over and governing the actions of God outside himself.

It is the law of the wisdom of God never to do a thing by an extraordinary intervention of his power whenever that same effect can be obtained by the natural development of the forces already existing in creation. The reason for such a law is as simple as it is convincing. To act wisely or as intelligence is to act for a reasonable motive. To act, on the contrary, without a reason or motive is to act without intelligence, and could never be supposed of God, who is intelligence itself. Now, to intervene by an extraordinary display of power, in order to produce an effect which could be obtained with the forces already existing in creation, would be to act without a reason—in fact, against reason, as it would be letting forces and energies go to waste. God, therefore, if he would follow the law of wisdom, cannot intervene by an extraordinary effort of his action to produce an effect otherwise obtainable from the forces already in existence. A necessary consequence of this law is that, if the forces already existing cannot produce the effect except in part, then God's intervention becomes necessary, but no further than is necessary to supply whatever energy

is wanting in the secondary cause to produce the whole effect.

These principles show the necessity of the co-operation of Mary. What was the object of the Incarnation? To enable creatures to render to God a homage of adoration worthy of him. And what was wanted for this? That creation, at the same time that it remained infinitely inferior to God, should be elevated to an equality with him. Short of these two conditions a homage worthy of him could not be rendered to God. It required inferiority on the part of creation, because adoration implies absolute dependence of the adorer upon the adored, which, as a general thing, implies inferiority of nature. It required equality because adoration implies perfect theoretical and practical appreciation of the Infinite.

These two conditions could only be fulfilled by the incorporation of a divine person into creation in this manner: that a divine person should take hold of a representative nature, and keep it substantially whole and entire and distinct from the uncreated nature to maintain its superiority, and to cause this nature without a personality of its own to subsist in the personality of the divine nature, in order that the acts of the inferior nature might have an infinite value and import to answer the condition of equality.

If God wishes to exact from his creation a homage and adoration worthy of him, he must necessarily intervene by an extraordinary display of his power to effect this incorporation, because there was no force in creation capable of effecting any such thing. What could creation do towards uniting the Infinite with the finite in the unity of one divine personality? Wisdom, therefore, demanded that if that end was desired God should interfere by an extraordinary display of his power, but no further than was absolutely necessary to supply what creation could never effect. There was one thing which universal creation could do, and this was to freely and delibe-

rately, with full knowledge of the object to be obtained, offer to God the nature to be used for that work.

In this case, if creation could not give to God a divine person to adore him, it could offer him freely and deliberately that nature which was to be elevated to that dignity, and thus render an infinite homage in an indirect manner.

God could say to creation: "Thou canst not adore me as I deserve, except I incorporate my divine personality in a representative nature, and this work I must myself effect, as there are no forces in nature capable of such effort. But I impart to thee full knowledge of the object for which I want this representative nature, and I put it to thy choice whether thou wilt freely offer me this nature for the object intended, that thou mayest have a share in the work, and be able to say that, if thou couldst not actually render me an infinite homage, thou offeredst me the instrument whereby I received that homage." Creation, after making the choice, could say to God: "It was by thy infinite condescension that I was enabled to adore thee as thou meritest by the act of the human nature of thy divine Son, as elevated and divinized by his infinite person. But it was I who freely offered that nature to be elevated and divinized, knowing full well and gladly approving of the purpose for which it was destined, rejoicing that I could do something toward rendering thee infinite homage, only wishing that I could have done more than merely offer the instrument."

This much creation could do; and if God had omitted to avail himself of so much created agency, if he had rejected that much power, he would have acted against the law of wisdom—he would not have reaped all the good out of created forces, and would have let some of them go to waste.

God is therefore to accept human nature from some representative of the race, in order that it may be united to the Word. And who is to offer this nature, except the natural human head of the race, that grand personality who was chosen to conceive him—the Virgin Mother of Christ?



*Expectabatur consensus Virginis loco totius humanæ naturæ.*

This is also true if we look at the Incarnation, inasmuch as it was modified into redemption by the foreknowledge and decree of the permission of evil.

The redemption of mankind, according to the plan which God chose to follow, was impossible without the existence of a God-Man.

Sin is an infinite offence against God by reason of its attempting to insult an infinite majesty. For every one is aware that the enormity of an offence is to be measured from the dignity of the person against whom the offence is perpetrated, and not from him who commits the offence; whereas honor is measured contrariwise—from the dignity of him who gives the honor, and not from him who receives it.

The grievousness of sin, therefore, having to be measured from the dignity of God, which is outraged, is infinite, in a certain sense, and therefore to be expiated only by a person of infinite dignity—that is, God alone could expiate for sin.

But this redeemer, who was to expiate for sin, was obliged to be a man also, because man had been the offender, and because a divine person could not suffer—a necessary condition for the atonement.

A God-Man, therefore, was necessary to expiate for the sins of mankind. But that was not sufficient: according to the law of wisdom mentioned in our last argument, God was ready to help human nature to that extent as to effect the Incarnation and produce the God-Man; but God required, also, that mankind should do all it could towards its own redemption. It could not give the God who was to divinize the acts of human nature; it could not actually effect the union between human nature and the divine person of the Word, but it could freely and deliberately offer the nature to be united for the express purpose and intent of suffering; and this offering could only be made by means of a representative human person fully

conscious of the necessity of expiation, of the conditions required by it, and of the consequences resulting therefrom.

This representative person could be no other than the human head of the race—Mary: *Expectabatur consensus Virginis loco totius humanæ naturæ.*

All these arguments for the necessity of the consent of Mary for the Incarnation and redemption receive their confirmation from reflecting that the mystery of the redemption must be the counterpart of the mystery of the fall. We shall here give a brief parallelism of the two mysteries, as we shall have occasion in the next article to speak of it again.

In the first place, we find Adam the head of the human race, Jesus Christ the divine head of the regenerated race.

2. God throws Adam into a profound sleep, and, whilst in that sleep, takes a rib from him and forms the woman—she who is of man, and the mother of all the living.

Whilst the second Adam, our Blessed Lord, is in the sleep of death, out of the water and blood which issue from his side, both the emblem of the sacrament of regeneration and of the eucharistic banquet, God, by anticipation of the effects of that blood and water and of that death, forms the second Eve, the first-fruit of the grace of Jesus Christ—Mary, his immaculate Mother—and makes her the mother of the living, the mother of his Church.

3. It was at the foot of a tree that the fall was brought about. It is on the tree of the cross that our redemption is consummated.

4. It is Adam's consent which really and efficaciously causes our fall. But Adam falls at the instigation of the woman.

It is true, also, that Jesus Christ really and efficaciously redeemed us by his obedience, humility, suffering, and death. But this redemption must be brought about by the real, active co-operation and consent of the second woman, the second Eve, the mother of the living.

Finally, the consent of Mary was required in the plan of

God in order to elevate created personality to the highest possible dignity, and thus to fulfil the end which God had proposed to himself in his exterior work.

This purpose was the highest possible communication and manifestation of his infinite excellence to be obtained by the Incarnation, in which mystery God communicated himself in the most profuse and abundant manner possible by taking human nature to be his own nature, to form part of himself, and to be God with him. This most sublime and superabundant communication was at the same time the highest possible manifestation, as God manifests himself in proportion to his communications. But sublime as this communication was, we perceive an element wanting to put the finishing touch, the last perfection, to the excess of that communication. Human personality was not exalted to the highest possible dignity. As we have already remarked, human personality does not exist in Christ and receives no honor from him. There is one person in him, and that is divine. God, in taking up no man, individually speaking, but human nature without individuality of its own, honored all men in general.

Human nature alone, therefore, has been exalted by the Incarnation, and not human personality; and yet it would be a greater outpouring of divine perfection, a greater excess of communication, a sublimer condescension, if God were to take hold of human personality by grace and raise it to such a height and pinnacle of exaltation as to put to its own discretion and to its own choice the fate of the mystery which was to exalt universal creation, humanity, and render to God a worthy homage.

This would be the supreme act of condescension and communication on the part of God, the sublimest elevation of human personality, and consequently the most agreeable with and befitting the end of creation—the utterest outpouring of divine goodness. Human personality could have said in this supposition: The great Creator exalted my nature, to be his

own nature, to be God with him. But, with still greater condescension, still greater excess of outpouring, before effecting this mystery and communication he called me to his council and offered me the honor to be an agent in such grandeur, to be somewhat the cause of my own exaltation, by putting it to my choice to consent to this union or not. He enabled me, by consenting to it through the highest human personality—the human head of the race—to claim the honor of having a share, a part, in that exaltation; to say I owe it to myself. This last honor it behoved God to give his creation, and, therefore, he caused the performance of the mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption to depend upon the consent of one great personality—the chosen Mother of his divine Son, the representative of all created personalities.

Mary, therefore, fulfils the office of creation, and especially of created personality, in its most sovereign act—the act which this personality would have elicited in Jesus Christ, if it had been in him. Human nature, such as it was in Christ, could not give itself, because to give is a personal act, and God wished to carry to its utmost extremity the communication of goodness, that human nature should give itself in order to be made partaker of the responsibility and attribution of the effects of that mysterious union.

The mother of the Incarnate Word gave him this human nature as a representative of all human personalities. Therefore she gave it not only from her virginal womb, but from her heart, her will, in the name of all mankind, in the name of universal creation.

*Expectabatur consensus Virginis loco totius humanæ naturæ.*

## CHAPTER VI.

### PROOFS OF THIS CO-OPERATION OF MARY FROM TRADITION.

THAT the mystery of the Annunciation proves with the greatest evidence that Mary was called to be the mother of God, not as other mothers—who know not the fruit which is conceived in their womb—but as a moral agent, with full knowledge of the nature and character and destiny of her Son, and with perfect liberty to be or not to be his mother, is beyond doubt, else the whole of that mystery means nothing at all.

But we insist that it means more. It means that the whole mystery of the Incarnation, with its purpose and consequences, was put at the choice of Mary; that she was made the arbiter of the execution of that mystery and of its consequences—in one word, that the angel came to ask whether, as the representative of the human race, she would consent to the mystery being accomplished at all or not; and that, if she had withheld her consent, it would not have been effected.

This we intend to prove with the Fathers of the Church in the present chapter. And at the outset we acknowledge that some of the testimonies we shall bring forward do not assert our proposition in so many words—for the Fathers were not writing in a strictly scientific style—but they admit on the part of Mary an activity and an agency so strong, and a causality so marked and so pointed, and attribute to her the effects of the Incarnation and redemption so plainly, that their testimony cannot be taken in any other sense, if we would attach any meaning to it. This remark applies to those Fathers who do not explicitly and directly assert the co-operation of Mary in our own sense in so many words. We shall bring forward

other Fathers, who express it in a language much stronger than we have been able to use.

“He was made man of the Virgin, *that by the same way in which disobedience, which proceeded from the serpent, took its rise it might also receive its destruction.* For Eve, when a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent and brought forth disobedience and death. But Mary the Virgin, receiving faith and joy when the angel Gabriel told her the good news that the Spirit of the Lord should come upon her and the power of the Most High should overshadow her, and, therefore, the Holy One which should be born of her was to be the Son of God, answered, ‘Be it done unto me according to thy word’” (St. Justin, *Dialog. cum Tryph.*)

“As Eve was seduced by the word of the angel to fly from God, having prevaricated as to his word, so this one (Mary) was evangelized by the angelic word to carry God, obedient to his Word; and if that one (Eve) had been disobedient to God, this one (Mary) was persuaded to obey him, in order *that the Virgin Mary might become the advocate of the virgin Eve, and, as through a virgin mankind has been bound to death, it might be saved through a virgin,* the virginal obedience being placed with equal balance against the virginal disobedience” (St. Irenæus, *Contra Hæreses*, l. v. ch. xix.) .

“As she (Eve), having been disobedient, hath become the *cause* of death for herself and all mankind, so Mary, an obedient virgin, having the predestinated man, became the *cause of salvation* for herself and all mankind” (St. Irenæus, *ib.*, lib. iii. ch. xxii.)

“God redeemed his image and likeness, made captive by the devil, by an *emulatory operation.* In the virgin Eve had crept the word which builds up death. In the Virgin Mary was to be introduced the Word, the Builder of life, *that that which had gone to perdition by the means of one sex, by the same sex might be brought to salvation.* Eve believed the serpent, Mary believed Gabriel. What the first gained by her belief the latter gained

by her belief. But Eve conceived nothing, then, by the devil's word—nay, did conceive, because the word of the devil was the cause that she should bring forth in servitude and sorrow; she brought forth a fratricide devil. On the contrary, Mary brought forth Him who was to save his brother in the flesh—Israel, the murderer of himself. God, therefore, sent his Word, a good brother, in the womb, that he might efface the remembrance of the evil brother; for Christ was to come forth for the salvation of men from that through which man, already condemned, had entered" (Tertull., *De Carne Christ.*, ch. xvii.)

"Eve brought the cause of death to mankind, by which death has invaded the whole world. Mary brought forth the Cause of life, by which life has been given to us" (St. Epiphanius, *Ep. contra Anticom.*)

We might multiply the texts of the Fathers indefinitely, but these will suffice.

Several things are evident from the testimonies we have brought forward:

1st. That our salvation should be brought about by the same means by which our ruin was caused. The Fathers take this principle for admitted in texts we have given.

2d. That the means which caused our ruin was Eve, and that the means which is to cause our salvation is Mary, and that, therefore, Mary is the counterpart of Eve.

3d. That our ruin was brought about by unbelief in the word of God and belief in the word of the serpent, by disobedience, and by the conception in the mind of a false word. That our salvation is caused by belief in the word of God, by obedience, and by the conception of the true Word, the personal Word of God.

In one word, that Mary saved us in the same manner as Eve caused our ruin. This is evident from the testimony of the Fathers.

Now, what was the causality of Eve as to our perdition?

Eve was not the principal and efficient cause of our ruin. The principal and efficient cause of our ruin was Adam as the head of the race. If Adam had not sinned, no consequence would have resulted to us from the sin of Eve. Eve's causality, therefore, in our ruin was the causality of an accessory. She suggested it, and suggested it being fully conscious of the sin she was committing, and of its terrible results to herself and all mankind, and being at perfect liberty to avoid it.

It was not Mary, likewise, who was the principal and efficient cause of our salvation. It was Jesus Christ. But Mary was accessory to it, inasmuch as she consented to co-operate herself to the work, being fully aware of the purpose and consequences of the mystery which was to be wrought in her, and at perfect liberty to consent to co-operate in it or not.

To elucidate yet more this point we shall bring a passage of a French author who has written a golden book on the co-operation of Mary, but which, unfortunately, is not well known :

“To complete the idea of what regards the co-operation of the first woman, we add that it was with full knowledge of the cause that she urged Adam to prevaricate, knowing full well that she was prompting him to that which was forbidden, and that such action would cause our ruin. Hence she *willed* our loss—not, in truth, in a direct manner, but in a manner sufficient to say that she willed it. It is what is called in theological language a co-operation not only material but formal. It is easy to conceive, in fact, that she might have engaged Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit without herself knowing that it was forbidden, or without knowing that the effect of such transgression would be the ruin of mankind. In such a case hers would have been a material co-operation, and then we could not attribute to her our loss, because her will would have had no part in it, though her material action had contributed to it. It is precisely because she acted, knowing full well what would be the result of her action, and in willing it



at least indirectly, that the loss and ruin of mankind is attributable to her. It is for that precisely that we can say that she shut heaven's gate against us, and that she drew upon us malediction, and that it is from her as from their first cause that our fall and condemnation originated.

“Behold, then, what is to be said about the original prevarication, of the part which the first woman had in it. The same is to be said of our redemption and of the part which Mary had in it. It is the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ which is the sole true cause, the total cause, the necessary cause, the cause fully sufficient, abundant, and even superabundant, of our justification, sanctification, and salvation. But it is true also that the Holy Virgin did really co-operate in this redemption wrought only by Jesus Christ; and we say this in the same manner, in the same sense, and to the same extent in which we have predicated it of the first woman with regard to the original prevarication and its consequences. Hence, as it is true that the first woman has lost us, caused our death, and drawn upon us the enmity of God, it is true also that the second Eve has saved us, restored us to life, made our reconciliation with God, and reopened for us the gates of Paradise.”

We shall bring now those texts of the Fathers who assert the co-operation of Mary in our own sense, and in language much stronger than we have used:

“Answer thou,” says St. Augustine, “O Sacred Virgin! Why delayest thou life to the world? The angel anxiously requests your *consent*—the reason why he tarries. Thou hast already heard how *this can be done*: that *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee*, in order that thou mayest conceive without losing thy virginity.

“The gate of heaven, once closed through Adam, is already open; through it the messenger has passed. God is at the gate, waiting for the messenger whom thou delayest. O

Blessed Mary! all captive generations request thy consent. *The world hath chosen thee as the hostage and surety of its faith to the Lord* (Te Domino mundus suæ fidei obsidem fecit), beseeching thee to take away the injuries brought on it by its first parents. He who had first been insulted has loosened the bolt which our iniquities had fastened in heaven; there is an entrance for us, if thy *consent* be obtained. And thou, O angel! the messenger of such a great King and the legate of the divine secret, who bringest from the palace of his Imperial Majesty life to the dead and the sacrament of peace to the prisoners, urge the Virgin, who mistrusts not the gift of God, but who is revolving in her mind the magnitude of such grace; favor the cause of the world, thou cognizant of the divine secrets. Thy fellow-angels shall rejoice, if thou advancest the business of the world. The sharp edge of our iniquities has cut us off from your society; through you now is our restoration being treated. Look at the wretchedness of our prison, and hasten to speak to Mary. How long, O Virgin! shalt thou keep the urging messenger? Look at God, on the threshold of heaven, bearing with me! Answer the word, and receive the Son; give thy pledge, and feel the power; open thy rosy bosom, O Perpetual Virgin! *Thy surety now either opens or shuts heaven*—Fides tua modo aut aperit cœlum aut claudit” (St. Aug., sermo cxx., in *Nat. Dom.*)

No comments are necessary on the words of St. Augustine. Our readers will judge by themselves whether they prove our thesis or not. Again :

“O Blessed Mary! all generations beseech your consent. O Mistress! *the world has made thee the surety of its faith.* Tarry not, O Virgin! Speak quickly the word to the messenger, and take the Son; give your surety, and feel the power” (sermo exciv., in *Annunt.*)

“Thou, O Virgin! hast heard of the event; thou hast heard of the manner. Thou hast heard of the event and hast believed; believe also in the manner, as thou hast heard it. The

angel waits for an answer, for it is time that he should return to God who sent him; and we also wait, O Mistress! the word of mercy, who are miserably oppressed by the sentence of damnation. To thee is offered the price of our salvation; we shall be saved at once, if thou consentest. We were all fashioned in the Eternal Word, and, behold, we die; in thy brief answer we shall be remade, that we may be called back again to life. This requests of thee, O merciful Virgin! the weak Adam, with his progeny, exiled from Paradise; the same Abraham and David; the same anxiously request all the holy Fathers, thy ancestors, who dwell in the regions of the shadow of death. The world, prostrate before thee, expects this, and that with reason, as on thee the deliverance of captives and condemned, the salvation of all the children of Adam, depend. O Mistress! answer the word which is expected by heaven, earth, and hell. The King and Lord of all things, inasmuch as he has yearned after thy comeliness, insomuch does he desire the *consent* of your answer, in *which he has proposed to save the world*" (St. Bern., hom. iv., in *Lucam.*)

Finally, omitting other testimonies, we shall recall again the words of St. Thomas which recapitulate all the traditions of the Fathers: "*Expectabatur consensus Virginis loco totius humanæ naturæ*"—words which chime in with those beautiful ones of St. Augustine just quoted: "*Te Domino mundus suæ fidei obsidem fecit.*"

## CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THIS CONSENT OF MARY IMPLIED, OR EXTENT OF ITS OBJECT—MARY THE CORREDEMPTRIX.

WE have so far been unable to point out the extent or comprehensiveness of Mary's consent. Occupied in defending its necessity, we have thought proper to leave the explanation of its extent to another chapter. This is the proper place to enter upon the subject.

The Virgin, on the day of the Annunciation, in giving her consent to the Incarnation and redemption, not only agreed to become the Mother of Jesus Christ the *Redeemer*, and consequently, as a representative of the whole human race, to administer to him his human nature, to be offered and immolated for man's redemption, but also to become a *co-sufferer* with him ; so that Mary's compassion was to accompany, to go hand in hand with, Christ's Passion, both being necessary for the redemption of mankind, according to the plan selected by God's wisdom.

Therefore Mary's consent implied two things :

1st. As a representative of the whole human race, as the hostage and surety of mankind, as St. Augustine calls her, she consented to administer to the divine Word his human nature, which he was to immolate for man.

2d. She consented to undergo all the anguish and sorrow and martyrdom consequent upon her from the sacrifice and immolation of her divine Son, to join her *compassion* to his *Passion*, in order to redeem mankind. In one word, she consented to become the corredeptrix of the human race.

All this is implied in her consent, and was necessary as that consent itself.

Father Faber, who has written the best book on Mary's sorrows, has not done justice to the subject we have in hand, and we must be permitted, to the honor and glory of Mary, and yet more to the honor and glory of truth, to examine his theory about this privilege of Mary of being the corredemptrix of mankind. Speaking of this privilege attributed to Mary by the Fathers and doctors of the Church, he says: "On the one hand, it seems rash to assert of a language used both by saints and doctors that it is only exaggeration and hyperbole—flowery phraseology intended to startle, but without any real meaning hidden beneath it. On the other hand, who can doubt that our most Blessed Lord is the sole Redeemer of the world, his precious blood the sole ransom from sin, and that Mary herself, though in a different way, needed redemption as much as we do, and received it in a more copious manner, and after a more magnificent kind, in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception? Thus, so far as the literal meaning of the word is concerned, it would appear that the term co-redemptrix is not theologically true, or, at least, does not express the truth it certainly contains with theological accuracy. We are distracted between the desire to magnify our Blessed Mother, the authority of the saints and doctors, and the supremely sovereign requirements of sound theology. We certainly shrink from asserting that the language of the saints has no meaning or is inadvisable; and at the same time we have no doubt that Our Blessed Lady is not the co-redemptrix of the world in the strict sense of being redemptrix, in the unshared sense in which our Lord is Redeemer of the world, but she is co-redemptrix in the accurate sense of that compound word." \*

This substitution of the word co-redemptrix to the ancient word corredemptrix proceeds, if we mistake not, from fear of falling into error, or rather from an incomplete notion of the offices of Mary with regard to redemption. The saints and

\* *The Foot of the Cross*, ch. ix.

doctors by that word never meant to affirm that Mary had redeemed the world, expiated for sin, and merited the salvation of souls, or helped or enhanced in any manner whatever the superabundant merit of the Passion. They always professed that Christ is our only Redeemer, and that his blood was the only valid price for our salvation. This must suffice both to prevent the calumnies of Protestants on the co-operation of Mary in the redemption, and to quiet the fear of certain Catholics, which prevents them from giving the word *corredemptrix* a literal sense.

The saints and doctors coined that word—surprising, indeed, but not hazardous, as Father Faber seems to look upon it—in order to express the economy of the atonement. Nor, indeed, in the patristic thought, was that title of *corredemptrix* applied to the Virgin to declare her co-operatrix above all saints, who, having become Christ's members by means of redeeming grace, may co-operate in the continuation and application of redemption already accomplished. The Fathers saw in Mary's co-operation an element become indispensable after the decree of God for the accomplishment of our ransom.

Did they place that co-operation in the virginal consent necessary for the effecting of the Incarnation, or in the administering of the flesh and blood to the Word that he might fulfil the offices of a Redeemer? This would only be a remote co-operation, a mediate intervention, a necessary consequence of the divine motherhood. But the Father intended to establish a *direct* influence, an *immediate* co-operation, a *co-efficiency* remotely based upon her maternity, and hence upon the individual consent by which she selected the work, but emerging more proximately from the *compassion*, or sorrows; and not even from these inasmuch as they flow from the maternity by way of necessary consequence, or inasmuch as they are woven with the sufferings of Jesus, or because Mary's compassion was contemporaneous with the Passion, or because they enhanced the Passion itself, or because Mary's compassion was a mag-

nificent example to the whole Church—all suppositions of F. Faber to explain the title of corredemptrix. All this does not express the whole thought of the Fathers, nor complete the idea of a corredemptrix; and Father Faber is aware of it himself, and therefore concludes as follows: “ Her dolors were not necessary for the redemption of the world, but, in the counsels of God, they were inseparable from it. They belong to the integrity of the divine plan, and they doubtless perform many functions in it which we are unable to apprehend, and which perhaps we do not as much as suspect. According to God’s ordinance, without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. One of our Lord’s infantine tears had enough in it of worth, of humiliation, of merit, and of satisfaction to redeem the sins of all possible worlds. Yet, as a matter of fact, we were not redeemed by his tears, but only by his blood. Hence Bethlehem was not necessary for our salvation, nor the worship of the three kings, nor the presentation in the Temple, nor the flight into Egypt, nor the disputing with the doctors. Nazareth was not necessary for our salvation, with all the beautiful mysteries of those eighteen years of hidden life. The public ministry, with its three years of miracles, parables, sermons, conversions, and vocations of apostles, was not necessary to our salvation. Indeed, our Lord might have suffered as a child, or he might have come full-grown like Adam, and simply suffered death at once. His blood was all that was absolutely necessary. But Bethlehem and Nazareth and Galilee belonged to the integrity of the divine plan. They were not only congruous, and beautiful, and significant, and full of teaching, but there are deeper mysteries in them, and a diviner reality, simply because God planned it so. All his works partake, in their degree, of his perfections. In what degree, then, must the mysteries of the thirty-three years partake of his perfections? The creation of the world was as nothing compared to the spiritual cosmogony of those thirty-three years, except that it was the root of them. No one would dream of thinking

lightly of the mysteries of our Blessed Lord's sacred infancy because we were not redeemed by them. They are a part of a whole, a divine whole. We do not know what would have happened, or what we should have lost, and what eternal consequences might have come, if they had not been there. So it is with Our Lady's dolors. Her maternity was indispensable to the Passion. Her dolors do not appear to be so; but they were an inevitable consequence of her maternity under the circumstances of the fall. They take their place among the Gospel mysteries."\*

The theory of Father Faber, therefore, is that Mary's dolors were the unnecessary sufferings of the Passion, as all those mysteries of our Lord which were not absolutely necessary for our redemption are also the unnecessary sufferings of the Passion. Here are the words: "They belong to a class of what we call the unnecessary sufferings of the Passion. Indeed, they were literally our Lord's unnecessary sufferings. . . . Her co-operation with the Passion by means of her dolors is wanting, certainly, in that indispensable necessity which characterizes the co-operation of her maternity."

All this passage of our saintly author proves that he had an incomplete idea of the office of Mary as to redemption—an office which he involves in the obscurity of the mystery, even to the exclusion of any possibility to imagine them. He distinguishes in the Passion the necessary from the unnecessary sufferings; grants to the first the expiative efficacy and virtue, and denies it of the latter; and limits the first to the shedding of blood, and extends the quality of unnecessary to all the rest of Jesus' mysteries.

Now, we object to this doctrine as being theologically inaccurate, to say the least. When we speak of the Incarnation we must exclude all absolute necessity, even with regard to human redemption, because God could save his creatures in a thousand different ways. "Deus," says St. Thomas, "per suam

\* *Ibidem.*



omnipotentem virtutem poterat humanam naturam multis aliis modis reparare."\* From this point of view nothing is necessary, neither the shedding of blood nor any other mystery of our Lord's private or public life, and all necessity either of the Passion or of the compassion disappears.

The Incarnation and the bloody sacrifice of the Victim cannot be necessary, except conditionally, in virtue and in consequence of a decree and a plan; and hence also the compassion, which holds, as regards the Passion, the nature of an effect. The divine plan once supposed, before introducing any distinction between necessary and unnecessary sufferings we must solve the following problems: Does redemption express such an economy and dispensation that the various states of the divine Victim constitute, along with the shedding of blood, a single sacrifice?

Is the merit of each of the mysteries of Christ's life accumulated with the merit of the shedding of blood in such a manner that both, in their union and accumulation, form the adequate and superabundant price of our ransom, or does the one remain separated from both?

The life of Jesus, in our opinion, is organic, a mysterious and divine whole resulting from the union of the various parts, some of which occupy the first place, some the second, and others the last in reason of order and time, all, however, united together, being absorbed in the unity of the end. The Passion of Christ must be considered as a variety of sorrows co-ordained by the unity of the sacrifice, the beginning of which was the maternal womb in which the Incarnate Word placed himself in the state of a victim, and the termination Calvary, where the grand holocaust was consummated. Who would dare to assert that the Redeemer must be recognized only on Calvary, and upon the cross, and not in the mother's womb, in the crib, in the presentation, in the flight, in the return, in the hidden life, and in the public preaching? Were

\* 2 T. p. q. i. art. ii.

not all these different states a real Passion? Did they not carry along the sorrows which the Incarnate Word suffered in his sacred humanity? Assuredly in the maternal womb he had his sorrows, his sorrows in the manger, in the exile, and in all his life till the last hour. All was Calvary in Christ's life, because there was nothing in it which had not its pain, and because all tended to Calvary. The way to arrive at it was long; it took thirty-three years to run it, but every sigh and every breath was a step towards it. Jesus, from his conception till the yielding of his soul in the hands of the Father, never came out of the state of victim, officiated always in that character, most anxiously waiting the baptism of blood to which tended all successive sufferings. St. Thomas defends these two propositions, that redemption was accomplished by way of sacrifice, and that Christ underwent all sufferings, not in particular, but generically; and to demonstrate this second proposition he sums up the whole life of our Redeemer, which begins from the least to the greatest pain of the cross. Thus he co-ordains the thirty-three years of Jesus' life. Therefore the distinction between the necessary and the unnecessary mysteries has no existence, because the supreme law of God's economy in the Passion is this: everything in it is necessary; you cannot touch one part or vary its location without deranging the whole. Therefore Bethlehem is necessary to our salvation, as the adoration of the wise men, as the presentation in the Temple, as the flight into Egypt, as the dispute with the doctors. Nazareth was necessary to our salvation, with the sublime mysteries of the eighteen years of hidden life. The ministry of Jesus, with his three years of miracles, of vocations of the apostles, was necessary to our salvation, because they enter in God's plan; and Jesus could not die as a child, or become old as Adam, or be subject to die at once, because all this would have been in opposition to the plan.

To this theory might be objected that if all the mysteries of our Lord's life were necessary in consequence of the plan of

God, then there is no more superabundance of merit flowing from those mysteries which might be called unnecessary. In answer to this objection we observe that the superabundance of merit does not originate in the number of meritorious acts, or in the merit of mysteries unnecessary for our redemption, but takes its rise in the *infinity* of the merit. One pang of our Lord's sacred heart would have been sufficient to redeem all possible worlds and still leave superabundance of merit. Hence there is superabundance of merit in any case, because of its infinity.

The necessity, therefore, of all the mysteries of our Lord's life, Passion, and death arises from the plan of God, and not because necessary to obtain more merit.

So much in answer to the first problem.

As to the second, its solution cannot be different, because if Christ's life is organic and governed by a design, organic also and cumulative must be the merit; if the various sufferings are gathered in the unity of the sacrifice, the various merits to be acquired are gathered in the same unity. St. Thomas teaches that our Lord merited the salvation of all men from the first instant of his conception: *Christus a principio suæ conceptionis meruit nobis salutem æternam*. St. Bonaventura excludes from Christ the progress of merit as to its efficacy, and admits it as to number.

Nevertheless, the heavens were not opened except by the blood shed on the cross; in this all doctors agree. How, then, to reconcile these two truths, which seem to collide: that Christ merited men's salvation by the first of his meritorious actions, and that, notwithstanding, heaven was not opened to them except by the shedding of blood? The divine plan removes the apparent contradiction. As the conception was subordinate to the death, so the first merit was subordinate to the last; every single merit was of itself sufficient to save a thousand worlds, but, according to the divine plan, the supreme merit of immolation was required actually to bring it about.

The redemption was to be an accumulation of merits, each one infinite, united in the bloody sacrifice, the supreme merit.

Let us, then, draw our consequences. In the redemption, therefore, concurred, in their proper manner and order, with their own particular merit, the conception, the birth, the tears, the public offering, the flight, and all that makes up the thirty-three years of the life of our Lord, one pain being connected with the other, and all ending in the sacrifice. .

We must remark here also that this distinction of necessary and unnecessary sufferings brought forward by Father Faber has no foundation in tradition, the Fathers of the Church being unanimous in holding that our Lord became high-priest from the moment of his conception, and exercised the functions of that office from that same time, and that the Incarnation is to be regarded as a perennial sacrifice, and consequently all the mysteries and actions and sufferings of his life are to be looked upon as tending to, and being subordinate with, his death, the consummation of that sacrifice. We refer our readers, in proof of our assertion, to the work of Thomassinus, *Dogmata Theologica de Incarnatione Verbi*, l. x. ch. viii. ix.

## ARTICLE II.

### *The Application to Mary.*

Upon this theory of necessary and unnecessary mysteries in the life of our Lord Father Faber explains Mary's compassion, and ranks it among the unnecessary sufferings of the Passion. But we have proved that in the Passion of our Lord there are no unnecessary sufferings, but that every one of them is necessary. We must conclude, therefore, that either Mary's compassion forms a necessary part of those sufferings, or that it stands alone and solitary, and has no connection whatsoever with the divine plan, and is a perfect stranger to it, and an anomaly. Now, such supposition would be absurd; we must therefore rank it among the necessary elements of the redemption.

We proceed now to investigate the reason why Mary's compassion forms a necessary element of the redemption. We have already sufficiently pointed it out when proving the necessity of Mary's consent to the Incarnation and redemption, but it is well to put it here in its best, clearest, and strongest light, as upon it depends that magnificent privilege of Mary—that of being the *corredemptrix*.

We undertake to answer the following question: Has God, in his infinite wisdom and power, in the redemption of the world, undertaken to do all himself, without making use of any human agency, or has he called in human agency, in order that it might do what it could towards its own salvation?

We answer that God not only has chosen the second alternative as a matter of fact, but he could not choose any other, supposing his decree of not wishing to save human nature except by a satisfaction.

We have to prove both assertions; and, as to the first, that God has chosen to allow human agency to do what it could toward its own salvation is evident from the fact of the Word of God being united to human nature, in order that it might suffer for its own salvation.

The Fathers take this view of the subject. We shall mention a few testimonies:

“You have learned, then, why he offered the sacrifice from *our own*. For what was the cause of the Incarnation, except that the flesh, which had sinned, might be redeemed through itself?” (St. Ambrose, *De Incarn.*, c. vi.)

“It was necessary that he, as priest, should offer for us what he had received from us; because, if he had not received from Mary the flesh, he would not have received from us what he offered” (Ferrandus Diaconus, *Epist. ad Anatolium*).

“He took from thee that in which he might die for thee,” says St. Augustine (Ps. lxx.); and, in another place: “What did the Lord receive from thee? The flesh. What is he himself? The Word of God, who was all things, by whom all

things were made. But that he might take something from thee, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us. He took from thee what he was to offer for thee, in the same manner that the priest receives from thee what he may offer for thee when thou wouldst propitiate God for thy sins. This was accomplished in the same manner; our Priest received from us what he would offer for us. He received from us the flesh, and in that flesh was made a victim, a holocaust, a sacrifice. In the Passion the sacrifice was accomplished; in the Resurrection he renovated that which had been slain, and offered it to God as thy own firstlings, and said to thee: 'All thy things have been consecrated when these thy own firstlings were given to God. Hope, therefore, that it will happen to thee in future what has preceded in thy firstlings'" (in Ps. cxxvii.)

It is evident that the Fathers look upon the taking of human nature by the Word, in order to satisfy for our sins, as a proof that God wanted human nature to do all it could towards its own redemption; for they do not regard the taking of human nature simply as such, but all the acts and sufferings of that nature—a thought which is expressed so forcibly by St. Ambrose in the words quoted: "That the flesh, which had sinned, might be redeemed through itself."

As regards the second proposition, it is an evident principle of wisdom never to do by a greater number of forces what can be effected by a less number; because, as it is clear, in such case there would be a waste of force.

Acting upon this principle in the economy of our redemption, God determined to give mankind all that help which was absolutely necessary for its atonement, and which no possible effort on the part of mankind could have supplied; but, beyond that, God exacted from humanity all that it could do and suffer for the satisfaction of sin and for the reparation of the injuries offered to his infinite majesty. For instance, it is evident that to satisfy the infinite justice of God a reparation was required

of infinite value, as the offence was directed against the majesty of an infinite person. No possible effort of humanity could supply this infinite value. Consequently, if this reparation must be brought about, it is necessary that God should supply this want, and hence he sent his only-begotten Son to assume human nature in the unity of his infinite personality, in order that he might give infinite value to all the acts of that nature done in reparation for sin. But beyond that God would not and could not go, in consequence of the requirements of his wisdom.

What we have said of wisdom must be said of justice also. It is agreed by all that God dealt with mankind in respect to its redemption according to the laws of strict justice. Of course absolute, strict justice required an infinite satisfaction; and humanity could not give that. God supplies that himself, but, beyond that, God exacts from humanity all that it can do towards its own redemption.

We believed that this thought was our own, but we find, to our great satisfaction, that we have been forestalled by St. Ambrose, who lays down this principle almost in as many words :

“ He received from us what, made his own, he offered for us that he might redeem us from our own; and what was not our own (what we could not give) he bestowed upon us from his own in force of his divine liberality. He offered himself, then, under our own nature, that he might act beyond and above our nature. The sacrifice was from our own; the merit from his” (*De Incarn.*, c. vi.)

The consequences of this principle are of the utmost importance, and we shall deduce them one by one :

1st. It follows from that principle that our Lord's humanity was to suffer as much as, in view of God's infinite wisdom and justice, would bear a kind of proportion to the offence and realize the principle that human nature was to do as much as possible towards its own redemption. Hence St. Thomas proves

that the sufferings of our Lord were the greatest possible in intensity and the greatest possible in number, generically considered.

The failing to perceive this principle and its consequence led Father Faber to imagine that distinction of necessary and unnecessary sufferings in the life of our Lord. All the mysteries and sufferings recorded of him were necessary, because, in God's sight, they were what his human nature could do towards human redemption.

2d. Consequently, human nature was required to do more than merely suffer in Christ. It was required to deliberately and willingly offer up that human nature to be united to the Word of God for the purpose of redemption, by means of a representative of the whole human race.

This explains, as we have seen already in a former chapter, the necessity of the consent of Mary to the Incarnation and redemption.. This consent to offer freely and willingly the human nature to be immolated was necessary in order to call into action human personality, as we shall explain in the next.

3d. Consequently, it was necessary that the highest representative of human personality, the human head of the race, should be subject also to the highest possible martyrdom which a human person may be subject to, as a reparation coming from a human personality, and unite it with the sufferings of the humanity of the Word, and thus bring its own meed of suffering required by God's wisdom for our ransom.

This was necessary, because in our Lord humanity suffered as a nature, not as a personality, as it is of faith that in him there was no human personality, but that his human nature subsisted in the personality of the Word of God.

It was necessary, therefore, that a human personality, the representative of all human personalities, should not only offer and administer to the Word his human nature in view of the redemption, but should actually share in the sufferings of that nature for the same object.



This explains the title of Mary of corredemptrix of the human race. Admitting once the principle that what must give an infinite value to any act of humanity must come from the person of the Word, and that, with regard to the rest, humanity, in its nature and personality, must do all it can towards its redemption, in the proportion which it seems fit to God's wisdom and justice, and which, of course, human reason cannot determine, it follows that to the human nature, as united to the Word in the unity of his divine person, is given the office to suffer the greatest possible sufferings in intensity and in extension, and actually and truly and efficaciously redeem the human race; to human personality, in its highest representative, is given to offer and administer that nature for the object intended, and to suffer along with it as much as a human personality can, in the proportion which seems fit to God's wisdom. This human personality is not, therefore, called in arbitrarily and without reason, but it is called in consequence of the principle that human nature, in itself and in its personality, must do all it can towards its own redemption.

Mary's compassion, therefore, is a necessary element of the redemption, and Mary is really and truly the corredemptrix of the human race. Father Faber failed to apprehend the principle guiding the economy of redemption, and he is, therefore, at a loss how to explain Mary's grand and magnificent privilege vindicated to her by all the Fathers.

The same author has no hesitation in admitting the necessity of Mary's consent, but fails to see that the privilege we are vindicating for her, and in the sense we claim it, was included in that consent as in its root and principle; that, in fact, the sacrifice began as soon as it was given—that is, with the conception of Jesus, immediately following Mary's fiat. For the Incarnation, according to the doctrine of the Fathers, is a perpetual sacrifice which began in the womb of Mary from the moment of Christ's conception, and never ceased even for a moment.

**JESUITS**

*Upper Canada Province*

We shall recall in a few words some of the arguments of the Fathers proving this truth. And, first, it is clear, from the fact that by the Incarnation, which implies the union between the human and divine nature in the unity of one person, humanity is no longer its own, that it has lost its ownership and passed into the possession of the Word. Now, this is a most splendid kind of sacrifice, a most absolute immolation of one's self, no longer to own itself, to divest one's self of all possession, to abdicate one's self, to be taken by, and absorbed, so to speak, in, the Godhead in an omnipotent manner; and such was the force and law of this mystery that humanity was filled, inebriated with the Divinity, which invaded it and penetrated it through and through in such a manner that humanity thus immersed was absorbed by the Divinity, as the ocean drinks in a drop of vinegar poured into it, and the latter alone reigned and dominated, as if humanity had been devoured. What better kind of sacrifice could be found?

Secondly, as St. Gregory of Nyssa remarks, Christ was not born to life but to death. For the Word of God was overflowing with infinite life, being the plenitude of being, the eternal and intelligible life of the universe. He was not, therefore, in need of life but of *death*, and to beg it he was conceived and born a man. The Incarnation, therefore, is not the taking up of human life, but the assumption of mortality and death, and, consequently, the beginning, the principle, the source of the sacrifice consummated on Calvary.

Mary, therefore, in uttering that magnificent fiat of hers, knew full well that she was preparing the sacrifice, as she was going to conceive the Victim; and as the sacrifice of that Victim was to her a sword of sorrow which penetrated the very marrow of her bones, she was, at the very moment that she gave her consent, the *corredemptrix*, the companion, the associate of the Victim, the co-sufferer with her Son for the redemption of mankind.

And what she began in Nazareth she continued throughout

the life of our Lord, and ratified and consummated upon Calvary. The whole life of our Lord is an assemblage of mysteries and sufferings, all subordinate and tending to the sacrifice, all receiving organism and unity by the sacrifice of the cross, and each one of them necessary as a part of the whole. The life of Mary was likewise an assemblage of sufferings beginning from her fiat, and continuing and progressing, and receiving their utmost perfection when she stood at the foot of the cross. He was the Redeemer in all his life; she, in all her life, was the *corredemptrix*.

In one word, all the sufferings of Jesus were necessary, because, in God's wisdom, so much was required from human nature, as such, for its redemption.

All the sufferings of Mary were necessary, because so much was required from human personality, as such, and as representative of all human personalities. Yet Christ alone redeemed us truly, really, and efficaciously, because he alone could give infinite value to those sufferings, and therefore is he the only Redeemer. Mary is the *corredemptrix*, but only in the sense just explained. Those who are afraid to think Mary's sufferings necessary for our redemption are thinking only of the infinite value required for our sacrifice. Mary has nothing to do with that. In speaking of her co-operation we limit ourselves to speaking of what was required from human nature and human personality as their mite toward redemption, independent of the infinite worth to be given only by Christ's infinite personality.



## BOOK SECOND.

### *GRANDEUR OF MARY'S DESTINY.*

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Having in the preceding book considered the place which Mary holds in the plan of the universe, or the destiny set apart for her in the plan of God from all eternity, we proceed in this second book to the task of setting forth the intrinsic grandeur, the inherent sublimity, and magnificence of such destiny.

And as this lies in a twofold dignity—that of being the mother of God, and the other of being the representative of the human race, in consenting to the effecting of the mysteries of the incarnation and redemption—we shall take up both dignities apart, and consider them separately in the following chapters.



## CHAPTER I.

### GRANDEUR OF THE DIVINE MOTHERHOOD.

The better to explain all the grandeur of the divine maternity in all its fulness and extent, we shall divide this chapter into two articles ; the first shall treat of this dignity in relation to the perfections of God, the second shall consider it in itself.

#### ARTICLE I.

*Grandeur of the Divine Maternity, considered in relation to God's Perfections.*

WE remark in the outset, and to avoid any danger of misapprehension of our meaning, that whenever we speak of this dignity as showing forth the attributes and perfections of God above any other work or dignity, we always intend to exclude from the comparison the mystery of the Incarnation, this being strictly and solely the chiefest and best of God's works outside himself.

This dignity of the divine motherhood is a work of such grandeur and such magnificence, a work of such exalted character, as to limit God's omnipotence, in the sense that God cannot, with all his omnipotence, effect a greater dignity than this.

The omnipotence of God is so called because it has no limits or bounds in the regions of possibility. Nothing can limit it except that which cannot be conceived possible—that is, a thing the elements of which would clash with and exclude each other. This is the only limit which restrains the omnipotence of God. St. Thomas gives a beautiful reason for such a limit, thus : That thing the elements of which would exclude each other would end in nothing, because elements clashing with

each other and diametrically opposed to each other could not cohere together, and could not possibly result in anything. Now, the omnipotence of God is infinite power and energy; if it could, therefore, effect an impossibility, it would terminate and result in a nullity, a mere nothing, which is absurd.

Yet the same St. Thomas affirms clearly and distinctly that the dignity of the divine motherhood puts a limit to the omnipotence of God. The Blessed Virgin, he says, from the fact of her being the Mother of God, is possessed of a certain infinite dignity from the infinite goodness, which is God; and in that respect nothing greater can be made, as nothing can be conceived greater than God. In other words, to understand this dignity we must look at the term of the operation of Mary. In what does this operation terminate, and what is its result? A divine person. Not a man or an angel, not even a person who should comprehend or be supposed to contain in himself all the perfections of men and angels, myriads of millions as there exist, but simply the only-begotten of the Father, the impression of his infinite substance, the brightness of his infinite glory—a very God. It is evident, therefore, that a dignity the operation of which ends and terminates in such personality must necessarily limit the omnipotence of God, because it were a contradiction for God even to attempt to effect a greater dignity, as it would be to attempt to effect a person greater than God. Hence the saying of some of the Fathers of the Church, that, next to the three divine Persons, the greatest and the sublimest personality, that which towers above all created personalities and is placed immensely higher than all, is Mary, because she is possessed of a dignity which is the end, the limit, of the omnipotence of the Most High—a dignity after having effected which the infinite energy of God must rest, with sweeter and more tender satisfaction and delight than he felt, so to speak, after the toil of the six days of creation; for he could create thousands and tens of thousands of millions of worlds greater and better and adorned



with more magnificence and beauty than the present creation, but he could not create a woman better, greater, more sublime, more divinely attractive, more exquisitely captivating, more majestic, and infusing more awe and wonder and amazement than the divine Mother of his Son. The Scriptures clearly point out this. When the Psalmist wishes to describe the creation of God, though he can fully appreciate the sublime magnificence of that work, yet is he forced by the truth to exclaim: "I will behold the heavens, the work of thy fingers," as if the realms of grandeur and beauty which roll above us were the play and the sport of the fingers of the Most High. But when Mary, the lineal descendant of the same Psalmist, who had inherited in an infinitely greater degree the prophetic spirit and the poetical genius of her sire, had to express the work which God had wrought in her, she was obliged to say that God, in the effectuation of that work, had concentrated all the power of his infinite arm: *Fecit potentiam in brachio suo.*

Wonderful masterpiece of God's omnipotence! That omnipotence which has no bounds, which can do all things, is exhausted in one great, magnificent creature, who can be styled the limit of the power of the Most High; and it would seem that God, speaking to his omnipotence as of old he spake to the sea, Thou shalt come so far and no farther, had said, Thou shalt concentrate all thy infinite energy into one grand, supreme effort in effecting a Mother for my only-begotten and beloved Son, and she shall be an expression so magnificent, so sublime, so utterly exhaustive of thy energy as to bear on her forehead the stamp and the character of that effort, and be called, and be in effect, the limit of infinite power.

Nor is the infinite wisdom of God less displayed in this wonderful limit of his omnipotence. God, who was free to create or not to create, had, in his infinite mercy, determined that the creation which he freely chose to effect should be raised to as strictly an infinite dignity as it was possible, in

order that it might portray and show forth in the best possible manner its infinite type and original, which is his divine essence. This he did to a certain extent, causing his divine Son to be incorporated with his creation in the unity of subsistence, thus raising all created elements to be God and infinite in the person of Jesus Christ.

But though created natures had been elevated to be God in Christ in consequence of the personal union; though even created operation had been elevated to an infinite value and excellence—because the actions of Christ, emanating from his human nature, though finite in their nature, yet in consequence of that same personal union, and because they were the actions of such a person, and that person was God, did not take their value from the nature from which they radically sprang, but from the dignity of the personality to whom they belonged, and were consequently an infinite price—yet creation had not been elevated to as infinite a dignity as it was possible to conceive. There was another dignity to which it could be raised, and it was that creation should be raised to the level of the internal operation of God, and should resemble and imitate his interior life.

The grandeur of the internal operation of the Godhead—that which will be the contemplation and the bliss of men and angels for all eternity—is that the internal operation of the Godhead produces and effects a divine person. Could this transcendental gift be bestowed on creation? Could a created personality be enabled to have for a term and result of his operation a divine personality, and in what manner?

How to enable this human operation to have for its term a divine personality was the problem which divine wisdom undertook to resolve, and after that it rested, as having made its greatest and its utterest effort. This could not be done by supposing a human person to effect substantially a divine personality, as it would involve a contradiction, inasmuch as the effect in this case would be infinitely greater and superior to

the cause; or, in other words, the effect would require infinitely greater intensity of action than the cause would be possessed of. God's wisdom resolved the problem by creating the divine maternity.

What does this imply? It implies that a human person conceives, with full consciousness and deliberation, that which is God by an infinite union, which almighty power effects at the same instant in which that human person administers that element which a mother must naturally furnish when she is said to conceive; so that the result of her conception is not a human body, it is not a human being, but a God-Man, a divine personality, and consequently her human operation results in the production of a divine personality in the sense already explained, and acquires, as much as it was possible, the dignity of the interior operation of the Godhead.

In Mary, then, the human act arrives at the highest possible dignity—at the dignity of the internal operation of God—terminating, as the latter, in a divine personality, with this distinction: that the internal operation of God gives effectual origin to the personality, whereas the human operation results in divine personality, not by an actual and effectual production, but by union. Mary, therefore, exhibits in her sublime dignity of Mother of God the solution of the greatest problem raised by divine wisdom, and satisfies the yearning of the creative act to raise created operation to the highest possible dignity—that of imitating as much as possible the internal genesis of the life of the Godhead.

This divine motherhood puts also a limit to the goodness of God in giving it the highest and the sublimest manifestation. It is the essence of goodness to diffuse itself, to pour itself out; and the more it yields itself, the better and the stronger does it manifest itself, and acts according to its essence. It is, therefore, in the essence of infinite goodness to give itself in an infinite manner. One should suppose that, divine goodness having poured itself out in the highest and utterest possi-

ble manner by effecting the Incarnation, there any other manifestation would cease, and that any further display, any utterer outlet of its caresses, would be impossible. But there was another outpouring of such goodness yet possible. This was to give to a creature this very power of communication, absolutely and strictly, in its highest possible sense of outpouring. Let us explain. Everything which God does proceeds from his goodness; creation, sanctification, glorification, Incarnation—all have their reason for existence in the goodness of God. For if one asks why did God create or bestow his grace or bliss or unite his divine Son to human nature, the final reason is and must be the goodness of God, because it is goodness, and, as such, naturally and essentially prone to give itself out. But these are not the best and highest acts of goodness. There is absolutely a higher one, and that is that goodness is the reason of the generation of the Son of God in the bosom of the Infinite, and of the breathing of the Holy Ghost.

It is true the generation of the Son and spiration of the Holy Ghost are not free acts of the goodness of God, such as its exterior works already mentioned, but necessary; but these free acts are possible, because divine goodness necessarily pours itself out in the interior bosom of the Godhead and follows necessarily its essential bent. The greatest possible act of goodness, therefore, in a sense wholly absolute, is the pouring itself out in the Son and the Holy Ghost by producing them.

Now, we have seen that, allowing for the proper distinction, Mary, in force of her sublime dignity, has been associated to this highest possible act of divine goodness in having her human action of conceiving raised by divine goodness to such a dignity as to result in the same identical term in which the eternal and permanent act of that divine attribute results. In Mary, therefore, divine goodness has its fullest, utterest, and best manifestation.

She, therefore, by her great dignity exhibits in herself the utterest manifestation of omnipotence, of wisdom, and of goodness, and is, therefore, the very masterpiece of God's handiwork.

Before finishing this article we wish to compare this dignity with the other works of God; and, first, with creation.

Beautiful and great, indeed, is creation. God speaketh in his omnipotence, and says, "Let light be made," and in an instant light which enlightens everything spreads all over creation and fills it with charm and loveliness. God speaketh, "Let there be a firmament," and that space lying between the earth and the celestial bodies is effected, and that canopy of celestial blue, so attractive and so enchanting, appears to the view. God speaketh, and creates the heavenly bodies, which are a most astounding wonder for number, for massive grandeur, and for their action. Who has even been able to number the stars, each one of them being a sun in itself, distant from each millions of miles, and having its planets and satellites, or, as it were, companions and courtiers, as our sun is followed by the earth and the moon? Each one of those suns forms a world apart, so that the enormous number of stars form millions and tens of thousands of millions of worlds, one more beautiful and lovely than the other. What shall we say of that white belt called the Milky Way, by which the firmament is girded as the bridegroom puts on the ornaments of his nuptials? It is all made up of stars so distant from us and in such colossal number as to exhibit a shadowy line of white color. All this enormous grandeur, all this profusion of created magnificence, this sublime hymn of glory, was the effect of the fiat of God's omnipotence.

God speaketh, and the sea is divided from the land, and one puts on a vesture of green color so charmingly pleasing to the sight, and upon this an ornament of flowers so beautiful and so enticing by the variety of their color and of their fragrance, of trees so various in size, shape, color, and fruits,

and of animals of all kinds; and the other is filled with an immense number of living things. Finally, God speaketh no longer to a being which must be called from nothingness—he speaketh to himself: “Let us make man after our own image and likeness.”

What a magnificent work must this last work be to render necessary the express meeting, so to speak, of the three divine Persons! “Let us make man after our own image and likeness”; and, lo! the masterpiece of omnipotence, of wisdom, of goodness is effected—man. God rests here, like a giant who hath run his race.

Now, comparing the fiat which God pronounced on the days of creation with another fiat which he himself caused to be uttered by a creature—“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word”—it is evident that he was pleased to display infinitely greater power, wisdom, and condescending love on the occasion of the fiat of Mary than he did at the fiat of his creation. For the fiat of Mary did not produce the material light, it is true, but it begot the Light which enlightens every man coming into this world; it did not produce the material firmament, but it begot that divine Firmament in whom heaven and earth meet together and give each other the kiss of peace; it did not create the sun, but it produced the divine Sun of Justice; it did not effect the stars, but it conceived the Star of Jacob; it effected neither earth, nor flowers, nor trees, nor animals, nor man, but it brought forth the earth which yields milk and honey, the Flower of Jerico, the Tree of Life, the Lion of Juda, the True Man, the Man-Type, the Man-God. In one word, the fiat uttered by God forms the creature; the fiat which he utters in Mary conceives the Creator. The fiat which God utters forms the finite; the fiat which he utters in Mary conceives the Infinite, the Almighty, the Omniscient, the All-Good, the accumulation of all perfections.

There is another fiat which God pronounced, far above that

creative fiat which called into existence all substances; there is the fiat of the supernatural order, surpassing the other in everything, in nature, in perfection, in beauty—the fiat which effects *grace*. This grace is scattered among myriads and tens of thousands of myriads of angels and saints who form the supernatural world; and, though God was pleased to display in the world of grace the inexhaustible treasures of his riches and perfections, which he scattered with lavish hand, yet this creation of grace, this fiat which calls to life the supernatural world, is far inferior to the fiat of Mary, which calls into life the Author of grace, the Source of grace, the Fountain and Plenitude of grace, from which flows the grace of all angels and saints, like so many streamlets from the river. Of this supernatural creation, also, we may say with David: “I will behold thy heavens, the work of thy *fingers*.” Of the effect of the fiat which God uttered in Mary, we may repeat: “He concentrated might in his arm”—*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo*.

## ARTICLE II.

*Grandeur of the Divine Motherhood, considered in itself.*

We have already said something of this particular view of our subject, as we have been pointing out the display of God's attributes in the creation of this dignity; but it is necessary that we should put it in its clearest and best light and in its boldest relief.

To do this with more precision we distinguish two sides in the divine maternity, considered in its own intrinsic nature:

- 1st. The material side, so to speak.
- 2d. The formal side.

As to the first—that is, considering Mary's maternity in the sense that she administered of her own substance that part which was to be united hypostatically to the Word of God—every one can see that it implies a glory and an exaltation beyond the reach of the highest created intelligence.

This side of Mary's dignity establishes a relation of identity between her and God the Son. The Word, in becoming incarnate, did not take the elements which were to form his body from any other source but the spotless substance of Mary—*Non aliunde sed ex materna traxit substantia*. It was, then, from Mary that he drew those elements which, united to a human soul, were incorporated with the Divinity so as to form one divine personality, and by that union they became, and must be called, divine, as in Christ man is God, and God man.

It is evident, therefore, that a part of Mary's substance is united hypostatically to the divine Word, and is and must be called God in Christ; and hence a part which belongs to Mary's immaculate flesh, which she can claim as her own in its concrete sense, is *God*. Could the relation of identity be better established?—a relation which the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have perceived and pointed out, among whom St. Peter Damian: "God being in all things in a threefold manner, he is in Mary in a fourth special manner—that is, by identity—because he is the same as she is. Let, therefore, every creature be hushed into silence and awe; for who is there who could scan the immensity of such dignity?" And St. Augustine: "The flesh of Christ is Mary's flesh, and though, by the glory of the resurrection, it has been exalted, it has yet remained such as he took from Mary." And as the flesh in Christ is one with the person of Christ, we subjoin, it follows that Mary is united to God by a relation of identity.

In one word, the union which exists between Mary and God, considering her dignity from this point of view, is that of *blood relation*. She is really and truly related to God by *blood*, as she is really and truly the divine Mother of God.

Let us pass to view this dignity in its formal side—that is, from that side which really and truly makes it her glory to be the Mother of God; because the mere administering a part of her substance to build up the body of our Lord might have



been purely accidental, without implying a proper knowledge and proper dispositions on her part. It required something else to make her really and truly God's mother, such as she should be; and that something we call the formal side.

This implied a similitude, a resemblance, a participation of the Godhead in the essence of the soul of Mary, in her intellect, in her will, in the whole of her nature and faculties, so great, so intense, so deep, so powerful, so magnificent, so incomparable, so unique, so utterly incomprehensible as to make her appear almost like another God—in other words, that *something* which theologians call the grace of the maternity.

This grace, that our readers may understand it, we shall here compare with sanctifying grace, both in its incipient state in this life and in its perfection in the next.

All the doctors of the Church, when speaking of sanctifying grace in both states, agree in admitting that it is a participation of the Godhead, but differ in determining in what precisely consists this participation. We think that they are all within the limits of the truth, each one emphasizing that particular side of the truth which seems to him more important, so that if we unite all their opinions we shall have a clear idea of the whole subject.

These sentences amount to the following elements :

1st. Sanctifying grace is a participation of the Godhead, inasmuch as it is a bond or union by which the whole Godhead is communicated to the just. As the Son in God is Son inasmuch as the identical nature of the Father is communicated to him, so that union by which the just receives from God his own participation of himself is grace. In other words, grace is the bond or tie uniting us to the Divinity, because it draws after it the divine nature, and makes it present to and living in us in such a manner that, if the Godhead were not immense and dwelt not everywhere, grace would make it intimately present to us, because the union between God and us through

grace is not merely a union of affection, but a real communication and indwelling of God's Spirit.

2d. Sanctifying grace is the principle, supernatural and universal, concurring in all the supernatural acts of the intellect and of the will, and thus elevating and perfecting the substance of the soul.

3d. That sanctifying grace implies an image and a similitude of the Divinity drawn in the soul, such as to surpass every similitude of substantial creation.

To gather all these views in a few words, we may say that sanctifying grace brings the Godhead into the soul by a real and actual indwelling, and that such indwelling causes in the soul a similitude of God himself, so true and expressive as to surpass all created similitude; and that both this presence and similitude combined and in unison are the universal principle of the supernatural acts of the soul.

Now, the grace of the maternity is something like, but immensely greater than, this, because it brings the Divinity in Mary, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in a manner so close, so intimate, so immediate as to surpass all possible communication, and falls only short of the hypostatic moment. It effects in Mary's soul a similitude of God so true, so deep, so intense, so sublime, so expressive, so beautiful as to make her appear almost like another God; and both are the reasons why she is able to perform that most magnificent and most glorious of all human acts—that act towering in grandeur and sublimity above all others in time and in eternity; that act transcending the loftiest and most exalted acts of created energy—the *act of conceiving the Son of God*.

A piece of bright, pure glass, exposed to the full effulgence of the sun in its greatest midday force, will give a faint image of what we wish to express. Expose a piece of the purest crystal to the full dash of the midday splendor of the sun, and what is the consequence? The sun will fill that glass with its brightest rays; it will penetrate it thoroughly, so that it can be

said to be impregnated, saturated with light. That impregnation will cause the glass to become as perfectly as possible another sun, and will enable it to reflect, almost with the same purity, the same brightness, the same force, its dazzling splendor.

So it was with Mary. By the grace of the maternity the whole Godhead came to dwell in her in a peculiar manner; not in the same manner as he dwells everywhere; not in the same manner as he dwells in the soul of the just, or of all of them, in this life or in eternity; not even in such a manner as he dwelt in Mary's soul, by sanctifying grace—because this was distinct from the grace of the maternity—but in a manner altogether distinct, peculiar, incomparable, and unique. And by that presence so close, so intimate, so immediate, by that embrace so overpowering and so overwhelming, by that caress so keen and tender, he filled her whole nature, her whole soul, her whole faculties, penetrated them through and through, saturated them, inebriated them, and caused in that soul and in those faculties a likeness of himself so true, so bright, so expressive, so vivid, so intense, so perfect as to make her appear like a very God, and thus enabled her, like himself, the divine Sun of Justice, to emit the ray of light which enlightens every man coming into this world.

We may make use of words, but of what avail can they be in a subject which defies the gaze of the cherubim or the intense affection of the seraphim, and which, according to St. Augustine, can be known to Him alone who took his nature from her? Let us hear St. Bernardine of Sienna, speaking of this grace of the maternity: "That God should conceive a God, no disposition of any sort was required, it being quite agreeable to his nature to conceive, by way of an intellectual operation, a Word altogether and in every sense equal to him. But that a woman should conceive and bring forth a God, it was the miracle of miracles; for it was necessary, if I may so express myself, that this woman should be elevated to a certain divine

equality, by a certain infinitude of perfections and graces the equal of which has never been given to a creature. Hence no human or angelic intellect could ever fathom the impenetrable abyss of all the caresses of the Holy Ghost which were showered down on the Virgin at the hour of the divine conception" (*De Vega*, vol. ii. p. 14).

### ARTICLE III.

*Grandeur of Mary's Dignity as the Co-operatrix in the Mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption.*

The second aspect of Mary's dignity is that God, as we have demonstrated, required her consent before accomplishing the sublime mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption, the unparalleled grandeur of which dignity is so clear and palpable as to render it almost useless for us to attempt to point it out. It will, however, be necessary to do so, lest some of our readers should fail to see the enormous proportions which it causes Mary to take in the system of the universe. Limiting ourselves, therefore, to considering this dignity only in its consequences, we observe, in the first place, that it involves on God's part a condescension so great, so sublime, so utterly lavish of itself as to throw us into a rapture of amazement.

God determines to effect the highest possible manifestation of his infinite excellence. He scans with his infinite glance all the regions of possibility, and resolves upon the Incarnation as the only true and best means to the end, and decrees the existence of Christ. Christ, in the constitution of his individuality, embraces three distinct elements besides his infinite nature—the natural and the supernatural, the natural implying a human body and a human soul, the human body also embracing the mineral, the vegetal, and the sensitive elements, the human soul representing all possible spiritual beings. The supernatural element comprehends two subordinate ones, the incipient and the perfect—that is, grace and

glory. God decrees that numberless variety of individuals comprised within these elements be effected, in order, as it were, to set off Christ, to pay court to him, to be one with him, and to cause him to be their centre, their king, their all. Hence the creation of the universe in all these elements—the mineral, the vegetal, the sensitive, the spiritual or angelic, and the composite, man. Angels and men, and all inferior elements, are to partake of the other two elements which enter into the constitution of Christ—that is, grace and glory; angels and men directly through Christ, all inferior elements indirectly through man; for the mineral, the vegetal, and the sensible, entering as a part of the nature of man, partake of both his exaltation to grace and of the perfection of grace in glory.

Man falls, and, as it were, disarranges the whole harmony of this plan, and God, with a more beneficent condescension, modifies the plan of the Incarnation into that of redemption, restores man to his former state, and reproduces a greater and more harmonious order, and a better, grander, more glorious manifestation of himself.

But in all this plan, by a most wonderful and most lavish beneficence of God, one element is to be included, and that is the *human will of a maiden* whom he has destined as the mother of his Incarnate Word. This will is made the arbiter between God and his work. God's manifestation of infinite grandeur will not be made, those wonderful proofs of his condescension will not be given, those grand and sublime works will not be effected, unless the will—the personal will—of Mary gives its free and untrammelled consent. We have seen the reasons for this determination of God, and this is not the place to repeat them, as we are only setting forth the magnificence of such destiny.

Can human or angelic intellect conceive a greater, a sublimer, a more tremendous dignity than this? An Italian poet has said of the greatest conqueror of modern times that two

centuries, one armed against the other, turned in submission to him, as expecting their fate from him, and that he paused and sat arbiter in their midst.

In our case we see the three divine Persons of the Godhead on one side, and all centuries and generations after the fall on the other side, both armed against each other, man rising up against God with his iniquities, and God's justice enraged against man and in the act of punishing him.

On the day of the annunciation, when Mary heard from the angel the good tidings of her sublime destiny of the divine motherhood; and, instead of embracing it at once, enquired of the angel if that destiny could be accomplished without injury to her virginal glory, both God and all human generations stood and expected from Mary their fate. Mary paused and sat arbiter between them. She said the word *fiat* and sealed the fate of both. To God that word gave a glory such as he could receive in no other manner—a glory fully and perfectly worthy of his infinite majesty and excellence; a glory of having a God, infinite in essence and tremendous in majesty, to adore him and to be sacrificed to his honor.

To men that word gave a God-Man and infinite exaltation of their nature—an infinite exaltation of their personality; it gave them grace and glory, and the society of the three divine Persons.

It gave a sublimity, an infinity, a scope to the whole creation.

Can we conceive of magnificence, of destiny, of a glory, of dignity greater, more sublime, more utterly incomparable than this?

“Let every creature be hushed into silence and awe; for who can measure the immensity of such dignity?” we shall say with St. Peter Damian.

## BOOK THIRD.

### *PERFECTIONS OF MARY IN GENERAL.*

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Before entering upon the subject of the perfections of Mary we wish to lay down a doctrine of St. Thomas which will pave the way to the understanding of all those ideas which we shall have to develop in this and the following books.

In the natural order of things there are three kinds of perfection. The first is the perfection, so-called, of disposition and fitness; and it is realized when a thing or an object has all the necessary requisites which render it fit for a certain end or office. For instance, suppose you wish to burn some wood; you must make it fit for the object by removing from it all those obstacles which may be in the way of its burning, such as greenness or dampness. Without removing such obstacles the wood is not fit to burn, and has not the perfection of disposition. So likewise if an artist should want to make a statue. He must remove from the block all such superfluities as may be necessary, and work it up to a certain shape, so as to be ready to take the form he intends to give it.

The second kind of perfection is the natural perfection of the thing which it is intended to effect, as everything has a natural perfection of its own, which causes it to be what it is and gives it its proper nature. As in the case of the sculptor, when he has worked up the block into such a form as he intended to express—as, for instance, into an Apollo or Hercules—then it has the perfection of form.

The last kind of perfection is when a thing has arrived at the final and ultimate development of its faculties.

These three kinds of perfection, as the reader may observe, are progressive, one being superior to the other—the second being superior to the first, and the last to the second; because it is more perfect to possess the perfection of form than the perfection of disposition, as it is much more perfect to have arrived at the last possible development than merely to have the perfection of nature or form.

Having presented this doctrine, the way which we must follow in speaking of the perfections of Mary is plain before us, if we would treat of all of them with order and distinction. We must speak first of her perfection of disposition, then of her perfection of form, and, finally, of the last perfection; and, therefore, we shall divide this book into three chapters, according to this doctrine.





## CHAPTER I.

### MARY'S PERFECTION OF DISPOSITION.

#### ARTICLE I.

##### *Necessity of such Perfection.*

It is a principle of theology as well as of reason that, whenever God chooses a person for a certain dignity or office, he bestows upon him all those graces or qualifications which are necessary for such a dignity or office. This rule is expressed by St. Bernardine of Sienna in the following words: "It is a rule in sacred theology that, whenever God raises one to a certain state, he bestows upon him all the good qualities necessary to sustain and abundantly to adorn that state." St. Paul confirms this rule when, speaking of the apostles, he said that God made them fit ministers of the new testament. We find, also, in the Sacred Scriptures that when God selected the seventy ancients who were to share with Moses the administration or the judicature of the Jewish people, he said to Moses, "I shall take away some of thy spirit, and shall give it to them, that they may bear the burden of the people along with thee"—thus giving us to understand that so long as Moses had the full charge of the people he had granted him such an amount of grace and help as to be sufficient to fully discharge that duty; but now, having called others to share in that burden, it was just that they also should share in those graces and qualities. We could prove this principle from reason, but it is not necessary, it being easy for any one to see how agreeable it is to the wisdom, goodness, and justice of God.

Now, what graces were necessary in order that Mary should be fit to adorn and discharge the sublime duties attached to

her dignity? To answer this question it is well to recall to mind that Mary's dignity is twofold: 1st. She is really and truly the Mother of God, and consequently of the race. 2d. She was the only created personality who had an active part in God's external works, and was the arbiter of their fate.

The qualities and perfections, therefore, must correspond to this twofold dignity and be of a piece with them. This condition is admitted by all the Fathers of the Church, and we shall recall the words of St. Bernardine summing up their opinion. As to the first dignity, that of being the Mother of God, he says: "That God should engender a God no disposition or qualification was required in him, it being agreeable to his nature to utter a Word in every sense equal to him. But that a woman should conceive and bring forth a God, it was the miracle of miracles. For it was necessary, so to speak, that this woman should be raised to a certain divine equality, *through a certain almost infinity of perfections and graces* which has never been granted to a creature. Wherefore neither human nor angelic intelligence has ever scanned the unfathomable abyss of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost which descended upon the Virgin at the hour of her divine conception."

It is also easy to conceive with what unparalleled perfections must that personality be adorned who was made the arbiter of the destinies of all the external works of God.

The perfections, therefore, which were to adorn the person of Mary, in order to dispose her for her twofold dignity, must be beyond conception, above all comparison, at an enormous distance from all other creatures, as her personality towers above all. Hence St. Epiphanius said: "The grace of the holy Virgin is immense." St. Anselm, addressing the Virgin: "To one who should wish to scan the immensity of thy grace, O Virgin! the mind fails and the tongue is stilled." And another Father: "So great is the perfection of the Virgin that it is God alone who can know it."

From this we shall draw the following rules or principles which must govern us in the science of the perfection of Mary:

*1st Principle.* Whatever gift or grace, natural or supernatural, ordinary or extraordinary, has ever been granted to any creature must always be predicated of Mary.

This principle is evident from the necessity, above proved, of a perfection without proportion or limitation.

*2d Principle.* Mary's perfections, natural and supernatural, especially her supernatural graces, must be in number, in intrinsic excellence and worth, superior to the graces of all creatures, saints and angels included, taken together and arrived at the summit of their perfection.

Because all these graces, enormous as the amount must be supposed to be, and beyond the possibility of calculation, could not make a fit mother of God and a co-operatrix in the mysteries of God's works, such dignity being superior not only to each separate dignity of any saint or angel, but towering far above their united dignities.

*3d Principle.* Mary, at the very first moment of her existence, must be supposed endowed with a grace superior to that of all the angels and saints taken together and arrived at the summit of their perfections.

Because the superiority of the grace of Mary, considered merely as disposition for her twofold dignity, is and must be so prodigious that even its beginning must be far superior to the finished and united grace of all others.

*4th Principle.* The perfection of disposition is something altogether distinct from and above anything which has been given to other creatures, or to all of them, and simply unparalleled and unique.

## ARTICLE II.

*Perfections of Mary in particular—Exemption from Original Sin.*

As we wish in this little work to make Mary known as much as possible, we shall endeavor not only to give a general idea of her perfections, but descend to every detail, and look at them from every side, and give the nature, quality, and property of every gift, so that, after making the application to Mary, one may have a very adequate and full knowledge of her perfections.

And we shall set out in this article by pointing out and vindicating all her negative perfections. These are the following :

1st. Absence of, and preservation from, original sin.

2d. A most perfect and total absence of any natural fault or defect.

3d. A most perfect and total absence of every moral fault, either venial or mortal, even of the most minute and of the most trifling and imperceptible kind.

4th. A permanence and confirmation in this purely and perfectly innocent state.

As to the first, it is evident that Mary was to be exempt from original sin, upon which we would have the reader to observe that here we do not establish the fact, which will be stated and proved in the life of Mary in all its stages and periods. We are now investigating the fitness and seemliness of the thing, to prove which we shall bring forward all the arguments which can bear upon the subject.

We shall endeavor to bring them together under the following heads, in order to give unity and harmony to the demonstration : Mary was to be exempt from original sin, if we compare her with other creatures endowed with the same privilege ; if we compare original sin with her dignity ; if we view it in relation to the three divine Persons ; if we consider it in its effects.

And as to the first, we know that myriads and millions of myriads of angels were created in holiness and sanctity, and consequently exempt from all sin. Adam and Eve, also, our first parents, were constituted, as the Council of Trent teaches, in innocence and purity when created.

Now, by the first principle we have laid down, it is clear that whatever gift or grace, natural or supernatural, ordinary or extraordinary, has ever been granted to any other creature must be predicated of Mary. If, therefore, angels and our first parents were exempt from original sin, this also must be predicated of Mary.

This truth will appear yet more necessary if we consider original sin in relation to Mary's dignity. From all eternity Mary appears in the mind of God in her twofold dignity of mother of her divine Son, and of co-operatrix with him in all his works *ad extra*. This is Mary's destiny from all eternity. She appeared, therefore, in the mind of God, always as such, and never in any other aspect. Now, this implies a union with God greater than which cannot be conceived possible, unless Mary had been united hypostatically to the Divinity. And who can fail to see that the closest possible union with God excludes and rejects absolutely and without any qualification the greatest possible separation which sin establishes between God and the creature?

The argument is strengthened if we inquire into the origin of this dignity. No merit of Mary, strictly speaking, no claim, no right, caused her to be elevated to such a height. It was the pure, sheer goodness and magnificence of God in her regard, who loved her above all possible creatures. How, then, could this love, so great, so sublime, so magnificent, so astounding, so infinite, so to speak—a love which wanted to effect a masterpiece, a wonder, a miracle of grandeur, a personality who could be said to be the very uttermost effort of love—how could it cease all at once and turn into hatred? For such would have been the result if Mary had been conceived

in sin; the love of God must have turned into hatred, this sin causing us to be children of wrath and perdition.

Besides, her dignity required, as we have seen, and shall yet see at more length, a sanctity so great as to be beyond all possible calculation; a sanctity so high as to be not only superior to that of all creatures arrived at the highest possible consummation of their holiness and perfection, but far transcending such a sanctity in colossal and prodigious proportions, and, indeed, beyond all proportion, as the dignity *is* beyond all proportion or parallel.

How, then, could any intellect ever conceive the possibility of sin being associated or supposed to nestle even for a single moment in a soul which was to be such a wonder of holiness? We must even claim, at the very first moment of Mary's existence, a positive sanctity superior to that of all creatures already perfect in glory, to keep up a certain proportion between the beginning of such an existence and the other stages of such a life. How could we, then, suppose such a beginning to be infected with sin?

Again, this dignity establishes a relation on the part of Mary with the three divine Persons of the Trinity, as we shall develop at full length, and merely allude to it now.

The relation with the first Person is that the Eternal Father associates Mary with himself to produce the same Son. The temporal generation of the Word Incarnate is not distinct from the eternal generation, but simply the identical one. The Father endows Mary, by means of the outpourings of the Holy Ghost, with a power of grace corresponding, so to speak, to his natural power of generation to produce the same Son. Hence Mary can strictly and more properly be called the Spouse of the Eternal Father. Can we suppose, then, that this divine Person would permit one estranged even for a moment by sin to be raised to the dignity of his Bride?

As to the relation with the second Person, assuredly it would be sheer absurdity to connect the real, true, natural

Mother of God with sin. The mere imagination of such a thing throws one into horror. Those only could have supposed such a thing who, led away by an over-estimate of the generality of the ravages of original sin, of the immutability of such law, coupled it with the Mother of God. But if there be any at the present time, they can only be those who do not really understand that she *is* the Mother of God.

The same thing is evident from the relation with the third Person. Mary was actually the effort, so to speak, of the Holy Ghost. He, being barren in the bosom of God, wished to become fruitful outwardly, and therefore took his nest in the soul of Mary, and so lavished upon her all his gifts, so concentrated in her the fulness of his graces and gifts, as to make her conceive and bring forth a divine Person, who was nothing but the bud and blossom, the sweetest and tenderest, the most beautiful flower of grace and sanctity. To mention sin here in connection with such magnificence of grace is really more than a Catholic could stand.

We have insisted on the second side of Mary's dignity—that she was the arbiter of the works of God. Upon her consent the Incarnation took place, and upon her consent, foreknown and supposed, all that went before the Incarnation was made and effected. Now, one and the chiefest of these works was the redemption of mankind from original and actual sin and their consequences, and it was effected by the free, deliberate consent of, and the necessary qualifications on the part of, Mary.

Could that personality be supposed to be infected with sin, when she was made on purpose to co-operate in its destruction, and when, upon this very co-operation, as a necessary consequence it was destroyed?

Again, original sin does not terminate in the soul. It overflows and makes itself felt in the body, since it implies what, in theological language, is called concupiscence. In other words, it stains and corrupts the flesh; it is, as it were, a

stigma inflicted and impressed upon it. If, therefore, Mary had been conceived in sin, that stain would have infected her body also and her blood. Now, it was from her blood that the body of Christ was to be formed. Christ, therefore, would have taken a body of sin.

### ARTICLE III.

The second negative perfection of Mary was the absence of every fault or failing as to her natural faculties; because God generally adapts the body and soul, or the whole nature and faculties, for the work of grace which he intends to perform in a given individual. The rule is not absolutely rigid, as there have been saints with a great many natural defects either of body or soul. But it holds good, if we confine the rule to most of the principal saints. To them, according to their history, we see that natural faculties were given in proportion to the wonders which grace intended to work in them. Thus, we see in St. Paul all those natural qualities which befitted him for the apostle of the Gentiles. Thus, all the founders of religious orders were endowed naturally with great natural abilities which, being taken hold of by grace, made them to be the wonder of their generation. Now, Mary was to be the very pinnacle of all sanctity which can be realized in a pure creature. Her human nature, therefore, with all its faculties, must have been in her without defect or imperfection.

Moreover, St. Thomas teaches that the first works of God are always perfect, without fault or defect, not only because the perfect is always before the imperfect, but also because they must be the principle or cause of other things.

Now, Mary was both the first creature and the cause, instrumental and typical, of all others. She was the first creature, because she was the first in the mind of God from all eternity, though she was created actually afterwards. It was through Mary, as the arbiter of the external works of God, that the



world was made, and therefore St. Bernard said: "Propter ipsam totus mundus factus est." It was after that magnificent creature, as existing typically in the mind of God, that the world was fashioned, because the order of the creation went thus: The essence of God the type of Christ, Christ the type and pattern of his glorious Mother, Mary the type of all the rest of the creation.

How, then, can we suppose any fault or defect in the nature or faculties of Mary, either as to her body or as to her soul?

This of her natural faculties. But the third principle we have stated claims also for Mary an absolute absence of all moral defects, mortal or venial, even as for the most distant, the most trifling and insignificant imperfection; and the proof of this lies in the fact that the dignity of Mary required a grace, a holiness, a sanctity almost infinite—a grace which could be known to God only. Now, what does this imply? Besides other things, which we shall have occasion to mention, it implies the strictest, the most intimate, the keenest, the closest, the maximum union of Mary with the Godhead. After that a creature loses its own personality, ceases to be his own, and becomes God, as it happened with the human nature of Christ, which never had any human personality, because at the moment of the conception it was taken hold of by the Word in a closer union than that which took place in Mary.

Now, to show how this maximum of union with God implied in Mary the absence of all moral imperfection, we call the attention of the reader to the reason why God can never *fail*, either really or morally. Among other reasons we mention the following of St. Thomas: The reason why men fail in their actions, either in the order of reality or in the moral order, is because they are distinct from that principle which forms the rule of their action. If they were identified in nature and in action with the rule of their action, they could never fail, unless either their nature or the rule failed or were changed, which is impossible in both cases, because the principles or rules of

actions, if we speak of physical action, are mathematical principles, and they can never change; the principles of morality are metaphysical principles also, and are immutable, as the nature of things is immutable. An architect sometimes may fail in the execution or the planning of a building, because he is not identical but distinct in nature and action from the rules of his art. If he were identical with them, the same thing with them, it is evident he could never fail, because they are certain and infallible as mathematics. He fails because, being distinct and separate from those rules, he may not justly or correctly apply those rules; but if he were identified with them the mistake or misapplication were impossible. This is the case with God. The supreme principle of morality is not distinct from him, but identical with his essence; it is his own essence, just as his action is identical with both, so that in him essence, supreme principle of morality, action are one and the same thing. He, therefore, absolutely and essentially, can never fail.

It follows from this theory that the more one is united with God, the more is he united with the supreme rule of morality, and the less can he be supposed to be apt to fail; and if we imagine a nature not having a subsistence of its own, but subsisting in the personality of God, it would be metaphysically impossible for such a nature to fail or commit sin. This was the case with the human nature of Christ.

In Mary the union with God by grace was the maximum after the personal union of the human nature with the Word; therefore her union with the supreme principle of morality, of justice, of sanctity, was the maximum; so as to render it impossible, morally speaking, to allow in her any, the most insignificant, imperfection.

This will appear more evident if we put the argument in another form. A person may fall into sin for a twofold reason—either for voluntary want of apprehension of the rule of morality or for lack of power and energy. In God this is meta-

physically impossible, because in him his essence, the supreme rule of morality, his knowledge of his essence and of the rule, and his action are all identical. The more, therefore, is one united with God, the more he partakes of his knowledge, the more he partakes of his power, and the maximum moral union implies the maximum participation of his knowledge and of his power. But his knowledge and his power are identical with the supreme rule of morality. Therefore the maximum union with God implies the maximum union with the supreme rule of morality, and renders a moral imperfection impossible.

That this gift, however, was to be permanent in Mary is manifest from the fact that it depends upon her grace; and so long as she continues to be the tabernacle of God's grace in the sense above explained, so long is it impossible for her to fall into any imperfection.

## CHAPTER II.

### POSITIVE PERFECTIONS OF MARY.

#### ARTICLE I.

##### *Natural Gifts.*

THE first positive perfection of Mary is that of her body, which was to be cast in the most perfect and exquisite mould, in all its parts and organs, and as whole, representing a picture of the most enchanting beauty.

The reasons which the doctors of the Church give are the following: Albert the Great says: "As the body of Christ, which God formed in a supernatural manner for himself, was most perfect and beautiful, as much as could be made in this life, so the body of the Virgin, which was directly destined for this, was the most beautiful which can be conceived." Dionysius the Carthusian: "As it was befitting that the humanity of Christ, in consequence of the hypostatic union, should be adorned with every perfection of nature and grace in the sphere of excellence, so the person of his Mother was obliged to be endowed in all things likewise, because next to the hypostatic union there is none so near to God as the Mother of God is to her Child. In confirmation of this we can recall the formation of Adam's body. God formed it out of the slime of the earth with the utmost care, because he had in his mind Christ, who was to be born of Adam after forty centuries." Tertullian expresses this thought with great elegance: "Consider the whole Godhead occupied upon the body of Adam with hand, sense, action, counsel, and providence, and above all with affectionate earnestness, of which love was drawing the lineaments. But whatever he expressed by the slime, he was thinking of

Christ." It was love, therefore, which gave polish to that slime which was to serve for the formation of Adam's body, which was formed with so much wisdom, counsel, providence, because, after a long series of centuries and after many generations, the body of Christ was to be taken from it. What care, therefore, must we suppose God to have taken in the formation of Mary's body, when this Virgin, not in a mediate manner and after a long interval of forty generations, but directly and immediately, was to administer matter for the body of Christ and be his true, real Mother! We must conclude that the whole Godhead was occupied in the formation of that body with great display of counsel, wisdom, and affection.

We subjoin here in particular what was required to make that body faultless and perfect:

1st. Besides the exemption from all defects, imperfections, and whatever cause might engender derangement and sickness, as we have vindicated above, it was necessary that every organ should be constructed after the most perfect manner.

2d. All the organs and other parts were to be in such proportion to each other as to form a most perfect and exquisite symmetry, from which resulted beauty of form and appearance.

3d. All the different temperaments which are found scattered in mankind were to be so well balanced and mixed together in Mary as to form the most perfect temperament to serve for all natural virtues which they occasion.

4th. The perfection of all this—that is to say, the perfection of organs and of every part of Mary's body, the perfection of the whole, the beauty of form resulting from both, the perfection of temperament—to be calculated and measured not by comparison with any human person, because it is evident that it must have had all the beauty of person which has ever been admired in any human individual of the same sex, but to be drawn from a comparison with the dignity to which it was to be raised, with the sublime function it was to exercise, it being

destined for a soul so magnificently and so abundantly superior to any other, and both for the divine motherhood.

5th. As we have occasion here, we will add other qualities of this body which were not a consequence of natural causes, but of that sublime and unutterable grace which filled Mary's soul. The place to speak of these qualities might perhaps be after we have spoken of her grace; but as we shall have no more reason to speak of her body, and as these qualities principally regard that immaculate tabernacle of God, we shall speak of them here.

The grace of Mary was beyond all calculation. Now, such an immense grace, besides sanctifying her soul, must have been felt in her body also; it must have overflowed in the body and given it qualities which did not naturally belong to it. These may be reduced to those four qualities which glorified bodies possess, inasmuch as they can be supposed to exist in one not as yet blessed, but in the state of probation; these are impassibility, agility, subtlety, and brightness.

The first, in the glorified body, implies immortality and incorruptibility, which, of course, cannot be predicated of any person in the present life, and was possessed only by our Lord in consequence of the hypostatic union, which necessarily implied the Beatific Vision, of which that gift is the necessary consequence. But inasmuch as this quality is taken as implying exemption from organic derangement, or derangement of humors of the body, so as to give it a certain immutability in health and well-being, it can easily be applied to persons yet living in the state of probation.

Agility, in the sense of being entirely free from the weight of the body, or, in other words, from the law of gravitation, must be predicated only of glorified bodies, and was possessed only by our Lord in this life, for the same reason alluded to in the other quality. But inasmuch as the germ of that privilege is put in the body, among other means, \* by sanctifying grace,

\* Such as the Holy Eucharist

a fulness of sanctifying grace may render possible a temporary and an occasional suspension of the law of gravitation in the body of the saint. The same must be said of the present conditions of the law of extension. The entire suspension and change of the present conditions of the law of extension is involved only in the state of a glorified body. But a temporary and occasional change or suspension of such may be possible in one full of sanctifying grace.

Brightness, or splendor, or light which is emitted from a glorified body is a reflection and an emanation, an outpouring, of the Beatific Vision, and must be predicated in its fulness and perfection only of such as enjoy that supreme beatitude. But as sanctifying grace is the germ of the Beatific Vision, it must necessarily, when existing in its fulness in a soul, pour itself out in the body and give it brightness and splendor; and the greater the amount of sanctifying grace, the greater the brightness which shines in the body.

Under this head we must enumerate other qualities which are connected with brightness, such as that of sweet fragrance which oftentimes the body of the saint emits.

As we have remarked, only the body of our Lord was endowed with these qualities in their full perfection whilst in this life, because our Lord enjoyed the Beatific Vision; and it was, as it has often been remarked, by a continual miracle of omnipotence that our Lord appeared like other men, and in his body was subject to all the conditions of bodies as if it were not glorified, which miracle of omnipotence reached its climax during the time of his Passion; as it was also a suspension of that miracle when our Lord walked over the waters and when he was transfigured before his apostles.

The Blessed Virgin not enjoying in this life the Beatific Vision, at least continually, her body was not glorified and did not possess the plenitude of those four qualities. But as she was endowed with a grace greater than which a creature could not enjoy—a grace greater than which God himself

could not impart—it is evident that her body must have possessed those four qualities as much as they can be had in this life, in a degree far superior to that which may have been granted to any or all saints put together. And so great must have been these qualities in Mary's body that we believe it required a great miracle of omnipotence to keep those qualities from breaking forth, and thus to prevent her from discharging that office which she came to perform; for instance, to suffer with our Lord. The grace of Mary's soul must have rendered her so impassible that pain and anguish would have been impossible but for that miracle.

The brightness, also, which shone from her body must have been checked, otherwise, like another sun, it would have dazzled all those who glanced on her; for we can easily imagine how a visage, cast in the most exquisite symmetry and proportion of parts, so as to exhibit a most perfect human face, reflecting in its brow, in its eyes, in its mouth and lips, in the whole contour of the face, in the whole expression, a grace so unparalleled and so unfathomable, must have presented a vision and a combination of beauty and loveliness so utterly attractive, so supremely captivating, so powerfully dazzling as to be able to throw the very angels of God into amazement and rapture, and blind the eyes of every beholder. It would be impossible to imagine a living portrait of Paradise; but if ever that heavenly abode, with all the grandeur and beauty it contains, was pictured in an external object, it was in the face of Mary.

That face, also, was the reflection of every virtue in particular, and of all of them in general. Who can imagine what loveliness must be created by the reflection of the loftiest, deepest, most intense love of God, and of the most devoted, self-forgetting, sweetest, tenderest love for man; by the reflection of the deepest and most profound humility; of a purity so magnificent as to eclipse even angels' purity; of a virginity so dear and beloved, even above the dignity of the divine



motherhood; of tenderness, sweetness, compassion, sympathy for every pang and woe—in a word, by the reflection of all virtues felt and practised in their utmost perfection, and which shone in their greatest splendor in that maiden's face, already so beautifully and so perfectly cast ?

That face, also, must have presented a thousand shades and variety of loveliness, in proportion as one or more virtues, or as one or another feeling, predominated for the time in her magnificent soul. Christian artists have spent their genius expressing these shades and variety in endless masterpieces. What enchanting simplicity and grace must that face have reflected when that Infant of election tottered up the steps of the Temple, to go and shut herself up like the dove in solitude to wait for her Beloved, or when she listened to the lessons which were imparted to her in that solitude, though she was greater in wisdom than Solomon, as her bridegroom, the Holy Ghost, had long since nestled in her heart and made it a fount of the purest, the sublimest, the loftiest knowledge ! What purity must have been reflected in that face when, her love of virginity rising higher than the love and desire of the expected Messiah, she spoke those words, How can this be done ?—for I know not man. And who could express how the beauty of that visage was enhanced by the blush called to her face at the sublime salutation, Hail ! full of grace, appearing like a rose which deepens its tinge into purple, and groweth in loveliness and fragrance ; or the humility, the devotion, the self-oblation expressed in her face when she uttered her sublime Be it done to me according to thy word ; humility, devotion, self-oblation which were changed at once into the most profound expression of awe and adoration, as instantly she felt the divine Maker of heaven and earth conceived and nestled in her bosom ? Who could depict the feeling of tender rapture, of sweetest love, of motherly glow mirrored in that face the first time she gazed on her Child, who already raises his infant hands, as if helpless, to her ; or the look of infinite anguish, of

intensest sorrow, and of the sublimest resignation, when on Calvary she fixes, for the last time, her motherly gaze on her Child in the agony of death and crying, I thirst?

Then the sweet, peaceful, constant calm of the children of God reflected on that face, the splendor which it emitted, the consequence of the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in her, must have adorned her person with an air of majesty so grand, so sublime, so magnificent, so overpowering as to throw every one into a feeling of awe and terror, at the same time that the sweet scent of celestial fragrance in which she was continually basking, and which surrounded the whole air around her, must have been so keen, so piercing, so searching, so exhilarating as to make one foretaste the heavenly delights, and change that feeling of awe and terror into a longing to dissolve one's self for sheer love and tenderness for this fairest of Eve's daughters.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Natural Gifts of the Soul—Intelligence.*

In consequence of the principles above stated, we must claim for Mary, as the destined Mother of God and the representative of creation, the highest possible gifts of the spiritual order; and, first, of intelligence. Mary must have been endowed with the very highest, vastest, quickest, and most profound intellect. It is not necessary to bring forward any proof in support of such a statement; it follows logically from the principles stated above, and would recommend itself to any mind which would reflect that God adapts the means to the end, and that Mary's mind was to be the tabernacle and receptacle of the highest supernatural wisdom. God, therefore, paved the way by creating Mary with an intellect greater than which was never granted to a human creature. We shall endeavor here to give an insight into the nature and qualities of such intellect, in order that we may be true to our purpose—

that of always representing as much as possible an adequate idea of the subject we are speaking about.

To explain what we mean by the highest, broadest, quickest, and most profound intellect, we shall give, first, an idea of what intellect is; of what infinite and finite intelligence means; and then make the application to Mary.

What is intellect and what is meant by the act of intelligencing? We can obtain the answer to this question by comparing intelligent and non-intelligent beings, to find that which distinguishes them. Now, it is evident that that which distinguishes the former from the latter is that non-intelligent beings are capable of having only their own form, whereas intelligent beings, besides their own form, can assume the form of other beings. For instance, all material things have materially one form, and, though by art and skill they can be made to assume other forms, they can have only one at a time. Minerals and plants have only one form by nature, and cannot have more than one. And if by artificial means they can be made to assume another form, it must be only one at a time. If a sculptor takes a block and gives it the form of man, that block cannot, whilst in that shape, assume another and retain the former.

It is quite the reverse with intelligent beings. At the same time that they possess their own form, or that which gives them reality and actuality, they can assume the form of other beings. Man's mind, for instance, besides its own natural form, which gives it actuality and reality, can assume the form of any being it understands—a mineral, a plant, an animal, and so forth.

Now, whence arises such difference? It arises from the fact that the nature of non-intelligent beings is more limited and confined within certain boundaries, whereas the nature of intelligent beings is less limited and has greater amplitude and extension. Hence Aristotle said that the soul is in a certain sense everything. Now, limitation comes from *matter*. It is evident, therefore, that the *immateriality* of anything is the rea-

son of its being intelligent, and the amount of intelligence, so to speak, is in proportion to the immateriality of the being.

To intelligence, then, is to be able to take the form of a being without losing one's form, and it comes from the immateriality of a being, the intelligence being in proportion to the immateriality of the being, or, in other words, to the thing not being so limited and contracted; hence in proportion as beings are more immaterial they approach more to infinity. Yet to be able to take the form of another is not as yet intelligence. Sensitive beings take other forms besides their own; for they apprehend any object which comes under the contact and observation of their senses, yet are they not for that reason intelligent.

To be intelligent is not only to be able to take the form of other beings, but to apprehend the universal, the essence of things. The animal only apprehends the singular and the individual; the intellect apprehends the essence and can have a universal form.

Having stated what is intelligence, we proceed to the question, What is infinite and finite intelligence, and in what are they to be distinguished from each other?

What is infinite intelligence? If to intelligence is to assume to take the forms of other beings, to apprehend the essence and the universal, to be infinitely intelligent is to assume the form of the infinite; and as there cannot be two infinities, to be infinitely intelligent means that the infinite intelligences himself, and that, therefore, an infinite intelligence means an intelligence which is always intelligencing; an intelligence which is identical both with the object understood, which it thoroughly comprehends; an intelligence, finally, which is identical with the form it takes in intelligencing.

For, in the first place, suppose that an infinite intelligence were not always actually and permanently understanding, we could suppose a stage or moment on which this intelligence would not be actually understanding, but would be only as

a faculty or a power. Now, the act of understanding is a perfection. If, therefore, an infinite intelligence were not always understanding, it would be perfected when in the act of understanding; and an infinite which can be perfected can no longer be supposed infinite.

Again, if an infinite intelligence were not identical with the object understood, as the knowledge of an object is also a perfection, the infinite would be perfect, not of himself, but through an object other than himself, which likewise would destroy the idea of the infinite.

The infinite intelligence must also comprehend the infinite object identical to himself.

To comprehend means to arrive at the very end of the intelligibility of an object, or to know a thing as much as it is knowable. Now, an object is knowable according to the peculiar manner of its actuality or perfection. The more actual an object, the more knowable it is; therefore the infinite, being infinite actuality and perfection, is infinitely knowable. Now, the intelligent force in the infinite is as great as his actuality, being identical with it; therefore the infinite thoroughly comprehends himself.

Likewise, the infinite intelligence must be identical with the form it takes in intelligencing, because the form constitutes the act of intelligencing, as intelligence is said to be intelligence just when it assumes that form. If, therefore, it were not identical with infinite intelligence, the infinite would become intelligence by means of something other than himself.

The infinite, again, intelligences other things distinct from himself, and that not only in a general way, but inasmuch as they are distinct from others. For the infinite would not thoroughly understand himself, if he did not understand thoroughly the force which lies in its bosom. Now, this force can effect beings distinct from himself; therefore the infinite can understand how far this force extends, and understand things distinct from himself.

Distinct also from each other, because all things pre-exist in this infinite force not only as to that which is common to all, such as existence, but as to that by which they are distinguished from each other not only in their essence and nature but in their peculiar differences. The infinite, therefore, comprehending this infinite force, comprehends also all things distinct from him and distinct from each other.

Infinite intelligence, therefore, consists in an intelligence which always comprehends an infinite object, and that by one idea, also infinite, as intelligence, object understood, and idea in the infinite are one and the same thing; and that infinite intelligence, in that single idea it has of an infinite object, comprehends all other things not only in general, as beings or existences, but in their nature and individual differences.

A finite intellect is an intellect which is not always in the act of understanding, but oftentimes as power and faculty only; an intellect which is distinct in nature from the object understood, unless it understands itself, and then it cannot fully understand its own nature; and an intellect which understands by a numberless variety of ideas or forms.

Among created intelligences there is a great variety, and the rule by which to distinguish a great and powerful intellect is the greater or less comparison it may bear with infinite intellect, always admitting, of course, the essential distance which runs between the infinite and the finite. Thus an intelligence which is more in act or always in act, though not actuality itself, which belongs exclusively to infinite intelligence—an intellect which understands by fewer ideas all that is intelligible or knowable by its nature—is greater than the intelligence which is not possessed of such qualities, and belongs to the nature of the angel.

The human intelligence is not in act, but only a power or a faculty of intelligencing; and this power is brought into play as follows: Being a power and a faculty, it is brought to the act by a sensible phenomenon, which is administered by the senses

and transmitted through the common sensorium to the imagination. Here one function of the human intellect consists in working out this sensible phenomenon as it exists in the imagination, depriving it of its individual conditions and getting at the essence of the thing represented; then, by a second function, comparing this essence with other phenomena, and finding them possessed of the same essence to form universal ideas.

The greatness of the intelligence in man consists, therefore, in the quickness and rapidity in depriving the sensible phenomenon of its individual conditions, and in perceiving the essence of things; in discovering with the same rapidity the same essence in other individual phenomena, so as to be able to generalize, and by this power of generalization to reduce its knowledge to a fewer ideas; in the power of searching into the very marrow of a principle, and discover, almost by intuition, all that it contains; of grasping it so thoroughly as to be able to see the remotest consequences and all the possible applications that it can bear.

Now, we must claim for Mary the highest, quickest, broadest, and most profound intellect which was ever created, superior not only to any particular intellect, but superior to all the created intellects of mankind.

Our reason, besides the general one which we have given above, is this: God was preparing the human faculties of Mary for the office she was destined to fulfil. Now, one part of this office was the highest possible supernatural knowledge of God by infusion ever granted to any creature, not only man but angels—and, indeed, men and angels put together. Because, as the Eternal Father begets his Son by a comprehension of his infinite nature, and therefore is the latter the essential, divine Idea, the internal Word, so Mary, in imitation of that intellectual generation, having to conceive the same identical Word, was to conceive him first in her mind by a knowledge of his infinite nature and perfection so great as to enable us to say that, as the Eternal Word was the fruit of the intellect of the Father

from all eternity, so the same Word was the fruit of the supernatural knowledge or the faith of Mary in time. Hence an intellect was required, as a natural preparation, which should be able to be the receptacle of such unutterable and unfathomable abyss of supernatural science infused into Mary.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Mary's Power of Will.*

What we have said of the intellect must be said also of the will.

The will in God is identical with his essence, and therefore it is act, power, energy itself, infinite force, because the will follows the nature of the intellect.

The will of the angel, though not force itself, is yet immovable in its determination, because his intellect apprehends immovably, as men immovably apprehend first principles.

But man's will is movable, because he apprehends movably by his reason, discoursing from one thing to another, having a way to arrive at each of the opposites; and therefore the will of man clings to anything, but movably, as being able to detach itself from it and cling to another quite opposite.

The force of determination, the firm adhesion to it, constitutes for man greatness of will.

In Mary the will, following her intellect, must have had a force, a tenacity corresponding to her apprehensive faculty.

### ARTICLE IV.

*Mary had the greatest Fitness for, and Realization of, the Beautiful in every Order.*

Before entering upon the demonstration of the statement at the head of this article it is necessary to premise an idea of the beautiful in general, and also of the various kinds of the beautiful.



There have been numberless opinions broached upon the subject of the beautiful, as every one is aware; therefore a great variety of definitions. Plato defined it the splendor of goodness; Aristotle, that which pleases; St. Augustine, variety reduced to unity. Plato developed his idea as follows: Goodness consisting in giving reality and existence to truth, the beautiful must consist in the splendor of the good; so that, according to Plato, you see a being endowed with sublime and rare perfections which, in consequence of their intensity, almost strike the eye so that their splendor and brightness dazzles the sight and engenders wonder and amazement—that is the beautiful.

Aristotle and St. Thomas said that being, good, and beautiful are identical; so that, in the order of reality, to say being is the same as to say good and beautiful. But in defining the limits within which each of these is confined and distinct from each other, they add that being merely expresses existence; good means an existence which is the object of desire of some faculty; the beautiful is the object of some faculty of vision, and, because vision does not delight except in things well proportioned, the beautiful consists in proportion. Modern philosophers have broached a great variety of opinions. We shall follow the opinion of St. Augustine, with some addition—the beautiful consists in variety reduced to unity. That such is the true idea of the beautiful is evident from the following reasons:

According to the opinion of Plato, the beautiful must engender in the beholder wonder and amazement—a wonder and amazement which does not overpower by force (for this would be the sublime), but which subdues by engendering a wonder mixed to an exhilarating pleasure. According to St. Thomas and Aristotle, the beautiful must also give a great delight, and upon these two effects which the beautiful produces in us almost all æsthetic philosophers agree. Now, these two effects certainly cannot be produced by anything better than by variety

reduced to unity. For our soul is simple, and one and every thing, in order to please it, must bear the impress of unity; without it it would be repugnant to its nature and engender disgust. On the other hand, if unity were deprived of variety, but were to exhibit itself to the soul as simple, mere unity, it would engender also satiety and disgust. Nor could anything deprived either of unity or variety create wonder. For who could feel wonder stealing upon him at a confused mass of things brought together without any bond or unity? Or, on the other hand, who could feel any wonder at a thing simple, and one which should present always the same point of view, without enabling the mind to turn itself to the contemplation of anything else?

But unity reduced to variety is not sufficient to represent the beautiful. It is necessary that all the parts entering into the composition of the beautiful should be placed each in its proper place, according to the order set down by the end to be attained, and that each part should have some affinity with each other and with the end, which is called proportion.

To adjust unity to variety in such a manner that variety does not hide unity and that unity does not destroy variety, is to have the beautiful.

We may reduce all the different kinds of the beautiful to the absolute, the natural, and the artificial; and, second, into spiritual and corporeal.

The absolute beautiful is God; for, as St. Augustine says, all beauty comes from the supreme beauty, which is God. In him truly we find all the elements of beauty—variety reduced to unity, with order and proportion. For if we contemplate that great mystery in which the eternal life of God lies, we see the absolute and supreme elements of beauty in one essence and three divine Persons distinct from each other; the first independent, the second depending on the first, the third proceeding from, and depending on, both; the first representing in the constituent of his divine personality the intel-

lective force of the Godhead, the second exhibiting the Godhead as intelligible, the third the Godhead as loved; the first, second, and third, though living in themselves, living in each other in consequence of the unity of essence, and enjoying the same life and the same unutterable bliss.

Created beauty is that of creatures, which may be regarded either individually or collectively—that is, each one in itself—or as forming one whole called the universe. If regarded individually, their beauty consists in the unity of essence and variety of their faculties, acts, and operations, all in proper order and proportion. This may be called metaphysical beauty, and is either spiritual or corporeal, according to the difference of nature. Moral beauty is the adaptation of the free actions of a creature to their proper moral end.

If we regard creatures as forming the universe, we find them all in such numberless variety, each one in the proper order and bearing proper proportion to each other and to the end; but the unity which must govern all this immense variety of creatures cannot be found in the universe, but must be sought outside of and beyond it. In a complex variety of creatures unity cannot be found materially, but must be spiritual; in a word, in order that all this immense variety of creatures may have unity, they must represent and realize an idea which in the universe is the infinite perfection of the Creator.

Artificial beauty, or, as called by some, plastic beauty, is the same; it lies in a variety of parts, all put in their proper place and all fitting each other, so that they all conspire in representing an idea.

Now, that Mary had the greatest aptitude for realizing the beautiful is evident from what we have discoursed in the three former chapters. She was endowed with an intellect superior to any created personality in height, in depth, in vastness, and in quickness, with a will corresponding to such power of apprehension; she was endowed with a body cast after the strongest as well as the most refined and exquisite mould, with

also a keen and perfect power of sensibility. It follows, therefore, that she had the greatest possible natural aptitude for appreciating and realizing the beautiful in every order, as she was also the greatest possible artist in being, supernaturally indeed, but not excluding all her natural fitness and disposition, enabled to conceive the very highest plastic work of beauty, Jesus Christ, realizing in himself both infinite and finite beauty, all created and uncreated loveliness, and bringing them to the most harmonious unity. For in his human nature he recapitulated all created loveliness, and in his divine nature he contained all infinite attraction and beauty, bringing them together and harmonizing them in the bond and unity and in the kiss of his only one divine person.

Was there ever an artist who could conceive and bring forth a work like unto this, comprehending all possible loveliness and beauty in every order, absolute, typical, ideal, created, and plastic, as Mary, that magnificent Virgin, did in her spotless cloister? What is a Fra Angelico, a Michael Angelo, a Raphael, to Mary?

## CHAPTER III.

### SUPERNATURAL DISPOSITION.

Having discussed, in the first chapter of this book, the natural perfections which were necessary to render Mary worthy of her twofold dignity to which she was destined, we proceed in the present chapter to speak of the more necessary and important qualifications for such a work—the supernatural disposition. And that they may be better understood, we shall put forward a few ideas upon the supernatural in general and upon sanctifying grace in particular, with all its effects and surroundings, as preliminaries to serve for the right understanding of the whole chapter.

#### ARTICLE I.

##### *The Supernatural.*

WHEN we speak of the supernatural the first idea which presents itself to our minds is something above and beyond nature; and the first question which arises about it is, What necessity is there for the supernatural? Cannot man develop himself and attain to his ultimate destiny without the supernatural—that is to say, without that mysterious power hidden above and beyond nature?

We have never been able to fully realize the reason why the human mind abhors so much the supernatural. One of the most likely reasons to account for such fact is the want of knowledge, the failing to take in the true, adequate idea of the supernatural, which is so simple and at the same time so convincing, so comprehensive, and so enticing. Let us try to put it in its best light and in its boldest relief.

Those who abhor the supernatural break up God's works into fragments, and, rejecting the best, retain the smallest and the most insignificant, so to speak, in the whole assemblage. They consider nature and man as being the sum total of God's

works and the only effect of his action, as well as the whole extent of his creative design. Looking upon nature and man as such—that is, as the furthest term of God's works—it is plain, nay, logical, to suppose that nothing else is wanted in order that nature and man may develop themselves and attain their ultimate end by natural forces and agents. This might be granted in the supposition, though some philosophers would demur from such conclusion, as they insist that even if man were the last and best of God's works he would need the supernatural in order to develop himself; for they argue that the natural and ultimate end of intellectual beings cannot be realized in the contemplation of created truth—for that would never satisfy the craving of intelligence—nor in the contemplation of infinite truth abstractedly apprehended—because neither would this satisfy its yearnings—but must be in the immediate intuition of infinite truth. The ultimate end of man, therefore, these philosophers reason, being in the immediate contemplation of infinite truth, and this act being beyond the reach of all natural forces, it necessitates the supernatural to enable man to attain his natural end.

But granting, for the sake of argument, that natural forces are sufficient for the ultimate development of man's nature and for the attainment of his ultimate perfection, we say this might be conceded if man were the only and the best of God's works.

But the case does not stand thus. Man forms but a small part of a great whole and vast design. The plan of the universe which God has selected, and which should most joyfully be admitted, were it only for the beauty and eminent exaltation to which it raises man, is by far more extensive and more magnificent. The best work of God, that which he intended first, and for the sake of which other things were created, is the personal union of the infinite with the finite, or the Incarnation, as we have explained it in the first book. This personal union implies two more unions: one is the beatific union, or the immediate intuition of the Infinite seen in himself just as he

is, and another is the supernatural—that is, a force of intelligence and of will beyond and above the two respective natural faculties, contemplating and loving that same infinite with a contemplation and love greater by far than those of the natural faculties, or, in other words, Beatific Vision in an incipient and inchoate state. The Incarnate Word comprehends in himself these two other unions besides the personal union of human nature with the divine person. All the other works of God were made for this, and for this alone; for it alone attains the end of God in acting outside himself, the best possible manifestation of his infinite excellence and goodness. As man, therefore, is intertwined with the whole system of God's works as a part, and as the end of the whole system is supernatural, the end of man must needs be supernatural also, and, therefore, attainable by supernatural means.

Having premised these few ideas on the necessity of the supernatural, we define it as being *something in its cause, in its nature and faculties, in its object and its end, beyond and above any created nature and energy.*

It is something beyond and above any created nature and force in its *cause*: because God employs a greater energy in effecting it than he does in the creation of substances.

In its nature and faculties: because the supernatural is a new energy added to nature, but far superior to it in intensity of being.

In its object: because the object of this new energy is God, not as intelligible but as superintelligible.

In its end: because the end of the supernatural is to bring man in contact with Christ, and through him to the Beatific Vision, or immediate contact with the Trinity.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Sanctifying Grace.*

This part of the supernatural is a new union of the three divine Persons with man's soul above all natural union, by

which the Trinity effect a new and superior likeness of their essence and personalities, and engraft it upon the essence and faculties of the soul, and enable it to apprehend and love them as a personal friend.

Let us explain the definition. And, first, it is to be observed that God's essence, the fulness of infinite perfection, is concrete and terminated by three divine personalities—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The first termination, not born of or originated from another principle, but connatural with the essence, is the principle of the other two Persons. The first termination is active intelligence. He intelligences himself and his nature perennially and permanently in consequence of his activity and eternity, and fully comprehends himself and his nature in force of his infinity. The term and result of this act is an intellectual conception worthy of, and fully adequate to, the act, and consequently infinite. We have, therefore, God, active intelligence, first termination of the Godhead ; God understood, second termination.

God intelligencing all his infinite perfections in and through his conception takes complacency in him and loves him as the substantial expression of his infinite excellence and plenitude of being. God conception takes complacency in the Father and loves him as the principle and pattern of his being.

This mutual admiration, love, and bliss is the third termination of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost.

When a soul is united to God by sanctifying grace the whole Godhead is reproduced in the soul in a finite manner, to be sure, but in such a manner as to be infinitely superior to anything in the sphere of natural creation. God effects in it a new principle, a new energy, which is an expression, a portrait, a similitude of his infinite essence and nature—a new energy which is the principle of two subordinate energies, supernatural intelligence and love.

Inasmuch as this new energy is a principle of the subordinate energies, it represents the first Person. The first subor-



dinate energy, proceeding from the radical principle, is the expression of the second; the other subordinate energy, proceeding from both, is a portrait of the third.

This idea of sanctifying grace is in perfect harmony with that given by the Holy Scriptures. That it is a new union with the Godhead is apparent from these words of our Lord:

*“If any one love me he will keep my commandments, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.”* \*

*“The charity of God is poured out into our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.”* †

*“Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* †

That the effect of this union is a new energy and a new principle is proven by the following texts:

*“He hath begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning of his creature.”* §

*“He hath given us very great and precious promises, that we might be made partakers of his divine nature.”* ||

*“Every one that is born of God does not sin, for his seed remaineth in him.”* ¶

Finally, we remark that sanctifying grace being destined to reach an end, which is the Beatific Vision and possession, it follows that it is capable of increase and gives rise to the faculties of supernatural faith, hope, and charity, which, by union with their respective objects, develop that new energy and bring it to its ultimate perfection.

The object of these faculties is God, but under different aspects. God, as being supreme, eternal, and infallible truth, who declares himself to men supernaturally and superintelligibly, is the object of supernatural intelligence or faith; God, as being supremely faithful and true to his promises, is the object of supernatural hope; God, as being supreme and infinite goodness, is the object of supernatural charity.

\* St. John.

§ St. James.

† St. Paul.

|| St. Peter.

‡ St. Paul, 1 Corinth.

¶ St. John.

This new energy, in its nature and faculties being finite and contingent, requires the permanence of the supernatural action of God in order to continue to exist, and also to prompt those faculties to action, to accompany and to aid them in their action, as well as to bring their act to perfect actuality or existence. The permanence of the action of God causing this energy and faculties is called *habitual grace* respectively to the essence of this new energy, habits or virtues respectively to the faculties. The action of God prompting these faculties to action is called preceding grace; the action aiding them, concomitant grace; the aid perfecting the action, subsequent grace. All these three last, by a common name, are called actual grace.

A sanctified being, therefore, is a person in supernatural union with the Trinity by that new supernatural being which is effected in him, and which breaks into three faculties or habits of faith, hope, and charity, which, by developing themselves through new acts, develop also that supernatural new being and bring it to perfection. But the reader must remark that what really sanctifies the person is the habit of charity. Hence it is to be carefully kept in mind that the supernatural new being is what, in theological language, is called the *character*, which can never be lost, even when all the habits of faith, hope, and charity are lost. Sanctification lies in the virtue of charity, which really unites the two wills, the supreme will of God and the will of the finite person; because it is only when a person is in actual contact with the supreme principle of morality that he can be said to be holy and just. Now, it is in the supreme will of God, identical and conformable as it is with his eternal intelligence of right, that the supreme principle of morality lies; therefore it is when the will of man is united by personal contact with the supreme will of God that he can be said to be sanctified, holy, and just, and that personal contact is realized only by means of the virtue of charity. But in speaking of the supernatural being and its faculties, in order to give a full and complete idea of it, we

must also speak at some length of the gifts, fruits of the Holy Ghost, the beatitudes, and of the different modifications which, under the causality of the same Holy Spirit, it may exhibit.

## ARTICLE III.

*Gifts of the Holy Ghost.*

By gifts of the Holy Ghost we mean certain permanent modifications which may affect this new supernatural being and faculties, and which render them easily amenable to the promptings of the same Spirit. "They are," says St. Thomas,\* "certain perfections granted to man by which he is fitted to follow the instincts of the Holy Ghost."

To understand them clearly we must distinguish in these gifts the habit itself from the act. It is to be observed that the acts of virtues we generally perform do not surpass the ordinary degree according to which they are practised by the generality of the just and righteous, and in that case they belong, strictly speaking, to the three supernatural habits of faith, hope, and charity.

But acts of virtues oftentimes go out of the ordinary way; they have something heroic and divine in them; and, consequently, in order that they may be possible, a particular impulse and action of the Holy Ghost is required.

These internal motions, directed to extraordinary and supernatural acts, are the *acts* of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

But the habit of the gift is a supernatural quality, which is infused in us along with the supernatural being, and especially with sanctifying grace, resting and leaning on both; and its office is to render our supernatural faculties easily inclined to obey the Holy Ghost whenever, by some particular instinct and motion, he urges us to such acts. It is called *habit*, because it is permanent; and though the Holy Ghost may not always

\* 1a, 2dæ, quest. lxxviii. art. iii.

prompt us to extraordinary acts, yet he keeps us ready to adhere to his impulse whenever he is pleased to impress them on us.

These habits are seven, four belong to the supernatural faculty of faith, and three to the other virtues.

The first is that of wisdom, which is a most pure and simple light given to our supernatural intelligence, enabling us not only to know and judge of supernatural and divine truths, but to taste them, as it were, with a supernatural delight.

It is a light, and produces in the soul such certainty about divine truths that if, by supposition, all the witnesses of them and all the motives of credibility were to fail, the mind would still most firmly and tenaciously adhere and cling to them. It generates also an esteem for God's infinite excellence greater than which not all the tongues of men and of angels glorifying and exalting his infinite perfections could effect; because these, acting outside the soul, could not engender even the shadow of that conception which God impresses upon the soul by this sublime gift. But its greatest prerogative is to judge of divine truths with a certain feeling or taste, because *sapientia* means a tasteful knowledge filling the soul with delight; and therefore can we understand why this gift impresses the soul with such certainty about divine truths, because it is an experimental delightful knowledge of the truth, and, therefore, most deeply eradicated in the spirit.

The gift of intellect is a divine light added to our supernatural intelligence, enabling it to penetrate most swiftly and profoundly into the great perfections of God, and is distinguished from wisdom in this: that the latter implies experimental tasteful knowledge, whereas the province of the former is to penetrate intimately into the truth.

It engenders admiration and ravishment, because the discovery of sublime truths naturally astonishes and entrances the intellect.

The gift of knowledge is a light infused into our soul by the

Holy Ghost, by which the soul forms a right judgment of what it must believe, and, according to the knowledge of things which are credible, regulates its operations with regard to what it must do or omit doing.\* Hence the gift of knowledge does not immediately refer to God as its object, but to our human acts only; because the office of this gift is to manifest by its light to the intellect what it must with safety believe or not believe, and, consequently, regulates the exercise of our faith. The difference, therefore, between the two former gifts and knowledge is this: the two former regard divine things in themselves and render us attached to them; the latter only manifests to us the credibility of these truths, and thus establishes faith in our minds and regulates our operations according to the dictates of the same faith.

The gift of counsel is light by which the Holy Ghost makes us know in particular cases what we must do or omit doing in order to acquire perfection and eternal salvation. This gift is distinguished from the other three in this: that wisdom, intellect, and knowledge, teach only in general what is to be done to acquire our supernatural end—one by the high experimental knowledge of God; the other by penetrating deeply and profoundly into divine things; the third by the knowledge of truths to be believed,—but they do not descend to particular operations. The regulating of these belongs to the gift of counsel.

The remaining gifts have to do with the supernatural will. That of fortitude is a powerful movement by which the Holy Ghost strengthens our supernatural will, in order that it may encounter what is hard and difficult and overcome all hardships which may be found in the service of God. As a gift, fortitude is distinguished from the moral virtue of the same name because the latter strengthens against common difficulties, the first against uncommon and extraordinary difficulty.

The gift of piety, according to St. Thomas, is a divine ray which enlightens the mind and inclines the heart to give God

\* St. Thomas.

that worship which is due him, and to succor our neighbor as the image of God. And here we must, to understand this gift well, consider in what it is distinguished from certain virtues akin to it. Worship is a protestation which we make to God of his infinite excellence. We can make this protestation to him with the submission of our hearts and mind, and then we have interior worship. This internal submission may be expressed by external acts, such as oblations, sacrifices, vocal prayers, and the like, and then we have exterior worship. If such worship is paid to God as the creator and provident ruler of the universe, it belongs to the virtue of religion. If it is rendered to him as a most amiable Father, who deserves every demonstration of reverence and respect, then it originates in the gift of piety.

Again, we may help our neighbors for several motives. If we help them because the act is good in itself, and out of pity for them, the act takes its rise from the virtue of mercy; but if we help them because they are the living images of our heavenly Father, it springs then from the gift of piety.

Fear is a reverential affection infused into us by the Holy Ghost, by which we fear to be separated from God. It is to be remarked that there are three kinds of fear—human, servile, and filial. The human fear by no means belongs to the gift of the Holy Ghost, as it comes from an inordinate fear of losing some worldly advantage. Servile fear is that which causes us to fear God in consequence of the punishment threatened against those who keep not his law. Filial is that which causes us to fear offending God because we love him as Father and would not like to offend him. The latter is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

With the gift of wisdom corresponds the seventh beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God," either because wisdom directs everything to God, and that peace consists in this right direction, or because wisdom renders us insensible to anything which might disturb our

hearts. For he who is possessed of wisdom, being used to taste the sovereign good, has no taste left for temporal good and cannot easily be affected by temporal evil.

The fruit of the Holy Ghost corresponding to this gift is the fruit of faith, because tasting divine things attaches itself more firmly to believing them, and the experimental knowledge which it has of them enhances most wonderfully their evidence.

The beatitude corresponding with the gift of intellect is, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." This purity, according to St. Thomas, extends itself to all the powers of the soul in banishing from it everything which excites the passions and the inordinate movements of the appetites, the vicious affections of the will, errors and false maxims of the intelligence. It regulates, also, the imagination in such a manner that no thought comes to the spirit but according to time and place, and lasts no longer than is necessary for the action to be performed. The fruit of the Holy Ghost relating to this gift is also faith, as perfected by it.

The beatitude corresponding to the gift of science is, "Blessed are they who mourn," because the knowledge which the Holy Ghost gives shows our defects, the miseries of this world, the vanity of all things, and raises a kind of permanent wail in the soul. The fruit of faith, as perfecting the knowledge of our acts and of creatures, refers to this beatitude.

"Blessed are the merciful" is analogous to the gift of counsel, because, as St. Augustine remarks, God never fails to assist by his light those who assist others.

"Blessed are the meek" corresponds with the gift of piety, because meekness, taking away all impediments from the acts of piety, aids it in its development.

The beatitude corresponding to the gift of fortitude is, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice," because those who have the strength of the Holy Ghost have insatiable desire to do and to suffer great things. The fruits of the Holy Ghost, magnanimity and patience, belong to this gift.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit” relates to fear, because this absence of attachment to honors, riches, and the like is a necessary consequence of the fear of God, which makes us entirely submissive to his will at all times and under all circumstances. The fruits of temperance, modesty, and chastity belong to this gift—temperance and chastity, because in moderating the use of the comforts of life and the pleasures of the body they contribute with the gift of fear to check concupiscence; modesty, because nothing like it enhances so much the fear of God.

#### ARTICLE IV.

##### *Extraordinary Supernatural Grace.*

The supernatural world consists of the supernatural being, with its three distinct faculties or habits of faith, hope, and charity, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, four of which, we have seen, relate to the supernatural faculty of faith, and three to the supernatural will. To these correspond the eight beatitudes and the fruits of the Holy Ghost. It is the doctrine of St. Thomas, followed by other theologians, that one degree of sanctifying grace habitually carries along with it all these other things in a corresponding degree, such as the gifts, etc. The acts of these gifts are produced extraordinarily under the actual influence of the Holy Ghost, but the habits are ordinary and follow necessarily sanctifying grace.

But there are some particular graces or acts of the same gifts which are not at all necessary or essential to sanctity, as there can exist the most exalted and sublime sanctity without any of them. These are all those graces spoken of in mystical theology, and which, though not essential to sanctity, are eminently significant of, and conducive to, it. Of these we must speak to complete the idea of Catholic hagiology before we make the application to Mary; and as we are not writing a treatise on mystical theology, we must necessarily be content with giving a simple sketch.



Let the reader suppose that the Holy Ghost, by an extraordinary action upon a soul, enables it to see all eternal and sublime truths, not by meditation or discourse or piecemeal, as ordinary intellects must do, but in a manner very much like his own divine knowledge—by a single glance, an intuition; and let this glance or intuition be accompanied by a certain divine delight or taste in the beauty and attractiveness of the same divine truths, and he may acquire an idea of the first of the extraordinary graces we are speaking of, which is called contemplation.

Let him suppose that the same infinite God gives this one who is already contemplating as much divine light as to be able to see and feel his presence, and, as it were, to taste it, and he will grasp the idea of the second of these graces—the *prayer of quiet*.

But let this same light be increased, so that the presence of God is felt and tasted, as penetrating the very interior, the very essence of the soul, and let that sentiment of delightful taste of God's presence fill it with joy and jubilee, so that the soul, carried away by that joy, breaks forth in disconnected sentiment and proposals of love like one inebriated, and we shall have the nature of the third of these graces—inebriation of love.

Let God deepen and increase that light, so as to fasten the intellect upon divine perfections in such a manner as not to be able to attend to other objects, and let that tasteful knowledge and sense of the Godhead penetrate the soul so deeply as to cause it to be entirely lost in him, and we shall have the fourth of these graces—contemplation of union.

But let this light increase and augment so powerfully as to abstract the soul from attending to the senses; we shall have the grace of *ecstatic union*.

Let God give this light so suddenly and with such a force, like a powerful flash of lightning, as not only to snatch the soul from the sense but take it up in him; we have the union

of rapture. And, finally, let this light and taste be increased so much as to draw and concentrate all the powers of the soul into its substance, touched most sweetly and delicately by God and the Holy Ghost, and there let the soul contemplate him and be united with and transformed in him, so as to live in him, breathe his very love, and be in *fact* inseparable from him, and we shall have an idea of the last of these graces—spiritual marriage.

We have necessarily been obliged to give only a sketch of these sublime graces, and perhaps it may not be easy for the generality of our readers to grasp the idea of each or all of these graces; but let it be remarked that divine things have their likeness in creation, and that divine love has its echo or distant impression in human love, and that both follow the same phases.

Now, by remarking the phases of human love we may possibly illustrate the sublime phases of divine and extraordinary love.

I see a person endowed with great natural gifts, and also with virtues; and by considering each of them successively, and little after little, I acquire an esteem for that person. A lover sees all those gifts and virtues at a glance and by intuition, and, as it were, tastes and delights in them. I meditate them, as I consider them piecemeal. He contemplates them, as he can see them, as it were, by intuition and at one glance.

Let this love increase, so that the mere presence of his loved one satisfies him and fills him with delight, so as to wish for nothing more than a mere silent and still contemplation of that delightful presence, and he may be said to converse silently—as the saint grown already to the necessary height of love is satisfied with the presence of God and prays with a prayer of quiet.

But suppose this love so full, so great, so overpowering that the possession of the loved one fills him with such stirring jubilee, with such extravagant joy, that he must break forth in pas-

sionate and disconnected sentiments and caresses of love ; we have inebriation of human love, as the inebriation of divine is that height of love which fills the soul with such ardor and such stirring jubilee that it must break forth in passionate and disconnected divine sentiments of love. But let this human love be carried to such an excess as to absorb all the faculties of the mind and all the feelings of the heart, in such a manner that the spiritual part of the person cannot attend to the requirements of sensible objects around him, and is, as it were, become abstracted ; we shall have a shadow of the ecstasy of love.

Here the comparison almost fails ; but still we might suppose a beloved object, with qualities real or imaginary, so attractive and so dazzling as to suddenly enrapture the beholder ; we have a faint image of the union of rapture.

Finally, let human love be carried so far as to transform one into another, make one live in the other and breathe his life ; this would give a still more faint image of spiritual bridal.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE APPLICATION TO MARY.

We have given a sketch of the supernatural world in its essence, faculties, and acts, both ordinary and extraordinary, in order to render what follows intelligible to the reader ; for it is not sufficient, in our opinion, to tell the reader what graces Mary was endowed with, without enabling him to understand what these graces were. Now, we come to describe what were these graces bestowed on Mary in order to fit her for her great and sublime dignity.

### ARTICLE I.

MARY, on the very first moment of her immaculate conception—that is, the very first moment of her life—was endowed with the whole assemblage of graces which form the supernatural world—that is, with the essence of the supernatural, with faith, hope, and charity, in which, properly speaking, lies sanctification, and with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the extraordinary acts just described—to an amount superior to the graces of all the angels and saints put together arrived at the summit of their perfection.

We undertake to prove this statement by various arguments drawn from the Fathers and doctors of the Church. And, in the first place, the statement is proven from the greatness of the grace which was absolutely demanded in order that Mary might be qualified for her unparalleled dignity.

The greatness of such grace is to be measured and proportioned, not by comparison with other creatures, but by a comparison with the dignity itself.

Now, this dignity, according to all the Fathers and doctors of the Church, is almost infinite, because it implies that the act of a creature must be raised to such an excess of sublimity,

of energy, of power, and honor as to terminate in, and have for its result, the same person whom an infinite power conceives from all eternity. This was natural to that infinite power, but not natural to a creature; and to befit such a creature for such an act, according to St. Bernardine of Sienna, it was required that she should be elevated to a certain almost equality with the Godhead, by a certain infinity and immensity of perfection such as have never been granted to any other creature.

Therefore the grace necessary to befit Mary for her dignity was so immense that, supposing it to have been granted by degrees, the first instalment, granted to her at the dawn of her existence, must, taking into consideration the proportion to the totality, have been such as to surpass the graces of all the angels and saints put together arrived at the acme of their perfection.

St. Thomas furnishes another reason: The more anything approaches to a certain principle or cause of any kind, the more it partakes of the action, effect, or influence of that principle. Thus, the nearer we draw to a heated body, the more we feel the heat it transfuses around. Hence St. Denis concludes from this principle that, as the angels are nearer to God, the fountain of all perfection, they partake more than men of his infinite goodness.

Now, Jesus Christ is the principle of grace authoritatively as God, by way of instrument as to his humanity; therefore whosoever is more or less near to him partakes more or less of the fulness of his grace. And who could be, even at the first instant of her conception, nearer to Jesus Christ than that sublime creature he had chosen for his mother? Who could claim a nearer relationship, a relationship closer than which cannot exist between two persons, and after which comes only identity of person? Therefore she partook, more than any or all creatures put together, of the fulness of his grace.

St. Bernard adds another reason: The cause of every grace is the love of God for us. Now, love is essentially diffusive—

that is to say, if we could, when we love and cherish a person, endow him with the utmost perfection, we would do it at once; because to love is to will good to one. In God love is not, like ours, in most cases barren and unproductive; it is creative. Therefore for God to love is to give, to endow with grace, to scatter perfections, to render lovely, and to do so in proportion to the intensity of his love. Now, at the dawn of her existence God loved Mary, and loved her better than all creatures together at any period of their existence, because he loved her as his future mother. Consequently, he made her lovely by grace above each and all created loveliness.

“In illo instanti conceptionis plus amabatur a Deo quam ceteri sancti, quia amabatur ut mater futura” (St. Bern., ep. clxxiv.)

Finally, Mary, at the first moment of her existence, was the future co-operatrix—that is to say, the secondary instrumental cause of all graces; or, in other words, the secondary means by which any creature is enabled to please God. Therefore it follows that at that moment she must have pleased God more than all creatures put together at any or the last period of their meritorious life. For in this lies the office of mediator: to be more acceptable to God than all those who are to benefit from that mediatorship. This being more acceptable to God means to be endowed with more graces, virtue, excellence, perfection than all those for whom the mediatorship is exercised. Therefore, etc.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Consequences of this Principle.*

It follows from this principle that the supernatural essence granted to Mary, or new energy, or entity, or by whatever name it may be called, was, in intensity of being, superior to the united supernatural essence of all the angels and saints.

2d. That her mind was gifted with a supernatural intelligence or faith greater than that of all creatures.

That she had a confidence and trust in God more childlike, trusting, and unwavering than all these creatures put together ; that she loved God in a manner wholly perfect, the like of which cannot be found in any or all creatures.

That at that very instant Mary was endowed with the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, together with the beatitudes and the fruits of the same Holy Spirit.

That at that very moment she was gifted with all those extraordinary favors bestowed by the Holy Ghost upon some saints, such as the gift of contemplation, prayer of quietude, inebriety of love, ecstasy, and spiritual bridal.

All these gifts and graces were in a degree indefinitely superior to those scattered upon all the rest of created persons.

Who, then, can contemplate, and much less describe, such an excess of spiritual loveliness, such a colossal tower of sanctity, such a prodigious display of God's beauty and tenderness, such an unfathomable abyss of gracefulness? It would require the mind of a cherub and the heart of a seraph, with a power of expression commensurate to both, to point the millionth part of such unparalleled grandeur.

Mary's mind must have basked in such a sea of light, of brightness, of splendor, in such an ocean of knowledge, in such an abyss of spiritual and supernatural vistas, in such extensive display of intellectual visions, of superintelligible realms—one grander, sublimer, loftier than the other, one more luminous, more dazzling, more attractive, more enrapturing than the other, one deeper, more profoundly, more intensely unfathomable than the other—that it is impossible to find anything to compare with it. Why, all the intellectual visions bestowed upon the saints upraised to the highest possible degree of contemplation must have been profound night when put alongside of the amazing splendor of Mary's vision, when put alongside of the successive lofty realms of intellectual kingdoms passing in review before her astonished intellect. This intense brightness, these supernatural visions, produced by the ador-

able Trinity dwelling in the very midst of the substance of Mary's soul, must so have illumined it and filled it with celestial brightness as to render her effulgent of purer, clearer, more dazzling splendor than ten millions of suns gathering their rays upon one single object.

Souls raised to such a height of union with God have the sentiment, the feeling of God—that is, the sentiment of the abyss of all perfections of eternity, immutability, immensity, infinity; of supreme intelligibility, wisdom, goodness, beauty, mercy, condescension, tenderness, sweetness, loveliness, infinite jubilee, and bliss. This light and sentiment of God, so grand, so immense, so beautiful, so exhilarating, dwelling in the very substance of Mary's soul, must have transformed her, so as to render her the most exquisite, the finest, the most finished, the most elaborate, the most perfect, the loveliest and best and purest and truest of God's images above all images; it must have rendered her almost another God by similitude, in finite manner, surely, but such as to surpass all others.

And what shall we say of the love which resulted from these operations of God in Mary's soul, from these effluvia of God's choicest and best caresses? We are told by mystical writers, such as St. Bernard, St. John of the Cross, and others, that in the spiritual marriage the Holy Ghost comes in a particular contact with the soul, gives it a particular touch, and that the soul at that moment feels the spiration of the Holy Ghost, as it were, by the Father and the Son, and that under that touch and that feeling the Holy Ghost raises the soul to be by similitude what he is by nature—the breath and the spiration, the kiss, the bond of union, the blessedness, the joy, the jubilee, the everlasting embrace of the Father and of the Son—so that the soul breathes, not, of course, naturally or by essence, but by transformation and similitude, that same breath of love which the Father breathes into the Son and the Son into the Father; that same bond of union, of concord, of peace, of infinite harmony, of infinite music; that same embrace, that same



everlasting blessedness. The soul, in this case, cannot simply be said to love God. No; it breathes his very love, it breathes the Holy Ghost. Oh! what must this love have been in Mary, if, at the very first moment of her spotless conception, she possessed all graces, gifts, caresses which have ever been granted to any or all creatures. How must she have been exalted, raised up, lifted to the very realms of God's infinite height, and from there, by transformation and communication, by the closest possible bridal, breathe with the breath of her soul a love so great, so intense, so pure, so exalted, so supereminent, a love not created or made, but the same eternal love of God, the Holy Spirit!

“Hic taceat et contremiscat omnis creatura quis eum audeat dicere tantæ dignitatis immensitatem.”—*St. Peter Damian.*

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Increase of Mary's Grace—its Particular Law.*

Having essayed to give an idea of Mary's grace, we come to speak of its natural increase and development. And to do this with clearness we must premise a few principles:

1st. That Mary never performed an indeliberate and indifferent act—that is to say, that she never performed an act without consciousness and knowledge of the end of the act; and whatever might be the nature of the act, whether indifferent in itself or good, it was always directed to God's honor and glory.

2d. That, consequently, every single action of Mary was free and meritorious.

3d. That Mary's merit was never interrupted, not even in sleep, because her mind and heart never ceased to be incessantly occupied with God, in consequence of the excess of union which was established between her and God.

4th. Mary threw into every single act she performed the whole intensity of her grace, virtues, and energy, God aiding her in proportion to the immensity of her grace.

5th. Consequently, Mary, in every action, doubled the amount of grace she was possessed of before the action.

These two last principles require some proof.

That which prevents men from acting with the full intensity and energy of their virtue are the impediments raised by our fallen nature and by concupiscence. In Mary it was otherwise; because, being conceived without, and being absolutely free from the sting of, sin, she never found any resistance to the exercise of any action with the full intensity of her virtue.

The second principle is proved by the fact that the habit of virtue, accompanied by an actual aid from God commensurate to the habit, is fully sufficient, according to theologians, to produce an action equal to the habit as to its intensity. Hence Mary, in every new action, doubled the amount of grace she was possessed of before the action—that is, every new action was equal to her former habit.

Now, taking these principles as guides, we can form an idea of the grace which Mary treasured up at every moment of her life. And to make our readers understand this increase, we shall suppose that Mary started from the first moment of her conception with one degree of sanctifying grace superior to the grace of all angels and saints. On this supposition we will give the computation of a great geometrician of the Society of Jesus, F. Claudius Riccardus. He says: "Suppose the space between the earth and the stars to be filled with so many grains; and suppose every grain to contain ten thousand smaller grains, each representing an angel endowed with as much grace as an angel arrived at his utmost perfection must have; and suppose Mary to have exercised two hundred acts of charity the first two hundred quarters of an hour of her life—the result would be that the amount of Mary's grace would be equal to one thousand five hundred and ninety-six millions, nine hundred and thirty-eight thousand and forty-four planets equal to ours, filled up with grains of mustard-seed, each grain containing ten thousand smaller grains, each

representing an angel or an apostle with so much grace and multitude of merits as had the supreme angel at the summit of his perfection; that is to say, that the grace of Mary in the first two hundred quarters of an hour of her life, supposing her grace at the first moment of her conception to have been superior to that of all angels and saints by one degree, exceeded in number one thousand nine hundred and ninety-six millions, nine hundred and thirty-eight thousand and forty-four worlds, each one full of grains, and each grain representing ten thousand angels, and each endowed with as much grace as St. Michael, the highest and the sublimest angel.”\*

What shall we say, then, if—suppose, as we must, that the superiority of Mary’s grace over that of angels and saints at the first moment of her conception was immense—what shall we say of all the years of her life, every moment of which was spent in performing acts of charity or of other virtues? What shall we say of the seventy-two years of such a life? It is with reason that, even considering the grace of disposition granted to her at the first moment of the conception and at its natural growth, we may exclaim with a holy father that hers was “*gratiæ abyssus immensa.*”

\* *De Vega.*

## CHAPTER V.

### EXTRAORDINARY GRACE OF DISPOSITION.

WE have hitherto spoken of the grace of disposition granted to Mary on the first moment of her conception, and of its growth by the meritorious acts of Mary; we must, in this chapter, treat of the extraordinary graces of disposition, or, as it were, of the last finishing touch of the supreme Artist in perfecting this wonder of his hands, this masterpiece of his tenderness, so that she might be the perfect mother of a divine Person.

It is admitted by theologians that Mary, previous to the Incarnation and the conception of the Son of God, received a most extraordinary augmentation of grace. This is proved by the following arguments:

1st. By the force of the words which the angel used at the Annunciation: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee." Now, we have proved that Mary possessed already, an excess of grace, as the other words fully indicate, "Hail! full of grace," which convey the idea of a certain plenitude of grace. What, therefore, must those words, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," mean, except an extraordinary intervention of the Holy Ghost with new gifts and caresses?

2d. The manner of the conception of the Son of God proves the same thing. This was to take place by the efficient and exemplar action of the same Spirit; that is to say, he was to be not only the active principle of the temporal generation of the Son of God, but also the typical and exemplar principle. This generation was to be effected after the pattern and model of that which distinguishes the Holy Ghost from the other persons, and which we may call the constituent of his person.

What is the constituent of the Holy Ghost—that which makes him to be the person he is?

This third Person in God is subsisting love or sanctity. Consequently, the generation of God's Son in Mary's womb was to be by an extraordinary influx of sanctifying grace.

The third reason is the extraordinary merit which Mary acquired by the consent which she gave to the mystery of the Incarnation, and which merited for Mary, by a title of fitness and seemliness, what our Lord himself merited by a title of justice.

But as we have proposed in this little work always to give a clear idea of things, we shall now proceed to explain in what consisted this extraordinary intervention of the Holy Ghost upon Mary, giving the last finishing touch to her sanctity.

Sanctity always implies knowledge; for it is divine love, and divine love never increases in a soul without supposing a growth of knowledge. This extraordinary influx, then, of the Holy Ghost in Mary's soul was an immense light imparted to her, in order that, as St. Augustine says, she "prius conciperet mente quam corpore."\*

This knowledge turned upon God, and especially the person of the Word, whom she was to conceive. Let us try to understand this. The Son of God is, in the first place, called Word. Now, to see the force of that expression, it is to be remarked that, according to philosophy, words or sounds are the signs of the affections or modifications of the soul, and it is a usual thing in the Scriptures to call the things meant to be expressed by the names or sounds which express it. It is necessary that the internal modifications of our soul which are expressed by external sounds should be called word; but whether this expression, *word*, should be applied, in the first place, to the exterior thing which is uttered by the word or to the internal conception of the mind, it is unnecessary to investigate at present. It is clear, nevertheless, that that

\* That she might conceive in the mind first, and then in the body.

thing which is signified by the voice, and which exists internally in the soul, existed before the word uttered by the external voice, because it is the principle of the existence of the latter. If, therefore, we would know what is meant by interior word, we must study what is implied in that which is uttered by the exterior voice.

Three things are to be considered in our intellect: the faculty of intelligence; the idea or form which the intellect takes in conceiving, as the eye assumes the form of the object it takes in; and the act of conceiving or understanding. Now, the sound uttered exteriorly by the voice means none of these three things. For suppose I utter the word stone; this does not signify either the substance of the intellect or the form or the act of understanding. That, therefore, is called interior word which the intellect forms in the act of understanding. Now, the intellect has two operations—one is the idea, the other the judgment. The first is the perception of the essence of a thing, the second the perception of the agreement or disagreement which two ideas have with each other. The idea or judgment formed in the intellect is expressed by the exterior voice; but the thing expressed by the exterior voice is called interior word, and refers to the intellect, not as something by which the intellect understands, but something in which it understands, because in that thing thus formed and expressed it sees the nature of the thing understood. Thus we have the signification of the sound *word*.

In the second place, we see from what we have said that the word is always something proceeding from an intellect actually existing, and also that the word is the reason and the similitude of the thing understood; if the intellect and the object understood be the same and identical with each other, the word is the reason and similitude of the intellect from which it proceeds; if it be different, then the word is not the similitude of the intellect from which it proceeds, but of the thing understood.

We must admit a word in every intellectual nature, because

it is in the essence of intelligence that the intellect should form something when it intelligences. This formation is called word; we must, therefore, suppose a word in every intelligent nature. There are three intellectual natures—the human, the angelic, and the divine; there are, therefore, three *words*—the human, the angelic, and the divine.

The divine Word differs from the human in three different ways: 1st. The human word is not formed, but is capable of being formed; as, for instance, when I want to perceive the essence of a stone, it is necessary that I should arrive at it by discourse and reasoning. But the divine Word is always in act.

2d. The human word is imperfect, because we cannot express all our conceptions by one word, but must use a variety of words to express the contents of our knowledge. It is not so in God; he expresses whatever he knows by his Word: “*Semel loquitur Deus.*” \*

Finally, our word is not of the same nature as ourselves; but the divine Word is identical in nature with God, and, therefore, something subsisting in the divine nature.

To sum up: the Word in the divine essence is a person; he is the similitude of Him from whom he proceeds, and co-eternal with him; also, that, as in every nature that which proceeds, having the likeness of him from whom he proceeds, is called the son, the Word in God, being identical in nature with God, from whom he originates, must be called Son.

The Holy Ghost, therefore, came upon Mary in a most extraordinary manner, raised her intellect by a most singular light of glory, such as to immensely surpass the light of glory of all the blessed put together, and admitted her to the beatific vision of God and that of the most Blessed Trinity, of the conception of the Word by the Father, and of the active and passive spiration of the Holy Ghost. Mary was plunged into the abyss of the divine essence and life, and saw face to face, as in a clear abyss, an immense ocean of splendor, the divine

\* God speaketh but once.

essence with its infinite perfections. She saw, as much as a finite being raised by a most intense and powerful light of glory may be made capable of, the divine intellect, the beginning and principle of the divine processions, the Father unborn and unbegotten, scan and fathom at one infinite glance the immense depth and profundity of his essence and perfections, the vast ocean of his attributes, the limitless sea of his excellence, and by that glance form an intellectual conception of his essence and attributes, and engender the Word immanently and co-eternally with him—the Word the most perfect, the brightest expression of himself, the infinite intellectual acknowledgment of himself. She saw, moreover, how the Father delights and takes complacency in this expression of himself, in this splendor of his substance, in this stamp of his essence; how the Son, contemplating himself as the conception of the Father, delights and takes complacency in him; how both, by this mutual delight in each other, rush towards each other in a mutual, infinite, blissful embrace; and how this mutual love and embrace breathing from both is the Holy Ghost, the bond of union, the substantial love, the practical acknowledgment of both, their infinite joy. Mary saw all this in a manner beyond all conception. She saw all this, and she conceived in the mind first the Eternal Word of God. This conception drew her whole essence, her nature, her faculties, her heart towards that Eternal Word. Under the influence of that conception she was transformed, changed into another being—not human, but divine—by participation. She became all light, all splendor, all glory, all brightness, all affection, all love; her soul was like a piece of crystal under the full effulgence of ten thousand suns. She drew from that vision torrents, abysses, oceans of blessedness, of sanctity, of love. This overflowed into her body, and exalted it, sanctified it in a most admirable manner. Fixed in that beatific contemplation of the eternal generation, she also saw a soul created—the human soul of her divine Son—the very masterpiece, the *ne*



*plus ultra* of divine omnipotence and goodness, destined to be united to that sanctified portion of her immaculate flesh set apart for the formation of Christ's body; and in that beatific ecstasy and rapture she saw the Eternal Father from his bosom cast his infinite Word into hers, who took hold of that soul and that body, united them personally to himself, and was conceived in her bosom. She heard at this moment the harmonies and the music of thousands and tens of thousands of myriads of angels singing the "Verbum caro factum est"; and she remained absorbed, plunged, lost in the beauty, in the utter condescension of that infinite mystery—silent, almost, for the rest of her life; for such things brook no human utterance.

We trust that the reader will not be surprised at our saying that Mary was exalted at the moment of the Incarnation to the beatific vision of the eternal generation of the Son of God. This opinion is held by some doctors, especially St. Antonine and Albert the Great. To this must be added that St. Thomas and other doctors hold that Moses and St. Paul were exalted temporarily to the Beatific Vision.

Now, it is a principle of this science that all privileges granted to the saints must be predicated of Mary; it follows, then, that if the Beatific Vision was granted to Moses and St. Paul, we may, with greater reason, suppose it to have been granted to Mary at the moment of the Incarnation. For it was befitting that the temporal generation should be as much as possible like to the eternal. The Father conceives the Son by the beatific vision of his infinite essence and attributes; it was most proper, then, that Mary should conceive the same identical Son by the beatific vision of God's essence and attributes, and of the eternal generation of the same.

We would say a few words on the grace of the divine motherhood before concluding this part of Mary's perfections of disposition. By it we mean that particular grace which, strictly speaking, made her conceive the Son of God. Now,

according to theologians, this grace of motherhood is a form, a similitude of God ; a union with God immensely superior to the similitude of, and union with, God established by grace and by the Beatific Vision, and the root, source, and origin of the supremest sanctifying grace ; and the loftiest possible degree of Beatific Vision.

So that Mary was entitled, in consequence of this grace of maternity, not only to a sanctifying grace superior to that of angels and saints ; not only to a Beatific Vision towering far above the beatific vision of each and all the saints and angels, but to a grace and vision altogether distinct, apart, of its own kind, and not capable of comparison or parallel.

This grace of the maternity, though claiming this unique grace and bliss, is yet neither the one nor the other, but distinct, something of its own kind—that is, a form or similitude of a union with God so great, so high, so exalted, so sublime, so magnificent, so utterly colossal in its proportion as to baffle the gaze of created vision, and only known to Him who took his human nature from her. We may recall here the words of St. Bernardine of Sienna : “ That God should conceive a God no disposition was required ; but that a woman should conceive a God, it was the miracle of miracles, because it required, so to speak, that the Virgin should be raised to a certain divine equality by a certain infinity and immensity of perfection never granted to any other creature.” This certain divine equality spoken of by St. Bernardine is the grace of the divine Motherhood.

## CHAPTER VI.

### EXTRAORDINARY GRACE OF MARY AFTER THE INCARNATION— PERFECTION OF FORM.

AFTER the unparalleled accumulation of grace spoken of in the preceding chapters, it seems impossible that Mary could receive any addition to her grace. But we have remarked with St. Thomas that there may be supposed three kinds of fulness of grace—the fulness of preparation, the fulness of form, and the final fulness. We shall speak in this chapter of the second kind—that is, all the natural perfection which grace could receive, all the embellishments, so to speak, and touches with which it was in its own nature capable of being adorned.

And the first source of this natural embellishment is the grace called by schoolmen “*ex operæ operato*”—that is to say, that grace which was not given in consequence of the industry which that most happy soul exercised in her good works, but on account of Christ, who worked in her what was pleasing in his sight. We shall try to gather this accumulation of grace under certain distinct heads. For instance, who can understand the abyss of grace the eternal Word must have poured into her soul on his first reception into her virginal cloister? Who could fathom the outpouring of that same grace every moment of those nine months she carried him in her spotless womb? It seems to us that the Incarnate Word dwelling in that virginal cloister was like a river of life, like a torrent of divine caresses, like an abyss of heavenly perfections, like an ocean of infinite grace, like a sea of immense sanctity, surrounding all her soul, her faculties, her heart, and swelling and overflowing into her body.

Who could realize the excess of grace poured out into her soul by the incarnate Word at the moment when, wrapt up again in the beatific vision of the Godhead, she saw the eternal glory of God, his infinite and hidden life, as well as the nature and essence of the mystery of the Incarnation, and admired with the glance more ecstatic than a cherub's, and with the stirring emotions greater than a seraph's, how the Incarnate Word was born of her, like the sunbeam of midday going through a glass, without depriving her of that incomparable and sublime privilege which crowns her as Queen of virgins? Who could fathom the torrents of graces which rushed into her soul the first time that divine Infant opened his eyes and met the ecstatic and adoring gaze of Mary? Who can fathom the graces which were imparted to her every moment of the long thirty years he remained with her, accepting her services rendered to him with the love, with the tenderness of a mother, and at the same time with the awe, and respect, and adoration, and self-oblation of the humblest of creatures? Who can tell the graces she received every moment of his public life, every moment of his three days' sufferings; the graces she drew from his opened bosom and from his bleeding wounds every moment of his agony, when she stood at the foot of the cross with a magnanimity of courage worthy of the Mother of God, with the magnanimity of self-immolation worthy of the co-operatrix in our salvation, but with a sorrow so great, so intense, so excruciating as to raise her to the dignity of queen of martyrs; the graces at the Resurrection and the Ascension?

More than this, it is admitted that Mary lived twenty-four years and some months after the Ascension, during which time she received, according to the custom of the early Christians, holy communion every day; and that, consequently, she received her divine Son more than eight thousand eight hundred and fifty times. Now, it is well known that in the sacrament of the altar grace is received according to the disposition one is possessed of on approaching it. Mary's preparation was su-

perior to anything imaginable. What, then, must have been the treasures of graces, of sanctity, of delights, of love she must have drawn from the heart of her incarnate and sacramental Son, who under those veils could hide his presence from her, but not his love, not his caresses ! How she must have exulted and rejoiced, better than when she sang her Magnificat, when she felt in her own immaculate flesh the contact and the touch of the flesh of her Son, and recognized it as her own, and felt as if his most precious blood returned back again into her immaculate heart, and remembered all the hidden delights, all the raptures of love she had felt years ago when yet bearing him in her bosom !

But these things are too high for human conception, and still more for human utterance. We have written all we could about the grace and perfections of Mary, and we pause, dissatisfied with ourselves as having said next to nothing. We feel there is infinitely more ; we have glimpses of untold realms of beauty, but as we try to catch them and to put them in words they glide away like an apparition and leave us anxious and disappointed. But it matters not ; some day we trust that immaculate and sweet Mother will show them to us in that abode where she reigns queen of sanctity and loveliness over realms of God's choicest and best saints.

We shall speak of the final perfection of grace when treating of her glory.



## BOOK FOURTH.

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### *CONSEQUENCES OF MARY'S DIGNITY RELATIVELY TO GOD, TO THE HUMAN RACE, AND TO HERSELF.*

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We have seen in the preceding books the place which Mary holds in the plan of the universe, the twofold dignity she is invested with ; we have admired the greatness and enormous proportions of such dignity ; we have spoken of the perfections necessary to adorn and to fit her for such exalted office. We have, therefore, laid down all the principles of Mary's grandeur. To complete the work we must now study that dignity in its relations, and shall divide the book into three chapters. The first will treat of the consequences of Mary's dignity in relation to the Trinity ; the second in relation to the universe ; the third in reference to herself.





## CHAPTER I.

### CONSEQUENCES OF MARY'S DIGNITY RELATIVELY TO THE TRINITY.

Mary's office puts her in the closest possible relation with the three divine Persons; and, therefore, to fully understand this relationship we must view Mary in relation with each of the three divine Persons.

#### ARTICLE I.

##### *Mary's Relation with the Father.*

IN studying this first ineffable person who is denominated Father—because such is the constituent, or that which forms his person—we find three moments or stages, so to speak, in his paternity: one natural and essential, the other two voluntary and from choice.

The first is that which constitutes his personality. He is Father because he begets a Son by an essential, necessary act of his nature. God is necessarily intelligent, as we have remarked so often in this work. He is infinite intelligence itself, because his intelligence is not really distinct from his nature or essence, but identical with it; and as his nature is infinite, so is likewise his intelligence. Intelligence meaning the act of understanding an object, an infinite intelligence necessarily must understand an infinite object, which in this case must be the divine essence, as beyond it nothing is infinite. But to intelligence is not only to grasp an object by the act, but also to beget an idea of the object understood, an interior word or discourse, as the product of the act. God, therefore, by intelligencing himself produces or begets inside his intelligence a word or idea, an intelligible discourse of himself, who, being produced by an action essentially assimilative, such as is the

act of intelligencing, and being identical in nature to the conceiver is necessarily for these reasons called *Son*, and the conceiver *Father*.

This is the first moment of the paternity of the first Person—that of begetting naturally and necessarily a Son co-equal and consubstantial with him, the infinite expression of his excellence and love, and of all the depths of light and beauty hidden in his infinite essence.

But the first Person, in begetting his substantial expression of himself, can see, through his Son or Word, other expressions of himself, not adequate or infinite, but inadequate and limited. He can see, through his infinite Word, the possibility of an immense variety of finite expressions of himself, which he can produce into actual existence or not, just as it pleases him, as they are not at all necessary, since his infinite intelligence has had its adequate act in the generation of his infinite Word. He may or may not, therefore, give reality to this immense series of possibilities, and if he does it will only be a voluntary and free act of his intelligence.

Hence creation was an act of free intelligence and love. We say free intelligence and love, because, though God must necessarily have knowledge of all the finite possible expressions of himself, and in this sense his intelligence of them is necessary, yet whether his active intelligence will give them reality or not is absolutely free to him and rests within his free choice. God, we know, has created an immense variety of these finite expressions, among which hold the first rank intelligent creatures, both those who are pure spirits and those which are wedded to matter. These, more particularly because effected by an act also in its nature assimilative, and because they are a vivid image of the infinite beauty of the Creator, must be called *sons* of God, and God their Father. This is the second stage of the paternity of the first Person—the paternity of creation.

But God would not rest here. He willed to raise his intel-

ligent creatures to a higher dignity of *sonship*. He willed that his essential, natural Son, the infinite and adequate expression of himself, should be united personally to human nature, so as to render this particular human nature, strictly speaking, the Son of God; then, by effecting through an extraordinary display of his power a supernatural similitude of this same Son, and imparting it to created personalities, raise them to a supernatural union with the same Son, and looking upon them all bearing the supernatural similitude of, and union with, Christ as his only Son, begotten from all eternity.

Three moments, therefore, are to be found in the paternity of the Father, the first necessary and essential—the eternal generation of his Son; the other two free and of choice—paternity of creation and paternity of adoption.

.. Mary was elevated to the colossal dignity of being associated with the eternal Father as to these three moments of his paternity. For, in the first place, by a condescension without example, the eternal Father throws, so to speak, that same eternal Son whom he begets from all eternity in a rapture of infinite admiration of his nature and perfections, the infinite and substantial expression of his transcendental loveliness and excellence, into the bosom of Mary, there to be united with the material element which she has to administer, and to which, together with a human soul, the Word is to be hypostatically united, and arranges and combines that union so skilfully and wonderfully that the term of the operation of Mary, or the fruit and product of her conception, is not one imperceptible instant sooner or later than that union, but absolutely contemporaneous; so that we must necessarily say that the product of her conception is not anything human, but the divine person of the Word, because really and actually the conception of Mary results in that personality, and thus is Mary associated with the first moment of the paternity of the Eternal Father by having been raised to the sublime dignity of begetting the same identical Son.

Mary is associated with the Eternal Father, as to the other two moments of his paternity, in two ways : First, because, in the series of created or regenerated beings, or in the hierarchy of existences, we must also consider those existences or beings which hold an inferior rank as somewhat means or instruments in relation to those which hold a superior rank and stand higher in the series. Hence we must hold that minerals were made for the vegetable kingdom, this for the animal kingdom, the animal kingdom for man, man for angels, men and angels for Mary, Mary for Jesus Christ, and he, the best possible manifestation of God's goodness and infinite excellence, for God.

This principle is also to be taken in a twofold sense. The first is that the superior being is somewhat the reason and cause of the existence of the inferior ; and, secondly, in its own nature and perfections it serves as a type or model after which to form the inferior being. In a word, in the series of existences, both of the natural and of the supernatural order, the superior being is first, the reason of the existence of the inferior, and serves as the type and model for its nature and perfections.

Mary was associated with the Eternal Father, as to these two kinds of paternity, in this double sense : as reason and as model—as reason, because she is the highest possible created personality, and, as such, the reason of the existence of the natural and supernatural worlds, with their respective perfections ; as model, because Mary's perfections, natural and supernatural, were the type and pattern after which were to be fashioned all the perfections of the natural as well as the supernatural worlds.

The first thought explains those texts of the Scriptures which the Church, in her ritual, applies to Mary, such as the words of Proverbs, ch. viii. v. 22 :

“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything from the beginning.

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

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

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

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

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

"When he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters :

"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.

"I was with him forming all things."

Of course the literal sense of these words of the Proverbs apply to the Eternal Word, and also to the Incarnate Word ; but in the sense above explained they apply to Mary, because she was the reason existing in the mind of God for the existence of the world.

The second thought opens a yet more beautiful horizon of the glory of Mary. For God, when scattering with bountiful hand perfections and loveliness all over creation, was merely portraying the perfections which he would one day accumulate upon this magnificent personality, whose type, formed and existing from all eternity in his infinite mind, was guiding his hand in the scattering of those gifts and perfections.

In this theory lies the philosophy of that symbolism which the Fathers have found in everything, every personage, every type of the Scripture, as regarding Mary ; for they, regarding Mary's ideal existence in God's mind as the model of the nature and perfections of all other creatures, naturally would see in everything a symbol of Mary's gifts and perfections.

What we have said of the natural we must repeat of the

supernatural world; for all the graces scattered among men and angels were like so many rays thrown here and there from that immense focus of light and beauty which was to be Mary's soul. "Thou art all fair. Many daughters have gathered together riches. Thou hast surpassed them all."

"Propter ipsam," we conclude with the profound expression of St. Bernard—"propter ipsam totus mundus factus." These words of the sweetest of all the Fathers of the Church have been taken as a pious exaggeration. The pious exaggeration is in the mind of those ignorant ones who fail to perceive the eminently philosophical sublimity of that saying.

Mary is associated with the paternity of the Father, in its two free moments, also in consequence of her dignity of having been made the arbiter of God's external action.

We have proved that God would not effect the Incarnation without the free and deliberate consent of Mary; and as the Incarnation is the first cause, after God, of everything, it follows that he would not effect that which caused everything without Mary's consent. To her, therefore, is to be ascribed, as to a secondary cause, the creation of the natural as well as of the supernatural world.

Being associated with the three moments of the paternity of the Eternal Father, Mary fully deserves that title given to her by the Fathers of Spouse of the Eternal Father.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Mary's Relation with the Son.*

We have said so often that Mary is the Mother of the Son of God. This relation is the greatest and the closest possible which can be conceived between a creature and a divine Person. Run over as one may all the possible unions which may be conceived, and we can never find one so great and so close as that which passes between Mary and God's Son.

The soul, for instance, is united to the body by the closest

possible union, yet death easily breaks that asunder. Closer still is the union of a soul with a beloved object, according to the philosophical saying that a loving soul becomes the object loved by transformation; yet is this union often broken when hatred and anger separate hearts which seemed knit together for ever. But no closer nor more permanent relationship can be conceived than that which exists between parent and offspring.

We shall consider it in two different aspects, in the Incarnation and in the intimate life which it established between Mary and her Son.

In the Incarnation, because Mary's flesh became the flesh of the Son of God. "*Caro Christi caro est Mariæ,*" says St. Augustine. And that substance which Mary administered from her own blood for the conception of Jesus Christ, after having once been hypostatically united with the divine Word, has never been changed by any natural transformation. "*Et quamvis gloria resurrectionis fuerit glorificata, eadem tamen mansit quæ assumpta est de Maria*" (St. Augustine).

"Whilst God," says St. Bernard, "is with all by union of wills, he is, in a particular manner, in Mary by a union so intimate as to unite to him not only her will but her own flesh in such a manner that his own substance and Mary's form but one—Jesus Christ." In this sense St. Peter Damian said: "God being in everything in three different ways, in the Virgin he was in a fourth manner—that is, by identity, because he is the same as she is." \*

This identity of blood implies, between Jesus Christ and Mary, a similarity of formation, of features, of inclinations, of tastes, of virtues; not only because identity of blood very frequently creates such a similarity, but because, in Mary's case, her maternity being altogether a supernatural fact, the effect of overwhelming grace, this grace, taking hold of this more or

\* "*Cum Deus in omnibus rebus sit tribus modis, in Virgine fuit quarto particulari modo, scilicet per identitatem, quia idem est quod ipsa.*"

less general principle of nature, developed it in her in such a manner as to make her the living image and portrait in everything of her divine Son, so that whosoever could see her could admire the most exquisitely formed image of Jesus Christ.

“The Father,” says St. Augustine (Serm. xx.), “engenders the Son co-equal and consubstantial with him, the full image and splendor of himself; and as the Father, so the Son. On earth the Virgin, to the amazement of all nature, engendered her own Creator, who is God, and, in consequence of his humanity, consubstantial heir of the Mother; and as the Mother, so the Son.”

This same relation of motherhood established between Mary and her Son an intimacy not only as to intercourse and communion of life, but as regards an interchange of hearts and of secrets; so that she was the mirror reflecting all the thoughts, feelings, aspirations, desires, and purposes of Jesus, as he, in his turn, reflected in a more eminent manner, as in an unspotted mirror, the miracle of purity, of love, of devotedness, of immense charity which was the soul of Mary. Mary could, therefore, say with greater reason than the Apostle of the Gentiles: “I live, not I: it is Jesus who lives in me.”

Finally, this same relation of motherhood implied on the part of Mary a kind of authority over Jesus Christ—the authority of a parent over his offspring. It is true our Lord was God, and, as such, no creature could have authority over him; consequently, if we limit our observation strictly to his person, Mary could claim no authority over Jesus.

But then this is true of the Eternal Father also, who, strictly speaking, can have no authority over his Son's personality, as he is God, co-equal and consubstantial with him.

But as the Eternal Father is the principle of the Word, he can claim an authority over him—an authority not of superiority on the part of the Father, nor of inferiority on the part of the Son, but an authority of order; so that the Word is subject to the Father, not because inferior in nature to him,



but because dependent upon him for his personality. So Mary can claim authority over Jesus Christ, not, by any means, because she is superior to, or even equal with, her Son, but because she is his mother; and, consequently, Jesus is subject to her, because dependent upon her for his human nature.

In other words, we may well conceive that it is possible to have authority over one person, without its being at all necessary that the person having authority be superior in nature or merit to the person over whom the authority is claimed; but it is sufficient that the right exist, founded on a just title. The title of principle or parent is sufficient to establish a right of authority, it being altogether accidental that the person over whom it is exercised should be superior to the person exercising it.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Mary's Relation with the Holy Ghost.*

Mary's relation with the third Person is established by the fact that she was, in a particular manner, the living temple, the sanctuary of that august Person.

That which makes the third Person to be what he is, or, in other words, that which constitutes his personality, is love or charity, as he is the personal love of the Father and of the Son.

When this God-love, therefore, communicates his grace to a soul, he communicates *himself*, and the soul becomes then the indwelling place, the temple and sanctuary of the Holy Ghost.

But to no soul did the Holy Ghost communicate himself so abundantly, so lavishly, and so profusely as to Mary's soul. For his yielding himself to her was so overwhelming, so magnificent that Mary was steeped in love, soaked through and through with love; she became all love, another Holy Ghost, so to speak, or rather one with him by transformation. And this was necessary, because the conception of our Lord in Mary

was to be the effect of this same love. It was not to be the work of man, but the work of the Most High: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and, therefore, the Holy One which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of the Most High."

The body of Christ, the union of that body with his human soul, the union of both with the second Person of the Trinity, was to be altogether and exclusively the work of the Holy Ghost; and he effected it by plunging Mary's soul into such an abyss of love, of divine charity, of living flame, of blazing fire that this very same love, after having filled her soul to the brim, so to speak, overflowed into her body and spiritualized it, sanctified it, divinized it, made it all a pure flame of divine love; and the fruit of such transformation was the conception of Jesus.

The relation, therefore, of Mary with the Holy Ghost, as sanctuary of that august Person, was distinct from any other in intensity, in magnificence, in result.

## CHAPTER II.

### MARY COMPLETES THE TRINITY.

When we speak of Mary completing the Trinity, we cannot, of course, be understood to mean any necessary, absolute, and internal completion of the life of the Godhead. Such a thing would be absurd and would plunge us into pantheism, the very error against which we are combating in all our little works. God is absolute perfection, and, therefore, incapable of any development or completion.

But there is a sense in which we can say with truth that Mary, by her co-operation, completes the Trinity. God has a twofold life—one absolute and internal, one relative and external. In his absolute and internal life he is infinitely perfect ; in his relative and external life he is capable of development and perfection. His external life is the manifestation which he has been pleased to make of his infinite, internal excellence by means of the works he has effected. Now, every one knows that God has not manifested himself all at once, but by degrees and stages, each degree and stage increasing the manifestation of God's perfections. In his external life, therefore, God is capable of development and completion ; and in this sense we assert that Mary has completed the Trinity—of that completion which does not fall upon God's nature, attributes, or personalities, but upon the external manifestation of his infinite life.

This general proposition we shall develop in the following articles.

### ARTICLE I.

#### *Mary Completes the Father.*

THE Eternal Father creates the universe through his Eternal Word. St. Thomas profoundly and elegantly expresses the principle thus : God, by knowing himself, knows all creatures. The word conceived in the mind is the representative of all which is actually understood by the mind. But in us we find different words or intelligible conceptions, according to the different things we understand ; because we understand things by different acts. In God it is not so ; by one act he knows

himself and everything he understands. His Word, therefore, is expressive not only of the Father but also of creatures. And as God's knowledge relatively to himself is merely intellective, and with relation to creatures is both intellective and creative, so God's Word as regards the Father is only his expression, but as regards creatures is both their expression and cause.

But though creatures are an expression of the Father's infinite perfections which he creates through his Word, yet are they but a faint and distant expression, and do not realize the aspiration of the creative act, which is the greatest possible manifestation of the Father's infinite excellence.

The Father would like to render the finite expression of himself also infinite. But how can this be done? By the intervention of Mary and by her consent to the Incarnation. St. Athanasius expresses this thought beautifully:

“As man's word has a twofold conception, one from the mind, the other from the lips, so also God's Word has a twofold generation—one from God the Father, which is called the first generation; the second from the flesh, and is called the second generation. And as our word, when produced by the first generation in the mind, is unknown, so also God's Word, though born of the Father before all time, was not known to men. And as our word, when we choose, can be born of our lips, so God's Word, when it seemed fit to him, was born of the lips of prophets and of the most chaste womb of Mary, and it became known.”

In other words, the Father conceives his Word in order to express his infinite excellence most adequately and infinitely. But this expression of himself, and he also, were unknown. The Father creates through his Word that he may manifest himself. But creation cannot be an adequate and perfect expression of himself, and, therefore, through it he was not adequately known. He utters his internal Word through the chaste womb of Mary, and thus becomes manifest in an adequate manner.

Mary, therefore, completes the external life of the Father, as she externates the internal, infinite expression of himself. This thought will have its full development in the whole of this chapter.

## ARTICLE II.

*Mary Completes the Eternal Son.*

The Eternal Word knows all creatures, being their type and pattern, and, in a typical state, their intelligible life. Yet one kind of knowledge of his creatures is wanting to the Word—*experimental knowledge*. This want is not, of course, an imperfection, because one who knows a thing in its cause knows it more perfectly than he who has an immediate perception of the thing in itself. The Word knows all things in himself as the principle and typical life of the universe; he knows them, consequently, in a more perfect manner than he would if he had an immediate perception of them.

Yet his creative act aspired to this immediate perception, to this experimental knowledge of his creatures, because such a knowledge implies a greater condescension on the part of the Creator, a greater union, a closer intimacy, a more magnificent communion between the type and his work.

What we have said of the knowledge must also be said of the feelings. The Word, as God, could not have the feelings of his creature, as he is subject to no modification. Yet the creative act aspired to this communication of feelings for the same reason—because it argues a more lavish and intimate intercourse between the type and the work. A doctrine of St. Thomas on one single point will illustrate and strengthen this theory. “There are two elements,” says the Angelic Doctor, “in the virtue of mercy. One is the power and the will to do good, without at all feeling those wants and miseries to relieve which mercy is called into action. The second element is not only to have the power and the will to do good, but to be able

to feel the miseries which must be relieved, to be able to sympathize with, to share in the sorrow of, the sufferer."

God possesses the virtue of mercy in the highest possible perfection in the first sense, inasmuch as he has the power and the will to relieve; but he cannot have it in the second sense, as it is impossible for him to be affected by sorrow. Yet the creative act aspired to the second element of mercy—to the communion of feelings, to this share of sorrow and pain, of joy and pleasure, of his creatures, because the community of feelings, this share in the joys and sorrows, enhances in a wondrous manner the infinite goodness of God.

Mary enabled the Word, when she clothed him with human flesh, to have both experimental knowledge of his creatures and to feel as they feel; and it is through her magnificent ministry that we can exclaim with St. Paul: "We have not a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

### ARTICLE III:

#### *Mary Completes the Holy Ghost.*

The third august Person of the Trinity, in the interior life of the Godhead, is wholly unproductive and barren. He terminates the cycle of infinite life, which is as follows: The Eternal Father, the beginning of all life, but unbegotten himself, without principle or cause, comprehends himself, and by this act begets a substantial and most perfect image of himself—the Word. The Father, contemplating himself in this most perfect image of himself, which reflects like the purest and most unspotted mirror all the magnificent and unutterable beauties of his nature, is attracted toward himself and loves himself and his substantial image. The Son, contemplating these beauties in himself, but as reflection of the Father, is attracted towards himself and the Father. This common and mutual love of the

Father and of the Son is not accidental but substantial, and results in a third Person, having for that which constitutes his personality the mutual, eternal, and substantial love of the Father and of the Son, expressing the infinite, substantial complacency they take in each other, and manifesting the infinite, eternal, and substantial bliss and joy they have in each other's embrace.

This third Person is the Holy Ghost, and with him terminate the infinite processions in God. He originates, therefore, from the Father and the Son, who are both active in his production, but he is merely passive and himself barren and unproductive. The Father is the beginning of infinite life, the Son is the medium, the Holy Ghost is the end. This barrenness is certainly not an imperfection, but rather a perfection; because were the Holy Ghost productive like the other two persons, he could not be the person he is—the personal *end* and *termination* of infinite *life*. But if he be barren and unproductive in the interior of God's life, because with him that life is completed, could he not be made productive outside of God in such a manner that his productiveness would terminate, not in a new divine Person, this being impossible, but in a divine Person already existing, under new conditions? Could not the Holy Ghost effect a term, a new creation,\* so to speak, which by union could become a divine Person? This was certainly possible, and it was effected in Mary and through Mary. For it was the Holy Ghost who wrought in her spotless womb, and in consequence of her consent to the Incarnation, that miracle of union, that wondrous work, that magnificent wedding of the human nature with the divine Person of the Word, and by which the second divine Person existed under a new condition. He effected that new creation, that new individuality called Christ, the Emmanuel, the God-Man.

It was therefore through the ministry of Mary, it was in consequence of the free consent of this sublimest of human

\* "Creavit Dominus *novum* super terram. Tœcina circumdabit virum" (Jeremias).

personalities, that the Holy Ghost became productive *ad extra*, and productive of a new creation, a new individuality—the God-Man.

#### ARTICLE IV.

*Through Mary the Religion which the Universe owes to God was Rendered worthy of the Infinite Grandeur of the Godhead.*

The object of God's external action consists in manifesting the infinite excellence and perfections of his nature. This end is attained by creation in two ways. 1st. Because the very nature of created things is an expression and likeness of the Infinite. This function is discharged indiscriminately both by intelligent and non-intelligent beings. But this same function by which non-intelligent creatures unconsciously manifest in their nature and properties the excellence of God, in intelligent creatures is necessarily a moral act, and gives origin to the virtue of religion, because intelligent creatures cannot possibly fail to discover the relation which necessarily binds them to the Creator, and to feel the duty of acknowledging it. Religion, therefore, is an absolute duty for intelligent beings, so necessary and absolute that the contrary assertion would be a contradiction, because to say a creature is to affirm a being purposely created to manifest God's perfections; to say intelligent is to affirm a creature able to perceive this relation, and capable to carry out the design which it perceives was intended by the Creator. To absolve or exempt, therefore, intelligent creatures from the duty of religion is to affirm and to deny in the same breath that they are intelligent creatures.

But can these pay to God a duty of religion which can be said to be worthy of him? Certainly not, either in the first or second sense. Not in the first sense, because there is no being in the whole range of the universe able by his nature and attributes adequately to express the infinite excellence and perfections of the Creator. Not in the second sense, because no created personality, or all of them put together, could freely



and deliberately pay God a homage worthy of him, because to pay to God a homage worthy of him implies two things: 1st, a theoretical appreciation of God in the mind fully adequate to his infinite excellence; 2d, a practical esteem fully adequate to the worth of the Creator—in other words, an infinite knowledge and an infinite love of God. Short of these two conditions, no religion is worthy of God, adequate to his infinite excellence. Now, it is unnecessary to mention that created persons are incapable of infinite knowledge and love of God. Their religion, therefore, is not, and cannot be, worthy of that abyss of perfections.

We know of one place where God is adored and recognized as he deserves, and that is his infinite bosom; and we know of one being who can recognize him with a homage absolutely worthy of him, and that is *Himself*. In short, in the mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity we find the real, true religion—that religion which God has for himself from all eternity. God is a living, personal being. He is unborn, unbegotten, intelligent activity, first termination of the Godhead. By one eternal, permanent glance he scrutinizes, so to speak, the innermost depths of his essence, and thus comprehends himself—that is, conceives and utters himself interiorly.

This infinite, most perfect utterance and intelligible expression of himself is a second termination of the Godhead—the Word, who portrays and manifests the Godhead intelligibly. This duality of terminations is brought into harmony by a third Person, the result of the action of both. For between the intelligent principal uttering himself, and the utterance, the term of that intellectual discourse, there necessarily exists an infinite attraction, a blissful sympathy, an unutterable complacency. The Father beholds, as in a bright, clear stream of infinite light, the unspeakable beauty and loveliness of his perfections, and utters them to himself, and beholds the Word, his Son, whom he cherishes with infinite fondness as the substantial image of himself. The Son beholds the transcendental

loveliness of himself, but as reflecting from the Father, and returns to him that same infinite love. This common complacency and love is the third Person, the Holy Ghost. In this idea of the Trinity we find the real, true religion worthy of God; for the Word is the infinite intellectual expression and appreciation of the Father, and the Holy Ghost the infinite practical esteem of the Father and of the Son. The first is the whole Godhead intellectually conceived; the second the whole Godhead infinitely loved. The first, so to speak, recognizes God in mind, the second in heart, and both in an infinite manner absolutely worthy of God. For there can be conceived no greater intellectual appreciation of God's essence and attributes than the Word, nor a greater practical expression of God than the Holy Ghost, the infinite personal love of the Father and of the Son.

In God's bosom, therefore, exists that religion which alone is worthy of him.

Of course, if men had been left in their natural state, they could only render to God that religion which their unaided faculties would have enabled them to render—that is, they could only have a knowledge of God such as they could draw from the universe around them proclaiming its creator, and a love corresponding to that knowledge.

But God never intended to be satisfied with a religion which his creatures could render to him by their unaided natural powers. When he determined to act outside himself the first object he had in view was the Incarnation, or the union of human nature with the second Person of the Trinity, especially for this end: that his works might be able to render to him that same religion which he renders to himself in the bosom of his infinite life. For by the Incarnation the individual called Christ—God and man in the unity of one divine personality—can render to God, even as man, a religion fully worthy of him, because the actions of his human nature partake of the worth of his personality, to which that nature is

united ; and, as that person is infinite and divine, the actions of his human nature have an infinite and divine value. The human nature of Christ can be said to appreciate God, theoretically and practically, in an infinite manner, because its actions, though radically emanating from a finite nature, receive their worth from the personality, who is infinite. In one word, Christ, as God-Man, acknowledges God with an infinite knowledge and loves God with an infinite love—the same identical knowledge and love which exist in his bosom from all eternity.

Created persons, in union with Christ, can render henceforth a religion to God fully and adequately worthy of him, because they can appreciate him with the knowledge of Christ. They can love him with that infinite love which burns in the heart of Christ. It is in him and through him and by him that they are enabled to do so.

This is the Christian religion, the religion which Christ paid to God ; and the Catholic religion is Christ made permanent in his Church, and gathering around him, through centuries and generations, created personalities, and uniting them to himself, and enabling them to form one grand, sublime, magnificent chorus, of which he is the leader, the mouthpiece, rendering to God a religion worthy of him.

From this idea we can understand the reason of exclusiveness of the Catholic religion. To refuse to enter within its pale is to shut one's self from salvation, because it is the refusing to embrace in an absolute sense the only religion worthy of God. God wants his intelligent creature to worship him with the mind and heart of his Incarnate Son permanent in his Church. Men refuse to be united to the Word incarnate residing in his Church, and offer, or would offer, him the miserable knowledge they can gather with their own unaided reason and the limited admiration of their poor heart. God will have none of this. There is the infinite mind and heart of Christ. Those who will not adhere to that mind and feel the pulsations and infinite throbs of that heart are rebel creatures,

refusing to acknowledge their Creator as he would and deserves to be acknowledged.

By the Incarnation, therefore, the religion of intelligent creatures was exalted to the dignity of that religion which God renders to himself from all eternity, and he was honored and worshipped on earth as he is in heaven.

But what was the ministry of Mary in this? What part did she have in raising created and temporal religion to the dignity of the uncreated and eternal?

Her ministry was twofold: First, she freely and deliberately administered to the Eternal Word his human nature.

Secondly, she freely consented to administer it for this very object, as the human head and representative of the race.

We have often remarked that God in all his works makes use of created agency whenever it can come into play, and that he never effects of himself alone, by any extraordinary effort of his power, that which can be supplied by calling into action created forces. He will supply that much which no created agency could effect, but he will supply no more, and it would be a useless waste of power on his part were he to effect immediately by himself what could be done by created forces called into play.

In the present instance God wanted to raise the religion of created persons to the dignity of his infinite, eternal religion. This could only be done by effecting the union of the Eternal Word with human nature; and this union no created agency could bring about, but required the power of the Most High.

But created persons could do one thing, and it was to offer to God freely and deliberately, with full knowledge of the end and scope of the offering, that human nature which was to be united to the Word, and by means of which they would be enabled to render to God a religion worthy of him, and this through the highest possible human personality as representative of the whole race.

Mary, the human head of the race, was this representative

who offered to God that human nature to be united to the Word for the express purpose of worshipping God as he deserves. She was that magnificent temple where the two religions, the temporal and the eternal, the human and the divine, were blended together and resulted in one outburst of infinite homage such as God had never yet received from earth. Her own consent was asked, because God would not receive this infinite homage from earth until humanity, by its grand representative, had done all it could toward realizing this infinite homage.

Through Mary, therefore, the religion which the universe owes to God became truly and adequately worthy of his infinite grandeur.

#### ARTICLE V.

*It was carried to the Height of Sacrifice.*

But it was also through Mary's ministry that a God was sacrificed to the honor and glory of God. The greatest and the most solemn act of religion is sacrifice. It has its foundation in the following reasons: 1st. Man is the creature of God. He owes him everything—his existence and faculties, his preservation, his actions, and all the external objects which preserve his life. This arouses in man both a feeling of awe, of reverence towards God, of utter subjection to him as he contemplates his nothingness and utter helplessness and absolute dependence upon God, and a feeling of gratitude and obligation for so many and so precious benefits.

2d. Man has offended God's infinite majesty, and would wish to satisfy God's outraged excellence for the insult; and, considering that he has offended God by egotism and sensuality, he feels that to satisfy God's justice and stolen honor he should crush that spirit of egotism by utter subjection and humiliation, and root out sensuality by inflicting pain upon himself.

3d. This same sense of having offended God causes a feeling in him of fear and dread to present himself before him, and, if possible, he would rather flee than appear before him.

These feelings of utter dependence upon God for everything, of awe and reverence for his infinite majesty, of gratitude for all the benefits received from him, the fear at beholding himself culpable, the interior effort of crushing before God the spirit of egotism and the cravings of sensuality, constitute the interior sacrifice, the sacrifice of the spirit, and man praises and thanks God for his mercies, offers himself and all his faculties to God as a free gift and oblation, adores him by acknowledging him to be the source of all things, his first beginning and his last end, the arbiter and supreme master of life and death, prostrates himself in spirit before God, and would, if it were possible, empty, annihilate himself before his infinite majesty. Apprehending also most vividly the insults and outrages he has offered God, he would crush his spirit in utter subjection and submission to God, and would not hesitate to mortify and kill that flesh which prompted him to sin, and to gratify which he offended God. All these feelings make up the interior sacrifice.

But man is an incarnate spirit; he must, in consequence of his double nature, give flesh and blood to his feelings; he must externate and embody them in some sensible expression which by its nature may represent and embody vividly, forcibly, and unmistakably the nature and intensity of his feelings pent up in his bosom. Hence the sacrifice which we find in the history of all nations. Protestants have distorted the nature of sacrifice in hatred against the eucharistic sacrifice, and have limited its notion to prayer. Who doubts that prayer is a spiritual sacrifice? But the question is not about the interior sacrifice, but about expressing exteriorly, about embodying in some clear, forcible, distinct, sensible sign, the interior sacrifice of the soul.

After these remarks the definition of sacrifice commonly

given by all may be easily understood. It is the offering of some sensible object made to God by a lawful minister, which object is destroyed or changed in order to acknowledge the supreme dominion of God over all things, to acknowledge him as the arbiter of life and death and the source and origin of all good, and in order to make expiation and satisfaction for sins. And how well does this institution express all the above-mentioned feelings of man! An oblation of a sensible object is made to express the feeling of gratitude. By a lawful minister; for man feels that he should not present himself before God's majesty and holiness, guilty as he knows himself to be, and substitutes a person to act for him, who by his consecration to God and by his purity of life is better calculated to go between God and man; and in this institution are expressed the feelings of fear, of dread, of awe which overcome man.

This feeling also is extenuated by choosing an innocent object.

The change or destruction of the victim portrays the sense of the power of God as the arbiter of man's fate, the feeling of the crushing of egotism and the destruction of sensuality, the overpowering sense of utter helplessness before God, and that awe which penetrates man so as to make him ready to empty, as it were, his whole self before that majesty.

It is thus that man, in all ages and countries, has recognized God by sacrifice.

But it is useless for us to remark here that all the sacrifices offered up to God were not worthy of his infinite excellence and majesty.

Where, in the first place, to find a victim and an oblation so pure, so clean, so spotless, so innocent as to be worthy of the infinite purity of God, and be pleasing and acceptable in the sight of his infinite holiness and justice?

Where to find a victim great and sublime enough to be able to return to God a thousandth part of that praise and honor and thanksgiving due to him for his infinite benefits showered

upon man with lavish hand? a victim great enough to be able to appreciate the grandeur of the donor as well as the magnitude of the gift?

Where to find a victim and oblation able to restore to God that honor which was taken from him by sin? If sin be an infinite offence, as it detracts from the dignity of an infinite Person, as its shafts are directed against the honor of infinite Majesty, assuredly a satisfaction must be identical in nature, infinite in value as the offence. And what victim could render to God an infinite honor? What victim could restore to his infinite outraged majesty an expiation equal to the insult?

It is evident that for all these reasons a God was required who could be sacrificed to God. Then, and only then, God would have a sacrifice offered to him by his creation fully worthy of him.

But God, as such, cannot suffer or be sacrificed. It required a God-Man, the Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, who could offer to God a sacrifice worthy of his infinite majesty.

For he was innocence itself, infinite in all his actions, and though suffering only in his human nature, yet those sufferings acquired their value from the infinite Person who upheld that human nature and through whom it acted.

But the sacrifice rendered to God by our Lord Jesus Christ could not have been said to proceed from the human race, strictly speaking, unless two conditions had been observed. The first is that humanity, by means of the human head of the race, the highest representative of humanity, should give him freely and voluntarily that nature which was to be sacrificed, in order that it might be said to have done all it could towards rendering to God a sacrifice worthy of him. The second condition was that humanity, by means of the same representative, of the highest human personality, should in the act of the sacrifice ratify that same offering made once, and be associated with and accompany that supreme act with all the



virtues necessary for it and of which a pure creature was capable, and especially by a supreme martyrdom.

These two conditions were indispensable, because, as we have often remarked, God, in raising men's religion to the height of its type and pattern, was willing to do all that man could not possibly do; but he would do no more, and exacted that whatever man could do should be done by him. Man could offer the human nature of Christ freely for that object, and could ratify the offering in the act of the sacrifice, and take his share of suffering, and God exacted both conditions.

Mary, as the human head of the race, as the representative of mankind, fulfilled the first condition when she uttered her magnificent fiat on the day of the Annunciation. She fulfilled the second condition on Calvary at the foot of the cross. On that bloody mountain there were two victims and two priests: one the infinite, immaculate victim, Jesus Christ our Lord, upon the altar of his cross; the other the human victim, also innocent, Mary, his spotless Mother. Jesus Christ was the high-priest who truly offered the sacrifice; Mary the priestess who co-operated in that sacrifice. She was there, on the part of humanity, to ratify the former offering made to God in view of the sacrifice, and to practise in the act of sacrifice all the virtues necessary to accompany and co-operate in that sacrifice.

She stood at the foot of the cross, filled with a most sublime and magnificent faith in the grandeur and majesty of the Creator and of his infinite attributes, in the absolute independence and sovereignty of God and his supremacy over all things, and in his absolute mastery over life and death. She stood filled with a most sublime and magnificent appreciation of the exalted nature and lavishness of his benefits done to mankind; with a most sublime faith in the nothingness and utter helplessness of creation. She had the grandest, the keenest, the vastest and most profound appreciation of his infinite majesty, of his sanctity, of his glory, of his dignity, and at

the same time the most sovereign sense and consciousness of the hideousness and malice of sin, of the nature of the outrage and insult it inflicts upon the infinite majesty of God. She knew all this with a knowledge superior to that of all the rest of mankind, of creation. All the intellects of men and angels put together, filled with the most exalted knowledge of these things, could not have compared with Mary's knowledge at that moment. And she felt an awe, a reverence for that divine majesty sufficient to melt her whole mind, soul, heart, and flesh. She felt a desire, a craving, a most overpowering yearning to dissolve herself in praise and thanksgiving. She felt a helplessness before God as almost to sink her down into nothing. She felt such an overwhelming zeal for the glory of God, such pining for the restoration of his honor, a grief so strong, so powerful, so overwhelming, burning like a raging fire in her heart, for God's outraged majesty, that her whole being was, as it were, changed, transformed into awe, into subjection, into praise, into sorrow. She felt all this for herself; she felt it for humanity, whom she represented. Oh! for a victim and an oblation to give flesh and blood to such feeling. Oh! for a victim and an oblation to give vent to the raging billows of this magnificent interior holocaust, to this sublime self-burnt offering. She would sacrifice herself upon the altar of her heart. She would shed every drop of her immaculate blood. But of what avail would that be? Her life sacrificed to the honor and glory of God would not adore him as he deserves. Her life given up in one burst of thankful lays would not praise him sufficiently. Her blood shed to the last drop would not restore God's stolen honor; it would not expiate for God's outrage; it would not save mankind. Oh! for a victim worthy of God. She lifts up her eyes and rests them on the immaculate body of her Son fastened on the cross. There is the real victim and the real priest. There is the oblation truly worthy of God, magnificent in every sense. She renews, with all the intensity of her mind, of

her soul, of her heart and feeling, the offering she once made. She renews it on her behalf and on behalf of mankind. She associates herself to the mind, to the feelings, to the throbs of the heart of Jesus, and offers him to God as a sacrifice of adoration, of praise, of expiation, of satisfaction, of réconciliation absolutely worthy of Him.

It is true that this offering cost her maternal heart pangs of sorrow, of mortal agony such as no creature or mother ever experienced before, such as make her the queen of martyrs, such as can only be compared to an overwhelming ocean of bitterness. But she is not merely mother then. She is the priestess, the representative of the human race, the Woman *par excellence*, the second Eve, and she subdues with a sublime magnanimity her mother's feelings. The zeal for God's honor and glory, the grief for his outraged majesty, the love for the race, overcome all other considerations, and she repeats with greater intensity, greater love, greater zeal, greater self-forgetfulness, greater devotedness her magnificent fiat, Be it done. She repeats the same consent she gave thirty-three years ago; and Jesus Christ is sacrificed. She would have repeated it had it been necessary to fasten Jesus Christ to the cross with her own hands. A God is immolated to the honor and glory of God, in expiation for his outraged honor, for the salvation of mankind, and Mary is the instrument by which God is honored by the sacrifice of a God.

#### ARTICLE VI.

*God received from Mary a Glory such as he has never received from any or all  
Creatures put together.*

This article is a consequence of the whole chapter, and requires but very little development.

Glory is the public manifestation of the esteem in which we hold a person.

Now, to prove our statement, it is only necessary to reflect

that before Mary's ministry God was but little known ; for he is known as much as he reveals himself, and before the Incarnation only his unity was clearly and distinctly known. By the Incarnation, effected through the consent and ministry of Mary, the mystery of his interior life was made manifest, the sublime truth of the Trinity, the magnificence of his power, of his wisdom, of his goodness, of his condescension, of his mercy, of his justice was displayed. Through Mary the religion by which men recognized God was exalted to the dignity of that eternal religion by which God recognizes himself. This recognition ascended through to the sublime and lofty height of sacrifice, and God was adored, recognized, and worshipped by a God.

In proportion as God became manifest he was loved, and the love which mankind had for God ascended the height of sacrifice, men endeavoring to make of themselves a victim to the honor and glory and love of God.

Mary, therefore, gave a glory to God such as he has never received from any or all creatures put together.

## CHAPTER III.

### CONSEQUENCES OF MARY'S DIGNITY WITH REGARD TO THE HUMAN RACE.

All the consequences which followed from the mystery of the Incarnation and redemption in reference to the human race, and all the beneficial results which the latter experienced thereby, when understood in their proper sense, are to be attributed to the consent and ministration of Mary.

To give our readers a proper idea of these benefits accrued to the human race through Mary's ministry, we shall take them up one by one in the following articles.

#### ARTICLE I.

##### *Idea of Redemption.*

To give a proper idea of redemption it will be necessary to state the nature and effects of that which rendered redemption necessary—that is, sin. Man transgressed the command of God—that is to say, made an act of rebellion and independence. This act of rebellion and independence brought about, as a necessary consequence, the following results:

1st. God was insulted by that act, and man became afraid of God.

2d. That act broke the personal intercourse which existed between God and man, and hence man lost, in consequence of it, sanctifying grace in its beginning, its growth, and its final perfection.

3d. The very natural faculties of man were impaired. His mind became darkened, his will weakened and prone to evil, and his superior and spiritual faculties were subject to the senses.

4th. He fell under the thralldom of evil.

What was, then, necessary to redeem man? The following conditions:

1st. Man must be rescued from the subjection of the senses.

2d. He must be brought back to confidence in God.

3d. He must be restored to the supernatural and personal intercourse with God.

4th. God's infinite honor, taken from him by sin, must be restored to him.

We shall explain the nature of these things, and consider the ministry of Mary in each of them.

## ARTICLE II.

*Man must be restored to the Invisible and Spiritual by a Sensible Process—  
Mary's Ministry.*

Man is an incarnate spirit. In him we admire a wonderful union between the spirit and the flesh—in fact, we might say between something divine and the flesh, as man's spirit is the image of the Godhead. Man, after all, is the expression of a more perfect, more sublime universal system of incorporation of invisible and spiritual things in visible and corporal things which we admire in the world, in which the ideal and the sensible, the heavenly and the terrestrial, the moral and the corporal, correspond with each other by a wonderful adaptation, according to the saying of St. Paul: "Aptata esse sæcula verbo Dei ut ex invisibilibus visibilia fierent."

Man is, then, naturally associated with the flesh. He is a part of a system in which the ideal and the real are closely united. If he was such before the fall, when all the faculties of his spirit governed and reigned over those of the body and of nature, what must have been his dependence upon sensible and corporal things when by his revolt and rebellion his spirit was plunged into flesh as into a living tomb, according to the expression of an ancient writer—when he broke off with the invisible world and was absorbed by the senses?

Hugh of St. Victor has drawn in a masterly manner this revolution. There existed three things—the body, the spirit, and God. The body was the world, the spirit the soul, and this soul was placed as a certain medium, having outside of itself the world and inside God. To the soul an eye had been given, by which it could see the world outside itself and all things which are in the world. Another eye had been given it by which to see itself and everything which is in itself—the eye of reason. Another eye, finally, had been bestowed on it by which to see God and the things which are in God—the eye of contemplation. As long as the soul had these three eyes clear and bright it was able to gaze at these three regions—the visible, the spiritual, and the divine. But after the darkness of sin had invaded it, and the eye of contemplation become extinct, it has not been able to see anything in that region. The eye of reason became veiled, and has not been able any longer to see, except as in twilight. The only eye which did not become extinct, and which was left in all the enjoyment of its brightness, was the eye of the flesh. From thence it is that the heart of man tends more towards the things which he sees through the eye of the flesh than towards those things which the eyes of the spirit hardly perceive. Man sees clearly the world of the bodies, but sees imperfectly the things of the spirit, and does not see at all the things of God.

This baneful and disastrous change required a corresponding change in the manner of our communication with God.

The taste for sensible things, increased by the enfeebling of the intellectual sense and by the loss of the divine sense, had become so depraved as to corrupt the whole nature, so that this world, where invisible things are placed within the reach of man by these visible representations, instead of leading him to the Creator, took him further away from him; and creatures transformed into divinities intercepted the knowledge of God, of which they should have been the messengers (Rom. i. 23, 26).

God, in his mercy for man, prepared for this evil a most wonderful aid. As it is an invariable law of justice that the fault be a punishment to itself, God, by an ingenious degree of his clemency, willed that the disease should be its own remedy, that that which caused us to fall should be a means to lift us up, and that visible things should bring to us the knowledge of the invisible. In hardening the disease, says a theologian, God would have increased it; in humoring it he soothes it. He recalls our erring senses by drawing them through their own error; he overcomes the sickness by the very sickness itself, and into the lie he inserts truth. To the false, material God which was the dream of humanity he opposes the God made flesh, and he transformed a delirium into a prediction. The human spirit could not do either without the idea of God or of that of the body—that is to say, it could not prevent being deceived—and God causes it to find the true God in a body and a true body in God, in order that it might no longer be deceived. Man was oppressed by sensible things; it was his evil. God mingles himself among sensible things, in order that man may find him almost against his will.

Man, if we may make use of this comparison, was like an infidel spouse taken away from the pure and holy embraces of divine Beauty by the seductive grossness of creatures. He had delivered himself up to them as to unworthy courtesans. In its love and compassion for him divine Beauty descends among its rivals, and using their outward attractions, legitimate only for itself, and which it purifies and beautifies in putting them on, causes itself to be preferred by the unfaithful spouse, and brings him back by this wonderful and merciful seduction.

What, then, was that mystery which God selected in order to bring about this ingenious device of his merciful condescension? The reader already understands it. It was the Incarnation, in which the Eternal Word, the substantial representation of all the intelligible and the spiritual, became incorporated



with the flesh, the highest representation of the visible and the material, and through that humanity attracted man and led him on to the knowledge of the invisible, the spiritual, and the divine.

But the reader will remark that the flesh which formed part of the human nature of our Lord, that representation of the highest expression of the visible and the material, was the flesh administered by Mary, and which was administered freely and deliberately, with full knowledge of the object for which it was intended; that flesh which she might have withheld, as God, in his infinite condescension as well as wisdom, vouchsafed to leave it to her choice to give or to withhold it; that flesh which Mary not only gave at first, but which she caused to grow in her spotless cloister and fed with her own substance and with the dew of her virginal breasts. Mary, therefore, in the sense already explained, laid down the first condition necessary for the redemption of the race—that of rendering the invisible and the spiritual visible and palpable, in order to lead men's minds, steeped in the material and sensible, to the spiritual and divine.

### ARTICLE III.

*Man must be rescued from the excessive Fear of God and must be brought back to Confidence.*

Man sins through pride and remains in sin through despair. The history of each one of us is the history of the race. At the facility with which the first human pair broke the commandment of God and transgressed his prohibition, one would suppose that no fear made them hesitate, so great is the false confidence which pride gives. But the moment the crime is committed this haughty confidence gives place to black despair. The guilty one who did not believe in a just vengeance now misbelieves in mercy. God's voice, like thunder, of which a guilty conscience multiplies the roarings, frightens him. He fears, and hides from God's face.

This fear is transmitted to the whole race. All antiquity hid itself from God's face. Through that familiarity which it had with all its gods, as they represented its own cherished passions and vices, always transpires a feeling of terror for the divinity under the name of fatality. Always its mythological heroes, a personification of humanity, are persecuted by the anger of some god or other. This forms the plot of every poem of antiquity. The anger of Apollo in the *Iliad*, that of Neptune in the *Odyssey*, that of Juno in the *Æneid*, form the plot of each respective poem. *Tantæ ne animis cælestibus iræ!* The origin of every people is signalized by the existence of some mysterious monster, a sphinx, a minotaur, or some different expression of some god's anger to whom a tribute was due of human victims. The sweetest of all sentiments—love—and the most seductive of all attractions—beauty—were divinized under an implacable character of cruelty and vengeance. *Sævus amor sæva mater cupidinis.* Everything in antiquity is full of that anger, and human sacrifices, symbolical and too often real, were its universal expression. And always this anger is enkindled by a great original crime, the punishment of which is continued until a solemn expiation takes place.

In the Mosaic dispensation itself, so different from all other religions, in which God makes men hear such fatherly accents, love is at the bottom, but, as it were, enveloped, restrained, and almost suppressed by fear. Love lies in the future, and meanwhile the law engraven upon stone, accompanied by horrible threats and punishments, seems to carry in its commandments the thunders and lightnings which accompanied its promulgation, and which caused the Israelites to cry to Moses: "Speak thou to us, and we shall hear thee. Let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die."

This despair, terror, and fear which afflicted humanity have their philosophical origin both in the nature of pride, as we have already intimated, and in the idea of God.

By the passion of pride man acquires an unruly, false, and

illegitimate idea of his excellence and of his power. He meditates, ruminates on that idea; he feeds on it, and a corresponding feeling delights and allures him. Whilst in these regions of error and unreality, and whilst taking complacency in this bubble, his bosom swells, his heart expands, and his courage is high, and he feels capable of everything. Some time or other he falls miserably, and that structure of excellence, that impregnable fortress of power, is taken and shattered to pieces. Such a view takes him down from that false height; it hurts him to the quick, and he becomes humbled, dejected, faint-hearted, and cowardly.

In the idea of God; for however creation may speak of God, however it may speak of his nearness to us and of his munificent love, he will always be for man the unknown, the hidden, and the one infinitely distant. What can creation proclaim of God beyond the idea of his existence and a very inadequate idea of his nature and attributes? In consequence of this God is always a mystery to man, a something that surpasses the reach of his intelligence, which overpowers any effort he may make to understand him. And though man may have a faint idea that God is near to each one of us, that in him we live, we move, and we are, yet God will always appear to his imagination as something separated from him by infinite space, by an unfathomable abyss, by an insuperable barrier. He also feels that God, though good, kind, liberal, and munificent, is yet an infinite power, upon whom he depends for everything, and at whose disposal he is at all times and in all places, and that before that power he has no choice but submission. These ideas which arise and have arisen in men's minds have originated that horror and dread which has afflicted mankind. For the idea of an unknown, mysterious power, the idea of a power separated from him by an infinite abyss, but which can reach man at pleasure at all times and in all places, the idea of an infinite being at whose pleasure we are and live, cannot but generate fear, terror, and dejection.

This is especially true after the fall, when, besides the effect this threefold idea has on man's mind, is added the knowledge and consciousness of guilt and of an infinite majesty insulted and outraged, of the consequent vengeance which hung over man's head.

What is, then, necessary to rescue man from this unlawful and inordinate fear and restore him to confidence and trust?

Two things are absolutely necessary: 1st. On the part of God, to show man all possible honor and respect, because after the fall man runs into the opposite vice—that of having a mean, untrue, despicable idea of his nature, faculties, and power. To restore, therefore, to man a true idea of himself, respect and honor must be shown to him.

Secondly, God must hide his majesty under a known, attractive, and familiar form to dissipate that impression from man's mind that he is a mysterious, infinite, unapproachable power.

How could all this be done? God's Son assumes human nature and makes it his own, so that in him man becomes God. Could there be a greater, more sublime, more magnificent proof given of the real worth and preciousness of human nature, of the esteem in which God held it?

How can man, after this mystery, think meanly and poorly of his nature, when the Infinite has vouchsafed to make it his own nature, and has exalted it to a personal union with himself?

The Son of God, the brightness of the infinite majesty of the Father, the splendor of his light, has hidden those overpowering rays of majesty under the form the most known, the most familiar, and most attractive for man—his own features, his own body, his own flesh.

Man, seeing God's infinite majesty hidden under his own nature, so well known to him; on seeing him appear as man, conversing as a man, expressing all the feelings, all the passions of man except sin—on beholding, in a word, a man like himself, full of human sympathy—cannot but acquire the most unbounded confidence and trust in him.

The reader must remark here again that it was in Mary, in her womb, that the prodigy of the union of an infinite person with human nature was realized, whereby human nature was exalted far above the angels; it was in her that the infinite majesty of the Godhead hid its splendor and effulgence and became man; that it was upon the express consent of Mary, required as a necessary condition, that all this was effected. Mary, therefore, rescued man from his excessive fear of God and restored him to proper confidence.

### ARTICLE III.

*Man must be restored to the Supernatural and Personal Intercourse with God.—Mary's Ministry.*

Man could not be restored to friendship with God, except in consequence of the merits of Jesus Christ, who gained, by his Passion and death, that grace which sanctifies us. In this Mary co-operated in the sense so many times explained in this work. But it is not this view of the subject we desire to point out in this article. We aim at showing forth how beautifully and infinitely wise was the means which God selected in order to bring man back to his friendship, to restore him that personal and supernatural intercourse which he had lost. Sanctifying grace could not come to man, except through Jesus Christ, who merited it for him; but God paved the way for the bestowal of this supernatural gift by selecting such means as naturally would win the love of man, and thus dispose him for the reception of that grace. It is this view of the subject that we intend to unfold in the present article. God wished to make himself intensely lovable to man. What to do to attain such object? Of course he is infinitely lovely—nay, loveliness itself. But man could not perceive it. How, then, to make himself intensely lovable to man, in a manner that man could not fail to perceive that loveliness and to feel it, was the problem which God's wisdom undertook to solve.

This he accomplished by condescending to subject himself to the conditions of love. These conditions are principally three: similarity, communion, and sacrifice.

And, first, similarity is absolutely necessary to win love. For although in the person we love we must either find, or imagine to have found, perfections which are not in us—for it is such perfections which arouses in us an aspiration after the object possessed of them—yet these perfections must not exalt the person too far above us; they must not place it too high beyond our reach, otherwise an impression takes possession of our minds that it is impossible to win that object; and any impression of impossibility is sufficient to kill in the bud all aspirations towards it. Love, therefore, is won by a perception of perfections intensely attractive and winning, but such as not to be too far beyond our reach, so that we can see the possibility of winning it. Hence an object, to be loved, must present perfections highly attractive, but subdued, so to speak, softened down by a certain similarity with us so that we may be able to grasp it.

In consequence of this principle it is incumbent on a person who desires to attract love, if he be too high in natural gifts, in personal attainments, in dignity, to humble himself, to descend to the level of the person whose love he wishes to win, and, by hiding all such marked differences, to assume a similarity with him, to take up his thoughts, his feelings, his aspirations and inclinations, and thus attract him. In this sense love is a condescension.

The second condition is communion. Love lives by communion and interchange of everything between the persons who love each other. A person who loves must make over to the object loved his goods, temporal and spiritual, his faculties, his very life; for the essence of love, of friendship, lies in this very consummation and yielding of everything to the person loved, and *vice versa*.

Finally, the third condition is sacrifice, not only in the sense

that you must become like unto the person you love by sacrificing all those differences which are a barrier against it, as we have explained in the first condition; not only because, when you love, your life and all that you possess are no longer your own but another's, but because love in its very nature is a dependence, a subjection; for when you love your happiness depends upon another, and by the very fact of your loving you are sacrificed.

God wished to make himself intensely lovely and attractive to man, and therefore, in his infinite wisdom, he subjected himself to these three conditions of love.

He hid his infinite majesty, descended to the level of man, assumed man's nature, and made it his own by uniting it with his own infinite person; he became man in the strictest and truest sense of the word, and assumed the thoughts, the feelings, the aspirations, the tendencies, the sympathies of man—sin always excepted—and thus fulfilled the first condition to make himself lovely to man; and he succeeded. Whilst in this mortal life he drew crowds after him, carried away by the loveliness of his countenance, by the majesty of his carriage, by the loftiness of his brow, the fire and tenderness which shot from his eyes, by the sweet smile playing about his lips, by the ardent words of love and mercy which fell from his mouth, and still more by his well-known sympathy with every woe, every sorrow, every grief, and every evil.

He conversed with men at all times, in all places; he was all to all. And before he left this world he instituted a sacrament in which his presence has become permanent, and in consequence of which men may be in daily communication with him, and be really united with his flesh and blood, and soul and divinity, in the same manner as we are united with the food we eat, with this difference: that the material food which we take is transformed, changed into our own blood, whereas in the eucharistic communion we are transformed in Christ.

He fulfilled the third condition, as he came into this world on purpose to be a victim and an oblation for man's good. He was the holocaust offered up to God all his life long, and more particularly on the three days of his Passion, at the end of which he consummated the sacrifice. And he was not content with this one universal sacrifice of the cross, but has, in consequence of the institution of the Eucharist, made that sacrifice permanent, in order to apply in each individual case the fruit which on Calvary he gained for all.

Man has seen, therefore, a God infinite in majesty and glory become man, in order to assimilate himself to man, become present to him in all times and places, and to make himself over to him by a real partaking of his body and blood. Man has seen God sacrificing himself for him and making this sacrifice permanent. God has made himself, therefore, infinitely attractive, immensely lovable. He has touched the chords of man's heart, which is ready to burst for him.

And Mary, in consenting to play her part in the mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption, in uttering her fiat, knew full well that she was to render God like to man—nay, more, always present to man, always a victim and an oblation for man. She made God attractive, lovely to man, and disposed him for a renewal of that friendship which man had lost.

#### ARTICLE IV.

*All other Consequences resulting to Man from the Mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption due to Mary.*

By these two mysteries God's infinite honor was restored to him and his justice received ample satisfaction for sin.

Man was healed of those wounds inflicted upon him by original sin, by the grace of restoration.

He was admitted again to the friendship of God by the gift of sanctifying grace and of the three virtues of faith, hope,



and charity. He became again the child of God and heir of eternal life.

All these graces are bestowed on man by means of the Church and the sacraments, which are nothing else but the continuation of the Incarnation and redemption in all times and places, because the Church and the sacraments are Christ acting through intelligent and non-intelligent instruments, and bringing all men to a union with him, and through him with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

All these graces and all that assemblage of graces which are necessary actually to bring man to salvation, and which flow to him from these two mysteries, are due to the glorious and magnificent Virgin, because she was made by God the arbiter of these two mysteries, in themselves and all their consequences, and in giving her consent to these two mysteries she consented to all their consequences. In ratifying that consent she ratified all their consequences.

Mary, therefore, made God visible and sensible to man, in order to draw him from the excessive love of the material and corporal; she made God accessible to man by hiding his dread majesty under the form of humanity, and restored man to confidence; she made God lovable to man by rendering him the same as man, by causing him to become the food and stay of man, by making him the permanent victim for man's good; she restored to man the friendship of God by means of the Church and the sacraments, and she obtained for him all grace necessary to bring him to heaven.

Mary, therefore, is all to the human race, and they have a reason to exclaim: "Thou, the salvation of our race!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### CONSEQUENCES OF MARY'S DIGNITY IN REFERENCE TO HERSELF.

Having viewed Mary's dignity in relation to the Trinity and to the human race, it remains for us, to make our task complete, to consider her in reference to herself, and we shall do so in the following articles.

#### ARTICLE I.

##### *Mary, the Mother of Men.*

Both human and divine laws admit of two kinds of paternity, and consequently of maternity—the one of nature, the second of adoption. When we speak of Mary being men's mother we mean that we all are her children by adoption. And in this article we shall investigate the reasons whereby we were adopted to be Mary's children and she acquired the rights of a mother over the human race.

In the first place, the very fact that she is the mother of Jesus Christ makes her necessarily our mother; and to understand this connection we have only to see how we become children of the Eternal Father.

When we become full Christians—that is, when we believe in Christ, love him, and keep his law—we become one with him. His life is imitated and, as it were, transfused into us. We then know with his mind, love with his heart, and live of his life. He has himself expressed this truth in St. John by that beautiful comparison of the vine: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the Vine, you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." In one word, when we

believe in Christ with a living faith we are made members of his body. "As the body is one," says St. Paul, "and hath many members, and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body: so also is Christ, for in one spirit were we all baptized in one body."

This our union with, and transformation in, Christ begins in baptism, is strengthened and deepened by confirmation, and receives its daily support and growth by the partaking of the Holy Eucharist. For there, in that grandest pledge of God's love for us, we are really and substantially united to the body of Christ and breathe his very breath. His sacred flesh touches our flesh and sanctifies it by its contact; his soul touches our soul, and sheds on its intellect torrents of light and splendor, and kindles in our hearts a blazing fire of love. By this sacrament we emphatically live of his life and may exclaim with St. Paul: "I live: not I, it is Christ who liveth in me"; or, as Christ himself has expressed it, we live of such true life that, in its comparison, every other life is death. "Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth with me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me" (St. John vi.)

Baptism, then, commences our likeness and union with Christ; confirmation strengthens it; the Holy Eucharist supports and makes it grow, until we arrive at the perfect semblance of Christ, at the fulness of Christ's age.

It is thus that we become the children of the Eternal Father. He observes in us the impression, the similitude of his only-begotten Son. He loves in us the image of Him in whom he is well pleased. He sees us endowed with his infinite merits. He beholds us believing and loving Christ, as forming one body, one spirit, one mystical person with him, and therefore

he considers us as belonging to him, as his own offspring; extends to us those paternal feelings, that paternal love, which he feels for Christ, the first-born among many brethren, and admits us to be his children. "He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ; he hath graced us in his beloved Son."\*

Now, the same reason which causes us to be the children of God the Father makes us to be the children of Mary. For Mary is the real, true mother of Christ. She has with the Eternal Father a common Son, the Word Incarnate, and therefore she, too, beholds in us the impression, the likeness, the portraits of her own beloved Son. She looks upon us as being so many members of his body, graced with his merits, and adorned with his virtues, and partaking of his life; and therefore she has a right to consider us as her own offspring, and to extend to us those motherly feelings which she entertains towards the First-Born among many brethren. She became our mother that very moment in which she became God's mother, since we are her children because brethren by adoption of her true, natural Son, because one body with him.

The second reason is drawn from the co-operation of Mary. We have proved that the Incarnation, with all its consequences, was put in the hands of Mary; that she was made the arbiter of the effectuation of this mystery, in itself and its consequences. Now, one of the principal objects of this mystery is our salvation. The Son of God vouchsafed to assume our nature and to become man, in order to rescue us from the tyranny of sin, to satisfy the justice of God in our stead, and, by the grace of restoration, to heal those wounds which original sin had inflicted upon us, and finally to sanctify us and to render us worthy of our eternal destiny. Mary was well aware of this object, and when she consented to be the mother of God she consented to all that was implied in this; and therefore she yielded her consent in order that we might be saved.

\* St. Paul.

When she uttered her magnificent fiat she conceived us all to grace. When she stood at the foot of the cross to repeat and to ratify that same fiat, she brought us forth to grace. Therefore she is our true, real, spiritual mother.

When our Lord on Calvary made her over to the disciple as his mother, and to us all represented by the disciple, he was only giving expression to those two facts that by her consent to the Incarnation, and by her ratification of the same consent on Calvary, she had become our mother. Yet let us for a while contemplate and study the scene of the sacrifice when our Lord made her the declaration of the right she had acquired.

“There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother. . . . When Jesus, therefore, had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother, ‘Woman, behold thy son.’ After that he saith to the disciple, ‘Behold thy mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own.”\*

Now, premising that the Word of God has always two meanings, the literal and the spiritual; that the literal is that which is conveyed by the words themselves, and the spiritual that which the objects or persons signified by the words represent; and that both are true and real, we observe that though the words just quoted, in a literal sense, mark a peculiar privilege granted to St. John, yet in the spiritual sense they establish with the greatest evidence the spiritual maternity of Mary over all men.

Three arguments will set this truth in its boldest light: the nature of the ministry of Jesus, the particular name given to Mary, and the name given to St. John.

And, first, the nature of the ministry of Jesus Christ—that of being our Saviour, our mediator, our high-priest—required that every word he said, every action he performed, should be for the instruction and advantage of the whole human race. It is true that Jesus Christ is a purely gratuitous gift which the

\* St. John.

Eternal Father made to us; it is true that he voluntarily and freely offered himself to be our victim and the price of our salvation; but the offering once made, its effects are necessary and irrevocable, and constitute for our advantage a true and real title upon the person of our Saviour. He became all our own. Hence Isaias foretold his coming in these words: "A child is given *to us*; a son is born *unto us*." And the angel announcing his birth to the shepherds said: "This day is born *to you* a Saviour." And St. Paul asserts clearly that the Eternal Father, having given us his Son, gave us everything along with him.

Therefore all the precious moments of his life, all his thoughts, all his affections, all his actions were entirely consecrated to us. We necessarily share in all his designs and all his works. If he had done or said anything without regard to us, he would have derogated from the integrity, the universality, the perfection of his offerings.

This rule is so true that it is the foundation of all the commentaries of the Gospel. Every word, every action of our Lord registered in the Gospel has been explained by the Fathers in a sense which touches all men and all future ages; because the Fathers were convinced that, in consequence of the nature of Christ's ministry, everything he said and everything he did had a general and common import.

We were, then, always present to his mind; his whole life, without the exception of a single instant, was a continual general sacrifice—a sacrifice whole and perfect, like one single, uninterrupted action directed to the common salvation.

If, then, every word he said, every action he performed, was for the universal good of man, can it be possible that on the cross, upon the altar of his sacrifice, at the moment of the immolation of the victim, he should forget us all in the grandest of his actions, next to the sacrifice itself—that of disposing of his mother? If those words to St. John, "Behold thy mother," had been a peculiar privilege granted to him alone, our

Lord, who had always acted for the common good, would have changed his conduct just at the very moment he was consummating and perfecting his offering for us.

We must conclude, therefore, that all Christians were implied in that privilege ; that to all Christians, in the person of St. John, Mary was given as mother.

This reason acquires more strength if we consider that whenever our Lord had occasion publicly to speak to his mother or to make allusion to her, he always did it in a manner instructive to all mankind. Thus, when, after having sought him for three days, she found him in the Temple, and gently reminded him of the fact, he said: "What is this, that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be after the things concerning my Father?" He could not mean by those words to reproach Mary for having sought him, for it was her clear and bounden duty to do so ; but he took occasion from this to give a lesson to all Christian parents not to disturb their children from peculiarly devoting themselves to God when called upon to do so.

When the woman enraptured by his eloquence took occasion to praise his mother, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck," for the same object he answered, "Nay, blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." And when, on another occasion, a man interrupted our Lord in the midst of his sermon by telling him that his mother and brethren were seeking to speak to him, he replied: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? They who hear the Word of God and keep it, they are my mother, and brother, and sister."

It is evident, therefore, that our Lord, in the whole course of his life, had in view the common good ; and shall we suppose that in the last most momentous action of his life he set it aside ?

In the second place, the expression our Lord used in addressing Mary proves the same truth: "*Woman, behold thy*

*son!*" This is the grandest eulogy, the most magnificent praise of his mother Jesus ever uttered. Twice he made use of that expression, and twice the same sublime panegyric is meant. Protestants allege these two occasions as conveying a mean idea of Mary; but they, like the Jews of old, have only the letter of the Word of God left them: the spirit has long since departed, and whenever the letter implies a mystery this is a sealed book to them.

Why, on these two occasions our Lord proclaimed Mary's distinctive grandeur, Mary's sublime destiny and office, in a louder manner than he could if he had consecrated to her whole pages of his Gospel. "Woman, behold thy son!" What is the meaning of that word? It is to be found in those words of Genesis (iii. 15), "I will put enmity between thee and *the woman*, thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head." The words of the Incarnate God, "Woman, behold thy son!" are the declaration of the fulfilment of that prophecy. Our fall was occasioned by a woman. Eve, standing by the tree of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, and indulging in the sin of unbelief, of pride, of sensuality, broke the command of God, and thus caused our ruin and became the unhappy mother of a more unfortunate race. Mary, as God foretold the serpent, was to be the counterpart of Eve. She, standing by the tree of the cross, and consenting to the sacrifice of her Son, and practising the most heroic act of humility, of faith, and plunged in an ocean of sorrow and anguish, caused our salvation, and thus became the mother of the whole regenerated race. In those words our Lord meant to say: "Thou, the flower of womanhood, the woman type, the true woman, the second and better woman, the second Eve at the foot of my cross, by thy consent to my sacrifice, in consequence of that universal charity with which thou lovest the whole race, and by practising in a most heroic degree the virtues of faith, of humility, of devotedness, hast just brought forth to salvation all mankind, as Eve brought about their ruin, and there-



fore hast thou become their mother. Woman, behold thy son, just born in the anguish of an ocean of bitterness."

Finally, the name given to St. John proves the same truth. If our Lord had intended to make Mary over to St. John as his mother, with a view of granting him a peculiar and exclusive privilege, he would have made use of the name of John in addressing him. But the Gospel clearly remarks that he said to the *disciple*, "Behold thy mother." This privilege, then, was granted him as disciple, as representative person, as one who was there in the name of all those who were to share in the same happiness of being Christ's followers. Therefore in him and through him all the faithful received Mary as their mother.

Before finishing this article we cannot refrain from giving an idea of the nature of the maternal feelings of Mary towards us, as determined and fixed at the moment of the declaration of her maternity by our Lord.

Mary stands at the foot of the cross in a sublime and heroic attitude. Immovable in her resignation, ecstatic in her grief, she contemplates her divine Son, covered with wounds, shedding streamlets of blood from his mangled flesh, pale, disfigured, and on the point of death. She hears the cutting sarcasms, the impious blasphemies, the bitter insults with which he is assailed by the ferocious rabble around him. She observes that they wax more impatient and more ferocious as death seems to tarry, to satisfy their hatred. Yet, in spite of the monstrosity of such barbarism, she hears her divine Son, forgetful of himself, forgetful of the atrocity of his sufferings, pray to the Eternal Father that his blood may be the ransom of those who are shedding it, and his death the salvation of those who inflict it. She beholds him with his heart open, his arms extended towards that people who persist in despising him and in clamoring for his death, and respond with proud contempt to the tender invitations of a love which calls them to reconciliation and to pardon.

Now, this contrast of a barbarity without parallel with a

charity without limits, this contrast of an excess of mercy with an excess of intensest ferocity, this overflow of clemency, of compassion, of mercy on the part of Jesus, as opposed to an overflow of injustice, of malice, of guilt on the part of the Jews, strikes Mary to the quick; it rivets her, makes her beside herself, keeps her absorbed, enraptured, in the sad fact which deprives her of her Son, in the consideration of the prodigy of 'meekness, of patience, of divine charity which the stormy billows of so many affronts, of such torments, cannot extinguish, the sublime height of which it is impossible for her to reach in thought, nor its mysterious breadth and profundity.

Never in all her life, during the thirty years he was subject to her, did Jesus appear to her more truly God than at the instant in which he is treated as less than a man; never did he seem to her more worthy of infinite love than at the time in which he was the object of intensest hatred. She felt as if her very heart would burst from her bosom and fly to her Son, so infinitely great, so intensely loving, so endearingly merciful he appears to her. She loved him all her life long with a love compared to which all the love of saints and angels is a mere image. Yet never did she love him so much as at that moment. Never was her whole soul, her mind, her heart so wrapt up in him as at that instant. Her love, always so tender, so energetic, so violent, intensified yet more by the spectacle of such tenderness and such compassion, becomes yet more tender, more powerful, more violent, and was raised, so to speak, to its highest power. And if the command of God had not kept her riveted at the foot of the cross, not all the combined efforts of men, not all the rage of the Jews, would have been sufficient to prevent her from flying to the cross of Jesus, to twine herself around him, as the tender vine around the oak, and be immolated in the company of him whose boundless generosity of heart, whose sublimity of soul, whose immense charity she feels now better than at any other time.

Now, in this state in which Mary's heart, softened, melted

by love, cannot but love—in this state in which her whole soul is a prey to the sweetest emotions, to the most tender affections, to the most powerful transports—in this very state our Blessed Lord, so to speak, catches her, and, in destining her to be our mother, bids her to turn upon us that sentiment of immense tenderness, of most powerful love with which she was possessed at that moment. “There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother. And Jesus said: Woman, behold thy Son.” It was as if he had said: “O woman! a most wondrous love causes thee to feel an unheard-of anguish. O woman! whom I observe a prey to the most tender and most impetuous feelings of love towards me, this very sentiment of a love so quick, so profound, so intense, so violent, which surrounds thee and fills thy whole being, I bid thee to turn towards my faithful. Behold in my disciple the whole Church; behold all faithful; to them thou must turn henceforth thy maternal love, because I put them in my place and will that thou shouldst consider them for what I am myself, thy only true Son. Behold thy son. From henceforth in them thou must find thy true Son, thy own Jesus.” Who could express the profound impression which these words of Jesus caused on Mary’s mind? They sank deep into her heart, were impressed upon it with indelible characters, agitated it, melted it, and moulded it into the sweetest and tenderest heart of a mother. She felt herself to be a mother, and that immense charity which she had for Jesus she turned toward us and embraced us all like her own true children.

Herein lies the nature of the motherly love of Mary for the race. It is not a borrowed love. It is the love, immense, profound, sublime, unutterable, which she had for Jesus Christ himself which is turned, directed towards us, fixed upon us. We and Jesus Christ are not loved as two different beings; we have become one with him—nay, we have taken his place, by his command, in the heart of Mary; and she who is the most glorious mother of God has become the most loving mother

of men, loving us, by God's command, with the same love she felt for him.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Mary the Dispenser of all Graces.*

"I shall not withhold from you," says Bossuet in one of his sermons, "a consequence of Mary's maternity which cannot be too often meditated upon. It is this: that God having once been pleased to give us Jesus Christ through the Holy Virgin, this order of his providence cannot be changed, as his gifts are without repentance." It is and will be always true that, having received through her means the universal principle of grace, we must also through her receive the different applications of it in all the different states which make up Christian life. "Her maternal charity," says St. Augustine, "which causes infants to be born to the Church, contributed towards our salvation in the mystery of the Incarnation, which is the universal principle of grace; and she will eternally co-operate in all its other operations, which are, as it were, its dependencies."

This truth is of immense importance. Upon it rests that exceptional worship, of which Mary is the object, in the Church. It constitutes a mystery apart, distinct from that of the saints, who can obtain for us graces, but are not, like Mary, their established channel. It is through Mary that we obtained all graces, and it is through Mary that we must ask them from Jesus. She possesses the dispensing power, and we should not hesitate to call her, with Gerson and other most celebrated doctors, our mediatrix, through whose hands God has determined to give all that he grants to mankind.

But then what will become of Christ's power, one may ask, and of that essential truth of Christianity that there is but one mediator? Either we must range Mary among all other saints, and give her that degree of pre-eminence which becomes her, but in the same order, or, if we take her from their

rank and give her a universal ministry of mediatorship, then we confound her with the only mediator, Jesus Christ.

We should not confound Mary either with Jesus Christ or with the saints; and the following is the explanation of this double distinction:

With regard to Jesus Christ, it must be observed that there are two kinds of mediatorship easily distinguishable, the nature of which the simplest minds can grasp: that which treats of our salvation by way of justice and of merit, or as springing from its efficient cause; the other which causes our salvation by way of humble prayer and supplication, and as an accessory cause. All Christians profess that there is no other mediator but Jesus Christ in the first sense, because he has satisfied for the sins of the whole world in all the strictness of justice, and offered to the Eternal Father his merits as sufficient, nay, superabundant, price for the ransom of mankind.

But the Church recognizes a secondary ministry of prayer and supplication, and that belongs to the saints. Mary shares with the saints this ministry, only hers is distinguished from that of any or of all saints by two incomparable prerogatives—universality and efficacy.

The mediation of the saints is limited to certain graces, to certain places, to certain persons. Mary is a universal agent, whose power extends upon all places, all times, all good, all evil over the whole world. Universal patroness of mankind, mother of men, God has given her a heart in proportion to that ministry, and has poured out into it a charity which embraces in its solicitude and tenderness all her children. What he has done in small proportion for each one of our mothers he has done on a colossal scale for the Holy Virgin. He has made her mother, as he is father.

The second distinctive trait of Mary's mediation is no less incomparable—its efficacy. The saints are not always heard—whether God does not reveal to them that which is the greatest good for him for whom they pray, or because the sins of

the latter are too great and the meritorious relation between the saints and Jesus Christ is limited, or because their merit is more particularly included in the order and course of ordinary providence, which they cannot move except in a certain measure. But it is different in Mary's case. To her maternal charity it has been given to know God's secrets, and to see all in that mirror of truth which is her Son; to have all power with him, even so far as to cause in a certain sense the decrees of Providence to be changed, as the anticipation of the miracle of Cana seems to indicate. Full herself of grace, there is no grace which she cannot obtain, being in immediate relation with its source, and that grace from her heart is poured out upon ours. "This abundance is such," says St. Thomas, "as not only to replenish her, but as to leave abundance enough to pour upon men. It is sufficient that each saint should have grace enough to save a certain number of persons; but if he had as much as would be necessary to save all men, this would be the greatest of all fulness and abundance, and it is the fulness which is found in Jesus Christ and in the Blessed Virgin—in Christ as the source, in Mary as the channel, because in all danger one can find salvation through her, and assistance in every conflict. Hence this glorious Virgin has said of herself: 'In me omnis spes vitæ et virtutis.'"\*

This text of St. Thomas renders unnecessary the authority of other doctors, and we proceed to give reasons for this power. They are three—her humility, her maternity, and her co-operation.

It is not through diminution of power, but through grandeur and magnanimity of goodness, that God lets his creatures do violence to him, and, as it is said in reference to Josue, he obeys the voice of man: "Obediente Domino voci hominis." "He does the will of him who fears him" (Ps.)

It is in the nature of goodness joined to power to yield to timid weakness and humility as much as it is to resist pride

\* St. Thom., *Opus viii.*

and to crush rebellion. This law is instinctive and universal. It constitutes the strength of everything that is feeble, and maintains the world in equilibrium, and is found even in the habits of animals. In religion this law, placed everywhere as the impression of God's grandeur, was to shine with the brightest lustre. This God has effected in causing his power to appear in proportion to the weakness and insignificance of the means employed, as one can see in the triumph of the cross, in the kingdom of the Lamb, the conqueror of the world, and in that saying of St. Paul which recapitulates the whole of Christianity: "When I grow weak, then I am strong."

In keeping with this law it was necessary that the weakest and the humblest among creatures should be possessed of the greatest power and of a sovereign empire over God's heart. The *Dove* was to be terrible as an army in battle array. Mary, the sweetest and the humblest among creatures, was in a certain sense to command her Creator. She herself has beautifully sung it: "He hath deposed the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted the humble. He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid. He that is mighty hath done great things to me" (Luke ii.)

Mary, in the second place, is mother, and both in her and in her Son this relation must have had the greatest imaginable perfection. The Mother and the Child must show themselves in a most excellent manner. God would not have contracted such a relation, if he had not designed to show himself faithful to it and to authorize us to count upon it. He has contracted it on purpose to inspire us with such confidence. All the consequences which result from it are not fortuitous, unforeseen, and not well thought upon, but the very object which he proposed to himself in his infinite wisdom.

Now, what is the most necessary of the consequences of this relation, if not that the most perfect of all children should have for the most august and glorious of all mothers that deference which is due from a child to his parent? To be faith-

ful to this duty, the Holy Ghost assures us, is like amassing treasures: "Sicut qui thesaurizat, ita et qui honorificat matrem suam."

The Holy Ghost, who has dictated this maxim, has willed to show it in the action of one of the wisest of his interpreters, the ancestor of both Mary and Jesus, and the figure of their person—King Solomon—saying to his mother: "Ask, mother; for it is not lawful for me to refuse you."

Now, says a holy writer, a man can approach God with assurance, having the Son as mediator with the Father, and the Mother as mediatrix with the Son. Jesus shows his Father his wounds and his side. Mary shows her Son her breast and her womb. It is impossible that the Father should refuse what is asked of him by so many marks of mercy and pity, which entreat for us more strongly than the most eloquent tongues; and it is equally impossible that Jesus should refuse what is asked of him by marks of such tenderness and affection.

Hence, whether we look upon Mary as the humblest of creatures or as mother, we see that she must have a sovereign power with God.

We add that that which raises this power to its utmost height is that Mary is the corredemptrix of mankind. Mary, says St. Irenæus, has been the cause of the salvation of mankind—"Maria generi humano causa facta est salutis." We have already explained in what sense this is to be understood—in the sense that it pleased God to make her the arbiter of the mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption, in themselves and in their consequences.

Being, therefore, the cause of the acquisition of grace, it was eminently just that she should be the cause of its distribution. She had a claim to it; for what is there more just than to be allowed to distribute that which one has co-operated in acquiring? It is this consequence of the twofold dignity of Mary which we proceed to prove in this article. We insist, therefore, that there is no grace of any kind whatever ever given to



man which does not pass through Mary's hands. The Fathers have asserted this truth :

"All gifts, virtues, and graces of the Holy Ghost are administered by her [Mary] to whom she pleases, in the quantity and manner she pleases" (St. Bernard, *Serm. de Aquaed.*)

"From the time in which the Virgin Mother conceived the Word of God in her womb, she acquired a certain jurisdiction, to call it so, or authority over all temporal processions of grace of the Holy Ghost, in such a way that since then no creature ever obtained grace or virtue from God, except according to the distribution of the same pious mother" (St. Bernard., *Serm. lxi. de Nativitate V.*)

"No grace comes from heaven to the earth except it passes through Mary's hands" (St. Bernardinus, *Serm. de Annunt.*)

These sentiments of the Fathers have been thought by some to be pious exaggerations. But they are a strict logical conclusion of the twofold dignity of Mary ; so that it seems an exaggeration to those who do not understand or grasp the full comprehensiveness of the truth of their religion. Not so with the Fathers, who embraced in their vast intellects every truth in all its universality, in all its bearing with other truths, and in all its logical conclusions.

These consequences we shall unfold, and show how eminently philosophical and true is that sentiment that there is no grace ever given to any one except it passes through the hands of Mary, or, as the same St. Bernardine of Sienna expresses it : "Every grace which is communicated to this world undergoes a triple process, because it passes from God to Christ, and from Christ through the Virgin is distributed to us" (*Serm. de Nativ.*)

And, in the first place, none will doubt that to give the universal principle of grace, to be the mother of one's Author, is a greater dignity than to be the channel of grace and the medium of its distribution. Now, in the operations of perfect wisdom the greater implies the less. To refuse what is less

would be to withdraw what has already been granted in the greater. The holy Fathers have drawn from this principle a general consequence, from which they have made a rule of judgment in all the questions touching Mary, and which we have given as one of the first principles of this science—that all imaginable grandeur, all possible homage, which is not incompatible with the adoration due to God, and with the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, must be attributed and paid to Mary as virtually and eminently included and contained in that ineffable dignity of God's mother which raises her above everything and every one that is under God.

As to the present question, we have already remarked with Bossuet that God having once been pleased to give us Jesus Christ through Mary, this order cannot be changed, as the gifts of God are without repentance, and it is and will always be true that, having once received the universal principle of grace through Mary, we must through her receive the different applications of it in all the different states which make up Christian life.

This ministry is therefore included in the divine maternity. From the moment the Virgin Mother conceived in her womb the divine Word one may say that she obtained a sort of jurisdiction over the outpouring of graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which she had the fulness. As no ray can be drawn from the centre of a circle unless it passes through the circumference, so no grace can be drawn from the heart of Jesus except it passes through her who surrounded him, according to the sublime expression of the Scripture: "*Fœmina circumdabit virum*"—a woman shall encompass a man.

Again, the whole Christian world is but the extension of Jesus Christ. We are one body with Christ, according to the teaching of St. Paul. He is the head of the body of which Christians, the chosen ones of heaven and earth, are the members. We must never consider our Lord Jesus Christ and all Christians as forming two different bodies, but as one; for

therein lies the whole grandeur of the Catholic Church and the reason of its sublime prerogatives. What is the Catholic Church? It is Christ uniting to himself, by means of intelligent and material instruments, all men in time and space, imparting to them his own knowledge, his love, and all his other virtues, and helping them to develop them until he brings them to eternal happiness. It is Christ living and acting in them and through them. It is evident, therefore, that we are all members of the body of Christ; that in him we live, we move, and we are. Now, the members of a body should not receive their life in a way different from that of the head. As he has received his life through Mary, so must all the members receive their life also through her.

But let us enter more deeply into the reason of this prerogative of Mary.

The principles which God uses in the production of its effects are permanent and identical—that is to say, God does not effect a thing in a general way first, and then make use of a different principle in every individual application, but the same principle which causes it in general applies it in particular. This law is absolute and constant, and admits of no exception. A sketch of the works of God will both illustrate and convince us of the existence of this rule. The same principle which created the whole world, the *creative act* of God, effects also everything in particular. This is evident in those things which are created immediately and exclusively by God, like our souls, and also in those things which are effected by the intervention of created agency; because created agency would be impossible without supposing the permanence of the creative act maintaining secondary causes in existence, and prompting and aiding them to action. Hence preservation of the maintenance of all created being in existence, and the prompting and aiding them to action, are called a continual creation, because the same principle which creates maintains them in existence and aids them to action.

In the supernatural world it is the same. The Incarnation and redemption are the principle of the existence of the supernatural world. They stand to the supernatural world in the same relation as the creative act of God stands to the natural world. They are its principle and cause. Now, as the Incarnation and redemption effected all that accumulation of grace which is called the supernatural world, in itself and, as it were, in general, so also the Incarnation and redemption apply that general accumulation of grace to every one in particular, and, therefore, they are permanent principles in all time and space. The Incarnation has become permanent and has created the Catholic Church, which is nothing less than Christ himself incorporated in intelligent and non-intelligent instruments, who, in them and through them, cleanses, purifies, and unites to himself, by faith, hope, and charity, generation after generation of men, to make them members of his body and to bring them to eternal life.

Redemption also has become permanent, because redemption is concentered in the sacrifice of Calvary, and that sacrifice is permanent in the Church, as Christ, incorporated in the elements of bread and wine, offers himself daily to the Eternal Father for the same objects for which he offered himself on Calvary, and applies to each one in particular, in all time and place, the fruit of that universal sacrifice.

It is evident, therefore, that the same principle which causes a thing in a general way applies it in every particular case; that such is the law of God's works; that his principles of action are permanent and identical.

Now, what agency did Mary exercise in the effectuation of the supernatural world? What was her ministry in its production?

She was made the arbiter of the mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption. God put them into her hands. He would not effect those two mysteries except upon the express consent of Mary. To her consent, therefore, are due those two mysteries, in themselves and in their effects.

Now, according to the law above explained and vindicated, that the same principle which causes a thing in general applies in every particular case, that the principles God uses in the production of his works are permanent, we must conclude also that Mary's ministry in the production of the supernatural world must be permanent also, and that she must be the arbiter in every application of the grace forming the supernatural world, as she was the arbiter of the mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption, which created the supernatural world.

This consequence seems to us of the utmost evidence. The creative act producing the natural world is permanent; the mystery of the Incarnation and redemption is permanent; and shall Mary's ministry alone, so important and necessary for the effectuation of those two mysteries, not be permanent? Shall God in her case, and in her case alone, change that constant law of all his work? No; as she was the arbiter of the mystery of the Incarnation and redemption, she must be the arbiter of their application, and through her hands must pass every grace which emanates from that mystery to men.

We shall give another reason which may account for the law spoken of in the previous argument. There is nothing successive in God. The present is his only time. *I am who am.* We must say the same of his operation, which must necessarily partake of his nature. Thus, as we have said above, his Incarnation is immanent. As Jesus Christ is born once, he is born incessantly of Mary. Let us hear the development of this truth by St. Bernard: "To-day is born to you a Saviour. Let no undevout spirit tell us this is not new; that has been said before. And I say it has been said other times and before. Christ was not only born before our age, but before all ages. This nativity dwells in inaccessible light and is lost in the depths of the bosom of the Father. But in order that it might somewhat be manifested to us, he is born, and in time; he is born of the flesh. What is there astonishing now that since his birth up to this time he is said to be born in the

Church, when so many centuries before it was said, 'A child is born to us?' Is it not true that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was yesterday, is to-day, and will be for ever? Exemplar, in a certain sense, of eternity, he comprehends in his vast bosom things past, present, and to come in such a manner that nothing escapes him, nothing succeeds him, nothing is before him. Let us consider, then, always as new what is continually renewing souls, and never as old what never ceases to fructify. As Christ is immolated every day as many times as we make commemoration of his death, so he must be considered as being born every time we make mention of his birth"\* (St. Bern. *in Vig. Nat.*, Sermon. vi.)

We cannot understand this mystery for the reason that we cannot understand God. But God and his Incarnation being granted, we must admit it. The Eternal One, coming into time, must fill it, and even trespass it, like the ocean were it to pour itself out in a small vase. He must be its plenitude. He must be the temporal-eternal One as the God-Man. It is for this reason that the Fathers say the mysteries of Jesus Christ—his Incarnation, his nativity, his life, his death—are perpetual and fruitful in all centuries; that they wrought and accomplished not only for the time when he lived on earth, but also for all time which preceded and followed them.

It follows from this sublime truth that the successive and particular giving of Jesus Christ is nothing but the first and universal gift which has taken place through Mary, and that thus Mary gives him always and to each one in particular, as she has given him once to the world. As the crimes of all men before and after Jesus Christ were present to his sacrifice, and poured their bitterness into the chalice of his Passion, so the graces which were to be distributed to each one of them have been brought to his birth from Mary. God, who in the order of his providence prepares effects in the most distant

\* This is eminently true at the Consecration

causes, as Bossuet remarks, has prepared all the graces which were to be divided among men in their principal cause, which is Jesus Christ, and the instrumental cause, Mary. Their application does nothing else but unfold this design; and as regards Mary, it is nothing but the development and extension of her divine maternity.

The river of grace poured out from the bosom of the Father in the humble bosom of Mary springs forth as from a public fountain, reaching even unto the height of its source, falls back again in her virginal soul, which it fills first and above all creatures, and from it it overflows into a thousand streams to bring the spirit of life into the whole body of the Church; and as this mystery is unceasing, unceasingly also Mary is full of grace, and incessantly is she its reservoir and its channel.

To terminate with a comparison which is at the same time a figure, like Rebecca, a maid of wonderful gracefulness and of exceeding beauty, a virgin whom no man had known, Mary descends by her humility into the fountains of the Saviour, and incessantly fills her urn, and, resting it on her arms, she gives to drink not only to the pious servant who asks her, but the beasts also, to which the Scripture justly compares sinners, receive of her fulness, by which they are all refreshed and reinvigorated.





## BOOK FIFTH.

### *MARY'S MERIT AND GLORY.*

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Having in the preceding books spoken of the place which Mary holds in the universe, of her sublime dignity, of the graces, natural and supernatural, ordinary and extraordinary, which were required to enable her to fulfil her mission and to adorn her dignity, of the consequences resulting from her twofold dignity as regards God, as regards men, as regards Mary herself, we feel that to complete her knowledge we must speak of her merit and of her glory. This we shall do in the present book.



## CHAPTER I.

### ARTICLE I.

#### *Idea of Merit.*

IT has always been very difficult to grasp the idea of merit when the question has reference to the creature acquiring merit with the Creator. The difficulty arises from the fact that it does not seem reasonable that any one should be compensated and receive a reward for doing what he is strictly bound to do. It is evident that whatever good works we may perform are due to God already, to compensate him somewhat, if we may speak thus, for the boundless benefits he has bestowed upon us. It does not seem reasonable, therefore, that we should be rewarded for actions due already for so many reasons.

Besides, in doing good we are not benefiting God by any means, but ourselves. Why should God, then, reward us for what is no benefit to him, but all our own advantage?

Hence some have scorned the idea of merit, and have branded the Catholic idea as unphilosophical and unchristian, and therefore the necessity for understanding that idea and for taking it at its own proper value.

We shall endeavor to put this idea in its clearest possible light.

It is to be remarked, with St. Thomas, that reward and merit have reference to the same thing; for that is called reward which is given to one as a retribution for his work or labor, as the price of the same. Merit means the same thing—a price due to one as a recompense for something he has performed. Both are founded on an act of justice: as to yield a just price for a thing received from another is an act of jus-

tice, so is it an act of the same virtue to recompense one for the value of his work or labor.

Now, justice implies equality. Therefore strict justice can be found only in those between whom there is strict equality; in those between whom this strict equality cannot be found there can be justice only after a certain manner. Likewise, merit, in its strictest sense, can be had in those between whom there is strict equality, in those in whom such strict equality cannot exist merit can be had only in a certain sense.

It is evident that between God and man there is not only no strict equality, but a supreme inequality, as there is an infinite distance between them, and all the good that is in man comes from God. Man, therefore, cannot have rights toward God in consequence of equality, as this does not exist; he can only have merit in a certain sense. This sense is that God himself must attach a reward to man's works, and hold them as meritorious by his own disposition and ordinance. For, as our works are due to God by so many titles, if God himself did not destine them a reward, man could have no right to it nor could infallibly expect it; for God could accept and claim his works for other reasons—for instance, by reason of creation, or of his supreme dominion over all creatures, etc. Hence, in order that man may merit a reward and infallibly attain it, it is necessary that God should, by his own ordinance, appoint a reward for those works.

Merit is, therefore, possible between God and man in the sense that to certain works of man, done under certain conditions, God has attached, by his own divine ordinance, a certain reward; and in this sense man can truly and really merit before God. Because once the promise of a reward is attached to a certain work performed under certain conditions, and once this promise is accepted and the work performed in view of that promise, the reward is really gained and can be claimed in strict justice, and it is incumbent on him who has made the promise to keep it; so God having attached a re-

ward to certain works, and man having accepted that promise, whenever the latter performs works coming under that promise he really merits and can claim his reward in justice.

Having given this philosophical idea of merit, we proceed to define it according to its theological sense.

Merit is a right to an increase of sanctifying grace, and to an amount of eternal beatitude corresponding to that grace, which God has attached as reward to certain actions performed by the free will of man, moved and directed by God.

A few words will suffice to explain this definition.

1st. Merit is a right. This must be understood in the sense explained above—that is, a right acquired in consequence of the promise of God.

A right to what? To a reward. And what is this reward? An increase of sanctifying grace, and an amount of beatitude corresponding to this grace. These two things form the object of merit—an increase of grace and a corresponding amount of glory. Everything else is no object of merit, because that only can be the object or the result of merit which can be acquired by the free will of man, moved and directed by God. But this direction and motion can never be acquired as a principle or cause; because, if man could merit as reward that motion or direction as principle or cause, he would render himself the master of God's action and motion, and dispose of God as he pleased, in which case he would be the master and God the subject, which is absurd.

I can never, therefore, merit that he should move and direct my free will to obtain his friendship, which is called the first grace; nor can I merit that he should move and direct me as long as I please, which would be the grace of perseverance—first, because to no action God has promised such a reward; and, secondly, he could not promise it without losing his own independence. But, moved and directed by God, I can merit the progress of God's friendship in this life and its consummation in bliss.

## ARTICLE II.

*Conditions of Merit.*

From the definition just given it is apparent that not every action which a man may perform is capable of merit, and, likewise, that not every agent is in condition to merit, but that some qualities are required, both in the action and in the agent, in order to constitute merit.

These qualities or conditions, as they may be called, are the following, some regarding the action and some the agent :

As to those regarding the action, it is evident that it must be either good of its own nature or indifferent—that is, of its own nature neither good nor evil, but capable of being qualified by the agent's intention.

As to the agent, the first condition is that he must enjoy the freedom of will—that is, there must be no principle in his own nature which may constrain and force him to act, but he must be free from all constraint or force, either intrinsic or extrinsic to himself, and be able to choose of himself either to act or not to act, to act this or the opposite, to act this or another thing, because the very idea of merit implies this freedom. Neither reward nor punishment, neither praise nor blame, would have any sense as applied to the action of an agent, who is necessitated from his own nature to act as he does, and cannot do otherwise.

2d. The agent producing the action claiming to be meritorious must be in the state of sanctifying grace. Because what has the action claiming to be meritorious to effect as a term? An increase of sanctifying grace, and a corresponding amount of beatitude. These are, in their nature, absolutely supernatural and beyond the reach of any natural agency. Man, therefore, not endowed with sanctifying grace, could never merit its increase or its consummation. It is true that the reward of merit does not flow naturally from the meritorious action, but is attached to it by God; but it is also true that he who is the

God of order and proportion always establishes an affinity and analogy between the end and the means, and therefore wants a proportion between the action of the agent with that which he must merit.

In other words, eternal beatitude means the end and complement of the movement of sanctifying grace. Its increase means a progress towards that end. If God, therefore, has established an affinity and a proportion between the end and the means, it is evident that neither can be attained without the first moment of this movement being realized in the agent.

3d. The action must be performed for a supernatural motive; because if the action be of itself indifferent, or if the action be good only of a natural goodness, then the supernatural motive in the first case qualifies the action and raises it to a supernatural dignity; in the second case, without qualifying the action, it gives it supernatural dignity. For instance, to eat, to sleep, to walk, and such like actions are in themselves indifferent, neither good nor evil; and yet St. Paul bids us to do them in the name of Jesus Christ, that they may be made good and elevated to a supernatural being, and be capable of merit. To give alms through natural compassion we have for the misery of others is of itself good, but only of natural goodness, and as such incapable of meriting eternal life. Now, nature can never produce grace and glory; therefore the motive must render that action supernatural. This motive is God's glory and honor.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Measure of Merit.*

The conditions which are necessary to render an action meritorious will enable us to establish some rules whereby to judge, as far as human understanding may, of the degree of merit which may be acquired by a given agent.

The first of these rules is as follows: The intrinsic amount of good which an action, considered in every sense, may contain is an index of the amount of merit which is gained by it, the merit increasing in proportion to the increase of that goodness.

The rule is evident of itself; because if God rewards with eternal life an action done freely for his honor and glory, and for the manifestation of this infinite excellence, it stands to reason that the more an action attains this object the greater is the reward it merits, especially if we take into account that the objective good of any created action cannot be in anything else except in the manifestation of God's infinite excellence, the universal end of all things. The greater, therefore, the more sublime, the more magnificent the manifestations of God's glory in an action, the greater the amount of good it contains, and therefore the greater the merit and reward.

*2d Rule.* The greater or less amount of sanctifying grace with which an agent may act is an index of the greater or less amount his action will merit.

Because sanctifying grace, as we have seen, is one of the principles of merit. The greater, therefore, etc.

*3d Rule.* The more strictly supernatural is the motive for which an action is offered to God, the greater the merit.

If sanctifying grace is the principle of merit, the supernatural motive is the final cause of merit; therefore, as one by being intensified increases the merit, the other, also, by being strictly and more supernatural intensifies the merit.

The rules whereby we may judge of the greater or less intensity of supernaturalness in a motive are:

1st. Its purity when the action is done merely and strictly without any other view but the honor and glory of God.

2d. The intensity and fervor of love with which an action is offered to God. For it is evident that if an agent is led to perform an action by a sublime effort of love he feels for God, the motive is more supernatural than if he acted with a love more remiss and less intense.



*4th Rule.* The merit is increased in proportion to the greater or less opposition an agent may meet with in the performance of his meritorious actions, wherever the opposition may come from.

Because it is evident that the more opposition an agent encounters in the performance of his meritorious actions, the greater is the energy, the courage, the magnanimity, the constancy, and perseverance he must display in performing them.

To sum up these rules whereby to measure the intensity of merit, we say that it has to be measured from the amount of perfection an action contains in itself, from the intensity of sanctifying grace which is its principle, from the more or less supernaturalness of the agent's motive, and from the effort one must make to merit.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE APPLICATION TO MARY.

In this chapter we shall test Mary's actions according to the four rules laid down just now, and endeavor to obtain an idea of the enormous, unparalleled, and magnificent merit which Mary must have acquired. But before coming to this test we shall premise an investigation into the time from which Mary began to merit until it ceased.

### ARTICLE I.

#### *Length and Multiplicity of Mary's Merit.*

THE following propositions will fully establish the length of Mary's merit :

I. Mary began to merit from the very first moment of her immaculate conception.

Because in that instant Mary was endowed with all those conditions and qualifications requisite in an agent to be able to merit. She had the most perfect use of reason, and an infused knowledge for the use of which she did not depend on the development of the body. She was perfectly free and endowed with a most marvellous amount of sanctifying grace ; there was, therefore, nothing which could prevent her from meriting. And that she did actually merit is shown clearly from two things : 1st. Because we know that the angels and the first man did merit in the first instant of their creation. The same, therefore, must be predicated of Mary, according to the rule laid down in this work. 2d. We know that every man, as soon as he can have the use of reason and of freedom, is bound to offer up himself and everything to God. Mary had the use of reason and freedom at the first instant of her conception ; therefore she was bound at that instant to turn herself to God and pay him the

homage due for all his benefits. If she had not done so, in her case, and in consequence of all the privileges she was endowed with—that is, all the conditions of merit—she would have transgressed a most absolute and most important duty.

II. Mary's merit was not interrupted during her sleep.

Because, in the first place, it is the opinion of several doctors of the Church—among whom St. Augustine—that our first parents, in the state of innocence, enjoyed that privilege. St. Augustine, speaking of them, says that their sleep was as happy as the life of those who are awake.

We think this privilege in our first parents was the consequence of that sublime condition in which they were constituted—that of original integrity—which gave their spiritual faculties a supreme control over the inferior faculties, and kept the former always untrammelled and independent of the latter.

If, therefore, this was a privilege of the state of innocence, it must be predicated of Mary always, conceived without sin.

Secondly, it is admitted also by many doctors that Mary, since the first moment of her conception, was endowed with the gift of infused knowledge. St. Bernardine, Albert the Great, St. Antoninus, have no doubt whatever about this privilege being bestowed upon Mary.

Now, infused knowledge is altogether independent in its operations from the senses and the imagination; therefore the Blessed Virgin could, whilst the senses and the imagination were buried in sleep, avail herself of that infused knowledge, and by its means be enabled to produce free acts of the will.

III. Mary merited by all and each of the actions of her life which depended on her own free will; because all the doctors who have written upon this subject agree in saying that it was befitting that the Mother of God, in all those actions of her life which were under the control of her free will and depended upon it, should have this privilege; that none of them should be performed without full and perfect deliberation, and, consequently, without being previously directed to the honor

and glory of God and becoming thereby meritorious in God's sight.

The length, therefore, and multiplicity of Mary's merits may be summed up by saying that she began to merit from the first moment of her conception, and continued to merit till the end of her life by all and each of those actions which depend on free will, without interrupting this merit during the hours given to the rest of the body by sleep.

## ARTICLE II.

*Greatness of Mary's Merit from the Objective Value of the Acts performed; or, Mary's Merit judged by the First Rule.*

We are at a loss how to begin this article; for who could conceive the enormous objective value of the acts which Mary performed, and still less express it in words?

Numberless as her acts were, yet we may conceive them all as reduced to unity in that one stupendous and unparalleled act performed at her Annunciation, the sublimest and most magnificent act ever performed before by any created personality, and which can never be imitated—the fiat which she gave in response to the angel.

All the acts of her life before and after that act were directed and subjected to that act; they were elevated, exalted, made beautiful by being made subordinate to that act. She lived in that act. It was the very badge and distinguishing mark of her personality. Her previous life was a preparation for that act; her after-life was the individual realization of that act, and a continual song of thanksgiving to God, a hymn of praise, for having been enabled to perform it. All Mary's life is identified with her fiat. As our Lord's life is centred in those words, "Ecce ego, mitte me," which express his voluntary offering and his entire and absolute consecration and devotion of himself to be a victim of God's glory and of man's salvation, so

Mary's life is centred in that fiat which expresses her own co-operation in those mysteries.

Now let us analyze as well as we may the objective value of that supreme, universal, all-comprehensive act of Mary.

We have proved in this work that God, before effecting the mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption, required, as a condition without which he would not effect them, the consent of Mary, for reasons which we have explained; that he made her the arbiter, according to St. Augustine, of those two grand mysteries. This consent, therefore, was a meritorious act, and it implied a twofold consequence. The first was the Incarnation; the second, all the effects of the Incarnation and redemption. The value, therefore, of that act is to be measured from the objective value of that which it effected.

It effected, in the first place, the Incarnation; for that consent terminated in the conception of our Lord, in a divine personality, as Mary's conception did not terminate in a human but in a divine person. Under this respect Mary's fiat had almost an infinite merit. For the individual in which that act terminated is an infinite person, a very God. We say almost an infinite merit, because she did not act as a principal or efficient cause, but only as an instrumental and co-operative cause, and, restricted in that sense, her act is worth what is worth the person of our Lord, the abyss of grace, of sanctity, of truth, he in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells corporally.

Secondly, it effected the mystery of redemption with all its consequences, such as the satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of the world, an infinite glory, honor, and homage to the majesty of God, the grace of restoration to all mankind, sanctifying grace, with its three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the fruits of the Holy Ghost, the beatitudes, the extraordinary supernatural graces—in one word, the whole spiritual supernatural world; also the visible supernatural world, such as the Church and the sacraments; and, finally, eternal glory. Now, who

could measure or calculate the objective value of all these things? And yet Mary merited them as co-operative cause by her consent expressed in that sublime fiat.

Now, as the natural world is for the supernatural, and the latter is the final end and reason of the former, by meriting the supernatural world Mary merited also by her magnificent fiat the creation and the preservation of the world.

More still, as our first parents, by their fall, merited death and annihilation for themselves and for all their posterity, if they were maintained in existence it was due to the fiat of Mary. "For the sake of this noble creature," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "God saved our first parents from the effect of their transgression, Noe from the universal flood, Abraham from the slaughter of Chodorlahomor, Isaac from Ismael, Jacob from Esau, the Jewish people from Egypt and from the impious hands of Pharaoh, from the Red Sea, from the calf in the desert, from the divers hands of kings and tyrants; and, to sum up everything in a few words, all the various deliverances and indulgences mentioned in the Old Testament God granted, I have no hesitation to say, for the love and reverence of this blessed maiden, whom he predestined from all eternity to be honored by all his works" (Serm. lx.)

We shall conclude this article with the words of the same St. Bernardine, which recapitulate all we have said of the merit of Mary viewed according to the first rule:

"If one considers the final term of the virginal consent to so great a mystery, he will clearly understand that all dignity and perfection included in being God's mother, both spiritually and corporally, is involved also in that consent.

"This infinitely surpasses in merit whatever may be thought or spoken of under God. If, then, such ineffable term was proportionate with its merit, the meritorious perfection of such consent must needs be equally proportionate with the perfection of its term. From this we may gather that the Blessed Virgin merited, in the consent to the conception of

her Son, more than all creatures, either men or angels, in each one of their actions, movements, or thoughts—that is to say, all those who merited could not merit any more than eternal beatitude according to their various states and degrees. But this Virgin, in that admirable consent, merited the dominion and primacy of the whole world, the fulness of all graces, of all virtues, of all gifts, of all beatitudes, of all the fruits of the Spirit, of all knowledge; the interpretation of words, the spirit of prophecy, the discernment of spirits, the operation of miracles; she merited fecundity in virginity, the motherhood of the Son of God; merited to be Star of the Sea, Gate of Heaven, and, above all, to be called Queen of Mercy" (*Vide* 2 Serm. v.)

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Mary's Merit considered by the Second Rule.*

The greater or less amount of sanctifying grace with which an agent may act is an index of the greater or less amount of merit.

Now, considering Mary's merit according to this rule, to understand its magnitude we should understand the immense amount of her grace. We have described it as well as we could in this work, and shall not repeat what we have said already. Here we shall give an idea of the grace according to the Fathers and doctors of the Church, in order that we may form an estimate of her merit.

We shall gather them under certain heads:

First are the testimonies of those doctors who make a comparison between Mary's graces and those of other creatures:

"All gifts flow into Mary; the river of the grace of the angels flows into Mary; the river of the grace of the patriarchs and prophets flows into Mary; the river of the grace of the apostles, of martyrs, of confessors, of virgins, of doctors—all rivers,

finally, flow into Mary. But what wonder that all grace flowed into her, when so much grace flows into all through her? ” (St. Bonaventura, *in Speculo*, c. 3d).

“ To all the elect grace is given in part ; into this Virgin the whole fulness of grace was infused ” (St. Idelphonsus, Serm. vi. *de Assumpt.*)

“ The most Blessed Virgin was full of grace : 1st. Because she had all graces, general and especial, of all creatures, in a most eminent degree. 2d. Because she had graces which no other creature ever had. 3d. Because her grace was so great that a pure creature is not capable of a greater one. 4th. She contained in herself the whole uncreated grace, which is God ” (Albert the Great, *De Laud. Virg.*)

Secondly, the testimony of those who speak of her grace in reference to her dignity :

“ Difference of gifts originates in the giver, because the giver bestowing according to reason, and reason regarding the end, a greater gift is given for a greater end. But grace is given to Mary to be Mother of God, and to all others is given to be servants of God ; as, therefore, it is without proportion a greater dignity to be Mother of God than the servant of God, so, likewise, the gift to render one Mother of God is without proportion greater than that of making a servant. Now, the gift in which everything is given is charity. The most Blessed Virgin, therefore, will be greater in charity than all other creatures ” (Albert the Great).

“ As the divine perfections are incomprehensible to every created intellect, so the perfections of grace which the Virgin received in the conception of the Son of God would be comprehended only by the divine intellect, by Christ and Mary ; and, truly, that God should engender a God no disposition was required in him, because it was conformable to his nature to engender, by way of intellect, a Word in every way equal to him. Nay, it is impossible for him not to engender a God in force of his fecundity ; but that a woman should conceive and



bring forth a God is and was the miracle of miracles; for it was necessary that a woman should be elevated to a certain almost divine equality, by a certain infinity of perfections and of graces which no creature has ever received. Hence, as I believe, neither human nor angelic intellect could fathom that profound abyss of the caress of the Holy Ghost which descended on the Virgin in the hour of her divine conception" (St. Bernardine, Sermon. lxi.)

Thirdly, those testimonies which have reference to the grace she received as the co-operatrix in the salvation of mankind:

"The Blessed Virgin is said to be full of grace for three reasons: 1st. As to her soul, in which she had all the fulness of grace. 2d. She was full of grace also in respect to the flesh or body, into which it overflowed. For it is a great thing for the saints to have as much grace as will sanctify their souls. But the Virgin's soul was so full that from hence grace overflowed in the flesh from which she was to conceive the Son of God. 3d. For the transmission of grace to all men. For it is a great privilege in any saint that he should have as much grace as suffices for the salvation of many; but if one had as much as would suffice for the salvation of the whole world, this would be the maximum of grace, and this is realized in Christ and in Mary" (St. Thom., Op. viii.)

Great truly, overflowing, and complete was the grace of Mary who gave glory to heaven, joy to the angels, restored peace to the world, taught the gentiles by faith, and put an end to vice. How! is she not, according to the oracle of Gabriel, full of grace when she has become the ladder of paradise, the gate of heaven, the truest mediatrix between God and man?" (St. Laur. Justin., Sermon. *de Assumpt.*)

If, therefore, sanctifying grace is the principle of merit, and if Mary's grace was simply as great as it is possible for a mere creature to be endowed with, it is evident that her merit must have been immense and unfathomable.

## ARTICLE IV.

*Mary's Merit considered by the Third Rule.*

The third rule is as follows: the more strictly supernatural is the motive, the greater is the merit. And to judge of the greater or less supernaturalness of a motive two rules also are to be kept in view:

1st. Purity of intention when nothing is aimed at by an agent except and solely the honor and glory of God.

2d. But this theoretical intention, so to speak, would by no means be sufficient to render an action more or less supernatural. It requires purity of affection. Of what avail would it be for one to intend by his action to glorify God alone, when in the very action his heart is led away by a multiplicity of tendencies more or less distant from the aim of his mind?

To intend mentally to do everything solely for God's honor and glory, and to be wholly detached in heart from anything not God or pertaining to God's honor, increases more or less the supernaturalness of an action in proportion as that detachment is more or less perfect. Hence it is the teaching of spiritual writers that the most perfect practice of that virtue called purity of intention implies the most perfect detachment of the heart from anything not God; in other words, the most perfect love of God, to the exclusion of any other love not subordinate to it.

Now, examining Mary's actions according to this theory; it is evident that they must have been most intensely and perfectly supernatural for three simple reasons:

1st. In consequence of her most sublime knowledge she conceived most admirably and wonderfully the duty of a creature to do everything for the honor and glory of the Creator; also, by the immense knowledge she possessed of the grandeur, magnificence, and loveliness of that Creator, she was led to appreciate him as much as a pure creature raised to the highest perfection of knowledge could possibly do.

2d. Her unparalleled purity of heart, beside which the purity of the sublimest hierarchies of heaven is like dross, made her concentrate her whole mind, her heart, her soul upon the Creator, and upon him alone.

3d. Even her affections, which could be called natural in her by the particular privilege of her conditions, were transformed without effort, and in consequence of her peculiar circumstances, into supernatural, so that the more she yielded to those natural affections the more supernatural they became. For instance, naturally she was attached to and loved the spouse whom God gave to her; but she loved him for the reason for which God gave him to her, and for the virtues with which he was endowed. He was given to her to be the external guardian and shield of her virginal purity, and to be the support of her young years and of her divine Son. For this reason her spouse was made a miracle of purity, of virginal love, of intensest devotion. She loved him for all this, and the more she loved the more supernatural was her love, as the whole reason of the existence of St. Joseph as her spouse was supernatural. Of course we do not mean to exclude from Mary's heart that natural affection which one must have for the companion of her life, but we mean to say that that affection was blended into the nature of the motives for which she was provided with a spouse—motives which were wholly supernatural.

This is more evident as to her Son. She could allow her whole heart to be fixed and wrapt up in her Son; she could give way to the tenderest affection for him; she could make him the sole object of her whole being, without fear of trespassing on the natural affection she could show him, for the simple reason that her Son was God; so that in her case the more her mother's heart was bent towards him the more she loved him, the more she loved her God. She could truly make him the idol of her heart, because that Son was truly worthy of an infinite love as her God and Creator.

Mary's actions, therefore, were strictly, purely, and absolutely supernatural, and therefore her merit was in proportion to that supernatural intensity, and increased in a manner far surpassing the span of any created intelligence.

## ARTICLE V.

### *Mary's Merit examined by the Fourth Rule.*

We have said that the height and sublimity and, in fact, the whole greatness of Mary's merit consisted in her fiat, in the consent she yielded to the mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption; that all her actions were blended into, and unified by, and a practical realization of, that fiat. Her actions previous to it were a preparation, and those after it a gradual development and execution of it. That fiat had two principal stages, so to speak: the first on the day of the Annunciation, when she first uttered it in response to the angel; the second on Calvary on the day of our Lord's death, when she uttered it again in her heart as the ratification and perfect completion of the former.

But was it easy for Mary to utter that fiat? Was there no opposition raised against it? Did she not have to perform a most sublime effort to utter it? This is the question we undertake to answer in this article to complete the idea of Mary's merit.

That fiat was the origin and source of the sublimest elevation and intensest glory to Mary; but, at the same time, in order to utter it, it required on her part an energy, a struggle, a magnanimity, a constancy, a perseverance so great, so sublime, so colossal, so magnificent as to baffle all power of expression.

The consent to the effectuation of the mystery of the Atonement, implied in the consent to the Incarnation, engaged Mary to two things :

1st. To the sacrifice of her Son to the honor and glory of God and for the redemption of the human race.

2d. To act in that mystery as the representative of the whole human race.

Both these engagements of Mary, implied in her consent, raised that opposition which we are developing, and which increased her merit.

And, first, the fiat of Mary cost her the sacrifice of her Son. Now, to give an idea how hard it was to make such a sacrifice and what anguish she must have felt in making it, we must study at a certain length the nature and intensity of the love which Mary had for Jesus.

“It is certain that if we look around on earth,” says Cardinal Wiseman, “for a type and representation of the best and purest possible affection—if we look for love in its utmost intensity, in its most unselfish simplicity, in its sweetest tenderness—there at once rises to our minds that natural affection which binds the mother to her child. For that pledge of God’s love she is ready to sacrifice herself, forgetting every consideration; not only will she sacrifice health and all the pleasures of life, but life itself, if necessary; and we cannot imagine a being more ready to give her existence for another than the mother who sees her child in danger, and resolves at once to make herself an oblation for its safety. So remarkable is this affection that God has beautifully chosen it as the representation of his own love for man. He does not content himself with saying to us, ‘I am your Father,’ notwithstanding all the natural ties of affection the title suggests, but he compares himself to a mother in his true love for us: ‘Can a mother forget the child of her womb? And, even if she should forget it, yet will I not forget thee’ (Isaias xlix. 15).”

Now, Mary was a mother—but what a mother! It would be absurd to compare her to any woman, even in the mere sphere of natural sensibility. Holy Writ records of Agar, of Jacobeda, of the mother of the Machabees, of Rachel, of

Respha the wife of Saul, all loving and unhappy in their offspring—all shadows and images of Mary, but nothing more. Mary had a soul tempered after the most exquisite and tender sensibility; a gentle, delicate, noble, excellent bodily structure. She was the purest and most perfect creation ever came forth from the hands of the Creator, next to the most holy humanity of our Lord. In her the vehemence and tenderness of affections, the sweetness of feelings, the beauty of form, the suavety and blandness of her movements, the delicacy of the organs, were not in the least altered by original sin nor touched by actual fault. What a mother must all these things combined have made Mary!

But she was a virgin-mother. What a new source of sensibility, of delicacy of heart! The sensibility of women proceeds not only from the more or less exquisiteness of frame and temperament, but also, and above all, from the purity of heart. Hence virgins are gifted with a most exquisite and delicate sensibility and love, with vehemence and tenderness. Who could compare with Mary in this gift of purity? What purity, what immaculateness could equal hers, which surpassed even angels' purity and drew upon her God's complacent looks? Virgin-mother!—that is to say, fecund without the work of man, but by a most pure operation of the Holy Ghost. Here human reason fails, and cannot fathom the bottom of such mysteries, nor the love which springs therefrom. On one side, Mary, because a virgin, is the truest of all mothers. Christ's flesh is wholly and entirely Mary's flesh, the Eternal Word having drawn from her alone that substance which other children receive both from father and mother. Jesus is all Mary's, an undivided property of hers, and hence an undivided love between them; a father's love, a mother's love, mysteriously united in one heart, is Mary's love for Jesus.

On the other hand, love following always the nature of the fecundating principle, and Mary having become mother by

the operation of the Holy Ghost, it follows that her love for her child is the same as that of the principle which fecundated her—that is, the same love by which the Father loves the Son and the Son the Father—the eternal and everlasting love of God the third divine Person.

Here we have left nature and arisen to the supernatural; nature's love has become love of grace, of dignity, of privilege, of virtue. The natural perfections of Christ, the most perfect, the most beautiful of the children of men, the most amiable, the truest of all children, increase a thousandfold the mother's love. But he is God's also; Mary, therefore, is mother, and God's mother. What then? She loves with the fulness of maternity, with the fulness of grace, she loves her God in her Child, and her Child in her God; natural love and divine love mutually enkindle each other and form a complete love—an absolute love, the measure of which is the perfection of the mother, the perfection of the Son.

We pass over many other remarks which we might make to give an idea of this love of Mary for Jesus, such, for instance, as can be drawn from her knowledge of the perfections of Jesus as God and as man. It is useless to remark that love increases in proportion to knowledge. Who ever knew Jesus as well as Mary? The highest and the most sublime knowledge of any, or indeed all, creatures was ignorance compared with hers. Who could better than Mary fathom his perfections? Who could better than Mary appreciate them? Add to all this Mary's intimacy with Jesus for thirty years. The presence even for a few moments of a beloved object increases the ardor of love. What ardor must Mary's love have received from the constant presence, the constant intercourse, the most intimate familiarity with Jesus, the abyss of all divine and uncreated, and the fulness of all created, perfections! Every moment of those long thirty years, which to Mary must have seemed an instant, must have enkindled a love in her heart beside which that of the highest seraphs of heaven were luke-

warmness. Every moment a blaze of divine fire must have been raised in her heart; every moment an abyss, a torrent, an ocean of divine love must have inundated that magnificent bosom and made it lord over the highest love of all the angelic hierarchies.

Now, it is with this love of Mary for her Child present to our mind that we must measure the amount of merit which Mary must have gained in uttering on the day of the Annunciation, and ratifying every moment of her life, and consummating during the Passion and on Calvary her magnificent fiat: "Let my Son, whom I cherish with a love which has no parallel, which bears no comparison, which cannot be fathomed—let him become the man of sorrows and be sacrificed for the human race."

What a strife this must have raised in Mary's heart! What a tempest must have tossed that heart to and fro! She rose sublime in her magnanimity, above the love for her Child, to fulfil that destiny to which she was called by God—to save the human race; but no wonder that this sublimest of all human efforts, that this colossal magnanimity, subjected her to an anguish, to a sorrow, to a grief, to pains so exquisitely intense, so excruciating, so torturing, so piercing, so overwhelming, so absorbing that she distanced in her martyrdom the pains and anguish of all the martyrs, and her's can be compared only to the martyrdom of Jesus.

For to determine the principle, the progress, the end, the intensity of Mary's sorrow we must have recourse to the Passion of Jesus. The Fathers are unanimous in this opinion formulated by St. Bonaventura: "What Christ suffered in the body Mary suffered in the soul."

The same Fathers make use of several images to depict this correspondence between Mary's sorrows and Jesus' Passion.

The Hecho, which repeats in their true sound the words and voice of man, is a beautiful image, according to Arnold, of



the reproduction of the strokes and wounds inflicted upon the body of Jesus in the heart of Mary.

“As a mirror,” says St. Laurence Justinian, “reproduces with fidelity and precision the figure and color of objects, likewise Mary’s heart reproduced with the same fidelity and exactness all the pains of Jesus.”

“Give me two lyres well tuned,” says St. Gregory of Nyssa. “If I touch one, in consequence of mere sympathy and oscillation of the air the other will reproduce the same sound. Such is the mysterious harmony, the wonderful consonance by which the sufferings of the Son are repeated in the heart of the mother.”

In order, therefore, that she might utter her fiat, in order that all her sublime life might be a realization of that consent, and receive its completion and consummation upon the bloody summit of Calvary, Mary had a most colossal struggle to encounter—her obedience to God’s decrees, her unequalled love for the race, against her maternal love for Jesus and the love of God’s will. The love of her race prevailed. She consented to be priestess in the sacrifice of her Son. She would, as some of the Fathers have remarked, have fastened him to the cross with her own hands had the executioners failed, with a magnanimity greater than that of Abraham; but her mother’s heart was deluged in a pain so sharp in anguish, so excruciating, that she has merited the title of Queen of Martyrs, as her martyrdom towers far above that of all martyrs put together.

What this sublime martyrdom merited, of course, is beyond the reckoning of all human intellect.

We conclude this chapter of Mary’s merit by recapitulating all we have said in a few words.

Mary’s merit is beyond all calculation, if we consider her meritorious work in its objective value, which is neither more nor less than the whole Christian dispensation, including the Incarnation, the redemption, the Church, the sacraments, all the supernatural order of grace, all the order of glorification.

It is beyond calculation, if we consider Mary's works in their principle, which is sanctifying grace, and which in Mary, being simply unfathomable, caused her merit to be in intensity beyond the reach of all understanding of man and angel. This merit was increased by the purely supernatural nature of the motive in all her works, and was carried to its utmost perfection, reached its loftiest point, by the struggle which Mary had to sustain in order that she might fulfil her destiny and be the corredemptrix of the human race.

## CHAPTER III.

### MARY'S GLORY IN HEAVEN.

Having spoken of the unparalleled and ineffable merit of Mary, we proceed to speak of her glory in heaven. This we shall do by giving a full and accurate idea of eternal glory, in order that, according to our wont, the reader may understand really the nature and perfections of Mary's glory.

#### ARTICLE I.

*On Eternal Beatitude, generically considered, and its Specific Distinction.*

THE best definition of beatitude is that given by Boetius in his book *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, wherein he says that it is a state so perfect as to gather in itself all possible goods—*Status omnium bonorum aggregatione perfectus.*

Beatitude may be considered under various aspects. We will point out two: First, it may be considered relatively to its object—that is, in that supreme and infinite good which possesses the power and virtue to satisfy all human aspirations; and it is called *objective* beatitude. Then it may be considered in respect of the subject—that is, in the possession which man takes of this supreme good; and then it is called *formal* beatitude.

Omitting other distinctions made by theologians of these two kinds of beatitude, we pass to the definition of both, inasmuch as they are strictly considered as the beatific happiness.

With regard to the objective beatitude, we say that it is God himself, in his essence, in his infinite attributes, in the mysteries of his interior life, in his works outside of himself, natural, supernatural, and beatific.

We need not dwell long on this objective beatitude, as

its idea will be made clear by the discussion of the formal beatitude.

We have said that formal beatitude consists in the possession which man takes of the supreme good. Now, theologians disagree in determining in what exactly consists this act of possession. Some, like St. Thomas, make it consist in the act of intuition by which the intellect perceives God; others, in the act of loving him; and others, finally, in the enjoyment of God. We think that all three opinions express a part of the essence of formal beatitude, because the true and real beatitude cannot do without any of them, and results from the union, intellectual and moral, of man with his supreme end, and from the joy consequent thereupon. The opinion of St. Thomas, however, is the most important, for the reason that knowledge being the root of all life and personal happiness, the Beatific Vision must be the beginning of celestial life, the fountain of the love and of the joyful sentiment; that which makes the object present, and unites the person with, and puts him in possession of, it. Under this aspect, St. Thomas's opinion may be regarded as expressing the essence of formal beatitude.

But of what nature is this vision? How is it developed? And what are the objects it grasps? We shall try to answer, as far as we may, these sublime questions.

The supernatural knowledge of man cannot be transformed into beatific vision by any continued progress of the former, but requires to be exalted to a new degree of specific perfection in order to grasp its object. The essence of faith consists in a symbolic knowledge, so to speak, in apprehending the superintelligible order, as it were, through analogies revealed by God and propounded and defined by the Church; and such a knowledge, however sublime, however perfect it may be, cannot satisfy the craving of human nature.

To satisfy the craving of human intelligence, it is necessary that the veils of faith be rent in two, and that the human mind

be elevated upon the wings of the light of glory to the immediate perception of God as infinite superintelligibility; that it perceive him in his reality and objective concreteness; that it may grasp him in his intimate nature, contemplate him in his mysterious life and in his great and infinite relations. This passage from faith to a direct perception is not a simple progress or development of the virtue of faith—not an evolution of that supernatural faculty—but, as it were, a *leap*, an exaltation, in virtue of which the divine essence elevates the soul to an intimate and vital communication with itself, and inundates it with its infinite light, infusing into it a new intellectual force, so as to transform faith into vision. “Videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem” (St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 12). “Nondum apparuit quid erimus. Scimus quoniam, cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus: quoniam videbimus eum, sicut est” (St. John Ep. 1 iii. 2).

From these considerations it is clear that the Beatific Vision is the end and final perfection of all human knowledge, and the completion of supernatural faith, as the latter is the completion of reason. They all go together, and without the Beatific Vision neither reason nor faith would have any reason for being. It is also to be remarked that this Vision is not, like rational or supernatural knowledge, confined, implicit, and obscure, but clear, distinct, and perfect, embracing and possessing infinite truth, with so much light and reflex evidence as is determined by the merits of each particular person. Truth, seen with so much fulness of light and certainty of consciousness, will be our life and our food; it will penetrate, transform, and deify us without absorbing or causing our personal individuality to cease.

But this Vision will not be so absolutely perfect as to exclude all possibility of increase, because every created force is, of its nature, of indefinite capability; hence, no matter how great its development may be, it will never be complete.

Besides, the Infinite can never be exhausted by created

intelligence. The more our intelligence perceives in him, the more there is to be perceived. Even Beatific Vision, then, under this respect, admits of progress.

## ARTICLE II.

### *Extension of the Beatific Vision.*

Rational and revealed truths, which on earth form the object of reason and of faith, in heaven will be the immediate object of the vision of the blessed.

The divine essence, which the blessed will see face to face, will be the supreme object, the intelligible form of their mind; and this divine intelligibility, extending itself to all the operations of the essence, both inside and outside, of God, will render intelligible all the life of God and of creation.

And, first, the primary object of the Beatific Vision, its supreme and essential object, will be the holy and ineffable Trinity, which, taking hold of the mind of the blessed, shall inundate it with its divine light and fill it with its infinite and immense splendor. In this supernatural and everlasting manifestation the divine essence will show itself in the concreteness of its interior life, in the ontological organism of its triple subsistence, in those great and infinite internal operations which, starting from the first fountain of all subsistence, declare the internal movement of the same, and its infinite internal fecundity in the eternal production of the Son and of the Spirit. The Father, who is subsisting by himself, will be the first object of the vision, the fountain of the beatific intelligibility, which, diffusing itself interiorly through its own fecundity, shall render intelligible the other two Persons with the same notional action by which it produces them. The blessed, starting from him, shall learn, by means of the organism of these his notional operations, the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and in these productions the eternal type of the external processions. In generation he shall see the

eternal and infinite revelation of the Infinite to the Infinite, the principle and the base of the exterior and finite revelation of the Infinite to the finite; in the procession of the Spirit he shall admire the equally eternal and infinite communication between the Infinite and the Infinite, the fountain and the source of every external communication of love between the infinite and the finite. .

In one word, in the first internal procession the blessed shall see that intellectual life, in the plenitude of its infinite fecundity, generates unto itself, without division or alteration, an intelligent *term*, a living *thought*, which is the splendor, the expression, the figure, both subsisting and seeing, of its generative Principle; in the second procession he shall contemplate the infinite communication of these two Persons, who, in the immensity of their transcendental glory and love, embracing each other, produce a third term, who is the individualization of their mutual charity, the breath of their common life, the determinate and living specification of that torrent of love which unites the Father and the Son, and which, not being able to remain in the mere quality of potentiality, is individualized in an infinite and supreme act of love, is concreted in an eternal subsistence, in a living personality, who is the substantial love of the Father and of the Son—their possession, so to speak, and their infinite bliss.

Such will be the primary and essential object of the Beatific Vision; but not that only. The divine essence is not only fruitful internally but also externally, and its life is not only individualized and organized in the eternal procession of uncreated persons, but goes out of itself, so to speak, and expresses itself in an infinity of finite substances, which in their harmonious unity shadow forth the great and infinite unity of the divine life.

This external fecundity, though it cannot equal the internal in the substantial infinity of its term, aims to reach it in a certain manner. The reason of this lies in the nature of the type

and in the divine action, which, being omnipotent and wishing to express the infinity of the type in creation, and not wishing to be frustrated in its tendency, requires that its term be raised to an infinite dignity to equal the internal term, not by identity of nature, but of personality. Such is the grand intention of the external fecundity, the immense problem of creation.

The blessed shall see also the solution of this second mystery, not by an obscure knowledge, but by a clear and direct intuition: he shall see how the subsisting *thought* of the Father, the internal life of God, without losing his infinite and eternal form, has come into creation, has become temporal and mortal, and has raised the finite to an infinite power by his incarnation in human nature, and has exalted to a supernatural participation of his infinite grandeur all other creatures by means of the universal renovation of the world.

The immediate vision, therefore, of Christ and of his exalting and redeeming action will enable the blessed to comprehend the great organism of the divine life, in its relations of harmony, of union, and of contact with the sublime organism of created life. The unity of the infinite person of Christ in his double nature, human and divine, will be the centre of this immense and wondrous unity and harmony, the key which shall open the sublime enigmas of creation, and shall explain in what manner infinite grandeur, by lowering itself even to the servitude of the creature, exalted the latter to its own height, without any loss to or confusion in its properties or nature. He will see how, by means of the personal identity, the infinite has been transfused into creation, has become property of creation, and has contracted with it such relations of union and intimacy that the divine properties became human and human passions divine. He will learn that through this communion, which is called by theologians communication of idioms, God is man, and man God; that God has become the son of man, and man the son of God; God true brother of man,



and man true brother of God; that omnipotence has become weak, and weakness omnipotent, etc. This alternation, so to speak, and transmission of properties or relations of names shall be seen clearly by the blessed, and through it will be made manifest the great mystery of creation.

But in Christ he will see also the renovation of the world; for, as the intuition of the Trinity includes the vision of Christ, so the latter includes that of the sublimation, redemption, and beatification of the universe. These supernatural and theandric actions, forming a part of Christ's life, as the latter enters in the concrete organism of the divine life, cannot be separated from the vision of himself, any more than Christ himself can be separated from the intuition of the Trinity. The great mysteries, then, of the vocation, renovation, and predestination, with all the other hidden things of religion, which form the object of faith, shall become the object of vision, according to the saying of the Psalmist: "*Sicut audivimus sic vidimus in civitate Domini virtutum.*" In that blessed city one will see clearly in what manner the divine life of the Trinity is communicated to Christ, and by Christ it is diffused and propagated all over creation. Christ will be seen as the great centre of universal life, the Sun and the true Light of the world, the Head of created things, the Prince of existences, the Fountain of all truth and good—in one word, the principle of the restoration and universal harmony of the world with God, according to the sublime saying of the Apostle: "*Deus erat in Christo mundam reconcilians sibi.*"

Finally, the last object which the blessed will see, and which cannot be separated from the vision of Christ, Creator and Reformer, will be the world, both natural and supernatural. This great work of divine goodness, which in so many ways is connected with Christ and the Trinity, will complete the Beatific Vision, and will be perceived in its immense variety and harmony, in its objective organism, and in its ideal rela-

tion with Christ, its supreme cause and divine type. The relations between nature and grace, reason and faith, between natural and supernatural truths, will not present any obscurity or mystery any longer. All that we now know but imperfectly and confusedly of nature, of its species, of its laws, of its operations; all that we know of grace, of its peculiar manner of illumining the intellect and of acting upon the heart, will be unfolded to us with so much light and evidence, will expand, as it were, and increase with such intensity and brightness of intelligibility, that at one glance, clear, distinct, and pure, we can see all these things and an infinite number of others which are connected with their nature, properties, and various other relations; the greatness and sublimity of the heavens, the infinite variety of beings, of their perfections, the immense diversity of their tendencies, the harmony of their relations, the unity of their operation, will be but a small prospective of that grand object which will be the term of that Vision. The hierarchies of angels with their choirs, the innumerable multitude of men, of other mundane intelligences, will be seen in their mutual relations, in the unity of their religious life, of their origin and supernatural generation from Christ. The latter, with his glorious mother, shall sit at the head of this immense and universal society of spirits, and will be contemplated as the centre which enlightens, kindles, and harmonizes such endless variety of intelligent creatures.

From this imperfect sketch of the Beatific Vision our readers may form an idea of the satisfaction and stirring delight and joy which the intelligence of the blessed must draw from the intuition of so many great objects brought together with such organism of unity and harmony. With reason did St. Paul exclaim that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those who love him." And, in fact, what tongue could ever express the delights of a mind which hath reached the term of its aspirations; which embraces, possesses, and feels it; which

speaks face to face with the most august Trinity, with Christ, who is the Uncreated Truth, which has become sister, relation, and friend of the mind which contemplates it; and, finally, which sees and converses familiarly with the universal society of angelic spirits and of those great souls who preceded it in the kingdom of everlasting bliss?

### ARTICLE III.

#### *Of the Will, Love, and Joy of the Blessed.*

Knowledge is the first element of personal life, but not the only one. As soon as truth shows itself to the intelligence, a most noble inclination arises in the soul which tends to embrace all the known truth, to possess and enjoy it. This inclination or fundamental affection, which, in its springing from the essence of the Spirit, at first shows itself necessary, universal, and confused, is gradually developed and actualized by being concentrated in different objects, in proportion as knowledge is extended and increased. From it derive different special affections, which are distinguished in as many classes as there are species of goods to which they tend.

Among these, first is the supernatural affection, which begins upon earth with faith and is perfected in heaven by the Vision. Hardly has the blessed reached the plenitude of his intellectual perfection than the movements of his heart are elevated, the affections are transformed, the wishes and hopes are fulfilled and quieted. Truth, known without shadow or error, in the evidence of its essence, is the supreme and last good of the soul, the end of its aspirations, the centre of its tendencies; and towards this good it tends with all the vehemence of its forces, with all the vigor of its passions; it embraces it, presses it to its heart, is plunged and lost in the abyss of its perfection, in the immensity of its glory.

In consequence of this beatific communication the supernatural will of the Christian, taken hold of, penetrated, and filled

by this infinite *Good*, is elevated to the very summit of its power, filled in all its cravings, satisfied in all its disquietudes, appeased in the variety and infinity of its desires. That last good, which in the course of its earthly development it was always seeking, sighing after, now it finds present in its own infinite essence, sees it in its intimate life, possesses it—nay, it is possessed by it fully, immediately, and superabundantly. Everything great, sublime, magnificent, wondrous it could wish for it possesses now in a manner above all fathoming, perfect and infinite, in the Trinity, who, communicating themselves to the blessed soul immediately, elevate it to the immensity of their joys, carry it after the torrents of their delights. An ineffable communion of thoughts, of affections, of love will be established between them, a sweet and intimate friendship will be sealed between them, and from it will result that sublime happiness, that fulness of contentment which shall overflow all the powers of the soul.

This will be more easily understood if one reflects that the life and perfection of the heart lies in love, but in love noble, moral, and dignified. The essence of this divine love is to wish good to the beloved one, to take pleasure and complacency in its perfections, and to rejoice that the beloved one possesses them as high, as great, as sublime as possible. The friend, strictly speaking, has the friend in view, and not himself; rejoices in the present good of the friend, and deems his own happiness that possessed by the friend. This intense property of love emanates from the very essence and order of *being*, from the essence of moral law, which requires that before and above all we should have in view the good in itself and by itself, in consequence of its intrinsic excellence; from which it is clear that the perfection, the harmony, and the completion of the will and of love consist in embracing good, in adapting one's self to its peculiar character, and in wishing it just as it is in its objective dignity. The consummation, then, and the full and complete satisfaction of the beatific will, will

consist in acknowledging and in loving as present the supreme good of the divine Persons, in taking complacency because they possess it invariably and eternally, infinite and immense.

## ARTICLE IV.

*Transformation of the Blessed.*

The Beatific Vision and possession produce in the blessed a transformation. This is pointed out in those words of St. John: "We know that when he shall appear we shall become like unto him, because we shall see him as he is." This transformation has its origin both in the vision and in the possession of God. As to the first, it is to be remarked with St. Thomas "that intelligence, according to its nature, takes the form and similitude of everything it understands";\* and the more perfect is the act of understanding, the more perfect is the resemblance with the object which results on the understanding.

Now, as the blessed know God clearly, see him face to face, contemplate him in his own nature and attributes, the knowledge they acquire of him is not accidental, superficial, or transient, but intimate, essential, profound, efficacious, and permanent; so much so, as St. Thomas remarks, that by the act of knowledge so perfect, God, as it were, is engraved upon, reproduced in, the soul of the blessed, who, absorbed in the contemplation of infinite beauties, are transformed and become like to the divine prototype, to the universal exemplar. They become what they see: "Id fiunt quod vident" (St. Thomas).

From this we can see the aptness of that beautiful similitude used by St. Paul to explain this mystery when he says: As a mirror placed before an object reproduces its image, likewise we, purified by divine grace, divinized by the light of glory, beautified by love, shall become mirrors placed in presence of God in order to contemplate without covering his infinite

\* *Intellectus intelligendo fit omnia.*

majesty, and to reproduce in ourselves his splendid similitude, but in such a manner that, in consequence of the virtue of the Most High, we shall be transformed into so many living and perfect images.

But this resemblance of God in the blessed will not merely be of an intellectual nature; it will be also effective, animating and vivifying the will. This follows also from the nature of love. We become like to the object we love: if the object be lofty, sublime, divine, our will becomes lofty, sublime, divine; if it be low, degrading, we also shall become low and degraded. Hence the Scripture says: "Facti sunt abominabiles sicut ea quæ dilexerunt."

Now, in heaven the blessed are united with a most perfect love to the Infinite, abyss of all perfection, the ocean of all loveliness and beauty; therefore they become like unto it. And this resemblance will not be distant, symbolic, figurative, or imperfect, as the similitude we acquire of God by grace in this life. In heaven there will be a true transformation of the creature into God. Man, says St. Gregory Nazianzenus, will overstep the sphere of nature and become God's: "Excedet homo suam naturam Deus de homine evadens." Hence the prophet represents God in heaven sitting in the midst of Gods: "Deus stetit in synagoga Deorum." There all differences are destroyed, all distinctions levelled. There will remain no other distinction except that of Creator and creature, but a creature elevated by the Creator to a perfect resemblance of himself and become by grace what he himself is by nature.

In fact, the creature received in God's bosom begins to live of God's life; the breath of God animates it, his substance nourishes it, his being supports it, and his divinity deifies it without destroying it, gives it another form without taking away its nature, in such a way that it becomes like unto God by participation without ceasing to be creature by essence.

But that nothing might be wanting in this resemblance, at the same time that in the soul of the blessed is reproduced the

divine unity, the trinity of Persons is also drawn in it. And as the three divine Persons concurred in the creation of man and in all the mysteries of grace, in the same manner, and with stronger reason, these three divine Persons will have part in the mystery of glorification. In a manner much more wonderful and perfect the Eternal Father will communicate to the glorified soul the power of his intellect, the Word the treasures of his wisdom, the Holy Ghost the delights and the effluvia of his goodness. Thus, according to the expression of St. Paul, the blessed, being plunged into God's bosom, will be filled of his plenitude. There shall be in them, therefore, the fulness of power, of wisdom, and of goodness. The created intelligence, partaking of the energy of the uncreated intellect, will engender also an interior *Word*, which will be like the echo of the uncreated Word; and this intelligence and this Word will rest in each other with a complacency which will bear a great resemblance to uncreated love. That is to say, the powers of the soul will correspond with each other almost with the same relations as the divine Persons, and the ineffable mystery of the august Trinity, which from all eternity exists in the abysses of infinite nature, will be reproduced not only by way of image, as in creatures without life, not only by way of natural resemblance, as in all intelligent creatures, but by a way of supernatural resemblance, perfect and permanent. The soul thus glorified will be a living image of the uncreated Trinity, its living portrait, powerful as they are almighty, wise as they are wisdom itself, loving as they are love itself, dazzling with the same splendor, and animated with the same life. "Ego dixi Dii estis" (Ps.)

#### ARTICLE V.

##### *Joy of the Blessed.*

The Beatific Vision, the possession, the transformation all unite in filling the blessed with overwhelming bliss and joy.

We would fain give an idea of this bliss and joy, but are conscious of the impossibility of being able even to touch upon it in the most superficial and unsatisfactory manner.

Let us analyze the idea of joy. Joy is a certain feeling arising in the soul, resulting from the possession of an object longed for and finally attained. Simple as it may appear, this feeling is composed of others. And, first, it implies rest; the faculty which has longed for its object, craved for it, pined after it, the faculty which has been worn out by the ardent desire after it, finally possesses it, and the first feeling resulting in the soul is a feeling of rest, of quiet, of repose, of satisfaction.

Again, this feeling would be marred, if the soul were not certain that the possession of that object is permanent and secure, and the consciousness of that permanence creates a feeling of security and of peace.

Finally, the possession of the object, with all its qualities and perfections, gives a new life to the soul; it expands, it exhilarates it. The soul is no longer alone by itself with its own life. It possesses a new life; its life is doubled in proportion to the magnitude of the object; it overflows with life; it has a fulness of life which it cannot contain within.

This expansion of the soul, this redoubling of life, this overflow of life, this exhilaration is joy, delight, jubilee, bliss.

Now, applying these ideas to our subject, it is evident that the possession of God, of the abyss of all excellence, the ocean of all perfection, the fulness of all loveliness, the most absolute life, produces first in the soul of the blessed a feeling of rest, of quiet, of tranquillity, of repose. With all the energies of its nature, with all the force of supernatural grace, the soul has sought after God, pined after him, longed for him. Away from him it was in a violent state, almost in an unnatural state, as it was out of its centre. It was in a continual strife and warfare, the most profound sense of those words of the Scripture: "*Militia est vita hominis super terram.*"

Now it is in possession of God, and a feeling of the sweetest,



most searching, most exhilarating rest and calm takes possession of it.

The consciousness of the permanence of that possession produces in it the feeling of peace and of tranquillity.

And, finally, the possession of God, the intimate union with him, fills the soul with infinite life, with the very life of God, with that true eternal life which is expressed and individualized in the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The life of the soul in this case is not only increased, doubled, but becomes, as it were, infinite, because it drinks in the life of the infinite, because it possesses God's life, because it is plunged into the abyss of life, because it basks and sports in infinite life. Who can express the result of this union? Who can express the feeling of such a life? Who can utter what the soul must experience under the swift, overwhelming waves of infinite life bearing upon it sweetly but powerfully? How it must grow and feel, as it were, oppressed, overwhelmed by such torrents! How it must expand and overflow with life, and to what transports of exhilaration, of inebriation it must give itself! The Scriptures have expressed it beautifully in those words: "A good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom" (St. Luke vi. 38).

For the measure of God's life imparted to the blessed shall be good, and pressed down into the very essence of the soul, and shaken together to impress it upon the soul more and more, and running over so as to extend beyond the soul. And this measure will produce an exhilaration and inebriation which forms the very essence of joy. The very life of God, which rushes up like rivers of refreshing waters from the bosom of the Father into that of the Son, and from the bosom of both into that of the Holy Ghost, and fills them with infinite joy, with stirring jubilee, with most searching delights, rushes into the bosom of the blessed, and they are plunged in that water; they bathe, they sport, they drink of these torrents, and

are inebriated with delight. "Inebriabuntur ab ubertate domus tuæ, torrente voluptatis tuæ potabis eos."

## ARTICLE VI.

### *Measure of Glory.*

Independent of the first sanctifying grace which is given through the merits of our Lord, according to St. Thomas, are to be assigned two principles as a measure of glory, one immediate, the other mediate and remote—the first springing from the latter.

The immediate and proximate principle of glory is the light of glory, which is given by God to the soul in order to enable it to see him face to face in his own infinite nature. Now, it is evident that the amount of glory in a soul is to be measured from the nature of this light; the glory being greater or less in proportion to greater or less intensity of this light.

But the greater or less intensity of light given to a soul is to be measured in its turn from the amount of merit a soul has gained in this life, God giving his light in proportion to the personal merit of a soul.

So that the measure of glory is to be taken from the amount of light of glory, and this is to be taken in proportion to the amount of merit.

This explains the words of our Lord: "In my Father's house there are different mansions." That is to say, that the glory is not equal in all the blessed, but varies according to the light of glory which they received on their first entrance into bliss; and this light of glory was given in proportion to the merits of each.

So that, in order to obtain an idea of the glory of a soul, we must look at the measure of its merit, and this will give us an insight into its glory.

## CHAPTER IV.

### APPLICATION TO MARY.

THE measure of the glory of a soul is its merit. Now, Mary surpassed in merit all created intelligences; therefore her glory towers above that of all angels and saints. Hence is she said to sit at the right hand of Jesus Christ, her divine Son.

But, in order to make our readers have a glimpse of the magnitude of such a glory, we shall endeavor to unfold that short reasoning by which we have commenced our chapter.

It is a truth of theology that the number of angelic spirits is so great as to surpass any reckoning which our mind could reach. This is asserted by St. Denis in those words: “Sunt beati exercitus supernarum mentium, infirmarum nostrarum mentium numerum super excedentes”—words which, well pondered by St. Thomas, made him hold that the angels surpass in number all corporeal substances as much as the colossal magnitude and number of heavenly bodies surpass the magnitude of the earth.

The reason which the holy doctor gives for this is that God has created a greater number of those creatures which are more perfect than of those which are less so, because the perfect creatures could express more of the beauty of his essence, which is the type of all creatures; and as that essence is infinite, it can be expressed by an immense number of angelic creatures and never be exhausted.

Hence we must conclude that the number of angels is far superior to that of all the stars of the heavens, of all the sands of the ocean, of all the leaves of trees, of all the drops of water, of all the atoms floating in the air.

This immense number of angels is not a confused multitude like the sands of the sea or the drops of water, or the atoms of the air, but a perfect order reigns over them, according to which each angel successively surpasses in natural gifts the former one, just as in numbers the second surpasses the first, the third the second, and so forth. Likewise proportionate with the gifts of nature are the gifts of graces with which angels are endowed, in such a manner that whoever is endowed with more natural gifts is enriched also with greater graces than another; and consequently he who is enriched with greater gifts of grace is blessed with greater glory proportionate with his grace.

The reader will forgive us this apparent digression for the sake of the argument we wish to illustrate. If, therefore, angels, as we have said, are numberless, and if one is more perfect than the other in nature, and if one, being more perfect than the other in nature, is more perfect also in grace, and consequently enjoys greater glory in heaven, it follows as an evident conclusion that, however small you may suppose the degree of glory to be in the least one of all angels, we must suppose a most colossal quantity in the supreme one among them; so that St. Michael, who, according to the most common opinion, is the chief of all the seraphim, the highest choir of angels, must possess at least as many degrees of glory as there are angels inferior to him—that is, an innumerable and immense multitude. And if we grant that the least of angels is not possessed merely of one degree of glory, just as an infant dead soon after baptism may be supposed to enjoy, but thousands upon thousands of degrees of glory, as it is befitting that an angel should have, how much more will the riches of the supreme angel increase who is the chief and the captain of all that heavenly host? Who can form an idea of such glory? Who could fathom such a bliss?

Again, let us form an idea of the glory of all the saints. They also are innumerable, according to St. John, and their glory must be immense! Think of the glory of all the just of

the Old Testament, of all the patriarchs and prophets, the glory of all the apostles, of the innumerable multitude of martyrs, of countless virgins, of confessors, of penitents, of all those souls who died and will die with one or more degrees of sanctifying grace.

Now put together the glory of the highest seraph, the glory of all the saints and just ones of all times and places—what an overwhelming glory! Who could fathom, and much less express it in words? Let us compare this glory with Mary's glory, and what is the consequence? Why, suppose Mary had died the second moment after her immaculate conception in the womb of her mother; her glory in heaven would have been superior to the glory of all angels and saints put together, as we have proved that her sanctifying grace, at the first moment of her conception, was superior to that of all angels and saints put together.

Add to this the overwhelming amount of grace she merited all her life, in the measure in which she merited it, according as we have proved in this work—that is to say, that on the second moment of her life her grace was doubled, and on the third it was four times as great, and on the fourth eight times greater, and on the fifth sixteen times greater, and so on through all the moments of seventy-two years, uninterrupted in merit, not even by sleep—and then let any one fathom the magnificent and colossal glory of Mary as reward for such a merit. She is a heaven apart, a paradise of its own kind, a garden of delights, unequalled and unparalleled.

But this was her ordinary merit; we have proved also, and determined as far as lay in our power, the extraordinary occasions on which she merited increases of graces, the intensity of which is known to Him alone who imparted it to her. These occasions were the day of the annunciation, the moment on which she gave her consent, the moment the Eternal Word was conceived in her womb, the moment he was born from her virgin cloister, every time she served him, the moment of the

circumcision, of the presentation, and, finally, leaving aside other mysteries, the three days of the Passion and the three hours of agony.

No human or angelic understanding could fathom such grace, and, consequently, no human or angelic understanding could fathom her glory.

In one word, Mary's glory is next to the glory of the humanity of Jesus Christ ; it can bear no comparison except with the magnificent soul of Jesus Christ.

If, then, even one degree of glory overwhelms the soul of the blessed with a light so great, so bright, so pure, so dazzling as to cause it to see God's essence and attributes, God's infinite mystery of life, the august mystery of the Trinity ; to see infinite realms of beauty, of loveliness, of perfection ; to see kingdoms without end of infinite possibilities, to see the reason and nature of all the works of God—of the Incarnation and redemption, of grace and of glory ; if one degree of glory causes the blessed to possess God fully and completely in his own nature and substance, perfection and bliss ; if one degree of such glory transforms the soul into God, so as to cause it to become another God by participation, a living image of the Trinity ; if one degree of such a glory fills the soul with infinite life, and expands it, develops it, exhilarates it, and makes it drink of the very bliss, the very delights of God, what vision must be Mary's vision ! What purity, what intensity must her light of glory have had ! What realms of knowledge it must have disclosed before her eyes ! What depths of beauties must have flashed upon her mind, what abysses of perfection must have opened to her gaze ! And how close, how intimate must her union with God have been ! And what an image of the unity and Trinity of God must have been drawn upon her soul ! A piece of glass overwhelmed by the effulgence of the sun, and become a small sun, were a poor image, a slight indication of the marvellous resemblance which must have been produced in Mary's soul of that infinite type she was contemplating.

And how must Mary's soul have expanded under the pressure of infinite life imparted to her in manner altogether singular, under the torrents of infinite bliss dashed upon her with all the vehemence, the force, the omnipotent energy of a love which always, and at all times, and from all eternity singled her out among all creatures! How much must the Eternal Father have delighted that spouse whom he chose from all eternity, and associated her to conceive, and bring forth the same Son whom he begets perennially in his bosom! How much must the Eternal Son have delighted her whom he chose for his mother, and the Holy Ghost her whom he chose as his loving tabernacle! Herein lies the privilege of Mary's glory. Other saints contemplate the life of God which consists in the Trinity; they contemplate the works of God—the Incarnation, the redemption, grace, the Church, the world. Mary contemplates the same, but in a different manner. She contemplates them as one who has, by the magnificent profusion of God's goodness, been elevated, raised to, connected with the same relations which form his life; she contemplates his works, and along with them her consent, which had its play in effecting them. She contemplates herself, next to Jesus Christ, the God-Man, as the centre between God and man, and gifted with glory superior, in a superabundant, overwhelming degree, to all which is not God.

But it were vain to continue to speak of things about which one can but stammer, and we shall leave it to the penetrating reason of our readers to fathom the wonderful and most singular excess of Mary's glory.

We shall close this chapter by pointing out one consequence which results from her peculiar glory; that is, that Mary is the *Queen* of heaven and earth.

And, first, she is queen in honor. Being the Mother of God, the arbiter of God's exterior works, the corredemptrix of mankind, the most perfect of all human creatures in gifts of nature, the most perfect of all creatures in privileges of grace, the

happiest of all creatures in glory, she deserves an honor far above all created intelligences, as she towers above them all, and, therefore, is she queen in honor.

She is queen in power—first, in consequence of her magnificent sanctity. It is sanctity which makes a creature powerful with God, as it is that which makes the creature beloved and cherished by God. In this lies the reason of the power of the saints. They are friends of God, the chosen ones of his love, the cherished of his heart, and they are, therefore, powerful with him. Who among the saints so cherished as Mary? Who so much beloved as that tower of sanctity? Who more intimate with God than this miracle of his goodness?

It is humility which gives power. Strange to say, lowliness, self-abasement, on the part of the creature, gives it power with God. “Cum infirmor, tunc potens sum. Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.” Who more humble than Mary among senates of saints and angels? Who more anxious than Mary to remain plunged in the abyss of her own nothingness, in proportion as God raises her to magnificence and glory? Who, therefore, more powerful with him?

She is the mother of Him to whom all power has been given in heaven and on earth; and as once the mother of Solomon, sitting at the right hand of her son, could obtain all things from him, as he felt that nothing could be denied to a mother, likewise the magnificent Mother of Jesus, sitting at his right hand, can dispose of his omnipotence and of his infinite merits in behalf of mankind.

It has been said by the Incarnate Wisdom that a glass of water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple shall not lose its reward. What shall be Mary's reward for clothing the Eternal Word of the Father with human nature, for carrying him nine months in her spotless womb, for bringing him forth amidst the fragrant lilies of her virginal purity, for nursing him with her own substance, and for serving him for thirty years with a devotion peculiar to her alone? Could he deny



to share power with her, if Mary points out to him the womb that bore him and the breasts that gave him suck?

Mary is the instrumental cause of creation, of redemption, of grace, and of glory. These things would never have taken place, except she had given her consent. All angels, therefore, owe Mary their creation and their sublime state. All men owe Mary their creation, their redemption, the grace which sanctifies them, the grace which makes them persevere, and the grace which glorifies.

Is she not, then, as instrumental cause in all the exterior works of God, entitled to a supremacy of power?

No wonder, then, that she is styled Queen of angels, Queen of patriarchs, of prophets, of apostles, of martyrs, of virgins, of confessors—the glorious Queen of heaven and earth.

## CONCLUSION.

IN concluding our work on Mary we thought to give a recapitulation of all we have said in the course of the book, so as to put before our readers in small compass the whole knowledge of Mary.

But as we were setting about our task, it struck us that the Holy Ghost had done that already by the wisest of the kings of the earth, in the thirty-first chapter of his Proverbs, and we at once determined to conclude our work by a commentary of this chapter, as found in Cornelius à Lapide. This course would have a double advantage :

1st. Recapitulate, though not in the same order, all we have said of our glorious mother.

2d. It would put the seal of the authority of the Holy Ghost on all we have written.

“Who shall find a valiant woman ? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her.”

Mary is the valiant heroine, the princess and queen of all the combatants and of all martyrs. “For she was so strong,” says St. Bernard, “as to crush the head of that serpent to whom God said, ‘I shall put enmities between thee and the woman, thy seed and her seed ; she shall crush thy head.’ ”

Hence is she that precious pearl which surpasses all price, as she is worth more than all angels and men and the whole universe ; and, as St. Augustine expressed it, “she is the price of her ornaments.”

“The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils.”

The Holy Ghost was the spouse of Mary, because he effected in a spiritual manner in her the conception of Christ, and

worked in a corporal manner in her what in other women man effects.

Hence the Virgin having said to the angel, "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" the angel replied and appointed the man: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee"—that is to say, he will come upon thee whole and entire, with all his fulness, and will trust in thee, that is, confidently and securely; will dwell in thee, and communicate to thee all his gifts, making over to thee himself and all his goods—nay, placing in and depositing with thee the Word with all his divinity." Again: "The heart of the Holy Ghost trusteth in Mary, because he has constituted her the advocate of sinners; through whom he acquires many a spoil of those who are saved from sin through her aid. Hence is she called the hope of sinners and the refuge of the poor."

"She will render him good, and not evil, all the days of her life."

No creature could be compared to Mary in fidelity to all the gifts of God, correspondence with all his caresses, in gratitude for all his graces. No creature gave God such magnificent, sublime honor and glory as Mary, and therefore of her can be truly said: "She will render him good, and not evil, all the days of her life."

"She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands."

This work of wool and flax belongs to Mary in a most eminent manner. First, literally, as St. Epiphanius writes: "She was docile and loving doctrine, and worked not only on sacred scripture, but in wool and flax, in silk and linen."

Secondly, allegorically. "For," as the same saint remarks, "who gave to women the texture of wisdom and the science of embroidering?" To Mary has been given to bring forth the Lamb, and from the glory of the same Lamb has been made to us, as from wool of wisdom, a vesture of incorruptibility.

She is herself this wool. She alone, says St. Proclus, is that bridge by which God has descended to us ; she is that texture of wool of that marvellous dispensation from whom and in whom that tunic of that wonderful union has been made, the weaver of which was the Holy Ghost, etc.

“ She is like the merchant’s ship, she bringeth her bread from afar.”

Mary was truly the merchant’s ship who brought the living bread, our Lord Jesus Christ, when she brought him forth in Bethlehem, the house of bread.

She brought him from afar, as she united in her spotless womb the things most distant, the temporal and the eternal, the omnipotent and the weak, the finite and the infinite, God with man ; and he was truly *her* bread, for she conceived him without the aid of man and amid the lilies of her virginal purity.

“ And she hath risen in the night, and given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens.”

To whom is this more applicable than to Mary? In the night of infidelity, of darkness, of languor, in faith, at the bidding of the angel, she rose to receive the news of the Incarnation of the Word, and, giving her consent, she incorporated in herself the Word, that she might give him to us food in the holy Eucharist.

Again, she gained by the most intense acts of charity, of humility, of patience, and other virtues, grace and merit immeasurable and immense ; not to keep it only for herself, but that she might distribute it to all Christians, that, as St. Bernard says, we might all receive from her fulness.

“ She hath considered a field, and bought it: with the fruit of her hands she hath planted a vineyard.”

Mary truly planted a field and a vineyard in herself when she cultivated her body and her soul by a continual practice of all virtues.

Secondly, planted and cultivated the field and the vineyard

of the primitive Church by her wisdom, her providence, her merits, and her examples, and rendered it so fertile that it became fruitful in all sanctity and brought forth apostolic men, martyrs, virgins, so much so that all Christians lived a life not only Christian, but religious in poverty, in chastity, and obedience. She also for all succeeding generations propagated the field of the Church among all nations, and planted in them the vineyard of so many religious orders; and from her own field and vineyard she offers to the faithful to sustain them the wheat of the elect and the wine germinating virgins.

Thirdly, she cultivates each faithful soul as new fields and vineyards in faith and sanctity. Because there is no Christian, no saint who does not owe to the Blessed Virgin his faith and sanctity, whatever it may be; for she was established by Christ the mother of family, whose children whom she brings forth to Christ, and whom she feeds and perfects, are all the faithful and the just.

“She hath girded her loins with strength, and hath strengthened her arm.”

The virginity implied in the expression, “she hath girded her loins with strength,” and the divine fortitude of Mary, are evident; for, as to the first, she was ready to renounce the colossal privilege of being the Mother of God, if this could not have been accomplished except with the loss of her virginity. As to the second, her whole life was a most sublime act of fortitude and magnanimity, as her whole life was the continuation of that fiat by which she had consented to become the corredemptrix of mankind on the condition of her suffering a martyrdom only to be compared to the sorrows of the Redeemer.

“She hath tasted, and seen that her traffic was good: her lamp shall not be put out in the night.”

Who better than God’s glorious Mother profited by the grace given her? Who better than Mary put her talents to use?

And this unceasing traffic in her, by a particular privilege, did not stop during the night, as it has been said of her, "I sleep, but my heart watches." Moreover, in the night of the Passion of our Lord, the faith of the apostles and disciples having failed, and they despairing of his resurrection after his death, the only light which burned brighter and brighter was Mary's faith and unshaken confidence in the power and divinity of her Son.

In heaven now, where she sits glorious at the right hand of the divine Solomon, she has not ceased her traffic, because, being solicitous about the salvation of the faithful and of all men, she works day and night, she watches, that all may attain it, continuing that ministry which she began upon earth by consenting to the mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption, by which she trafficked the salvation of all.

Hence we may say with St. Bernard (Serm. 2, *de Pent*): "To her, as to a medium, as to the ark of God, as to the cause of all things, as to the business of all generations, look, and those who dwell in heaven, and those who dwell in hell, and those who preceded us, and we who live now, and those who shall follow us, and the children of our children, and those who shall be born of these." Those who are in heaven (that is, the angels, who have lost many of their number), that they may be restored; and those in hell (*limbus*), that they may be freed; and those that follow, that they may be glorified.

In thee the angels have found joy, the just grace, sinners pardon for ever. With reason every creature looks to thee, because in thee and through thee and by thee the benignant hand of the Almighty has restored whatever he had created.

"She hath put her hand to the strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle."

Mary always acted sublime and heroic acts, the strong things, as become the Mother of God; and all these actions were subjected to the spindle of right intention, which was the simplest and purest, always God's infinite glory and honor.

“She hath opened her hand to the needy; and stretched out her hands to the poor.” Of whom can this be said with greater reason than of her who clothed God with bowels of mercy, who gave us a Pontiff who can have compassion upon our infirmities, who conceived and brought forth the living mercy of God?

Hence is she rightly addressed in those endearing words: “Hail! Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.”

“She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow: for all her domestics are clothed with double garments.”

Those who love Mary and belong to her household need not fear the cold of sin; for they will be clothed by their mother with a double garment, as she is herself clothed, interior and exterior. The interior garment will be the golden garment of charity; the exterior the garment of modesty and continency.

Other doctors, like Suarez, understand by this double garment that Mary, as we have proved in the course of our work, in every new act doubled her grace.

“She hath made for herself clothing of tapestry: fine linen, and purple is her covering.”

All these things are to be found in Mary in a most eminent manner. Her dress was linen—that is, a virginity more than angelic; and purple—that is, a most ardent charity. It was tapestried by a variety of holy inspirations and desires, which both the angels and God were continually presenting to her imagination, to perform the most heroic actions, and especially to grow in God’s love. This began at the moment of her conception, and went on increasing till the end of her life.

“Her husband is honorable in the gates, when he sitteth among the senators of the land.”

For, being a husband and guardian of the virginity of God’s Mother, St. Joseph is noble in the senate of all the saints, if not greater than all the rest.

“She made fine linen, and sold it, and delivered a girdle to the Chanaanite.”

Linen is a symbol of purity; the girdle is a symbol of abstinence and mortification. Mary, the purest of all creatures, imparts purity to all, and gives the girdle of abstinence and mortification to those who have fallen in the sins of the flesh, that they may acquire charity and continency.

“Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day.”

Who more powerful than Mary? Who more beautiful than this miracle of God's grace? And whose death was ever more full of joy, a greater foretaste of Paradise, than Mary's death?

“She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue.”

Mary gave forth the Eternal Wisdom of the Father and his living clemency, and she was on that account filled with wisdom and mercy.

“She hath looked well to the paths of her house; and hath not eaten her bread idle.” The sense of this text is clear from all we have said; for, either we take the word house to mean her own soul or the Church—she hath looked well to both, and hath merited for herself that grace with which she has been nourished.

“Her children rose up and called her blessed; her husband and he praised her.”

The whole Blessed Trinity called her blessed in the words they put in the mouth of the angel: “Hail! full of grace; the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women.”

St. Elizabeth called her blessed: “And blessed art thou that hast believed.”

The whole Church ever since, all her own children by adoption, have called her blessed, in fulfilment of that prophecy she made on the occasion just mentioned: “Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”



“Many daughters have gathered together riches : thou hast surpassed them all.”

We shall let the doctors of the church give the various explanations of this text :

“Mary, the Virgin,” says St. Bernardine (V. 2, Sermon. 2, *de Beata Virgine*), “the most holy, who conceived, brought forth, and fed the Saviour, who continually stood by his side, who was his companion in every journey, who most intensely watched every one of his words and actions, was the only one who knew the great works of the Saviour, the different kinds of preaching ; she assisted at them, saw them in an especial manner, heard them more secretly, knew them more readily, retained them more carefully, learned them more copiously than all the apostles and disciples, and related them more faithfully. Hence it is said in her praise that ‘many daughters,’ etc., because, although our Lord talked to the people in parables, and made known everything to the apostles as to friends, we must believe, however, that to his Mother, whom he loved in a special manner, he imparted more instruction and revealed to her more secrets, and more frequently raised her to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hills of incense, and hid her in the cellars of wine, in order to impart to her a knowledge of himself and of his beatific glory.”

St. Bonaventure : “If we understand these daughters to mean the saints and angels, must we not say that she has surpassed the riches of all, since she is the first of all virgins, the mirror of confessors, the rose of martyrs, the register of the apostles, the oracle of prophets, the daughter of patriarchs, the queen of angels ?”

She surpasses, in the third place, all the saints and angels in grace and beauty, because of that supreme act of faith and obedience she practised in giving her consent to the Incarnation, by which she merited more than all angels and saints in all their acts ; so that, according to St. Epiphanius, she is superior to all except God.

Finally, because she is somewhat the principle of all grace to all angels and saints. "Why is it," says St. Irenæus, "that without Mary's consent the mystery of the Incarnation is not effected? Because God wishes her to be the principle of all good.

"Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

The Woman by excellence did not seek, like others, favor or beauty, but all her grandeur and praise comes to her from the fear of the Lord, this holy fear in Mary having been the source of all her grandeur and sublimity, and even of the beauty of her body.

"Give her the fruit of her hands: and let her works praise her in the gates."

Mary received the fruit of her transcendental labors and sorrows in the glory to which she was raised in heaven above all angels and saints, and received praise from them. Hence St. John Damascene wrote of the day of the assumption of Mary: "To-day the angels rejoice, the archangels applaud, the virtues join in the praise, the principalities exult, the powers are gladdened, the thrones celebrate a festal day, the cherubim bring praise, the seraphim glory, and they themselves are filled with glory when they bring their meed of praise to the glory of their mother" (*Orat. 2, de Dormit.*)

And St. Bernardine of Sienna, speaking of Mary's glory and of her power in heaven, the fruit of her labors, says: "As many creatures serve the glorious Virgin as serve the Holy Trinity; for all creatures, whatever may be their rank in the universe, either spiritual creatures like the angels, or rational as men, or corporal as the heavens and the earth, either the lost ones or the blessed, all who are subject to the divine authority, are subject also of the glorious Virgin. For he who is the Son of God and of Mary was subject on earth to the blessed Mother."

May all Christians, all men, submit to the sweet power of

Mary upon earth, that they may through the same power one day be admitted into the kingdom of the blessed, and there join the saints and angels in the hymn of canticle which they raise to God's Mother: "Thou glory of Israel, thou joy of Jerusalem, thou the magnificence of our people, the first, the best, the sublimest, the dearest, the most cherished of God's creatures, the miracle of his power, the masterpiece of his wisdom, the tenderest object of his goodness, the spouse of the Father, the mother of the Son, the tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, the cor-redemptrix of mankind, the mother of all men, the source of all good to men, the most exalted and glorious of all created personality, the nearest to God's grandeur, the relative by blood of the eternal Godhead, and hence the relative of his power and perfections." "Fines divinitatis propinquius attingit."—St. Thomas.

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Here we put an end to our book, but not before drawing from all we have said a general consequence, which must have flashed upon the minds of our readers in proportion as they advanced from one chapter to another and acquired, as we trust, a fuller and better knowledge of the subject.

This consequence is: Who will be able to reckon the honor and respect and veneration which is due to the magnificent Mother of God, as who will be able to define the amount of power she has with God, and limit, consequently, the confidence and trust which ought to be put in her?

A recapitulation of all we have said will put this in its clearest light.

We have seen that her predestination from all eternity was to be associated with Christ as his mother; that she, as mother of Christ and the human head of the race, was chosen as the representative of all created personalities to give or withhold

her consent to the Incarnation and the Redemption, and that, consequently, she was made the arbiter of those mysteries; that she ratified the consent she gave on the moment of the Incarnation when our redemption was accomplished on Calvary; that, as mother of God and the arbiter of his mysteries, she was endowed with natural as well as supernatural perfections in a degree which surpasses the ken of all created intelligence. We have seen that, in consequence of her fiat, she gave a glory to God such as he has received from no other creature; that she became the mother of the regenerate race, the dispenser of every grace, the queen of heaven and earth.

Now, what honor and what veneration does such a creature deserve? What admiration, what love can she not claim from us? Could the Catholic Church, could any Catholic, do less for Mary? If Mary assists at the dawn of our spiritual life, at its progress, and at its final consummation, could it be otherwise when we consider the part she took in all the principles of our salvation, and the part she must take in the application of those principles?

Hence the Catholic Church is absolutely consistent and right when, next to Jesus, whom she worships as God, she honors and venerates that magnificent creature, his mother, with a love and veneration immeasurably above that which she pays to all the saints; when, next to Jesus Christ, the fountain of every grace, she puts all her trust in Mary, as the co-operatrix in the distribution of those graces, as she co-operated in their acquisition.

Mary, then, in the Catholic Church, holds the place next to Jesus—at an infinite distance, it is true, because Jesus Christ is God and the only real and efficient cause of our salvation. But next to him stands his mother, as the secondary co-operating cause of our salvation; and this not merely in abstract, inasmuch as she co-operated once in the effectuation of those mysteries, but in concrete in every case, because the principles which God uses in the effectuation of his works are

permanent in time and space, and act continually and in every individual case. This, therefore, being the place of Mary in the system of our salvation, what wonder that we should feel for her a true, earnest, unbounded love; what wonder that, next to Jesus, we should place in her all our confidence and all the reason of our hope; what wonder that, however we may honor the saints and place certain confidence in their intercession, we can never look upon any, or, indeed, all of them as we do on God's mother, on our own spiritual mother, on the dispenser of all graces, on her whom God has placed over us as the queen of our minds, our will, and our hearts? We know full well that this veneration in which we hold Mary, that this confidence we place in her, gives and has given offence to those who have the immense misfortune of being outside the Church of God. But is it our fault if they do not understand the system which God has chosen to effect? Is it our fault if they cannot understand the place which Mary holds in that system? Is it our fault if they have not considered all the mysteries of God's dispensation? If they have lost all idea of the Incarnation and of the Redemption in themselves, and of their extension in time and space, which forms the very essence, nature, and properties of the Catholic Church? Mary is invulnerable. She is the Tower of David. A thousand bucklers hang from it; all the armor of the brave. You cannot attack her without attacking the whole system of God's work. You cannot touch her without disarranging the harmony of the whole. You cannot deny to her a single prerogative without denying some essential part of Catholic truth.

Why should not Mary be honored beyond measure, if she be the Mother of God? If you deny her such honor, it is because you cannot conceive how she is the Mother of God, and, consequently, you attack the economy of the Incarnation, and destroy the idea of the God-Man, Christ. And if that is destroyed, what becomes of the atonement? what of the

efficacy of his grace, of the sacraments, of the divine origin of his Church? Why should we not place all our trust in her, next to her Son, when she has been chosen to have a part in the acquisition and distribution of those graces which are necessary for our salvation?

If you deny such ministry of Mary, you take away from the system of God's works the principle of created agency, of created personality, which God has taken such pains to introduce and to glorify. You mistake the mysteries of God.

No; Mary is to be honored, venerated, worshipped as the most glorious Mother of God, as the arbiter of the mysteries of God, as the priestess in the sacrifice of our redemption, as the sublime and most magnificent expression of created personality, as the accumulation of every natural perfection, as the miracle and the wonder of every supernatural and divine gift, as the instrument of the sublimest glorification of God, as the instrument of the creation and exaltation of the universe, of all angels, of all men, as the secondary cause of their eternal salvation and bliss, as the mother of all regenerated spirits.

We have absolute reason to put every trust and confidence in her as the mother of the Redeemer, as the arbiter of his graces, as the distributor in every particular case of every gift and every blessing.

Those who refuse to venerate Mary know neither God nor Christ, nor the wonderful things they have vouchsafed to effect for us. They are estranged from the family, as they would recognize the Father and the Son, and would renounce that sublime creature whom the Father associated to himself in the honor of conceiving and bringing forth the same Son. They do not belong to that family of whom Mary foretold once, under the intensest pressure of the Holy Ghost, in the sublimest ecstasy of love: "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." This was a prophecy uttered under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, whose fulness Mary had just received. And who are they who call Mary blessed?

Surely those who belong to the family, those who do not divide the Mother from the Father and the Son, those who feel the worship of that unparalleled mother brimful in their bosom. Surely the Catholic Church is that child. Surely all Catholics are of that family.

All those who refuse to call Mary blessed, as she was called by God, by the mouth of the angel, as she was called by St. Elizabeth filled with the Holy Ghost, are not of the household, are estranged from the true faith, are aliens and wanderers. May that glorious Mother bring them all into the true fold, and there shall be one shepherd and one fold!

THE END.

*JESUITS*  
*Upper Canada Province*













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