Richard of St. Laurent

ON THE PRAISES OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

De laudibus Beatae Mariae Virginis

From the Latin of the Borgnet edition, printed among the works of Albert the Great (Paris, 1898)

English translation

Contributed to Mind of the Church by a friend of the library who wishes to remain anonymous

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About this translation

Translated from the Latin text printed under the name of Albert the Great in *B. Alberti Magni Ratisbonensis episcopi, Ordinis Praedicatorum, Opera omnia*, ed. A. and É. Borgnet, vol. 36 (Paris: Vivès, 1898), pp. 1–841. The work is generally attributed to Richard of St Laurent (c. 1245), penitentiary of Rouen; the Antwerp edition of 1625 already printed it under his name.

This is a working translation. The page numbers of the Borgnet edition are given in the text as (p. N). Scripture is cited by the Vulgate numbering the author used. The editor's indexes that follow the text in the volume (*Index capitum*, *Index rerum*, and the index of Scripture, pp. 843 ff.) are not translated.

Notes on the text. Corrected text: the treatment of the navel on p. 316 was revised from a clearer reading of the page.

Book I: The Two Prologues, and the Exposition of the Angelic Salutation

Prologue I

(p. 1) To all the faithful of Christ who will look upon the present little work with a single eye, its writer offers a taste of that eternal sweetness which the sacred womb of the Virgin Mary poured out upon a famished world. If you presume to add to well-sounding cymbals the sound of a broken bell, the sweetness of the harmony, which of itself rang sweetly before, is at once spoiled. In like manner, if I attempt to add anything unpolished to the praises of Mary, whom the morning stars praise together, and to whom all the sons of God shout for joy, I fear that my praise may seem more a detraction than an increase of praise. For I know that her praise is ineffable, and that no living man will be able to reach it, even if he were granted to speak with the tongues of angels and of men, or fully knew the heavenly language, since she is greater than all praise. For the supernal Artisan, whose special work the Virgin Mother is, has kept this glory for himself, and will give it to no other; wherefore he says of Mary through the Prophet: *My secret to myself* (Isa. 24:16). For this reason also the Bridegroom so often repeats in the Canticle of her beauty (Cant. 4:1): *Beside that which lieth hid within*, which is open to the Creator alone, but known to no creature; for how great Mary's beauty is, he alone knows who gave the beauty. And although I was not unaware that the blessed Virgin is exalted when *man cometh to a deep heart* (Ps. 63:7), it has nevertheless pleased me to set forth, at least a little, of her praises for the present, urged by love of her and by the greatness of her promises: *They that explain me shall have life everlasting* (Sir. 24:31).

(p. 2) If, however, anyone asks whence I have such presumption, that I have in a manner set my mouth against heaven, when she is the one in whose praises every tongue stammers, as the Lord liveth, here is the reason. I was greatly troubled, and bore it ill, that none of the Doctors, fitted for this by life and learning, had gathered the testimonies of Mary like ears of wheat through the fields of Scripture and bound them as it were into sheaves, that is, into chapters, as though he had not heard that prophetic saying: *Blessed are they that search his testimonies* (Ps. 118:2). Of her whose womb is compared to a heap of wheat (Cant. 7:2), and who is figured by Mount Galaad (Cant. 4:1). Since, however, I was not of so profound a mind as to know how to expound the sacred Scriptures, lest I seem a eunuch deflowering a virgin, that is, not making Sacred Scripture fruitful, I chose to imitate the prudence of the bees, whose diligent assiduity gathers honey and wax from wherever it can to make combs. The modern Doctors and the ancient theologians have furnished me the matter, with the Bible as intermediary: from their wells I drew water that nourishes young shoots; from their fine flour I set out bread that strengthens hungry hearts; from their clusters I pressed a chalice of contemplation that inebriates with wondrous sweetness.

By the grace of God a twofold principal fruit can come to the devout reader from the inspiration of the present work: a keener illumination of the intellect, and a more ardent kindling of the affection, toward the knowledge and love of the glorious Virgin, so that knowledge may be referred to the intellect and love to the affection. The minds of the less capable, too, can be instructed, if they ruminate with a cloven hoof. The studies of the more subtle can, if they lay aside their disdain, be advanced at least by occasion to greater things. This fourfold gain I chiefly sought from my labor, referring the whole to the honor of the holy *Theotokos*, who says with her Son: *Whosoever shall glorify me, I will glorify him; but they that despise me shall be despised* (1 Sam. 2:30).

If anyone, however, judges me indiscreet in setting down concordances, he should know that truly whatever the ancients said of divine Wisdom the moderns expound of the mother of wisdom, with whom Wisdom has so manifold a union that, though the generation is univocal, she is, as if by emphasis, called Wisdom. And if I am reproved for prolixity, I shall answer that to speak at length of sweet Mary was a very sweet matter, and

since I had leisure, and *it was good to be here*, it pleased me to ruminate such sweet things the longer. Indeed, if my brevity had put an obstacle in the way of the capacity of the simple, for whose sake I had begun to write, I should have deserved to be defrauded of the reward which the Mother of God promises not to those who obscure but to those who elucidate her. For these reasons, then, I have taken upon myself the office of a whetstone, which can make iron sharp though it is itself useless for cutting.

Prologue II

(p. 3) It was said to St John the theologian, in Apocalypse 1:11: *What thou seest, write in a book, and send to the seven churches.* In this place and in many others "to see" is put for "to understand," because as bodily things are weighed by the bodily eye, so spiritual things are discerned by the spiritual eye, which is the intellect.

He says therefore: *What thou seest*, that is, what you understand, *write*; for what is spoken quickly passes, but what is written lasts the longer. *Write*, since writing can reach much farther than the word. Write, lest it be able to be erased by forgetfulness, that which must remain for the instruction of those to come. *In a book*: in the book of your heart, that you may not hand over to oblivion what has been revealed to you for the profit of others. In the book of your heart too, that after the example of the blessed Virgin you may become, as far as you can, a storehouse of the Scriptures: Luke 2:19, *Mary kept all these words*, etc. *In a book*, that is, in the hearts of those who hear, that those who have heard may recall, and by recalling advance to better things. *In a book*, that is, on parchment, that what you understand may be preserved for the instruction of those to come. For this reason it is said, Isa. 30:8: *Write it diligently in a book, and it shall be in the last day for a testimony for ever.* Sir. 39:38 [sic]: *I have taken counsel, and thought, and left it written.* There follows: *And send to the seven churches*, that is, to the universal Church, filled with the sevenfold grace.

Considering, then, I who am poor and slight in understanding, that the Lord's voice commanded not only John to write what he saw, but all those learned in the sacred page, I have done what I could, and have diligently arranged many notes pertaining to the praise of the Virgin, which I had zealously heaped together over a long time, considering that they would have profited little if they had remained without order. For I preferred, since scarlet and hyacinth, byssus and purple were lacking to me, to offer devoutly of goats' hair, rather than, against the precept of the law, to appear empty in the sight of God or of the blessed Virgin herself. For it is to be feared, as Ambrose says, that just as men shall render account for every idle word, so they may be held to answer to the strict Judge for idle silence. This I believe is to be understood chiefly of the wise. And another says: "Woe, Lord, to those who are silent about thee." Since, however, I have knowingly left nothing scrupulous in this little work, but as best I could have made everything smooth for the understanding of the less subtle, so that neither these may go astray in anything nor those who call light darkness dare to carp, *(p. 4)* I fear only this, that the little book, finished with all diligence, may be corrupted by the fault of scribes. And since I have been asked by my friends, both monks and nuns of the Cistercian order, who are accustomed to serve the glorious Virgin with a special affection, I have pursued her praises, not as I ought but as I could; of that same order I humbly beg, but of all to whom my labor shall have been pleasing, that they ask of the Mother of mercy, by their prayers, pardon of my sins for me, most wretched sinner. My name, however, I preferred to keep silent, lest the treatise perhaps become cheap once its writer was known.

Editor's note (Borgnet): Quetif and Echard hold that this work, *De Laudibus B. Mariae Virginis* in twelve books, is not to be ascribed to our Albert. See their reasons in the bibliography of Albert's works which we placed in volume I of this edition, pp. XLVII ff.

Chapter 1. Ave, Maria

(p. 5) Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

We find in the Gospel three salutations more celebrated than the rest. The first is that of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:28). The second, of Mary to Elizabeth (Luke 1:40). The third, of Christ to the Apostles after the resurrection, of which John 20:19 speaks, and which is read repeated more often by the Lord himself.

By this threefold salutation a threefold concord is signified: namely, of the Angel with man by the first, of man with man by the second, of God with man by the third. For before the Son of God was incarnate, God was at variance with man on account of the sin of the first transgression, since man, withdrawing from the service of his Lord, had subjected himself to an alien power. The Angel was at variance with man for a twofold cause, as it were. First, because man, who ought to have repaired the ruin of the first apostasy which occurred among the Angels, himself also falling to earth, was drawn down with the third part of the stars of heaven (Apoc. 12:4). Second, because, whereas they ought to have been fellow servants in the service of the Lord, man had as if willingly submitted himself to the dominion of the devil. Man was at variance with man, *(p. 6)* the Jew, that is, with the Gentile, through rivalry of differing laws, since the Jew worshipped one God, the Gentile idols. There was also a fourth discord, between flesh and spirit, on account of their mutual altercation, since the flesh naturally craved carnal things, the spirit heavenly things. For first the spirit had corrupted the flesh, and now the flesh corrupts the spirit.

By the Angel's salutation of Mary, therefore, the concord of Angel and man is denoted; for through Mary's childbearing man has become a fellow citizen of the Angels and a member of God's household. Man and Angel have become servants of one Lord, namely Christ. And through Christ himself the ruin of the Angels has been repaired from among men; which the Angels themselves were entreating of the Lord through the Psalmist: *Deal favourably, O Lord, in thy good will with Sion, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up* (Ps. 50:20). Of this concord and peace it is also said in Isa. 57:2–3: *Let peace come, let him rest in his bed*, etc. *But come you hither*, that is, into heaven, *you sons of the soothsayer*, that is, men. Likewise, in the same place, v. 19: *I created*, says the Father, *the fruit of the lips, peace: peace to him that is near*, that is, the Angel, *and to him that is afar off*, that is, man. The fruit of the lips is Christ. For when the grace of answering was poured out upon the lips of the blessed Virgin, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me*, etc. (Luke 1:38), then she conceived this fruit, through whom the aforesaid peace was made. Therefore also Christ is called Solomon, that is, "the peaceful," and at his birth peace with joy is announced to men of good will by the Angels themselves, and *glory to God in the highest* (Luke 2:14), who is glorified by the Angels for their restoration and our redemption. This peace the Angel also intimated in Apoc. 22:9, replying to John, who wished to adore him after the Son's incarnation: *See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren. Adore God*, etc.; whereas before this the Angels readily permitted themselves to be adored by men. On that text of Luke 2:1, *There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus*, etc., Gregory says: "Because by sinning we were strangers to God, the Angels, citizens of God, counted us strangers to their fellowship."

By Mary's salutation of Elizabeth the concord of Jew and Gentile is designated, because Christ, the cornerstone, called all into one Church and one faith. John 10:16: *Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.* Eph. 2:14: *He is our peace, who hath made both one*, etc. He is therefore called the cornerstone; Job 38:6: *Who laid the cornerstone thereof?* Isa. 28:16 and 1 Pet. 2:6: *Behold I lay in the foundations of Sion*, that is, of the Church, *a cornerstone.*

By Christ's salutation of the Apostles the concord of God with men is designated, because the Son of God, made obedient unto death (Phil. 2:8), made satisfaction to God the Father for man. Isa. 27:5: *He shall make peace with me, he shall make peace with me.* And accordingly he is called the mediator of God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). The discord also which was between flesh and spirit Christ pacified, assuming both in himself in

concord and bearing them peaceably. Whence *the rich and poor together* (Ps. 48:3), that is, spirit and flesh, are in concord in Christ. Therefore it is said, Ps. 75:3: *His place is made in peace.* Eph. 2:14–15: *Breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities, in his flesh, making void the law of commandments contained in decrees, that he might make the two*, that is, spirit and flesh, *in himself into one new man, making peace.* Therefore also he is called Emmanuel (Isa. 7:14), that is, God with us.

Thus these fourfold discords were pacified through Mary, who bore Christ for us, in whom God was reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19), through whom all rational creatures, *(p. 7)* united through charity, have been made partakers of one spirit and coheirs of one kingdom. Let God himself, then, say to Mary, let the Angel say, let man say: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.*

This concord is designated also in the fact that the name of Heva was changed into a word of salutation. For this noun *Heva* has two vowels, namely *e* and *a*, which show forth the twofold misery of human nature, that is, guilt and punishment, with which wretched man is born. When this name *Heva* is turned about, therefore, "Ave" was said to Mary: for through her both guilt was changed into pardon and punishment into glory. By the turning of the name *Heva* into *Ave* it is also signified that in the blessing of Mary the curse of Heva was reversed. For after the curse Adam straightway gave his wife the name Heva (Gen. 3:20), which is derived from *a*, meaning "without," and *eu*, meaning "good," as if "without good": because she took away the good given by the Lord to herself and her husband. And through her we too were made *sine eu*, that is, without good, and fell into the woes (*vae*) of guilt and punishment. Through Mary, however, both we and our first parents have been made *sine vae*, without woe. Hence a courtly versifier says to Mary:

Hail, gate of salvation, by whom there stands open an exit from woe (a vae). Woe came from Heva: because thou takest away woe (vae), thou art Ave.

Therefore the Church also sings: "Through Heva the gate of paradise was closed to all," etc. For this reason Mary's Angelic salutation is to be often recalled: because through it we have been freed from a manifold curse.

Again, of the first mother someone says: "Mary was filled with grace, and Heva was emptied of guilt." Jerome: "Whatever of curse was poured in through Heva, the blessing of Mary took away entire. Moreover the birth of Christ poured back the grace which the whole world had before." Bede: "God, intending to water the earth with heavenly dew, when woman had been drawn from man to destruction, willed to bring man forth from woman for salvation, that she who had been the beginning of human damnation might be the beginning of human restoration." Jer. 31:22: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth*, etc.

It is also to be noted that Heva waged a threefold war: above herself, against God, through pride, because she wished to be as God, knowing good and evil; beside herself, against her neighbor, through avarice; below herself, against her own flesh, through gluttony. But Mary, the daughter of Heva, made peace: with God through humility, with her neighbor through charity, with her flesh through virginity. And so from the same letters, but transposed, *Heva* became *Ave*. For *Ave* is *Heva* read backwards. Again, blessed Bernard, on that text of Luke 1:26, *The Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin*: "Rejoice, father Adam, but you more, O mother Heva, exult: for as you were the parents of all, so you were the destroyers of all; and, which is more unhappy, destroyers before parents. Both of you, I say, take comfort over a daughter, and such a daughter, but she the more from whom the evil first arose, whose reproach passed upon all women. For the time is at hand when the reproach shall be taken away, and man shall have no cause to complain against woman: he who, when he imprudently tried to excuse himself, did not hesitate to accuse her cruelly, saying: *The woman whom thou gavest me to be my companion gave me of the tree, and I did eat* (Gen. 3:12). Therefore run, Heva, to Mary; run, mother, to daughter; let the daughter answer for the mother, let her take away the mother's reproach; let her make satisfaction to the father for the mother: for behold, if man fell through woman, he is not raised up except through woman. What wert thou saying, O Adam? *The woman whom thou*

gavest me to be my companion gave me of the tree, and I did eat. (p. 8) These are words of malice, by which thou dost increase rather than blot out the fault. Nevertheless Wisdom overcomes malice, when she finds in the treasury of her unfailing mercy the occasion of pardon, which God by questioning tried to draw from thee, but could not. Woman is indeed rendered for woman, wise for foolish, humble for proud, who for the tree of death offers thee the taste of life, and for that poisonous food brings forth the sweetness of an eternal fruit in place of bitterness. Change, then, the word of wicked excuse into a voice of thanksgiving, and say: *Lord, the woman whom thou gavest me gave me of the tree of life, and I did eat; and it was sweet above honey to my mouth, for in it thou hast quickened me* (cf. Ps. 118:103, 50)."

Note that the angelic salutation delivered to the Virgin is completed in ten words: let *Ave* be the first; *Maria*, which the Church adds, the second; *mulieribus* the tenth. By which it is intimated that through her the tenth order of Angels was to be restored, and the tenth drachma to be recovered (Luke 15:8). Likewise, in this saving salutation the Angel first set down *Ave*, the Church inserts *Maria*, Elizabeth added *Blessed art thou among women*, and the rest that follow. For in the salutation of Mary the Church triumphant, which speaks through the Angel, the Church militant, which sets down *Maria*, and the Synagogue, which is designated by Elizabeth, are brought together. Likewise, this salutation the Angel composed for the greater part, Elizabeth for the lesser: because more acceptable to the Mother and the Son is the praise of the chaste, who are denoted by the Angel, than of the married, who are designated by Elizabeth. Hence Apoc. 14:3–4: *No man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women*, etc. Likewise in this salutation Mary is blessed by the Angel, because she repaired the triumphant Church; she is blessed by Elizabeth, because she raised up the militant Church, already almost dead; for both the Angel and Elizabeth said to her: *Blessed art thou*, etc.

Hail, Mary. Note that *Ave* is sometimes the word of one who wishes, sometimes of one who prays, sometimes of one who rejoices with and applauds. Of one who wishes, when I say to someone *Ave*, because I wish him health (*salus*). Of one who prays, when I say: "Hail, precious Cross"; for I do not wish health for insensible wood, which it cannot have, but I pray that the power of the Cross may work salvation for me. Of one who rejoices with another, when I say: "Hail, Mary," or "Hail, holy parent," as if I should say: O blessed Virgin, I rejoice with you and congratulate you on your health and glory. Just as the word *vale* is said from *valeo, vales* (whence *vale* and *valete*), so perhaps this word may first have been said to be derived from *aveo, aves*, whence also after the resurrection the Lord says to the women *Avete* (Matt. 28:9). The beginning of salvation is in desire, but its consummation will be in joy.

Although this word *Ave* is one of congratulation and applause, like *euge*, it is yet sometimes used by the malevolent to mock. Hence Judas said to Christ: *Hail, Rabbi* (Matt. 26:49); and the Jews: *Hail, King of the Jews* (Matt. 27:29).

Again, this word *Ave* means as much as "without woe." For before this salutation there was woe to all that dwell on the earth, and salvation could have no place unless woe were first taken away, nor blessing unless the curse were first taken away. Whence the ancient salutations are read to have been refused by those to whom they were made. Judges 6:13, Gideon to the Angel who saluted him: *If the Lord be with us, why have all these things befallen us?* And Tobias 5:12, to the Angel: *What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness and see not the light of heaven?* Deservedly indeed did they find so many evils; *(p. 9)* for she was not yet come who should find grace. The mediatrix had not yet interceded. She had not yet come forth from among us to whom it should be said, *Ave*. She had not yet come who should be filled with grace. She was not yet born to whom the Lord should be subject. Even the Son of God, Emmanuel, that is, God with us, could not yet be so called. Blessed Bernard: "Therefore for so long a time the streams of grace were wanting, because the aqueduct had not yet interceded."

Chapter 1 (continued)

For Heva received a threefold curse, like a threefold *vae* (woe), as the penalty of disobedience. The first: *I will multiply thy sorrows*, etc. The second: *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.* The third: *Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee* (Gen. 3:16). Without this threefold woe you will find Mary: for she neither felt travail in conceiving, nor sorrow in bringing forth, nor was she subject to a husband, by reason of her perpetual virginity. Therefore the Angel said to her: *Hail, full of grace.* And how could she be full of grace, unless she was without woe?

Or again: the first woe is corruption in conception; the second, heaviness after conception; the third, pain in childbirth. Mary, on the contrary, received in this salutation a threefold blessing: for she became fruitful without corruption, with child without burden, a mother without pain. This is what *Ave* means, that is, without the threefold woe of corruption, heaviness and pain, which Heva incurred by sin, and which all women except Mary have contracted from her as by hereditary right. Therefore what is said in Hosea 9:11 can be expounded of Christ and Mary: *Their glory shall fly away from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception* — in reversed order. For Christ was conceived, and the Virgin conceived him without corruption of virginity; he was carried, and the Virgin carried him without burden of the womb; he was born, and the Virgin bore him without the pain of one in labor.

There is also another threefold woe, Apoc. 8:13: *Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth.* The woe of concupiscence, the woe of guilt, the woe of eternal punishment. The first is in the flesh; the second in the spirit; the third in both. Of the first, Eccles. 10:16: *Woe to thee, O land*, that is, the flesh, *whose king*, that is, the mind, *is a child.* Gen. 3:17–18: *Cursed is the earth*, that is, the flesh, *in thy work*, that is, for thy work, namely for sin; *thorns and thistles*, that is, carnal motions, *shall it bring forth to thee.* Of the second, Hosea 7:13: *Woe to them, for they have departed from me.* Of the third, Hosea 9:12: *Woe to them when I shall depart from them*, which will be when they are thrust down into hell. For in the present the Lord never departs wholly from even the worst sinner, but rather offers him grace. Apoc. 3:20: *Behold I stand at the gate and knock.* Mary was without this threefold woe, because she had a threefold good contrary to this threefold woe: the good of continence, the good of grace, the good of perseverance. The first excludes concupiscence, the second guilt, the third eternal punishment, since *he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved* (Matt. 10:22; 24:13).

Otherwise: the first woe is the darkening of the sun and of the air by the smoke of the pit (Apoc. 9:2), that is, the clouding of our sense and reason, which is like a sun in our souls. The air, however, is the affection of our will. This is the first punishment which we incurred through Adam: ignorance, namely, by which we do not see where we are, or whither we are going, or whither we ought to go, or from what we ought to flee. For who would run into hell if he saw it? Who would throw himself into the snares of death if he knew them? Who would not run to the Lord with his whole mind, if he considered his beauty, or tasted it ever so slightly? The second woe is in fire and brimstone (Apoc. 9:17–18), namely in the burning and the stench of lust, in which the whole world reeks and seethes. The third woe is the kingdom and dominion of the beast.

These three woes have been taken away from us by Mary. The darkness of ignorance, because she gave to the world the sun of understanding and the light of justice, *(p. 10)* and brought forth the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. Hence she is also named the morning star, that is, the day-star and the dawn, whose ray became the very Sun of justice. And so she is understood as the illuminatress: because to a world so darkened she brought forth the true light. She is also the illuminatress because for all who implore her humbly and devoutly she obtains the light of true knowledge. Hence she says, Sir. 24:45: *I will enlighten all that hope in the Lord.* So, as often as we feel ourselves to be in darkness, we ought to remind her of her name, praying that she interpret it in us, lest it seem to have been falsely given to her.

How she destroys the second woe, which is lust, ask those themselves who have been drawn by her out of the bilge of lust, and who rejoice that through her they have gained the virtue of chastity. Nor is it permitted to

doubt that she is the bitterest enemy of lust and the most fervent lover of chastity, to whom, without the prerogative of virginity, it would never have been given to be the mother of the Son of God. The third woe, the kingdom and dominion of the beast, is pride; if you are assailed by it, you must flee at once to most humble Mary, who in her Canticle attributes to her humility the regard of the Lord (Luke 1:48). And although she was endowed with every virtue and every grace, of this one she singularly glories. Implore her help confidently against pride, which she relentlessly pursues, hates and abhors; and ask of her the gift of humility, because you cannot please Mother and Son either with pride or without humility. For the sake of these three gifts we thus ask her in the hymn:

Loosed from our sins, make us meek and chaste.

Again, there is another threefold woe: the woe of the world, the woe of the flesh, the woe of the devil. Apoc. 18:10: *Woe, woe, that great city Babylon.* Mary was without this threefold woe. For she was poor against the first, a virgin against the second, humble against the third. She is therefore worthy to be saluted not only by the Angel, but still more by man, who, lost in himself, has returned to salvation through her.

Hail, Mary. By the word spoken to Mary, *Ave*, that is, without any woe, her immunity from all sin is denoted. Hence it is also said to her, Cant. 4:7: *Thou art all fair, O my love*: all fair as to original sin, sanctified in the womb; all fair as to actual mortal sin, the tinder of sin being utterly subdued; and *there is not a spot in thee* even of venial sin, the tinder being utterly extinguished at the conception of the Son of God. And therefore *all fair* in work, *all fair* in body, and *there is not a spot in thee* in heart. All fair in work, through simplicity. Matt. 6:22: *If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome.* All fair in body, through chastity. Wisd. 4:1: *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory! for the memory thereof is immortal*, etc. All fair in heart, through humility, which is to be without spot. Hence it is said, Esther 2:15: *Esther was exceedingly beautiful, and her incredible beauty made her appear agreeable and lovely in the eyes of all.* Such was Mary: exceedingly beautiful through charity, which is the form of the virtues; of incredible beauty through unwonted chastity; agreeable and lovely in the eyes of all through humility, on which God looked down, because where love is, there is the eye. Again, of these three it is said, Judith 11:19: *There is not such a woman upon the earth, in look, in beauty, and in sense of words.* In look, that is, of conversation; in beauty, of the body; in sense of words, that is, in interior words, that is, the purity of thought. And so she was without any woe of avarice in deed, of lust in body, of pride in heart. This is the threefold woe of Apoc. 8:13: *Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth.* And so she was immune from all *(p. 11)* sin. But was she so in the highest degree? Surely, in the highest degree of creatures. Whence Augustine: “When sins are in question, I will not have any question at all about the blessed Virgin.” Anselm also says that “she shone with that purity than which, under God, a greater cannot be understood.”

Chapter 2. Ave, Maria

Hail, Mary, etc. If the prices of things are to be reckoned by their rarity, according to what is written, “every rarer thing is precious,” then the form of this salutation, which was brought from heaven to Mary, the rarer it is, the more precious ought it to be esteemed. For nowhere in the Scriptures is it found before; nor ought it to be delivered by anyone other than an Angel; nor was such a salutation owed to anyone other than Mary. Hence Mary not undeservedly wondered, and thought *what manner of salutation this should be* (Luke 1:29), because she had not read it elsewhere in the Scriptures. For in every salutation there was made first either an imprecation of life, as in Dan. 2:4: *O king, live for ever*; or of salvation, as in 2 Kings [2 Sam.] 16:16: *God save thee, O king*; or of blessing, as with Booz, who said to the reapers *The Lord be with you*, and they answered, *The Lord bless thee* (Ruth 2:4). We read, however, that two salutations were brought to men by Angels. Judges 6:12: the Angel said to Gedeon, *The Lord is with thee, most valiant of men.* And Tobias 5:11: *Joy be to thee always.* But the salutation of the blessed Virgin brought by the Angel is compounded out of them all, and is therefore worthier than all, holier than all. For what is put first, *Ave*, that is, without woe, that

is, without sorrow — behold the salutation made to Tobias: *Joy be to thee always.* What follows, *Full of grace* — behold the salutation of the Apostles, who in their epistles always prefix: *Grace to you and peace.* What is added, *The Lord is with thee* — behold the salutation made to Gedeon: *The Lord is with thee, most valiant of men*; and the salutation of Booz to his reapers: *The Lord be with you.* What follows, *Blessed art thou* — behold the salutation of Booz to Ruth (Ruth 3:10): *Blessed art thou of the Lord, my daughter.*

It is also fittingly put first, *Ave*, that is, without woe. For she was properly without curse: for in the law the barren woman was accursed, and the woman who brought forth in sorrow was not free from the curse. Mary alone escaped both curses; whence we still say to her *Ave*, as rejoicing with her joy. And note that the curse of the barren woman is not expressly read in the Bible, but in Exod. 23:26 and Deut. 7:14 it is said as a blessing for the obedient: *There shall not be one barren among you of either sex.* Hence, by contraries, barrenness was reckoned a curse in the law.

(p. 12) Hail, Mary. Note that the Angel, saluting the Virgin, first kept silent her proper name, namely Mary, that by this he might show that he was imposing on her a new name, namely "full of grace." Hence Isaiah had foretold, as if speaking to Mary, Isa. 62:2: *Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name*, that is, which the Angel, or the Son of God, who is the mouth of the Father, shall name through the Angel. Afterwards, however, he expressed the name of Mary, saying, *Fear not, Mary*, intimating by this that, as Jacob, when he received the blessing, so received a new name as not to lose the old (whence Scripture afterwards frequently calls him Jacob), so with Mary. Or he named her *Full of grace* before *Mary* so that she might thereafter be called full of grace. And he first names the name familiar to herself, and at length does not omit the name Mary, which is necessary for us, so that he may seem to impose a new name on her in such a way as to signify that the old is not to be taken away. For how, when he had removed from her every woe by saying to her *Ave*, should he straightway name her Mary, which means "bitter sea"? For the name Mary suits men rather than Angels, since it is understood as "illuminatress" and "star of the sea": for only to those who sail the sea of the world is the invocation of the star of the sea necessary; the illuminatress is necessary to those who have need of illumination; but to Angels, who need none of these, "full of grace" is better said. Therefore he says: Hail, full of grace. We say: Hail, Mary. For this reason also she was first called full of grace, and thereafter named Mary by the Angel: because she has it from grace that the name Mary is interpreted in us. For she is not full of grace because she is illuminatress, but illuminatress because she is full of grace. And so you can assign this for each of the interpretations of that name. In this too, that the Angel saluted Mary with such reverence and humility that he seemed almost about to adore a woman, he who was accustomed to be adored by men, saying to her *Ave*, there is understood a congratulation as festive as it befitted an Angel to show to the queen of the Angels. Blessed Bernard, speaking to the Angels: "Honor, holy Angels, the mother, you who adore the offspring of our Virgin: him, namely, who is likewise your king, the repairer of our race, the restorer of your city."

Hail, Mary. Blessed Bernard: "Of the glory of this name no barren thought can conceive anything worthy, nor can untaught speech bring it forth." So it is no wonder if we say little, who fail in thought: surely it is not given us to taste of so great a sweetness. For *that which is holy is not to be given to dogs* (Matt. 7:6). And he does not understand who does not taste, as it is said: *Taste and see* (Ps. 33:9). Affection tastes, intellect sees; and it is necessary that taste precede, in order that it may be able to enlighten the intellect. Whence also the eyes of Jonathan, that is, of the just man, are not enlightened unless honey has first been tasted (1 Sam. 14:27). Hence in Isa. 26:19 it is said to the Lord: *The dew of light is thy dew.* Dew of light, that is, bringing light and enlightening the intellect. He therefore who does not taste does not see; and for this reason one who has not seen, that is, understood, is less able to tell it to others. But if there are some perhaps to whom it has been given both to taste and to see, they would rather hide what they have perceived for themselves, and, like the hungry, seek yet more, than communicate to others what they have perceived, as the blessed Virgin says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger* (Sir. 24:29). For those who have once tasted her sweetness desire to

experience yet more of her. Hence it is that few things have been said of her by the Saints, and perhaps in this they were complying with her wish, that though many things had been revealed to them about her, they might yet say few, and hide her who always desired to lie hid and be hidden.

(p. 13) Let us hear, then, what Solomon said in prophetic manner of the excellence of this name, Cant. 1:2, as if speaking to Mary: *Thy name is as oil poured out; therefore young maidens have loved thee exceedingly.* Rightly is this name, Mary, compared to oil: because above all the names of the saints, after the name of the Son, it refreshes the weary, heals the languid, enlightens the blind, penetrates the hard, restores the tired, anoints the combatants, rots the yoke of the devil, floats above every name as oil above every liquid. For the whole Trinity gave her a name that is above every name after the name of her Son, that in her name every knee should bow — as is manifestly clear — of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (Phil. 2:10); and that every tongue should confess the grace, the glory and the power of this most holy name. For there is in no other name, after the name of the Son, so powerful a help, nor is there any other name under heaven given to men, after the sweet name of Jesus, from which so great a salvation is poured out upon men (Acts 4:12).

It is said therefore to Mary: *Thy name*, that is, the fame of thy name, which was shut up, as oil in a vessel, as long as thou didst tarry in the world, after thy assumption into heaven was poured out through all the climes of the world: for in the preaching of the Apostles *their sound went forth into all the earth* (Ps. 18:5), and was made manifest to the whole world. Or, according to the custom of the Scriptures, "name" is here put for the one named, as there, Ps. 19:2: *The name of the God of Jacob protect thee*, that is, he who is named the God of Jacob.

And the sense is: *Oil*, that is, thou who art named oil according to the many properties of oil, and chiefly on account of mercy, *poured out* outside the vessel, whose vessel is Christ himself, from whose fullness thou hast received, and from thy fullness hast poured back upon us grace for grace (John 1:16). And because *thy name is oil poured out*, therefore the *young maidens*, that is, faithful souls who, having put off the old man with his deeds, have put on the new, and so are renewed by grace, not aged by guilt, not barren with age, but fruitful with spiritual gifts, strong in faith and love, not weak as old women, not bent over by love of earthly things, but upright by desire and raised toward the heavens, *have loved thee exceedingly*, that is, vehemently. And note that it is said in the feminine gender, *adolescentulae*, because they love more fervently than young men, and because they are commended for humility and fruitfulness. These too are called daughters of the Jerusalem above, because by faith, hope and desire they tend toward the vision of eternal peace.

The properties of oil, which are noted in the verses written below, can fittingly be applied to the name of Mary; and this is to be understood chiefly of olive oil:

Oil is green, warm, rich, sweet, penetrating, bright, refreshing, and bitter; it feeds and fattens, and enlightens, and heals, strengthens, softens, extinguishes and enlarges fire, is of use for paintings, keeps iron from rust.

Oil is green. Because the memory of this name is unto generations of ages, as she herself says, Sir. 24:28; for in greenness perseverance and durability are designated. Devout invocation and remembrance of her name also leads to the greenness of grace in the present, and to the greenness of heavenly things in the future. Acts 4:12: *There is no other name*, etc.

Warm, from its effect: because devout naming of her wonderfully kindles to love, as those know who have experienced it. Hence Bernard the abbot says to Mary: "O pious, O great, O much-to-be-loved Mary: thou canst not even be named without kindling, nor thought of without refreshing the affections of those who love thee; thou never enterest the memory of the pious without the sweetness divinely implanted in thee." And this is a property of oil, that when poured upon fire it makes it burn more fervently.

(p. 14) Rich, because it supplies the richness of devotion and grace to its lover, so that he can say, Ps. 22:5: *Thou hast anointed my head with oil,* of grace and devotion, that is, my mind.

Sweet, through kindness. Blessed Bernard says that the name of Jesus is "honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, a shout of joy in the heart." So too the name of Mary, and even more, if we dare to say so. For "Jesus" is as it were a proud name and exceedingly powerful; a more humble name befits our affections. Hence if anyone in Jesus fears the austerity either of the Godhead or of the male sex, let him recur to Mary, in whom nothing of this is suspect. For Mary is a womanly name, setting forth and commending meekness. Again blessed Bernard: "Turn over more diligently the whole series of the Gospel history; and if perhaps anything reproachful, anything harsh, any sign even of slight indignation appears in Mary, thereafter hold her suspect and fear to approach. But if (as they truly are) all things that pertain to her are found rather full of piety and grace, full of meekness and mercy, give thanks to him who has provided you such a mediatrix, in whom nothing can be suspect. But if you fear her sex, because it has often been a ruin to itself and others, she is a virgin."

Penetrating. For wonderfully the power of this name, Mary, softens and penetrates the hardness of the human heart. Prov. 20:27: *The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, which searcheth all the hidden things of the bowels.* Let us too say: The lamp of the Lady, that is, of Mary, who is interpreted illuminatress and Lady, is the breath of man: for the sinner, through her, draws breath again in hope of pardon and grace, after the example of Theophilus; and she searches, that is, causes the sinner to search, all the secrets of the belly, that is, the hidden things of the heart. But note that oil does not penetrate what is moist, namely by carnal concupiscence, but what is dried by abstinence and penance. If you wish therefore to be penetrated by this oil, you must first be dried.

Bright, when it is without dregs, as is evident in a lamp. Prov. 5:3: *Her throat is smoother than oil,* that is, the words proceeding from the throat, which wonderfully enlighten our understanding.

Refreshing. For it refreshes the weary and those who labor. Hence she says with her Son, Matt. 11:28: *Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*

And bitter, until it has been boiled by fire. For Mary is interpreted "bitter sea": because she embitters worldly delights with her bitternesses, and sweetens present bitternesses by the fire of charity, supplying grace to them.

It feeds and fattens. Wonderfully, indeed, it feeds the affection and fattens it through devotion to this name; and as often as we remember her, so often are we strengthened.

It enlightens our intellect: because Mary is interpreted illuminatress and star of the sea. The excellence of this name blessed Luke himself also noted by the manner of pronouncing it, when he uttered it so reverently. For he did not say: *The angel Gabriel was sent to a virgin whose name was Mary,* as he had said of others, but like something long awaited he at last brought it forth with weight, saying, *And the virgin's name was Mary* (Luke 1:27), showing that this name holds much of instruction and grace, and is to be committed more deeply to memory and investigated more diligently. As Jerome also says, when sailors for some reason plunge into the sea, they carry oil in the mouth and discharge it, and the bottom of the water becomes clear. So the devout invocation of this name, namely Mary, and her teaching and grace, make manifest the innermost of hidden things. Blessed Bernard: "Is anyone saddened? *(p. 15)* At once, at the name of Mary, the cloud gives way, and calm returns." Behold how this oil enlightens.

Chapter 2 (continued)

And it heals. Eccles. 7:2: *A good name is better than precious ointments.* You will find this below. For if a wound is anointed with oil, the oil does not allow a scar to form until the matter has been drawn out. Nor

does Mary's kindness allow the conscience of her lovers to be pacified until the corruption of vice has been cast out by confession. Whence Prov. 20:27: *The lamp of the Lord,* etc., as above. Mary is indeed that oil of mercy which the true Samaritan, that is, Christ, poured into the wounds of him who was wounded, that is, of the human race, going down from Jerusalem to Jericho through the transgression of the first mother (Luke 10:33 ff.).

It strengthens. For oil hardens the bones and sinews and strengthens the marrow. Hence the ancient wrestlers also anointed their whole body with oil; and the Lord's champions, anointed with this oil, through love and frequent remembrance of this name, either cannot be seized by the devil their adversary, or cannot be held long.

It softens. For the name Mary softens the hardness of the abscess which designates pride, and calms the swelling of the heart, after the manner of oil, when through her prayers the heart of stone is taken from us and a heart of flesh is given (Ezek. 36:26), and when by her example and grace the pride of our heart is turned into humility.

It extinguishes and enlarges fire. For oil extinguishes fire in stone and kindles it in wood. If then you have ever been stony and hard by sinning, and have turned with your whole heart to Mary, she will extinguish the blaze of sin in you: for it is the property of oil to extinguish Greek fire and a heated stone; and it is Mary's custom in her lovers to extinguish the fervor of sin. If you are wood, that is, pliable and patient, she will kindle in you the sweetness of God, if you invoke the mercy of her name with your whole heart.

It is of use for paintings. For oil is useful for making paintings, because it binds colors and makes them adhere to shields, saddles and images. And Mary's grace marks the inner man with the colors of the virtues.

It keeps iron from rust. For iron tools do not rust if they are anointed with oil.

Hail, Mary. Solomon seems to intimate the dignity and efficacy of this name when he says, Prov. 22:1: *A good name is better than great riches.* Again, Eccles. 7:2: *A good name is better than precious ointments.* For the name of Mary is far better than bodily riches, because it relieves the narrowness of poverty better, and heals the sorrow of sins better than ointments. You are poor: flee for refuge to the name of Mary, who is shown to you as most poor; and if you devoutly attend to the fact that from this poverty she was exalted even above the Angels, poverty will no longer be burdensome to you. You are a sinner: flee for refuge to the name of Mary; it alone is enough to heal; for no plague clings so effectually as not at once to yield to the name of Mary, as is evident from the example of Theophilus. You are justified, but perhaps you are tempted beyond your strength, and the more you remember being overcome by the tempter at some time, the more you fear his snares: remember that the name of our Lady is a most strong tower; to it the sinner will flee in temptation, even he who has sinned, and he shall be saved. For Solomon, who knew little of Mary, says, Prov. 18:10: *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the just runneth to it, and shall be exalted.* But we must say: The name of the Lady is a most strong tower; to it the sinner will flee, and shall be saved.

Again, Isaiah foresaw the sweetness of the name of the Lord, saying (26:8): *Thy name, O Lord, and thy remembrance are the desire of the soul.* Yet he shows it as terrible, saying (30:27): *Behold the name of the Lord cometh from afar, his wrath burning,* (p. 16) *and heavy to bear.* And Ps. 110:9: *Holy and terrible is his name.* A horrible sweetness, sprinkled with such wrath. But thanks be to him who provided another refuge for sinners, having very much of delight and security, and nothing of terror. For Mary is interpreted in the Syrian tongue "Lady"; and she is powerful not only to protect, as a tower, those who flee to her, but also to overcome pursuing enemies. Hence on that text of the Canticle 6:9, *Terrible as an army set in array,* blessed Bernard says: "Visible enemies do not so fear any copious multitude of camps as the aerial powers fear the name, the patronage and the example of Mary. They give way and perish like wax before the face of fire, wherever they find frequent remembrance of this name, devout invocation, solicitous imitation." Mary must therefore be asked assiduously that her name, which is Lady, be interpreted in us, by overcoming our

tempters and showing herself to us a tower of strength before the face of the enemy; and that she may deign to grant us this, let her name and her memorial be held in the desire of the soul and in constant remembrance.

Hail, Mary. At least three times in the Canticle it is asked, in the person of the Angels, *Who is this?* (Cant. 3:6; 6:9; 8:5), not only because they marvel at the excellence of her person, who was seen neither to have had a likeness before nor to have a successor, but perhaps because they desire that a sweet name be given in answer. For as the ancient fathers, Isaiah and the rest, had the name of the Lord in desire, namely that Christ, who was known in heaven, should be named among men, and the name that was shut up in heaven should be poured out on earth, so the Angels desired to name the name of Mary and to have it poured out into notice, so that it might not be enclosed within the bounds of earth, but be held famous also in the heavens.

Likewise Luke 1:27: *And the virgin's name was Mary.* Fittingly is Mary's virginity immediately joined to it, in that she not only displays it by her name but also affords to others the grace of chastity. So inseparably are virginity and holiness joined to the name of Mary that when blessed Luke (7:37 ff.) deals with the penitence of Magdalen, out of reverence for this name he did not dare to call her Mary, but "a woman"; but a little after (8:2–3), when he says that she, justified by the Lord, ministered to him of her substance, he calls her Mary, and joins to her Susanna and Joanna. If these are blessed because they ministered to the Lord of their substance, this one is far more blessed; whence it is said to her, Prov. 31:29: *Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all.* For she alone has both interpreted in herself the names of the three aforesaid and fulfilled their office. There Mary, here Mary. Susanna is interpreted "lily," which suits none better than her who merited the privilege of chastity. Joanna is interpreted "grace of God," and no woman is remembered by this name more than she who is recalled as full of grace. Those ministered to the Lord from earthly substance; she ministered properly from her own, who from her own flesh furnished the conception and from her own milk the nourishment. Hence, in Luke 11:27, she is called blessed by the woman who said to the Lord: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck.* But if a woman who had not yet merited to share in his flesh and blood blesses her, much more is she to be blessed by us, who are refreshed at the altar from her flesh and blood; for the flesh that is received there is the flesh of the Virgin, from whose flesh a small portion was taken, from which, by the craft of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ was formed.

Chapter 3. Ave, Maria

(p. 17) Note that, as the name of the Son is poured out into seven names, Isa. 9:6, where it is said, *And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor*, etc., so also the name of Mary can fittingly be poured out through its interpretations. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 1:2: *Thy name is oil poured out*, etc. For Mary is interpreted "illuminated," or "illuminatress," or "illuminating," or "star of the sea," or "myrrh of the sea," or, according to some, "hyas of the sea," or "bitter sea," or, in the Syrian tongue, "Lady."

Of these interpretations four are more commonly in use, namely illuminatress, Lady, bitter sea, star of the sea. She was properly illuminatress and star of the sea at the Son's nativity, when she sent forth a ray that illumines the whole world and brought forth to the world the true light, namely when the true sun of justice arose from her. Lady properly at the Son's offering, when she presented him in the temple, where the whole world was gathered, as if wishing to send the whole world from him into herself. This her image still designates, holding the Son as if to give him. Likewise Lady, as Damascene says: "Anna bore Mary, that is, by grace a Lady. For Mary was made Lady of all creatures, being the mother of the Creator of all." Bitter sea in the Son's passion, when the sword pierced the soul of the Son's mother. Blessed Bernard: "More than a martyr should we not undeservedly proclaim her, in whom surely the affection of compassion exceeded the bodily sense of the passion."

Again, she is illuminatress because she illumines our darkness, that is, us who are in darkness, in many ways, as will be shown below. Lady, because she protects us as a most strong tower, as above, and represses and

overcomes our adversaries, to whom she is terrible as an army set in array (Cant. 6:3, 9). Star of the sea, because she directs our ways through the sea of this world. Bitter sea, because she makes bitter to us the harmful delights of the world. She must therefore be asked assiduously that her name be interpreted in us, namely that she may illuminate our darkness, make bitter to us harmful delights, rule and direct our ways as star of the sea, and as Lady repress tempests and punish and restrain our adversaries.

Now let us see somewhat more diffusely about the individual interpretations of Mary.

Illuminated by the Father of lights, from whom comes down every best gift (James 1:17), and by whose gift she had in herself as many lights as she had virtues. And thus this name, Mary, suits her singularly and excellently, because above all others, after her Son, she had more gifts of graces. Illuminated also by the grace of the Holy Spirit, when she was sanctified in the womb, and when the Holy Spirit came upon her. Likewise illuminated by the Son of God, the true sun of justice, in his *(p. 18)* conception, whom she received entire in her heart and bore entire in her womb; nor could she be other than illuminated, who had received in herself the whole fountain of light. Therefore it is said, Apoc. 12:1: *A woman clothed with the sun.* She herself also, as if from the sun, from the regard of the divinity, is called blessed by all generations. Whence she says, Luke 1:48: *Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid. For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.* Behold that she is illuminated by the sun. Behold the beauty and the light of the moon.

Illuminatress. Therefore, after she has been called *fair as the moon*, she is called *elect as the sun* (Cant. 6:9). For as the sun by the rays of its brightness illumines the world, so she by her virtues and examples irradiates the Christian people. Whence she says, Sir. 24:45: *I will enlighten all that hope in the Lord.* Others by no means. For she illumines the Church militant, signified by Noah's ark, which was lit by a crystal window that figured Mary. She illumines the triumphant also. Whence she says, Sir. 24:6: *I made that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth*, that is, I gave birth to Christ, who is in the heavens unfailing light. On this account it is sung of her that her glorious life illumines all the Churches, that is, the militant and the triumphant. She herself, after the Son, is also that true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world — supply: who is enlightened. Whence the Father says to her, Isa. 42:6: *I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles*, etc. To signify this too she gave birth at midnight to the true light, that by the mediation of her childbearing she might illumine his people walking in darkness. She is also that way by which the light is spread and the heat divided upon the earth (Job 38:24).

Against this illuminatress heretics, Jews, pagans and blasphemers rebel. Whence Job 24:13: *They have been rebellious to the light*, etc. But darkness pursues her enemies, as it is said in Nahum 1:8.

Some say, however, that the name is interpreted "my illuminatress." For she is our illuminatress through the mediation of the Son, who, John 9:6 ff., made clay of spittle, by which he enlightened the man born blind: in which a very great sacrament lies hidden. The spittle descending from the head of Jesus, the Wisdom of God, who says, Sir. 24:5: *I came out of the mouth of the Most High*, etc. From this spittle and the nature of our earth a collyrium was made, by which the human race, designated by that blind man, was enlightened, namely by faith in the Word incarnate. Whence one says:

Our flesh is clay, the wisdom of the Word is the spittle; the human race is healed by such a medicine.

Now the eye is threefold. There is the eye of contemplation, by which God and the things that are in God are seen, which through Adam's fault was utterly extinguished. There is the eye of reason, which sees the mind and the things that are in it, which through that sin was made bleary. There is the eye of the flesh, which sees the world and the things that are in it, which lies open to the concupiscence of the flesh. Whence it is said of our first parents, Gen. 3:7, that when the forbidden fruit was tasted, immediately the eyes of both were opened, that is, the rivers of concupiscences. The first two are healed by faith in the incarnation, but the third is blinded by this collyrium. Otherwise: there is a twofold collyrium, the incarnation and the passion of the

Savior. In the first, spittle and dust: flesh made of the dust of the earth; from the spittle, as has been said, this collyrium is called Christ's, with which he enlightened the eyes of the man born blind (John 9), that is, of the human race. The second collyrium is called Raphael's, which is interpreted "medicine of God," which he made of the gall and liver of the roasted fish, by which Tobias was enlightened (Tob. 11). The roasted fish is Christ suffering, who, roasted on the spit of the cross, was fed with gall and given vinegar to drink, as he says through the Psalm (68:22); and if his bitternesses are recalled with bitterness, they enlighten the spiritual eyes.

(p. 19) Illuminating. Some say "illuminating them," that is, Christians or her familiars; namely because by her teachings, which are found in the Gospel, she taught them to live as Christians. In many things also she taught the Apostles themselves, the doctors of the Church. She also brought forth for us the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world (John 1:9). She also obtains continually grace for darkened sinners, who are not illumined except by grace.

Thus therefore we can pour out the name of Mary into the names above said, yet so that they are understood antonomastically and with an article restricting the common appellation, by appropriation, to the proper and singular person of Mary. When therefore we say, *Ave, Maria*, we ought to humble ourselves before her as servants before a Lady. We ought also to be contrite for our sins, bringing to memory both her passion and that of her Son, to which we have given cause by our sins. We ought also to remember in the midst of what perils we move, and the darkness of our ignorance, that thus, in a contrite and humbled heart, which neither she nor her Son despises, we may obtain from her the light of grace and guidance among the perils.

Star of the sea. Let us see first why a star, and then why star of the sea. A star, on account of the excellence of her state. Whence she says, Sir. 24:7: *I dwelt in the highest places.* For she was excellent in her origin, because she was sanctified before she was born: she was born a daughter of grace, whereas all others are born sons of wrath (Eph. 2:3). This was signified in the fact that she was the daughter of Anna, which is interpreted "grace." Cant. 6:8: *She is the only one of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her.* Excellent in life, according to human custom: because she vowed virginity, although the barren woman was accursed in the law; and because most humble, whereas many are proud of virginity; and because faithful and believing, although what was promised her seemed impossible, namely that a virgin should conceive and bear while remaining a virgin. For by the vow of virginity and the excellence of humility she pleased God, but by faith she conceived. Whence she is also said to have conceived through the ear, that is, through the faith of the teacher: because faith is from hearing (Rom. 10:17). Therefore it is said to her: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*, etc. (Luke 1:45). Excellent also in childbirth, because without pain, nature marveling, she bore her own begetter. Excellent also in her assumption, exalted above all orders of Angels. In all these and many other things the excellence of our star consists.

Because fixed in the firmament of heaven, that is, of Scripture, by constant meditation on the divine law; or in heavenly goods, by desire and love of eternal things, as a true daughter of Abraham, to whom it is promised, Gen. 22:17: *I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven.*

Because clear and bright by the example of holiness, illuminating the world with the manifold ray of the virtues, as will be set out below. Clear also by the purity of her life, having in herself no spot, as the moon has in the present. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 4:7: *Thou art all fair, my love, and there is not a spot in thee.*

Because wholly fiery through charity, most of all from the time that she conceived him who is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24). Or fiery also through the universality of the virtues. For virtues are of fiery nature, and therefore she draws upward, because the place of fire is upward.

Because she appeared small, by humility offering herself to the Lord as handmaid when she was asked for as mother; but afterwards she testifies that she is great, saying (Luke 1:48–49): *All generations shall call me blessed, because he that is mighty hath done great things to me.* Therefore she is called the luminary that is

diminished at the consummation (Sir. 43:7).

Because of attractive nature. *(p. 20)* Alchabitius the philosopher: “The nature of the stars with respect to vapors is that of the adamant with respect to iron.” Since she is a star, therefore, she draws to the Son those made fluid by vices, as is evident of Theophilus. Let every faithful soul say to her: *Draw me after thee*, etc. (Cant. 1:3). For she is the curtain of all cleanness, going before by prayers, merits and examples, and drawing after her all the curtains of the tabernacle, that is, of the Church of God (Exod. 26; 36:10). *The Spirit and the bride say: Come. And he that heareth, let him say: Come* (Apoc. 22:17).

Because in time of frost she shines and sparkles most brightly; which appeared at the Lord’s passion, when the charity of the rest grew cold, and she alone, as from the night, illumined the whole Church.

Because *stella*, a star, is named from *stando*, standing. For to stand belongs to the obedient, and of her it is said: *The queen stood*, etc. (Ps. 44:10).

Because gleaming and glowing through her most excellent conduct.

Because she has aspect and effect toward the earth, that is, toward earthly persons, whose affairs she brings about, and especially toward her servant and lover, to whom she says: *In this way which thou walkest I will fix my eyes upon thee* (Ps. 31:8).

On account of continuous motion: because she was continually moved from virtue to virtue, from one good to another, from the active life to the contemplative. Blessed Bernard: “On the way of God not to advance is to go backward.”

On account of the obedience given. Baruch 3:35, of the stars: *They were called, and they said: Here we are.*

Because she illumines those whom she keeps, and by whom her love is kept. Baruch 3:34: *The stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced.*

Because she fights against the devil on behalf of her servants. Judges 5:20: *The stars remaining in their order*, etc.

Because she assigns to the Son whatever good she has received from him. Baruch 3:35: *They shone to him with cheerfulness that made them.*

Because she was and always is at the right hand of God. Apoc. 1:16: *He had in his right hand seven stars.*

Because she served always for eternal things, not for temporal. Prov. 3:16: *Length of days is in her right hand*, etc. She is believed also to sit at the right hand of the Son.

Because in her own way she watches by night in order to illumine the night itself.

Because she gladly gives her light. Baruch 3:35: *They shone to him*, not to themselves, not to the world, *with cheerfulness*.

Because a creature exceedingly beautiful through honesty of life. For a star is beautiful in every part of it. And it is said of Mary, Cant. 4:7: *Thou art all fair, my love*, etc. Is she not all fair who had neither spot nor wrinkle (Eph. 5:27)? Is she not all fair, who is fair from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head? (And this is shown below, in the title on her beauty.)

Because she leads those sailing through the sea of the world into the port of salvation. Therefore she is signified by the star that led the Magi to Christ, who is the port of salvation. Whence Matt. 2:9: *Behold the star which they had seen*, etc. And immediately follows, v. 11: *And entering into the house they found the child*, who is that port.

Because sometimes she seems as it were to laugh, for she brought forth our laughter and our joy, and in her and through her the Father smiled upon us. Whence in her figure Sara said, Gen. 21:6: *God hath made a*

laughter for me, etc. And for this reason we must laugh with her and rejoice with her. Whence there follows in Sara's words: *Whosoever shall hear of it will laugh with me*, that is, will rejoice with me, says the Gloss.

Because she adorns the firmament, that is, the Church, as the most beautiful of women (Cant. 5:9). Beautiful in her sanctification in the womb, more beautiful in the conception of Christ, most beautiful in her assumption. Sir. 26:21: *(p. 21) As the sun when it riseth to the world in the highest places of God, so is the beauty of a good wife for the ornament of her house.*

Chapter 3 (continued)

Because she illumines the night. For she illumines that solitary night, not worthy of praise, which had flowed down from Heva even to her. For at her birth all things began to be bettered.

Because with her rays she illumines the earth, that is, the earthly. For being filled with the sevenfold grace, she fills us always from her fullness, pouring grace back upon us, unless it stand in the way through us.

Because she foretells coming events. For a comet, when it rises, is a sign of the death of princes; and she is a sign of the death of Christ, who is the prince of peace (Isa. 9:6), and of the devil, who is called the prince of this world (John 14:30). Therefore it is said, Jer. 46:12: *The strong hath stumbled against the strong*, that is, the devil against Christ, *and both are fallen together*, but not alike. That was fulfilled in the Lord's passion.

Because she makes the astrologers truthful; nay, she stands above the astrologers, that is, the Prophets, who, in what they had foretold of her bringing forth, were found faithful through her, as he had asked (Sir. 36:18).

Because she rouses the slothful to labor, since she is the day-star and the morning star: for before her rising the labor of man was useless for meriting eternal life.

Because she directs and guides those who sail through the sea of this world to the port. Whence she is designated by the star that led the Magi to Christ, who is the port of salvation. (See below.)

Mary and Lucifer. Whence the Church sings: She is risen as the day-star, that is, not dark at her rising, as we are, who are all born children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). But she was sanctified before she was born. She is risen as the day-star, that is, wholly clear, and in hope of a greater clearness, namely of the Sun of justice, who was born from her. And Mary is well called the day-star because in her womb she carried the true light for nine months. For *Lucifer* is called in Greek *phosphoros*, from *phos*, which is light, and *phora*, which is bearing. Of this day-star the Lord says to Job, 38:32: *Canst thou bring forth the day-star in its time?* that is, in the time of grace. As if to say: Not thou, but I. Likewise the day-star is brighter than the other stars, and Mary in individual virtues stands pre-eminent above all the orders of the saints. (Apply to this day-star the properties of the dawn.)

Morning star, shining before the day dawns: because Mary's rising preceded the rising of the day, that is, of Christ, who is light and day. This is the star that is promised to the conqueror as his reward. Whence Apoc. 2:28: *To him that overcometh I will give the morning star.* And note that at the rising of this star, namely when the grace and love of Mary rises in the heart of the just, thieves flee, that is, demons, to whom she is terrible as an army set in array. The watchmen become more alert, that is, prelates, or anyone anxious for his salvation; the sick more tranquil in mind; workmen more vigilant. And Mary is well called the morning star, because she was always at the morning of her rising and never tended toward the setting of sin. Or the morning star is eternal glory, which will never have an end, and which will always seem to be beginning, so that any one of the blessed may seem to say, *And I said: Now have I begun* (Ps. 76:11), namely to taste that the Lord is sweet. Or the morning star is any one of the blessed. Whence it is said, Job 11:17: *Thou shalt rise as the day-star.* Christ also is the morning star. Whence Apoc. 22:16: *I am the root*, that is, the sustenance by divinity, *and the offspring of David*, according to humanity. Matt. 1:1: *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David.*

The bright and morning star. Here he touches his chief work according to humanity, namely the resurrection. *(p. 22) Bright*, in that he illumined the night of hell. Isa. 9:2: *The people that walked in darkness*, etc. Well is it a star that appears small, and signifies his humility, by which the king descended to free the imprisoned servants; and *morning*, because he rose in the morning.

And note that a threefold star can be distinguished, namely the evening star, the night star, the morning star; that is, the life of Heva, the life of the ancient fathers, and the life of Mary. The first is *vesperus*, that is, "breathing woe" (*vae-spirans*). This is Heva, who breathed upon the whole world the woe of guilt and the woe of punishment, which star is called Wormwood (Apoc. 8:11) on account of the bitterness of misery brought upon the world. The second is the life of the just, who were both before the coming of the Lord and after, to whom the Apostle says, Phil. 2:15–16: *In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.* The third is the day-star (*lucifer*), that is, the life of Mary, whose glorious life illumines all the Churches.

Again, this is the star that appeared to the Magi, which ran not in the firmament but beneath the firmament, as if the nature of the stars were inclined, in the lower space of the air. As if she said with the Psalmist, Ps. 17:10: *He bowed the heavens and came down.* That star was new, signifying novelty, of which Jer. 31:22: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth: a woman shall compass a man.* This was new and unheard of upon the earth, that a woman had in her womb one who was indeed a little child in time, yet a man in every perfection of virtues. This star shone with the sun, against the nature of all stars; for the moon and stars, when the sun's light comes upon them, do not appear, but are swallowed up in the splendor of the sun. But this star shone with the sun, and did not lose its own clearness in the light of the sun, to demonstrate the privilege of that star which bore the sun. For the blessed Virgin, who bore the true Sun, shines with her Son; and by as much greater dignity as the Son glows, by so much greater dignity does the mother also shine, who, though far less than the Son, as a star is less than the sun, yet rejoices in this privilege, that every soul compared with God suppresses its own brightness. But because the honor of the son is the honor of the mother, in the excellence of the son the excellence of the mother shines, who deserved to beget so great a Son. Which is signified in this, that that star shone by day.

This is the star of which it is read, Num. 24:17: *A star shall rise out of Jacob*, etc. In the nature of the stars six things are wont chiefly to be considered, which can fittingly be adapted to the praise of this star. These are matter, form, quantity, position, motion and power.

Matter, in which incorruption is considered: for whereas all bodies beneath the moon are subject to corruption, the nature of the stars alone, while the world remains, cannot be corrupted. Rightly, then, in the matter of our star, the Virgin Mary, incorruption is considered, of whom was born materially, according to the flesh, he whose soul God did not leave in hell, nor suffered his holy one to see corruption (Ps. 15:10). She also, according to the flesh, is to be faithfully believed to have been entirely free of corruption, who with incorrupt virginity bore from herself him who is the cause of all incorruption, so that as the stars are by nature incorruptible, so she is incorruptible by grace. Without the corruption of putrefaction and reduction to ashes in the body she is believed to have been assumed from the world.

Form, in which fullness of roundness and perfection are considered: for, as is proved by geometrical reasoning, the sphere is fuller and more perfect than all bodies, and every star is spherical. Hear the fullness in this star: *Hail, full of grace* (Luke 1:28). Hear the perfection: *Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be perfected [accomplished] that were spoken to thee by the Lord* (Luke 1:45).

(p. 23) Quantity, in which smallness or greatness is considered; but so it is that what is small in estimation is great in the truth of the matter. Hear this star small in estimation: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38). Hear her great in the truth of the matter: *Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, because he that is mighty hath done great things to me*, etc. (Luke 1:48–49).

Position, in which eminence or depression is considered: for some stars are as if fixed in heaven, the others hang lower down. But the star of the sea always appears lofty in heaven. “But that one black Styx beholds beneath its feet, and the deep shades.” Of our true star, the glorious Virgin, the eminence is always lofty in heaven, for she is exalted above the choirs of Angels to the heavenly kingdoms.

Motion, in which the general revolution of all is considered: for every star, though it changes place, is moved in a circle around the center of the circle; but the star of the sea alone, not knowing how to be moved from its place, circles an immovable point which is the beginning of heaven, which point the star of the sea has within it and does not know how to be separated from it. These things can well and fittingly be adapted to our Virgin. Hear this revolving star: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth: a woman shall compass a man* (Jer. 31:22). Hear also that man as a point, that is, as simple. Blessed Dionysius, when speaking of the parts of human nature in Christ, says: “Of which the simple Jesus is ineffably composed.” Do you wish to hear the immovable? Boethius says: “Remaining stable, he gives all things to be moved.” Do you wish to hear him as the beginning? He himself says, John 8:25: *I am the beginning, who also speak to you.* Do you wish to hear how our star has him within herself? *For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. 1:20). Do you wish to hear that she cannot depart from him? Hear her in the Canticle, 3:4: *I held him, and I will not let him go.*

Power, in which the operation of generation or of corruption is chiefly considered. For the power of certain stars makes the earth fruitful for the operation of generation, but the power of certain others infects it to corruption. Do you wish to hear the power of our star? *The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee* (Luke 1:35). Do you wish to hear the fruitfulness of our earth from this power? *The Lord will give goodness, and our earth shall yield her fruit* (Ps. 84:13). Do you wish to hear the operation of generation? *One generation and another shall praise thy works* (Ps. 144:4). Do you wish to hear the purging of corruption through the same power? Hear Paul saying to the Hebrews 1:3: *Carrying all things by the word of his power, making purgation of sins*, etc.

O truly wondrous star, truly worthy of praise! Come therefore, you who are subject to corruption, to the incorruptible, that through her this corruptible may put on incorruption for you, and this mortal immortality (1 Cor. 15:53). You who are empty of grace, to the full of grace, that, though you be empty of grace, *our soul may be filled as with marrow and fatness* from her fullness (Ps. 62:6). You who are imperfect, to the perfect, that *when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part may be done away* through her (1 Cor. 13:10). You little ones, to the great, that through her you may grow in him whose greatness has no end (cf. 1 Pet. 2:2). You humble, to the sublime, that through her he may exalt you who through her put down the mighty from their seat (Luke 1:52). You who limp from your paths, to the revolving one, that the woman who will compass the man in the embrace of her womb (Jer. 31:22) may be round about her people from henceforth now and for ever (Ps. 124:2). You weak, to her power, that *when any one falleth he shall not be bruised* (Ps. 36:24), but the mother of divine mercy may put her hand beneath him, etc.

(p. 24) Star of the sea. On that text of Luke 1:27, *And the virgin’s name was Mary*, blessed Bernard says: “Let us speak a few words on this name, which, interpreted, is called star of the sea, and is very fittingly applied to the Virgin Mother. For she is most aptly compared to a star: because as a star sends forth its ray without any corruption of itself, so the Virgin brings forth her Son without injury. Neither does the ray lessen the brightness of the star, nor the Son the integrity of the Virgin. She is therefore that noble star risen out of Jacob (Num. 24:17), whose ray illumines the whole world, whose splendor both shines forth in the heights and penetrates the depths, traversing the lands also, and warming minds more than bodies, fosters virtues, burns off vices. She, I say, is the bright and excellent star, necessarily lifted up over this great and spacious sea, shining with merits, illuminating by examples. O whoever thou art that perceivest thyself, in the flux of this age, to be tossed among storms and tempests rather than to walk upon the land: turn not thine eyes from the splendor of this star, if thou wouldst not be overwhelmed by the storms. If the winds of temptation rise, if

thou run upon the rocks of tribulation: look to the star, call upon Mary. If thou art tossed by the waves of pride, of ambition, of detraction, of envy: look to the star, call upon Mary. If anger, or avarice, or the allurement of the flesh shake the little boat of the mind, look to Mary. If, troubled by the enormity of thy crimes, confounded by the foulness of thy conscience, terrified by the horror of judgment, thou begin to be swallowed up in the gulf of sadness, in the abyss of despair, think of Mary. In dangers, in straits, in doubtful matters, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let her not depart from thy mouth, let her not depart from thy heart; and, that thou mayest obtain the help of her prayer, do not forsake the example of her conduct. Following her thou strayest not; praying to her thou despairest not; thinking of her thou errest not. While she holds thee thou fallest not; while she protects thee thou fearest not; with her as guide thou art not wearied; with her favorable thou arrivest: and so thou provest in thyself how deservedly it was said: *And the virgin's name was Mary*."

Likewise, at the time of this salutation Mary was very fittingly called star of the sea, when namely there were no blessed in heaven — understand, of men. In the world there were no just, or very few, but all, or almost all, were in the sea, that is, in the bitterness of sins, wrapped in the darkness of ignorance; and therefore she is justly called star of the sea, that is, of the wretched, who was ordained to this from eternity, that through her the Lord, as far as in him lay, might have mercy on all. Therefore she herself says, Prov. 8:23: *I was ordained from eternity.* But now, in the time of grace, since she illumines not only the wretched but also the just and the blessed, she seems rather to be called star of the world, star of heaven. Star of the world, that is, of the just, who on account of cleanness of heart are called clean (*mundi*), because while they look to her with the affection of devotion, against the pressures of the world they obtain from her the benefits of consolation. Star of heaven, because by her brightness she illumines all the orders of the blessed. Star of the sea, because all the wretched who are tossed in the bitterness of crimes find refuge in her, who brought forth the light for those tossed in this sea. Or also star of the sea, because she especially illumines those embittered for their sins; and she is the light of sinners, even those who sin most deeply, as is evident in Theophilus. Likewise star of the sea, because as a star at sea is for sailors a sign of the right way, so Mary in this world shows to those who live crookedly, to some the right way of humility, to others of chastity, to others of good works, to others of contemplation or of any virtue. Again, *(p. 25)* star of the sea, because those who sail the spacious sea of the world, where there are creeping things without number, small living beings with great (Ps. 103:25), know her especially among all the stars, that is, the saints; they look to her more frequently with spiritual eyes; they return more anxiously when lost; they direct their journey according to her. For she directs by her examples those who desire to live rightly, brings the erring back to the way, and leads the endangered to the port of salvation.

Likewise this star of the sea excels the other stars in three ways: in height, in immobility, in the communion of light.

In height, because, set at the vertex of the world, as the head over the members, so it is exalted above the other stars. Whence the Poet: "This pole is always lofty to us; but that one black Styx beholds beneath its feet, and the deep shades." Similarly Mary is higher than all the creatures of heaven and earth; for the other saints, departing from the body, are received among the choirs of Angels and above the orders of the blessed. Whence: "I saw her beautiful as a dove, up above the streams of waters."

In immobility, since, established as it were in the center of the firmament, while the others tend by various motion now to rising, now to setting, she herself stands immovable. Turn your sight to the others, those sons of men who by their mobility have fallen, and fall all day long; and so you will be able to see how she remained immovable and unchanged: and not only immovable by sin, but, to say it briefly, she did not waver from her vow or purpose of virginity at any promise of the Angel. Whence she is also called a castle founded upon firm rock, which is Christ, and likewise a tower.

In the communion of light, because while the other saints give their light in turn, she, without alternation, always with an equal ray, as far as in her lies, pours out clearness upon all the living. For the other saints, by right of patronage, can profit more those committed to them, and so bestow their suffrages on mortals, but in differing manner, as Peter on the Romans, Denis on the French, Martin on those of Tours, and the like. For his own flock any saint can do more in the court of the Most High than for another's. But Mary, as she is queen of all, so also is patroness of all, and equally, as far as in her lies, she has care of all (Wisd. 6:8), without respect of persons, she who above all has received the fullness of dignity. For she illumines those far off with the rays of her mercy, but those near by special devotion with the sweetness of consolation, and those who are with her in the fatherland with the excellence of glory. And so there is none that can hide himself from her heat (Ps. 18:7); for as both the just and sinners assiduously pray to Mary, so both Angels and blessed ever look upon Mary.

Bitter sea. The sea is a general collection of waters, and is properly so called because its waters are bitter, as Isidore says. For Mary is interpreted "bitter sea," and as by a kind of presage she was so named; and if not on account of the bitter groan of penitence, which she who did not sin did not have, yet on account of the vehemence of sorrow which she had in the Son's passion, she obtained by lot the name of bitterness.

She is fittingly called bitter sea by reason of her state in the Son's passion, that is, "sea" and "very bitter," so that these two words, *mare* and *amarum*, may be referred to a double bitterness: for she was as it were a sea, that is, wholly bitter, for the sorrow of her Son, and very bitter for the blinding of her people. Whence the Apostle, Rom. 9:2: *I have a continual sorrow in my heart*, etc. Of this sea it is said prophetically, Eccles. 1:7: *All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea doth not overflow.* Sir. 40:11: *All the waters shall return into the sea*, etc. *(p. 26)* It is said, then, *all the rivers*, that is, all sweet waters, namely every kind of graces and all charisms, *run into the sea*, that is, into Mary; *and the sea*, that is, Mary, *doth not overflow*, that is, does not swell with pride, nor revolve upon itself in boasting, nor exceed its shore or limit of humility. For hearing from the Angel, *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, … the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:28, 35) — behold that all the rivers run into the sea. She answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38) — behold that the sea does not overflow. Whence that verse of her father David also fits her, Ps. 29:7: *I said in my abundance*, that is, in the fullness of my virtues, *I shall never be moved*, that is, I shall not swell with pride. And this is the truest humility, which is born of the fullness of virtues.

Mary is a bitter sea. On account of the fullness of the waters, that is, of the graces. Whence she is called full of grace. For in the sea there is neither bottom nor measure, nor did Mary receive grace according to the measure of others. Sir. 1:2: *Who hath measured the depth of the abyss?* This fullness is also weighed from this, that as rain into a fleece the Son of God came down into her (Ps. 71:6).

On account of the amplitude of the vessel. Whence it is said to Christ, Ps. 76:20: *Thy way is in the sea*, etc., *and thy footsteps shall not be known.* For through her, as through the sea, Christ came into the world, and through her, as through the sea, the true Israelites pass to the port of eternal happiness, the Egyptians being drowned, because she has destroyed all heresies. Or, the Egyptians being drowned, that is, demons and vices, in floods of tears, which proceed from the sea, that is, from the bitterness of the mind, reddened by the memory of sins.

On account of the multitude of bitternesses which she endured in the Son's passion. Whence she says to the Son what the Son says to the Father: *All thy heights and thy billows have passed over me* (Ps. 41:8), by compassion and interior bitterness. For, as blessed Bernard says: "She could not see her Son crucified without the affection of maternal sorrow, even though she hoped that he would rise again and overcome death."

Because it cannot be exhausted: for it receives all waters and sends out all waters, and always remains full, and therefore receives that it may send out. So Mary receives from God all the waters of graces, all the

fullness of all goods, that she may distribute them to us without diminution of her own fullness. And therefore to the place whence the rivers of benefits go forth, they return, that is, they ought to return by thanksgiving, that they may flow again to us (Eccles. 1:7).

Likewise, as the depth of the sea, so Mary's liberality cannot be exhausted; for she gives grace tirelessly and sufficiently to all, unless it stand in the way through their own fault, which grace she most easily found with God (Luke 1:30). And she is like a fleece or a sponge, whence it came down as rain into a fleece, which very readily draw water, and in great quantity, and give it back at the lightest pressure: so also Mary, the grace which she found with God.

Because her drops cannot be numbered; and the graces or mercies of Mary are innumerable. Sir. 1:2: *The sand of the sea, and the drops of rain, who hath numbered?* And this most of all since the Son of God came down into her like rain into a fleece.

Because her waters are salt, and when drunk kindle thirst the more. These waters are the graces which Mary distributes, which, when tasted, kindle the desire the more. Whence she herself says, Sir. 24:29: *They that drink me shall yet thirst.* Nor is it wonderful if salt kindles thirst, since she is that vessel of which Eliseus said, 4 Kings 2:20: *Bring me a new vessel, and put salt into it.* Salt in a new vessel: the wisdom of God in the *(p. 27)* virginal womb.

Chapter 3 (continued)

It is no wonder, then, if she who received such salt is wholly salty, like the sea; and therefore those who have once tasted her sweetness desire her the more, the more they drink.

Mary is also called the bitter sea, as Bede says, because by her grace and example she makes the sea, that is, the world, bitter to us, and turns all the delights of the world into bitterness for one who thinks faithfully of her, and causes worldly bitternesses to be reckoned sweet by those who imitate her. Deut. 33:19: *They shall suck the floods of the sea as milk*, namely the imitators of Mary. For the proper channel of this sea of Mary is holiness; and if she looked only to the saints, she would be shut up, as it were, in her own channel; but the Holy Spirit came upon her to make her overflow. She overflows, then, as one passing beyond her proper channel, since she, though without sin, nonetheless condescends to sinners, and by this overflowing feeds her own, as with milk. And these overflowings are those outpourings of paradise of which it is treated in Cant. 4:13.

She is called the bitter sea none the less because the world was bitter to her. Hence she is also understood by the rod of the nut tree (cf. Jer. 1:11). For in a nut the kernel has sweetness, the shell solidity, the husk bitterness. The kernel of this nut is Mary's spirit, sweet above honey; the solid shell is her body, whole, never battered by any delights; the outer husk is the world, whose riches she reckoned thorns, following the example of her Son, choosing poverty rather.

Again, she is the red sea, because through compassion she was reddened in the passion of her Son. Hence she is called Sulamitis, that is, "scarlet" (Cant. 6:12). In her and through her the spiritual Pharaoh, that is, the devil, [is overcome], since the Lord delivered Sisara into the hand of a woman (Judg. 4), with the whole army of vices; and by her merits, prayers, and examples the true Israelites cross from the Egypt of this world, first into the desert of penance, she pouring into them the grace of repentance, and into the land of promise through the Jordan, which is interpreted "humble descent," that is, through Mary herself, into whom the Son of God descended by the merit of her humility.

Again, Mary is designated by the molten sea, of which we read in 3 Kings 7:23 and 2 Par. 4:2, which in the building of the temple was set on the right side, toward the East and the South, that those entering the temple might wash in it, and not presume to enter the temple defiled. By this sea Mary is signified: molten through

piety, liquefied through love, bronze, that is, incorruptible, through her immunity from sin, resounding through divine praise and constancy of prayer. By a special affection of mercy she is the first of all the saints to meet those who wish to enter the Church; she pours into them the grace of inward bitterness and contrition and the sound of true confession; she leads them by her grace to the true East, that is, Christ her Son; she kindles them with the fervor of charity, which is designated by the South; and at last she brings them in to the right hand of eternal blessedness.

Chapter 4. Gratia plena

(p. 28) Full of grace. It is as if the Angel said to her: You are rightly called full of grace, because soon you will have in the womb one *full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). And again: well may she be called full of grace, because she has every grace whole, and nothing of its contrary.

For a threefold grace can be distinguished, with which Mary was filled before all creatures. There is the grace of natural goods: since the Holy Spirit came upon her, she alone among the daughters of Heva received the integrity of natural things according to the dignity of the first condition. Therefore it is said, Cant. 6:8: *One is she of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her.* There is the grace of spiritual gifts: since Christ was incarnate in her, she could sin no more. There is the grace of heavenly gifts: because she was given, in a certain way, the power of contemplating the fatherland. For as great as is the difference between the smell and the taste of an aromatic spice, so great is the difference between the contemplation of Mary and that of the other saints. For as she received from Christ a singular active grace, namely to carry his human nature, to nurse him, to wrap him in swaddling clothes, to cherish and feed him, and to render him the other offices of humanity, so also (to say what the devotion of my heart supplies) he granted his mother singularly to experience the sweetness of his divinity. Hence there is added to the fullness of grace: *The Lord is with thee.*

Again, Mary is called full of grace by reason of three principal virtues, namely virginity, charity, and humility, which made her fit to be filled with grace. For the grace of God, as blessed Bernard says, is a most pure balsam, and therefore requires a pure, solid, and deep vessel. And what is purer than Mary's virginity, who was a virgin before the birth, in the birth, and after the birth? What is more solid than her charity, with which she loved continually, perseveringly, with her whole heart, whole soul, and whole strength? What is deeper than her humility, who was the abyss of virtues? On account of these three it is said to her, Cant. 4:7: *Thou art all fair, O my love,* inwardly through humility, outwardly through virginity; *and there is not a spot in thee,* on account of perfect charity.

Full of grace. For how, when the whole fullness of grace had descended into her, would it have left anything empty in her? She was so completely filled with grace that nothing of guilt held any place in her; nothing of guilt was left at all, not even a thought. And note that it is said *full of grace,* not of graces, or with graces, as we read in Esther 15:17 that it was said to Assuerus: *Thy face is full of graces.* For it would not seem wonderful if she were said to be full of many graces, nor would it be so much to show her full of each one, perhaps of all taken together; but she is so full of graces that she is full of each of the graces. For example, she is so full of humility that no place was left in her for pride. Holy men do not have that fullness without pride, at least venial pride, sometimes occupying their heart, if only in thought; but it was a special privilege of the blessed Virgin Mary that not even the thought of any vice *(p. 29)* occupied her. Likewise she is so full of chastity that lust never occupied even her thought; in the saints it sometimes strives to claim loftier places for itself, and is not content with thought alone, but tries through first movements to break into the affection. So also she is so full of charity that envy, anger, or hatred did not occupy in her even the last or the smallest place. And so with each of the virtues. Rightly, therefore, is she called full of grace, whom grace filled so wholly that not even a venial fault could usurp any place in her flesh or soul, however small.

And well is she full of grace, who in heart and in body had received the whole fountain of grace; to whom the very fountain of grace, Christ the Lord, imparted so much of his immense fullness, which filled her

throughout, that he himself became a river of her fullness, who filled her mind even before her womb; and when he was born from the body, he did not depart from the soul. Therefore he himself says, Jer. 23:24: *I fill heaven and earth.* Heaven first, that is, Mary's soul; earth afterward, that is, her flesh and womb. Or heaven and earth, that is, the blessed Virgin: earth by nature, but heaven by grace. Therefore it is also said of her, Sir. 26:19: *A holy and shamefaced woman is grace upon grace.* Grace upon grace: for graces were set in her like jewels in their settings, while each grace filled her wholly and occupied her, and as it were claimed her for its own. The grace of the womb upon the grace of the heart, the grace of fruitfulness upon the grace of virginity. For filling grace was given to other women; but grace filled both her heart and her womb. Or, grace upon grace, that is, above every grace. For that she was made the Mother of God is above every grace. The grace, too, by which her body, as womb, was filled is more sublime than all the graces of Angels and of men. Again, grace upon grace, as if doubly gracious, who has won grace for herself and for us. Or, grace upon grace, that is, above all gracious women is the holy and shamefaced woman, namely the blessed Virgin, to whom was given the grace of virginity, and above this grace the grace of fruitfulness, which was most singular to her. Hence it is said to her: *Many daughters*, that is, angelic virtues and holy souls, *have gathered together riches* of graces, virtues, and merits; *thou hast surpassed them all* (Prov. 31:29).

Full of grace. And this is the first fullness, which, according to the order of history, we read of in the New Testament. For where *the fullness of time* came (Gal. 4:4), there came equally the time of fullness, and it brought a threefold fullness. The first of these is proper to the most blessed Virgin, of whom it is said here, full of grace. The second is proper to Christ as man, of whom John 1:14: *Full of grace and truth.* The third is common to all the saints, of whom we read, Acts 6:8: *Stephen, full of grace and fortitude*, etc.; Acts 9:36: *Tabitha, full of good works and almsdeeds.* The first of these fullnesses is of grace, the second of grace and truth, the third of faith and good work. The first fills the mind and the womb; the second, the affection and the intellect; the third fills the mind within and flows out without through action. The most blessed Virgin, then, was full of grace in mind and womb, because she had the fullness of graces in her mind, and had the Lord himself, the Lord of graces and virtues, in her womb. Christ, however, was full of grace and truth, in whom were *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3), because he himself is the power and wisdom of the Father (1 Cor. 1:24). The fullness of the saints is of faith and works, as the Gloss expounds on that text of Acts 6:8, *Stephen, full of grace and fortitude*. Gloss: *(p. 30)* In faith and works. But as for what is said of Tabitha, *full of good works and almsdeeds*: "good works" stands for interior good works through charity, and "almsdeeds" stands for exterior good works, through faith working by love.

Now the first of these fullnesses is as the fullness of a fountain, the second as of a river, the third as of a rivulet descending from the river. Of the first, Esther 10:6: *A little fountain which grew into a river, and was turned into a light and the sun, and overflowed into many waters*, etc. The blessed Virgin is called a fountain on account of the abundance of graces, little on account of the excellence of humility, and thereby she grew into a very great river when she bore Christ, who says, Sir. 24:41: *I, like the river Dioryx, and as an aqueduct, came out of paradise.* And from this river the fullness of the saints descends like a rivulet, because *of his fullness we all have received* (John 1:16); and Eccles. 1:7: *Unto the place from whence the rivers come, they return.* This place is Christ the Lord.

The first of these fullnesses excludes emptiness, the second denies partiality, the third implies overflow. The fullness of the saints, which is common, has overflow, because it fills the soul within and flows out without through action. Hence Acts 2:4: *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost*: behold the interior fullness; *and they began to speak*: behold the exterior overflow. The fullness of Christ denies partiality: for *God doth not give the Spirit by measure* (John 3:34). On this the Gloss: Not partially, nor by subdivisions, but universally and generally. Hence it is also said, Col. 1:19: *In him it hath well pleased [the Father] that all fullness*, namely of the divinity, *should dwell bodily.* But the fullness of the blessed Virgin excludes emptiness. For as long as a vessel can hold something more, so long it has something of emptiness. Hence every other creature

had something of emptiness, because it could receive a greater grace. But she was so completely full of grace that she could not have had greater grace unless she were united to the divinity itself, that is, unless she herself were God. This is the fullness of which the Angel here especially says: *Hail, full of grace.* It is so proper to the most blessed Virgin that even the Angel kept silent her proper name and put this in place, as it were, of her proper name, so that she might henceforth be called full of grace, as was said above.

Full of grace. Fullness is fourfold. The first is of sufficiency: this was in the Apostles, Acts 2:4: *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* The second is of great excellence: this was in Stephen, full of grace and fortitude. The third is of far greater excellence: this was in Mary, full of grace. The fourth is of the highest excellence: this was in Christ, Luke 4:1: *Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan.*

Sufficient grace is that which fills according to the fitness of the thing, as when it is said, "The church is full of people," not that no place is left empty there, but that those who are there suffice for the place, as fitness requires. Such a fullness of grace was in Stephen and the saints, not that they could not sin, since even the Apostles are commanded to shake the dust from their feet (Matt. 10:14; Mark 6:11), and 1 John 1:8: *If we say that we have no sin*, etc., and James 3:2: *In many things we all offend.* But they received a fullness of grace sufficient for salvation.

Filling to the full is when nothing empty is left in the thing filled, as in a measure of wine or oil. This was in the blessed Virgin before the conception of the Son of God, as was shown above, because in what is full throughout, nothing more is received. *(p. 31)* Overflowing is when the thing that fills exceeds the capacity of the vessel it fills. This fullness was in Christ, as was said above, and *of that fullness we have all received, and grace for grace* (John 1:16). And this same fullness of grace descended into the Virgin when she conceived the Word of God. Hence the fullness that fills to the full is indicated when it was said to her: *Hail, full of grace.* The overflowing fullness is indicated when there is immediately added: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*; *the Lord is with thee*, as a fountain ministering a fullness flowing out on every side. And a little after it was said, *full of grace*, there is added: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.* Therefore it seems the distinction can be made thus: she was full of grace as if level to the brim for herself, as if heaped up for our sake, who always receive from that fullness, unless it be hindered by us.

Again, full of grace. This fullness consists chiefly in two things, namely the fullness of dignity and of holiness. The fullness of dignity is considered in this, that she, virgin and mother, therefore compares herself to the cedar (cf. Sir. 24:17), which in height surpasses all trees; so does she surpass all men. The fullness of holiness is in this, that she is not only holy in herself, but can sanctify others and heal them of sin. Hence she compares herself to the cypress (ibid.), which is a medicinal tree.

Full of grace: toward God through humility, toward Angels through virginity, toward men through fruitfulness. Prov. 11:16: *A gracious woman*, that is, Mary full of grace, *shall find glory*, namely that of which Prov. 10:1: *A wise son maketh the father glad.* Blessed Bernard: "This is the singular glory of our Virgin and the excellent prerogative of Mary, that she merited to have one and the same Son in common with God the Father." But in that it is said *full of grace*, interior grace is designated, not exterior; for exterior grace is deceitful and vain, such as beauty of body, nobility of birth, and the like. Prov. 31:30: *Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain*, etc. This fullness of grace in the blessed Virgin was the extinction of the tinder of sin, the knowledge of truth, the love of virtue. The first is flight from vices and prepares the soul; the second perfects the intellect; the third completes the affection. Therefore she is full of grace more than Stephen, less than Christ; the Virgin Mary stands, then, in the middle. Hence she says, Sir. 24:25: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth.* This she shares with Christ. *In me is all hope of life and of virtue.* This she shares with Stephen. Stephen was full with a fitting fullness; Christ with a heaped fullness; Mary with an equal fullness. The first suffices, the second flows out, the third is perfect.

Again, this fullness of grace is referred to the four cardinal virtues, than which nothing is better in life (Wisd. 8:7). We find each of them to have been eminent in her. From temperance she had chastity of flesh, modesty of speech, cleanness of heart. From prudence she kept silence when troubled, understood what she heard, answered wisely to what was proposed. From justice she rendered to all what she owed. To those hard of heart she conformed to custom in her betrothal, in the circumcision of her Son, in the legal purification. To the afflicted she showed compassion (John 2:3: *Son, they have no wine*). To the holy she rendered communion, for she was with the women and the disciples *persevering in prayer* (Acts 1:14). From fortitude she took up the purpose of virginity, held to it when taken up, and gave faith to so immense a matter: *Be it done to me*, she said, *according to thy word* (Luke 1:38). These are the twelve stars in the crown of the woman of whom it is said, Apoc. 12:1: *(p. 32) A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.*

Blessed Bernard, however, says that these twelve stars are the twelve prerogatives of the Virgin, on account of which she is also called full of grace. Four belong to heaven, four to the flesh, four to the heart. For there shone forth, as stars from heaven, Mary's generation, the angelic salutation, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the ineffable conception of the Son of God. Four shone forth in the flesh: that she was the foremost in virginity, fruitful without corruption, with child without burden, a mother in childbirth without pain. Four shone forth in the heart: the meekness of modesty, the devotion of humility, the greatness of soul in believing, the martyrdom of the heart. On account of the first it is said: *The Lord is with thee.* On account of the second: *Blessed art thou among women.* On account of the third: *Full of grace.* On account of all it is said, Prov. 31:29: *Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all.*

Full of grace. Master Hugh of St Victor, to Mary: "Therefore she is full of grace, from whom the fountain of grace arose. And therefore, gracious Virgin, all that is ours is in a certain way from you, because it is ours through him who was born of you. Full of grace, so full that from your overflowing the whole world may draw. For if the prudent virgins took oil in their vessels with their lamps (Matt. 25:4), you, most prudent Virgin and Virgin of virgins, had not one vessel only filled with the oil of grace, with which you fed your lamp burning unquenchably; you tasted another vessel, overflowing and unfailing, from whose poured-out oil of mercy you might light the lamps of all, and fill the vessels of all to the top and to perfection, and diminish nothing in it. Prudent, therefore, you were, to provide for yourself, and not fearful of helping others. Nor did you say, *Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you* (Matt. 25:9); but knowing that it would suffice for you and for us, you kept enough and gave enough. The light was in the lamp: in the flesh, virginity. The oil was in the vessel: in the heart, humility. And there was another vessel, the humanity of the Word in your womb, full of grace; from whose fullness you also received both the light of virginity in the flesh and the oil of humility in the heart. Afterward, by an unviolated childbirth offering him to us, you gave him unfailing, that from his fullness there might be poured out that by which both our lamps, put out, might be lit again, and empty vessels be filled. So you were full of grace when from the earth of your flesh the fountain of grace burst forth, to flow over all the earth, and water the dry ground, and make the barren fruitful."

It was fitting that she be full of grace, through whom, as through a certain channel, divine grace overflowed to the whole human race. If, therefore, O faithful soul, grace should fail you, you must flee and run to the very fullness of grace. Do not say, "If something flows away from that fullness, the fullness will be diminished." Far from it. For this fullness is of such a nature that the more flows out of it, the more it will abound; as is plain from love. For the more you love someone, the more of your love will flow into the one you love; and the more you love, the greater the love in which you will abound. You see, then, that the very fountain of love grows by its own flowing, so that by flowing out it is increased, while by its retention it dries up and suffers loss. Hold back your love, that it not flow into another: now you have no love; now the fountain of love has dried up in you. Therefore she is also called the fountain of gardens, the well of living

waters, which run with a strong stream from Libanus (Cant. 4:15). If, then, your heart is dry, if it needs to be watered, *(p. 33)* run to the fountain of gardens, which waters all gardens; run to the well of living waters; and do not fear the labor of drawing, for they run with a strong stream on account of their liveliness and fruitfulness. Sir. 40:16: *Above every water is greenness*, etc. For the heart cannot fail to live that is near this fountain and this well. It cannot dry up; it cannot be burned up by the fire of the passions. Since, therefore, grace is given freely, otherwise grace would no longer be grace, run to her who is full of grace, who gives to all abundantly, to whom it is a joy to give; otherwise she would not be generous.

Full of grace. Blessed Bernard: "Full for herself, to us more than full and overflowing, of whose fullness we all receive, grace for grace: the grace of the Son for the grace of the mother, the grace of example for the grace of teaching, the grace of forgiveness for the grace of intercession. O Mary, rich toward all and above all, from whose substance a part taken up sufficed to pay the debts of the whole world! A great abundance of riches remained for her own uses, of which the taking up could redeem and restore all things. And *of her fullness we have all received*, say all rational creatures."

Chapter 4 (continued)

Full of grace: level to the brim for herself, heaped up for our sake, who all receive from that fullness. From this fullness there comes to us the price of redemption, the water of washing, the bread of refreshment, the medicine of healing, the armor of battle, the reward of recompense.

The price of redemption. For she was the purse in which were all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden (Col. 2:3), which the Lord took with him at the assumption of his mother, to return on the day of the full moon (Prov. 7:20), that is, at the consummation of the Church. Of this price, Prov. 31:10: *From afar and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her*, that is, of the finder, says the Gloss. From the uttermost coasts, that is, from the lowest humility of the blessed Virgin. Or, from the uttermost coasts, that is, from the conjunction of God and man, who are the two uttermost ends. Wisd. 8:1: *She reacheth from end to end*, etc. This price was sent to us by the incarnation, and paid on the same day: for Christ was conceived and suffered on the same day, thirty-three years having passed. But the Jews thought to reject this price. For although this price was the best gold of the land of Evilath, that is, of the blessed Virgin (look under the title that Mary is called land), they did not recognize this gold, because they did not believe him to be God, but reckoned him copper, and took the heavenly honey to be gall. Hence in every way that money is tested, they tested him: they examined him in the fire, but found nothing of dross. Hence the Son to the Father: *Thou hast tried me by fire* (by the ministry of those who crucified him), *and iniquity hath not been found in me* (Ps. 16:3). Again, they counted him; hence he says: *They have numbered all my bones* (Ps. 21:18). Nor was this enough, but they even weighed him in the balance of the cross. Hence of her it is sung: "The balance made of the body," etc. And again: "Thou alone wast worthy to bear the price of the world."

The water of washing. For she is the fountain, Zach. 13:1: *In that day there shall be a fountain open.* Cant. 4:15: *The fountain of gardens, the well of living waters.* She is a fountain with regard to the common benefits which she bestows on all, a well with regard to the deep and spiritual devotions which she ministers to her own special ones. She is also a cistern, in so far as refreshment flows from her to sinners. This is the cistern of Bethlehem by the gate (cf. 2 Kings 23:15), because she wishes, as far as in her lies, to *(p. 34)* satisfy all who pass by. Hence she cries out: *Come over to me, all ye*, etc. (Sir. 24:26). The water of this cistern is Christ the Lord, who is *the fountain of water springing up into life everlasting* (John 4:14). David longed for this water, that is, the Jewish people, crying: *Our soul is as earth without water* (Ps. 142:6); and in 2 Kings 23:15: *O that some man would give me a drink of the water of the cistern*, etc. Isa. 41:17: *The needy and the poor seek for waters.* But the Lord gave Moses and Aaron counsel what to do, Num. 20:8: *Speak*, he says, *to the rock*, that is, to the blessed Virgin, hard against tribulation, weighty against instability; *and she will give*, namely to you, *waters.* Then the Lord opened to him a treasure, a fountain of living water, from the cistern of

Bethlehem. Two strong men brought this water, namely faith and charity: faith, strong, which removes mountains, and through which the saints conquered kingdoms; charity, *strong as death* (Cant. 8:6). And what did David, that is, the Jew, do with this water? He did not drink it, because he did not believe; but he poured it out as a libation to the Lord on the cross. Yet that libation of theirs was certainly our washing. For he washed us from our sins in his blood (Apoc. 1:5), with which water came forth.

This fountain of life was also signified in Gen. 2:10, where we read that a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise, which from there is divided into four heads. These four heads are the four benefits from which all the others are derived, namely the benefit of creation, of re-creation, of justification, and of glorification. And rightly are these benefits called rivers, because they have conferred on us the four things that great rivers are accustomed to confer on the cities and towns which they flow past. For a river brings in what is necessary, carries away what is superfluous, washes away filth, and quenches thirst. The benefit of creation, then, brought us all that is necessary, as is plain throughout Genesis 1. The benefit of re-creation carried away all that is superfluous, namely original and actual sins; for then he was the scapegoat, who bore the sins of the people into the desert (Lev. 16:21). The benefit of justification took away all our uncleanness. Hence Ps. 50:4: *Wash me yet more,* etc. But the benefit of glorification will quench all thirst: until then our soul will thirst for God, the living fountain (Ps. 41:3), nor will this thirst be quenched in the present life, because *the eye is not filled with seeing* (Eccles. 1:8); but it will be satisfied *when his glory shall appear* (Ps. 16:15), when he shall make us drink of the torrent of his pleasure (Ps. 35:9).

The bread of refreshment. For she is the ship of the merchant, bringing her bread from afar (Prov. 31:14). From afar, because he is the living bread that came down from heaven (John 6:51). To which the Virgin invites us, Prov. 9:5: *Come,* she says, *eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you.* For God the Trinity mingled the water of humanity with the wine of divinity when he united human nature to the divine; and the blessed Virgin mingled it when she believed the union and consented to it. This bread, likewise, she made for us; for she is Sara, who mixed three measures of flour (Gen. 18:6): the divinity, the soul, and the flesh. The leaven in this making was the faith of the Virgin; for the bread was kneaded in the incarnation, baked in the oven of the virginal womb by the fire of the Holy Spirit or of Mary's charity, but broken in the passion, when *he sent his crystal,* that is, his most radiant soul, to the limbo, *like morsels* (Ps. 147:17), that is, like a piece of bread divided from the bread, that is, from the body which lay in the tomb. *(p. 35)* This is the bread that the little ones asked for (Lam. 4:4); and Isa. 58:7: *Break thy bread to the hungry,* that is, allow thy soul and body to be separated from each other on the cross, for the refreshment of the famished.

Otherwise, Gen. 18:6: *Abraham made haste into the tent to Sara, and said to her: Make haste, temper together three measures of flour, and make cakes upon the hearth,* etc. Sara is the blessed Virgin. Abraham is the Son of God, who made haste to her at the Annunciation. Hence Cant. 2:8: *Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains,* etc. For he is called the Angel of great counsel, and the motion of Angels is hasty and sudden. By the tent the virginal womb is denoted. *And he said to her: Make haste,* by giving the reply of your consent. Hence blessed Bernard to Mary: "As greatly as the king desired your beauty, so greatly does he desire the assent of your reply," etc. *Temper together three measures of flour.* By those three measures are understood the three things that come together in the person of Christ, namely the Word, the soul, and the flesh. For as in that supreme Trinity there is a trinity of persons and a unity of essence, so in this second trinity there is a trinity of substances and a unity of person. And as the trinity of persons does not split the unity of essence, nor the unity of essence diminish the plurality of persons, so here neither does the plurality of substances divide the unity of the person, nor the unity of the person cut away the plurality of substances. These three measures are called of fine flour on account of the purity of each; for the whiteness of fine flour signifies purity. Of the purity of the Word it is said, Wisd. 7:26: *He is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror.* Of the purity of the soul it is said, 1 Pet. 2:22: *Who did no sin,* etc. Of the purity of the flesh

both the divinity of the Father and the virginity of the mother bear witness. There follows: *And make cakes upon the hearth.* By bread the flesh of Christ is signified, which is truly food (John 6:56). But it is said "cakes," in the plural, because there the refreshment is manifold. The ashes signify our mortality, under which ashes this bread was baked in the oven of the virginal womb, as by the fire of virginal charity, and finally was as if baked again in the heat of the passion, so as to be like twice-baked bread, which suits those who are making their way toward the heavenly Jerusalem. The leaven of this bread is the faith of the Virgin. Hence blessed Bernard: "Happy the woman who, according to the voice of the Gospel, having taken three measures of flour, put in the leaven of faith, until the whole was leavened, that is, until whatever is preached of God should be preached of man."

The medicine of healing. Sir. 38:4: *The Most High hath created medicines out of the earth,* that is, out of the earth of the virginal flesh, the body of Christ. Sir. 43:24: *The remedy of all is the speedy coming of a cloud.* (See the title on the garden, § 8, where the garden is called misty.) This medicine flows to us from the fullness of Mary. Hence Christ says, Sir. 24:41: *I, like the river Dioryx,* which is interpreted "medicine of generation," because he himself heals all our infirmities; *and as an aqueduct I came out of paradise,* that is, out of the Virgin's womb.

The arms of battle. But what fitness have arms for medicine? Mary is designated by the house of the forest of Lebanon (3 Kings 7:2), which was divided into two parts, as the Master says in the *Histories*. One part was called the spice-store, which contained the spices and aromatics for the use of the temple and the royal house. The other part was the armory, containing arms for the king's defense and the adornment of the house. This house signified Mary. Libanus is interpreted "whiteness" or "whitening"; this is the Virgin, all white within and without, whom Solomon made, because wisdom, that is, Christ, *built herself a house* (Prov. 9:1). And this *(p. 36)* house contained the medicine against the diseases of sins, that is, Christ, and the arms against the world and the devil, namely the virtues, humility, and the like. In this house also were the golden shields which Solomon made, designating that shield which David asked for, saying, Ps. 34:2: *Take hold of arms and shield.* Which the Lord also did, saying, *I will pass into the place of the wonderful tabernacle* (Ps. 41:5), that is, I will be incarnate in the blessed Virgin, where he took the shield of good will, that is, the flesh, in which he showed us his good will toward us. Hence he says notably: *Thou hast crowned us* (Ps. 5:13). For this is the highest dignity of man in relation to other creatures, that he sees God bearing his shield. This shield was pierced in the battle of the passion in five places.

The reward of recompense we shall at last receive from this fullness, for the reward is children, the fruit of the womb. (You will find this below, under the title *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb*.)

Chapter 5. Dominus tecum

The Lord is with thee. After it was said *full of grace,* there is added: *The Lord is with thee,* whereby a singular grace is assigned. For the Lord is with the holy Angels through grace; with holy men not only through grace but also through nature, so that man can say, Emmanuel, that is, God with us, namely a companion by nature; which the Angel cannot say. For, as it is said in Hebrews 2:16, *Nowhere doth he take hold of Angels,* because he did not unite the angelic nature to himself, but *the seed of Abraham* he took: the human nature. With the blessed Virgin, however, he was not only through grace and nature, but also through a portion of her flesh assumed without the admixture of male seed, so that it is said to her: *The Lord is with thee,* the fellowship of a carnal father being excluded. Hence it is also said, Ezek. 34:27: *The earth shall yield her increase.* (Look under the title on the earth.)

Again, *The Lord is with thee* far more excellently than with the other saints, with whom he is spiritually only, in the heart; but with thee he is both spiritually in the heart and bodily in the womb.

Again, what is said, *The Lord is with thee*, refers to Mary's charity, because *God is charity: and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him* (1 John 4:16).

The Lord is with thee. Blessed Bernard: "He did not say, The Lord is in thee, but The Lord is with thee. For God, who is everywhere equally whole by his simple substance, is nevertheless otherwise in rational creatures than in the rest, and otherwise in the good among them than in the wicked, by way of his efficacy. He is so in irrational creatures that he is not grasped by them. By all rational creatures, indeed, he can be grasped through knowledge, but by the good alone is he grasped also through love. *(p. 37)* In the good alone, therefore, he is so as even to be with them, on account of concord of will. For when they so subject their wills to justice that it does not misbecome God to will what they will, by the very fact that they do not dissent from his will they join God to themselves in a special way. But though it is so with all the saints, it is so specially with Mary, with whom there was such consent that he joined to himself not only her will but also her flesh; as if from his own substance and the Virgin's he made one Christ, or rather one Christ was made, who, though neither wholly from God nor wholly from the Virgin, was nevertheless wholly God's and wholly the Virgin's: not two sons, but one son of both. He says therefore: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.* Hence in Psalm 109:3: *With thee is the principality*, that is, the Son of God, who says, John 8:25: *I am the beginning, who also speak unto you.* There follows: *in the day of thy strength*, namely on that day on which by divine power you conceived. And not only is the Lord the Son with thee, whom you clothe with your flesh, but also the Lord the Holy Spirit, of whom you conceive, and the Lord the Father, who begot him whom you conceive. The Father, I say, is with thee, who makes his Son also yours. The Son is with thee, who, to establish in thee a wonderful sacrament, in a wonderful way both opens for himself the secret place of generation and preserves for thee the virginal seal. The Holy Spirit is with thee, who with the Father and the Son sanctifies thy womb." So far blessed Bernard.

The Lord is with thee. In these words a divine fellowship with Mary is noted, which Mary likewise had with the supreme Creator. For there is a threefold fellowship: one carnal, of bride with bridegroom; another natural, of mother with son; a third spiritual, of creature with God. The first is great, because there are two in one flesh. The second is greater, because there are two from one flesh, for the flesh of the mother and the flesh of the son is one flesh. The third is greatest, because *he who adheres to God is one spirit with him*, 1 Cor. 6:17: *He who is joined to the Lord is one*, etc., as above, and this through grace. And Mary was called full of grace; and she found grace with God; and *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.* And on account of this vehement union of herself with divine wisdom through grace she herself says, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me*, etc., as above. Rightly, therefore, the fellowship of the blessed Virgin with God is the highest, which embraces all of these.

This can be distinguished otherwise, by saying that there are four unions which most of all make one, and that all of these were between Mary and divine wisdom. The first is of God with the soul, and is spiritual: of which 1 Cor. 6:17: *He who is joined to the Lord*, etc. The second is personal, and is of the Word or divine wisdom with the body: for although divine wisdom was not joined to Mary in unity of person, nevertheless divine wisdom associated to itself a portion of her flesh in unity of person, when that was fulfilled: *Rich and poor together* (Ps. 48:3). The third union is natural, namely of tree with fruit, of mother with son: for she was the tree, Christ the fruit. The fourth is sacramental, and is by marriage between the divine nature and the human, and this in the womb of the Virgin. For marriage consists in two things: in mutual consent, which was there when the Virgin answered, *Be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38); and in the joining of natures, which was there when the Word was made flesh. And then the blessed Virgin and divine wisdom were one spirit and one flesh. For if Heva is said to be one flesh with Adam, because she was formed from his rib, yet was drawn out from him and was in no way nourished by him, much better will the flesh of Christ be said to be one with the flesh of the blessed Virgin, because it was drawn not from the rib but from the inmost viscera, *(p. 38)* indeed from the purest blood of the Virgin, as Damascene says, and was nourished not

outside but within her glorious viscera for nine months. Therefore it is said, 1 Cor. 6:16, and Gen. 2:24: *They shall be two*, that is, Christ and Mary, *in one flesh*, the virginal flesh. On account of this fittingness and manifold union between Mary and divine wisdom, almost all that is said of divine wisdom can be expounded of Mary, and the same things are attributed to her. And perhaps on this account it was said to her: *The Lord is with thee.*

The Lord is with thee. For the Lord was with her in three ways, namely as Lord with handmaid, as bridegroom with bride, and as son with a most beloved mother. As bridegroom with bride: for if virgins are the brides of the Lamb, how is not the Virgin of virgins the bride of brides? She is rightly called Virgin of virgins, who first consecrated and vowed virginity without any precept, counsel, or example. In praise of other virgins it is said that *they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth* (Apoc. 14:4); but of her it can be said with assurance that the Lamb followed her wherever she went. Hence Luke 2:51: *He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.* Again, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me, and I to him who feedeth among the lilies.* In the same book, 6:2: *I to my beloved, and my beloved to me, who feedeth among the lilies.*

The Lord was also with her as a son with a most beloved mother. Hence it is said here specially: *The Lord is with thee.* For from this his name was called Emmanuel, that is, God with us: because from this union of God and our Lady Christ was made the son of human nature, made our flesh and our brother, made the bridegroom of the Church; of which nuptials, John 2:1: *There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there.* Cana is interpreted “zeal”; Galilee, “migration.” In Cana of Galilee, therefore, that is, in a charity that was, as it were, immoderate, he made the divine nature migrate to the human. Again, these nuptials were prefigured in the nuptials of Esther and Assuerus, of which it is said, Esther 2:18, that Assuerus, whose name is interpreted “blessedness” and who signifies Christ, made a most magnificent banquet, that is, inestimable spiritual joy, for the union and nuptials of Esther, that is, of human nature, formerly hidden from God by sin, but now raised above every creature in Christ the Lord himself in the unity of person. Hence in Psalm 64:5: *Blessed is he whom thou hast chosen and taken to thee: he shall dwell in thy courts*, that is, he shall share with thee in thy properties. For Esther is interpreted “hidden” or “raised up among the peoples.”

The Lord was also with her as lord with handmaid. For if *blessed is the people whose God is the Lord*, how is she not most blessed whose lord is her son? In many other ways also, and in many places and deeds, the Lord was with her. For he was with her in exile. Matt. 2:13: *Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt.* And therefore certainly she is now with him in the Son and in the kingdom. Hence Ps. 44:10: *The queen stood*, etc., for *if we suffer, we shall also reign with him* (2 Tim. 2:12).

Lastly, the Lord was with her, and she with the Lord, in the same work of our redemption. The Mother of mercy helped the Father of mercies in the work of our salvation. Hence it was foretold, Gen. 2:18, of the first woman: *It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help*, etc. For that literal Heva was not a help to her husband, but rather a destroyer; this woman, however, was a help, because *the Lord delivered Sisara*, that is, the devil, *into the hand of a woman* (cf. Judg. 4–5); and one Hebrew woman wrought confusion in the house of Nabuchodonosor (Judith 14:16). (Look under the title that Mary is a woman.) *(p. 39)* What then is it that the Lord says, Isa. 63:3: *I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me*? It is true, Lord, that there is not a man with thee; but one woman is with thee, who received in her heart all the wounds which thou didst receive in thy body. And as the soldier’s lance pierced thy side, so the sword of her sorrow passed through her soul. And as thou didst endure not what thou wouldst, but what thy Father willed, as thou hadst foretold, John 6:38: *I came down from heaven, not to do my own will*, etc., so she endured with thee not what she herself willed, but what thou didst will. For as thou didst thirst on the cross for the salvation of the human race, so did she also thirst: for she stood by the cross, as Ambrose says, not to consider the sorrow of her Son, but to await the salvation of the human race. Thus it is plain that in all things

the Lord was with her, and she with the Lord.

The Lord is with thee. Cant. 2:8: *Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills.* The mountains or hills are the Angels. Christ, then, leaped upon the mountains, that is, among the Angels, and as one of them was sent for our salvation; for they are all *ministering spirits* (Heb. 1:14). He skipped over the hills, that is, he surpassed the lesser Angels in the alacrity and humility of ministering, who had come not only to minister, but also to give his life a redemption for many; which none of the Angels did. Finally he skipped over Gabriel and came to the Virgin before him, the Angel himself also bearing witness, who said: *The Lord is with thee.* Nor did he say, "My Lord is coming; prepare lodging for him," as other forerunners are accustomed to say; but finding the lodging prepared and the Lord having come before him, he said: *The Lord is with thee*, because he whom he had just left in heaven he found with her. Blessed Bernard: "You are conquered, O Archangel; he has leaped over you who sent you ahead."

Otherwise, Cant. 2:8: *Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills.* The mountains are the Patriarchs and Prophets. His leaps are these: Abraham begot Isaac, behold one leap; Isaac begot Jacob, behold the second leap; Jacob begot Judas, behold the third leap; and so on with the others. At last he made a great leap, when it is said: *Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ* (Matt. 1:16). And so he comes leaping upon the mountains, that is, the Patriarchs and Prophets; but he skipped over the hills, that is, the Angels, *whom he nowhere taketh hold of* (Heb. 2:16). And note that in each leap he left some footprint, as is the custom of those who leap: in Abraham, faith; in Isaac, hope; in Jacob, charity; in David, humility; and so with the others.

Mary assigns the cause of this so great haste, Cant. 1:11, saying: *While the king was at his repose, my spikenard sent forth the odor thereof.* These are the words of blessed Mary concerning her humility, which poured out her devotion, ascending even to the heavens, and bending down to the earth the Son of God, *who dwelleth on high and looketh down on the lowly.* She does not say cedar, or cypress, or any tall tree, which designate the other virtues, but nard, that is, humility. She says, therefore: *While the king*, that is, Christ, who rules all things, *was at his repose*, that is, while the Son was still in the bosom of the Father, not yet made visible. Or, *in his repose*, that is, in the lofty dwelling of the heavens. And note that she names a king, not a bridegroom, because the nuptials had not yet been celebrated in Cana of Galilee, that is, in Mary's womb. *My nard*, that is, the devotion of my humility, *sent forth its odor*, that is, pleased the Most High, whose sweet odor not only perfumed the world round about, but *(p. 40)* also sprinkled the whole city above, reaching even to the nostrils of the Lord, and to him who in the bosom of the Father had long awaited and desired this odor, because he could not find such an odor in any of the Angels.

Chapter 5 (continued)

For it is more praiseworthy to lead an angelic life in frail flesh than to be an Angel, as Jerome says. Or, *gave forth its odor*, that is, a chief odor, even to the couch of the paternal throne. The odor of this nard was her humble virginity and virginal humility; by this most sweet odor she both enticed the Son of God and wholly ravished him, and, enticed and wholly ravished, he leaped from the bosom of the Father into the womb of the mother, and *his going out was from the highest heaven* (Ps. 18:7); for, as it is said in Wisd. 18:15, *Thy almighty word, O Lord, leaped down from heaven from thy royal throne.* Finding not only in her womb the odor of virginity, but also in her mind the odor of humility, and mingling with these odors the odor of his divinity, he made of a handmaid a bride, and of a creature a mother. So surely did Mary's humility draw the King of heaven to earth, and, as an eagle enticed by the scent of a coveted prey, join him to her most immaculate flesh; the smoke of aromatics, that is, of her virtues, ascending in the sight of the glory of the great God, she *found grace before the eyes of the Lord*, while those standing round about cried out: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices*, etc. (Cant. 3:6). And at once the King, going out from his holy place, and leaping forth from the lofty dwelling of the heavens, *rejoiced as a*

giant to run the way, and flying with excessive desire, outran his messenger to the Virgin whom he had chosen, whom he had loved, whose beauty he had desired; and like a most gentle unicorn he received himself into the Virgin's lap, laying aside the fierceness of wrath which, because of the sin of our first parents, he had until then held toward the human race. Seeing him coming from afar, the Church, rejoicing and exulting, says: *Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains*, etc., as above. Therefore it is said: *The Lord is with thee.*

Again, of this drawing it is said, Job 28:18: *Wisdom is drawn out of secret places.* For wisdom, which is the Son of God, was drawn from the bosom of the Father, that is, from those secret places to which no creature had access, as by certain cords: the inmost desires, tears, and sighs of the ancient saints. Hence Moses said, Exod. 4:13: *I beseech thee, Lord, send whom thou wilt send.* And David, Ps. 143:7: *Put forth thy hand from on high*, etc. And Isa. 64:1: *O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down.* But Mary, who loved more, sighed more deeply, desired more vehemently, and she herself drew more strongly, saying: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. 1:1). Therefore it was said to her: *Fear not, Mary; thou hast found* what thou didst seek. I do not say, however, that she dared to ask that the Son of God be incarnate in her.

Again, *The Lord is with thee.* This is said in the way it is commonly said that a greater person eats with a lesser one, at whose lodging he turns aside, to take food with him. So the Son of God in his incarnation turned aside to the lodging of the virginal womb; whence, taking flesh, he was nursed at virginal breasts, and fed with bodily food by virginal hands. Isa. 7:15: *He shall eat butter and honey.* Again, Cant. 5:10: *My beloved is white and ruddy, … who feedeth among the lilies.* On this blessed Bernard says: "Mary's hands are certain most white lilies, nor will that lover of lilies complain that he was not found among the lilies, whatever it be that he shall find among Mary's hands."

The Lord is with thee. In these two words the dignity of Mary and her dominion over her Son are noted. For although it is said of all the other saints, and it is a great thing for them to be with the Lord (hence Henoch is said to have walked with God, Gen. 5:22, which those do who obey his will in all things), Mary obtained something greater than the other holy men: that not only was she herself subject to the will of the Lord, but the Lord also to her will, so that by this it might rightly be said that the Lord is with her. *(p. 41)* Blessed Bernard: "Does not Mary boldly call him her son, the God and Lord of Angels, saying, *Son, why hast thou done so to us?* (Luke 2:48). Which of the Angels would dare this? It suffices them, and they hold it a great thing, that, though they are spirits by condition, they were made and called Angels by grace, as David testifies: *Who makest thy angels spirits* (Ps. 103:4). But Mary, acknowledging herself a mother, calls with confidence her son that majesty whom they serve with reverence. Nor does he disdain to be called what he deigned to be. For a little after, the Evangelist adds: *And he was subject to them* (Luke 2:51). Who? To whom? God to men. God, I say, to whom the Angels are subject, whom principalities and powers obey, was subject to Mary. And not to Mary only, but also to Joseph for Mary's sake. And therefore at his mother's intercession he put off until the age of thirty the business which he had already begun at twelve. Hence Cant. 8:5: *Leaning upon her beloved*, as though above the beloved. Again, Cant. 2:16, she herself says: *My beloved to me*, subject, namely, and obedient, as a son to a mother; *and I to him*, obedient and compliant, as a daughter to a father, as a handmaid to a lord, as a creature to the Creator."

Again, against this it was said to Heva, by the merit of her transgression: *Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee* (Gen. 3:16); it was said to Mary: *The Lord is with thee*, by the merit of the grace she found. To this it also contributes that Solomon's throne is said to have had a footstool. (Look under "throne.")

Again, Master Hugh of St Victor on John 2:3: *The wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine.* She did not say, "I ask," that thou mayest supply the defect of the cup by believing or by changing; but she judged that this privilege was owed to maternal reverence, that whatever she signified even by a hint,

she ought not to suffer a rebuff from her Son. And this indeed would have been just, if she had asked of him something that he could do according to the nature which he had received from her; but now he is, in a way, justly reproved, because she demanded obedience in a miracle from the nature which he had not given. And it is said to her: *What is that to me and to thee, woman?* (John 2:4). For to work a miracle is the power of God, not of man; and therefore when Christ as man is asked a miracle by his mother, he accuses the woman, not the mother, of presumption, not as man but as God. For Mary ought to ask a miracle of Christ not as a mother demanding of a son, but as a woman humbly petitioning God, if need had been.

The Lord is with thee. You, therefore, who seek the Savior, seek him with her. Hence it is said of the Magi, Matt. 2:11: *They found the child with Mary his mother,* etc., that he might be shown to us as always to be sought with her. The Lord is also frequently said in Scripture to be with those whom he is ready to help, and whose vows and desires he is ready to fulfil. Hence Ezek. 3:14: *The hand of the Lord was with me, strengthening me.* And of John the Baptist: *For the hand of the Lord was with him* (Luke 1:66). Matt. 28:20: *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.* Implore, therefore, the blessed Virgin in all thy prayers, *(p. 42)* and do not despair or distrust her power to help; for the Lord is with her, and therefore as often as she wishes to help thee, God is with her, that she may also be able.

The Lord is with thee. Whoever lacks this one companion, however great a crowd of men he may have with him, woe to him. Eccles. 4:10: *Woe to him that is alone,* for when he shall fall he hath none to lift him up. For this one alone is the companion who can lift up the fallen.

Chapter 6. Benedicta tu in mulieribus

Blessed art thou among women, or in women. Blessed, that is, praised by the mouth of all the faithful. Since it is said, Sir. 25:26, *Short is all malice over the malice of a woman,* it is the more glorious, the more rarely any woman is found blessed among women.

It is said, therefore: *Blessed art thou,* etc. And note that the "thou" marks a distinction and an exclusion, because in Mary alone is blessedness found simply, with nothing of the curse of mother or of virgin. Hence also it was fittingly said to her: *Ave,* that is, without the woe of a double curse. For cursed is the barren woman who does not bear, namely the virgin; and cursed she who bears, namely the mother, since she bears in sorrow. Mary, however, is truly blessed, having the blessing of fruitfulness in conception and the blessing of joy in childbirth, the curse both of sorrow and of barrenness being excluded from her.

Again, after it was said to her *Ave,* there is added: *Full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.* And these three correspond to Mary's three principal virtues. *Full of grace,* by the merit of humility, by which she was, as it were, empty, and therefore merited to be filled, especially since she was clean; for humility was the companion of virginity. For humility is the sense of one's own emptiness, as Augustine says; and the true Eliseus fills empty vessels with the oil of grace (cf. 4 Kings 4:3 ff.), and therefore Mary, who presented an empty vessel, merited to carry it away full. James 4:6: *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. The Lord is with thee,* by the merit of solitude, which she supremely loved. Hence she was found alone by the Angel in the chamber when he entered to her. *Blessed art thou,* by the merit of virginity, whose vow she was the first to make, and for love of which she despised the curse of the law. For the Lord fills the empty, and accompanies the solitary. To those who for love of him despise the curses of men, he gives a blessing in place of the curse. Hence Ps. 108:28: *They will curse,* namely the lovers of the world, *him,* that is, the just man; *and thou, Lord, wilt bless.* On the contrary, he will empty the full. Job 20:15: *The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly.* Those accompanied by crowds he will make solitary. Hence it is said to proud Lucifer, Isa. 14:19–20: *Thou shalt be as a rotten carcass. Thou shalt not have fellowship, neither with them in burial.* Those who seek to be blessed by men he will curse. Luke 6:26: *Woe to you when men shall bless you,* etc.

(p. 43) Against these three, David chose for himself solitude, emptiness, and cursing. Hence he pleads, Ps. 24:16: *Look upon me, and have mercy on me, for I am alone* (that is, solitary) *and poor* (that is, empty). "Poor" is said as if "having little in the pouch." And he chooses to be cursed, 2 Kings 16:11–12, saying of Semei: *Let him alone that he may curse me … that perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction, and the Lord render me good for this day's cursing.* As if he said to the Lord: Accompany the solitary, fill the empty, bless the cursed. And in these three Mary is proved the true daughter of David.

In these three, moreover, three things are set before us to emulate, according to our measure, that we may merit to obtain these three things from the Lord. Humility, that we may be filled with grace, for God gives grace to the humble. The love of solitude and of good singularity, that we may have the Lord as companion. Moses was alone when the Lord appeared to him (Exod. 3:2); Elias was alone (cf. 3 Kings 18); Agar was alone (Gen. 21:17), when Angels appeared to them. Chastity, for love of which the curses of men are to be despised, that we may be blessed by the Lord, that is, that we may obtain the grace of the Lord, be directed by him, and be made useful to men. *The Lord is with thee* is placed in the middle, for he preserves grace within, and works the blessing of spiritual fruitfulness without. Rightly, then, after *full of grace* was said, there is added *The Lord is with thee*; for as without God we can do nothing, or have nothing, so neither can we guard what we have without him. Therefore after the gift of grace it is necessary that the Lord be with us, and guard with us what he alone gave us.

Blessed art thou among women, or in women, so that the middle might fall away by participation; for she is a virgin with fruitfulness, and a mother with virginity. She was a woman by the condition of her sex, and was to be a woman by the fruitfulness of childbearing; yet not on that account to incur the curse, but rather to obtain the blessing. Yet on hearing this word, *Blessed art thou among women*, she was troubled, because among virgins she had always wished to be blessed; and therefore she *thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be* (Luke 1:29), which from the start seemed to her suspect. But when in the promise of a son the danger to her virginity was plainly manifest, she could no longer dissemble, but said: *How shall this be done?* etc. (Luke 1:34). Or she was also troubled out of wonder, because she knew that all women were cursed in their mother Heva; and therefore, hearing herself blessed among women, she was troubled, and thought what manner of salutation this was, which called her both woman and blessed.

Or, *among women*, that is, above women, because better works were in her than in the others. For a virgin she bore; she begot her own father; bearing, she bore him who bore her; nursing, she nursed him who nursed her; empty and full, humble and sublime, poor and rich, she was in one; which could be found in no woman before her. Nor was she blessed only among women, for that would seem little, but among blessed women she was distinguished and blessed by a singular blessing. Hence it is said of her, Sir. 24:4: *In the multitude of the elect she shall have praise, and among the blessed she shall be blessed.* For in her alone was found fruitfulness with virginity, two things which had never before had peace. Hence one has written:

Childbirth and wholeness, long at odds in time, Hold covenants of peace in the Virgin's bosom.

(p. 44) Again, she is called blessed among women not only because she conceived without concupiscence and bore without sorrow, but because above all others she was multiplied in offspring. For though carnally she bore one son, in him she was made spiritually the mother of a great multitude of sons, of whom Christ is the firstborn; hence it is signally said, Luke 2:7, that she brought forth her firstborn son. Rom. 8:29: *That he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Again, by this that she is called blessed among women, the price of Mary is designated, who is the valiant woman, of whom it is said, Prov. 31:10: *From afar, and from the uttermost coasts, is the price of her.* For because for love of virginity she despised the curse by which the barren woman was cursed in the law, she therefore merited to be blessed.

Blessed art thou among women, that is, above all women, says the Gloss; and this Gloss is the text in Judith 13:23, where Ozias, prince of the people of Israel, says to her: *Blessed art thou, O daughter, by the Lord the most high God, above all women upon the earth.* Judges 5:24: *Blessed among women be Jahel.* Esther 2:17 says that Esther had grace and mercy above all women, and that Assuerus loved her more than all women. Mary, therefore, is called blessed *in* women; Judith, *above* women; Jahel, *among* women; Esther found grace and mercy *over* all women, loved by Assuerus *more than* all women. In these words the highest blessing is signified. And these three women expressly prefigured Mary. Let us take the whole, then, and say that she was blessed in women, and above women, and among women, and over all women. Blessed *in* women, in that she alone had whatever good was in women. Blessed *above* all women, because she had all those things more excellently. Blessed *among* women, because she alone was free of that curse which all women received in their mother Heva. Blessed *over* all women, because she had what no other woman ever received, namely whatever good was in women.

Now there was a threefold good state in women, which Mary consecrated: the conjugal, the widowed, the virginal. She had the virginal state before her betrothal, the conjugal after her betrothal, the widowed after her Son's passion; for unless Joseph were dead, it does not seem that she would be commended to the disciple. For if she was entrusted to him as a young girl, it does not seem that when she was nearly fifty she would be taken from him. And therefore, though she is prefigured through many women, she is more expressly figured through four: through Judith the widow, through Esther the married woman, through Rachel and Rebecca the virgins. But why through one widow, one married woman, and two virgins? Perhaps because she was a virgin before the birth, and remained a virgin after the birth. On account of this threefold state it is said to her, Sir. 24:13: *Dwell in Jacob*, that is, in the married, who are in the struggle, since they have such tribulation of the flesh (1 Cor. 7:28); *and inherit in Israel*, that is, in widows, for she who is a widow thinks on the things of God (1 Cor. 7:34); *and take root in my elect*, that is, in virgins. Thus she alone had whatever good was in women.

And it should be noted that, because that noble virgin of Israel was to be the Mother of God, the chamber of the bridegroom, the beloved of the beloved, the only one of the only one, the Son of God willed to work in her singularly, indeed wonderfully, so that she who was to bear the price of the universe should have something in common with every state of the universe. With the married she had in common the bearing of offspring; with the continent, the vow of chastity; with virgins, perseverance in virginity; so that, while by her offspring she redeemed the continent, the married, and virgins, *(p. 45)* the thirtyfold, the sixtyfold, and the hundredfold fruit should at the same time come to her. But you, faithful man, who think of the blessed Virgin with goodness, do not understand in her a lesser thirtyfold fruit than sixtyfold or hundredfold. Assert with confidence that she merited no more by bearing than by preserving her virginity. In keeping, then, with God's varied working in her, the fruit owed to her receives a varied lot as to its very designation. In others, however, it is not so, because they neither remain continent without difficulty, nor bear without corruption.

She was also blessed above all women, because she had all those things more excellently. For all married women had fruitfulness with corruption; widows, fruitfulness with preceding corruption; virgins, chastity with barrenness. She alone separated the precious from the vile, because she had the conjugal and widowed state with virginity, and the virginal state with fruitfulness; and therefore she is blessed above all women. Hence she ought to be called blessed and superblessed: blessed by the Angel, superblessed by Elisabeth. She was also blessed among women, because she alone was free of that curse which all women contracted in Heva, Gen. 3:16: *I will multiply thy sorrows and thy conceptions: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children*, etc. From which curse she was immune. Hence Isa. 66:7–8: *Before she was in labor, she brought forth; before her time came to be delivered, she brought forth a man child. Who hath ever heard such a thing?* And therefore she alone among women is blessed. She was also blessed over all women, because no other ever received what she had, namely that a virgin bore, which was not only over all women, but over all nature and

all understanding: that she bore God. Thus, then, she alone had every good that was in women; she alone did not have the curse which every other woman had; she alone had what no other woman could ever have.

For this reason it is notably said, Luke 10:42, that this Mary chose the best part. The best in quantity, because she had the whole. The best in quality, because she had a purer and more excellent part. The best in dignity, because a more worthy part could not be understood. For this is true of the blessed Virgin in her own right: Mary chose the best part, because among all who ever received a part, she alone chose and had the best part. God, however, chose none, because he always had the whole, in so far as he was also the son of the most blessed Virgin.

Behold those four from which the blessedness of the most holy Virgin is made whole: immunity from all sin, hence *Ave Maria*; the fullness of grace, hence *Full of grace*; divine fellowship, hence *The Lord is with thee*; the singularity of prerogative, hence *Blessed art thou among women*. Of these, the first two make her blessed in herself; the other two, in comparison with all to which it is possible to compare her. And this is only to what is above, because *The Lord is with thee*, and to what is below, because *blessed among women*; for by mediation of that blessing which she had among women, she was blessed in relation to all to which it is possible to compare her. For because she bore God, the restorer of Angels, the redeemer of men, the conqueror of demons, all generations call her blessed. And this is what is said, Judith 15:10–11, in the person of Mary: *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem,* by which the Angels are designated, who are always in the vision of God and in peace. *Thou the joy of Israel.* By Israel I understand the souls of the blessed, who once were Jacob, that is, wrestlers, but now are Israel, that is, seeing God face to face. *Thou the honor of our people.* By the people, namely of the Jews, that is, of those confessing their sins and the praises of God and glorifying God, I understand the souls of the just. *Because thou hast done manfully,* by conquering the devil, as had been prophesied, Gen. 3:15: *I will put enmities,* etc.: she shall crush thy head.

Chapter 6 (continued)

(p. 46) Otherwise: The first, *Thou the glory of Jerusalem*, is the voice of the Angels, whose ruin was repaired through her. The second, *Thou the joy of Israel*, is the voice of men, whose sadness was made glad through her. The third, *Thou the honor of our people*, is the voice of women, whose infamy was blotted out through her. The fourth, *because thou hast done manfully*, is the voice of the dead who are in limbo, whose captivity was redeemed and brought back through her.

Otherwise: *Thou the glory of Jerusalem*, that is, of the innocent. *Thou the joy of Israel*, that is, of the penitent. *Thou the honor of our people*, that is, of sinners. This, then, is the blessed fullness and the full blessedness of our Lady, who is the fountain and origin of all our blessedness. For whatever of blessedness has come to the human race from that great sea, that is, from the infinite goodness of the Trinity, has all flowed down through this vein; and therefore whatever is sent to us from on high must be referred back to her by thanksgiving, for through her as mediatrix we have, without doubt, whatever grace we obtain.

Blessed art thou in women, that is, among mothers grown soft and among barren virgins. Or more expressly, *among women*, that is, among mothers and virgins. For as the cornerstone stands on two walls, and between two walls stands on each wall, yet neither wholly on one nor wholly on the other, so Mary is in the number of mothers as to fruitfulness, and in the number of virgins as to incorruption; but she is not entirely in the wall of mothers, because she is incorrupt, nor wholly in the wall of virgins, because she is fruitful. For it was fitting that the mother of the Savior be such that the mediatrix should bear the mediator, and the cornerstone bear the cornerstone. Job 38:6: *Who let go the cornerstone thereof?* As if he said: Who, from the cornerstone, let go the cornerstone? Christ, the mediator of God and men, is the cornerstone, in whom two natures meet, the divine and the human; standing on each wall, because he is God and man, *mediator of God and men* (1 Tim. 2:5): just with God, mortal with men. It was fitting that he be born of a virgin mother, so that in a mortal mother he might be conceived mortal, and in a virgin be conceived just; for it was necessary that whoever

was conceived through a mother's corruption be conceived unjust, from original sin. And this is the first reason. The second, that as the first Adam was made from virgin earth, so the second Adam should be made man from a virgin. The third, that as through the virgin Heva the perdition of the human race was wrought, so through the virgin Mary its restoration should be wrought. Hence the Church sings: "The gate of paradise, closed to all through Heva," etc. The fourth, that he who in heaven had a father without a mother should have on earth a mother without a father, so that, as by two witnesses, the divinity of Christ should be proved: in the virginity of the mother and the divinity of the father. The fifth, that the truth of prophecy might be answered, Isa. 7:14: *Behold a virgin shall conceive*, etc. Blessed Bernard: "God (for it is God whom the Virgin bore), being about to endow his mother with a singular glory in heaven, took care to anticipate her on earth with a singular grace, whereby she should ineffably conceive untouched and bear uncorrupted. Further, such a nativity befitted God, that he should be born of none but a virgin. Such a childbearing also befitted a virgin, that she should bear none but God. Accordingly the maker of men, in order to become man by being born of man, had to choose from among all, indeed to create, such a mother as he knew would befit him and as he knew would please him. He willed her therefore to be a virgin, from whom the immaculate one should proceed immaculate, to purge the stains of all. He willed her also to be humble, from whom he should come forth who is meek and humble of heart, being about to show in himself these virtues, an example necessary and most salutary for men. *(p. 47)* He gave childbearing to the Virgin, who had already before inspired in her the vow of virginity and bestowed beforehand the merit of humility. Otherwise, how would the Angel, in what follows, announce her as full of grace, if she had anything, even a little, of good which she had not received from grace? So, that she who was to conceive the Holy of Holies and likewise bear him might be holy in body, she received the gift of virginity; that she might be holy in mind, she received also the gift of humility. Adorned with these gems of virtues, a royal virgin, and shining with the twin beauty of mind and body alike, known in the heavens by her loveliness and her beauty, she drew toward herself the gaze of the citizens of heaven, so that she inclined the king's mind to desire her, and drew the heavenly messenger down to her from on high."

And that a virginal conception befitted the Redeemer was said to Abraham, Gen. 15:16, when the return of his seed was foretold to him in this word: *In the fourth generation they shall return hither.* The first generation was in Adam, without man and woman. The second was in Heva, from man without woman. The third is in us, from man and woman. The fourth, namely Christ's, is without man, from woman. And this one is singular; nor could another be found which could succor the first three, which had perished; but this one led the other three back to the homeland from captivity. Mary, therefore, is rightly called blessed among women, because she, among mothers and virgins, a prudent mediatrix wonderfully in the middle, took from each of the extremes what was best, and separated the precious from the vile. And leaving behind the barrenness of the virgin and the corruption of the mother, she took to herself integrity from the virgin and fruitfulness from the mother, so as to be whole and fruitful, neither barren nor corrupt.

Blessed art thou among women, as though in the middle between the women of the Old Testament and the women of the New. The women of the Old Testament were tending toward her, as is plain, since with all their affection they strove for the begetting of children, that they might arrive at her who would take away their reproach. Hence Rachel is read to have said to Jacob, Gen. 30:1: *Give me children, otherwise I shall die.* The women of the New Testament look to her, who is set before them as an example, and to whom she has restored liberty; for she sanctified the threefold state of good women: the good, the better, and the best, that is, marriage, widowhood, and virginity.

Blessed art thou in women. This can be said in the way it was said, Gen. 27:39–40: *In the fat of the earth, and in the dew of heaven from above, shall thy blessing be.* The dew of heaven is virginity; the fat of the earth is fruitfulness. For through Mary the blessing was poured out upon women. O how many have been snatched from the curse by her help and prayers, and are snatched daily!

Or, she is blessed *in* women because it is not read of any other, so that by this it may be noted that she will not only have glory among women, but also by a certain spiritual privilege has claimed to herself the love and affection of women, since through her the reproach of that sex was escaped. For before Mary conceived the Savior, it was a reproach and an ignominy to be a woman, on account of the betrayal by the first mother. Likewise to be a human being, on account of the theft and betrayal of Adam. For we were the children of a traitor and a thief. Hence it is said, Isa. 1:23: *Thy princes*, namely Adam and Heva, *unfaithful, companions of thieves*, that is, of demons. And for this reason the human race cried to the Lord Savior under the figure of seven women, Isa. 4:1: *Let thy name be called upon us*, namely that we may be called Christians from Christ; *take away our reproach.* The reproach of our first parents, therefore, has been taken away from us through her, and moreover we have been made so noble that we have become brothers of the king and queen of heaven. *(p. 48)* Rightly, then, is she blessed in women and among women, through whom so great a reproach of the first woman has been taken from women, and so great an honor conferred on women, that a woman has been made queen of heaven and Mother of God.

Again, in that it is said, *Blessed art thou in women*, her pre-eminent power to obtain is shown. For other women soften the rigor of men; but she softens the severity of God, designated by the rod that brought water out of the rock (Num. 20:11). (You will find this more fully under the title that Mary is called woman and rod.)

Again, she is blessed in women as being the only one of women to be proclaimed by all generations, and to have glory before all.

Chapter 7. Et benedictus fructus ventris tui

And blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Above, the Angel had said, *Blessed art thou among women*; and Elisabeth said, *Blessed art thou among women*, as if both thought the same of the Virgin. But here the Angel stopped, and did not say, *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb*, because this fruit was as yet a flower in the garden of the Virgin. Hence Isa. 11:1: *A flower shall rise up out of his root.* But he was to be fruit in the world, medicine on the cross, bread in the sacrament, life in the soul, blessedness in heaven. Elisabeth, attending to this, supplied what the Angel had not said, namely, *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

And truly blessed, because beautiful to see, sweet to smell, sweet to taste, as you will find below. Blessed Bernard to Mary: “Not because thou art blessed, therefore is the fruit of thy womb blessed; but because he went before thee with the blessings of sweetness, therefore art thou blessed. For truly blessed is the fruit of thy womb, in whom all nations are blessed; of whose fullness thou also hast received with the rest, though differently from the rest. And therefore thou indeed art blessed, but in women; he, however, is blessed not in men, not among Angels, but he who is over all things God blessed for ever, as the Apostle says (Rom. 9:5). A man is called blessed, bread blessed, a woman blessed, the earth blessed, or anything of the kind in creatures is recorded as blessed; but singularly blessed is the fruit of thy womb, since he is over all things God blessed for ever. Blessed, therefore, is the fruit of thy womb. Blessed in odor, blessed in taste, blessed in appearance. Of odor, Gen. 27:27: *Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed.* Is he not truly blessed whom the Lord hath blessed? Of taste it is said: *O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet* (Ps. 33:9). Again: *How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord* (Ps. 30:20). Again, Peter: *If so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet* (1 Pet. 2:3). And the fruit himself, inviting us to himself, Sir. 24:29: *They that eat me*, he says, *(p. 49) shall yet hunger*, etc. Surely he said this on account of the sweetness of the taste, which, once tasted, rouses the appetite the more. A good fruit, which is both food and drink for souls hungering and thirsting after justice. Again, of appearance, in Psalm 49:2: *Out of Sion the loveliness of his beauty.* Again, 1 Pet. 1:12: *Into which things the angels desire to look.* And blessed Agnes: ‘Whose beauty the sun and moon wonder at.’ Nor is he beautiful only as other fruits are, but as he is said to be *beautiful in form above the sons of men* (Ps. 44:3), so he must be said to be beautiful above all fruits. For

if that fruit of death was not only sweet to eat but also, as Scripture testifies, *delightful to the eyes* (Gen. 3:6), how much more ought we to believe a life-giving beauty in this vital fruit." So far blessed Bernard.

Blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Fittingly Christ is called the fruit of the virginal womb, singularly and distinctively, because the Virgin mother conceived him in the womb, in the womb, that is, from an intrinsic cause, not as other women, who receive from outside that from which they conceive. Therefore Christ is also called a shoot or a grain. Hence Isa. 4:2: *In that day the bud of the Lord shall be in magnificence and glory, and the fruit of the earth shall be high.* For as a moistened grain sends forth a shoot from its own substance, from which the whole fruit comes, without contact of another grain, so Mary, moistened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, without contact of a man, brought forth Christ from herself alone, who is the blessed fruit, and who is also called a shoot on account of humility. Therefore she says, Sir. 24:8: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven,* that is, him who encloses and contains all things, *in the bosom of my womb*: alone, that is, without the help of a man. Of this shoot the Father says, Ezek. 34:29: *I will raise up for them a bud of renown,* namely the Just One. No other, however, can be properly called the fruit of the womb, but rather of the womb and the loins, because he is both conceived by the mother and begotten by the father.

Christ is fittingly called fruit, because as fruit is born from the herb or the tree, or from the earth, without violating it, so also Christ from the Virgin. For as good fruit makes the tree commendable through the earth from which it is born, so Christ makes glorious the Virgin from whom, wholly blessed, the wholly blessed one was born. Hence it is said to her here: *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

For fruit makes known what sort the earth or tree is from which it arises. So Christ the Virgin. Hence Matt. 7:20: *By their fruits you shall know them.* In the same place, v. 18: *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.*

Because, taken under the leaves of the accidents, this fruit in the sacrament is more delightful to the soul that worthily receives it, for there the soul gains more, as regards the present, I mean. But that fruit the tree, that is, the man, will not taste in the future who has not borne good fruit in the present.

Again, *fructus* (fruit) is said from *fruor, frueris* (to enjoy); and to enjoy is to cling in love to some thing for its own sake alone. Christ, however, who in the sacrament is our refreshment on the way, will be our enjoyment in the homeland, whose enjoyment makes blessed; and he merits this enjoyment who sets Christ as the end of his joy. Hence it is said in Psalm 126:2–3: *When he shall give sleep to his beloved, behold the inheritance of the Lord are children: the reward, the fruit of the womb.* For fruit is usually taken at supper, which is a refreshment against sleep. And Christ is the fruit which we await at that last supper, of whom we shall have the enjoyment; for, as is commonly said, after the fruit no other dish is usually added, nor eating, but after the supper. When, therefore, Christ shall give sleep to his beloved, *behold the inheritance of the Lord,* which *(p. 50)* is also the reward of the son, which the Lord will give to his faithful, and gives daily, none other than himself, who is the fruit of the blessed womb. O inheritance, neither obtained by the father's death, nor to be passed on to posterity by succession, nor to be divided among brothers, nor made narrower by a multitude of co-heirs! This is the goodly inheritance of which the Psalmist speaks, Ps. 15:6: *The lines are fallen unto me in goodly places; for my inheritance is goodly to me.* Truly he has a goodly inheritance whose inheritance is God. He who possesses God is possessed by God. He who has received the earth as his inheritance has an obscure inheritance, and for him the lines have fallen in obscure places. Cursed inheritance, because the Lord cursed it, Gen. 3:17: *Cursed is the earth in thy work.* And because it is hastened after, therefore in the end it will lack blessing (Prov. 20:21). And note that he says, *in the beginning*, that is, of him who prefers the earthly inheritance to the heavenly. Again, this is the inheritance of which the Lord says, Sir. 24:27: *My inheritance is above honey and the honeycomb.*

This fruit is of wondrous odor, of the best color, and of life-giving vigor. By odor enticing, by taste refreshing, by color gladdening, by vigor strengthening, light to the touch, delightful to the sight, sweet to the

taste, lasting in its durability, etc. The hungry man longs for this without torment, eats without disgust, is satisfied by it without excess, is healed by it without relapse. The best and most savory fruit, the most wholesome and the most pleasant, having in itself every delight and the sweetness of every savor; but for those only who have tasted that the Lord is sweet. It tastes, indeed, according to the diversity of those who taste: to some like manna for its sweetness, to some like honeycomb for contemplation, to some like butter for the richness of devotion, to some like bread for strength, to some like wine for compunction, to some like oil for consolation, to some like milk for humanity, to some like honey for divinity, to some like wood for eternity, and the like. This is the fruit of the tree of life, that is, of the blessed Virgin, which grew in paradise, that is, in the virginal womb; whoever eats of it worthily shall not taste death for ever. Hence he says, John 6:56: *My flesh is meat indeed*, etc. This fruit lay hid under the flower of virginity in the conception, appeared in the nativity, ripened in the preaching, was gathered on the tree of the cross in the passion. Isa. 53:8: *Because he is cut off out of the land of the living.* This fruit appeared white in the nativity through virginity and innocence, green in the promise of eternal things, resplendent in the transfiguration, ruddy in compassion, pale and discolored in the tomb.

Blessed is the fruit of thy womb. How the sweetness of this fruit is perceived is taught in Cant. 2:3, where the faithful soul says: *Under the shadow of him whom I desired, I sat: and his fruit was sweet to my throat.* The shadow of Christ is properly the imitation of what he did in the passion, when, with his shoulders fixed to the cross, he overshadowed the Church, to temper for it the heat of the Father's wrath. In this shadow is the life of the soul; outside this shadow, death alone. In Lam. 4:20 it is said to Christ: *Under thy shadow we shall live among the nations.* And he says well, *under the shadow*, which, with respect to the body, is only a kind of appearance. Likewise, whatever good the best man could do for God, with respect to what God did for man, is nothing but a very thin shadow. As far as a thing is distant from its shadow, so far is the passion of Christ distant from the sufferings we endure for God, if its circumstances be carefully noted. Well did the Lord's passion make a shadow, in which the obscurity of punishment and the clarity of piety came together. To sit under this shadow is to rest in the imitation of the Lord's passion, where three things are found, *(p. 51)* odor, protection, and refreshment. Odor makes joyful, protection secure, refreshment quiet.

Of odor it is said to the bridegroom, Cant. 4:10: *The odor of thy ointments above all aromatical spices.* In the same place, v. 11: *The odor of thy garments as the odor of frankincense.* (Look below, under the delights of the garden.) Again, blessed John the Evangelist, visited by Christ, says to him: "Thy odor stirred up in me eternal desires." Again, Sir. 24:21: *Like balsam not mixed was my odor.*

Of protection, in Psalm 16:8: *Protect me under the shadow of thy wings*, etc. Again, Ps. 56:2: *In the shadow of thy wings will I hope, until iniquity pass away.* The wings of Christ are the virtues by which he flew to heaven. Or his wings are his arms stretched out on the cross, of which it is said, Mal. 4:2: *Health in his wings.*

Of refreshment, Jer. 6:16: *Ask for the old paths, which is the good way, and walk ye in it; and you shall find refreshment for your souls.* This way is Christ the Lord.

The faithful soul says, therefore: *Under the shadow of him whom I desired, I sat.* Behold two things necessary for those who wish to perceive the sweetness of this fruit and to share in it for salvation, namely the imitation of the passion. Hence, *under his shadow I sat*: joyful, secure, and quiet, and with intense desire. Hence she says, *I desired.* Again, in sitting, rest is noted, *that thou mayest cease to do perversely* (Isa. 1:16), because first it is necessary to cease from sin. In sitting, the lower part of the body rests toward the earth, while the upper part toward heaven labors and moves; to sit, therefore, is to rest from the appetite for temporal things and to labor for eternal ones, that so the sweetness of this fruit may be perceived. Hence there follows: *And his fruit*, that is, the reception of his body and blood, by which we are refreshed and sustained on the way of our pilgrimage. Or, *fruit*, that is, the efficacy of the sacrament, *sweet to my throat*, that is, to the inmost affection of my soul. And he says well, *to my throat*, through which the voice passes, so

that whoever desires to perceive this sweetness should, before approaching this sacrament, have confessed his sins, that in the voice of exultation and confession there may be the sound of one feasting. Again, Osee 14:8: *They that sit under his shadow*, as above, *shall live upon wheat, and they shall blossom as a vine. Shall live upon wheat*, that is, on the body and blood of Christ. They shall live here by grace, and by glory in the future. The Septuagint says: *They shall be inebriated with wheat, and shall blossom as a vine*: namely, humbly imitating in their works Christ, who is the true vine, for humility is designated in the shoot. Otherwise, unless they first sit under this shadow by imitating what Christ did in the flesh and following the footsteps which he trod on the cross, they will die of this fruit and this wheat. For the heavenly bread is not wholesome except to the sound. Hence one says:

What you handle at the Lord's table, weigh it carefully; What you put to your mouth gives life or death.

To live, by cause; to die, by occasion.

Desire is also necessary, namely for pardon, grace, and glory. Hence she says: *I desired.* Job 3:24: *Before I eat I sigh*, desiring, namely, these three, etc. This desire, however, the worthy eating of this fruit rouses and inflames. Hence he himself says, Sir. 24:29: *They that eat me shall yet hunger*, etc. Nor does he belong to the throat of the Church who does not hunger for this fruit.

Again, *His fruit sweet to my throat.* For this fruit is sweet in the mouth of those who preach, sweeter in the palate of those who meditate, sweetest in the throat of those who taste. In word. Hence Ps. 118:103: *How sweet are thy words to my palate*, etc. Again, John 6:69, Peter, tasting this sweetness, says: *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* In example. Matt. 11:29: *Learn of me*, (p. 52) *because I am meek and humble of heart.* In promise. Apoc. 2:17: *To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna.* In the laying on of the yoke. Matt. 11:29–30: *Take up my yoke upon you*, etc.; *for my yoke is sweet*, etc. In operation. Because through him the blind see, the lame walk, etc. (Matt. 11:5). In the forgiveness of sins. Ezek. 18:21–22: *If the wicked do penance for all his sins*, etc., *I will not remember all his iniquities which he hath done.* In the scourging of sons. Hence Ps. 22:4: *Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.* Again, Ps. 102:13: *As a father hath compassion on his children*, etc.

At last he will be perceived as sweetest in the bestowal of the reward, when he will feed us with himself, who is the hidden manna, and will make us drink of the torrent of his pleasure (Ps. 35:9). To the taste: 1 Pet. 2:3: *If so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet.* To the touch: 2 Kings 23:8: *He is like a most tender little worm of the wood, than which nothing is softer when touched.* To the hearing: because he is *the sweet word that multiplieth friends* (Sir. 6:5), that is, for the Father, a sweet Word. To the smell: Sir. 49:1: *The memory of Josias is like the composition of a sweet smell*, etc.; Josias is Christ. To the sight: 1 Pet. 1:12: *Into which things the angels desire to look.* To the intellect, which he illuminates, since he is truth. To the affection, which he feeds, since he is charity.

Chapter 7 (continued)

Again, of the blessing of this fruit the Prophet says to God the Father: *Thou hast prevented him with blessings of sweetness*, etc. (Ps. 20:4). It is well said, *Thou hast prevented*, because he gave him these blessings before his birth.

The first blessing is immunity from sin and the inability to sin. For he lacked original sin, which his mother's virginity proves; and actual sin, which his Father's divinity proves. Therefore Peter calls him a lamb unspotted (1 Pet. 1:19): unspotted because he lacked the original stain, and undefiled because he lacked all actual contagion. Therefore he is called the candlestick, Exod. 25:31, 37: *Thou shalt make a candlestick of beaten work, of the purest gold, and thou shalt put on it seven lamps.* Christ is rightly called the candlestick, because he enlightens every man that cometh into this world (John 1:9). Of beaten work, not molten: because it was not poured through by a man's seed, but drawn out by the work of the Holy Spirit from the purest gold,

that is, from the purest blood of the Virgin, which was pure gold in her sanctification, purer in the coming of the Holy Spirit, purest in the conception of the Son of God, who is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24). For in the conception of the Son of God the mother was so perfectly purified that afterward she could not sin even venially. Therefore his flesh and blood are called the purest gold. *And thou shalt put on it seven lamps*, that is, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which rested upon Christ. And note that John the Baptist, though sanctified in the womb, could nevertheless afterward sin, at least venially. Hence he says to Christ, Matt. 3:14: *I ought to be baptized by thee,* that is, to be purged of the power of sinning, which comes from the tinder of sin.

The second is the consummate perfection of the virtues. For although in baptism the virtues are infused into a child, they are not yet consummate, because he cannot yet pursue them by working. But Christ had them consummate. Hence Isa. 4:1: *Seven women shall take hold of one man*, that is, all the virtues, which are designated by the sevenfold number, *one man,* that is, Christ, who in the instant of his conception was a perfect man as to wisdom and virtue, and as to the organization of his members. *(p. 53)* Therefore it is said: *The Lord will do a new thing* (Jer. 31:22), because other men are formed in nine months. Of wisdom, Sir. 1:1: *All wisdom is from the Lord God, and hath been always with him, and is before all time.* Of virtue, 1 Cor. 1:24: *He is the power of God and the wisdom of God,* each of which can neither be diminished in itself nor increased. Hence Boethius: "And remaining steadfast, he gives all things to be moved," etc.

The third is the fullness of all wisdom and knowledge. For virtue perfects the affection, wisdom the intellect, and he was perfect in both. Col. 2:3: *In whom are hid all the treasures*, etc. For his wisdom knows past, present, and future uniformly. Hence Sir. 23:28: *The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun*, etc. And four things are set down here, by which it is shown that nothing is hidden from his wisdom, and that it infinitely exceeds the light of the sun. For the sun sees only the surface of a thing exposed to it, but not the interior of the thing; but the wisdom of God *reacheth from end to end* (Wisd. 8:1), etc. Job 26:6: *Hell is naked before him, and there is no covering for destruction.* And therefore it is said *far,* because the eyes of the sun, that is, its rays, see only bodily things, but the eyes of the Lord see spiritual things. *Brighter,* because the rays of the sun see only present things, but the eyes of the Lord see past, present, and future. *Above,* because the sun sends its rays only to what is beneath it, but the eyes of the Lord see what is above the sun as well as what is below. Of this blessing it is said, Deut. 33:16: *The blessing of him that appeared in the bush come upon the head of Joseph.* Joseph is Christ increasing (cf. Gen. 49:22). Hence Luke 2:52: *Jesus advanced in wisdom,* etc. Solution: his wisdom advanced by extension, not by intensity, as a teacher advances by extending his teaching to his disciples, and as a candle that lights a candle from itself advances by the extension of its light, not by its intensity.

The fourth is the fullness of enjoyment. For from the instant of his conception he enjoyed as fully as now; and, what is more wonderful, in the same part of the soul he at once suffered and enjoyed. Therefore it is said in the person of Christ as man: *I set the Lord always in my sight* (Ps. 15:8).

The fifth is the union of diverse natures, which, according to Augustine, was such as to make God man, and man God. This is the blessing of sweetness, because neither was the soul separated from the Word after it was assumed by him, and so the soul of Christ could not sin; nor likewise was the flesh left by the divinity after it was assumed by it. Hence for this reason it could not be corrupted in the tomb. Of these five blessings it is said, Deut. 33:23: *Nephthali shall enjoy abundance.* Nephthali is interpreted "enlarged." This is Christ, whose faith has been enlarged through the whole world. These are the blessings of sweetness. But earthly blessings, of which Psalm 143:15 says, *They have called the people happy that hath these things*, are of bitterness, because they are turned into bitterness. But of this sweetness it is said, Gen. 27:27: *Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed.*

There follows: *Thou hast set on his head* (Ps. 20:4), that is, at the beginning of his preaching, *a crown of precious stone*, that is, of precious stones, namely the twelve Apostles, who as he preached surrounded his

head like a crown. Matt. 5:1 ff.: *Jesus seeing the multitudes*, etc., *and when he was set down*, etc. These are the twelve stones which the high priest bore on the rational (Exod. 28:11 ff.). Job 29:25: *When I sat as a king*, etc. Otherwise, the crown of eternal glory, which has no end, which is said to be of precious stone, which is the topaz, that is, all-colored, because, according to Gregory, it shines in every color. The sense, therefore, is: *Thou hast set on his head*, etc., that is, a crown of glory having every beauty. To have this crown, as man he fought and taught all to fight, for *he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully* (2 Tim. 2:5). (Give an account of the stone under the sevenfold or the twelvefold number.) *(p. 54)*

Morally: *Thou hast set on his head*, that is, in the mind of the just man, which is the head. Eccles. 9:8: *Let not oil be wanting from thy head. A crown of precious stone*, that is, the ornament of the virtues. In this crown are four precious stones. Prudence in front, that he beware of future things; justice behind, that he make satisfaction for past things; temperance on the right, lest he be dissolved by prosperity; fortitude on the left, lest he be broken by adversity. And this crown is a diadem.

Again, this fruit is wonderful. Hence Ps. 4:4: *Know ye that the Lord hath made his holy one wonderful*, that is, the Father hath made his holy one, namely Christ, who is the holy of holies, wonderful; and this in many ways. First, in the conception, when *a woman shall compass a man* (Jer. 31:22). The interlinear Gloss: "In the bosom of her womb." Isa. 4:1: *In that day*, namely of the Lord's conception, *seven women shall take hold of one man*, that is, all the virtues, one man, that is, Christ. Second, in the nativity, when he came forth from the Virgin's womb with the gate closed. Ezek. 44:2–3: *This gate shall be shut … for the prince*, as he enters and as he goes out, as a ray of the sun enters and goes out through glass without corruption of itself or of the glass. Third, in the preaching. John 7:46: *Never did man speak like this man.* And Peter, John 6:69: *Thou hast the words of eternal life.* Fourth, in the passion, where he *set his face as a most hard rock* (Isa. 50:7), and the sun was darkened and the rocks were rent (Matt. 27:51). Fifth, in the resurrection, when *he gave not his holy one to see corruption* (Ps. 15:10), but quickly raised him up, and with the sepulchre closed he came forth. Sixth, in the ascension, when by the power of the deity he ascended in triumph. Isa. 63:1: *Who is this that cometh*, etc.? For all these things his name was called *Wonderful* (Isa. 9:6).

Again, *Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle, because he hath done wonderful things* (Ps. 97:1). In this, that though he was rich, he willed for our sake to become poor (2 Cor. 8:9). *You know the grace.* Because, though he was always in joy, for our sake he willed to suffer and die in a most vile torment. Heb. 12:2: *Christ, having joy set before him, endured the cross*, etc. Because, though he was supremely innocent, he willed to be reputed wicked. Isa. 53:12: *And with the wicked he was reputed.* Because he willed to suffer for enemies, which is much more than for friends. Hence John 15:13: *Greater love than this*, etc.; yet he had a greater, because he died for enemies. Because, though with one word alone he could save the world, since *he spoke and they were made* (Ps. 32:9), nevertheless he willed to endure so many and such great things for the world. Hence Luke 9:30–31, Moses and Elias spoke with him of his decease, which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. And he did all this to entice us to his love, and to root out in us the vice of ingratitude. For man was ungrateful for the benefit of creation, which the Lord had bestowed on him without penalty. But the benefit of re-creation was not so. Blessed Bernard: "Remember, O man, that though you were made from nothing, you were not redeemed from nothing."

And note that there was a fourfold will in Christ, which the Father makes wonderful, as Christ says of the Father: *To the saints who are in his land he hath made wonderful all my wills in them* (Ps. 15:3). The will of the deity: this was made wonderful by making all things that are. *(p. 55)* The will of reason, by which he willed to suffer, to die, and to rise again, and which also makes men who obey him die to sin and rise again by grace. It was made wonderful in obeying the Father unto death (Phil. 2:8). The will of sensuality, by which he willed not to die. Matt. 26:39: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.* This was made wonderful by showing himself a true man, and that he truly assumed our infirmity. The will of compassion, by which he had compassion on sinners. Luke 19:41: *Seeing the city, he wept*, etc. Osee 6:6: *I*

desired mercy and not sacrifice. Which he made wonderful also by having compassion on the unworthy. These wills, I say, he made wonderful to the saints, not to the Jews or pagans, for to these they are a stumbling-block or foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23), etc.: to the saints, namely, who are in his land, that is, who have fixed their hope, like an anchor, in that land which is his land, namely the land of the living, lest they be submerged by the waves of the age. (Many other things about this wonderful fruit, which ought to have been written here, you will find in § 10, on the enclosed garden, where that garden is called wonderful.)

Therefore, because the salutation which Christ gave to the blessed Virgin Mary is so sweet, so celebrated, so festive, so devout, so efficacious, so pleasant, when he decreed to save the world through this mediatrix, it is worthy and just that it be recited most solemnly and devoutly by the worshipers of Christ on earth, since by the dwellers in heaven, as is truly believed, it is frequently recited in heaven to the honor and glory of the glorious Virgin. Hence the Church sings: "The Angels praise thee," etc. For if we so affectionately and assiduously salute, bare our heads, bow, rise, bend the knee, and repeat the greeting so many times, to the familiars and kinsmen and associates of great men, whose counsels and aid we need in the courts, and win their good will by gifts and presents and by whatever means we can prevail, what ought most of all to be done toward the mother in the court of her only-begotten, whom she can not only efficaciously supplicate, but even command with a mother's authority?

Again, if a hungry jester should come and sing at the full table of a rich man, will food be denied him? Likewise, if anyone, despising temporal things and hungering for grace, should come to the table of the Lord's mother with his whole heart and affection, saying, *Ave Maria, gratia,* etc., can that generosity deny him grace? At least, since she is full of grace, she will bestow some fragments of grace. For she is the honeycomb of honey, to whom it is said, Cant. 4:11: *Thy lips, O my spouse, are a dropping honeycomb.* If it is well pressed by the touch of the lips of one devoutly praying, it will easily distill a honeyed sweetness. She is Gedeon's fleece, moistened with the dew of graces (cf. Judg. 6:37–38), which by the lightest pressure of a devout salutation and prayer will distill abundant drops upon the earth of the human heart. She is the most slender rod through her supreme humility, which by the breath of a gentle breeze, that is, of a humble salutation or prayer, can easily be bent; and when bent, it will bring with it its flower and its fruit.

Again, if anyone should salute some great or powerful man assiduously, though he were indignant and proud, he would not be so ungenerous as never to return his saluter's greeting, at least overcome by importunity, according to Sir. 41:25: *Be ashamed of silence before them that salute.* Will the mother of mercy, the humblest of women, be of a more indignant nature? Far from it. She returns the greeting by bestowing benefits. For it is quite probable and credible that if one should often repeat the angelic salutation to the blessed Virgin, namely *Ave Maria,* as far as *(p. 56) and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,* he would at some time bring back from the blessed mother, as a reward, that very blessed fruit.

But it should be noted that whoever wishes to salute or pray to the blessed Virgin worthily must first prepare his soul. Hence Sir. 18:23: *Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God.* Otherwise he will have to repeat his prayer, which is forbidden, Sir. 7:15: *Repeat not the word in thy prayer,* that is, pray so devoutly that there be no need to repeat. Gregory: "By which saying the wise man by no means forbids us to ask pardon often, but to repeat faults." As if he said plainly: when you have wept over ill deeds, never again do what you will have to lament again in your prayers. For the salutation of Mary, or a prayer directed to her, is less efficacious and useful when it is presumed upon by an unworthy person. Hence before the Lord teaches the disciples to pray (Matt. 6:1 ff.), he first gives instruction about the virtues. For as God does not hear sinners (John 9:31), so *praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner* (Sir. 15:9). In prayer we suggest what we lack, and we ask and seek compassion for our misery; but he does not merit this who has not known how to rejoice with another's glory. For thus we share with the heavenly Jerusalem on the principle of giving and receiving, when we bestow on it our congratulation, and it in turn bestows its compassion on us. And if we must rejoice with the joy of all the saints in order to have them propitious, we

must rejoice with the blessed Virgin more and more often, for whom the Lord made laughter, and all who hear laugh with her, as Sara said (Gen. 21:6), who prefigured Mary. Hence it is that this salutation is wont to be frequented by the faithful, and it is not folly for those who salute, if they show themselves worthy and prepare themselves for saluting.

That this salutation is acceptable to Mary is shown in that she is read to have been first saluted by the Angel, and he not standing outside, but entering to her. You too must be an Angel, and enter to her, if you wish to salute Mary worthily. Purity, charity, and humility make one an Angel; these three are found to be pre-eminent in the Angels. Purity, because as they are free of the flesh, so they are wholly immune from the allurements of the flesh. And as Jerome says: "To live in the flesh beyond the flesh is not a human life, but a heavenly one." Charity is proved in community of life, because the participation of the heavenly Jerusalem is *in itself* (Ps. 121:3), since no one there says that anything is his own, but all things are common to them. The humility of the Angels is proved in obedience and in ministry, in which, without murmuring, without contradiction, without deceit, they conform themselves to the Lord. Whoever does not show himself an Angel by these three virtues is not fit to be admitted to salute the Virgin in the heavenly chamber, in which Mary was taken up to the ethereal bridal chamber, in which the King of kings sits on a starry throne. These three the Angel recognized in Mary, and these three the glorious Virgin seeks to find in those who salute her. Hence, that she is called full of grace refers to humility, which alone merits by grace to be filled, for, as it is said in James 4:6, *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. The Lord is with thee* refers to charity, for God is charity, and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him (1 John 4:16). *Blessed art thou among women* refers to purity. And if you have these, and by these are an Angel, it is necessary that you be Gabriel, that is, "fortitude of God," so that you do not ascribe to your own fortitude whatever good you have, but to God's; and so entry to Mary will lie open to you. *(p. 57)*

Again, that not just anyone is worthy to salute so great a queen is shown by the Lord when, to salute her, he sent none but an Angel, evidently showing by this that whoever desires his salutation to be accepted by her must imitate the angelic life, as was said above: he must be peaceable, because among the Angels the greater does not oppress the lesser, but all stand in the highest peace and quiet. Let him also be humble, for an Angel does not disdain to guard man, who is earth and ashes, nor is he ashamed of it. Let him be obedient, that is, fulfilling the commands of the Lord. Let him be without envy, for *star differeth from star in glory* (1 Cor. 15:41), yet one does not envy another its brightness. Likewise an Angel does not envy the good of any companion, but rejoices with him. Bede attributes these properties to the Angels on that text of Exod. 25:8–9: *They shall make me a sanctuary … according to all the likeness of the tabernacle which I shall show thee.*

Note also that three things chiefly invite us to salute Mary: namely, the example of Gabriel, who is read to have been the first to salute her, even before she was the Mother of the Lord; the fruit of the return greeting, as above; and the leaping of John. For if she returns our greeting, the infant will exult in joy, that is, ineffable joy in the womb of our mind, so that we can say: *Behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy* (Luke 1:44). Hence the Apostle says, Rom. 16:6: *Salute Mary, who hath labored much among you*, by praying for you, by fleeing into Egypt, by enduring poverty. But how will you salute her? Frequently, faithfully, wisely. Frequently, because *thou art all fair* (Cant. 4:7). Isa. 23:16: *Sing well, frequent the song, that thou mayest be remembered.* Faithfully, that she be saluted with heart, mouth, and deed, lest the blessed Virgin be able deservedly to answer what is said in Isa. 29:13: *This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me*, etc. Wisely, that she be saluted with a right intention. For some nobles salute girls so that they can boast of their familiarity with them. So many salute Mary frequently that they may seem to love her; but such she does not salute in return, because she knows the hidden things of hearts, as she herself says, Sir. 24:45: *I will penetrate all the lower parts of the earth, and will behold all that sleep.*

Note that those not worthy to be saluted by us are the excommunicate, the man of another law, and the enemy. The devil is the excommunicate, who falsified the bull of the supreme Pontiff, that is, his own form, which was the seal of the likeness of God (Ezek. 28:12). Again, he was an arsonist of holy places, that is, of those two temples which God had made, namely Adam and Heva; for all the just are temples of God, as is said in 1 Cor. 3:17 and 6:19: *The temple of God is holy, which you are.* Again, he laid violent hands on a cleric, indeed on the Pope himself, that is, Christ. And because he has no superior from whom to seek absolution, and does not wish to seek it from that one, he therefore cannot be absolved. For this it is said, 1 Kings 2:25: *If one man shall sin against another, God may be appeased in his behalf; but if a man shall sin against the Lord, who shall pray for him?* That excommunicate salutes us when he suggests spiritual sins, in order to kill, as Joab killed Amasa by saluting him (2 Kings 20:9–10). He who gives consent to his suggestion returns his greeting, and becomes excommunicate. Rom. 1:32: *Not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them, are worthy of death.* The excommunicate, therefore, is neither to be saluted nor greeted in return. 2 John 10: *If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, (p. 58)* etc.

The man of another law is the flesh, whose law is contrary to the law of the spirit. Rom. 7:23: *I see another law*, etc. Of those who are of another law, some are Gentiles, worshiping idols, namely the motions of lust, who in their heart make male images and female, as Ezek. 16:17 said: *Thou hast made thee images of men, and hast committed fornication with them.* Others are Jews, who keep the law and the sacrifices carnally, that is, the motions of gluttony. Others are heretics secretly corrupting, that is, motions inclining to sin under the appearance of virtue or necessity. The first, that is, the pagans, are to be slain with the sword of abstinence. Ps. 44:4: *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty.* The Jews are not to be slain, but to be afflicted with hunger and misery. Heretics, however, are to be burned with fire, for it must be committed to the Holy Spirit to reveal in such persons whether their spirits are of God (1 John 4:1). This man of another law salutes when the flesh suggests pleasure. He who consents returns his greeting, and is made excommunicate. Sir. 9:4: *With a woman that is a dancer be not assiduous, and hearken not to her.*

The enemy is the world. Hence James 4:4: *Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God.* He salutes when he suggests riches or honors, saying with Judas, *Hail, Rabbi* (Matt. 26:49), and he kisses him, and betrays him at the same time; but he is not to be greeted in return by consent. Hence Ps. 61:11: *If riches abound, set not your heart upon them.*

The salutations of these three Mary did not receive, because she was humble and poor and a virgin, as has been said. And therefore the Angel rightly said to her: *Ave*, that is, without any woe.

Book II: How Mary Is to Be Served

Chapter 1. On forty special reasons why Mary is to be served

(p. 59)

For many reasons you ought to serve the Mother of God while you live, if you wish to live after death.

1. First: because the Son of God honors and magnifies his mother, according to what is commanded, Exod. 20:12: *Honor thy father and thy mother*, etc. For the mother of Christ by nature is the mother of the Christian people by grace. Therefore Christ himself says of his mother, Isa. 60:7: *I will glorify the house of my majesty*, namely Mary. And a little after, v. 13: *I will glorify the place of my feet.* The head of Christ is the divinity. 1 Cor. 11:3: *The head of Christ is God.* The feet by which he came to us are the humanity, whose place is the virginal womb; this place, as we are able, we ought to honor, because all the goods of pardon, grace, and glory have flowed and flow incessantly from there to us. Eccles. 1:7: *Unto the place from whence the rivers come, they return, to flow again*; that is, they ought to return through constant remembrance, through due veneration, and through thanksgiving, and this that they may flow again.

2. Second: because the Holy Spirit commands that Mary be honored, Ps. 98:5: *Adore his footstool, for it is holy.* (Look under the title that Mary is called footstool.) This footstool, literally, the three Magi adored, adoring the mother with the son (Matt. 2:11). To honor Mary, indeed, is to lay up for oneself eternal life. Sir. 3:5: *As one that layeth up a treasure, so is he that honoureth his mother*, that is, Mary. Eph. 6:2–3: *Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long-lived upon earth.* Our father is Christ, who begot us according as he is God (hence James 1:18: *Of his own will hath he begotten us*, etc.), and according as he is man bore us marvelously in the pains of the passion (hence John 16:21: *A woman*, that is, the human nature of Christ, *when she is in labor hath sorrow*, etc.). Hence he said, Matt. 26:38: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death.* Our mother is Mary, who, though she bore carnally only one son, was made in him spiritually the mother of a great multitude of sons, of whom Christ is the firstborn (Rom. 8:29). (Under the title that Mary is mother, you will find many things of this kind.)

(p. 60) **3. Third:** because whatever reverence and honor is shown to the mother redounds wholly to the son, and conversely. Hence Sir. 4:15: *They that serve her shall be obedient to the Holy One*, that is, Christ, who is the holy of holies (Dan. 9:24). *And them that love her the Lord loveth.* For as he who honors not the Son honors not the Father who sent him, so, on the contrary, he honors not the Son who honors not the mother who bore him. Jerome: “Surely the honor of the mother belongs to him who was born of her.” The same: “No honor of the mother is other than when he is rightly honored who deigned to be born of her.” The same: “There is no doubt that whatever is worthily bestowed upon his mother and solemnly rendered belongs wholly to the glory of Christ.” Blessed Bernard: “There is no doubt that whatever we utter in praise of the mother pertains to the Son; and again, when we honor the Son, we do not depart from the glory of the mother.” To signify this, that blessed woman who, lifting up her voice from the crowd (Luke 11:27), wished to praise the Son, said to him: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck*, understanding through the Holy Spirit that in the praises of the mother the son is praised.

Again, the same is signified in Cant. 2:1–2, where, after the son had praised himself, saying, *I am the flower of the field*, etc., he passes at once to the commendation of his mother, saying: *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.* By this he shows that his praise is the praise of the mother, and conversely. And he calls her “love” to show that, as all things are common to those who truly love, so the praise of each is common to both, and that after the praise of the son there follows, in the first place, the praise of the mother. Again, blessed Ildefonsus: “That I may become a devoted servant of the Son who was begotten, I faithfully desire to become the servant of the mother; and that I may be approved as serving the Lord, I seek,

as testimony upon myself, the dominion of his mother. For as what is served to the handmaid is referred to the lord, and what is spent upon the mother redounds to the son, so, in turn, what is applied to the nurse is for the nursling. Thus the honor that is paid in the service of the queen passes to the king."

4. Fourth: because through her and in her and from her the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is increased. Hence in Psalm 47:2: *Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, in his holy mountain.* For although in every creature God is great and exceedingly to be praised, yet he is said by name to be great and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, which is Mary, of whom it is said: *Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God* (Ps. 86:3). Alcuin: "In this city and on this mountain the Lord is great and exceedingly to be praised; indeed I say boldly, greater and more to be praised than in all creatures. For he who is not contained by heaven and earth, and who holds the world in his fist, was shut up in her womb; and from there he took that by which, obedient to the Father, he became obedient unto death: for which God hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names (Phil. 2:8–9). Let him say who thinks better. In nothing, indeed, does God seem to me greater than in that he humbled himself, made man; nor ever more praiseworthy than in that he became more merciful, who most manifests his omnipotence by sparing and having mercy. For this it is said of Mary, 1 Cor. 11:7: *The woman is the glory of the man.* And Prov. 12:4: *A diligent woman is a crown to her husband.*"

5. Fifth: because through her and in her and with her and from her the world has, and has had, and will have every good, that is, Christ, who is every good, and who has the highest good, and without whom nothing is good, who alone is good; hence he himself says, Luke 18:19: *None is good but* (p. 61) *God alone.* And without him no one is good, who was made all things to all men that he might save all (1 Cor. 9:22), and who in the future will be all in all, that is, the sufficiency of all. Or, "every good" can be said to be that threefold good which is Christ: the good, namely, of pardon, of grace, and of glory. Therefore human nature says of Mary, Wisd. 7:11: *All good things came to me together with her.*

6. Sixth: because when Mary is found, every good is found. Hence she herself says, Prov. 8:35: *He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.* Behold the life of grace in the present, and eternal salvation in the future; and in these two consists whatever is necessary. Therefore it is said of Mary, Prov. 18:22: *He that hath found a good woman,* that is, Mary, *hath found a good thing, and shall receive a pleasure from the Lord*: a twofold pleasure, of conscience here, of joy in the future.

7. Seventh: because she loves those who love her; nay, she even serves her servants, as will be shown below. Hence she says, Prov. 8:17: *I love them that love me.* But whoever is loved by the mother is loved also by the Son, and conversely, and consequently by the whole heavenly court. Hence Wisd. 8:2: *Her have I loved,* etc. (Look below, under the title that we owe love.) Therefore she says with the Son, John 14:21: *He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and of my Son, and I will love him*, etc.

There follows, in the first authority: *And they that in the morning early watch for me.* One must watch for Mary in the morning of grace, the night of sin having been put to flight. Again, in the morning, that is, with conscience renewed through penance. Again, in the morning, so that he who wishes to serve her may first go out from the night of sin. Again, one must rise in the morning of the day to celebrate her service. *They watch for me*, that is, for the sake of having and finding me. Again, *for me*, that is, for my service, which is to be sung watchfully and attentively. Hence many miracles are read to have happened.

There follows: *They shall find me.* A happy finding, to find the finder of grace, by whom, once found, every good is found. Sir. 32:18: *They that watch early for him shall find a blessing.* Therefore every just man ought to give his heart to watch early for the Lady by whom he was redeemed and reconciled (cf. Sir. 39:6). Again, Wisd. 6:15: *He that shall awake early for her shall not labor, or in vain; for he shall find her sitting at his door*, namely always ready to help, and knocking that she may enter. Hence he says in Apoc. 3:20: *Behold I stand at the door* of free will. The doors of the soul through which the grace of Mary enters the soul are the

fear and love of the mother and of the Son. At these doors Mary's piety sits, like a ray of the sun at a closed window, which, if it is opened, at once comes in. She sits also as doorkeeper and guard, lest the devil or sin enter our gates to slay and plunder. These gates are our exterior senses. Hence it was said to Abraham, Gen. 22:17: *Thy seed*, that is, the just, who are sons of Abraham, *shall possess*, that is, shall guard, *the gates*, that is, the five senses, *of their enemies*, that is, of the demons and the vices, by which they enter to slay the soul. Jer. 9:21: *Death is come up through our windows*, namely those of the senses. If it is asked about the doors of wisdom, her doors are the two Testaments. Again, Wisd. 6:16–17: *He that watcheth for her*, that is, for Mary or for wisdom to be obtained, *shall quickly be secure; because she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her*, that is, clean and humble. She goes about, that is, she fortifies on every side, lest the enemy have entrance by any part; *and in the ways*, when, namely, they imitate her, *she sheweth herself to them cheerfully.* The ways of hers are humility, piety, charity, *(p. 62)* truth, and the like, of which she with wisdom says, Prov. 8:32: *Blessed are they that keep my ways.* And of which it is said, Prov. 3:17: *Her ways are beautiful ways, and all her paths are peaceable.*

Again, of these she herself says, Sir. 24:25: *In me is all grace of the way*, namely that which leads to life, that is, to my Son, who is life. To those who keep and walk in these ways Mary shows herself cheerfully as they go out of this world; and in all the forethought which she gives for preserving the soul, she will run to meet them as a most faithful helper.

8. Eighth: because to serve Mary and to be of her household is the highest honor, the highest glory, and the highest usefulness. For to serve her is to reign, as Boethius says of the Lord; and to be guided by her reins is the highest liberty. Hence it is also said to her by the Son, indeed by the whole Trinity, Isa. 60:12: *The nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; and the Gentiles shall be wasted with desolation.* He says well, "desolation," because, deprived of the help of so great a mother, they are consequently deprived of the help of the Son and of the whole heavenly court. *But woe to him that is alone; for when he shall fall he hath none to lift him up* (Eccles. 4:10). But the servant of Mary, if he fall, shall not be bruised, because the Lady mercifully puts her hand under him; for she alone, after the Son, is the companion who can lift up the falling. Hence she says with the Son, Osee 9:12: *Woe to them when I shall depart from them; they shall be wasted.* Mary is pleasant for conversation. Hence Wisd. 8:9: *There shall be talk of my cares and griefs.* The Philosopher: "A fluent companion on the road is as good as a carriage." She is humble for ministering, which appeared when she ministered to Elisabeth, her inferior (cf. Luke 1:39). Rich for bestowing: Wisd. 8:9: *Knowing that she will communicate to me of her good things.* Powerful for protecting: hence her servant can say securely that word of Job 17:3: *Set me beside thee, and let any man's hand fight against me.* Wise for instructing, because she is the teacher of the wisdom of God. Prov. 13:20: *He that walketh with the wise shall be wise; a friend of fools shall become like to them.* Merciful for upholding: hence it is said of her servant in Psalm 36:24: *When he shall fall he shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth his hand under him.*

But of those who will not serve Mary, or who sin against her, it is said, Isa. 45:16: *They are all put to shame and confounded*, such as Jews, pagans, heretics, and blasphemers. Again, Sir. 3:18: *He is cursed of God that angereth his mother*, that is, Mary. She herself also says, Prov. 8:36: *He that shall sin against me shall hurt his own soul. All that hate me love death.* For he that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul (Ps. 10:6). Likewise Tob. 12:10: *They that commit sin*, etc. To such it is said, Baruch 4:8: *You have forgotten God who brought you up, and you have grieved your nurse*, that is, the Church, or Mary.

9. Ninth: because, drawing from the fountain of life which is with God, indeed which is himself, with the bucket of humble and devout prayer, she pours out abundant drops to her servants, especially if they have suitable vessels. (Look under the title on her mercy.) Hence she says with the Son, John 7:37: *If any man thirst, let him come*, etc. (Look under the title on the garden, § 6, where the garden is called thirsting.) And this obtaining of grace was prefigured in John 2:3, where, wine failing at the wedding, she obtained wine from the Son.

Nor does she only obtain grace, but she also preserves what has been obtained; and this is necessary, because, as Gregory says, the good is soon lost that is not guarded by the giver. For this reason the text of Sir. 17:18 applies to her: *He will keep the grace of a man as the apple of his eye.* Grace is compared *(p. 63)* to the pupil: because as the pupil is quickly injured, so the grace of God is easily lost. Again, because as the pupil is guarded most diligently, so also the grace of God ought to be guarded with all zeal and all diligence. Again, because as, with the pupil taken away, the eye is worth nothing, so a man is worth nothing without the grace of God. Again, the pupil is small and black; so, from its effect, is the grace of God, because it makes a man small and contemptible in his own eyes. Again, because as the pupil illumines the eye, so grace illumines our work. Again, because as a double pupil is necessary for a double eye, so a double grace is necessary for us, preventing and following. Hence Gregory: "May thy grace, O Lord, go before us and follow us," etc. Again, because as in the pupil the power of bodily sight consists, so in the grace of God the power of spiritual sight.

10. Tenth: because with the angered Son she most powerfully reconciles her servants and lovers; for *he will speak peace unto his people, and unto his saints*, etc. (Ps. 84:9). Indeed also upon all who suppliantly invoke her, as is plain in Theophilus.

11. Eleventh: because her kindness is such that no one need fear to approach her. (Look under the title on her kindness.)

12. Twelfth: because her mercy is so great that no one is repelled by her. (Look under the title on her mercy.) Fulbert of Chartres: "She who shone forth on earth, distinguished by the privilege of virtues, never ceases to be the patroness of the earth-born."

13. Thirteenth: because with gifts and charisms she builds up her servants, that they may become a worthy dwelling of her Son and of the Holy Spirit. Prov. 14:1: *A wise woman buildeth her house*, that is, her household. If you desire to be built up into a habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:22), take pains to be enrolled in her household.

14. Fourteenth: because with manifold virtue, as with a manifold garment, she adorns her servants, as was designated by Dorcas, who clothed the poor (Acts 9:39). For this it is written of her, Prov. 31:21: *She shall not fear for her house the cold of snow.* The cold of snow is the frost of sin. Hence Sir. 43:22: *The cold north wind bloweth*, etc. Or the cold of snow is the punishment of gehenna. Hence Job 6:16: *They that fear the hoary frost, the snow shall fall upon them.* This is said of those unwilling to do penance in the present. Frost freezes in the lowest places, and soon fails, and signifies temporal punishment, light and transitory. Snow falls from above, and signifies the divine vengeance, which will suddenly fall upon the heads of the wicked. Hence Prov. 1:27: *When sudden calamity shall fall on you*, etc. This vengeance, namely, lasts forever, as on Lebanon there are continual snows, as it is said in Jer. 18:14: *Shall the snow of Libanus fail from the rock of the field?* etc. Of such snows it is said again, Job 24:19: *Let him pass from the snow waters to excessive heat.* Or, these colds are the persecutions of the wicked, who are frozen by the blast of the North wind. Sir. 43:14: *By his commandment he maketh the snow to fall apace.*

There follows: *For all her domestics are clothed with double garments.* The domestics of Mary are specially those faithful, men and women alike, who, as servants and handmaids, spend themselves and what is theirs in her service, and, avoiding what they believe displeases so great a Lady, are moved, as far as they can, to everything that they believe pleases her. These domestics are clothed by the Lord, through the prayers and examples of Mary, in the present with double garments, that is, manifold ones, that is, various kinds of virtues: namely the byssus of chastity, the scarlet of twofold charity, the hyacinth of heavenly desire, and *(p. 64)* the purple of royal dignity. These garments are for beauty and splendor; hence the Lord says to the soul that loves and is the handmaid of his mother, Ezek. 16:10: *I clothed thee with divers colors.* Again: *surrounded with variety* (Ps. 44:15). If it is asked of the future, they are clothed, that is, they will be clothed with double garments, that is, with each stole. Hence Isa. 61:7: *In their land they shall possess double.* Or,

these doubles are the perpetual immortality of the body and the impassibility of the soul: immortality refers to the gifts of the body, impassibility to the gifts of the soul. On the contrary, those who neglect to serve Mary *are clothed with confusion as with a double cloak* (Ps. 108:29).

The garments of Mary's servants are faith and works. Faith is the inner garment, which adorns the soul before God. Works are the outer, which are done before the neighbor. Wisdom, to dash errors and repel heresies, and patience to endure tribulations. The charity of God and neighbor, because charity covereth a multitude of sins (Prov. 10:12; 1 Pet. 4:8). Works of mercy, bodily and spiritual, which, like a double garment, protect against the cold of hell. Meekness of heart and chastity of body. Hence we pray: "Freed from faults, make us gentle and chaste." The promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:8). Confession of sin and of praise. That confession is a garment, Psalm 103:1 says: *Thou hast put on praise and beauty*. To be imbued with the sacraments of Christ and formed by his examples. Here, to be helped by divine aid; there, to enjoy the vision.

Otherwise, the doubles are to be adorned with justice, which is to decline from evil and to do good. Likewise, chastity is twofold, of mind and of body. Hence it is said of the faithful soul, Apoc. 19:8: *It is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white.* In that it is said "white linen," a twofold chastity is noted. In that it is said "glittering," the diffusion of good example. In that it is said "it is granted," that no one can be chaste or continent of himself, but only by the gift of God. Hence Wisd. 8:21: *And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it*, etc.

Again, a double garment is good work, as though having a lining of right intention. For of those who do works of the kind that are good for vainglory or temporal reward, it is said, Isa. 59:5–6: *They have woven the webs of a spider … Their webs shall not be for garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works; for their works are useless works*, etc. Hypocrites, indeed, have cloaks, that is, singular and defective garments, because they do not work well with a good intention.

Again, a double garment, winter and summer. The winter cope is patience and humility, against the rain, hail, wind, and snow of temptations and tribulations. The summer garment is the virtues by which, in time of peace, they give themselves to good works, namely mercy, piety, compassion, and the like. Or, these doubles are changes of raiment, as the rich and noble are accustomed, at great banquets and solemnities, to put on new and precious garments, because it is not lawful to enter the palace or the king clothed in sackcloth (cf. Esther 4:2). For, according to the fitness of the solemnity, humility, devotion, and thanksgiving are to be put on at the Nativity of the Lord; at the passion, mourning, discipline, and compassion; patience at the feasts of martyrs; holiness at the feasts of confessors and virgins; so that the very habit may vary according to the variety of the feast. As may be seen in great churches in the dress of those who minister: in red for martyrs, in green or saffron or hyacinth for confessors, in linen for virgins. *(p. 65)* For these things the Lord says to the Church or to the faithful soul, Ezek. 16:10: *I clothed thee with changes of raiment* (the Vulgate reads *subtilibus*, "fine garments").

Again, from a threefold material she makes garments for us as well. From the hairs of little animals, that is, from wool, giving us the virtue of simplicity. From the barks of herbs, that is, from linen, giving us patience in tribulation, that is, for enduring tribulations. From the entrails of worms, ministering to us the entrails of piety, when, namely, from what we withdraw from our own entrails, of our food and drink, we refresh the entrails of the poor. And this is more precious than the others, as a silk garment is more precious than other garments.

She also bestows a many-colored garment, that is, one distinguished by diverse virtues as by threads. For "polymitus," according to Isidore, is the same as multicolored. For the garment of each one is his life: of the purple of discipline, of the byssus of chastity, of the hyacinth of heavenly conversation, of the scarlet of twofold love. Or, by purple understand piety, which is dyed in another's blood; but patience, in one's own

blood; and charity, in the Lord's blood; for with such threads the many-colored garment is woven. For he who attends to the works of one virtue only, that is, either chastity alone, or piety alone, or abstinence alone, has a garment of one color. But this does not suffice for the glorious Virgin, unless her friends and domestics, by her example, are surrounded with variety.

Again, by the prayers and examples of Mary there are acquired those garments which the Apostle enumerates, Col. 3:12 ff., saying: *Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy*, that is, warm garments; *benignity*, namely ample ones; *humility*, namely light ones; *modesty*, namely well composed; *patience*, namely strong ones, as of well-joined and firmly woven cloth; *bearing with one another*, namely things sometimes to be shared. Hence there follows: *And forgiving one another*, etc. *Above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection*, namely that they may be well colored, because charity is the form of the virtues, which gilds and colors the virtues, and that they may be well sewn together through love, which is the bond of perfection. There follows: *And let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts*, namely that they may be pleasant to the touch. Behold nine pairs of garments, with which those who are now adorned deserve to be joined to the nine orders of Angels. And with all these the blessed Virgin adorns her domestics, with which she herself has been adorned. Hence it is said: *Surrounded with variety.*

She clothes her servants also with the byssus of innocence and simplicity, the fine linen of chastity, and the purple of chastity. For this it is said of her, Prov. 31:22: *Fine linen and purple is her covering*, with which, namely, she is clothed, and with which she clothes her servants. Again, ibid., v. 24: *She made fine linen, and sold it.* Fine linen is a subtle and soft cloth made of byssus, and signifies the newness of holy conversation. This Mary makes for us, bestowing the grace of chastity, from which holy conversation begins. This garment also she in a way sells to us, when she bestows it on us, and is thence worthily glorified by us. This fine linen she also made for herself when she vowed chastity. Then she sold it, when through the vow of virginity she pleased the Son of God that he should be incarnate in her. Hence the Prophet says to her: *The king shall greatly desire thy beauty* (Ps. 44:12), that is, thy virginity.

Again, that such garments may be better fitted to her servants, she gives to each a girdle or belt of temperance, restraining depraved motions. Hence there follows, Prov. 31:24: *And delivered a girdle to the Chanaanite*, which is interpreted "emulator," or "zealot," or "prepared," or "trader." Or, Chananaean "changed," namely from vices to virtues.

Chapter 1 (continued)

(p. 66) A garment reaching to the heels, through perseverance. Gen. 37:3: Jacob made for Joseph his son a coat of many colors, reaching to the ankles.

White, without admixture of mortal stain, because the garment mingled with blood, that is, the body defiled by mortal sin, shall be for burning (Isa. 9:5). Therefore it is said, Eccles. 9:8: *At all times let thy garments be white.* Or, the garment mingled with blood is conduct polluted by lust. Apoc. 3:4: *They shall walk with me in white*, namely if they shall have been in white. And he speaks of those who have not defiled their garments, that is, their bodies, by the stain of mortal sin.

Seamless, through the integrity and unity of exterior conduct and interior intention, lest it be unsewn through duplicity, or pretense, or hypocrisy, after the example of the Lord's tunic (John 19:23). Again, Lev. 19:28: *You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh, nor make any figures or marks on you.*

Shining, through example; hence Matt. 5:16: *Let your light shine*, etc. For this reason the Angels appeared at the Lord's resurrection in shining garments (Luke 24:4), that after you have risen from sin your conduct may shine to others by example.

Fragrant, through the sweetness of reputation. Cant. 4:11: *The odor of thy garments*, etc. Gen. 27:27: *And immediately as he smelled the fragrant smell of his garments, blessing him, he said*, etc. Have such a garment if you wish to be blessed by the true Isaac. (Look for this fragrance a little below.)

Fine, through discretion and self-examination. Ezek. 16:10: *I clothed thee with fine garments.*

Warm, through charity. Job 37:17: *Are not thy garments warm*, etc. Prov. 6:27: *Can a man hide fire*, namely of charity, *in his bosom, and his garments*, that is, his conduct and manners, *not burn*, so as to warm those who touch them? This is the garment which Esther, that is, Mary, sends to Mardochai, that is, to the penitent clothed in sackcloth, by which servile fear is signified, with which one does not enter the palace of Assuerus, that is, heaven, as we read in Esther 4:2, 4.

Twofold, through the love of God and neighbor, or on account of chastity of heart, for which a double stole will be given. Hence above, Prov. 31:21: *Her domestics*, etc. But the old conduct must first be put off. Zach. 3:4: *Take away the filthy garments from him.* Again, the Epistle of Jude, v. 23: *Hating also the spotted garment which is carnal.* For otherwise a new conduct cannot be put on, like a new garment. But if this garment cannot be put off altogether, at least it must often be washed by penance. Isa. 1:16: *Be washed, be clean*, etc.

She also bestows on some a garment of sackcloth or haircloth, those, namely, to whom she inspires the grace of doing penance. Hence she can say with the Son that word of Isaiah 50:3: *I clothe the heavens*, that is, heavenly men, *with darkness*, that is, with the mournful habit of penance, *and I make sackcloth their covering.* She also clothed the Son of God, and hers, with the sackcloth of our mortality, clothed in which he did penance for us on the cross, and was so clothed with that sackcloth that it was wholly torn on the cross. Hence the Son says to the Father, Ps. 29:12: *Thou hast rent my sackcloth*, that is, thou hast permitted my sackcloth to be rent, that is, my flesh, with nails and lance. Of this sackcloth Job says, 16:16, in the person of Christ: *Sackcloth I have sewed upon my skin.*

She also bestows on some special ones of hers a garment made, as it were, of the same cloth with which she herself is clothed, of which it is said, Prov. 31:22: *She made for herself a garment of striped cloth*, etc. And this proceeds from the greatest affection of mercy, which is noted by this, that this authority is contained under the letter Mem (מ), which is interpreted “entrails”; for by this she shows us the greatest mercy *(p. 67)* of the entrails. *Stragula* is said from *stragos*, which is interpreted “ankle” or “variegated.” A striped garment, then, is conduct reaching to the heels through perseverance, variegated or many-colored like the tunic of Joseph (Gen. 37:3), on account of the variety of graces, gifts, or good works, so that such a soul may be said to be *surrounded with variety* (Ps. 44:15). Or, *stragulata*, firmly composed, as it were, with a variety of painting or weaving. And this the Gloss means: such as is commonly called embroidered. Or, firmly woven on account of the indissolubility of charity, which never falleth away, for many waters of tribulations shall not be able to quench charity (Cant. 8:7). Or, *stragulata*, that is, varied and of diverse colors, by which the diversity of virtues is signified, namely chastity, humility, patience, and the like. This is the many-colored garment of Joseph (Gen. 37:3). And it is called *stragulata* from *stragulum*, which is the cloth that is laid over a bed and a seat, and is called *tapelum* in French. Hence 4 Kings 8:15: *Hazael took a cover*, etc.

She made for herself, because she ought to begin with herself. *Fine linen and purple is her covering* (Prov. 31:22). Fine linen signifies white innocence, purple of a blood color patience. For when one suffers innocently after the example of the Lord, then his soul is elegantly adorned before the Lord. Or it is called a *stragulum* because it is suitable both for bedding and for clothing, as Isidore says. Or, the striped garment is the grace of the religious life, which consists principally in three things: in continence of the members, in obedience to commands, and in toleration of persecutions. For *stragulata*, as some say or wish, is said as if *triangulata*. The three angles are: devotion of mind, compassion for the neighbor, and mortification of the flesh. Or, three angles: the praise of God, one’s own usefulness, the example of the neighbor. The first is

toward God, the second toward the neighbor, the third toward oneself. He is clothed, therefore, with a striped garment who aims at these three in his words and works. In all these ways Mary made for herself a striped garment. For she had a variety of gifts and graces, of ministrations and operations, the manifestation of the Spirit, words of wisdom and knowledge, faith and the grace of healings, workings of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, kinds of tongues, interpretation of speeches, and other things of this kind which are enumerated in 1 Cor. 12. Again, she had differences of virtues, namely justice, prudence, fortitude, temperance, and all the rest, universal and singular. Again, she had differences of grades: for she was angelic with Angels, prophetess with Prophets, apostle with Apostles, martyr with martyrs, contemplative with confessors, virgin with virgins; and all these supereminently. Hence: *Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all* (Prov. 31:29). Again, she had differences of states: for she was virgin, married, and a widow when Joseph had died. Again, she had differences of lives: for she was active and contemplative, Lia and Rachel, Mary and Martha. Again, she had differences of merits and rewards: first a humble handmaid, at last a sublime queen.

It is said, therefore: *She made for herself a striped garment*, namely that she might be adorned by it, not for vainglory, but to please her spouse; for hypocrites make garments not to adorn themselves, but to sell for the price of human praise. Note that some books have: *She made for herself a stragula garment.* And this is the same as the many-colored garment, or samite, that is, woven of many threads. Of this we read, 4 Kings 8:15: *Hazael took a cover, or coverlet, and poured water.*

There follows, on the clothing of Mary and of the faithful soul: *Fine linen and purple is* (p. 68) *her covering.* By twisted linen understand the whiteness of conscience and the innocence of life. By purple understand patience. Or, fine linen is chastity, purple charity. Or, fine linen is virginity, purple martyrdom. Morally: fine linen, which comes to whiteness by many shearings, is the chastening of the flesh; purple, fitting for kings alone, is the contemplation of heavenly things.

15. Fifteenth: because she offers the prayers and sacrifices of her servants, and especially those that are offered to her, in the sight of the divine majesty. Hence blessed Bernard: “The hands of Mary are certain most white lilies, nor will that lover of lilies complain that he was not found among the lilies, whatever it be that he shall find among the hands of Mary. The gifts, then, whatever they are, that are committed to the hands of so worthy a bearer cannot displease the most high Trinity.”

16. Sixteenth: because as the Son is the mediator of God and men (1 Tim. 2:5), so she also is our mediatrix to the Son, because, namely, through her mediation the Son of God came to us, and through her as mediatrix one comes to the Son. To signify this, Christ dying had her from the North, by which sinners are signified, as though he himself were saying that, through her mediation, he would extend the right hand of his propitiation to sinners who were frozen, which he himself still does for us sinners, as the image of the crucified signifies. And note that not only on her side did he extend his right hand, but he also bowed his head crowned with thorns. As if he said: O you sinners, at the prayers of my mother I stretch out my right hand to you, and show you my head pierced with thorns. Let not the bitterness of compassion, then, be burdensome to those whom the right hand of propitiation delights. The left hand of God, who has nothing sinister in himself, is his anger. Hence: *He shall set the goats on the left, but the sheep on the right* (Matt. 25:33): in which is his propitiation. And Mary, by praying, obtains for us the propitiation of God.

Otherwise, the North is adversity. Jer. 1:14: *From the north shall an evil break forth.* To those who patiently bear the adversities of the world for the love of God, she is herself a mediatrix to the Son.

17. Seventeenth: because she is our advocate to the Son, as the Son is to the Father; indeed, with the Father and the Son she transacts our affairs and petitions. Hence we say to her: “Eia, our advocate,” etc. But we wretches, by evil works and perverse desires, contradict her, and, not without very great injury to the mother and the Son, we take away by our own deeds the effect of the mother’s prayers. Mary is also so prudent and

discreet an advocate that the Son cannot take vengeance on those for whom she pleads. This is signified in the deed of Abigail (1 Kings 25:24 ff.), who turned away David's anger from Nabal the fool by the subtlety of her words; Nabal signifies the sinner. Yet afterward Nabal was killed, because he would not amend. She is also designated by that wise woman who freed the city of Abela by her wisdom (2 Kings 20:16 ff.). (Look under the title on the wisdom of Mary.)

Note, then, that we have a manifold advocate in the court of God. The first is the Holy Spirit, who asks for us with unspeakable groanings (Rom. 8:26), that is, makes us ask, who is the love of the Father and the Son, and appeases the Father's wrath for us. The second is the Son of God, *always living to make intercession for us* (Heb. 7:25), who, as a good champion, shows the Father the stigmata of the passion. The Son also obtains for us from the Father the grace of the Holy Spirit. *(p. 69)* Hence he says, John 14:16: *I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete*, that is, comforter. And of this advocate it is said, 1 John 2:1: *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just.* Again, Rom. 8:34: *Christ Jesus who died, yea who is risen also again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* The Son, therefore, is our advocate with the Father, and obtains for us the remission of sins and the grace of the Holy Spirit, as has been said; and the Holy Spirit obtains the grace of groaning and of penance.

The third advocate is the blessed Virgin, especially before her Son, and she obtains for us, in general, every good. Indeed, we lacked an advocate with the Son before Mary was born. The Father said, Gen. 2:18: *It is not good for man to be alone*, that is, a single advocate, or mediator, or intercessor for the human race in heaven does not suffice, since it has so many and such dangerous cases before me. *Let us make him a help*, that is, the blessed Virgin, who may plead for the human race before the Son, as the Son before me. For this it is said of her in Psalm 88:38: *A faithful witness in heaven.* (Look under the title on the throne of Solomon, near the end of the chapter.) Of these two advocates, namely mother and Son, blessed Bernard says: "Man has a safe access to God, where he has the Son as mediator of his cause before the Father, and the mother before the Son. Christ shows the Father his side and wounds, Mary shows Christ her breast and paps. Nor can there be any refusal where these monuments of clemency and ensigns of charity meet and plead more eloquently than any tongue." To so great an advocate we owe the greatest fee of thanksgiving and salutation and the like. Of this advocate a certain holy man related that when some religious were singing that antiphon, "Hail, queen, mother of mercy," and said the words, "Eia then, our advocate," etc., many saw in spirit the mother of the Lord herself prostrate before the presence of her Son, and pray for the preservation of that whole Order.

The fourth advocate of ours is the Angel. Hence in Dan. 12:1 Michael is said to stand for the children of his people. The fifth advocate is almsgiving. Sir. 29:15: *Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil.* The sixth, prayer. Hence on that text of Psalm 87:3, *Let my prayer enter into thy sight*, the Gloss says: The great power of pure prayer is shown here, which enters to God as a certain person, and carries out there the mandate whither the flesh cannot come. He says, therefore: *Let it enter*, that is, let it not be kept out of the Church of heaven as excommunicate, such as is the prayer of the rich, who will not hear the poor or the law commanding mercy. Prov. 28:9: *He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination*, that is, it will not enter the Church of heaven in the sight of God, because the holy Angels do not bring in profane voices, nor does the doorkeeper of heaven admit leprous prayers. The prayers of Tobias, whose name is interpreted "the good of the Lord," were carried by Raphael before God (Tob. 12:12). In that it is said, *Let it enter in thy sight*, it is noted that prayer, like a person, is seen by the Lord, and is heard as a voice. There follows: *Incline thine ear to my prayer*. In the singular, because that one thing which is necessary is to be asked (Luke 10:42).

18. Eighteenth: because, to pacify the angered Son for those who suppliantly invoke her, Mary presents to him sweet words, as was said above, in respect of which the Son, delighted, *(p. 70)* is easily gentled. Isa. 11:8: *The sucking child shall be delighted* ineffably, that is, Christ, by the breast of his mother presented to him. There follows: *Upon the hole of the asp, and into the den of the basilisk, he that is weaned shall put his*

hand. For Christ, as has been said, delighted by the breast of his mother, stretches out the hand of grace to the wicked, who before had been the holes of the asp and the den of the basilisk. (You will find about the breasts of Mary under the title on the beauty of her members.)

19. Nineteenth: because, for the salvation of those who serve her, she can not only entreat the Son, as the other saints do, but can also command him with maternal authority. Hence we pray to her thus: "Show thyself a mother"; as though imperiously and with a mother's authority she should entreat the Son for us. (This you will find fully in her ninth privilege.)

20. Twentieth: because she is the tree of life to those who lay hold on her with special love and service (Prov. 3:18). The tree of life, that is, the tree whose fruit is the life of grace here, and of glory in the future, namely Christ the Lord. But this fruit is not for men in general, but only for those who have laid hold on her as with a double hand, namely love and service. And note that it says *laid hold on*, a verb which signifies a certain haste. For to lay hold is to seize something quickly and, as it were, violently; and what is thus seized, to hold firmly, and not easily to let go. Hence we may seem to say to her what Jacob said to the Angel in Gen. 32:26: *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* She must be held fast with us, as with two arms, namely tears and prayers. Hence of Jacob's wrestling it is said, Osee 12:4: *He wept, and made supplication to him*, etc. For by tearful prayer the blessing of Mary is obtained.

There follows: *And he that shall retain her perseveringly*, not turning aside after harlot pleasures, so that he can say of her as she of the Son, Cant. 3:4: *I held him, and I will not let him go*, namely cleaving to her inseparably, *is blessed*: here in hope, in the future in reality. Blessed, born for his good. Blessed, that is, well fitted in virtues. Blessed, because all things desired succeed for him in the future. Hence it is said, Wisd. 8:18: *In her friendship is good delight*; and therefore good, because eternal, for what is only temporal cannot simply be called good. Blessedness is the heap of all goods, which can in no way be taken away, as the Gloss says on Matthew.

21. Twenty-first: because often those whom the justice of the Son condemns, the mercy of the mother frees. This justice of the Son and mercy of the mother seem so to dispute, as though the justice of the Son said, *I will kill and I will strike*; the mercy of the mother answers, *And I will make to live, and I will heal.* The mercy of the mother also says what follows, Deut. 32:39: *And there is none that can deliver out of my hand.* Flee, therefore, under the protection of her hand, as Theophilus did, and nothing is to be feared; for she says, Sir. 24:6: *I covered all the earth as a cloud*, namely from the wrath of God, as from the heat of the sun. Therefore she also says of the Son, Cant. 3:4: *I held him*, namely lest he strike sinners, *and will not let him go*, but by the continual urgency of prayers I will restrain his fury. She is Abigail, whose prudence restrained David's fury, lest he avenge himself on Nabal the fool (1 Kings 25:24 ff.). And this is why the Lord complains, Isa. 64:7: *There is none that riseth up and holdeth thee.* Again, Ezek. 22:30: *I sought for a man that might set up a hedge, and stand in the gap before me in favor of the land*, that is, of the earthly sinner, *that I might not destroy it, and I found none.* That the Lord is held back by the prayers of the saints, he himself shows, *(p. 71)* speaking to Moses, Exod. 32:9–10: *I see that this people is stiff-necked: let me alone, that my wrath may be kindled*, etc.

22. Twenty-second: because, since she is the treasure of the Lord and the treasuress of his graces, she enriches most copiously with spiritual gifts those who serve her. Hence she says with Wisdom, Prov. 8:20–21: *I walk in the way of justice, in the midst of the paths of judgment, that I may enrich them that love me, and may fill their treasures.* That she is the treasure of the Lord is said in Wisd. 7:14: *She is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God.* (You will find all this sufficiently expounded below, under the title on the riches of Mary, after the treatise on her poverty.)

23. Twenty-third: because the confession of the virginal childbirth is made with the mouth unto salvation, and from it follows the blessing of God the Father. Hence in Psalm 66:4 ff.: *Let people confess to thee, O*

God; let all people give praise to thee. What is to be so earnestly confessed he adds, namely that *the earth*, that is, Mary, *hath yielded her fruit*, from whom and through whom eternal blessing is promised and hoped for us. Hence there follows: *May God bless us*, that is, the Father; *may God, our God, bless us*, that is, Christ, the true Emmanuel; *may God bless us*, that is, the Holy Spirit. On this place the Gloss says: This fruit, then, is Virgin from virgin, Lord from handmaid, God from man, son from mother, fruit from earth. (Look under the title on the earth.)

24. Twenty-fourth: because she most powerfully protects her servants from a threefold adversary, namely the world, the flesh, and the devil, to whom *she is terrible as an army set in array* (Cant. 6:3). (You have had much of this kind under the title on her name.) Therefore whenever you are tempted beyond your strength, you must cry to her: *Be thou to me, O Lady, a tower of strength against the face of the enemy* (Ps. 60:4). For as a little boy fearing a dog flees and cries to his mother, so whoever is vehemently tempted and fears the bite of the devil or of any temptation ought by prayer to flee back to the mother of piety. (Look for all this under the title on her name, and how she is a tower.)

And note that the blessed Virgin protects us in many ways. Hence she says to her servant, Isa. 44:21: *Thou art my servant.* And above, Isa. 43:2: *When thou shalt pass through the waters*, that is, tribulations, *I will be with thee, and the rivers*, namely of temptations and persecutions, *shall not cover thee.* Therefore he who devoutly serves her can say securely that word of Job 17:3: *Set me beside thee, and let any man's hand fight against me.* Again, presuming discreetly on her help, if we serve her, we can say that word of Psalm 43:6: *Through thee*, that is, through the virtue given to us by thee and obtained by thy Son, *we will push down our enemies with the horn*, namely flesh, world, and devil, we will fan away, that is, cast down like chaff. But note that winnowing is done with the hands, and there is a double motion, upward and downward, by which is figured the good work done to the honor of Christ and Mary and the usefulness of the neighbor. *Through thee*, by cleaving to thee closely, *with the horn*, that is, the fortitude of Christ incarnate in thee, according to Bede: because horn is harder than flesh and softer than bone; so neither did Christ appear wholly in his majesty, nor wholly in his humanity. *And in thy name*, that is, in the power of thy name, which is Mary, or in thy nameable power, *we will despise them that rise up against us*, namely the motions of sins rising within the heart; these those despise who repel them with indignation, but those do not despise them who look upon them and, as it were conversing with them, take delight in them. Prov. 16:14: *The wrath of a king*, that is, of a just man, *is a messenger of death*, that is, suggestions *(p. 72)* of the devil and motions of sin. For sin and the devil are the death that kills the soul. Of these messengers the king is angry, that is, he who rules himself well. Prov. 20:8: *The king that sitteth on the throne*, etc. We will despise them, I say, not presuming on ourselves, but on thy help. Another reading says more expressly: "In thy name we will trample down our adversaries." For this too the Prophet seems to say to the servant and lover of Mary: *The queen stood* (Ps. 44:10), that is, the blessed Virgin stood by thee, namely to help thee; *at thy right hand*, namely that she may obtain for thee things prosperous and salutary; *in gilded clothing*, that is, in the stole of soul and body, as is believed, *surrounded with variety* of graces, which she obtains and bestows for those who serve her. For she stands by the right hand of the poor in spirit, to save his soul from them that persecute it (Ps. 108:31).

Again, in the multitude and vehemence of temptations, one must say to her what King Josaphat said to the Lord, 2 Par. 20:12: *In us indeed there is not strength enough to be able to resist this multitude which cometh violently upon us. But as we know not what to do, this only we have left, that we turn our eyes to thee.*

Mary protects us as a tree does, under the shade of its branches and lilies. (Look under the title on the garden, § 9, where the garden is called shady.) Under the mantle of her humility and virginity. For humility and virginity are her wings; and these wings are broad by the fullness of each virtue, and of these wings we say to her: *Protect me under the shadow of thy wings, from the face of the wicked who have afflicted me* (Ps. 16:8–9). Again, elsewhere: *In the shadow of thy wings will I hope, until iniquity pass away* (Ps. 56:2). In the shadow of virginity, against the burning of lust; in the shadow of humility, against the wind of vainglory or

the tempest of pride; in the shadow of meekness, against the hail of anger. That anger is designated by hail you have in Wisd. 5:23: *Hailstones full of wrath shall be cast as from a stone-bow*. In the shadow of her motherhood, against the wrath of her Son. In the shadow of truth, of which she is the mother, against the snow of hypocrisy. In the shadow of prayer, against the rain of diabolical temptations; and so with the rest. (You will find enough about these in § 9, on the garden, where the garden is called secluded.) Under the shield of her patience, by example: *His truth shall compass thee with a shield; thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night* (Ps. 90:5–6).

By sending Angels to our aid. So she did for Basil. Hence: *He hath given his angels charge over thee* (Ps. 90:11). For Angels are her ministers and attendants by the command of the Creator. By fighting for us against our enemies. Hence the text of Sir. 29:16–17 suits her: *Better than the shield of the mighty, and the spear, it shall fight against thy enemy*, namely for thee. By tempering the heat of prosperity with the cold of adversity. By softening the bitterness of tribulation with the sweetness of consolation: like a wise woman, she puts into the pot of our heart, boiling with impatience, the water of consolation.

She also protects us with respect to her mercy as it concerns us, but to her justice as it concerns demons, vices, and sins. Hence what is said of the Son most truly suits her, Prov. 20:8: *The king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his look.* Likewise the queen, that is, Mary, sitting with the Son on the throne of paradise, looking upon the sinner with the eye of mercy, scatters by her look all evil, that is, a threefold evil: the evil, namely, of guilt, whose pardon she obtains; the evil of punishment, which she does not allow to be inflicted at once; and the evil of the devil, lest by tempting he prevail to harm as much as he desires. For by her mercy and wisdom she scatters the thoughts of the malignant, lest *(p. 73)* they be able to fulfil what they had begun (Job 5:12).

Chapter 1 (continued)

Therefore whenever we are tempted beyond our strength, we must cry to her with our whole heart: “Eia, our advocate, turn those merciful eyes of yours toward us.” And that word: *Be thou to me, O Lady, a tower of strength against the face of the enemy* (Ps. 60:4). Again, that word: *Look upon me, O Lady, and have mercy on me* (Ps. 24:16). *And let thine eyes*, namely faith and devotion, *be toward our Lady, until she have mercy on thee* (Ps. 122:2), that she may pluck thy feet out of the snare of temptation (cf. Ps. 24:15), that is, thy affections.

She protects also from the accusations of demons, who accuse the just in the sight of God day and night (Apoc. 12:10), that is, continually; or day and night, namely of dissoluteness in prosperity and murmuring in adversity. Of the devil it is said, Sir. 11:33: *Turning good into evil he lieth in wait, and on the elect he will lay a blot*, namely of vainglory. For who would dare to accuse before that Son one whom he sees the mother defending? And if Mary is for us, who is against us? And if she is the one who justifies, who is he that condemneth? (Rom. 8:31, 33–34). (Many things of this kind are found in the books of her miracles.)

She protects also from the accusations of detractors, and from the assembly of the malignant, and from the multitude of them that work iniquity (Ps. 63:3), as appears in the miracle of the pregnant abbess, whom the Virgin of virgins made a virgin again, after, at her command, the Angels had drawn the boy from her womb; nor in the birth did she need any other midwife. This boy, namely, she sent through the same Angels to be nursed by a certain hermit, and the boy afterward became a bishop. Therefore it is said of her, Wisd. 10:11: *In the deceit of them that overreached him she stood by him.* (Look a little below.)

She protects also from bodily fires, as appears of a certain Jewish boy whom his father threw into a burning furnace because he had adored the image of the blessed Virgin with the Christian boys. And the blessed Virgin appeared to him in the midst of the furnace in the form of the image which the boy had adored, and protected him under her mantle from the fire, and made the midst of the furnace as it were a wind of dew

blowing (Dan. 3:50). At the sight of this miracle many Jews were converted to the faith, and the boy's father was thrown into that same furnace and burned.

Christ also protects the servants of his mother, so that it may truly be said: *He that dwelleth in the aid of the most high Lady shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven* (Ps. 90:1).

Mary protects us also from bodily enemies, as is often read in her miracles, and from the seducers of souls. And that word of Wisd. 10:12 suits her, which is said of wisdom and can rightly be understood of Mary: *She kept him*, that is, her servant and lover, from enemies without and open, that is, from detractors, who try to take away his reputation, from heretics, who try to take away his faith, from tyrants, who try to take away his life; *and from seducers she defended him*, that is, from those who lie in wait secretly, namely the world, the flesh, and the demons. Of these the first tries to take away piety through avarice, the second chastity through lust, the third humility through pride. Behold six most cruel enemies, and a seventh through whom all the others fight, and without whom they do not prevail, namely one's own will. These are the seven nations which always assailed the children of Israel (Judges 3:1 ff.). Again, a little before, Wisd. 10:11 says: *In the deceit of them that overreached him she stood by him. Him*, that is, her lover; *of them that overreached*, that is, of the demons, who out of envy always strive to circumvent those who serve her; *she stood by him*, enlightening his eyes, namely, to foresee and beware of *(p. 74)* their snares, because she is an enlightener; *and made him honorable*, that is, purified like gold in the furnace through temptations and battles against the enemies mentioned above.

She protects also as a castle: for she is the castle (Luke 10:38), which is the refuge of the weak; and she is everywhere on earth the refuge of sinners. (Look under the title that she is a castle.)

She protects also as a temple, since she is the temple of the living God, the basilica of the true Assuerus, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, the Church, that is, the congregation and gathering of the Christian people, and the house of prayer. For the Church defends those guilty of blood, if they flee to her.

In fire, as above concerning the little Jew. Hence she says to her servant, Isa. 43:1–2: *Thou art mine … when thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burned.* In water, Isa. 43:2: *When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee*, as above at the beginning of this paragraph. For she is the ship that receives her friends shipwrecked in the waves of this sea. Hence she says, Sir. 24:8: *I have walked in the waves of the sea with my familiars*, namely as a ship, that I might snatch them from the shipwreck of sins, and, having snatched them, bring them to the port of their desire. (Look under the title that she is a ship.) She walks also in the waves of the sea, by consoling the sorrowful and gladdening the sad. In the air, from the assault of the aerial powers, as is often read in her miracles. On the earth, which is signified in Apoc. 12:16, where it is said in a figure of her: *And the earth helped the woman*, that is, Mary helped the soul devoted to her, which the serpent, that is, the devil, was harassing. Therefore she herself says, Sir. 24:9: *In every land I have stood*, that is, I have always been at hand to those who faithfully invoke me. Or, for her to stand on the earth is to confirm the just in virtue.

25. Twenty-fifth: because in Mary there is a refuge for those who, fearing the justice of God, shrink from approaching him directly. Blessed Bernard: "As the name of Jesus is honey in the mouth," etc. (Under the title on the name of Mary.) The same: "Why dost thou tremble to approach Mary?" (Under the title on the kindness of Mary.) Of this refuge the Psalm says, 103:18: *The rock*, that is, Mary, *is a refuge for the hedgehogs.* (Under the title on earth, where Mary is the rock.) Because of this refuge she is called the city of refuge, figured by the six cities of refuge (Num. 35:6–14). And well six: because sinners generally destroy themselves in six ways: through the vices of the heart and the corruption of the five senses. Three on this side of the Jordan, and three beyond the Jordan. The Jordan is baptism. Three on this side of the Jordan: because those who are tempted by the three concupiscences have to flee to her, that she may protect them and make them advance in good. Three beyond the Jordan: because through her they often return to pardon and obtain

grace and glory, who have crossed the Jordan, that is, who, seduced by the threefold concupiscence, have lost baptismal innocence. But note that those cities were set apart as a refuge for those who unwillingly had committed homicide; but now the mercy of God has been enlarged, and in Mary he has provided a refuge even for voluntary homicides. For she is the house of refuge, to save us (Ps. 30:3).

Again in another way: Christ is called the door of paradise, through which the sheep enter to the pasture of life (John 10:9). But the blessed Virgin is the window of heaven, as the Church sings to her. Hence:

Let the weeping enter like the stars; thou hast been made the window of heaven.

Now it is wont to happen at certain banquets that the poor, fearing the wrath of the doorkeeper, cry to the window, that something may be thrown to them. Now the saints and Angels are at table at the heavenly banquet, of which Isa. 25:6 says: *The Lord* (p. 75) *shall make a feast*, etc., where Christ is the door, and the doorkeeper his justice. If you dread it, cry to the window, which is Mary, by praying and by pleading your poverty, that at least from the crumbs of that banquet, where the dishes are full, she may throw you some little consolation, some fragments of graces.

26. Twenty-sixth: because she supplies food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. Hence it can be said of her as of the Son: *Cast thy care upon the Lady, and she shall nourish thee* (Ps. 54:23). For she fills the hungry with good things, and gives food to the hungry (Luke 1:53), saying with the Son, Jer. 31:25: *I have inebriated the weary soul, and every hungry soul I have filled.* We too can say to her what we say to the Son: *All expect of thee that thou give them food in season* (Ps. 103:27). Again: *Thou giving to them they shall gather up; thou opening thy hand, they shall all be filled with good. But if thou turn away thy face*, that is, the regard of thy mercy, *they shall be troubled*, etc. (Ps. 103:28–29). Again, elsewhere, in Psalm 144:15–16: *The eyes of all hope in thee, O Mary; and thou givest them meat in due season; thou openest thy hand, and fillest every living creature with blessing.* For she gives to her beasts of burden, that is, to those who carry the burdens of her Son's commandments, their food, namely the hay of the flesh of her Son, when through the mother's grace we have been made worthy of holy communion. This was prefigured in that she laid her newborn Son in the manger. It was as if she said to the ox and the ass, that is, to those designated by the ox and the ass, who are laborious and burden-bearing animals, "Eat; behold your refreshment." She gives also to the young ravens, that is, to the imitators of penitents, who are designated by ravens, and who faithfully invoke her.

Of her also, who is the strong woman, it is said, Prov. 31:15: *She hath risen in the night, as one ready and diligent, and hath given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens.* To rise in the night is to bestow aid in the darkness of the present life. Mary's household are those who give themselves wholly to her service, to whom she gives a threefold prey. A prey in themselves, when, namely, snatching from the devil those whom the devil himself had before snatched, she restores them to themselves, as is clear in Theophilus. For the sinner, as Augustine says, does not possess himself; therefore he is nothing. Again, when by her grace they subject the flesh to the spirit in themselves. She gives also a prey beside themselves, giving the grace to convert others from worldly allurements and to lead them back to the way of truth. A third prey she gives them above themselves, obtaining for them from the Son the grace of seizing the kingdom of heaven, which suffereth violence (Matt. 11:12).

Otherwise: *She hath risen in the night.* With what fruit? Namely a threefold one. The first, that she snatches some from the enemy, that is, the devil, as the Gloss says there. Hence, *a prey.* The second, that she incorporates those snatched from the enemy into the Church. Hence, *she gave to her household*, that is, to the Angels and the faithful, to whom she unites those whom she takes from the devil. The third, that she refreshes the same, indeed all the faithful, in many ways. Hence, *and victuals to her maidens.*

The first prey was that of the first man, in the active sense, who wished to seize divinity, as the Gloss says there: *What I took not away, then I paid* (Ps. 68:5). The second was the prey of the serpent, that is, of the

devil, who seized man the seizer. Hence it is also said to him, Isa. 33:1: *Woe to thee that spoilest, shalt not thou thyself also be spoiled?* The third, that of earthly man seizing. Job 12:6: *The tabernacles of robbers abound.* The fourth, that of Christ the man, who, descending into hell, snatched from the devil the first man, whom the devil had seized. Eph. 4:8: *He led captivity captive.* The fifth, that of man *(p. 76)* seizing men, as preachers do. Isa. 9:3: *They shall rejoice as conquerors rejoice after taking a prey*, etc. The sixth, that of the Spirit of God, who snatches away the spirit of man. Hence Acts 8:39: *The Spirit of the Lord took away Philip.*

There follows: *And victuals*, in the plural, Mary brings *to her maidens.* These are the victuals with which she refreshes her servants and handmaids, by her merits, prayers, and examples. Grace, by which she nourishes and fattens the soul. Hence Wisd. 16:25 says of the just: *Serving thy grace, the nurse of all.* Faith, by which the just man liveth (Heb. 10:38; Hab. 2:4). Hope, which is fed, and feeds her household, with the odors of paradise. Hence Mary also says: *My flowers are the fruit of honor and honesty* (Sir. 24:23), or, in another reading, *of fragrance.* Charity, which is called bread having in itself all sweetness (Wisd. 16:20), and which has become all things to all men. Good work. Hence John 6:27: *Labor not for the meat which perisheth.* The virginal flesh, which we receive in the sacrament of the Son: because the flesh of Christ and the flesh of Mary are one flesh. Hence 1 Cor. 6:16: *They shall be two in one flesh*, that is, Christ and Mary, in one virginal flesh. Therefore she says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger* (Sir. 24:29). Because whoever has tasted her sweetness desires to experience yet more of her.

Or otherwise: she is food and drink for those who imitate her, that is, her words and works. Hence she says: *He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded* (Sir. 24:30). Works. Hence: *They that work by me shall not sin* (ibid.). The imitation of works is twofold: either to work well by her example, and this is to eat; or by her example to extinguish in oneself depraved concupiscences, and this is to drink. Therefore she says: *They that eat me*, that is, who incorporate my way of life into themselves, *shall yet hunger*, because it produces not disgust but desire. For the holy way of life of anyone, when drawn into example, is food spiritually refreshing and nourishing. Hence, in John 21:15–17, it was said to Peter: *Feed*, namely by example. And therefore much more strongly does the way of life of the blessed Virgin feed, since she is bread having in herself all sweetness (Wisd. 16:20).

And note that this feeding with which Mary feeds us is wholly contrary to that with which our first parents fed their children, of which it is said in Psalm 16:14: *They are filled*, namely Adam and Eve, *with children*, that is, to the harm of their children. For the offspring still feel what their parents committed: *The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the teeth of the children are set on edge*, etc. (Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2). On that text of Job 3:13, *For now I should have been asleep and silent*, the Gloss says: If no corruption of sin had corrupted Adam, he would have begotten from himself no sons of hell. And *they left the remainder*, namely to their little ones. These remains are hunger, thirst, death, and the like. Wisd. 4:6: *For the children that are born of unlawful beds are witnesses of wickedness against their parents in their trial.* Morally, that is understood of the evil works of sinners, which are their children, and will bear witness in the judgment that their fathers ought justly to be condemned.

The victuals or dishes mentioned above, then, the blessed Virgin gives to her handmaids, that is, to the humble who serve her. (Look for the properties of a handmaid under the title on the appellations of Mary.) Let him, then, be a handmaid and serve the blessed Virgin who desires to be nourished with such victuals. And note that these victuals are given to these handmaids, as regards beginners, that they may grow. For the same the enemy is bound (cf. Job 40:24), as regards those making progress, by whom the devil is bound and conquered. They are also sent to preach, Prov. 9:3, as regards the perfect. On the contrary, to those unwilling to serve her she seems to say, Isa. 65:13–15: *Behold my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry: behold my servants shall drink,* (p. 77) *and you shall be thirsty: behold my servants shall rejoice, and you shall be confounded: behold my servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart,*

and shall howl for grief of spirit, and the Lord God shall slay you, namely Christ, my Son.

27. Twenty-seventh: because, since she is the mother of wisdom, which is the Son of God, she mercifully instructs her servants in the law. Hence it is said of her, Wisd. 7:27: *She maketh the friends of God and prophets*, that is, wise men. She herself says also, Sir. 24:46: *I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy, and will leave it to them that seek wisdom. Yet doctrine*, namely of poverty, humility, and chastity, *as prophecy*, that is, as a sign of the future. She pours out this doctrine more abundantly now that orders have been instituted in her honor, where the doctrine of virginity shines by the vow of chastity against lust, that of poverty by the renunciation of property against avarice, that of humility by the vow of obedience against pride: and this is the three days' journey in the desert of religion (Exod. 3:18). Again, the three days of the Lord's burial, in which man is buried together with Christ, by which the trinity of the mind is repaired, and one comes to the three days of reward.

But she poured out doctrine *as prophecy*, because by this the fall of the world and the glory of the kingdom are foretold. Joel 2:28: *Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy*, by entering religion, despising the world, panting for the kingdom. Again, Zach. 3:8: *Hear, O Jesus the high priest, thou and thy friends that dwell before thee, for they are portending men.* That Jesus the high priest signifies Christ, who offered himself for us on the cross. His friends are all the saints, who are portending men; for a portent is a sign. There follows: *And I will leave it to them that seek wisdom.* He says, to them that *seek*, not to them that have found; that is, to those who are in the zeal of seeking, not in the presumption of having. James 4:6: *God resisteth the proud.* Wisdom not of the world but of God, which James describes, 3:17: *The wisdom that is from above.*

Otherwise: *Yet doctrine*, that is, knowledge of figures, which she reveals by her grace to whom she will, when she will, and as much as she will. *As prophecy*, that is, without falsehood and with all truth. Indeed, because she first drank from the fountain of eternal wisdom, she can reveal to whom she will the secrets of the mysteries of God. For she is Rebecca, who gave Eliezer and the camels to drink from her pitcher (Gen. 24:18–20). Serve devotedly, therefore, the mother of wisdom, and she will feed thee with the bread of life and understanding, and with the water of saving wisdom will give thee to drink (Sir. 15:3). Which wisdom, namely, foolish men shall not lay hold of, and men of sense shall meet it (Sir. 15:7).

28. Twenty-eighth: because if her propitiation has withdrawn from thee on account of thy sins, as soon as thou repent she will return to thee. Hence she says with the Son, Zach. 1:3: *Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you.* Hence also, desiring our conversion to herself and her Son, she says with the Son to the sinful soul, Cant. 6:12: *Return, return, O Sulamitess*, etc., *that we may behold thee*, namely with the regard of mercy. For an example which Peter Damian narrates, of how her propitiation returned to certain brothers who had omitted her service, look below, under the title on not omitting her office or service.

29. Twenty-ninth: because our salvation is in her hand, so that we Christians can say to her much more truly than the Egyptians said to Joseph, Gen. 47:25: *Our salvation is in thy hand.* Let our Lady only look upon us, and we will gladly serve the king her son. For she can truly be figured *(p. 78)* by Joseph, who is understood as "increase" or "increasing": because to her there accrued the grace of fruitfulness above the grace of virginity. Therefore it is said of her, Sir. 26:19: *Grace upon grace*, etc. For she is the cause of the salvation of the human race, and in a way the reason and the completion, after her Son, of all things that were made and that shall be.

Chapter 1 (continued)

30. Thirtieth: because by serving her the days of grace and glory are acquired. Hence she says to her servant, Prov. 9:11: *By me shall thy days be multiplied, and years of life shall be added to thee.* Hence also of her servants and children it is said: *Full days shall be found in them* (Ps. 72:10). Prov. 3:16: *Length of days is*

in her right hand, with which she rewards those who serve her out of charity; *and in her left hand riches and glory*: for with riches and worldly glory perhaps some who serve her are rewarded, though they are worthy of eternal retribution. It was well said, in other words, to Nabuchodonosor, who had carried out the vengeance of the Lord on Tyre: *Because thou hast served me in Tyre, I will give thee Egypt* (cf. Ezek. 29:18–20). For no good is unrewarded.

31. Thirty-first: because after the Son, Mary is the Lady of the whole creation; hence "Domina" is interpreted "Lady," and therefore she is to be served as Lady. Therefore the whole blessed Trinity seems to have said to her that word of Isaiah 45:14: *The labor of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to thee, and shall be thine.* By all these is signified Mary's power over the just whom she protects, and over sinners whom she converts. *The labor of Egypt*: sinners laboring in the vices of the world. Jer. 9:5: *They have labored to commit iniquity.* Egypt means darkness or sorrow. Darkness, because love of the world blinds. Hence Tobias was blinded by the dung of swallows (Tob. 2:11). The swallows are the saints, because they regard temporal things as dung, with the Apostle (Phil. 3:8), that they may gain Christ; and by this dung, namely, the lovers of the world are blinded. Sorrow: Prov. 14:13: *Mourning taketh hold of the end of joy. The merchandise of Ethiopia*: this fits the avaricious, who have their souls for sale (Sir. 10:10). Of Ethiopia, on account of blackness, because the heat of avarice blackens and scorches them. *Sabeans*, or Saba, "captive": these are the proud, whom the king of pride makes captive (Job 41:25). *Men of stature*: before they were converted and given to Mary, namely through pride; afterward made lofty through their life: *shall come over to thee, and shall be thine*, namely as servants and tributaries, day by day rendering thy service, and paying as it were a tributary tax. There follows in the authority of Isaiah 45:14: *After thee*, as young maidens after the queen, handmaids after the lady, *they shall walk*, namely from virtue to virtue, until they see the God of gods in Sion. *In chains shall they go*: for it is necessary for the servants of Mary to have their hands bound with the manacles of the commandments of God, lest they stretch them out to unlawful things. *And they shall adore thee, and make supplication to thee*, mighty in respect of thy mercy, and saying: *Only in thee is the true God.*

32. Thirty-second: because he who loves and honors the mother of the Lord can securely ask mercy from her Father and Son. Hence in Psalm 25:8 he says to the Father or the Son: *Lord, I have loved the beauty of thy house*, which consists in virtues and gifts of graces and privileges of merits. This house is the blessed Virgin. Hence Prov. 9:1: *Wisdom hath built herself a house, … and the place of the habitation of thy glory*, that is, of thy Son: because a wise son is the glory of his father (cf. Prov. 10:1). This place is the virginal womb. And he says well *the place of the habitation of thy glory*, that is, the virginal womb where thou didst dwell gloriously, and *(p. 79)* which by dwelling in it thou madest glorious. Cassiodorus on the Lord: "Whatever he deigns to inhabit is made glorious." And he adds, Ps. 25:9: *Destroy not my soul, O God, with the wicked.*

33. Thirty-third: because through the incarnation of the Word, which was accomplished in her, the sinful soul returns to the unity of the Church. Hence, Jer. 31:21–22: *Return, O virgin of Israel, return to these thy cities. How long wilt thou be dissolute in delights, O wandering daughter? For the Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth: A woman shall compass a man.*

34. Thirty-fourth: because through Mary, and through the Christ whom we had through Mary, whatever we had lost through Adam and Eve has been restored to us. Blessed Bernard: "One man and one woman did us grievous harm; but through one man and one woman all things are restored, and not without great increase of graces. For not as the offence, so also the gift; but the greatness of the benefit exceeds the estimate of the loss. Christ indeed could have sufficed, since our sufficiency also is from God; but it was not good for us that man be alone. It was more fitting that both sexes should be present at the restoration, since neither had been absent from the corruption." Therefore it is said, Sir. 33:15: *Two against two, and one against one.*

Master Richard of St Victor: “Through the childbearing of Mary the human race received back what it lost in the first parent; and he is cast down who first cast down, and he is raised up who first was cast down. And man has recovered his honor. And our reproach was taken away by her Son. But what reproach, you say? That of which we read, Ps. 48:21: *Man, when he was in honor, did not understand*, etc. For man was made to the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26): a great honor. But he did not understand, and therefore he despised. But having despised and rejected the likeness of God, he transfigured himself to the likeness of a beast. Behold what disgrace. According to the greatness of the honor is the greatness of the dishonor; hence reproach, hence insult. And justly indeed *the reproaches of them that reproached fell upon him* (Ps. 68:10). Therefore in the person of the human race the Prophet cries to the Lord: *Take away from me reproach and contempt* (Ps. 118:22). And he was heard when God conformed himself to that human likeness into which man had transformed himself, who had cast away the divine likeness; and God became as one of us by reason of his humanity. And what had been said ironically of Adam, *Behold Adam is become as one of us, knowing good and evil* (Gen. 3:22), the Father and the Holy Spirit can now say in earnest of the second Adam, namely Christ the man: *Behold the second Adam is become as one of us, knowing good and evil*, by reason of his divinity.”

35. Thirty-fifth: because from her childbearing and conception there has accrued to human nature a wondrous prerogative and dignity, from this, namely, that the Son of God, about to redeem the world, did not assume angelic nature, but human, in her and from her. Heb. 2:16: *For nowhere doth he take hold of the angels*, etc. And this had been prefigured in Gen. 28:1–2, where we read thus: *Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, saying: Take not a wife of the stock of Chanaan, but go, and take a journey to Mesopotamia of Syria, to the house of Bathuel, thy mother’s father, and take thee a wife thence of the daughters of Laban,* (p. 80) *thy uncle.* And these are the words of God the Father to the Son about to take flesh. Chanaan, as they say, is interpreted “possessing a house,” and signifies the Angels, who in the heavenly house always stand by the Lord; from their stock God the Father did not will that the Son should join to himself a wife, that is, assume nature. Mesopotamia is interpreted “raised up,” Syria “sublime.” This is human nature, raised up and made sublime from the time the Son of God assumed it to himself. But he is sent not to just any house, but to the house of Bathuel, that is, to the blessed Virgin; for Bathuel is interpreted “Virgin of God,” or “chaste to God,” because this privilege was kept for the blessed Virgin. And there he took a wife of the daughters of Laban, which is interpreted “whitening,” that is, from the purest and cleanest blood of the blessed Virgin he took flesh, as Damascene says; and he willed to be born of a Virgin to denote that he, a virgin himself, would join to himself a virgin Church. 2 Cor. 11:2: *I have espoused you*, etc. And from this the greatest dignity accrued to human nature, which before was vile, and cried to the Lord, Lam. 1:11: *See, O Lord, and consider, for I am become vile.* But after the incarnation it says to Christ: *With glory thou hast taken me up* (cf. Ps. 72:24), *and I am made glorious*; as an ignoble woman is lifted up when she is taken in marriage by a noble man. And this is why every sin after the incarnation of the Savior is graver than before: as it is more disgraceful for a noble man to act basely than for an ignoble one. Indeed, human nature through Eve had been laid beneath the feet of Satan, but now through Mary it has been exalted above the Angels; and she whom the devil had drawn into destruction through Eve now, through Mary, surpasses the merit of the Angels; and she who through Eve was made ignominious has been made glorious through Mary above the Angels. For through Eve death had entered into the world (Wisd. 1:24); but death was destroyed by the childbearing of Mary. Hence the Son says, Osee 13:14: *O death, I will be thy death*, etc.

Again, this marriage mentioned above was signified by the marriage of Esther and Assuerus. Assuerus, which is interpreted “blessed,” is Christ. Esther is “hidden” or “exalted.” For this is human nature, before hidden from God by the sin of Adam and Eve, but ineffably exalted when it was assumed by Christ. Hence Peter: “The Word of the Father wished to be wedded; flesh could not wed higher, nor more gloriously.” Man too was exceedingly magnified by this marriage. Wondering at it, Job says to the Lord, 7:17: *What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him*, etc.? And Ps. 8:5: *What is man, that thou art mindful of him?* namely, for

him, by incarnating the Son; for before, the Father seemed to have forgotten man. Hence in the person of the ancients David said, Ps. 12:1: *How long, O Lord, wilt thou forget me unto the end? How long dost thou turn away thy face from me*, that is, thy Son? Therefore he prayed, Ps. 105:4: *Remember us, O Lord, in the favor of thy people*, that is, in the Son; *visit us with thy salvation*, that is, in the same Son.

36. Thirty-sixth: because, wishing us to obtain the victory so that we may come to the crown, knowing that none is crowned except he who has lawfully contended (2 Tim. 2:5), she procures strong battles and temptations for her lovers, and at times permits them to be afflicted; but she *makes with the temptation also issue*, that they may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13), and supplies them with strength to reach the crown. For she it is who by her prayers, merits, and examples gives strength to the weary. And to those who are not according to their own estimation, that is, the humble, she multiplies fortitude and strength (Isa. 40:29). Hence that word of Wisd. 10:12 can be understood of her: *She gave him a strong conflict*, that is, to her lover, that he might conquer and *(p. 81)* acquire the crown, which is promised to the victors in temptations alone; and that he might know by experience that wisdom is mightier than all, that is, Mary, who is emphatically called wisdom.

37. Thirty-seventh: because those who serve her in the present will see her most glorious face in the future. Hence Job 33:26 says of Mary: *He shall be gracious to him*, namely to her servant, *and shall see*, namely the servant himself, *her face with joy.* Apoc. 22:3–4: *His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face*, etc. Wisd. 6:17: *In the ways she will shew herself to them cheerfully.* And this showing in the present, by grace, is for faith. Walk, therefore, in her ways, which are humility, purity, piety, poverty, obedience, and the like; and she will meet thee in the future as a mother honored (Sir. 15:2). Of such ways it is said, Prov. 3:17: *Her ways are beautiful ways*, that is, clean from all sin, *and all her paths are peaceable*, because her highest zeal is to make peace between her Son and sinners. (Look under the title on her ways.) We must therefore ask her constantly to teach us her ways and to make us walk in her paths (cf. Isa. 2:3). He who keeps to these in the present, his eyes shall see the queen in her beauty (cf. Isa. 33:17). And those who imitate her shall be on her side (Wisd. 2:25). For she seems to say to the Son, as the Son to the Father (cf. John 12:26; 17:24): *Son, I will that where I am, there also my minister be.* But Mary must be asked to be willing; for if she wills, it must needs be done, as Augustine says of the Lord.

38. Thirty-eighth: because she will reward those who serve her with the glorious fruit of her womb, as she is depicted in her images holding the Son, as though to give him to her servants, since she is the propagator of workers. Hence Ps. 126:3: *Children, the reward, the fruit of the womb.* Commending this fruit, that she may be served the more eagerly in order to have it, she says, Prov. 8:19: *My fruit is better than gold and precious stone, and my produce than choice silver.* On this account we must say to her continually: *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* For about a thing greatly commended and praised, not by flattery but by truth, those whose thing it is willingly give to its commenders, as with good wine and the like. But, alas, the filthiest Venus has more servants than the purest Mary.

39. Thirty-ninth: because she protects the souls of her servants, as they depart from their bodies, from the assault of the aerial powers, to whom she is terrible as an army set in array, as is often read in her miracles. *For they that hate us flee from her face* (Ps. 67:2); and she rising up to help us, her enemies and ours are scattered. For she guards, after the example of the Son, the souls of her servants, and will deliver them out of the hand of the sinner (Ps. 96:10). Hence Wisd. 10:9: *Them that observed her she delivered from sorrows.* Ibid., v. 12: *She kept him from his enemies*, etc. Prov. 4:6: *Forsake her not, and she shall keep thee: love her, and she shall preserve thee*, as above (no. 24).

40. Fortieth: because she will glorify in the future those who serve her and honor her in the present. Hence she says with the Son, 1 Kings 2:30: *Whosoever shall honor me, I will glorify him; but they that despise me shall be despised.* For she is the gracious woman who found grace and glory, not only for herself but also for us: for our Lady will give grace and glory after the example of the Son. But of those who despise her service,

unwilling to pray to her or to praise her, the Son seems *(p. 82)* to say to her that word of Jeremiah 7:16: *Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither take to thee praise and prayer for them, and withstand me not: for I will not hear thee.* This is signified in this, that Solomon did not hear his mother when she prayed for Adonias (3 Kings 2:17–25).

Chapter 2: How the blessed Virgin served us in the Son

1. Now that the manifold reason has been assigned why the rational creature, man and Angel too, ought to serve the mother of the creator, it remains to assign whence, and how, and by whom, and of what sort, she is to be served. Mary indeed, as has been said, is the tree of life to those who lay hold on her, as with a double hand, by love and service. And as a fruitful tree, not knowing how to remain sterile, yields fruit to all and each of its branches and leaves that possess it, so Mary has borne and rendered the fruit of life to the whole world, and most of all to her servants and special ones, and to all and each of their members, as we shall show below, as if by way of anticipation. And by the streams of graces which she continually draws from the fountains of the Savior, and never ceases to pour back on her friends, they too bring back the fruit of life, by the taste of which their desire will be satisfied forever. And on this account she seems, as it were, to threaten, with the Son, those who neglect to serve her in the present, Isa. 65:13: *Behold my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry,* and much besides.

We ought therefore also to render some special service to each of Mary's members, *that the streams may return to the place whence they go forth, to flow again* (Eccles. 1:7). For this it is first necessary to keep all our members from the contagion of sin, and to devote them to her service, praying to her earnestly and devoutly, that she may by her grace restrain our members from sin in the present, and, supplying the grace of working well, glorify them in the future. But let us also see, by even a slender consideration, how Mary's members served us in the little one who was born to us according to his humanity (Isa. 9:6), and in the Son of God who was given to us according to his divinity. Let us investigate besides how she continually serves us, most unworthy and ungrateful as we are, although the human mind cannot grasp it, nor the tongue of man, however eloquent, suffice to recount it. For such service is very necessary to humble us, since even the most just man could not answer her with even one in a thousand (Job 9:3).

Indeed, from the heart of the blessed Virgin proceeded faith and consent, through which two the salvation of the world was begun; and her heart itself, before all creatures, was found worthy to be the first to receive the Only-begotten of God as he came forth from the paternal heart, when, namely, the heart of the Father uttered a good word (Ps. 44:2) *(p. 83)*, which, going out from the bosom of the Father, received itself into the bosom of the Virgin mother.

Chapter 2 (continued)

Again, in her heart and womb *mercy and truth met each other,* when divine justice extended the saving kiss to peace (Ps. 84:11). Again, her heart, sweet and most loving beyond what can be said, was embittered by the crucified Son, and the whole channel of her soul was filled through compassion with the torrent of the passion; her soul, namely, was then wounded for our iniquities, and in its own way was bruised for our sins (Isa. 53:5). For she then bore our sorrows and the Son's, and our infirmities and the Only-begotten's, in the bowels of inmost piety. For then *every wound was the sadness of her heart* (Sir. 25:17). By the exceeding charity with which she was wounded, she gave her Only-begotten for our sins, and the fruit of her womb for the sins of our souls (Mic. 6:7). Then was fulfilled what God had foretold of the first woman, in a figure of Mary, as though speaking of the second Adam, Gen. 2:18: *It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself.* For God the Father did not wish, if one may so speak, that the human race be saved and the devil condemned by the death of the Son alone; but he had determined to deliver Sisara into the hand of a woman (Judg. 4:22), and that one Hebrew woman should bring confusion on the house of

Nabuchodonosor (Judith 14:14). (On this matter you had above, reason thirty-four.)

As for what Isaiah had foretold in the person of Christ, 63:3, *I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me*, it must be understood thus, and can safely be so expounded: It is true, Lord, that there is not a man with thee, but one woman stands by thee crucified, who, whatever wounds, whatever sores, whatever sorrows thou feelest and takest in thy body, by compassion takes into the bowels of her heart; and as the cruel lance pierces thy side, so all the swords of thy sorrows pass through her soul. Thus it is clear how much this woman cooperated in the salvation of the world. For when the Son laid down his life for the salvation of the world, the mother, although she did not lay down her life for the world, yet exposed it, and did what she could; she did not fail bodily martyrdom, but bodily martyrdom failed her. Since she is exceedingly compassionate, from the same heart she has compassion on us who grieve and are afflicted, and most of all if she find us condoling with her and compassionating the sorrows that passed through her soul while the Son suffered, as was said above.

Of the earth of her body the Most High created the medicine of flesh and soul, namely Christ the man (Sir. 38:4). He *bore our infirmities in his body upon the tree, and himself carried our sorrows* (Isa. 53:4), that is, carried them away, namely sins, which are the causes of sorrows. For Christ, as a certain Gloss says on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 7:26, drew from his mother not the heat of the wound but the material of medicine. Again, from the virginal substance of her body the supreme pontiff took the victim of his flesh, which on the altar of the cross, with his hands raised on the cross, he offered as the evening sacrifice, and whose sweetest odor soothed the anger of the Father. Again, her body is the land of Hevilath, from which sprang the best gold (Gen. 2:11), namely the flesh of Christ, by whose inestimable price all the just have been enriched and redeemed. (Look under the title on earth.) We are also fed and given drink with the flesh and blood of the Son in the sacrament: because the flesh of Christ and the flesh of Mary, as of mother and son, is one flesh. Gen. 2:24: *They shall be two in one flesh*, Christ, namely, and Mary.

On account of these four things and many others *(p. 84)* blessed Tobias had foretold to the holy city Jerusalem, under the figure of Mary, as though speaking of all the faithful: *Thy land*, that is, the virginal body, *they shall have for sanctification: for they shall call upon a great name in thee. Cursed shall be all that shall despise thee, and condemned shall be all that shall blaspheme thee; and blessed shall they be that shall build thee up*, namely love thee (Tob. 13:11 ff.).

By simple hearing she received, for our salvation, the message of Gabriel, namely *Hail, Mary, full of grace.* And from her hearing our restoration took its beginning, that the remedy might enter where the disease had crept in, and that life might follow death by the same tracks, light darkness, the antidote of truth the poisonous lie of the ancient serpent, and that the ear might become the door of life by which death had entered the world. Through Mary's hearing, too, joy and gladness are promised to our hearing.

Again, through Mary the Lord hears the poor in spirit. Hence we say to Christ: *Thine ear hath heard the preparation of their heart* (Ps. 9:38), that is, of the humble; thine ear, that is, the blessed Virgin; because through her as mediator thou hearest the poor, as a man hears by means of his ear. (On this matter you will find something a little below, under the title that we owe obedience to Mary.)

The eyes of Mary, dove-like and merciful, were, by the abundance of tears while the Son suffered, like the pools in Hesebon (Cant. 7:4); so that, with the fourfold stream that flowed from the body of Christ, namely of sweat and weeping, of water and blood, the tears of the blessed Virgin being added as if in fifth place, the foulness of souls might be removed. These eyes also look upon the poor in spirit, and are to them like a flame of fire (Apoc. 1:14), enlightening and warming, terrifying and burning up. For a flame does these four things. The glorious Virgin enlightens her lovers to the knowledge of truth, and inflames them to the love of good; their adversaries she terrifies from them by hard threatening, and the unrebuked she burns up with the fire of hell. Read her miracles.

Again, *the eyes of the Lord are upon the just* (Ps. 33:16); the eyes of the Lady are upon sinners and the just, as the eyes of a good mother upon her child, lest he fall, or if he fall, that she may raise him up. Hence she says to her servant: *In this way wherein thou shalt walk I will fix my eyes upon thee* (Ps. 31:8). Be humble, therefore, that the eyes of Mary may look upon thee; for of Behemoth we read that *he beholdeth every high thing* (Job 41:25).

Her nose, that is, discretion, is to us *the tower of Lebanon, which looketh against Damascus* (Cant. 7:4). Damascus is interpreted "drinking blood," and figures the devil, who continually thirsts for the blood of our souls, in which is their life. The discretion of the blessed Virgin, sensing the malice of the devil like a certain stench, continually looks against him for us, and manfully opposes herself to him for us like a tower; and by the powerful whiteness of chastity, which is signified in Lebanon, she crushes carnal concupiscence like the head of the serpent. This nose, too, is to us the way of the spirit, that is, of the grace of God, which is given to us by her merits and prayers, and it supplies the breath of hope to desperate sinners. By the ministry of this nose, also, the vices of our mind are purged, as by the nose the humors of the head; and she bestows on her friends the grace of discerning between aromas and stenches, by which vices and virtues are designated. (You will find many other things under the title on the nose.)

Her lips are comparable to a dripping honeycomb (Cant. 4:11), for their honey-flowing sweetness, in which the Holy Spirit poured out the abundance of the several charisms; they offered to the Son *(p. 85)* of God, and to her own Son, the sweet kisses of the divine and human covenant. For with regard to that response, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc., it was said to her in Psalm 44:3: *Grace is poured abroad in thy lips*, etc. Which is thus expounded: Grace collectively, that is, the whole of graces, *is poured abroad*, that is, not only poured forth for thee, but diffused, that is, abundantly distributed to the whole world through thee: *in thy lips*, that is, in thy response, by which the world was reconciled to God the Trinity, men who were before perverse were turned to God, and those who were before foul were cleansed from sins. There follows: *Therefore hath God blessed thee*, not with the left hand, by which temporal goods are given, but with the right, by which eternal goods are given. Hence there follows: *for ever*, that is, with a blessing leading to eternity. Prov. 3:16: *Length of days is in her right hand.*

Her virginal mouth, whose odor is comparable to the odor of apples (Cant. 7:8); for by her prayers, breathing aromas, she draws men to the worship of the Son, as the odor of apples entices the taste to eat. She pleads for us and speaks good in the sight of God, for she is our advocate. In us also, being as it were the mouth of the Lord (Jer. 15:19), she separates the precious from the vile, the soul, namely, from sin and from love of the world. She herself also *opened her mouth to wisdom* (Prov. 31:26), which is the Son of God, to attract it, that is, to draw it to herself, when she vowed virginity; for by that vow the Only-begotten Son of God fell in love with her. Again, she opened the mouth of her understanding to draw in wisdom by study, and the mouth of her affection to attract wisdom by desire. Of the first it is said: *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it* (Ps. 80:11). Of the second: *I opened my mouth, and drew breath* (Ps. 118:131), that is, spiritual understanding. Thus, filled with wisdom in a twofold way, she opened her mouth in the midst of the primitive Church; for she became the teacher of the Apostles, who afterward became our teachers, and when the Lord ascended she taught the Apostles the New Testament, which the same Apostles wrote down to teach us.

Her ivory teeth chewed, as is piously believed, for the little Son who was given to us (Isa. 9:6), his food, as is the custom of nurses. Her sense and her zeal, which two are signified in the teeth, chewed, ground down, ruminated, and incorporated into her soul, like green herbs, the divine sayings of the Scriptures. She also shows us many ambiguous things, to those studying divine wisdom, in its words and deeds. Hence she herself promises, Sir. 24:46: *I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy.* (Look above, reason twenty-seven.)

Her tongue is *eucharis*, that is, graceful, which was the pen of the scribe writing swiftly (Ps. 44:2), namely of the Holy Spirit, the scribe himself moving the pen. It uttered that good word, honeyed and sweet: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38). In this nectar-like word she so

delighted the king of heaven, anxious about our salvation, that, as if forgetful of the injury of our first parents, he descended at once from the royal seat, having laid aside, as it were, the diadem of glory, and, tearing the heavens asunder, leapt in the same moment from the paternal bosom into the virginal womb, crying out that word of Proverbs 8:31: *My delights were to be with the children of men.* In this word, too, her tongue was to us a tongue of healing, a tongue of mitigation, a tongue of mercy (Sir. 36:25). For by answering humbly and obediently she healed the sickness of Eve's answer. For the tongue of Eve, answering the devil with doubt, and persuading her husband to taste the forbidden tree, *(p. 86)* and attributing her sin to the serpent (Gen. 3:1 ff.), wounded mortally all the progeny to be born from her, closed the gate of paradise to all, and provoked the anger of God to vengeance. But the tongue of Mary healed the sick, opened what was closed, and soothed the wrath of the Lord.

Her throat, which is compared to the best wine (Cant. 7:9): the words that proceed from the throat, in the manner of wine, reveal the sorrows of the afflicted, and alienate their minds from carnal sense; they sweetly prick and stir the slothful to run the way, to love the way of God's commandments, and to pray. They are savory to Christ through devotion in prayers, and prick his heart, to draw mercy from it for the wretched, and so inebriate him as to make him forget our offences.

Her neck: she herself, namely, who is called the neck of the Church, joins to Christ the golden head his body, which is the Church. And this in two ways: for she begot Christ, God and man, who is our head, that he might become our Emmanuel; and, as far as lies in her, she rejoins to him again, by her prayers, us who by sinning were disjoined from him. Again, as through the neck the interior air is sent out and the exterior drawn within, so through her our devotion is presented to God, and mercy is given back to us by her. Again, as saliva is drawn from the head itself into the body by means of the neck, so through her grace is obtained for the human race from God the Trinity. Again, as by means of the neck there descends into the body whatever is necessary to it of food, drink, potion, medicine, and the like, so through her there descends to us the Son of God, who is the true medicine, whose flesh and blood are truly food and drink (John 6:56); for through Mary man ate the bread of Angels in the sacrament of the altar. Again, through the neck words are brought forth, and Mary speaks good for us in the sight of God, for she is our advocate. Nor does her Only-begotten wish, or is he able, to defraud her of the desire of her lips (cf. Ps. 20:3).

In her arms and on her shoulders the Son was carried into Egypt, and brought back into the land of Israel; in which was signified that through her those who before served idols would have God, and that by her gift they would finally, in the kingdom of Israel, behold with the eyes of the blessed the king in his beauty. 1 Pet. 1:12: *Upon whom the angels desire to look.*

Her hands, turned, golden, full of hyacinths (Cant. 5:14), nourished for us the members of the Only-begotten of God; in which members, as in medicinal herbs in the little mortar of a most humble passion, ground in manifold ways with the pestles of tribulations and tempered with the liquor of blood, a fitting medicine was compounded for our infirmities and sins, which infirmities could not suitably be healed except by the passion alone of the Only-begotten of God.

These hands are described as *turned*: for as the art of turning is quicker than other arts in working swiftly, so Mary is swifter than all the other saints in succoring the wretched, so that she seems to say of the wretched, with the Son, that word of Isaiah 65:24: *Before they call*, namely to me, *I will hear them.*

These hands are also called *golden*, on account of wisdom, which is signified in gold: for so subtly does she bestow mercy on the wretched that she never breaks the seal of divine justice. In gold, also, charity is noted: for out of pure charity she is proved to have mercy on the wholly unworthy and to do them good.

They are called also *full of hyacinths*: for as far as in her lies, she gives to all abundantly, since she is supremely rich, supremely also *(p. 87)* liberal. (Look under the title on her mercy and largess.) Hyacinths are stones of the color of the sky: because whatever good she does shines with heavenly intention and proceeds

from the fountain of eternal wisdom. The hyacinth also has the grace of obtaining: for whatever it pleases her to give, she most easily obtains by praying from her Only-begotten Son, who not only gives to her according to what she asks, but even incites her to ask. To figure which, Solomon is read to have said to his mother, 3 Kings 2:20: *Ask, my mother; for I must not turn away thy face.* Under this figure Assuerus, who designates Christ, is read to have said to Esther, who figures Mary, Esther 7:2–3: *What is thy petition, Esther, that it may be granted thee? and what wilt thou have done? Although thou ask the half of my kingdom, thou shalt obtain it.* To whom she answered: *If I have found favor in thy eyes, O king, … give me my people for which I request.* Behold how Mary asks for her servants. The hyacinth also is bright in fair weather, but in the dark and cloudy appears dark; for those enlightened by grace think worthily of her and serve her out of love, but those darkened by unbelief and vices make little of honoring and serving her. Since, then, she is most liberal, and abounds from the gift of the Son with every spiritual charism, she always opens her hand to the needy and stretches out her palms to the poor (Prov. 31:20); for she is the cistern of Bethlehem near the gate (cf. 2 Kings 23:15), wishing to satisfy all who pass by. Wherefore she ceases not to cry: *Come over to me, all ye, and be filled with my fruits* (Sir. 24:26), etc.

With the breasts of a mother she ministered to the Son of God the milk on which he alone was fed; nor did any other child drink of it. Hence he himself glories, saying, Cant. 5:1: *I have drunk my wine with my milk,* namely the virginal milk, which was wholly mine. And on this account he is designated by Moses, Exod. 2:9, who, as they say, would suck the breasts of no other woman than his own mother. From this glorious milk was nourished and coagulated that blood, by whose shedding the price of our redemption was paid; and in this blood is contained the life of faithful souls (Lev. 17:11). Therefore this blood of the Lord is drunk at the altar.

Again, at her breasts the Son of God dictated the covenant of our salvation; and the presentation of them, exhibited to Christ, cheers him, though saddened by our iniquities. Isa. 11:8: *The sucking child shall be delighted at the breast.* The mother of mercy also nourishes us with a double breast, which are chastity of flesh and kindness of heart. And these breasts, like little children, we ask to suck, when we say to her:

Virgin singular, Among all meek, Make us, loosed from sins, Meek and chaste.

Note the single words.

To the honor of these breasts the Son by his commendation invites us, Cant. 4:10, where he says: *How beautiful are thy breasts, my sister, my spouse!* that is, with what reverence and honor they are to be extolled, and with what love they are to be embraced, that with heart and mouth of them it may be said to Christ: *Blessed are the breasts that gave thee suck* (Luke 11:27). (Under the title on the breasts of Mary you will find infinite other things.)

Her belly ivory, set with sapphires (Cant. 5:14), which her creator had constructed for himself as a special resting place. Hence: *He that made me rested in my tabernacle* (Sir. 24:12). The true Solomon had prepared it for himself as a throne and a great ivory seat; the Holy Spirit had consecrated it to himself as a sanctuary, a singular lodging; it became a palace for the supreme king, *(p. 88)* who, coming from the royal seats, chose there for himself his first dwelling among the sons of men. There, besides, he put on beauty, and covered himself with a white robe, that is, with a most clean humanity, whose beauty is immunity from sin. Of the grace, too, of this lodging the faithful souls are now guests in the heavenly palace, though all before spread their couches in the darkness of hell. Job 17:13: *In darkness I have made my bed.* (Look for many more things under the title on the belly of Mary.)

Her navel a turned bowl, which is said never to want cups (Cant. 7:2). She, namely, who is called the navel of the Church, because, as the navel is in the middle of the whole body, so she is in the middle of the Church, which is the body of her Son, prepared, as far as in her lies, to do good to all. With virginal milk, which had in itself the properties of wine, she gave drink to the Son and inebriated him. Wherefore she is called a bowl,

that she might make him forget our sins. And as a turned bowl, if it be full of some liquor, pours out that liquor at the lightest touch, so, full of grace, she pours back grace as often as she is touched by pious prayer. This navel never wants cups, since it is full of grace, and always draws waters in joy from the fountains of the Savior (Isa. 12:3).

Her loins, which she girded with the strength of fortitude, vowing virginity and fortitude binding in herself the flow of carnal pleasures, made her desirable in the eyes of God, as had been foretold to her: *The king shall greatly desire thy beauty* (Ps. 44:12), that is, virginity. By this desire the eternal king was joined to her, assuming virginal flesh from her, in which he also suffered; and by faith in the incarnation and the virtue of the passion we are reborn in baptism of the heavenly kingdom, sons and heirs.

The joinings of her thighs (Cant. 7:1); which thighs, on account of their most precious beauty of chastity before God, are compared to necklaces. For as a necklace connects both sides of the neck-opening, so her thighs by virginity continually clave to each other. These thighs, I say, pour back to us examples of holiness and chastity. Hence they are called *as necklaces*, as it were warning us of the lily of chastity. And this necklace, or this joining, the heavenly craftsman made, that is, the Holy Spirit, namely when he extinguished in her the whole tinder of carnal concupiscence by the supervening dew of heavenly grace, and thus joined the virginal thighs.

Of her feet it can be said what is said of the feet of the Son, Apoc. 1:15: *His feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace.* The feet of the blessed Virgin can be called the affections of charity, with which she visits her lovers, which are commended here by three things: by wisdom, which is in the gold; by perseverance, which is in the brass; by the vehement fervor of her exceeding charity, which is signified in the burning furnace. (Look under the title on feet.)

Her steps beautiful in sandals (Cant. 7:1), that is, in the examples of the saints who went before, never cease to visit her household, to accompany them, and always to be at hand for their needs. Hence she says to her servant, Isa. 43:1–2: *Thou art my servant; when thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee.* And she calls tribulations waters. *And the rivers*, namely of temptations and tribulations, *shall not cover thee.* This is what she says, Sir. 24:8: *I have walked in the waves of the sea with my familiars*, namely as a ship, that I might snatch them from the shipwreck of sins, and, having snatched them, bring them to the port of their desire. She walks also in the waves of the sea *(p. 89)*, by consoling the sorrowful and gladdening the sad. There follows, Sir. 24:9: *And in every land I have stood*, that is, I have always been at hand to those who invoke me. For in every place, everywhere on earth, the mother of mercy is the refuge of the wretched.

Chapter 2 (conclusion)

Her stature is likened to a palm tree (Cant. 7:7). The stature of Mary was made manifest in the time of the Lord's passion: for when all the Apostles wavered from the faith, she persevered immovably in the faith. And this stature of hers is compared to a palm, that is, to the triumphal tree of the Lord's cross, because for the uprightness of her perseverance this grace was conferred on her, that devout invocation of her name, like the sign of the Lord's cross, terrifies and expels the malignant spirits. Bernard, on that text of Canticles 6:9, *Terrible as an army set in array*: "Not so much do visible enemies fear any army set in array as the aerial powers fear the name of Mary, her patronage, and her example. They melt and perish like wax from the face of fire, wherever they find frequent remembrance of this name, devout invocation, and careful imitation of it."

On account of such services as the glorious Virgin renders us from each of her members, she seems therefore to ask her reward from us, together with her Son, Zach. 11:12, saying: *If it seem good in your eyes, bring me my wages; and if not, be quiet*, that at least you may not repay me evil for good, or hatred for my love. What sort of services, however, we owe her from the heart and the mouth and all the senses, or of what kind they

ought to be who wish to serve the heavenly queen worthily, we shall assign below, as she herself, who is the cup-bearer of grace, shall give to drink.

Chapter 3: How we ought to serve Mary from the heart

1. We owe, then, to the blessed Virgin faith, the standard-bearer of all virtues, which she herself first requires of us: that we firmly believe her to have been sanctified in her mother's womb, and this soon, as is piously believed, after the soul was infused into her flesh, according to that word of Psalm 45:6: *God will help her in the morning early.* By *morning* is signified the beginning of her life in her mother's womb; and by *early dawn*, the removal or dispelling of original darkness. Or, by *morning* the removal of the said darkness, and by *early dawn* the brightness of the virtues, which were then infused into her. But this help the blessed Trinity alone, which created her, could exhibit; for she is a special work of God. Let us believe also that she was born wholly holy; hence her nativity is compared to the rising of a star, Num. 24:17: *A star shall rise*, etc.

Let us believe moreover that she led in the world an immaculate life without sin, preserved by the wisdom of God, which enters not into a malicious soul, nor dwells in *(p. 90)* a body subject to sins (Wisd. 1:4); for God the Trinity ever guarded her as the apple of the eye from every harm. Hence he says of her: *Night and day I keep her; there is no wrath in me* (Isa. 27:3–4).

Let us believe also that she was the first leader of virginity, that she was made fruitful without corruption, pregnant without burden, a mother in childbirth without pain; that she alone is virgin and mother of God, and no other; because this privilege was due to her alone. Again, that she could not sin, from the time she conceived God. (Look under the title on her privileges.) And so all else that the Catholic Church believes and preaches of her is to be believed, with which this whole book is besprinkled.

We must also feel concerning so great a Lady in goodness of heart, as it is said of the Lord (Wisd. 1:1), which is to venerate and piously believe all those things concerning her which are not understood: for there are infinite things concerning the blessed Virgin which exceed human understanding. Hence so many heresies have arisen concerning her childbearing, in the hearts, namely, of those who, by human or natural reason and their own sense, in their own arrogance, have wished to discuss and investigate what is above man, though Isaiah contradicts, 53:8: *Who shall declare his generation?* Her generation, that is, Mary's: namely how she bore him who made her, according to that word of Psalm 86:5: *This man was born in her*, by the incarnation; *and the Highest himself hath founded her*, by creation.

2. We ought also wisely to trust in her goodness, if we have loved her, if we have served her, according to that word of Psalm 47:14: *Set your hearts on her power*, etc., not on our own power; for *cursed is the man that trusteth in man* (Jer. 17:5), himself, namely, or another. For she it is who by her prayers, merits, and examples gives strength to the weary; and to those who are not, according to their own estimation, that is, to the truly humble, she multiplies fortitude and strength (Isa. 40:29). And she herself, suggesting this confidence in herself, says: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Sir. 24:25). As Augustine also says of the Lord, on that text of Psalm 72:28, *It is good for me to adhere to God*, etc.: "God permits no one to fall who adheres to him with true love." Again, that word: *I was cast upon thee from the womb* (Ps. 21:11); and this wisely, because she is not so cruel as to withdraw herself and permit thee to fall. So it can be said and believed of the blessed Mary, on the testimony of those who have often experienced it.

3. We ought also to hope in her, since she is the mother of holy hope (cf. Sir. 24:24). (Look for this authority under the title that Mary is called mother.) Again, as it is truly said of the Son, Prov. 29:25: *He that trusteth in the Lord shall be set on high*, so can it be said of the mother: *He that trusteth in the Lady shall be set on high*, that is, shall be lifted up in the present, by grace, above the flesh, the world, and the devil; and shall be lifted up through glory in the future.

4. We owe also to the blessed Mary charity and love, so that a Catholic man can say of Mary what is said of wisdom, Wisd. 7:10–11: *Above health and beauty I loved her, and chose to have her instead of light: for her light cannot be put out. Now all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.* Expound thus: *Above health* of the body and above the beauty of any temporal thing, because, as it is said, Prov. 8:11: *She is better than all the most precious things, and whatsoever may be desired cannot be compared to it.* Again, Wisd. 7:9: *I have not compared to her any precious stone*; for *(p. 91)* all gold in comparison of her is as a little sand. Again, Prov. 3:14: *The purchase of her is better than the merchandise of silver, and her fruit than the chief and purest gold*, etc.

I loved her: for all acquisition of these temporal things fails a man in extreme necessity. But the blessed Virgin fails her lovers neither in life nor in death; nay, as is frequently read in her miracles, she kindly receives their souls as they depart from their bodies, and protects them from the assault of malignant spirits. Hence of wisdom, and fittingly it can be understood of Mary, it is said, Wisd. 10:9: *Them that observed her she delivered from sorrows.* Again, from this text is taken that Responsory which is sung of the blessed Virgin: "Above health and all beauty thou art beloved of the Lord," etc., or "chosen by the Lord." For above health she was chosen by the Lord. For the Son of God could have assumed flesh which would be subject neither to infirmity nor to death; but above that health he chose this infirmity, that he might take infirm flesh from the blessed Virgin, chosen and beloved. Whom also above all beauty he chose: because although many daughters have gathered riches, she hath surpassed them all (Prov. 31:29). Whom the Holy Spirit made so beautiful that she should be comely above all daughters by the fullness of graces.

There follows: *And chose to have her instead of light.* (Look under the title that she is called light.)

There follows: *For her light cannot be put out*: with which light, namely, she enlightens her lovers and imitators, saying with the Son, John 8:12: *He that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life*, which is inextinguishable.

There follows: *Now all good things came to me together with her.* And this is chiefly to be understood of gratuitous goods, which are true goods. They came, namely, from God, the giver of all goods, who, whatever good he gives to his creatures, wills to pass through the hands of the Virgin mother. Hence there follows: *And innumerable riches through her hands*: for when she opens her hand, all things are filled with blessing (Ps. 144:16), that is, with good giving. On this account the knowledge of Mary is to be studied; for he who knew her would love her, and her lover, by her mediation, would receive from the Son every good necessary in the present, and eternal life in the future, of which graces and virtues are the pledge.

Again, Mary is to be loved, because she loves those who love her. Hence she says with the Son, Prov. 8:17: *I love them that love me.* That her lover may be able to say of her that word of Wisd. 8:2: *Her have I loved and sought out from my youth, and I desired to take her for my spouse, and I became a lover of her beauty. Her have I loved with my heart, and sought*, that is, with all my heart I sought her, studying the Scriptures which speak of her, diligently investigating her great deeds, meditating on her, praying to her continually, working to her honor, that I may serve her honestly by solicitously guarding myself from harlot pleasures. *And I desired to take her for my spouse*, that is, I coupled her to myself in chaste, fruitful, and undivided love. And such love is spiritual, not carnal. *And I became a lover of her beauty*, that is, of that most beautiful one, to whom the spouse says: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee* (Cant. 4:7).

Again, concerning her love, that which is said of wisdom can fittingly be expounded, Wisd. 7:8: *I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones*, that is, powers and dignities: that is, for her sake I despised whatever there is in the world of glory, honor, and riches, as many are read to have done literally for love of her, counting all things as nothing *(p. 92)*, that they might gain her. Phil. 3:8: *I count all things to be but loss*, etc. Nor is it enough merely to despise or leave all delightful things for love of her, but also to endure patiently for her contumelies, troubles, injuries, and the like. For, as it is said, Prov. 12:26: *He that neglecteth a loss for the*

sake of a friend, that is, Christ, and for such a friend as is Mary, *is just.*

There follows, v. 9: *Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone*, that is, any saint: *for all gold in comparison of her is as a little sand*, that is, every spirit in respect of Mary is like sand in respect of gold; *and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay*, that is, the wise and eloquent of the world in respect of her wisdom and eloquence. For she is that precious pearl (Matt. 13:46) for which all one has must be sold, that it may be bought; that is, all the emoluments of the present life must be despised, that she may be served.

Again, another reason. If someone were bound by many debts, and had a piece of land which without cultivation and without sowing would in one year bring so great a quantity of fruit that from that fruit he could pay the whole debt, and live always on the remainder, he would greatly love that piece of land. Such fruit Mary has brought forth to us, who is our land, that is, the land given to us; by which fruit, namely, we have been redeemed from the debt of gehenna, and on which we can live abundantly forever. On this account it is said, Deut. 8:10: *Thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the excellent land which he hath given thee.* Much, therefore, ought we to love Mary, who is such a land, and her fruit, and not exchange her for another pleasure.

Again, the love of Christ and of Mary herself is unique, yet not private; sole, yet not solitary; shared, yet not divided; common and singular; belonging in part to all and wholly to each; neither decreasing by participation, nor failing by use, nor growing old with time; ancient and new, desirable in affection, sweet in experience, eternal in fruit, full of delight, refreshing and satisfying, and never generating weariness.

Again, at the beginning of the Canticles three causes are distinguished why young maidens both love, and ought to love, the blessed Virgin, where it reads thus: *For thy breasts are better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointments. Oil poured out is thy name: therefore young maidens have loved thee* (Cant. 1:1–2). In this series of words, under this distinction, three clauses are gathered by which three causes are rendered on account of which the blessed Virgin is most loved by the young maidens; and these two expressions, *because* and *therefore*, regard each other. They can be the words of the Son to his mother. They can be the words of the Angels to the Virgin, who, seeing the young maidens standing by the Virgin, say to her: Therefore these young maidens have loved thee exceedingly, that is, greatly: because thy breasts are better than wine; because thy breasts are fragrant with the best ointments; because oil poured out is thy name. But young maidens are called faithful souls, new by grace, not old by guilt, not barren with age, but fruitful with spiritual gifts; strong, not feeble like old women; not bent, setting their eyes to look down at the earth, but upright by heavenly desire and erect toward the heavens. These souls, with the obsequy of pious devotion, always stand by the blessed Virgin, loving her, and loving in her these most powerful causes of love, namely, that her breasts are better than wine. For of better, more powerful, and more useful efficacy are the breasts of the blessed Virgin than wine; for wine can inebriate a man so that he is forgetful of past offences, and so is ready to condone and generous to give. But the breasts of the blessed Virgin could, as it were, inebriate God; for after he drank milk from the mother's *(p. 93)* breasts, as if with the sweetness of the milk he had drunk the sweetness of mercy, he cast our sins behind his back, and became generous in giving the pardon of sins, generous in giving grace and the justice of works.

Therefore also the young maidens love the blessed Virgin because her breasts are fragrant with the best ointments; for in her breasts is fragrant the odor of him who sucks the breasts, who, anointed with the best ointments, with fullness of charisms and healing graces, came to the leprous spouse, the Church, namely, or the sinful soul, to heal her of all leprosy, and to join her to himself in sacred wedlock.

Therefore also by the young maidens the blessed Virgin is deservedly loved, because oil poured out is her name. For as oil floats on every liquor, so her name, and the invocation of her name, surpasses and excels the names, and the invocations of the names, of all the saints, in efficacy of succor, in obtaining divine grace, and in putting demons to flight.

Again, concerning the love of Mary, a little after it is added, Cant. 1:3: *Remembering thy breasts above wine, the righteous love thee.* For because the Angels had said above to the blessed Virgin, *Therefore the young maidens have loved thee, because thy breasts are better than wine*, lest in the holy souls whom they called young maidens a noun of feminine gender should hint at any infirmity, they repeat the same sentence, and the same souls whom they had called young maidens they call upright, as it were manly, not effeminate; upright, not bent by vicious old age; and they say: *Remembering thy breasts above wine, the righteous love thee.* As if one should say: Therefore they love thee, because they bear fixed in their memory that thy breasts are better than wine, as has been expounded in the foregoing.

Again, Mary is to be loved and specially honored, because by her mediation the divine form came of its own accord to man voluntarily deformed; grace gratis to one ungrateful for grace; medicine unasked to the sick; virtue to the infirm; wisdom to the foolish; sanctification to the unclean; truth to the liar; piety to the unmerciful; peace to the rebel; mercy to the impious; charity to the enemy; justice to the unjust; not to judge and condemn him according to his justice, but to justify him in his injustice, and form him according to himself, and, formed according to himself, at length glorify him in himself. For to this end the form of God came into flesh, that he might conform to himself first in spirit, and afterward also in flesh, those whom he foreknew and predestined, namely God the Father, to be made conformable to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29). This form, then, so beautiful, from piety alone united itself to matter so unformed, and not merely unformed but deformed, and not deformed from any necessity, but from the voluntary perversity of its own will alone.

Again, Mary is to be loved, because through her we have been made, from nothing, something new from old, and from the damned and dead, blessed and eternal. And on this account she is compared to the dawn (Cant. 6:9), which, rising, gives back to all things their proper colors; for at night all things are as it were of one color; so also at the rising of Mary all things began to be bettered.

Again, Mary is to be loved, because by her childbearing God the Father delivered the poor from the mighty, that is, man from the power of the devil. Hence the Psalmist says of Christ, Ps. 71:12: *He delivered, or will deliver, the poor from the mighty*, that is, from the devil, who in his nature is mighty. Hence Job 41:24: *There is no power upon earth that can be compared with him.* But the sinner makes him mightier, because he makes his power have effect; for unless man bends himself, the devil cannot ascend. John 8:36: *If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.* The poor man *(p. 94)*, I say, and such a poor man *that had no helper* (Ps. 71:12); because neither man, nor Angel, nor law, nor free will could deliver him, but the Lion of the tribe of Juda (Apoc. 5:5). Sir. 51:10: *I looked for the succor of men, and there was none.*

And note that the poor man is the sinner, because he is stripped of gratuitous gifts and wounded in natural ones. And sin is mighty, because it is a king. Hence Rom. 6:12: *Let not sin reign in your mortal body.* From this mighty one the poor man is here delivered by the Lord, because the will to repent is infused into him. Therefore thou oughtest to cry to him continually: *Deliver me from blood*, etc. (Ps. 50:16). Truly such a poor man, because he lacks the suffrages of the Church.

Again, we owe obedience to Mary. Hence she herself promises, Sir. 24:30: *He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded.* Gloss: *Hearkeneth*, that is, obeys. He who hearkeneth to me, that is, who studies his own formation by hearing my words and investigating them, shall not be confounded by hearing the harsh word, Matt. 25:41: *Depart from me, ye cursed*, etc. Or, *He that hearkeneth to me*: here the fruit of those who imitate Mary's words is shown: *shall not be confounded.* Confusion belongs to fools; the words of wisdom have no confusion, for the wise man will not repent. But the words of wisdom are the words of Mary, who *opened her mouth to wisdom* (Prov. 31:26). (Look under the title on her words.)

Or, *He that hearkeneth to me*, in a poor man crying out, or a preacher teaching, *shall not be confounded*, that is, shall not suffer a repulse, which is a great confusion for the wise man, when he shall have asked for

something in the name of my Son, namely what pertains to salvation. Or, *shall not be confounded* with the evil confusion with which the impious alone will be confounded in the judgment of my Son, because I will stand by him. For to those who obey their mother the Son will say: *Come, ye blessed*, etc. (Matt. 25:34). Or, *He that hearkeneth to me* devoutly listens to my service. Or, *He that hearkeneth to me*, that is, acquiesces in my counsel, of which it is said, Sir. 31:16: *Her counsel remaineth like a fountain of life*, that is, like a living fountain ever springing up.

And note that chiefly in two places we find that Mary asks obedience to be shown to her counsels, namely Sir. 24:26, where she says: *Come over to me, all ye*, etc.; and John 2:5, where she says to the servants: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.* And she adds a little after with what profit, saying, Sir. 24:30: *He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded.*

And note that in this authority, *He that hearkeneth to me*, etc., she promises retribution to three kinds of men: to those who devoutly hear her words (hence, *He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded*); to those who imitate her glorious examples (hence, *And they that work by me*, that is, on my account, or *by me*, that is, after my example, *shall not sin*; or, *They that work by me*, as upon a foundation, taking my works as an example); and to preachers, her exalted rewards (hence, *They that explain me*, etc.). To the first is promised a reward freeing from punishment: hence, *shall not be confounded.* To the second, a reward justifying from guilt: hence, *shall not sin.* To the third, a reward of eternity in glory: hence, *shall have life everlasting.* For this reason also he says, Prov. 8:34: *Blessed is the man that heareth me.*

Note that there are many counsels of Mary by which she counsels us for the salvation of souls. Hence she says, Prov. 8:14: *Counsel and equity is mine*, etc. For she is Rebecca, who said to her son Jacob, Gen. 27:8: *My son, follow my counsels*, etc. And note that Rebecca called Jacob, which is interpreted wrestler or supplanter, her son, not Esau; because only the wrestlers and the supplanters of vices *(p. 95)* are sons of Mary worthy of her inheritance, and only such can call Mary their mother. Behold the counsels of Mary:

Chapter 3 (continued)

First, that we do penance, which is signified in the preparation of the kids, which she ordered to be brought to her by her son, who thus acquired the blessing of Isaac his father, by obeying, namely, the counsels of his mother. **Second**, that we flee the devil, who wishes to kill us, who is signified by Esau, as that Esau wished to kill Jacob (Gen. 27:41). **Third**, that we quickly return to the Lord, if we have departed from him by sin. Hence in Nehemias, or 2 Esdras 2:6, the king and queen said to Nehemias: *For how long shall thy journey be, and when wilt thou return?* As if they said to him: Hasten to return. **Fourth**, that we obey the priest and the divine messenger, as she did Gabriel, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc. (Luke 1:38). **Fifth**, that we flee the noise of the world and love the solitary life, as she prayed in her cell when the Angel entered to her, as blessed Bernard says. **Sixth**, that when we are praised we be frightened rather than exult, and consider whether worthily or unworthily, as she considered what manner of salutation this was (Luke 1:29). **Seventh**, that each persevere constantly in the state of his profession, as she, after the vow of virginity, constantly replied: *How shall this be done, because I know not man?* (Luke 1:34). **Eighth**, that each conform his own will to the divine will, as she did, answering: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38), whose part it is to will what her Lord wills. **Ninth**, that each, despising earthly things, seek heavenly. Hence, having conceived the Lord, she went into the hill country with haste (Luke 1:39). **Tenth**, that nobler and greater persons serve and minister even to lesser, as she ministered to Elisabeth. **Eleventh**, that beautiful and noble women not despise their husbands, as Vasthi despised Assuerus (Esther 1:11–12); as she did not disdain to be betrothed to a craftsman, though she was of royal stock.

We ought, then, to obey her counsels, and to approach her who calls us. Heb. 12:25: *See that you refuse not him that speaketh.* And this for a twofold cause: on account of reverence for her, because she is queen; and on account of our danger, we who dwell among demons and wicked men, and live in sins. For he who is just

ought to flee to her, that he may be able to say that word of Canticles 2:3: *Under the shadow of him whom I desired I sat down*, etc. So that Mich. 4:4 may be fulfilled: *Every man shall sit under his vine*, that is, he shall be secure by the help of the Virgin. So the sinner ought to flee to her, because she is the city of refuge. (Look above, reason twenty-four, on her protection.) For to those who are unwilling to obey her she will say some day that word of Proverbs 1:25–26: *You have despised all my counsel*, etc. *I also will laugh in your destruction. All my counsel*, that is, my counsel, which is every good.

Again, we owe her reverence, namely, lest in her eyes we dare to think, desire, consent to, or do anything indecent; lest thou turn away from us those merciful eyes which cannot look upon iniquity. Therefore, Hab. 1:13, it is said to the Son and the mother: *Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil, and thou canst not look on iniquity.* Sir. 42:20: *No thought escapeth him, and there is not any word that can hide itself from him.* Heb. 4:13: *All things are naked and open to his eyes.*

Again, therefore, it is said of her who is truly the strong woman, Prov. 31:27: *She hath looked well to the paths*, that is, the secret thoughts of the consciences, *of her house*, that is, *(p. 96)* of her household. We must beware, therefore, lest even in her presence we think, much less do, base, harmful, or iniquitous things; for perverse thoughts separate from her and from her Son (cf. Wisd. 1:3). And note that it says *perverse*, that is, wholly averted from God, such as are the thoughts of unbelievers, of the hesitating, of pretenders, of the contentious, the proud, the envious, the avaricious, which hinder the coming of grace, and put to flight from the heart the grace already received. Therefore she herself also says, Prov. 8:12: *I am present at the learned thoughts*; *learned*, that is, discreet, disposing and directing them; but she withdraws from thoughts that are without understanding (Wisd. 1:5), which do not read inwardly the evils that lie hidden within, but only superficially consider what they think.

Again, we owe her fear. For on account of her most mild humility we must not so presume that fear and reverence of her highest dignity are not due. For although she it is who said of herself, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38), is she not the same who is read to have addressed the King of glory and Lord of majesty thus, Luke 2:48: *Son, why hast thou done so to us?* For she is the spiritual sanctuary of the Lord, of which he himself says, Lev. 26:2: *Keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary*, etc. Ibid., 19:3: *Let every one fear his father and his mother.* For as it is said of the Son, *Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him* (Ps. 32:18), so can it be said of the mother: Behold, etc. As if she said: It is open that the eyes of the Lady, that is, the regard of mercy (and he says *eyes* in the plural on account of the manifold effect of her mercy), are *upon them that fear her*, that is, upon the humble who fear and take care not to offend her. But because fear alone without hope is not good, there follows: *And on them that hope in her mercy.* But to what end she is to be feared and hoped in, he adds, v. 19: *To deliver their souls from death*, from the death of present guilt and of eternal punishment, their souls, not only their bodies from present punishment; *and to feed them in famine*, of the word of God (Amos 8:11). Or, *in famine*, that is, in the time of eternal famine, as she promises and threatens, Isa. 65:13: *Behold my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry*, etc.

Again, Sir. 34:19–20: *The eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him; he is their powerful protector*, etc. Let us also say: The eyes of the Lady are on them that fear her: powerful protectress, strong support, a covering from the heat, and a shadow at noon, an entreaty against offence, and a help from falling, lifting up the soul, and enlightening the eyes, giving health, and life, and blessing. All these benefits and many more she bestows on them that fear her. Expound thus.

And note the eleven goods which, after the example of her Son, she does for them that fear her. *She protects them powerfully* from all adversity, as above, reason twenty-four. Or, she protects the power which she has given them to do well and to decline from evil; because, as Gregory says, “quickly is that good lost which is not guarded by the giver.” Or, she protects them against the power of malignant spirits. *Strong support*: because she gives firmness to the virtues which by her prayers she obtains for them from the Son, and confirms those virtues in them. *Covering from the heat*: because she mercifully cools in us the

concupiscences which diabolical suggestion inflames. *A shadow at noon*, that is, refuge against the heat of violent and fervent persecution, as the sun at noon burns and is fervent. Or, against the incentives of lust. *Entreaty against offence*: because she can be entreated for the offence of sinners. Or, because she entreats the Son for the offence of men. And *help in falling*: because she guards those who fear her against a fall, that is, lest *(p. 97)* they fall into sin, or into hell. And she also raises them up, if perchance they have fallen. Hence the Church prays to her: "Help the falling people, who strives to rise." *Lifting up the soul* of him who fears her, from earthly things, which she makes him despise, to heavenly things, which she makes him desire; because *she raiseth up the poor out of the dunghill*, the poor in spirit, that is, the humble, *to sit with princes*, that is, Angels and saints, *and hold the throne of glory* (1 Kings 2:8). *And enlightening the eyes* of the mind, the understanding, namely, and the affection, to know and love God, himself, and his neighbor. *Giving health* of conscience, *and life* of grace, *and blessing* of glory. And note that the Son had done all these things for his mother when she conceived him. (Look there, *The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee*.)

Again, we owe humiliation, that we be humbled under his mighty hand, that he may exalt us in the time of visitation (1 Pet. 5:6); which we hint at when with bent knees and spread hands we adore before her memorial. The bending of the knees is the sign of humility, the spreading of the hands the works of largess. Literally, as often as we salute her, or pass before her temples, or images, or altars, we ought to bend the knee, bare the head, and humble ourselves before her, as servants before a lady, as young maidens before a queen. Therefore Abbot Ecbert says: "Let every creature magnify the mother of the Creator, and let heaven and earth, and all that dwell in them, bow before her royal majesty." In Nehemias, or 2 Esdras 8:6, it is said of the Jews: *They bowed down and adored God with their faces to the ground.* As was there done to the Lord, so ought it to be done to the Lady, that is, to Mary.

Again, we ought to think and meditate on Mary assiduously, because her heart assiduously meditates and thinks on our peace and salvation. Hence she says with the Son, Jer. 29:11: *I think thoughts of peace*, etc. She is that prince of whom it is said, Isa. 32:8: *The prince shall devise such things as are worthy of a prince*, namely thoughts of peace and not of affliction. Of her thought, in which she thinks good for us, it is said, Sir. 24:39: *From the sea her thought hath abounded, and her counsel from the great deep. From the sea*, that is, above the sea, her thought hath abounded, in which she thinks good things for us; because it cannot be comprehended by human sense, as neither can the sea be exhausted: *and her counsel*, in which she thinks good for human salvation, *from the great deep*, because it cannot be searched out. For who can investigate the efficacy of her word, by which she wholesomely provided for the weak, when she wonderfully conceived by the word the medicine of all?

Otherwise: *From the sea her thought hath abounded*, that is, that which is about her, or which we have by her merits, abounds in us as the sea of penance; and *her counsel from the great deep*, that is, deep, and proceeding from the depth of charity, is her counsel. Or, *her counsel from the great deep*, that is, in the greatness and multitude of sins nothing remains but to flee to her.

She gives, however, a twofold counsel to sinners. One, Sir. 24:26: *Come over to me, all ye*, etc. The other, John 2:5: *Whatsoever my Son shall say to you, do ye*. Therefore it is said to sinners, Jer. 23:20: *In the latter days you shall understand her counsel*, which now you despise. Prov. 1:25: *You have despised all my counsel*, that is, my counsel which is every good, that is, full of every good.

He says, then: *From the sea*, that is, more than the sea, *her thought hath abounded*; for as it is impossible for human sense to think or number the drops of the sea, or to drink the whole sea, so it is impossible, and far more, to grasp with human understanding the charity, piety, humility, and the rest that pertain to Mary. Or: *From the sea her thought hath abounded*, that is, of her goodness, that is, more than the sea; for more easily could the sea be exhausted than Mary's goodness perfectly thought out. For the thought *(p. 98)* of her, that is, that which concerns her, is greater, better, and more exalted than all thought. For who can suffice to think the depth of her humility, who, when announced as mother of God, answers: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*

(Luke 1:38)? Who can comprehend the excellence of her charity, when she is rebuked by the Son, saying: *What is it to me and to thee, woman?* (John 2:4), and yet, pitying the lack of wine and compassionating the shame of the servants, counsels them: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye* (John 2:5)? Who can estimate the immensity of her piety, when she sees her Son crucified and does not protest, knowing that the passion of the Son works the salvation of the human race?

We ought, therefore, also, as far as human frailty permits, to think of her frequently and assiduously, and in our thought to dwell on what pertains to her glory and honor. Wisd. 6:16: *To think therefore upon her is perfect understanding; and he that watcheth for her shall quickly be secure.* Sir. 30:1: *The thought of her will take away sleep*, namely of sin. Again, Sir. 43:25: *At his word the wind was hushed, and with his thought he appeased the deep. At her word*, that is, she praying for us, the wind was hushed, that is, diabolical temptation ceased; and *by her thought*, when we faithfully and devoutly think of her, *she appeased the deep*, that is, the heart deep with sins and darkened with temptations. Prov. 3:6: *In all thy ways think on him*, namely God, *and he will direct thy steps*, that is, rule thy works. The same can be said of the mother. Tob. 4:6: *All the days of thy life have God in thy mind*, supply, and his mother, *and take heed thou never consent to sin.* As if she said: Through such recollection thou shalt easily be able to beware of sin.

We owe Mary also continual memory. Hence she herself says, Sir. 24:28: *My memory is unto everlasting generations.* Of this memory it is said, Sir. 49:2: *In every mouth it shall be sweet as honey.* In Psalm 144:7: *They shall publish the memory of the abundance of thy sweetness.* She says, then: *My memory is unto generations of ages*, that is, in men who succeed one another by generation; and yet they are of ages, because those will remain forever who in due manner hold my memory. Therefore it is said to her, Isa. 26:8: *Thy name and thy remembrance are the desire of the soul.* Osee 14:8: *Her memorial shall be as the wine of Libanus*, that is, wonderfully delighting, sweetly inebriating, and making virgins to spring forth (Zach. 9:17); because Libanus is understood as whiteness, and designates virginity.

Or thus: *Unto generations of ages*, that is, of men, of whom there is one generation, yet a twofold age according to the states of meriting and of receiving. As if she said: I shall be held in memory by the saints who will remain in both ages; for if *the memory of the just is with praises* (Prov. 10:7), how much more the memory of the Virgin, through whom Christ was made to us justice (1 Cor. 1:30).

Or, he says *ages* on account of the double state, of exile namely and of liberty; for it is just that we continually have her memory. Hence it is said, Wisd. 4:1: *Immortal is the memory thereof*, that is, of chaste generation, or of Mary, who by the example of her virginity generates chastity in others, and who, her chastity safe, bore the Savior; *because it is known with God*, which would not be unless she were exceeding beautiful. For a friend does not willingly remember his beloved unless she be exceeding beautiful in his eyes; *because it is known with God*, who is immortal and forgets nothing, it is known by the knowledge of approval, *and with men*. A beautiful generation properly is the generation of the saints, or of Mary and the other virgins.

We ought also to direct the gaze *(p. 99)* of our mind continually to her, and to lift up spiritual eyes to look on her. Hence, Sir. 4:16: *He that beholdeth her*, that is, wisdom, or Christ on the cross, or Mary herself: he beholds, I say, with the eye of faith and true love, that to her may continually distill the eye of her servant. *He shall remain confident* (Sir. 4:17), namely on the day of judgment; so that we also may be able to say that word (adapted from Matt. 8:25): *Our Lady, our eyes are upon thee, lest we perish.* Again, that word of 2 Par. 20:12: *As we know not what to do, this only we have left, that we turn our eyes to thee.* Again, that we say of her: *I set the Lady always in my sight*, etc. (Ps. 15:8).

Note that our understanding and our affection are two eyes, with which we ought to behold the Son and the mother equally, as the sight of bodily eyes is directed equally to the same object; but many turn the left eye, that is, the understanding, to heaven by study, and turn the right, that is, the affection, to the earth. These are

those who make a covenant with Naas, that is, the devil (1 Kings 11:1 ff.), who plucks out for them their right eyes, from the head, that is, Christ.

Because her heart exults at our amendment, our heart ought to congratulate her for the grace she found with God, and for the other goods that were given to her. Therefore she is designated by Sara, who says, Gen. 21:6: *God hath made a laughter for me; whosoever shall hear of it will laugh with me.* For the Lord made a laughter for Mary in the conception of the Savior, when he smiled on her, and in her on us, or when he gave both to her and to us matter for laughing and rejoicing. Hence in her childbirth the Angel said to the shepherds: *I bring you good tidings of great joy* (Luke 2:10). Sir. 51:20: *My heart was delighted in her. My foot hath walked in the right way,* that is, the affection, namely of the commandments of God. Behold the fruit of this joy. Therefore also blessed Anselm says that Mary is to be asked assiduously that the congratulation of her blessedness may always be with us, and compassion for our misery always with her.

We owe her also from the heart compassion, and to condole and suffer with both the mother and the Son: for both the passion of Christ and the compassion of Mary, whose soul the sword of the Son pierced through, demand from us an affection of compassion; because if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him (2 Tim. 2:12). And if we have been partakers of the sufferings, we shall be of the consolations also (2 Cor. 1:7). So also is the Son honored by us, if we have compassion on the mother. Hence Sir. 7:29: *Honor thy father*, namely God, *and forget not the groanings of thy mother*, namely Mary.

We ought also never to consign her to oblivion, because she never forgets those who remember her. Hence she says, Isa. 49:15: *Can a woman forget her infant?* etc. (Under the title that Mary loved those mindful of her.) Hence Ps. 136:6: *If I do not remember thee*, namely with love, *if I do not make Jerusalem*, that is, O thou Mary, *the beginning of my joy*, that is, if there be not in me chief joy in thee and from thee after thy Son, *let my right hand be forgotten*, or *let it forget me*. Another reading has *my right hand*, that is, eternal life, of which it is said, Cant. 2:6 and 8:3: *His right hand shall embrace me.* And he interposes a condition which it is necessary to fulfil, that one forgetful of Jerusalem, that is, of eternal life or of blessed Mary, be given to oblivion with God: *Let my tongue cleave to my jaws*, that is, be mute from the praise of God, if I omit thy praises, and if my praise be not with thee and of thee in the great Church.

Chapter 3 (conclusion)

(p. 100) To her we ought to sigh with weeping and groaning. Hence the faithful souls say: *We wept when we remembered Sion* (Ps. 136:1), that is, Mary. Therefore the Church sings to her: "To thee do we sigh, mourning and weeping," etc. For groaning and weeping supplicate Christ and Mary more efficaciously than composed words. Hence Baruch 3:1: *The soul in anguish, and the troubled spirit crieth to thee.* Gregory, on that text of Job 41:3 (which the print applies to Behemoth), *Will he multiply prayers to thee, or speak soft words to thee?*: "To pray truly is to utter bitter groans in compunction, and not to sound composed words."

We owe Mary also the desire of the heart, because she desires every good for us, saying with the Apostle: *For God is my witness*, etc. (Phil. 1:8); so that her servant may say to her: *Lady, all my desire is before thee*, etc. (Ps. 37:10). Again, that word of Isaiah 26:9: *My soul hath desired thee in the night*, namely of the present life. For *the desire of her*, as is said of wisdom, *bringeth to the everlasting kingdom* (Wisd. 6:21). She also *preventeth them that covet her*, that she may show herself first to them, as is said there (Wisd. 6:14). Therefore she also invites to herself those who desire her, Sir. 24:26: *Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits.* (You will find this expounded in the first sermon on her Nativity.)

With the whole heart we ought to bind ourselves to her service. Sir. 6:24 ff.: *Hearken, my son, with the ear of thy heart, and receive the counsel of understanding*, that is, that which confers pure understanding without error. *Put thy feet*, as a volunteer, that is, thy affection, *into her fetters.* For the particular services of Mary, of which we treat in this place, are as it were fetters, holding her servants in the state of justice, lest they run to

unlawful things. *And be not grieved*, that is, bear not heavily and with weariness, but fulfil with cheerfulness the precepts of wisdom and of Mary, *with her bands.* Again, there, of wisdom and Mary: *With all thy mind go to her*, that is, turn all thy thoughts and desires to her, *and with all thy strength keep her ways*, that is, with heart and work keep her ways, that is, her precepts and examples, by which we come to her and she to us. Again, there: *Search after her*, by praying, studying, asking the more skillful, working for her praise, *and she shall be made known to thee.* And much else. And at last is added: *For in her is the beauty of life*, in the present by grace, in the future by glory: *and her bands*, that is, the examples and services by which we are bound, lest we run about through fields of license, *are a healthful binding*, because they draw from sin and draw to eternal salvation.

Her service and praises we ought never to omit. Hence Prov. 4:8–9: *Take hold of her*, that is, wisdom, or Mary, to serve her; *and she shall exalt thee*, from earthly things to heavenly; *thou shalt be glorified by her, when thou shalt embrace her*; *she shall give to thy head increase of graces, and a glorious crown shall protect thee. Take hold of her*, that is, take her to thyself; or, seize her quickly and as it were violently, as a thing long desired is wont to be seized with a certain violence and impetus; or, seize her as a noble bird seizes its noblest prey and sweetest food. For therefore the Son lifted the mother to heaven, that he might draw us to himself. There follows: *And she shall exalt thee* from the depth of vices to the heights of virtues, from earth to heaven. *Thou shalt be glorified by her when thou shalt embrace her*, as a beloved thing, embracing her, namely, with two arms, love and service. There follows: *She shall give to thy head*, that is, to the mind, which is the head of the soul, *increase of graces (p. 101)* spiritual, bodily, and temporal; *and a glorious crown*, of roses of charity and patience, of the lilies of twin chastity, of the violets of humility and temperance, *shall protect thee*, because by this threefold virtue man is protected from the assaults of vices and demons.

Ibid., v. 6: *Forsake her not, and she shall keep thee: love her, and she shall preserve thee.* Forsake her not, as by turning your back on her for harlot pleasures. Or, forsake her not, that is, flee her not by sinning mortally, for she does not depart from her servant except on account of sin; for she is the bee (Sir. 11:3), whom the dregs of sin put to flight. *And she shall keep thee* from the violence of the devil. *Love her, and she shall preserve thee* from sin and from the oppression of enemies. Again, Prov. 27:18: *He that keepeth the fig tree*, that is, Mary, who is called the fig tree for the sweetness of her fruit, *shall eat the fruits thereof: and he that is the keeper of his master shall be glorified.* Let us say: of his Lady. Again, Sir. 7:21: *Depart not from a wise and good woman, whom thou hast gotten in the fear of the Lord.* The wise woman is the blessed Virgin, having the mind of the Lord in governing the household of the Church; from her he departs who by negligence omits her service, or whoever, leaving chastity, follows harlot pleasures, or generally whoever sins mortally. *Whom thou hast gotten* more strongly by the gift of grace, specially loving her and serving her, *in the fear of the Lord*, that is, with reverence, humility, and devotion.

Again, Eccles. 8:3: *Be not hasty to depart from his face, and do not continue in an evil work. Be not hasty to depart from his face*, that is, from his good pleasure; for God, or Mary herself, never deserts man unless first deserted by the man himself. For mother and Son are always first in approach but last in withdrawal, as blessed Dionysius says. Again, *from his face*: before the face of Christ and of Mary are those who serve and minister to them, as Raphael says (Tob. 12:15). From their face they hasten to depart who spring back from their service and good pleasure, like the relapsing. But if by sinning we have withdrawn, we ought immediately to return by penance, because, as blessed Cyprian says, hasty correction neighbors innocence. For this reason mother and Son cry to the sinful soul, Cant. 6:12: *Return, return, O Sulamitess*, etc., *that we may behold thee.* And this is what follows: *And do not continue in an evil work*, as some are unwilling to be converted till they grow old, to whom it is said, Sir. 5:8–9: *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day: for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee.*

Again, to continue and most devoutly celebrate the service of the blessed Virgin, there avails that example which Peter Damian narrates of certain religious who, at the suggestion of a certain perverse brother of ready tongue and polished eloquence, had abandoned the service of the blessed Virgin; and immediately, her service abandoned, all manner of misfortunes began to rise against those brothers: fires, depredations, slaughter of men, mortality of animals, and the like, so that those brothers despaired of life and were weary of living. But as soon as, at the counsel of the said Peter, those brothers resumed the service of Mary, that harassment ceased from them, and thereafter those brothers enjoyed much peace and prosperity, serving Mary henceforth with their whole heart.

Again, we ought to attend to her service with the whole heart. Hence Ps. 46:8: *Sing ye wisely.* Gloss there: "He sings unwisely who does not understand what he sings." Again, there, Ps. 5:3: *Hearken to the voice of my prayer.* Gloss: "God hearkens to him who attends or understands." Augustine: "Let that be turned over in the heart which is brought forth in prayer." Hence it is said, 2 Par. 33:13: *He (Manasses) prayed to God, and besought him intently* (p. 102)*, and he heard his prayer.* Do thou also earnestly beseech the mother and the Son, that thou mayest deserve to be heard. And note that it says: *Hearken to the voice of my prayer.* The voice of prayer is the desire of the heart, which cries in the ear of the mother and the Son; for as one is not understood on account of the noise of lips without formed voice, so neither is prayer without the voice of desire. Hence Gregory: "What profits the noise of lips where the heart is dumb?" The soul speaks to God only through desires; and the deeper and more spiritual the desire, the louder the voice, and the louder it cries before God. For there is no one who cries so loudly with outward voice that his voice is heard to a mile. The voice of desire cries so loudly that it is heard up to heaven. Hence, Exod. 14:15, it is said to Moses: *Why criest thou to me?* But he cries well who can truly say: *Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O Lord* (Ps. 129:1). And this is when desire goes out from the depth of the heart.

This desire mother and Son show they hear, when each says, Isa. 65:24: *Before they call*, namely to me with vocal sound, *I will hear them*; so that each can say of those who cry devoutly: *Thine ear hath heard the preparation of their heart*, that is, of those crying devoutly (Ps. 9:38). But of those who pray or celebrate the service of the mother and Son undevoutly, although they bring forth much with the mouth and make very great modulations, the mother says with the Son, Matt. 15:8: *This people honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me* (cf. Isa. 29:13). Nor do mother and Son call such people clerics, or canons, or nuns, or monks, but common people and villagers, etc.

Again, the heart of Mary is bent to piety by a slight little prayer, provided it be devout, since she is exceedingly compassionate and bears pious bowels over the afflicted; nor, after the example of Joseph, can she long contain herself when devoutly and faithfully entreated. And our heart, too, when something honorable is asked for her sake or in her name, ought most readily to grant what is asked.

Chapter 4: How Mary is to be served with all the members and all the senses

Having seen the services which we owe from the heart, we must now see those which we owe from the members and the senses.

1. The head and face. We owe her, then, of the head and face, adoration, lowering, and inclination. Hence, Isa. 66:23, she seems to say with the Son: *All flesh shall come to adore before my face.* Her servant also seems to say of her to the Son: *I will adore toward thy holy temple* (Ps. 5:8). Again, Isa. 49:23, the Son seems to promise her: *With their faces to the ground they shall worship thee.* Indeed, since heaven was inclined to her, and the heavenly King descended to her humbled *(p. 103)*, which the Angel hinted when saying, *The Lord is with thee* (Luke 1:28), well ought we wretches, on seeing her image or hearing her name, to bow to her; for by adoring her we adore her Son in her and with her. Hence Ps. 28:2: *Adore ye the Lord in his holy court.* The court of the Lord, nay the royal palace, is the blessed Virgin. This literally the three Magi did in the inn, adoring the mother with the Son, which became a royal palace when in it the supreme King was

born. Again, Ps. 98:5: *Adore ye his footstool, for it is holy.*

We ought also to bow to her images as we pass before them, intending to adore her seated on the throne at the right hand of the Son; because, as is said in the book of Barlaam and Josaphat, the reverence of an image passes to the exemplar of the image itself. For she is that gate (Ezek. 46:3), at whose door the people of the land adore on the sabbaths; for the sabbath is the special day of the blessed Virgin. But note that since the gate is lowly, the door of the gate, which is Christ, is lowly; because one comes to the mother or the Son only through humility.

2. The eyes. Of the inward eyes, that is, the eyes of the mind, the gaze, as above. After her example, to turn them away from vanity, praying to her: *Turn away, O Lady, my eyes that they may not behold vanity* (Ps. 118:37). On her part, to those crying out to her, mercifully to look, according to that word of Ecclesiasticus 4:1: *Son, defraud not the alms of the poor, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor.* Tob. 4:7: *Turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall be that the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee*, nor that of Mary herself. To watch reverently at her service. For the blessed Mary is concerned for her children, and many times she was seen in the Cistercian order to have given heavenly refreshment to those who had watchfully and devoutly celebrated her service. Wisd. 6:15–16: *He that shall watch for her shall quickly be secure. He that awaketh early to seek her shall not labor*, etc. (Look above, reason seven.)

To entreat her with weeping and groaning. Hence the faithful of the Church sing to her: "To thee do we sigh, mourning and weeping." To look at her images reverently, to imprint her memory more closely on our hearts. For having by the above-said ways devoted our eyes to her services, we shall be able to say to her securely: "Turn those thy merciful eyes toward us." And to such she says with the Son that word of John 16:22: *I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you.*

3. Hearing. For her honor and glory, to stop our hearing against all harmful things. Gregory: "The saints grievously endure whatever does not sound what they love." Sir. 28:28: *Hedge in thy ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue.* Whatever honorable thing is said of her, to hear gladly; whatever dishonorable, in no way to listen to, nay, to rebuke those who say it with all severity or sharpness, according to that word of Psalm 100:5: *The detractor who in secret detracted his neighbor, him did I persecute.* Therefore she says, Sir. 24:30: *He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded.* (Look above, under the title that we owe obedience to Mary.) Mary, indeed, is the ear of God. Hence it is said to Christ: *Thine ear hath heard the preparation of their heart*, that is, of the poor (Ps. 9:38); thine ear, that is, Mary, by whose mediation thou hearest the poor, as a man hears by means of his ear.

4. The nose. For the honor of the mother and the Son, to abhor and flee harlot odors, of which the woman of Solomon's Proverbs says, Prov. 7:17: *I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.* The harlot says the same, that by odor she may provoke the fool to lust. But this odor is followed by stench. Hence, Isa. *(p. 104)* 3:24: *Instead of a sweet smell there shall be a stench.* Note that she names three aromatic species, two bitter and one sweet, to designate that in lust there is more bitterness than delight. One bitterness belongs to the present, the second to the future.

5. Odor. By the odor of good example and efficacious doctrine, to attract those whom we can to love her, to run in the odor of her ointments, that curtain may draw curtain (Exod. 26:3); and *he that heareth, let him say: Come* (Apoc. 22:17).

Again, Sir. 6:26 says of wisdom, and it can be understood of Mary: *Put thy shoulder under her, and bear her*; that is, put thy acts beneath her mastership. Put under by humility, bear by fortitude. Put under by obedience, bear by patience. *And be not grieved with her bands*, that is, bear not heavily and with weariness, but with cheerfulness fulfil the precepts of wisdom and of Mary. Now *acedia* is said from *aceo, aces* (to be sour). Hence the slothful man is one without the fire of charity, which lightly bears all things. And of such it is said: *In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink* (Ps. 68:22).

6. Taste. To restrain our taste, that we may serve her more worthily, from intemperance of food and drink; for praise is not comely in the mouth of the glutton or the drunkard. To take the necessaries of living modestly; because the wisdom of God, or grace, is not found in the land, that is, in the soul or body of those living softly (Job 28:13). Of what is set on the table, to withhold from the belly something to be given to a poor man for her sake. In sparing diet, to fast on her vigils and Saturdays. On her solemnities, to give more largely to the poor for her. And to such there is fitting the fruit of her most glorious womb, who in the sacrament is our refreshment, and in the future will be our fruition.

7. The shoulders. For her honor and for the love of the brethren, mercifully to support the burdens of a brother's infirmity, and patiently to bear the weights of present tribulations. Hence, Gen. 49:15, it is said of Issachar, which is interpreted "reward": *He saw rest*, that is, Mary, in whom Christ rested nine months, as she herself says: *He that made me rested*, etc. (Sir. 24:12), *that it was good*; and *the land*, that is, that same Mary, who is the land flowing with milk and honey, *that it was excellent*; *and he put his shoulder under to bear*, namely the above-said burdens.

8. The hands. For her honor, assiduously to keep the hands from all polluted contact and unlawful work, that according to the purity of our hands she may reward us (Ps. 17:21). To extend them to the poor as far as we can. Hence Sir. 14:13: *According to thy ability stretch out thy hand and give to the poor*, that after her example thou mayest open thy hand to the needy and stretch out thy palms to the poor. To lift pure hands to pray to her (1 Tim. 2:8). Lam. 3:41: *Let us lift up our hearts*, that is, our affections, *with our hands*, that is, with good works. This cannot be done unless our hands are bound by the Lord's precepts, which are as it were iron manacles, lest they be stretched out to unlawful things. Hence Ps. 149:8: *To bind their kings*, that is, the just who rule themselves, *in fetters*, etc., *and their nobles with manacles of iron.* Therefore it is said, Sir. 6:26: *Be not grieved with her bands*, namely of wisdom or of Mary, as above. To adorn and furnish her oratories, altars, and images. On her feast and on Saturdays, to prepare honorable lights, that her name, which is "illuminatrix," may be interpreted in us. To prepare with all diligence clean and honorable vestments for ministering to her. Hence in her miracles it is read that to blessed Hono, bishop of Clermont *(p. 105)*, and to blessed Ildefonsus she brought the most beautiful vestments from the paradise of the Son, in which they were to minister on her special feasts, and which it was lawful for no one else to put on.

Chapter 4 (conclusion)

Whatever we know to pertain to her praise or glory, while we have time we are to work at with all earnestness; for she herself says that she is a vine. Hence Sir. 24:23: *I as the vine*, which looks for the servant, not the lord. Hence she says of her workers, Sir. 24:30: *They that work by me shall not sin.* Now in this vine there are as many branches as there are virtues. Those who imitate humility work in the branch of humility; those who imitate piety, in the branch of mercy; and so of the rest. And therefore perhaps, since she is the propagator of workers, the Son will say to her in the judgment that word of Matt. 20:8: *Call the laborers and pay them their hire*; as if he said, not to others, the reward. Therefore it is also said, Sir. 6:19, of him who wishes to have a reward: *Come to her as one that plougheth and soweth*, namely to acquire her, that is, with zeal and labor, and with hope of receiving whence thou mayest be refreshed and live. Hence 1 Cor. 9:10: *He that plougheth should plough in hope.*

And note that he who ploughs and sows first roots out the thorns and harmful things from the field, and, the earth being turned over, sows his seed. So he who desires to receive the doctrine of wisdom or the grace of Mary must first turn over with diligent inquiry the earth of his heart, and root out the growths of vices; and then he will be able to receive the seed of divine doctrine or the grace of Mary, and at length reap the fruit of virtues and of glory. Therefore it is said, Jer. 4:3: *Break up your fallow ground.* But because some wish at once to eat the fruit of their seed, of whom Isa. 28:4 says: *An early fruit before the ripeness of autumn: which when he that seeth it shall behold, as soon as he hath it in his hand he will eat it up*; he adds, Sir. 6:19: *And*

wait, that is, patiently expect, *for her good fruits*, that is, the eternal goods which she promises, and which through her we find. James 5:7: *Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman*, etc. But lest anyone be wearied by the long waiting, he adds, Sir. 6:20: *For in working about her thou shalt labor a little, and shalt quickly eat of her fruits.* As if he said: A small labor in respect of the fruit.

10. The arms. We ought, with love and service, as with two arms, to embrace the blessed Virgin, that we may bring back from her the good reward, that reward, namely, of which it is said, Prov. 4:8: *Thou shalt be glorified by her, when thou shalt embrace her.* We ought also, for her honor, to be reconciled with our enemies, which reconciliation is designated in the mutual embrace and the stretching out of the arms. So the Lord stretched out his arms on the cross, wishing, as far as in him lay, to gather all into the embrace of his mercy. Or, after her example, to fight against the threefold enemy. Hence Sir. 7:33: *Fight with thy arms.* Another reading says: *Purge thyself with thy arms*, by giving alms acquired by one's own arms. As if he said: For thy purging give alms acquired by thine own labor. Hence Sir. 7:33 ff.: *Offer the gift of thy arms, and the sacrifice of sanctification to the Lord, and the beginnings of the saints. And reach out thy hand to the poor*, etc. Construe thus: *The gift of thy arm*, that is, what is acquired by thine own labor, *and the sacrifice of sanctification*, in which thou mayest be sanctified, *thou shalt offer to the Lord*, that is, to the Lord's ministers for his sake. *The beginnings of the saints*, that is, the initiations of sanctification, are these: tithes, firstfruits, gift, sacrifices. And he says *beginnings*, because such gifts do not make sanctification but initiate it. *And reach out thy hand to the poor*, by giving alms, consoling, rebuking, *that thy propitiation may be perfected*, that is, the remission of sins; *and thy blessing*, passively, that is, the conferring of graces, or, actively, the giving of alms. *The grace*, that is, for the grace, *of the gift*, that is, of thy giving, *in the sight of every living man.* Which will be in the future, when grace *(p. 106)* shall become glory; and so blessing and propitiation shall be perfected.

11. The breasts. To pour in the milk of simple doctrine for simple people. Hence Sir. 24:31: *They that explain me*, etc. Which is done most profitably when her life is shown to simple people. Again, because the breasts of the faithful soul are compassion and congratulation, for her honor we ought to fulfil that word of the Apostle, Rom. 12:15: *Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep.* Or even to rejoice with her and to compassionate her, as above. Or, for love of her, to give counsel and help to the afflicted, which are the two breasts of the just man, with which he ought to give milk to the lesser. Or, better, the breasts of the faithful soul are gratitude and humility, by which Mary's grace is chiefly retained with us, according to that word of Canticles 1:12: *He shall abide between my breasts.* For by the very fact that through humility we acknowledge ourselves unworthy of Mary's manifold benefits, and through gratitude do not cease to give thanks, we retain her with us inseparably and delightfully; for *her delights are to be with the children of men* (Prov. 8:31). On the contrary, nothing more puts her and her Son to flight than ingratitude and pride.

12. The loins. That she may be worthily ministered to, after the example of that strong woman who girds her loins with continence, and by good work strengthens her arm (Prov. 31:17).

13. The knees. Before her altars or her images, and when her name is recited, to bend the knee; for she says with the Son, Isa. 45:24: *Every knee shall be bowed to me.* Baruch 2:18: *The soul that is sorrowful for the greatness of the evil, and goeth bowed down and feeble, and the eyes that fail, and the hungry soul, giveth glory*, to God, namely, and to his mother.

The feet. Above all, for her honor, to keep our feet from every evil way, to frequent her memorials with devotion, that we may be able to say: *Our feet were standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem* (Ps. 121:2), that is, O thou Mary. Whence among other things she is read to have said to Theophilus that she greatly loves the race of Christians, especially those who with right faith and a pure conscience run to her temple. And note *run*, in which the fervor of devotion is noted; for she is not to be sought with sloth but with fervor. To visit her servants mercifully, for her honor and glory. To solemnize her service by standing. Hence notable miracles are read to have happened to some. Mystically, however, it can be understood that if you wish to

honor the mother and the Son worthily, you should have the earth under your feet, putting temporal goods and earthly desires beneath you, and despising and trampling carnal affections, so that you may be like that woman who is described as having the moon under her feet (Apoc. 12:1), that is, all changeable things; for otherwise you will not be able to be clothed with the sun in the present, nor to have the crown of twelve stars. Be lifted up, therefore, aloft, seeking heavenly things; and this is the spiritual standing. That she may worthily be served, one must abdicate all carnal filth and drunken affections; for, as is said in Wisd. 7:25, *No defiled thing cometh into her.* For her grace does not dwell in a body subject to sins (Wisd. 1:4). Nor is it found in the land of them that live in delights (Job 28:13). *The deep saith: It is not in me: and the sea saith: It is not with me* (Job 28:14).

Chapter 5: How Mary is to be served with the mouth

(p. 107) Again, with our mouth we owe the glorious Virgin manifold service: praise, super-exaltation, prayer, confession, blessing, elucidation, preaching, magnification, singing, thanksgiving, salutation, investigation, solemnization.

1. Praise. That as it is said of the Son, *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord* (Ps. 144:21), so also it may be said of the mother: *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lady. And let all flesh bless his holy name.* For she herself says with the Son in Psalm 49:23: *The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me: and there is the way*, namely to eternal praise, to abide without end, of which it is said: *They shall praise thee for ever and ever*, namely they that dwell in thy house, O Lord (Ps. 83:5). *Which journey being completed, I will show him*, that is, my praiser, *the salvation of God*, that is, the Son of God and mine. Or, *the salvation of God*, that is, myself. For she it is from whom and through whom holy Jacob, now near death, hoped for eternal life, saying, Gen. 49:18: *I will look for thy salvation, O Lord.* For through her God our king before the ages decreed to work salvation in the midst of the earth. So blessed Bernard expounds this place. Again, blessed Bernard: “There is no doubt,” etc. (Look above, reason two.)

Again, concerning praising Mary especially on her solemnities and Saturdays, a certain writer says, courteously, in a prose sequence: “On the festal day of the Virgin let us rejoice together, from whom we confess that the light of light was born. And that we may be cleansed from the rot of every crime, let us venerate her with the ode of our song. She is worthy of praises, who has brought remedies to our crimes. Let us therefore praise her together, while it is granted us, with gladness.” But since whatever is written in this book pertains to her praise and glory, we pass over this briefly. Bede also says that “the clemency of the Savior is to be entreated continually, that he may make us worthy to venerate the memory of his blessed Mother with fitting offices.”

2. Super-exaltation. That above all the saints, after the Son, we exalt her to the measure of our ability, according to what is commanded us concerning the Son, Dan. 3:57: *Praise and exalt him above all for ever.* Sir. 43:33: *Blessing the Lord* (let us say, the Lady), *exalt him as much as you can. Exalt*, that is, proclaim her exalted beyond all things and above all things; for she is greater than all praise, that is, worthy of greater praise than all angelic or human praise. Ibid., v. 32, of the Son (let us say of the mother): *Glorifying the Lady as much as you can.* Which is done most of all whenever the sacred Scriptures are expounded concerning her, that she may be shown more glorious. *For she will yet exceed*; and her magnificence is wonderful. Again, in Psalm 150:2: *Praise (p. 108) him* (let us say, her) *according to the multitude of his greatness.* Sir. 18:2–3: *Who shall search out her great works*, that is, her power? *And her majestic power who shall declare? or who shall add to declare her mercy?* For as incomparably more honor and grace were shown her by the Creator himself than to all other creatures, so by the whole creation more honor and devotion is to be shown her than to any other pure creature.

3. Prayer. For we owe Mary the sacrifice of devout prayer, so that it may be said of the mother as it is said of the Son, Isa. 62:6–7: *You that are mindful of the Lord, hold not your peace, and give him no silence.* Again, 1

Thess. 5:17: *Pray without ceasing.* Which is to be understood, as Bede says, either of the daily hours according to the rite of the Church (hence, *I will bless the Lord at all times*, Ps. 33:2), or because whatever the just man does according to the honor of God and of Mary is referred to prayer. Therefore also the Church sings: "Every man, at every hour, pray to her and implore her patronage." Mary, indeed, is to be entreated assiduously by us, because she assiduously entreats for us. For she is the lover of the brethren and of the people of Israel, that is, of Christians seeing God by faith. She it is who prays much for the people and for the whole holy city Jerusalem, that is, the Church militant, as it is read of Jeremias (2 Mach. 15:14). For she is Bethsabee, that is, "well of satiety," who bore Christ, that is, the sufficiency of all, which by her prayers she obtains from the true David, that is, God the Father, for her sons, that is, her imitators, the kingdom of Israel, that is, of eternal vision, as it is read in 3 Kings 1:17 ff. that Bethsabee obtained the kingdom for Solomon her son. And this is what blessed Bernard teaches: "Desiring to find grace, let us seek Mary, the finder of grace; who, because she always finds, cannot be frustrated: for she will be heard by reason of her reverence" (cf. Heb. 5:7).

Again, Mary is our mouth, because she assiduously entreats the Son for us. Hence Apoc. 12:16: *The earth*, that is, Mary, *opened her mouth*, to entreat the Son, *for the woman*, that is, the faithful soul, whom the serpent, that is, the devil, was harassing. And she it is who is read first in the New Testament to have pleaded for man, saying: *Son, they have no wine* (John 2:3).

Again, the mother of mercy is to be asked assiduously that she mercifully show to us wretches the works of mercy, namely that she break her bread to the hungry (which is done when she distributes particularly the grace that strengthens the heart of man); that she bring the needy and the harborless into her house, namely paradise; that she cover the naked with the garments of virtues, with which she clothed the Son of God in flesh; that she let go free them that are broken, and break asunder the burdens of sins, etc. In this manner, Isa. 58:6 ff.

Again, in the Litany of the Saints we address Mary by three names, that she may pray for us. These are: "Holy Mary, pray for us. Holy Mother of God, pray for us. Holy Virgin of virgins, pray for us." And these are against the three vices which chiefly assail us, that is, pride, avarice, lust. Mary is interpreted "star of the sea," which star is small and bright. And Mary is small by humility, bright by example. Behold a medicine against pride, which thinks great things of itself, and inwardly darkens and blinds. Mary must be asked assiduously that her name be interpreted in us, which is "illuminatrix." A mother is wont to be pious and merciful to her children. Behold a medicine against avarice, which despoils either fraudulently or openly, and which crucified the very image of God, that is, the Son, for *(p. 109)* money. In this name, Virgin of virgins, a double cleanness is noted, of flesh namely and of spirit, against the affection and the act of lust. And so in these three appellations it is insinuated that however much anyone has been stained by any disease of sin, in the blessed Virgin he can find a washing.

Let the proud man say to the blessed Virgin: As thou art truly the star of the sea, small and bright, take from me the swelling and the cloud of pride; for she hates pride inexorably who loved humility inestimably. Likewise avarice, since she is the mother of piety; and lust, since she first emitted the vow of virginity. Let the avaricious man say to her: As thou art truly the mother of piety, take from me the hardness of avarice, and give me the tenderness of mercy. Let the lustful man say to her: As thou art truly Virgin of virgins, extinguish in me the concupiscences of the flesh, and make me clean and chaste. And this is what we pray her:

Make us, loosed from sins, Meek and chaste.

Mary is designated by the temple of Solomon, of which the Lord says, 2 Par. 7:15–16: *Now my eyes shall be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place: for I have chosen and sanctified this place.*

Again, we ought to pray to Mary assiduously, after the example of blessed Anselm, saying to her: "I beseech thee, O Mary, by the grace with which the Lord willed to be with thee and willed thee to be with him, that for the sake of that same grace thou make thy mercy and grace to be with me. Make that love of thee be ever with me, and the regard of thy piety, so long as I subsist, be ever with me, and compassion for my misery, so far as is expedient for me, be ever with thee. For as, O most blessed, everyone turned away from thee and despised by thee must needs perish, so everyone turned to thee and regarded by thee, it is impossible that he perish." For that word of Psalm 103:29 can be understood of Mary: *Thou turning away thy face*, that is, the regard of mercy, *they shall be troubled*, etc. Again, she alone is the one by whose regard the ice is melted, that is, the frost of the sinner's heart. Again, Ps. 29:8: *Thou turnedst away thy face from me, and I became troubled.* Job 13:24: *Why hidest thou thy face?* Isa. 64:7: *Thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast crushed us by the hand of our iniquity.*

Again, because Mary easily obtains whatever she asks of the Son. Therefore in her figure it was said, Judith 8:29: *Pray for us, for thou art a holy woman, and fearest God.* Likewise in her figure it was said, Esther 15:3: *Call upon the Lord, and speak to the king for us, and deliver us from death.* For she holds back the anger of God, lest he at once take vengeance on us. Hence she says, Cant. 3:4: *I held him, and I will not let him go*, etc. Her graciousness in obtaining was figured in Esther 7:2, where Assuerus said to Esther: *What is thy petition, Esther, that it may be granted thee? and what wilt thou have done? Although thou ask the half of my kingdom, thou shalt obtain it.* (Look for the exposition under the title that Mary is queen.) For the Lord complained before Mary was born, saying, Isa. 64:7: *There is none that riseth up and holdeth me.* But she became our advocate, and pleads for us faithfully before her Son, presenting to him her womb and breasts; and he, like a most loving infant, is delighted by the breast of the mother presented to him (Isa. 11:8). Ask of Mary the grace or wine of compunction, which was signified at the wedding (John 2:3 ff.). The grace of reconciliation, as the woman of Thecua obtained for Absalom the fratricide (2 Kings 14:4 ff.). The grace of the washing away of sins, signified in the book of Kings by Abigail (1 Kings 25:24 ff.). The blotting out of the handwriting of the devil, signified by Esther, who made the letters of Aman null (Esther 16:9 ff.).

Chapter 5 (continued)

(p. 110) **4. Confession.** For she seems to say with the Son, Matt. 10:32 and Luke 12:8: *Whosoever shall confess me before men, I also will confess him before my Father*, and before my Son. For we ought to believe with the heart, because *with the heart we believe unto justice*; and to confess with the mouth, because such confession is made *unto salvation* (Rom. 10:10): to confess her as the first leader of virginity, fruitful without corruption, pregnant without burden, a mother in childbirth without pain, and all else which the Catholic Church believes and asserts of her, etc.

We ought also to confess her virginal childbearing, as above, reason twenty-three, and that she seems to have had neither a like one before her nor one following, and the like. To this end we ought continually, by praying, to ask the life of grace, since she is the mother of life; for *a living man, living with the life of nature, living with the life of grace, he, no other, shall confess to thee*, O Lady, to the salvation of his soul and thy good pleasure; for *from the dead*, by mortal sin, *as from one that is not, confession perisheth* (Sir. 17:26). We ought therefore to confess her with the confession of praise, that she may confess us with the confession of recognition and protection. Christ says of the reprobate: *Then will I profess unto them: I never knew you* (Matt. 7:23). And this is the confession of reprobation. And this is what is read in the penance of Theophilus: because before she would permit herself to plead for him, she made him confess her Son true God and true man, born of her for the salvation of the world, saying to him: "Confess my Son; for he is merciful and will receive the tears of thy penance."

She is to be confessed also as we are taught to confess to the Son, Sir. 39:20: *Confess to him with the voice of your lips, and in songs of your lips, and with harps.* Thus expound: *Confess* sins and praises, *to him*, that is,

to his glory and praise; because, as the Gloss says on the first chapter of Joshua, the confession of the sinner belongs to the praise of the one who pardons. *With the voice of your lips*, that is, in confession, praise, and preaching; *in the songs of your lips*, that is, in praises which proceed from gladness of mind; *and with harps*, that is, with mortification of the flesh by fasts and other penitential exercises. Hence he says *harps* in the plural. And all this is as if the wise man said: By words and deeds praise her.

Confession of our sins also we owe to Mary. Hence those who wish to be absolved say: "I confess to God, and to blessed Mary, and to all the saints," etc. As if the one confessing said: I want her to know my confession, to bear witness for me before God that before death I confessed my sins; for she is a faithful witness in heaven before her Son, as is said of the moon in Psalm 88:38. But see that you confess truly, and have a good cause; because she is a faithful witness, and will not lie for you, as it is said, Prov. 14:5.

Blessing. That is, that incessantly, with heart and voice together, we bless Mary, by whose virginal childbearing the curse of Eve was turned into a blessing, when it was said to Mary: *Hail, full of grace*, etc. (Luke 1:28).

Again, that by blessing her we may deserve to be blessed by the Lord. For if it was said to Abraham by the Lord, Gen. 12:3: *I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee*; and if it was said to Jacob, Gen. 27:29: *Cursed be he that curseth thee; and blessed be he that blesseth thee*: much more was this said to Mary, who is the daughter of Abraham, and who is also well designated by Jacob, who is interpreted "supplanter," because at once and at one time she supplanted all vices. For those who bless her shall inherit *(p. 111)* the land of the living, but those who curse her shall perish, that is, shall perish in diverse parts, namely in body and soul, such as are the Jews, pagans, heretics, and blasphemers. For it is the will of the Son that we bless his mother and our Lady at all times, that is, night and day, in prosperity and in adversity, and that her praise be always in our heart and mouth, meditating on her, praising her, praying, blessing, giving her thanks, preaching her great works, and that her praise be as a bridle in our jaws, restraining us from the vices of the tongue. Hence she herself also promises with the Son to her praiser, Isa. 48:9: *With my praise I will bridle thee, lest thou perish.*

Again, that thou mayest fulfil that word of Psalm 102:1: *Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless his holy name.* And her several members are to be blessed daily, that in each of our members we may carry away a blessing from her. Again, there are to be blessed the feet with which she carried the Lord; the womb in which she carried him; the heart whence she firmly believed in him and fervently loved him; the breasts with which she nursed him; the hands with which she fed him; the mouth and tongue with which she gave him the happy kisses of our redemption; the nostrils with which she smelled the sweet fragrance of his humanity; the ears with which she delightfully listened to his sweet words; the eyes with which she devoutly looked on him; the body and soul which Christ consecrated in her with every blessing. And these most holy members of hers are to be saluted and blessed with all devotion, so that to each are said several salutations, namely Hail Mary: two to the feet, one to the womb, one to the heart, two to the breasts, two to the hands, two to the mouth and tongue, two to the lips, two to the nostrils, two to the ears, two to the eyes, two to the soul and body. And so in all there are twenty salutations, which, in the manner of a daily payment, with as many genuflections if it can be done, before her image or altar, are to be paid to the glorious Virgin, according to that word of Psalm 144:2: *Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever*, etc. And as those say who have experienced it, and testify, who have heard it from very holy men, scarcely could another mode of service be found which would so please the Virgin, or from which such devotion would overflow to those who love her.

Again, for each of her members, after the genuflection, for prayer and salutation one must say thus: "Sweet Lady, I adore and bless those most blessed feet with which thou didst carry the Lord upon the earth. I bless and adore that most blessed womb in which thou didst bear him"; and so of the other members and senses, commemorating their acts with which they served the Lord. This devotion will dictate better than speech,

grace better than writing.

This also is to be done after the example of that blessed woman who, as is found in the legend of blessed Martha, the hostess of the Lord, was called Marcella, and who, lifting up her voice from the crowd, said to Jesus: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck* (Luke 11:27). *Lifting up*, that is, lifting from the heart, her voice in commendation of Christ and to the confusion of the blaspheming Jews, a certain woman of the crowd, that is, not rich or noble, but of the common people. For this reason that Gospel is read of the Virgin on feast days. *She said to him*, that is, to Christ, who was being blasphemed by the Jews: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee*, that is, that bore thee, blessed, to us. Or, *who*, that is, because it bore thee; for not from the womb did the Son, but the womb from the Son, receive the honor of beatification, as a new and pure vessel receives savor and odor from good wine or good spice or electuary, and not the other way round.

The womb of the Virgin is called blessed principally on account of three wonders that were done in it. First: because God there *(p. 112)* was made man, the Word an infant, the immortal mortal, the immense a little one, the creator a creature, *who made that which was made*. John 1:14: *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* On this account also, Sir. 1:9, it is said of the Father and of wisdom, which is the Son of God: *He created her*, that is, appointed her to be incarnated. Hence the Father says, Isa. 45:8: *I the Lord have created him*, namely the man, *in the Holy Spirit*, that is, by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, because the whole Trinity wrought the incarnation of the Son. *And he saw*, namely God the Father, that is, approved; *and numbered*, that is, fully comprehended; *and measured*, because the numerosity of charisms with which Christ the man was filled the Father comprehended most fully. Or thus: *And he saw*, that is, made visible; *and numbered*, that is, made numerable with other men. And so three wonders are shown about the incarnation: for the invisible was made visible, and the innumerable was made numerable, and the immense was made measured, confined, that is, within the virginal womb. Therefore Jeremias says, 31:22: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth.*

Second, it is called blessed because he who made the womb was made in the same womb. This is a great wonder, as if someone first built a house and afterward were born in the same house. Therefore glorious things are said of the city of God, that is, Mary, namely that *a man is born in her; and the Highest himself hath founded her* (Ps. 86:5). Isa. 66:8: *Who hath ever heard such a thing?* Third: because that womb contained one greater than itself, that is, God, whom the whole world does not contain, who enclosed himself in the virginal womb, and in the bowels of the glorious Virgin. (On this matter you will find much under the title that Mary is called the wonderful vessel, the work of the Most High, Sir. 43:2.)

Again, note that that woman did not say, “Blessed the mother who bore thee,” but rather, “Blessed the womb,” to hint at compassion, and that as far as in her lies she communicates her goods to all through charity. Hence her womb is called a heap of wheat (Cant. 7:2). And of this bearing in her spiritual womb, which designates her piety, she herself says with the Son, Isa. 46:4: *I will carry you, and will save you,* etc.

Again, the womb of the blessed Virgin is called blessed for many causes, both as to herself and as to us. As to herself, in three. For Boethius says that blessedness is a state perfected by the aggregation of all goods. All good, with respect to the womb, is virginal integrity, conjugal fruitfulness, widowed continence. And blessed Mary was always a virgin, was fruitful but without a man, was a widow when her spouse died. This womb was blessed also as to us, because it relieved our misery, which was threefold: of servitude, of infirmity, and of need. The first, because it bore the treasure of our redemption. Prov. 21:20: *A treasure to be desired, and oil,* etc. The second, because it was the apothecary of our healing. Sir. 38:4: *The Most High hath created medicines out of the earth,* of the virginal flesh. The third it relieved, because it was a field full, bringing bread, and a garden enclosed, bringing the fruit of our refection.

Again, blessed is the womb because it conceived with integrity, bore with lightness, brought forth with sweetness; whereas, on the contrary, every woman conceives with corruption, carries with burden, brings forth with pain. And to these three miseries the female sex is addicted by the sin of the first parent. Let men and women say, then, to the blessed Virgin: *Blessed art thou among women* (Luke 1:28). Let them say to Christ: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee* (Luke 11:27).

Again, blessed is the womb because it was consecrated by the Holy Spirit. Hence: *The Most High hath sanctified his tabernacle* (Ps. 45:5). Again, because it was filled by the Son of God. Luke 1:31: *(p. 113) Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb*, etc. Again, because the virginal milk of Mary's breasts gave drink to the Son of God. Hence there follows: *And the paps that gave thee suck.* And well are womb and breasts joined in the blessing; because, as Bede says, according to the physicians the seed for begetting children and the milk for nourishing them proceed from the same source.

Again, blessed the womb and blessed the breasts, because by their representation to Christ in her prayers this blessed mother obtains for us absolution from guilt, and blessing in grace, and glorification in the fatherland. Hence blessed Bernard: "The mother shows to the Son her womb and breasts."

Again, the virginal womb is to be beatified, because every best gift and every perfect gift has flowed from it to us. The fountain of life, which is Christ, tends to the redemption of the dead, to the reparation of the lost, to the salvation of the living, to the raising up of the fallen, to the rescue of the imprisoned, to the destruction of enemies, to the restoration of Angels, and the like. He himself is the bread of our refection. Hence Cant. 7:2: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat*, etc. He is the ark containing the true manna. The cup of our inebriation. Hence Ps. 35:9: *They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house*, which is that womb in which thou didst dwell nine months; *thy navel a round bowl*, etc. (Cant. 7:2). The water of our absolution, of which the Lord says, Ezek. 36:25: *I will pour upon you clean water*; because her womb is the fountain open to the house of David (Zach. 13:1). The medicament of our healing. Hence Sir. 38:4: *The Most High hath created medicines out of the earth* of the virginal womb, that is, Christ. The provision, or victuals, of our pilgrimage; for her womb was a ship containing the living bread which came down from heaven, and *the food of all in it* (Dan. 4:9). The price of our redemption; because he was the little purse of that money with which we were redeemed, of which it is said, Prov. 7:20. The reward of our remuneration. (Look for all these above, under the title "Full of grace," at the end of the chapter.)

Again, the virginal womb is a paradise of delight, from which flow to us four rivers (Gen. 2:10): fear, knowledge, fair love, and holy hope. Hence the Virgin says: *I am the mother of fair love*, etc. (Sir. 24:24). On account of all these things Jerome calls the virgin's womb a full field.

There follows, Luke 11:27: *And the paps that gave thee suck.* From this it follows that Christ sucked only the breasts of the Virgin and of no other woman. Which was prefigured in Moses, who would suck the breasts of no other woman than his own mother, as they say (Exod. 2:7–9). To this also avails that word of Canticles 5:1, where Christ says: *I have drunk my wine with my milk*, namely the virginal milk, which was wholly mine, and of which no other drank. Again, when it is said to the blessed Virgin, Cant. 1:2, *Oil poured out is thy name*, it is nevertheless not said that her breasts are poured out.

Investigation. We ought also to give the blessed Virgin a pious investigation of her words, examples, and works. To this blessed Luke the Evangelist invites us by word and example, who so diligently follows up the time and place of the Lord's conception, manifesting the messenger by name, and the one who sent him, and describing the race and name of her to whom the messenger was sent, and passing over nothing at all (Luke 1:26 ff.). In which he invites us to diligent inquiry into the mysteries of the Lord's incarnation and passion. Hence Exod. 12:9 says of the paschal lamb: *The head with the feet and entrails thereof you shall eat*, that *(p. 114)* is, the mystery of the incarnation and passion you shall diligently inquire into.

But it behooves that such scrutiny be done most discreetly. For concerning Mary, who was the minister of the Lord's incarnation, many have failed, searching with indiscreet scrutiny (Ps. 63:7); because, since they were darkened by presumption and unbelief, they dashed their darkness against the mother of light; and therefore through Mary *the mouth of them that speak wicked things has been stopped* (Ps. 62:12). *For the too curious searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory* (Prov. 25:27). Therefore it is said, Sir. 43:34: *Exalting him, be filled with strength, and be not weary; for you cannot comprehend.* Therefore also it is said, Prov. 25:16: *Hast thou found honey? eat what is sufficient for thee.* Prov. 30:33: *He that violently bloweth his nose, bringeth out blood.* Therefore also of this investigation it is said, Sir. 14:23: *Going after her as one that traceth, and standing in her ways,* that is, standing entirely; for such investigation is as it were a food of the soul. Hence she says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger* (Sir. 24:29). He has these things, as it were, in the mouth of the heart who firmly believes them; he as it were chews who piously investigates; he as it were swallows into the body's nourishment who by working well imitates, and who is rightly affected toward her. Therefore also Augustine says of the body of Christ: "Why prepare tooth and belly? Believe, and thou hast eaten. And this is the faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). Therefore Augustine himself was not satisfied, from wondrous sweetness, with considering the height of the divine counsel on the redemption of the human race.

Again, of this investigation can be understood: *Blessed are they that search his testimonies* (Ps. 118:2). *For upon the face of the scribe he shall lay his honor* (Sir. 10:5). Again, *Thy testimonies are wonderful, O Lady; therefore my soul hath sought them* (Ps. 118:129). Again, *The declaration of thy words giveth light, and giveth understanding to little ones* (Ps. 118:130), that is, to the humble: of the words, I say, which thou hast spoken, or which have been spoken of thee. Again, Sir. 6:28: *Search after her, and she shall be made known to thee.* (Look a little back.)

Elucidation. Hence she promises, Sir. 24:31: *They that explain me,* that is, my life, by word, example, preaching, and the like. Or, *they that explain me,* that is, who imitate, that they may teach others to imitate; for life teaches more efficaciously than letter. *They shall have life everlasting* in the future. For Mary shall lay her honor upon the face of her scribe, as is said in Sir. 10:5. These elucidators are properly those whose conversation is already in the heavens (Phil. 3:20), and therefore they do not need present sustenance. And therefore the reward of life is promised to them, that they may be the more enkindled. (Of this threefold promise of Mary, which she makes to three kinds of men, namely hearers, workers, and elucidators of hers, you had above, under the title that we owe obedience to Mary.)

Otherwise: *Life everlasting,* that is, the contemplative life, which is perpetual. Or *life everlasting,* that is, hard; for stones are eternal because they are hard. And he who wishes worthily to elucidate the blessed Virgin must, after her example, lead a hard life, not a delicate or dissolute one. Again, Wisd. 6:24–25: *I will lay open her knowledge,* that is, Christ's, wisdom's, or Mary's; that is, as far as I can I will make them known and loved: *and I will not hide the truth,* nay, manifestly, discreetly, and wholly I will elucidate it; *neither will I go with consuming envy,* that is, making to waste. As if he said: Without envy I will communicate the good *(p. 115)* that I shall know about these three, nor will I envy others wisdom or prophecy, as Moses did not (Num. 11:29); *for such a man,* that is, the envious, *shall not be partaker of wisdom,* that is, of that grace which is given by wisdom and acquired through it, and likewise through Mary. Again, Wisd. 8:3: *Her nobility,* namely of wisdom and of Mary, *he glorifieth,* that is, as far as he can he magnifies and exalts, *the just man, having the fellowship of God,* that is, a good soul in which God dwells as in his temple. He glorifies, I say, by preaching, praise, and good work. *Yea, and the Lord of all,* that is, the Father, *hath loved her,* that is, wisdom, Mary, and such a soul.

8. Preaching. Which is truly the same; nay, first indeed and chiefly God is to be preached, afterward Mary. Hence Isa. 24:14 is said of preachers, who are the Lord's horses, bearing him through the world: *When the Lord shall be glorified,* namely through their doctrine, *they shall neigh from the sea,* that is, they will eagerly

preach of Mary. For this reason also it is said of the strong woman, who is Mary, Prov. 31:28: *Her children rose up, and called her most blessed*, etc. The children of Mary are all the faithful of the Catholic Church. Note the order of the words. For he who wishes worthily to preach Mary or to serve her must first rise from sin by penance, because *praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner* (Sir. 15:9). Therefore it is first said: *They rose up.* Nor is he who is in mortal sin worthy to be called the son of so great a mother. Again, *her children*, that is, her imitators, especially in three things: chastity, largess, humility. For thou art her son whose works thou doest. Peter of Ravenna: "He who does not the works of his begetter denies the stock, as the Lord says, John 8:39: *If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham.* The sons of Mary, then, are her imitators in benignity, meekness, mercy, and the like; which is to run in the odor of her ointments. And the heir of this in the future will be he who in the present shall have been her son; for *if sons, heirs also* (Rom. 8:17)." Of such offspring the Son promises his mother, Isa. 44:3: *I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy stock.*

Therefore also of both mother and Son can this be understood: *Declare his glory among the Gentiles, his wonders among all people* (Ps. 95:3), that is, her prerogatives and virtues. Again, of her can be said, as of the Son, Isa. 12:5: *Sing ye to him, for he hath done great things: show this forth in all the earth.* Again, *If I do not make Jerusalem*, that is, O thou Mary, *the beginning of my joy, let my tongue cleave to my jaws* (Ps. 136:6), that is, may I become mute from the praise of God. Wisd. 7:13: *Which I have learned without guile, I communicate without envy, and her honesty I hide not*; which honesty is described, James 3:17: *First indeed chaste, then peaceable*, etc. This is the honesty of wisdom which is attributed to Mary. To learn without guile is to seek and investigate, for no other reason than love of wisdom or of Mary, what pertains to them. To communicate without envy is to seek in such things the glory of Christ's wisdom and of Mary and the usefulness of the neighbor, and in one's teaching to bring forth naked truth with pure intention and fitting speech.

Again, of this preaching it is said, Cant. 6:8–9: *The daughters of Sion saw her*, that is, the angelic powers and holy souls; *saw her*, that is, understood her singular dignity; *and declared her most blessed*, that is, by preaching exalted in the world her, most blessed already in body and soul, according *(p. 116)* to some; *and the queens*, that is, the powers of the heavens, *praised her, saying with admiration: Who is she*, etc. Rightly is Mary called most blessed. Blessed for the absence of all evil, more blessed for the abundance of all good, but most blessed, because with all security she possesses all good.

Chapter 5 (continued)

9. Magnification. This is done when we extol Mary from the heart, by mouth, by work, as far as we can, and invite to her services, praises, and love whomever we can. As if the lover of Mary said to them by word and example: *Magnify the Lady with me, and let us extol her name together* (Ps. 33:4, adapted), that is, in harmony. Augustine: "As if he said: Proclaim with me the greatness of Mary, and raise with a loud voice the great heralding of her name." To this blessed Elizabeth invites us by her example, who, being saluted by blessed Mary, cried out with a loud voice: *Blessed art thou among women*, etc. (Luke 1:42). *With a loud voice*, not so much clamorous as devout, as Bede says. Again, by the example of that holy woman who, *lifting up*, that is, lifting from the heart, her voice from the crowd (Luke 11:27), said to Jesus: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee*, etc. (Above, under the title on blessing Mary.) For to lift up our voice is to magnify Mary with great devotion, great desire, and great effort. For as she was vehemently magnified by her Son, every action of whom is our lesson, so she is to be vehemently magnified by every Christian. And as we say of the Son, *I will magnify him with praise* (Ps. 68:31), so let us say also of the mother. Ecbert the abbot to Mary: "May every soul magnify thee, O mother of sweetness, and may every tongue of the pious praise together the blessedness of thy heart, whence our salvation flowed, for ever and ever." The blessed Virgin is to be magnified by us for this reason, that through her we are brought back from darkness to light, from the

trackless to the way, from death to life, from corruption to integrity, from mourning to laughter, from sorrow to joy, from earth to heaven, from prison to the kingdom, from servitude to freedom, from punishment to glory, from the mouth of the most savage dragon to the bosom of the most loving Father.

Singing, according to that word of Psalm 104:2: *Sing to him, and make melody to him, tell all his wonders*, namely that from a handmaid she was made a queen, a mother from a daughter, a re-creatress from a creature, from a virgin a parent remaining a virgin.

Again, that we may be able to say to her that word of Psalm 70:6: *In thee is my song always*, etc. Again, Ps. 32:3: *Sing well to him with a loud noise.* Again: Sing, sing with all effort, with heart, mouth, voice, vow: *Hail, full of grace.* Again, Isa. 12:5: *Sing ye to him, for he hath done gloriously*, namely when she first vowed virginity, when from humility and credulity of heart she answered the Angel: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me*, etc. (Luke 1:38).

Again, note that he who wishes worthily to sing and chant of Christ and Mary must first prepare his heart and soul, according to Psalm 56:8: *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.* Twice he says *ready*, namely by subtraction and by addition: as an apple is prepared by taking off the rind of hypocrisy or of bad example, and the interior rottenness of lust, and the emptiness of pride, and the like. Again, *ready*, that is, adorned with virtues, as a temple is adorned with hangings and curtains, red, green, hyacinth, and the like. *And with my heart so made ready I will sing and say a psalm.* And note that where there is only exterior preparation without the interior, as in hypocrites who cleanse what is outside of the cup and dish (Matt. 23:25–26), there is nothing but woe.

(p. 117) And note that from the fact that the just man says to Christ or to Mary, *In thee is my song always*, it seems that the just ought to be the minstrels of Christ, of Mary, and of the saints. For courtly minstrels are wont to compose songs, and to apply those already composed to the persons from whom they have already received great gifts, or hope to receive them. Now we have already received many benefits from Christ and from Mary, and we hope to receive much greater ones from them. And therefore we ought to sing with all devotion both to them and about them, that we may truly be able to say to each, in thee, and of thee, and to thee, and beside thee, that is, in thy Church, *my song is always*. For the Church is the fitting place for singing the praises of the mother and of the Son. Hence Ps. 149:1: *His praise in the church of the saints.* In Isa. 38:20 Hezekiah asks: *O Lord, save me!* How can one be made safe? And he adds: *We will sing our psalms all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.* And this is manifestly against those who seldom or never say their hours in church. This was what he marvelled at who said: *How shall we sing the canticle of the Lord*, or of the Lady, that is, Mary, *in a strange land* (Ps. 136:4), that is, outside the Church. And note that it says *in thee is my song*, not merely narration, against those who never say their office with chant. *Mine*, not another's, not a deputy's. Hence Ps. 3:5: *I have cried to the Lord with my voice, and he hath heard me.* Mine, that is, my own.

Again, *In thee*, not in the world or in vices: this is against those who sing whatever is vain or shameful. Again, *In thee*, not in me: because in myself I find nothing to sing of, but rather something to lament. Gregory: "It is just that he should find sorrow in himself who, having left true joy, sought joy in himself."

Again, *Always*, that is, at the due hours. *Always*, because here begins the song of the just, which will never end. Hence Ps. 88:2: *The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.* Again, Ps. 83:5: *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever.* Or *always*, that is, in prosperity and adversity. Hence Ps. 33:2: *His praise shall be always in my mouth.* Isa. 62:6: *All the day and all the night they shall never hold their peace*, praising the name of the Lord or of the Lady, that is, Mary.

Again, *In thee is my song always*, against certain clerics and white monks and canons who spare their voices, against whom Job 7:11 says: *I will not spare my mouth*, etc. And they lie through their teeth when they pray: *Let my mouth be filled with praise, that I may sing thy glory* (Ps. 70:8): for they do not open their mouths

wide to be filled, though the Lord says: *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it* (Ps. 80:11). And the devil closes the mouths of such, against which Esther 13:17 prays: *Shut not up the mouths*, that is, do not permit to be shut by negligence or vainglory, *of them that sing to thee, O Lord.* What we should chiefly sing he notes where he says: *That I may sing thy glory and thy greatness* (Ps. 70:8). We sing the glory of God, saying: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son," etc. His greatness, saying with Mary: *My soul doth magnify the Lord* (Luke 1:46). Or the greatness of God is the power by which he created and disposed the world. Hence it is said to him: *Thou art the God that dost wonders* (Ps. 76:15). His glory is properly the recreation of the world, of which glory he says, Isa. 42:8: *My glory I will not give to another.*

Again, note that he who sings sometimes lowers his voice and sometimes raises it. To sing of Mary, then, is sometimes to raise to her the voice of desire, which cries to God alone, and sometimes *(p. 118)* to lower oneself, humbling oneself by the knowledge of one's frailty.

Again, since the blessed Virgin is signified by that Mary the prophetess, the sister of Moses, who, taking a timbrel, rejoiced for the drowning of Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exod. 15:20 ff.); and since she herself sings with mind and spirit and rejoices to God for the drowning of the spiritual Pharaoh and the liberation of the faithful people, the Angels and saints follow that jubilation, desiring to hear it. Hence the Bridegroom says to her, Cant. 8:13: *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the friends*, that is, the Angels, *hearken to thee*: behold the desire of the Angels. *Make me hear thy voice*: behold, the Bridegroom himself desires to hear her song. Hence he also says to her, Cant. 2:14: *Let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet.* Or thus: *The friends*, that is, all the faithful, hearken to thee for imitation; the Bridegroom himself, for remuneration. But we wretches, how shall we sing the canticle of the Lady in a strange land, that is, if we still sojourn in the land of unlikeness? For *praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner* (Sir. 15:9).

And note that to mother and Son one must sing and chant, and they are to be prayed to in spirit and mind, as the Apostle says of himself, 1 Cor. 14:15: *I will pray with the spirit, I will pray also with the understanding; I will sing with the spirit, I will sing also with the understanding.* For as we owe both of them the vocal hours, so also the real and the spiritual hours. The vocal hours are seven. Hence Ps. 118:164: *Seven times a day I have given praise to thee*, etc. The real hours, which are sung by works and not by words, are the seven works of mercy done to her honor. The spiritual hours are seven, that you may present to her out of yourself faith, hope, and charity, which are the three theological virtues, and the four cardinal, which are justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance. Or the spiritual hours are charity, joy, peace, patience, etc., which are enumerated in the epistle to the Galatians, 5:22–23: that to the best of your power you may imitate Mary in all these things; which is to run in the odor of her ointments, and to sing such hours to her.

Thanksgiving. That is, that in every prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving for benefits already received, our petitions may be made known to her (Phil. 4:6). For we owe every kind of thanks to the blessed Virgin, because in her and through her God was made man; whence there accrued to man a very great prerogative of honor and dignity, love and blessedness; on account of which the Son of God was made *a little lower than the Angels* (Heb. 2:7; Ps. 8:6) as to the condition of nature, who are not fleshly and cannot die, but *the Word was made flesh*, and the immortal became mortal. Hence Job 7:17: *What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him?* etc. For we shall see, not only with the intellectual eye the divinity, but also with the bodily eye, which the Angels do not, the glorified humanity, whereas now we see through a glass in a dark manner (1 Cor. 13:12). Augustine: "For this God was made man, that he might redeem and glorify the whole man." For this reason, therefore, we must never cease from thanksgiving, because Christ and Mary never cease to do us good, *that unto the place from whence the rivers come, they may return, to flow again* (Eccles. 1:7).

We ought also to give thanks incessantly to God the Trinity for so worthy a largess, by which he provided Mary for us, who, to say it briefly, has been made all things to all, that as far as in her lies she may gain all, since there is none that can hide himself from the heat of her charity; saying continually with heart, mouth, and work that word of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 9:15: *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.* Again, 2 Macc.

10:38: *With hymns and confessions they blessed (p. 119) the Lord, who hath done great things in Israel*, that is, in Mary, as she herself testifies, saying: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49). Or, who through Mary did great things in Israel, that is, in the Christian people. Again, Ps. 30:22: *Blessed be the Lord, for he hath shewn me his wonderful mercy in a fortified city*, that is, in Mary, whom the Holy Spirit fortified with all grace and virtue. For she seems to say to all Christians, with the Apostle, that word to the Philippians, 1:8–9: *God is my witness, how I long after you all in the bowels of Christ*, namely of my Son; *and this I pray, that your charity may more and more abound.*

And note that we have already received, and continually receive through Mary, so many and such immense benefits that blessed Augustine proves all the saints to fall short, in worthy thanksgiving to her, saying: "O blessed Mary, who can worthily render thee the due of thanks and the heralding of praises, etc.?" Again: "What praises to thee, etc." Therefore it is said of the holy living creatures, Apoc. 4:8: *They rested not*, that is, did not cease, *day and night*, that is, in all the time of their life, or in adversity and prosperity.

Again, on account of this insufficiency of ours we must say to her as we say to the Son: *What shall I do to thee, O keeper of men?* (Job 7:20), that is, O thou blessed Virgin, who keepest the faithful and those who use reason? *What shall I do to thee*, that is, what shall I render thee for all thy benefits? For thou hast no need of my gifts. Or, *What shall I do to thee?* As if he said: I can do nothing good of myself. Or, *What shall I do?* As if he said: If I do anything that seems good, it is nothing before thee, or nothing in respect of the goods which thou dost continually do to me. And from such consideration there is generated in us humility and love of her. And these two she chiefly requires from us.

12. Solemnization. Mary is to be solemnized at every time by every believer, and most of all on Saturdays and vigils and her special feasts; because through her man returned to the solemn feast of eternal joy. For she is the moon, of which it is said, Sir. 43:7: *From the moon is the sign of the festival day.* The festival day is the day of eternity. For in her was the beginning of the festival day, because she despised all temporal things, gaping after the things above. From her also was born Christ, who is our feast in the present, bestowing peace of heart, joy of conscience, serenity of thoughts, the grace of keeping sabbath from servile work, that is, from sin, and who will be to his faithful an everlasting solemnity in the future. (Look under the title, that she is the moon.)

Therefore we ought to establish a solemn day for Mary *in the thick boughs*, as Psalm 117:27 teaches: *Appoint a solemn day*, namely with heart, mouth, and work establish it. Or, by saying *appoint* is noted firmness and stability of mind in good, for serving her, saying: *This is the day which the Lord hath made* (Ps. 117:24). And he willed to be kept in honor of his mother the day, namely, of her sanctification, the day of her nativity, the day of her conception, the day of her childbearing, the day of her purification, the day of her assumption, and every Saturday as solemn, by solemnizing, reciting, and preaching her virtues and wonders, that the remnants of our thoughts may keep a festival for her in serenity of conscience. And this *in the thick boughs* of all the articles of faith, those which pertain to the glory of her childbearing, to her virtues and works. I speak to you who desire to approach *even to the horn of the altar*: literally, to take the sacrament of her Son, or to celebrate about her. Or otherwise: Mary is called the altar of the Lord's propitiation, who is appeased toward sinners when they offer their gifts and sacrifices on this altar; of which altar he himself says, Isa. 60:7: *They shall be offered upon my acceptable altar*, etc. This *(p. 120)* you will find, Nahum 1:15: *Keep, O Juda, thy festivals, and pay thy vows.* Juda is interpreted "confessing" or "glorifying"; this is the faithful people, which is commanded to celebrate the festivals of Christ, Mary, and the saints, which are its own. Hence it says, *thy*, that is, instituted for its own advantage, if it will heed.

These festivals are to be celebrated for a manifold cause. First, that we may render them turn for turn: for the saints and Angels, nay Christ himself and the blessed Virgin, make a feast of us. Luke 15:7: *So there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance*, etc. And these are the dishes of paradise. Christ also, as is said there, who is designated by the woman seeking the lost drachma, when it is found calls together her

friends and neighbors, that is, the Angelic powers, that they may rejoice with her over the drachma lost and found, and likewise over the sheep. By this woman Mary also can be designated.

Second, because we are girded for battle, that we may have them as advocates and intercessors: for *let not the girded boast himself as the ungirded* (3 Kings 20:11). Therefore it is said in Psalm 120:1: *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains*, that is, the saints, *from whence help shall come to me.* For *strength is from heaven* (1 Macc. 3:19). Again, that we may say to both, the mother and the Son, that word of 2 Paralipomenon 20:12: *As we know not what to do, we have this only remaining, that we direct our eyes to thee.*

Third, that we may be encouraged to do as they also did, whose strength was not the strength of stones, nor was their flesh of brass (Job 6:12); but in flesh and in a frail sex the glory of martyrdom was conferred on them. *Neither is the hand of the Lord shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear* (Isa. 59:1). *But our iniquities have divided between us and our God, and our sins have hid his face from us* (Isa. 59:2), that is, his propitiation.

Fourth, that when their virtues, which are recited on their feasts, have been recited and considered, we may blush at our filth and imperfection: for all our justices are in the sight of the Lord as the rag of a menstruous woman (Isa. 64:6). Therefore it is commanded, Ezek. 43:10: *Thou, son of man, show to the house of Israel the temple, and let them be confounded for their iniquities.*

Fifth, because, though they are always ready to pray for us, as is said of Jeremias (2 Macc. 15:14), we believe that on their feasts they intercede most earnestly for those who observe them.

It is to be noted, moreover, that the vigils of the principal solemnities of Christ, Mary, and the saints are to be fasted on a spare and slender diet, or even on bread and water, especially (the vigil) of the glorious Virgin. Hence blessed Bernard: “The authority of the fathers has ordained that the principal feasts of the saints be forestalled by votive fasts. Usefully indeed, if one is present who heeds. For many sins we contract daily, and in many things we all offend; nor is it altogether safe to undertake the celebration of sacred festivities, and especially those that are greatest, unless the purification of abstinence has first been sent ahead, whereby we may be found both worthier and more capable of spiritual joys.”

Again, to solemnize in an orderly way is that the vigil precede in dry things, and the feast follow in fat things. For now just men keep the vigil of the eternal solemnity which will be in paradise. And if perhaps they are sometimes burdened by the length or dryness of the vigil, let them recall the eternity and delights of the feast. Blessed Bernard: “Thou shalt not complain of a longer vigil, if thou considerest the long duration of the festival.” But the wicked do the reverse, now having a transitory *(p. 121)* feast in fat things, but about to keep vigil in the driest things for ever. These are the Agarenes, which is interpreted “solemnity of vigil and of vigils,” who make a solemnity of the vigil, contrary to the Lord’s institution, and therefore in the time of the eternal solemnity will keep vigil for ever. Of these it is said in Psalm 103:11: *All the beasts of the field shall drink.* The field is the world; the brutish beasts and animal men, seeking nothing but what is of the belly and below the belly, will drink at the cup of Babylon that inebriates (Jer. 51:7), now clear and delightful, but dregs for ever. Hence Isa. 24:9: *Bitter shall be the drink to them that drink it.* Jer. 9:15: *I will feed this people with wormwood, and I will give them gall to drink.* But *the wild asses*, that is, just men, *shall wait in their thirst* (Ps. 103:11), that is, their Dalila thirsting. Dalila is interpreted “bucket.” This is the wretched flesh, which always thirsts for pleasures. They shall wait, I say, until they have clear water, that is, until they are fully given to drink of the water of saving wisdom. For it is the property of the wild ass, though it thirst vehemently, to refuse to drink turbid water, but to wait until it has clear water, and above all rain from heaven; and it is an animal that endures its thirst long. Isidore says that *on* is the same as “ass,” *agria* the same as “servant.”

Again, holy men, now keeping the vigil of that eternal solemnity, fulfil spiritually what is wont to be done literally in vigils. One bathes, and in the bath is designated contrition, which is the first washing of the soul,

where Christ loves the soul. This was designated in the fact that David, who signifies Christ, saw, namely with the eye of mercy, Bethsabee, that is, the penitent soul, washing herself in the bath of contrition, and loved her (2 Kings 11:2 ff.). The head is washed, that is, the mind, through compassion, which is the second washing of the soul. Of this twofold ablution, namely through contrition and confession, it is said, Isa. 1:16: *Wash yourselves*, with the washing of contrition and confession, in which all things are washed, as blessed Lawrence says. And note that a stain is said to be washed, that is, taken away; a cloth to be washed, that is, whitened and cleansed. *Be clean*, that is, persevere in cleanness after the washing: because otherwise the washing profits not. And this fortifies against relapse: for true confession cleanses the soul as a broom the house, as lye a cloth, as a bath the flesh, as a file iron, as ablution the foot or hand. The garment is cleansed, that is, the flesh, which is the garment of the soul. Hence Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh.* Likewise through contrition, confession, taking of discipline, abstinence, giving of alms, and especially through the pouring forth of tears. The house of conscience is purged of the mud of lust, the dust of avarice, the cobwebs, that is, the vanity of pride. All of which is done by truly confessing spiritual as well as carnal vices. Our house also is spiritually cleansed when we take care that the plunder of the poor be not found in it, or that it be not polluted by the mud of lust; when, that is, we make ourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity; when also we take pains that our camp be holy, and that nothing of foulness appear in it, lest the Lord our God forsake us (Deut. 23:14).

The beard and the crown are shaved. Gregory on Job: “They shave their beards who withdraw from themselves confidence in their own strength.” For the shaving of the beard, which signifies virility, is to cut off from oneself presumption of one’s own strength. As the beard, then, is taken off before a feast, so, if you wish to come to the eternal feast, you must take away presumption from your virility, that you be *a man that seeth his poverty* (Lam. 3:1). And *(p. 122) thy humiliation shall be in the midst of thee* (Mic. 6:14). (Look under the title on confession, where confession is called a razor.)

Chapter 5 (conclusion)

Therefore the Lord commanded, Ezek. 5:1: *Son of man, take thee a sharp sword, shaving the hairs.* To shave the crown or the hairs of the head is by confession to cast from oneself superfluous and harmful thoughts of the mind. Therefore, Num. 8:7, the Levites, sprinkled with the water of purification, are commanded to shave all the hairs of their flesh. Which is: by the razor of confession or of discipline to cut off carnal thoughts from the mind, and superfluous motions from the flesh.

Again, in the shaving of the crown the head is shaved on top, to signify that our mind ought to be clean toward God. And temporal things, which like hairs, because of continual necessities, are compelled to cling to the head, that is, to the mind, ought not to occupy the principal part of the soul, but to hang down as from the side; nor be exalted in it, but flow down from it, as the hairs are on the head; and lower down let their form be circular, that the use of temporal things may be referred to heavenly. Let the hairs also be short, that in our minds temporal things may be cut short by contempt, not drawn out by desire and love. Hence where temporal things are more perfectly despised, there the tonsure is shorter. The hairs are cut round, as has been said. The hairs are the superfluity of thoughts. Jer. 7:29: *Cut off thy hair, and cast it away.* Again, Mic. 1:16: *Make thee bald, and be shorn for the children of thy delicacies.* (Under the title, that penance is the shears.)

The nails are cut, by which rapacity is signified, which is the more damnable the more sublime the solemnity. The house is adorned, that is, the conscience, with diverse virtues, as with hangings or boughs and leafy fronds, which designate the greenness of eternal things, which then especially ought to be sought by prayer and desire. Job 39:8, of the wild ass: *He looketh round about on the mountains of his pasture, and seeketh for every green thing.*

Servile work is ceased from, that is, from sin, which makes man the servant of the devil. John 8:34: *Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.* 2 Pet. 2:19: *By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he*

is the slave. Therefore it is said, Lev. 23:25: *You shall do no servile work therein.* Nor only on great solemnities is servile work, that is, sin, to be ceased from, but also from necessary and lawful works on other days. Hence in the same chapter it is said (vv. 30–31): *You shall do no work therein… The soul that shall do any work, I will destroy it from the midst of his people. You shall do no work therefore therein.*

A manifold holocaust is offered to the Lord. Lev. 23:25: *You shall do no servile work therein, and you shall offer a holocaust to the Lord.* But chiefly the sacrifice of contrition, and of recollection of their sins in bitterness of soul, ought to be immolated to the Lord by the faithful on feast days. Hence Lev. 23:32 and 29: *It is a sabbath of rest, and you shall afflict your souls… Every soul that shall not be afflicted on this day shall perish from among his people.* But because the holocaust profits not unless it is kindled by the fire of divine love and fullness of heart, it is said in the same chapter, v. 8: *You shall offer sacrifice in fire to the Lord.*

Note that as in the Old Law a sacrifice of some animal was literally offered to the Lord, so in the New there must be spiritually offered to the Lord the sacrifice of a contrite heart and a humbled spirit. Hence Ps. 50:19: *A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit.*

The sacrifice offered in the Law (the contrite heart offered to God). *First*, it was separated from the other animals. So too the body must be separated from all animality: for *the sensual man perceiveth not those things that are of the Spirit of God* (1 Cor. 2:14).

Second, it was bound. So too the heart must be bound with a double cord of fear and love, lest it escape further after its concupiscences. Or the double cord: the love of God and shame before the world. Or a threefold cord *(p. 123)* which is not easily broken (Eccles. 4:12): the fear of death, of judgment, and of hell. Or also a threefold cord: the prohibitions, precepts, and counsels of wisdom and of theological Scripture, of which it is said, Sir. 6:31: *Her bands are a healthful binding.* And this is what is said of Abraham, Gen. 22:9: *And when he had bound Isaac his son*, etc.

Third, it was offered at the door of the tabernacle. The door is mercy. Hence in 3 Kings 6:32 the doors were of olive wood, in the plural, by which the manifold mercy of God is figured. He too who by sinning was outside the Church, by purposing to do penance and make satisfaction, comes to the Church.

Fourth, the bound animal was delivered into the hand of the priests. This is done when the penitent promises to make satisfaction at the judgment of the priest. Luke 17:14: *Go, show yourselves to the priests.* Therefore Christ, to be immolated for us, was offered bound to the high priests (John 18:13).

Fifth, it was slain, namely by the sorrow of contrition and the labor of sanctification. Gal. 5:24: *They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh*, supply, fighting with the vices of works and the concupiscences of desires.

Sixth, it was flayed. For after man has died to sin in heart and will, nothing remains but flayed and naked confession, that the inward parts may be integrally revealed. Hence the Lord, Matt. 10:16: *Be ye wise as serpents*, namely that you lay aside the whole old skin, and give it for acquiring a new skin. Job 2:4: *Skin for skin*: the skin of sin for the skin of virtue. Or a mortal skin for an immortal skin. Col. 3:9: *Stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds*, etc. For this reason it is said of Judith (10:2), who is understood as "confessing" or "confession": *Judith laid aside the garments of her widowhood*, etc. These garments are the old conversation and the sins themselves. But as the finer the skin the harder it is to flay, so also with spiritual sins, which are the subtler. And as the head of an animal is flayed with more difficulty than the other members, so with lettered clerics and prelates. And as an eel, which has a slippery skin, can scarcely be held to be flayed, so clerics are more slippery when they are flayed, even than laymen. And as when a living animal is flayed there is great pain, so he who does not grieve inwardly in his confession may be thought a dead animal, namely in sin.

Seventh, the members were cut up piecemeal. Hence Lev. 1:6: *And the skin of the victim being taken off, they shall cut the limbs into pieces*, namely by individual confession and by contrition for single sins; because

contrition ought to precede, accompany, and follow confession itself. Hence Joel 2:13: *Rend your hearts*, etc.

Eighth, the members were washed. Hence Lev. 1:13: *The entrails and the feet he shall wash with water*. This is done chiefly by the pouring forth of tears and the giving of alms. Of the first it is said, 3 Kings 18:34: *Fill four pots with water, and pour it upon the holocaust.* For so must the waters of tears be drawn from the depth of the heart with the bucket of humility, and from the deep mercy of God with the bucket of prayer. Of the second, Luke 11:41: *Give alms, and behold all things are clean unto you.*

Ninth, the members were laid upon a pile of wood, as is said, Lev. 1:7. The wood which feeds the fire is the good works which nourish charity, and without which it fails, as fire is extinguished without wood.

Tenth, the members were burned on the altar. Hence Lev. 23:8: *You shall offer sacrifice in fire to the Lord.* Therefore it is commanded, Lev. 1:13: *The priest shall burn all upon the altar for a holocaust and most sweet savor to the Lord.* For the heart *(p. 124)* of the penitent must be kindled with the fire of charity and zeal. Hence 3 Kings 18:38: *The fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the holocaust* of Elias. The altar, then, is faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). The grid, roasting and raising up, is hope; the fire that consumes is charity itself; the pit of the altar that receives the ashes is humility, always recalling its iniquities in order to grieve for them. For the ash, which is the residue of the fire, signifies the memory of God's benefits, or the memory of our consumption through sins.

Eleventh, the odor of the ascending smoke was diffused. In this smoke are compunction or devout prayer, in which the Lord delights, and the diffusion of good example, by which the neighbor is invited to the like. For the first it is said of Noe's sacrifice, Gen. 8:21: *The Lord smelled a sweet savor.* For the second the Apostle says of himself and other penitents: *We are the good odor of Christ unto God* (2 Cor. 2:15).

Twelfth, the ashes were kept. Again, of such a sacrifice it is said: *Offer up the sacrifice of justice* (Ps. 4:6), that is, offer the maceration of the flesh. Rom. 12:1: *I beseech you by the mercy of God*, etc. Or, the sacrifice of justice, that is, good works. Hence Ps. 140:2: *The lifting up of my hands, as evening sacrifice.* Or, the sacrifice of justice, that is, the heart, from which all that was said above is to be done. *And trust in the Lord*, that is, that you can find the mercy of God. But some immolate to demons, and not to God, and the demons themselves will immolate these for ever; so that they have more cause to fear the fire of hell than to hope for the mercy of God. Or the threefold sacrifice of which it is commanded, Lev. 2:4, must be offered sprinkled with oil. The first, from the oven, namely the love of God, sprinkled with the oil of devotion, of which oil it is said: *Thou hast anointed my head with oil* (Ps. 22:5). The second, from the pan, namely brotherly correction, poured over with the oil of consolation, which the Samaritan poured into the wounds of the wounded man (Luke 10:34). The third, from the gridiron, namely the mortification of the flesh, poured over with the oil of cheerfulness, for *God loveth a cheerful giver* (2 Cor. 9:7).

In feasts the propitiation of the Lord is sought. Lev. 23:28: *You shall do no servile work in the time of this day, because it is a day of propitiation, that the Lord your God may be merciful to you.* How the divine propitiation is to be sought is shown in Isa. 55:6–7, where we read: *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found*, etc. *Let the wicked forsake*, etc., *and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him*, etc. By alms the propitiation of God is found. Hence Sir. 7:36: *Stretch out thy hand to the poor, that thy expiation and blessing may be perfected.*

With spiritual joy there is exultation, and worldly sadness is put aside. Hence it is commanded in Nehemias, or 2 Esdras 8:10: *This day is holy to the Lord, be not sad: for the joy of the Lord is our strength.* In the same place (v. 11) it was also said to the people who wept when they heard the words of the Mosaic law: *Hold your peace, for the day is holy, and be not grieved.*

Rich food is prepared more abundantly, not that it be eaten more gluttonously, but that it be more largely bestowed upon the poor. Hence it is commanded in the same place (v. 10): *Go, eat fat things, and drink sweet*

wine, and send portions to them that have not prepared for themselves: because it is the holy day of the Lord.

The word of God is set before the faithful, and the people are called together to hear. Nehemias, or 2 Esdras 8:1–3: *All the people were gathered together as one man to the street… And they told Esdras the scribe to bring the book of the law of God*, etc. *Esdras the priest therefore brought the law before the multitude of men and women*, etc.; *and he read it plainly… from the morning until (p. 125) midday… And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book.*

A collection is made for the work of the poor. Hence it is said in the same place that they made a collection according to the rite. The Apostle, 1 Cor. 16:1–2, says: *Concerning the collections that are made for the saints, as I have ordered the churches of Galatia, so do ye also; on the first day of the week*, etc. Heb. 10:25: *Not forsaking our assembly.*

A new garment is put on, but the old and filthy is first put off. The old and squalid garment is the old and filthy conversation in sins, which must be torn apart by contrition, and cast out by confession, and its squalor washed away by satisfaction. The new garment is the new conversation, which consists in virtues: that, namely, for lust chastity, for gluttony sobriety, for tenacity largess, for sloth strenuousness, for envy charity, for wrath benignity, and for pride humility, be assumed. Or the new garment is the conversation which Christ, the new Adam, lived in the flesh. Hence Rom. 13:14: *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*, not as a man puts on a garment, but as iron fire, as the authority says there.

Bells are rung festively. In sign of which the Lord commanded Moses to make for himself two trumpets of beaten silver, by which he might call together the multitude of the people (Num. 10:2 ff.) when the camp was to be moved. And the use of those trumpets was chiefly to three things: to call the people to wars, to solemnities, and to mourning for the dead. To these three the use of preaching should chiefly be directed, through two trumpets, on account of promise and threat, and of silver on account of sonority. For preaching is principally to three ends: namely, to call the people to the eternal solemnities, and to war (against the flesh, the world, and the devil), and to the mourning of penance for those dead in sin; for each has his own dead. Hence Jer. 6:26: *Make thee mourning as for an only son.* Take note.

At vigils and the service, therefore, praises are also sung to God, the power of which praises, if they are devoutly celebrated, is shown against spiritual enemies. 2 Par. 20:22–23: *When they began to sing praises*, the children of Israel, that is, devout Christians, *the Lord turned the ambushes of the enemies upon themselves, and they killed one another with mutual wounds.* Which is to be understood of demons. Again, 1 Par. 23:30: *The Levites stood to give thanks, and to sing to the Lord in the morning, and in like manner in the evening, both in the offering of holocausts to the Lord, and on the sabbaths and the new moons and the other solemnities.*

Chapter 6: What Is the Property of the Servants of Mary and of the Son, and How Ought We to Prepare Ourselves for Their Service?

(p. 126) Having seen the causes why we ought to serve the glorious Virgin, having seen also what kinds of service we owe her, having seen nonetheless how she is to be served in the present by the several members and senses, it remains to assign the properties of her servants, which unless we have them we cannot worthily minister to her. For those who desire worthily to minister to Christ or to his mother and the other saints ought, as far as they can, to imitate them in virtues, and at least to run from afar in the odors of their ointments (Cant. 1:3); for, as the authority says, to venerate the saints and not to imitate them is nothing else than to flatter falsely. Gregory on that word of John 8:46, *Which of you shall convince me of sin?*: "Those who know not God falsely honor the servants of God. For the true veneration of the saints is the true imitation of them. To Christ indeed and to the saints a devout imitator is far more pleasing than an idle praiser. And true praise of heart and mouth is imitation in work. And then we are true praisers of the saints if

we follow what they too followed." Jerome to the virgins, there: "You compel me, O Paula," etc. "Therefore, most beloved, love her whom you honor, and honor her whom you love; for then you truly honor and love her if you are willing to imitate with your whole heart her whom you praise."

The conditions of the servants of Mary (in the author's mnemonic verses):

Clean, aromatic, upright, devout, Hebrew, Compassionate and congratulating, truthful, silent, Fervent, discreet, humble, pious, and modest, Just, peaceable, simple, patient, and honest, And bashful, cheerful, zealous, studious.

Clean. The servants and praisers of Mary must be clean and immaculate; for she is *a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed* (Cant. 4:12). One must not enter a flowery and delightful garden with muddy feet, nor is the water of the purest fountain to be drawn with dirty hands. For to treat of the blessed Virgin one must approach only with a clean heart and purified thoughts, that with her her servant may be able to say: *In the holy dwelling before him,* that is, the Son, or before her, namely the mother, *I have ministered* (Sir. 24:10). For a holy dwelling is the same as a clean and firm conversation, raised from the earth. "Dwelling" (*habitatio*) is a verbal noun and descends from a frequentative verb, and signifies frequency and perseverance; for there I dwell (*habito*) where I frequently have myself (*me habeo*); and there is my dwelling where my having myself is frequent. For those who are unclean do not minister in the holy dwelling. Likewise neither do those who covet earthly things beyond what is just, nor those who converse upon the earth.

(p. 127) Before him, or her, I have ministered. Here note four things. *First,* heavenly desire, that before God and his mother may be all our desire, and our conversation in the heavens. *Again, before him,* that is, simply, with a single eye, not doing thy justice before men that thou mayest be praised by them, but seeking nothing else but him. *Again, before him,* that is, strenuously; for *all things are naked and open to his eyes* (Heb. 4:13): it is proper to every servant, even a lazy one, to work strenuously as long as his lord is present. Boethius: "Great necessity is imposed on us," etc. Or *before him,* that is, in his good pleasure. Again, *before him,* that is, reverently, before so great a Lord and so great a Lady, since even before earthly lords their servants minister reverently. *I have ministered,* humbly and willingly. *Minister* (*minister*), as one less (*minor*) in station; *to minister,* as to stand as one less. The authority: "If you obey unwillingly, you are a servant; if willingly, a minister." To minister, then, in continual cleanness of mind and body, is to minister in a holy dwelling. *Before him,* that is, in heaven, as has been said. Or *before him,* that is, in his sight, that one may continually look to him by right intention, not intending gain or other temporal advantage; and thus, in his sight, actively or passively, may continually think himself seen by Angels and by God. Hence: *Blessed is he that shall meditate in his mind the circumspection of God* (Sir. 14:22). Or *before him,* that is, to his honor, or to his good pleasure.

And note that in these three words are touched almost all the things necessary to the ministers of Christ or of Mary: that they minister in cleanness, or abjection of pleasures and contempt of temporal things, in patience in adversities, in desire of eternal things, strenuously, fervently, simply, reverently, humbly, willingly, perseveringly. Behold the decalogue of the ministries of Christ and Mary.

Again, let us serve the mother as we are taught to serve the Son. Luke 1:74–75: *Let us serve him in holiness,* that is, in cleanness. Hence the mother says with the Son: *Walking in the undefiled way, this one* (here discriminately, not another) *ministered to me,* to my good pleasure. And in justice, so that you may not believe you are giving her a gratuity but rendering a debt, saying: *I am an unprofitable servant* (Luke 17:10). *Before him,* not that we wish to be praised by men. Hence Col. 3:22: *Not serving to the eye.* Matt. 6:1: *Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them.* In this also, that he says *Before him,* it is noted that the good stand in the sight of God, as Elias says of himself, 3 Kings 18:15: *As the Lord of hosts liveth, in whose sight I stand,* etc. But the wicked stand behind. Hence: *For thou shalt make them turn their*

back (Ps. 20:13). And this because they are unknown by the Lord. *All our days*, that is, perseveringly; because the Lord wills not a servant obliged to another, knowing that *no man can serve two masters* (Matt. 6:24). The world is not to be served, because it not only does not reward its servant, but at his departure despoils him totally. Job 1:21: *Naked came I out.* Nor the devil, against whom, the more affectionately he is served, the more heavily it will be exercised against such a one, as Gregory says. Nor the flesh, which for the service rendered it returns nothing but the coin of dung.

Again, a threefold cleanness is necessary to the servants of Mary, namely, of the flesh, which is to abstain from every exterior uncleanness and every illicit act which could be done knowingly and watchfully. Uncleanness in the restricted sense is the flow of seed by any attraction or touch of a man except by the use of a woman, or of a woman except by the use of a man; but, the word being taken broadly, uncleanness embraces fornication, adultery, *moechia*, incest, *(p. 128)* sodomy, the brutish sin, and the like. Of anyone unclean in these ways or others the Apostle says that the unclean shall not possess the kingdom of God.

Chapter 6 (continued)

Of the will it is to abstain from every illicit consent. Hence Sir. 18:30: *Go not after thy lusts*, namely by consenting to them. Of the heart, to abstain from illicit and perverse thoughts, which separate from God (Wisd. 1:3): imaginations, delectations, desires, recollections, titillations, consents, and the like; for, as the Lord says, Matt. 5:28: *Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.* Again the Lord, Matt. 15:19–20: *From the heart come forth the things that defile a man.*

Aromatic, by the fragrance of good repute, by the example of chastity, piety, and humility. For the purer she is, the more the lustful man stinks to her. For she, being a bee, is put to flight by stench. Sir. 11:3: *The bee is small among flying things.* Being the mother of piety, the impious and avaricious man stinks the more to her. Being the exemplar of humility, the proud man displeases her the more, and so of the other abominations of vices. On account of this fragrance it is said to her servants, Sir. 39:17–20: *As Libanus*, that is, by the example of Mary, who is designated by Libanus (hence she says, Sir. 24:21: *As Libanus not cut*, etc.), *yield a sweet odor, and as the rose planted by the brooks of waters bring forth fruit. Flourish as the lily, and give a smell, and put forth leaves in grace… give ye magnificence to his name.* Behold that first he enjoins the sweet smell of virtues, and afterward her praises.

This fragrance you ought to have in heart, in mouth, in work. In the heart, against the stench of depraved desires, filthy thoughts, recollections, titillations, imaginations, and the like. In the mouth, doubly: by assiduously ruminating her praises, which are aromatic and spices, and by solicitously stopping your ears against all unchaste and detractory speeches. In work and senses, that for her honor and your own advantage you abstain from all polluted work, and solicitously guard your senses and members from every illicit act: namely, do not fix your eyes on a woman; do not, as far as you can, hear a wicked tongue; do not take delight in harlots' perfumes; let not the mouth taste what, tasted, brings death; and likewise guard touch and gait from illicit pleasures and the like.

Upright. For through her the Lord broke the chains of our necks, that we might walk upright (Lev. 26:13). Cant. 1:3: *The upright love thee.* Others are bent. This is said to the mother and to the Son: for the servants and praisers of Mary ought to be upright, because *praise becometh the upright* (Ps. 32:1). Upright is he whose intention is directed to God for God's sake. For there are those who praise God or Mary when she has done them good, as if she does good to them, whose praise, although it tends to God or Mary, is yet reciprocated to themselves. Hence Isa. 59:8: *Their paths are crooked to them*, that is, bent back upon them, bent back to their own advantage; *every one that treadeth in them knoweth not peace.*

Again, morally: A good soul does not stretch itself forward to covet present goods; not backward, to look back by delectation on past evils; not to the right, to pour itself out in prosperity through incontinence; not to the left, to exceed in adversity through impatience; but upward it puts forth its growth; upward it has its heart, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. And such a soul worthily praises together the Son and his mother.

Again, upright is he who is not bent to the love of earthly things. This is signified in the uprightness of the human body, which is upright *(p. 129)* that it may teach its spirit uprightness. Hence: "He gave man a lofty countenance," etc. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I). Eccles. 7:30: *This only I have found, that God made man right*, etc. Therefore the just man asks: *Renew a right spirit within my bowels* (Ps. 50:12). Blessed Bernard: "The very uprightness of the body is a sign of the spiritual uprightness to be kept, and by the comeliness of the limbs rebukes the deformity of the soul." And a little after: "It is a perverse thing to have the eyes upward, and to draw the inward senses and affections down to the earth." And below: "Unworthily does a brutish and bestial spirit inhabit a human body." To seek and savor the things that are upon earth is the crookedness of the soul; but to meditate on the things that are above is its uprightness. Col. 3:2: *Mind the things that are above*, etc. For since the Lord is upright, the servant must be upright, as Psalm 24:8 says. Because the redeemer is upright, the redeemed must be upright.

Again, *How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart!* (Ps. 72:1). Those are of a right heart who desire eternal things; and to them the God of Israel is good. Those are of a crooked heart who desire only earthly things; and to them God will not be seen, though he is good. Of the first it is said, Lam. 3:25: *The Lord is good to them that hope in him, to the soul that seeketh him.* Of the second it is said: *Trust not in iniquity* (Ps. 61:11). Again elsewhere, in Psalm 106:42: *The just shall see*, that is, those who by desire are raised to heavenly things and are not bent down to earthly by love. And such see clearly, because they are not blinded by the dust of worldly things nor by the dung of swallows, *and shall rejoice.* For some are like the mole, which cannot live except in the earth; but the just are like the eagle, which sees the sun in the wheel: by faith now the sun of justice in the wheel of eternity, but at length they shall see face to face. *But not so the wicked, not so.* And (Ps. 106:42) *all iniquity shall stop her mouth*, that is, the mouth of every unjust man shall be stopped; for the wicked shall be silent in darkness. He does not say "shut," but "stop up," in which there is greater pain. Prov. 9:17: *Hidden bread is more pleasant.* And in the same, 20:17: *The bread of lying is sweet to a man.* To a man, from "human." The bread of lying, that is, sin, which by delectation flatters; therefore it seems sweet; and it promises refection, therefore it is bread. But it lies; therefore it is called "of lying." *And afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel.* Gravel is a fiery stone, with which if the mouth be filled, it will burn it. In which is noted the bitterness of the pain, because fiery; by "shall be filled," the infirmity of the pain; by "stone," the durability of the pain, because stone is eternal. Since then it is stone, it cannot be chewed; because the mouth is filled, it cannot be swallowed nor experienced; because fiery, it cannot be sustained.

And note that even pure praise is not enough unless it be also joint praise, that is, that Christ and Mary be praised with one accord. Hence Exod. 15:1, the children of Israel say: *Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously magnified*, etc. For he who is good is not willing to praise alone, but calls others, whom he can, to his help as praisers, saying: *Magnify the Lord*, or Mary, *with me, and let us extol his name together* (Ps. 33:4), that is, in harmony. Nor does he envy the glory of Christ or Mary, as neither did Moses, Num. 11:29, saying: *Who shall give that all the people may prophesy?* Rightly therefore does any saint say: *Let us sing to the Lady*, or to Mary. Someone says: *Sing ye.* Another says: *I will sing.* Neither of these is the saints' own. The first lays upon men's shoulders burdens which he does not touch; the second seeks glory from singularity. In the first, sloth, in the second, pride is reprehensible, as is shown *(p. 130)* in Matt. 23:1 ff. The humble man, therefore, who believes himself insufficient for the praises of mother and Son unless helped by others, rightly says: *Let us sing*; in which is shown that God wills to be praised in concord. Hence Acts 1:14

says that *all were persevering with one mind in prayer*. And 1 Tim. 2:8: *I will that men pray… without anger and contention.* Again, Job 38:7, Christ says: *When the morning stars praised me together, and all the sons of God made a joyful melody.*

Devout. Devotion is a pious and humble affection toward God or the blessed Virgin, generated by contrition. Otherwise: devotion is tenderness of heart or mind, by which one is easily dissolved into tears. This is the marrow of holocausts, without which every holocaust is dry. Hence: *I will offer to thee holocausts full of marrow* (Ps. 65:15). Otherwise: devotion is the fervor of good will, which the mind, not able to restrain it, manifests by certain signs. It is divided into three: zeal, compassion, and benevolence. Zeal is when, for the love of justice, the mind of its own accord offers itself as defender, not enduring to suffer the calumny of truth. Compassion is when we suffer with the miseries of others. Benevolence, when by spontaneous will we grant benefits to one who asks.

Hebrew, that is, "passing over." Hence the glorious Virgin calls to her service especially those who pass over, Sir. 24:26, saying: *Come over to me, all ye that desire me*, etc. (You will find a manifold exposition of this authority in the first sermon on the nativity of Mary.)

Compassionate and congratulating. (You had this above, expounded under the title that we owe Mary congratulation and compassion.) Rom. 12:15: *Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep.*

Truthful, since she herself is the mother of truth, who can neither be deceived nor intends to deceive. Sir. 15:8: *Lying men shall not be mindful of her, and men of truth shall be found in her,* etc. And note that a threefold truth is necessary to the servants of mother and Son. Truth of heart, without duplicity: for, as is said in James 1:8, *A double-minded man is inconstant in all his ways.* Our ways: our actions. Truth of speech, without falsity: for *the mouth that lieth killeth the soul* (Wisd. 1:11), taking away the life of grace in the present, the life of glory in the future. Truth of work, without vanity, which they have not who delight in the praises of men here, and expect another retribution from God, of whom the Truth says: *Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward* (Matt. 6:2). There Chrysostom: "He who does good for human favor, when the people are silent loses his reward."

Silent: for *in the multitude of words there shall not want sin* (Prov. 10:19). After the example of the glorious Virgin, who is read in the Gospel to have spoken no more than seven words. Read and imitate. Therefore Mary is to be asked assiduously by her servant: *Set, O my Lady, a guard to my mouth, and a door round about my lips. Incline not my heart,* that is, do not permit it to be inclined from the uprightness of virtues, *to words of malice, to make excuses,* etc. (Ps. 140:3–4). Therefore to her servants applies that of Jeremias 8:14: *Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into a fenced city*, which is Mary, fenced with every kind of virtues, of whom it is said in Psalm 30:22: *Blessed be the Lord, for he hath shewn me his wonderful mercy in a fortified city.* There follows, Jer. 8:14: *And let us be silent there*, that is, by her example, from all evil speech, etc.

(p. 131) **Fervent**, against sloth, idleness, lukewarmness, and negligence. For it is said of wisdom and of Mary, Sir. 6:20: *Come to her as one that plougheth and soweth,* that is, to her service, *and wait for her good fruits. For in working about her thou shalt labor a little, and shalt soon eat of her fruits.* But *by reason of the cold the sluggard*, that is, by reason of torpor of mind, *would not plough*, that is, labor; *he shall beg therefore in the summer,* with the foolish virgins, in the summer of the future judgment, *and it shall not be given him* eternal life (Prov. 20:4). Against the idle it is said, Heb. 6:12: *That you become not sluggish, but followers of them who through faith and patience shall inherit the promises.* Against the lukewarm it is said, Apoc. 3:15–16: *I would thou wert cold or hot*, etc. Blessed Bernard: "The hot are those fervent with spiritual desires; the cold, those constricted by horror of their sins and of eternal damnation." These two affections we know and believe to be desirable and acceptable to the Lord. *But because thou art lukewarm,* etc. The lukewarm are devoid of both affections, such as almost all are now found. *I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth*, that is, to separate thee shamefully from the society of the faithful, who are the mouth of the Lord; as

that which is vomited is shamefully cast out; which is spiritual excommunication. Otherwise blessed Bernard: “Hot with the fervor of love, cold in consideration of himself.” Otherwise: “Cold is he who for fear of Gehenna does not sin; hot, he whom the love of God does not suffer to sin; lukewarm, he whom neither fear terrifies nor love inflames.” Wonderful is God’s patience, which many times takes back through mercy the one vomited, whereas no one would deign to do this with food vomited. Therefore he says: *I will begin to vomit thee*. Now he begins to vomit, but does not vomit entirely except in death. Again, in that he says *I will begin*, he in a way forearms the lukewarm that he may take heed, which is great mercy. Of the negligent it is said, Jer. 48:10: *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord negligently.* Another reading has “fraudulently.”

Discreet: because often by vehemence of fervor the virtue of discretion is lost. Hence she says with the Son, Isa. 52:13: *Behold my servant shall understand*, he shall be exalted. For as *the king’s honor loveth judgment* (Ps. 98:4), that is, discretion, so also the honor of the queen, as blessed Bernard says: “That in every sacrifice which thou wilt offer to her to her good pleasure, thou study to add the salt of discretion (Lev. 2:13), namely *nothing too much*, nor too little.” Rom. 12:1: *Your reasonable service.*

Humble: that when thou hast done all good things to her honor, thou say to her: *We are unprofitable servants* (Luke 17:10). For *minister* is said as of lesser station, and *to minister* as to stand as lesser: in which humility is noted. (Look above, at the first property, namely, clean.) Or *minister* as one terrified by threats (*minis territus*), namely by fear, which is the brother of humility. For since we are poor and needy, vile and humble by our nature, it is necessary that we voluntarily assume our poverty and humility for Christ, especially since what is consonant with nature is delightfully to be embraced; and these things are greatly consonant with our nature, since poor and useless we are born and die. By the example also of our Lord, who, being rich, became poor (2 Cor. 8:9); being Lord of all, willed to serve all.

Pious: for he who desires to serve to her good pleasure the mother of piety and mercy must needs himself be pious and merciful, since she is the refuge of the merciful, and turns those merciful eyes away from him whom she shall see unmerciful *(p. 132)*, since such a man or woman is altogether unlike her. For if thy hand be empty of works of mercy done to her honor, with what irreverence wilt thou presume to demand mercy from her!

Modest: that her servant walk not in great things, nor in wonderful things above himself (Ps. 130:1); but let his modesty be known to all men (Phil. 4:5), and let him imitate his Lady in this virtue. For if a soldier who is orderly must have an orderly household, as Jerome says, much more the queen of paradise. Modesty is to keep measure in all things: namely in words, because there is *a time to keep silence, and a time to speak* (Eccles. 3:7). Prov. 17:27: *He that moderateth his words is wise and prudent.* In clothing and food, that having food, not delights, and wherewith we may be covered, not ornaments, with these we be content (1 Tim. 6:8). And so of the rest.

Just. Hence it is said to her by the Son, Isa. 60:21: *Thy people shall be all just, they shall inherit the land for ever.* Sir. 15:1: *He that containeth himself in justice*, that is, together with the other virtues holding justice in heart, mouth, and work, *shall lay hold on her*, that is, shall firmly hold with affection and intellect, *her*, that is, wisdom or justice, that is, the fruit of justice, which is eternal life. Or, *he shall lay hold* with all effort of mind and body, saying: *I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and will not let him go* (Cant. 3:4). *Her*, that is, Mary, that he may serve her, praise her together with others, and work for her honor: for he does not seem just, or of the number of the predestined, but rather of the number of the reprobate, who does not specially serve Mary. *And she shall meet him*, namely justice itself, or wisdom, or Mary, *him*, that is, the one containing himself, loving, imitating. She shall meet him, I say, by the glory of conscience, which follows the works of justice, the doctrine of wisdom, the familiarity of Mary, to reward him, both here and in death. *As a mother honored.* Which is to say: as a mother honored by her sons receives them tenderly, so justice, wisdom, and Mary, by the merit of justice, tenderly receive the just in death; for justice, wisdom, and Mary are the mother of the just, because she nourishes them and adopts them as sons. As a mother honored, by the

multitude of good works, and by the doctrine of word and example elucidated. *And as a woman.* Mary is a woman (*mulier*), because she softened (*mollivit*) God, and because she softens hard hearts. And she is a virgin, because by continence she as it were makes virgins again of dissolute bodies. I say mother, not receding from virginity; woman, for the fortitude and fruitfulness of works; and virgin, for the integrity of intention and cleanness of mind which she bestows on those who love her.

Peaceable: that he who desires to serve Mary to her good pleasure may first take care to be pacified by penance with the Son; for so long as one by sinning assaults the begotten, he does not minister to the begetter.

Simple, that is, without the fold of duplicity and simulation; for the simulator with his mouth, as far as in him lies, deceives his friend (Prov. 11:9). Of such the mother complains with the Son, Isa. 29:13: *This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* Which is manifest of many clerics and religious, who are not clerics or religious but rather apes before God, who by singing and chanting do not placate Christ or Mary, but rather provoke and irritate. Of such it is said, Job 36:13: *Dissemblers and crafty men provoke the wrath of God.* On the contrary, *the simplicity of the just shall guide them* (Prov. 11:3).

(p. 133) **Patient** under insults of words, that for her honor he may patiently bear the derisions of the impious, and drink up derision like water after the example of Job (Job 34:7). Nor let him answer the contumelious: for the servant of God, or of Mary herself, must not wrangle, but be meek toward all (2 Tim. 2:24). Again, patient in losses of temporal things, that he may say with Job 1:21: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,* etc. Again, in injury of the members. And this patience is more perfect than the first two. This Christ displayed, saying: *I gave my body to the strikers* (Isa. 50:6). Again, in compulsions of works. Matt. 5:41: *Whosoever will force thee,* etc. Again, in the tribulations which our flesh inflicts on us. James 1:12: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.* Again, in contempt of the world, that he may be able to say to the Son and to the mother: *For thee I have borne reproach* (Ps. 68:8). Again, in bodily sicknesses, that he may say with Job 6:8 ff.: *Who will grant that my request may come, and that God may give me what I look for? And that he that hath begun may destroy me, let him loose his hand and cut me off? And let this be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow he spare not.*

Honest, that is, well-ordered, and let him ask the grace of this honesty from her whose fruits are of honor and honesty.

Bashful: that if he would please by his service the mother and the Son, he blush to do, to say, or even to think shameful, harmful, or wicked things.

Cheerful: that he serve both mother and Son out of cheerfulness, not out of sadness or necessity; for, as the Apostle says, 2 Cor. 9:7: *God loveth a cheerful giver.* Again, Sir. 35:11: *In every gift show a cheerful countenance.*

Zealous: that he serve not out of fear, but rather out of love.

Studious, that is, solicitous in inquiring how he may please him to whom he has approved himself.

Chapter 7: On the Feast of the Eternity of the Blessed Virgin

Therefore, since we made mention of the feast of eternity, to which man has returned through Mary, where it was said, *From the moon is the sign of the festival day* (Sir. 43:7) (see above, chapter 5, §12), of which authority you will find the full exposition under the title that Mary is the moon, we shall therefore say a few things about that feast, at least stammeringly.

That feast is called a banquet. Isa. 25:6: *The Lord of hosts shall make unto all people in this mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wine, of fat things full of marrow, of wine purified from the lees.* Expound thus: *The Lord of hosts shall make unto all people,* that is, to the elect out of every people, as it is said, *Unto thee shall*

all flesh come (Ps. 64:3), that is, some out of all flesh. And *(p. 134)* this banquet is signified in Gen. 43:31 ff., where Joseph, who signified Christ, made a banquet for all his brethren gathered to him.

In this mountain, that is, in the Church triumphant: of which mountain, on account of the fewness of those ascending, it is said: *Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord?* etc. (Ps. 23:3).

A feast of fat things, that is, of every kind of satiety. Hence Ps. 16:15: *I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear*.

A feast of wine, that is, of every kind of joyfulness. Sir. 31:35: *Wine was created for joyfulness*, etc. For then the just shall be inebriated with the plenty of God's house, and he shall make them drink of the torrent of his pleasure (Ps. 35:9).

Of fat things full of marrow, that is, of interior and exterior joys, as the fatness is twofold, of which Ps. 62:6 says: *Let my soul be filled as with fat*, that is, the robe of the soul, *and fatness*, that is, the robe of the body.

Of wine purified from the lees, that is, of the purest joyfulness, without the lees of sadness, as pure wine is called wine without water or mixture. Otherwise: understand in the fatness, fullness. Hence it is said, Job 36:16: *The rest of thy table shall be full of fatness.* Therefore David prayed: *Let my soul be filled as with fat and fatness* (Ps. 62:6). In the marrow, which is hidden within the bones, understand security. Hence Deut. 33:28: *Israel shall dwell confidently.* In the wine purified from the lees, understand the purity of every kind of delight and joyfulness, without admixture of anything contrary.

The banquet of Christ is ennobled. In Luke 22:29–30 eight things are touched which make the banquet noble, where the Lord says to his disciples: *I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom.* The first, the nobility of the one who sets the example, where he says: *I.* The second, the ordered placing of the dishes. Hence: *dispose.* The third, the honesty of the guests. Hence he says: *to you;* for he was speaking to the Apostles. The fourth, cheerfulness of countenance. Hence: *as my Father hath disposed to me a kingdom.* (An example of how the father receives the prodigal son: Luke 15:20 ff.) The fifth, the authority of the one who invites. Hence: *my Father.* The sixth, the fruitfulness of the table. Hence: *that you may eat and drink at my table.* This they do not deserve who minister dishonorably to the poor. The seventh, the pleasantness of the place. Hence: *in the kingdom.* (An example from the banquet of Assuerus, which was made in a garden planted with trees: Esth. 1:5.) The eighth, security. Hence he says: *my.*

This banquet will be that great supper which a certain man made (Luke 14:16), that is, God the Father, when from eternity he prepared for his elect heavenly joyfulness, or the enjoyment of his divinity. God the Father is called "man" there, as in *The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man a king, who made a marriage for his son* (Matt. 22:2), namely to a man a king, God the Father, says the Gloss; yet he is not a man. The Son is called man, and is man. The Father is called man for a double reason. The first is the likeness of creation: since the whole Trinity created man, it gave him divine being, and created him to its likeness, that the interior man might have unity in essence and trinity in powers, as in God there is unity of essence and trinity of persons. Hence Ps. 81:6: *I have said: You are gods.* Just as when the devil overcomes a man, he is called man. Matt. 13:28: *An enemy man hath done this.* Gloss: the devil. The second reason is the union of love. Hence, on account of the love which God has for man, the Father is called man. Augustine: "Love is the union of the lover with the beloved." *He who is joined to God is one spirit* (1 Cor. 6:17). Luke 2:35: *Thy own soul (p. 135) a sword shall pierce.* This was said on account of this union. Or the Father is called man because he is kind, human, and merciful, which are proper to man. Or, *a certain man*, the Word made flesh, by whom this supper is greatly enlarged, that is, that we may have not only God the Creator, as the Angels have, but also a brother as to human nature, which glorified nature to see will be one of the chief delights of paradise; for then it will be made clear what manner of begetting it was. And well is Christ called *a certain man*, that is, singular: man, because he took true flesh from the Virgin; singular, because he alone is God and man, because alone without sin, because alone conceived without injury to maternal virginity, alone carried

without burden of the maternal womb, alone born from the mother's womb without the pain of childbirth, because alone by his death he could redeem the human race, alone by his death slay death, alone draw his elect from hell, alone in the sepulchre not see corruption, because alone among the dead free, alone raise himself from the dead, alone by his own power ascend bodily into heaven, to him alone was it given by the Father to sit, or to sit again, at the right hand of the Father.

That feast is called a supper. And supper is properly the evening refection about the end of the day. And eternal beatitude will be given fully to the elect after the judgment, which will be at the end of the world. For now the blessed taste that supper as to the glory of the soul; but when the bodies are received in the general resurrection, then they shall fully *possess double in their land* (Isa. 61:7). *Double*, that is, each robe.

Supper is also called *obsonium*, that is, food against sleep, namely delicate and delightful food, because it is taken from dainties against sleep, such as bread, wine, and fruit. Sleep is the eternal quiet, of which Psalm 4:9 says in the person of the good: *In peace in the selfsame I will sleep, and I will rest.* This sleep, or this peace, they are to receive who have been refreshed in the present by the bread that came down from heaven, which is now taken in the sacrament, and in that supper will be taken in an ineffable manner. Of which bread it is said, Luke 14:15: *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*, that is, that, filled, he may belch forth from the full.

The wine of this supper is that of which it is said, Deut. 32:14: *They shall drink the most pure blood of the grape*. Isa. 25:6: *Wine purified from the lees*, as above. The grape is Christ, who was born of that most blessed vine, that is, the glorious Virgin, who says, Sir. 24:23: *I as the vine*, etc. Which grape was pressed in the winepress of the cross; and thence flowed the must of our redemption, of which it is said to Christ: *How goodly is my chalice that inebriateth!* (Ps. 22:5). Which must, or most pure blood of the grape, we now take in the sacrament, and then it will be taken in an ineffable manner, when to the guests shall be said that word of Canticles 5:1: *Drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.*

The fruit of this supper is that blessed fruit of which Elizabeth said to the glorious Virgin, Luke 1:42: *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* (Look under its title.) This fruit now must be bought with the price of good works, that there it may be eaten the more dearly and delightfully. Hence of the good soul that trades it will then be said: *Give her of the fruit of her hands* (Prov. 31:31). Nor is it only the fruit of the virginal womb, but also the fruit of the triumphal tree, that is, the cross, on which Christ triumphed, of which it is said, Cant. 7:8: *I will go up into the palm tree*, by synecdoche, that is, into the cross, *and will take hold of the fruit thereof.* This every just man must really say; for he will not taste this fruit in the future who, going up into the palm, that is, the cross, has not gathered it in the present. And note that the more *(p. 136)* anyone climbs high into the palm tree, whose fruit is the date, the sweeter and riper dates he finds; because at the very top of the palm the fruit is found sweeter and riper. He climbs higher into the palm who does greater and longer penance, and exposes himself to greater tribulation for the Lord, and thus is about to receive a more glorious crown in the future. Therefore it is said of this fruit, Isa. 4:2: *The fruit of the earth shall be high.* Nor can it be had unless thou hast ascended. Of this *obsonium* and this fruit Psalm 126:2–3 says: *When he shall give sleep to his beloved, behold the inheritance of the Lord are children: the reward, the fruit of the womb.* (Look under the title, *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb*.)

Or, the fruit of this supper will be that threefold fruit of the land of promise, of which we read in Num. 13:24: namely, figs, grapes, and pomegranates. By the fig is designated the sweetness of mind in the contemplation of divinity, which contemplation is the food and drink of the soul. Hence, to designate this, it is said of the Israelites, Exod. 24:11: *They saw God, and did eat and drink.* By the grape is designated the joy of mind, which charity inebriates, in the knowledge of that eminent charity which caused the Son of God to be incarnate. By the pomegranate, which contains many seeds under one rind, is designated the unity of minds of those rejoicing, where each will rejoice in another's good as in his own, without envy; and what he does not himself receive as reward, he will rejoice that another has received. Therefore it is said of the heavenly

Jerusalem (Ps. 121:3) that it is *built as a city*, on account of the unity of the citizens, *whose participation is in the selfsame*, that is, common; and this was designated in that primitive Church in the time of the Apostles. Hence it is said, Acts 4:32, that *the multitude of believers had one heart and one soul*, and that *all things were common unto them.*

It can also be said that in this supper two dishes will be set out, namely honey and milk. Honey signifies the sweetness from the knowledge of divinity, because honey descends from the air, or heavenly dew. Milk, the joy from the knowledge of the Lord's incarnation in the Virgin, because milk proceeds from flesh. And then it will be made clear what manner of begetting it was, and how our Emmanuel *shall eat butter and honey* (Isa. 7:15). (You will find that below.) Behold the double sweetness, namely of milk and honey. Hence it was said to the Virgin, Cant. 4:11, after she had conceived the Son of God: *Honey and milk are under thy tongue*, that is, God and man within thy bowels. And therefore there was promised to the children of Israel a land flowing with milk and honey, that is, to true Christians seeing God with the double eye of faith and love, the most blessed Virgin.

In this supper again there are twelve dishes, which are noted in Gen. 27:28, in the blessing of Jacob, where Isaac says to him: *God give thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, abundance*, etc. The *dew*: refuge and protection against the heat of tribulations. Hence: *We have passed through fire and water, and thou hast brought us out into a refreshment* (Ps. 65:12). The *fatness of the earth*: stability and firmness in good; for among the elements the earth is the firmer, which *standeth for ever* (Eccles. 1:4). Again, Ps. 103:5: *Who hast founded the earth*, that is, the Church. *Corn*: the supplying and removal of every defect. Apoc. 7:16: *They shall not hunger. Wine*: forgetfulness of all miseries. Prov. 31:6–7: *Give strong drink*, etc., up to these words: *Let them drink, and forget their poverty, and remember their sorrow no more.* Isa. 65:16: *The former distresses are forgotten. Oil*: ineffable joy. Hence: *And that he may make the face cheerful with oil* (Ps. 103:15). The *obedience* of every creature, which will serve their will. Hence: *Let people serve thee* (Gen. 27:29). Hence also: *Well done, good servant… I will place thee over many things* (Matt. 25:21). *Honor. (p. 137)* Hence: *Let all the Angels of God adore him* (Heb. 1:6). Wisd. 5:5: *Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.* Again: *Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor* (Ps. 8:6). *Participation in all goods.* Hence: *Be thou lord of thy brethren* (Gen. 27:29). For just as when the sun shines all share the light without diminution and prejudice to any, so every saint will share the joy of another. This the Psalmist prays, saying, Ps. 118:63: *I am a partaker with all them that fear thee. Dominion over all things.* Hence: *And let the sons of thy mother bow down before thee* (Gen. 27:29). Ps. 8:8: *Thou hast subjected all things under his feet. Vengeance on enemies.* Hence: *Cursed be he that curseth thee* (Gen. 27:29). Ps. 57:11: *The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge. Reward of friends and benefactors.* Hence: *And he that blesseth thee, be he filled with blessings* (Gen. 27:29). Matt. 10:42: *Whosoever shall give to drink*, etc. The *conjunction of Christ and the Church*, which is noted in the kiss of Isaac: for as there is no division between those who kiss, so there will be no division between Christ and the Church. Of this kiss the bride says: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. 1:1). These are the twelve stars in the crown of the bride (Apoc. 12:1), and the fifty-one blessings of the children of Israel, that is, of faithful Christians (cf. Gen. 49 and Deut. 33).

Again, these are the dishes which are promised in Job 5:17–21, where it is said to him: *Blessed is the man that is corrected by God. Reject not therefore the chastising of the Lord: for he woundeth, and cureth: he striketh, and his hands shall heal. In six troubles he shall deliver thee, and in the seventh no evil shall touch thee. In famine he shall deliver thee from death, and in battle from the hand of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, and thou shalt not fear calamity when it cometh.* Gregory: "It is done by God's mercy that punishment follows guilt, and the force of sorrow is the cause of salvation; and since he is blessed, therefore thou who art corrected, if thou wilt be blessed, reject not the chastising of the Lord."

Six goods of correction. And note that this correction does six goods. For he woundeth the flesh, and healeth the soul. Sir. 31:2: *Grievous sickness maketh the soul sober.* And he healeth by visitation, or by infusion of joys. *He striketh, and his hands shall heal*: for his strokes are healings. Hence he says, Deut. 32:39: *I will kill, and I will make to live: I will strike, and I will heal,* etc.

In six troubles, namely of this world, *he shall deliver thee, and in the seventh*, which will be at the judgment, *no evil shall touch thee. In famine*, that is, in bodily want, *he shall deliver thee from death*, namely of sin and of Gehenna. Illicit eating brought in death, and the Lord delivers from death in scarcity of food and drink. *And in battle*, against three enemies, *from the hand of the sword*, that is, from the power of sin. Sir. 21:4: *All iniquity is like a two-edged sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue* of the wicked. Gloss: thou shalt be delivered. Or of the tongue, that is, of the Lord's sentence: *and thou shalt not fear calamity when it cometh.*

Goods that follow patience. Consequently the goods are enumerated which follow true patience, when it is said in the same place, Job 5:22–26: *In destruction and famine thou shalt laugh, and thou shalt not be afraid of the beasts of the earth. But thou shalt have a covenant with the stones of the fields, and the beasts of the earth shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle is in peace, and visiting thy beauty thou shalt not sin. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be multiplied, and thy offspring like the grass of the earth. Thou shalt enter into the grave in abundance, as a heap of wheat is brought in in its season.*

First: *In destruction* of Gehenna, which *(p. 138)* will lay waste the wicked outwardly, *and famine*, that is, the lack of every good, inwardly. Gloss: As within and without they have offended, so within and without they will be punished. Isa. 66:24: *Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched.* Fire outwardly, worm inwardly. *Thou shalt laugh* at the perdition of the wicked; for *the just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge* (Ps. 57:11). Prov. 11:10: *In the destruction of the wicked there shall be praise.* Or, *Thou shalt laugh*, rejoicing at thine own salvation on the last day.

Second: *And the beasts.* Gloss: that is, the devil. *Of the earth.* Gloss: who devours earthly men. *Thou shalt not be afraid.* Behold security. Zach. 14:11: *Jerusalem shall sit secure.*

Third: *But with the stones of the fields.* Gloss: To the elect, who shall then be gathered from every region, *thy covenant* shall be firm, stable, and eternal, for they shall love thee as themselves.

Fourth: *And the beasts of the earth*, that is, demons and wicked men. 1 Cor. 15:32: *I fought with beasts at Ephesus. Shall be at peace with thee.* Gloss: The wicked spirits will not assail thee. Or, the beasts of the earth, that is, the motions of the flesh; for then the flesh will not lust against the spirit, nor conversely, as now.

Fifth: Peace of the breast. Hence there follows: *And thou shalt know*, namely by experience, *that thy tabernacle is in peace*, of the breast here, of eternity there; *thy tabernacle*, that is, the body.

Sixth: *And visiting thy beauty*, that is, thyself by consideration, *thou shalt not sin* against neighbor, thyself, or God. Or *thy beauty*, that is, the neighbor. Gloss: Our beauty is the neighbor, in whom we see what we are.

Seventh: *And thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be multiplied*, acquired by example or preaching.

Eighth: *And thy offspring*, that is, the spiritual sons whom thou hast converted, or the good works which thou hast done, *like the grass of the earth*, because many in number and green in virtue. All this can be understood of the present. Hence there follows: *And then in abundance of virtues thou shalt enter the sepulchre of contemplation, as a heap of wheat is brought in*, where is the gathering of good works, *in its season*, after long exercise; because Lia precedes Rachel.

Here ends Book II.

Book III: On the Twelve Privileges of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Chapter 1: Introduction. The Privileges of Her Virginal Flesh

(p. 139) Before we come to treat of the twelve special prerogatives of the blessed Virgin, we must see of the dignities and privileges of her virginal flesh.

And first it is to be noted that flesh (*caro*) is said by some to come from "to lack" (*carendo*), because there was a manifold glorious lack, or glorious defect, in her flesh.

The flesh of Mary lacked original sin in her sanctification. Hence Ps. 45:5: *The Most High hath sanctified his tabernacle*, when he purged her from original sin, that she might be born wholly clean. For then the Father seems as it were to have commanded the Holy Spirit that word of Proverbs 25:4: *Take away the rust from silver, and there shall come forth a most pure vessel.* For then the heavenly goldsmith, that is, the Holy Spirit, who is the artificer of all (Wisd. 7:21), took away all the rust of original guilt from the silver of the virginal flesh; and then that flesh was silver tried by the fire of the Holy Spirit, *proved in the earth*, that is, from earthly contagions, *and purged seven times*, that is, perfectly, by the sevenfold grace (Ps. 11:7). And all this that the vessel of the virginal body might come forth most pure to receive graces and virtues, and might become fit matter from which God the Father might fit a glorious body for his only-begotten. Hence the Son to the Father, Heb. 10:5: *Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not, but a body thou hast fitted to me*, that is, hast given me fit and suitable, on account of four things. First, because without sin. Exod. 12:5: *It shall be a lamb without blemish.* Second, because mortal, that it might be immolated. Third, because anointed with grace. Hence *full of grace and truth*, as a sacrifice was offered with its libations. Fourth, because united to divinity, and therefore it was a sufficient victim for the human race, of which victim blessed Bernard says: "This victim, as it alone could profit, so alone sufficed."

The flesh of Mary lacked the tinder (*fomes*) and depraved motions, in the infusion of charisms. Hence Ps. 45:6: *God will help her in the morning early*, that is, at the beginning of her life, while she was still in her mother's womb, *at break of day*, that is, at the rising of graces, expelling the darkness of the sin *(p. 140)* of origin. Or, *at break of day*, that is, with the clarity of graces arriving, which were then infused into her. Then also the Father, as is said in Hosea 13:15, *brought a burning wind*, that is, the Holy Spirit, who, in that he is wind, cooled the virginal flesh from the heat of concupiscence and quenched the tinder, as the blast of wind a candle; but in that he is burning, drank up the noxious humor and dried the earth of the body. (Look under the title, that Christ is the wind.) But if perhaps after the sanctification there remained in her the tinder, or the power to sin, as her sanctity grew continually, that tinder and power continually decreased, until, the Holy Spirit coming upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her, it was extinguished altogether. To hint at which, as if speaking of her, the Lord says to Job 38:13: *Hast thou shaken the extremities of the earth, and shaken the wicked out of it?* that is, the depraved motions. As if he said: Thou hast not done this, but I. The extremities of this earth can be called carnal conception and bodily death. From the first extremity he shook out, as has been said, the tinder and depraved motions in the sanctification; from the last extremity he shook out putrefaction, the worm, and dust in the resuscitation. (Look for the authorities a little below.)

She lacked every defect that would lead to guilt, in the fulfillment of grace. Therefore it was said to her: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee* (Luke 1:28), because she had received in herself the whole fountain of grace; for how, when the whole fullness of grace had descended into her, would it have left anything void in her where guilt could be admitted? (Look under the title, Full of grace.) Master Richard of St Victor: "The Holy Spirit coming upon Mary, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her, that remained in her which was toward punishment; that wholly departed which was toward guilt. Viciousness wholly departed, penalty remained: carnality is wholly taken away, but calamity is not removed." (These and many other things look for under the title on the sanctity of Mary.)

She lacked every rebellion against her spirit, for neither did her flesh lust against the spirit, nor the spirit against the flesh. For she was the ark of Noe, in which were all the animals at peace. For the Lord had said at her sanctification, or at her entrance: *Peace to this house* (Matt. 10:12).

She lacked every emptiness, from her union with God. Hence, when the Angel had said to her, *Hail, full of grace,* as if expounding it he immediately added: *The Lord is with thee,* who to the flesh as well as to the soul of his mother was all in all, that is, the sufficiency of all. For the sufficiency of Mary as well as ours is from God (2 Cor. 3:5). For then she could most truly say of wisdom, which is the Son of God: *All good things came to me together with her* (Wisd. 7:11).

She lacked the reproach of sterility, in the coming of the Holy Spirit, who came upon her for this, that from her flesh he might separate a certain small portion, and the separated portion cleanse further than the rest, and, most perfectly cleansed, form into the body which the Son of God would assume. Therefore Mary is said to have conceived of the Holy Spirit; and the Son can say to the Holy Spirit that word of Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh,* etc.; nonetheless the whole blessed Trinity wrought the incarnation of the Son, for the works of the Trinity are inseparable.

She lacked man's touch, which did not follow from the betrothal. Hence of Mary specially is understood that of Wisdom 3:13: *Happy is the barren, and undefiled, who hath not known bed in sin,* etc. Origen: "Happy the womb of chastity, which the embrace of a husband did not touch." For at the wedding of Joseph and Mary the wine of carnal delight failed, of which wine it is said *(p. 141),* Prov. 20:1: *Wine is a luxurious thing,* etc. For her flesh was that land through which no man passed, that is, her husband Joseph (cf. Jer. 2:6).

The flesh of the Virgin lacked itch and defilement in the impregnation, because the power of the Highest overshadowed her. Other women conceive in heat and filth; but she, in coolness and every kind of purity. For the Son of God was to her in his conception the firmament of power, because she conceived with integrity, and the covering against ardor; for the power of the Highest overshadowing her, the fire of concupiscence was altogether extinguished in her; nay, even the very ashes, that is, the tinder of sin, were lulled to sleep, so that no itch could thereafter be excited in her.

She lacked also the breaking of the virginal seal, conceiving without defloration. Hence Ezek. 44:2–3: *This gate shall be shut, and it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it: because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it: and it shall be shut to the prince,* that is, to the honor of the prince, namely Christ. And this is what blessed Anselm says on that word of Luke 10:38: *Jesus entered into a certain town,* etc.: "For Jesus saves, he does not violate; he makes firm what is broken, he does not break the firm: as his name, so his work." For she did not conceive after the manner of other women, but by faith in what was said to her by the Angel. Hence Elizabeth said to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.* And so she conceived by the ear, because *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17). And this is what she herself says, Cant. 5:4: *My beloved,* that is, God the Father, *put his hand,* that is, his Son, *through the hole,* namely of my ear, etc.

She lacked all burden in the carrying. Hence it had been said to her: *The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee* (Luke 1:35). Which is expounded thus: He will make shade for thee, by utterly extinguishing the tinder in thee; for then the Son was to her the shade of noonday (Sir. 34:19). Others thus: *Shall overshadow thee,* that is, shall take a shadow in thee, that is, light flesh and immune from sin. For sin is a weight; but a shadow has the figure of a body, though not heaviness. For the flesh of the Savior was that light cloud on which the Lord ascended in his incarnation (Isa. 19:1), which covered the sun of eternal light like a cloud, and tempered it for the bleary eyes of mortals.

She lacked all trouble and pain in the childbirth. Hence the Church sings at the Nativity: "The Virgin mother, not knowing man, bore without pain," etc. Isa. 66:7–8: *Before she was in labor she brought forth…*

Who hath ever heard such a thing? etc. Blessed Bernard: "What wonder if he brought no pain to his mother, who was coming to take away the pains of this whole world?" (Look below, at her fourth privilege.)

She lacked all sin through the continuation of the whole present life. Blessed Bernard: "It was fitting indeed that the queen of Virgins, by a singular privilege of sanctity, should lead her life without any sin, who, while she was to bring forth the destroyer of sin and death, was to obtain for all the gift of justice and sanctity." For she was *elect as the sun* (Cant. 6:9), which neither fire burns, nor water softens, nor sword cuts, nor stench corrupts, nor glass resists, and so it is incorruptible. She was also like glass, which, illuminated by the sun, receives no cloud. (Look for many other things at her seventh privilege.) Therefore also the gate is said three times to be shut, Ezek. 44:2, because she was always shut to the sin of thought, the sin of speech, the sin of action. And this is what is said of her under the name of the city Jerusalem, Apoc. 21:27: *There shall not enter into it any thing defiled* — by consent in thought — *or that worketh abomination* — abomination practised *(p. 142)* in action — *or maketh a lie* — in speech. And so it is clear that she sinned neither by thinking, nor by speaking, nor by acting; neither by corruption of herself, which is defilement, nor by contempt of God, which is abomination, nor by deceiving the neighbor, namely a lie. For this reason also it is said of the gate that it shall be shut to the prince, that is, to sin, which reigns and rules in many; against which it is said, Rom. 6:12: *Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof.*

She lacked the bonds of death in the dissolution, that is, putrefaction, worm, and pulverization, wholly immune from that curse by which it had been said to Adam, Gen. 3:19: *Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.* And for this reason she is compared to the cedar, which neither putrefies, nor breeds worms, nor burns; for by fire come ashes, which are dust. Of putrefaction, Augustine: "We believe that the flesh never rotted on earth, of which a part is glorified in heaven." Of the worm, Master Adam: "If there is any part of her with the worm, I shall no longer believe that she is full of grace." Of incineration or pulverization, Augustine: "Incorruptibility rightly followed the integrity of the virginal body, not any dissolution of putrefaction."

The flesh of the Virgin was perfectly cleansed from original sin, when she was sanctified in the womb, as above.

Enlarged with manifold grace, when *in the morning at break of day* she was helped by the Lord, as above.

Excellently adorned, when she was adorned with virtues. For she was a vessel of solid gold adorned with every precious stone (Sir. 50:10). She was a golden vessel befitting the King of kings, because gold befits kings. The precious stones are the privileges assigned above, and to be assigned below. Therefore Nehemias, 2 Esdras 6:3, says of her, in the person of the Father or the Holy Spirit: *I am doing a great work.* Exod. 8:19: *The finger of God is here,* that is, the work of the Holy Spirit. 3 Kings 10:20: *There was not the like made in any kingdom.* (Under the title on the vessel, look for the precious stones.)

By the fire of the Holy Spirit manifoldly refined, when her sanctity was always enlarged. Of this enlargement Master Richard of St Victor says: "The Holy Spirit knows not to corrupt a virgin, but to sanctify; he knows not to diminish the cleanness of a virgin, but to increase; he knows not to defile, but to make fruitful; he knows not to vilify, but to glorify." Behold the enlargement of sanctity.

Wonderfully exalted, when she was dedicated to perpetual virginity. Isa. 35:2: *The glory of Libanus is given to it,* namely when the desire of perpetual virginity was inspired into her heart, and she first vowed virginity, which is figured in Libanus, which is interpreted "whiteness" or "whitening."

Made fit for fruit, when she was watered with the fountain of graces. Hence Gen. 2:5–6: *There was not a man to till the earth,* that is, the virginal flesh, *but a spring rose out of the earth, watering,* etc. (Look under the title on the conception of the Virgin, at the end of the chapter.) Again, when the Son of God descended into her *like rain drops falling upon the earth* (Ps. 71:6). And when it rained upon the earth without man in

the desert (Job 38:26).

The flesh of the Virgin was made fruitful when the south wind stood still, for grace wrought her conception. Hence Augustine: “The Son of God was begotten of the Virgin not by the mother concupiscence, but by the mother grace.” For the Son seems to have said to the Holy Spirit at his conception: *Come, O south wind, blow through my garden,* etc. (Cant. 4:16).

Preserved for God alone, when she neither knew man nor was known by man. Of the first she said, Luke 1:34: *I know not man. (p. 143)* Of the second, Matt. 1:24–25: *He took unto him his wife, and he knew her not,* etc. (Look for the exposition under the title that Mary is the spouse.) For this reason it is said of the closed gate, Ezek. 44:2–3: *No man shall pass through it, because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it: and it shall be shut to the prince.*

Most worthily ennobled, when she was joined to Christ by natural union. For natural is the union of tree to fruit, of mother to son. For she was the tree, Christ the fruit; she the mother and he the Son. (Of the fourfold union between Mary and divine wisdom, look under the title, The Lord is with thee.) And this is what is said, Ezek. 17:3: *A great eagle*, that is, the Son of God, *with great wings*, that is, great wisdom and power, *came to Libanus*, that is, to the whiteness of virginal cleanness, *and took away the marrow of the cedar*, that is, a certain portion of the purest bloods, according to Damascene, or of her purest flesh.

Enriched with most precious treasures, when she was filled with Christ. For in him are *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3). And he himself says, Jer. 23:24: *I fill heaven and earth.* Heaven, that is, the soul; earth, that is, the body of Mary. For this reason she is called the land of Hevilath, in which grows the best gold (Gen. 2:11). For she was that field of which the ten men said to Ismael, Jer. 41:8: *Kill us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and barley, and oil, and honey.* These treasures signify Christ, who was wheat in his nativity, barley in the harshness of life, oil in the passion, when the rock which is Christ poured out streams of oil for his Church, as she herself says of him through Job 29:6; he was also honey in the resurrection.

In a manner deified, when she was inhabited by the Son of God. For as Christ, assuming a portion of hers, was weakened in every way in her, so too the virginal flesh borrowed from divine omnipotence something divine, to us ineffable and beyond human understanding.

A table prepared for Christ, who was fed from her and in her. From her. Hence Ambrose: “And he was fed with a little milk.” In her. Hence Cant. 2:16: *Who feedeth among the lilies*, that is, among the hands of Mary, as Bernard expounds. Of this table the Father seems to have said to the Son, Sir. 29:33: *Pass over, stranger, and furnish the table*, etc.: Pass from my bosom into the womb of Mary, and furnish this table. The table is virginity, which is signified in the lilies on which Christ was fed, which fruitfulness adorned and wonderfully decorated.

Wholly given to the service of the Son of God, when each of her members served Christ: the feet by supporting, the legs and shins by sustaining, the womb by carrying, the breasts by nursing, the hands by feeding, the arms by embracing, the lips by smiling, the mouth by kissing, the tongue by conversing, the nostrils by smelling, the ears by listening, the eyes by gazing, the head by adoring. Hence it is sung at the Purification: “The Virgin adored him whom she bore after childbirth,” and the like. Ambrose says the same.

She wrought the redemption of the world, when the portion of her assumed by the Son of God was immolated on the cross; and that portion was a sufficient victim for the sins of the whole world, though not an efficient one. Blessed Bernard, speaking of Christ crucified: “This victim, as it alone could profit, so alone sufficed.” Nevertheless of certain ones Psalm 48:7–8 says: *They that trust in their own strength, and glory in the multitude of their riches*, etc. *The brother*, that is, Christ, *redeemeth not*, etc. By reason of this redemption blessed Bernard says of the virginal flesh of Mary: “O rich toward all and above all, *(p. 144)* Mary, from

whose substance the portion assumed sufficed to pay the debts of the whole world. A great store of riches remained for her own uses, the assumption of which could redeem and restore all things. Nor did that flesh work the salvation of the world, or its redemption, only then, but it works it daily; for we are fed and given to drink by her flesh and blood in the sacrament of the Son, because the flesh of the mother and of the Son is one flesh." Hence Gen. 2:24: *They shall be two in one flesh.* And therefore with the Son she can say that word of John 6:56: *My flesh is meat indeed*, etc. And perhaps for this reason she says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger* (Sir. 24:29), etc.

Chapter 2: The Privileges of Mary

Apoc. 12:1: *A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.* Blessed Bernard (in his sermon on this text) interprets these stars in the crown of Mary, who is designated by this woman, as twelve prerogatives in the Virgin, on account of which she is also called full of grace: namely, four prerogatives of heaven, four of the flesh, four of the heart. For there shone in her like stars from heaven: her illustrious generation, namely from the seed of Abraham, from the tribe of Juda, from the stock of David. Again, the angelic salutation, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the ineffable conception of the Son of God.

The prerogatives of the flesh are that she was the first leader of virginity, that she was made fruitful without corruption, pregnant without burden, a parturient without pain. The prerogatives of the mind were meekness of modesty, devotion of humility, magnanimity of belief, martyrdom of the heart.

Again, the prerogatives of Mary can be referred to the four cardinal virtues, each of which we find eminent in her threefold. She had from temperance the chastity of the flesh, modesty of speech, humility of heart. She had from prudence that she was silent when troubled, that she understood what she heard, that she responded to what was proposed. She had from justice that she conformed herself to the hard of heart in her betrothal, in the circumcision of the Son, in the legal purification. Again, that she showed compassion to the blushing servants when wine failed at the wedding. Again, that she showed communion with the saints, when she persevered in prayer with the women and the disciples. She had from fortitude, through magnanimity, that she took up the purpose of virginity, that she held what she had taken up, that she gave faith to so immense a thing. But we, placing the four prerogatives which blessed Bernard names before all the prerogatives of Mary, will discourse of the remaining eight in another order, by the mediation of the Virgin's grace.

Chapter 3: Mary Made the First Vow of Virginity

(p. 145) The first prerogative of Mary, according to blessed Bernard, is that she was the first leader (*primiceria*) of virginity. For the Apostle Bartholomew says plainly that she first vowed virginity. And therefore first, because before her, none. Nor did she fear that curse which was written, Exod. 23:26 and Deut. 7:14, where for a blessing it is said to the obedient: *There shall not be among you barren of either sex.* Hence by contraries sterility was reputed a curse in the Law; for in the time of the Law virginity was reproachful on account of its adjunct, that is, sterility. Hence the daughter of Jephte wept her virginity (Judges 11:38). And this was a curse of reproach; for reproach and uselessness was to a woman her sterility. Hence Elizabeth says, having conceived John, Luke 1:25: *Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he hath had regard to take away my reproach among men.* Rachel said the like of the born Joseph (Gen. 30:23). But Mary despised this curse, this sterility, this reproach, this contempt, that she might offer to God the most acceptable sacrifice of virginity, without any human precept, counsel, or example, by the sole inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as blessed Bernard says. By reason of this vow she herself is called Virgin of virgins, as the standard-bearer and exemplar of virginity. But because the Lord had said, 1 Kings 2:30, *Whosoever shall glorify me, I will glorify him*, and he could not be a liar, he did what he had promised, and glorified her who honored him. And lest from the offering of virginity she should remain in the reproach of

sterility, as she had made a new thing on earth by vowing virginity, so in her he made a new thing upon earth, which the whole earth, which the whole world does not contain. Jer. 31:22: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth: A woman shall compass a man.* (You had all this expounded above, under the title on the glorious conception of the Virgin.) And because for love of virginity she despised the curse of sterility, she was rewarded with the highest blessing in the conception of the Savior, the Angel and Elizabeth saying to her, Luke 1:28 and 42: *Blessed art thou among women.* And for that curse for which she cared not she deserved so ineffably to be blessed. For to those who for God's sake reckon not the curses of men, he himself repays blessing for the curse. Matt. 5:11: *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you.* In Psalm 108:28, of the lovers of the world: *They will curse*, that is, the just, *and thou wilt bless.* Origen: "He who does well and is unjustly cursed, a reward shall be rendered to him for the curse."

Master Hugh of St Victor: "It is to be noted that first, when the world was made, fruitfulness was blessed by the Creator (Gen. 1:28), that there might be a multiplication of men *(p. 146)*. Afterward, when God was acknowledged by only one people, sterility was cursed by the Law, that the faithful might be multiplied. Lastly, when the time was at hand in which God is now worshipped by all nations, virginity was blessed, that all might be called to the celibate life from the work of the flesh. Neither do we say fruitfulness of the flesh to be a merit, nor sterility a fault; nor was it by multitude of children but by merits of virtues that the ancients or the moderns pleased the Lord; nor was fleshly sterility cursed in the Law in order that the Law might show it damnable before God, but rather that it might show it (at that time, when the succession of the race was sought in a multitude of children) unfruitful among men, and on this account in a way dishonored. The Virgin Mary, then, is not to be blamed, nor accused of contempt of the Law in which sterility is cursed, but she alone is singularly to be praised, who, considering that the first words of the Law are not to be understood carnally, chose on earth to become the abjection of the people and the reproach of men, that through the cleanness of integrity she might become in heaven the companion of the Angels. And beautifully did she, first among women, for love of chastity, bear in her flesh the curse of the Law, she who was to bear from her flesh him who himself, bearing in his flesh the curse of the Law for us, freed us from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13). Hence deservedly to her alone was it given that she should bear the Son of God and remain a virgin: that because she first preferred virginity of her own accord to fruitfulness of the flesh, she might now be both fruitful in the flesh and whole in virginity.

"If it is asked why Mary, after the vow of virginity, consented to have a husband, since she never changed her purpose of virginity nor consented to carnal union, it can be answered thus: Because for this she consented to have a husband, that her purpose might be concealed, Joseph approving and himself purposing this same thing. Or if perhaps Joseph was not conscious of this purpose (which could have been), she feared to be disobedient to her parents commanding the marriage, and on this account consented to marry a husband, confirmed by a special confidence (through the Holy Spirit, who had kindled her to chastity from the beginning), and by hope, not doubtful, which she had in God, that the divine mercy would so guard her that she could both show obedience to the will of her parents in contracting marriage, and yet find no impediment in that same marriage by which she should be forced to break the vow of virginity (which she had undertaken for love of chastity). She took up marriage, therefore, but did not change the purpose of virginity. And because she loved chastity and held to obedience, there was found in her both conjugal sanctity without detriment to virginity, and fruitful virginity without reproach of sterility.

"So that blessed Patriarch, form of faith and example of obedience, Abraham, had received in the repromise that in Isaac his seed would be blessed; and yet afterward, commanded by God to immolate that same Isaac, whom he had as only-begotten of Sara his wife, he obeyed without delay or hesitation, knowing for certain that although according to human reason God's command might seem contrary to the promise, nevertheless according to that power by which all things are possible to God, even with the obedience to the command the promise could be fulfilled. And so it came about that both the devotion of obedience (by which he did not put

off obeying God commanding) found its merit, and the faith by which he believed God promising obtained the effect of the promise. So here too it could happen that this blessed Virgin, commending to God all her desire, had such confidence in him that she believed without doubt she could both show due obedience to her parents, and keep inviolate the vow of chastity, of which he alone was conscious, in the way he wished, under his patronage. But whether it was so done or not, we indeed *(p. 147)* ought by no means to doubt that blessed Mary, for a certain and reasonable cause, after the vow of preserving virginity and the purpose of continence, took on the sacrament of marriage, and yet did not change the purpose of virginity, and truly took the name of wife, and perseveringly held the vow of integrity." (Hugh of St Victor, *On the Perpetual Virginity of Mary*, chap. 1.)

Again, that she had made a vow of perpetual virginity Mary indicated, answering the Angel who announced the Son: *How shall this be done, because I know not man?* (Luke 1:34). That "how" is not of doubt but of wonder, so that the sense is: How shall this be done, since I know not man? that is, it shall be done in a wonderful way, and truly wonderful, because I know not man. Bede: "How, she says, can it be that I should conceive and bear a son, who have set myself to end my life in the chastity of virginity?" As if she said: I have the purpose of not knowing man, I have the purpose of guarding unviolated to the end the glory of virginity. As if someone should say: I do not drink wine, I cannot taste this cup; that is, because I have a vow not to drink wine, I cannot taste this cup. Such is that: Nazirites do not cut their hair (cf. Num. 6:5; Judges 13), that is, they have a vow of not cutting hair. Nor did she say, *I have not known man*, for this would not hinder the virgin betrothed from knowing a man and bearing a son, but would not leave her a virgin. And the Angel says to her: *The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee* (Luke 1:35). Fear not, he says, on account of the purpose of virginity, to distrust the promise of offspring. *The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee*, that is, thou shalt conceive a son, not from a man, but of the Holy Spirit. My promise indeed will be fulfilled, yet thy purpose will not be violated. Thou hast vowed that thou wouldst not know man, and I foretell that thou shalt bear a son. And therefore thou wonderest, lest perhaps either the promise be void, the purpose remaining, or the purpose be violated, if the promise be fulfilled. For human reason does not comprehend this, that a virgin should bear, untouched should generate, and without work of the flesh flesh should proceed from flesh. Therefore thou wonderest how this shall be done: because thou knowest not man. For meanwhile, as far as is in thee, thou canst find nothing why thou shouldst doubt of thy perseverance; and on this account thou askest how thou canst trust in my promise. *How shall this be done, because I know not man? The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.* Do not for the purpose distrust the promise: for the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee. Do not for the promise fear for the purpose: for the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, lest by intercourse thy integrity be corrupted. The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, lest by lust thy chastity be polluted. The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Thou shalt furnish the substance, and shalt not feel concupiscence. Thou shalt not receive seed from a man, and, fruitful, shalt germinate the fruit of the womb in a son. Do not therefore say: How shall this be done, since I know not man? because by man this shall not be done, but by the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Behold, now we have Mary betrothed a virgin, and yet remaining in the purpose of virginity. Truly betrothed a virgin, and no less truly remaining in the purpose of virginity. Thus far Master Hugh.

The glorious Virgin, divinely inspired, knew that the Son of God desired *(p. 148)* virginity on which to feed. Hence it is said of him, Cant. 2:16: *Who feedeth among the lilies.* And therefore she vowed virginity, as if by this very act saying: Lilies he desired, lilies I present to him, that is, double virginity, of mind and body. Which is noted in what is said, *among the lilies*. And this is what the Apostle says, 2 Cor. 11:2: *I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.* For when he had said *virgin*, he would not stop, but added *chaste*, to signify that he requires double chastity, and that one without the other does not please him.

Again, by reason of this vow, which she first made, Joachim and all the priests say to her, Judith 15:10–11, that is, the Son of God and all the saints: *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem*, that is, of the saints; *thou the joy of Israel*, that is, of the Angels; *thou the honor of our people*, that is, of the whole human race; *because thou hast done manfully*, by making first the vow of virginity, *and thy heart has been strengthened, because thou hast loved chastity*, etc. (You had this authority most excellently expounded under the title, Blessed art thou, near the middle of the chapter.)

Chapter 4: Mary Was Fruitful Without Corruption

The second prerogative of Mary, according to blessed Bernard, is that she was made fruitful without corruption. (Whatever pertains to this privilege you had above, under the title on virginal fruitfulness, and under the title on the conception of the Virgin, and where the first delight of the enclosed garden is treated, where that word is manifoldly expounded: *The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee* (Luke 1:35).)

Chapter 5: Mary Pregnant Without Burden

The third prerogative of Mary, according to blessed Bernard, is that she was pregnant without burden. And this prerogative is demonstrated in this, as blessed Bernard says, that at the very beginning of her conception, *(p. 149)* when other women are more wretchedly afflicted, Mary with all alacrity went up into the hill country with haste (Luke 1:39), to minister to Elizabeth, who, she had heard from the Angel, had conceived; and notably it is said *with haste*, that is, not with slow step, as is the custom of those weighed down by some burden. It is shown also by this, that she went up to Bethlehem, the birth already imminent, carrying in her womb that most precious deposit, carrying that light burden, carrying an infant by whom she was carried, carrying him in that he was man, by whom she was carried in that he was God, *under whom they that bear up the world stoop* (Job 9:13), and who *carrieth all things by the word of his power* (Heb. 1:3). And so it is clear that the body which Christ assumed from the Virgin either was without weight, or was a body by which she was carried; and afterward, likewise, the waves of the sea, that they might sustain the weight of the body, he confirmed more solidly by his power.

Chapter 6: Mary a Parturient Without Pain

The fourth prerogative of Mary, according to blessed Bernard, is that she was a parturient without pain. And this is weighed from the fact that she wrapped the born Son in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger (Luke 2:7), whereas other mothers very often perish in childbirth or scarcely remain half-alive. And this is what Sedulius, rhetor of the Roman Church, in his Paschal Work says among other things: “The Infant, small and greatest, small indeed in his members and body, but most high in deity, passing through the sincere chastity of the hospitable temple, did not injure the body by departing which he had not injured by coming.” Therefore the Church sings at the Nativity: “Not knowing, she bore without pain, that is, without injury to the natural parts, the Savior of the ages.”

To hint at this it was said to Mary by the Angel, Luke 1:31: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son*, without an intermediate parturition. For in other women parturition is intermediate between conception and birth, but in the virgin the birth follows immediately. And this is what Isa. 66:7–8 says: *Before she was in labor she brought forth*, etc. *Who hath ever heard such a thing?* Master Richard of St Victor: “Therefore she also bore without pain, because she conceived without lust. Lust indeed is the cause of pain, and pain the effect of lust. From the effect, therefore, the cause is implied in that which is said: *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children* (Gen. 3:16). But conversely and likewise, in the conception of the Virgin, from the removal of the cause the removal of the effect is weighed. For she who conceived with virginity conceived without lust, and bore without burden, and consequently brought forth without pain. And

because the conception was without concupiscence, so was the parturition without pressure. For if after the manner of other women *(p. 150)* she had conceived with concupiscence and defloration, she would surely have been subject to the curse of Eve, and after the manner of other women would have brought forth in sorrow and sadness. For this reason Ambrose also says in his hymn:

Come, Redeemer of the nations, Show forth the Virgin's childbirth; Let every age marvel: Such a birth befits a God.

He does not say: Show the Virgin's conception, but the birth, which is so great and of such a kind that it befits God, and in which every age ought to marvel. Therefore he also says: *Show forth the Virgin's childbirth*, because in the birth something more is declared than in the conception. For in the conception the virgin becomes pregnant without intercourse, but in the birth the whole incorruption of the virgin is shown, namely that she is a virgin before the birth, and in the birth, and after the birth. Hence the gate is said three times to be shut (Ezek. 44:2). Ambrose therefore wishes that this birth be shown to those who do not know it; because if the Virgin had borne in filth and pain, neither would such a birth befit God, nor would there be in it anything for the world to marvel at, but rather something in which and with which to grieve, which God forbid."

Again, Augustine, in the epistle to the Ephesians, explaining that word of Psalm 93:1: *The God of vengeances hath acted freely.* Because Christ alone among all is free from guilt, therefore he acted freely in being born freely of Mary. Which Psalm 18:6 also shows, saying: *And he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bridal chamber*, that is, from the virginal womb. For Christ, as a joyful bridegroom exulting, and wholly festive, to lead his wife, that is, to join to himself the Church in his nativity, came forth from his chamber, that is, the virginal womb, which was made passable to him alone. Nor are those to be listened to, nay, like most wicked heretics to be punished, who dare to say that he then afflicted his mother with pains, corrupted her bowels, violated her modesty, increased groans, multiplied sorrows or hardships. Nor could he otherwise be probably said to come forth from his chamber as a bridegroom, who, joyful and brisk, cheerful and swift, and surrounded by a joyous family, with the cloud of all sadness driven from his lodging, desires to be found and seen. And to signify this, at the hour at which this Bridegroom came forth from this chamber in his nativity, great joy was announced by the Angel to the shepherds and sung: *Glory to God in the highest*, etc. (Luke 2:14).

Chapter 7: Mary at Once Virgin and Mother

The fifth prerogative of Mary, that being virgin, with the honor of virginity, she was also mother, which no other was. Hence in a figure of her it is said of Judith, 11:19: *There is not such a woman upon earth*, etc. And of her Sedulius says: "Having the joys of a mother with the honor of virginity, she was seen to have neither a like before her nor a following." For she is the land flowing with the milk of fruitfulness and the honey of virginity (Exod. 13:5), which is not of earthly life but heavenly, *(p. 151)* as Jerome says. Hence the Lord obtains for the Jews that ineffable benefit which they would not receive, nor yet receive, Ezek. 20:6: *I provided for them a land flowing with milk and honey, the choicest of all lands.* This land is the blessed Virgin. (Look under the title, the land.)

Chapter 8: Mary Virgin and Mother of God

The sixth, that she is virgin and mother of God, which no other is. In this prerogative of dignity neither man, nor angel, nor any creature shares with her, but she alone with God the Father can say to the Son of God: *Thou art my Son* (Ps. 2:7). She alone also can say of Christ the man that of Gen. 2:23: *This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.* Hence also the Son says to her, Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, thou hast put me together with bones and sinews.* Which was properly when she consented that the Son of God should become flesh in her and of her, when namely she answered the Angel: *Be it done to me*

according to thy word (Luke 1:38). Therefore it is said, Gen. 2:24 and 1 Cor. 6:16: *They shall be two*, that is, Christ and Mary, *in one virginal flesh*, because mother and son are one flesh. Therefore also blessed Bernard says: "This is the singular glory of our Virgin and the excellent prerogative of Mary, that she deserved to have one and the same Son in common with God the Father." Anselm of Canterbury: "God gave his Son, whom alone, begotten from his heart equal to himself, he loved as himself, to Mary, and of Mary made for himself a Son, not another, but the very same, so that naturally there would be one and the same Son common to God and to Mary."

Again, on that of Luke 10:38, *Jesus entered into a certain town*: "*Certain*, that is, singular town was the Virgin Mary, because she was singularly both virgin and mother of God, which no other was. For even if some other virgin could be also a mother, which is impossible, even so Mary will be a singular virgin, because she bore the only Son of God, who as he is the only one of the only Father, so is the only one of the only mother. And therefore no woman, even if a virgin bear, will generate either the same or such a one."

And note that it was great and laudable for Mary to have been a virgin; but greater in every way and more wonderful to have been fruitful in virginity, and after the emptying of the womb to have had the womb sealed: and this was *grace upon grace* (Sir. 26:19). And note that it is the supreme and ineffable thing to have been the mother of God. For *from the beginning of the world it hath not been heard* that any woman, except Mary, could say to God: *Thou art my Son.* And behold, this is new under the sun, whatever Solomon may say (Eccles. 1:10). In *(p. 152)* memory of the three things aforesaid, the wisdom of the Greeks instituted, in the icons which they paint to the image of the blessed Virgin, to put the superscription of three names in this fashion: *Virgo Dei Mater* (Virgin Mother of God). Yet among them it is one word, *Theotokos*; among us, two.

Chapter 9: Mary Could Not Sin from the Time She Conceived the Son of God

The seventh, that she could not sin from the time she conceived the Son of God. Hence she also says, Sir. 24:15: *And so was I established in Sion.* But before she says: *In the holy dwelling before him I ministered* (24:10). And so by ministering, namely when I named myself a handmaid, in the very moment of my consent which I expressed, saying, *Be it done to me according to thy word*, the Savior being conceived, I was established, that is, confirmed in good. And this in Sion, that is, in the Church militant, still placed there; which was a special privilege to me. For the other saints are not so established in this life that they can henceforth not sin, but only in the heavenly Jerusalem. And this can be persuaded and proved in many ways.

First: because the Holy Spirit coming upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her, extinguished in her carnal concupiscence, and took away ignorance of heart, which are the two roots of sin. The Son of God also, who is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29), descending into her, consumed in her ignorance, as the light of fire consumes darkness, and the power of the Highest, namely the same Son of God, overshadowed her, and against every incentive of sin furnished refreshment. Or otherwise, as Master Richard of St Victor says: "If the cloud that overshadowed the disciples of Christ (Matt. 17:5) was bright, how bright must be believed that which overshadowed the mother of Christ! But if that shade which the Son or the Holy Spirit afforded her was bright, then it afforded both light and shade: light to drive off ignorance, shade to extinguish concupiscence. Wonderful that overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, which in one moment wiped away and exterminated from the Virgin both ignorance of good and concupiscence of evil! How wholly concupiscence was extinguished in her is proved by the fact that she afterward conceived and bore with integrity of virginity. How profoundly she was illuminated is proved by the fact that she believed that sacrament of so great depth so truly and so swiftly, which could scarcely at last be persuaded to the wise of this world through so many and so great miracles."

Second: because she was full of the grace of the Holy Spirit; and so there was no void place where sin could be admitted, for in what is full no more can be received.

Third: because the Holy Spirit never left her, and thus the malignant spirit never had access *(p. 153)* to her.

Fourth: because Christ is light, as he himself says: *I am the light of the world* (John 8:12). Again, 1 John 1:5: *God is light, and in him there is no darkness.* But sins are darkness. Hence John 3:19: *Men loved darkness rather than the light.* But *what concord hath Christ with Belial*, or light with darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14–15). Therefore it is said to Mary, Zeph. 3:14–15: *Daughter of Jerusalem, he hath turned away thy enemies; the king of Israel the Lord is in the midst of thee, thou shalt fear evil no more*: evil, namely, of venial or mortal guilt. For she was like glass, which, illuminated by the sun, receives no cloud. Therefore what is said of wisdom befits her, Wisd. 7:25: *She is a pure emanation of the clarity of the almighty God*; and thus nothing defiled runs into her, because it was impossible that she could thenceforth sin.

Fifth: because she was the dining-hall (*triclinium*) of the Trinity. The Father powerful, to whom the irascible power belongs, strengthened her against the extolling of pride. The wise Son, to whom the rational, against the insipidity of all depraved pleasure. The Holy Spirit, to whom the concupiscible, against the venom of all malice. Every sin has its origin from this threefold evil root, as is said, 1 John 2:16.

Sixth: because she had Gabriel deputed to her guard, which name is interpreted "the strength of God," under whose patronage the enemy could gain nothing in her, nor did the son of iniquity presume to harm her; and not one Angel only, but it is believed infinite ones. Hence it is said to her: *He hath given his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways* (Ps. 90:11), namely in thoughts, speech, actions, and the like.

Seventh: because she is called *elect as the sun* (Cant. 6:9), which neither fire burns, nor water softens, nor sword cuts, nor stench corrupts, nor glass resists, and so it is incorruptible. In like manner Mary, from the time she was elected to be mother of the sun of justice, was made indeed a new sun by him who made the dawn and the sun (cf. Ps. 73:16). But if anyone says that she could sin even after the birth, it must be answered that although the Son of God was born of her, God the Trinity never departed from her. (Of this confirmation she says: *And so was I established in Sion*, etc.; look under the title on the sanctity of Mary.) Again, that word: *Thou hast held my right hand* (Ps. 72:24). (Look in the same place.)

Eighth: because Mary was wholly heaven, which does not receive dissimilar things, namely vices with virtues. Of which heaven it is said in Psalm 102:19: *The Lord hath prepared his throne in heaven*, that is, in the blessed Virgin, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Again, of her under the name of the heavenly Jerusalem, Apoc. 21:27: *There shall not enter into it any thing defiled* — by consent in thought — *or that worketh abomination* — in action — *or maketh a lie* — in speech.

Ninth: because she was a garden enclosed (Cant. 4:12), through which the uncircumcised and unclean did not continue to pass (Isa. 52:1).

Chapter 10: Mary Had All and Each of the Virtues

(p. 154) The eighth, that she had all and each of the virtues and gifts of graces in the superlative degree, whereas the other saints had each a single one. Hence Noe is called just, Abraham faithful, Joseph chaste, Moses meek, Job patient, David humble, Solomon wise, Elias zealot of the Law, and the like. Hence of any holy confessor is sung that of Sirach 44:20: *There was not found the like to him*, etc., because each of them excelled the other saints of his time in some special virtue.

Note that this is said of the saints temporally and particularly; for in his own time Abraham had no equal in faith, nor Isaac in obedience, nor Joseph in chastity, nor Moses in meekness, nor Job in patience, nor David in humility, nor Elias in zeal. But the Apostles of the Lord exceeded all in these virtues and others. But the blessed Virgin surpassed all the saints of the Old and New Testament, not in some, but in each of the virtues. Hence she says, Cant. 7:13: *All fruits new and old, my beloved, I have kept for thee.* Virtues and works of virtues are called fruits (*poma*): for refection, because they are the food of souls; for health, for they are the

food of the sick; for odor, because they delight, comfort, and refresh those who hear them, running in the odors of such ointments. Hence Job 9:26: *My days have passed as ships carrying fruits*, etc. She says, then: *All fruits new and old*, that is, all the privileges of the saints of the New and Old Testament, gathered and fused in me, *I have kept for thee*, guarded namely in myself, attributing to thee whatever good I have, and not to my merits: for *by the grace of God I am what I am*, etc. (1 Cor. 15:10). And on this account it is said, Prov. 31:29: *Many daughters have gathered together riches*, etc. (Under the title where Mary is compared to precious stones.) Christ indeed willed that his mother should participate in all beauty, and be a woman out of all, as it is said, Eccles. 7:29. (Look under the title, that Mary is a woman.) On this account one elegantly says of her: “Sun brighter than the moon, and the moon than the stars: so is Mary to all who believe in God.”

Again, otherwise this can be expounded: *All fruits*, etc. In which word the perseverance of good works is demonstrated in the Virgin. She says, then: O my beloved, all fruits, that is, all works of good odor which I have done, both old, that is, which proceeded from the commandments of the old Law, and new, which the Gospel precepts produced, without stain of infection, without putrefaction of corruption, I have kept for thee, as welcome gifts (*xenia*) to be presented. Again, in this also he seems in a manner to hint at the infancy of the Word, which was made flesh in her; for children love fruits.

Again, to this privilege pertains whatever was said above of the singular excellence of Mary; whatever also was said under the title on her riches.

Chapter 11: Mary Alone Can Command Christ as Son with Maternal Authority

(p. 155) The ninth: whereas all other Saints and Angels can supplicate Christ and be heard by God (hence he also says to them: *Ask, and you shall receive*, John 16:24), she alone, with maternal authority, can command him as son. Which was signified in 3 Kings 2:20, where we read that Solomon, who signifies Christ, answered Bethsabee his mother, who figured Mary: *Ask, my mother, for it is not right that I should turn away thy face*, etc. To figure this also, 3 Kings 10:13, it is said that king Solomon gave to the queen of Saba all that she desired and asked of him, etc.; which queen signified Mary. Therefore we pray to her thus: “Show thyself to be a mother.” As if it were said to her: Imperiously, and with maternal authority, supplicate for us to thy Son. Again, that: “Pray the Father, command the Son.” Some, however, say that this was not well said; but *iniquity hath lied to itself* (Ps. 26:12). Is it not read, Luke 2:51, of Jesus, that he was subject to them, namely to Mary and to Joseph on account of Mary? And in the same place, v. 48, that she, exercising maternal authority, rebuked the Son, saying: *Son, why hast thou done so to us?* And a little after it is added that, having heard the maternal correction, he patiently and without murmuring went down with them to Nazareth, *and was subject to them*. For that commandment of the Lord in the fatherland will not be made void: *Honor thy father and thy mother* (Exod. 20:12), but will be most perfectly fulfilled. Nevertheless understand all these things of the reverence which the Son of God shows to his mother, and of the subjection by which Christ was subject to his parents: he commended to us the form of humility and obedience. Nor was that subjection of necessity, but of piety, as the Gloss says in the same place. And it shows what we owe to parents. (Look for much more about this prerogative under the title, The Lord is with thee, near the end of the chapter.)

Again, the power of Mary to obtain is noted, Esther 5:3, where Assuerus said: *What wilt thou, Esther the queen? what is thy request? Although thou shouldst ask the half of the kingdom, it shall be given thee.* In this also, that he says, *What wilt thou, Esther? what is thy request?*, it is hinted that the Son does not wait for the mother to ask, but even anticipates her petitions, according as he himself says, and as is said to him of the true poor, Isa. 65:24: *Before they cry*, namely to me, *I will hear them.* And that of Psalm 10 (Hebrew numbering, v. 17): *The ear of thy hearing has heard the preparation of their heart.* (On the division of the kingdom look under the title, that Mary is queen.)

Chapter 12: Mary Was a Martyr

(p. 156) The tenth: that she was a martyr in soul, and the sword of sorrow which pierced her soul in the passion of the Only-begotten is reckoned to her as a most bitter martyrdom.

The Son indeed willed that his mother should participate in the whole beauty of the saints, nay, should exceed the whole beauty of the saints; and as she is called Virgin of virgins, so she ought to be called Martyr of martyrs; for whatever was wrought in the Virgin was new, as had been foretold, Jer. 31:22: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth*, etc., and Apoc. 21:5: *Behold I make all things new.* It pleased the Son, therefore, that she should be a more glorious Martyr, and appear wonderfully, that she might be adorned with a new and unheard-of kind of martyrdom. And truly new and unheard-of is the martyrdom which the mother suffered in the passion of the Only-begotten, in that part which is impassible, as Jerome says. A new kind of martyrdom, I say, for many causes.

First, whereas other martyrs suffer in the body, she suffered in the soul or heart, according to the prophecy of Simeon, Luke 2:35: *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.* Expound thus: *thy own soul*, that is, of thyself. Or, *his sword shall pierce thy soul*. He does not say, it shall move the light of reason by clouding it, but *shall pierce through* it like a thing standing immovable, neither resisting nor in any way wavering. The sword of the passion indeed, which passed through the body and members of the Son, pierced through, that is, passed perfectly through, by compassion, the soul of the mother; and then every wound was sorrow of her heart (Sir. 25:17). For other martyrs, though they felt torments in the body, were refreshed in mind with interior consolation; and if the swords of torments for Christ pierced their bodies, yet their souls delighted in Christ. The Son also at once suffered and was safe, because he was in the way a comprehensor. Hence he says: *I set the Lord always in my sight* (Ps. 15:8). But the soul of the mother was tortured in Christ, and the vehemence of sorrow possessed her whole soul. Blessed Bernard: “Far more than a martyr may we not undeservedly proclaim her. In whom the affection of compassion exceeded the sense of the passion, when the sword of the passion pierced her soul. For the soul of the Son was now no longer there, but the soul of the mother could not be torn away.”

She was also more than a martyr, because she bore a double martyrdom, while she both saw the death of the Son and by his example mortified her members upon earth. Which kind of martyrdom is doubtless milder than that by which members are cut by iron, in horror, but more troublesome in duration. Again, as there was no sorrow like that sorrow which pierced the body and members of the Son, as he himself says, Lam. 1:12: *O all ye that pass by*, etc., so there was no sorrow like that sorrow *(p. 157)* which through compassion pierced the bowels of the mother. Hence also in Psalm 44:10 it is notably said: *Surrounded with variety*, namely of so many sorrows as she saw her Son suffering. For she saw this one’s head crowned with thorns, this one’s cheeks plucked, this one’s face spat upon, this one’s feet and hands pierced, this one’s mouth given gall to drink, this one’s head inclined on his shoulder as he expired, this one’s side opened by a lance when dead. Truly then *surrounded with variety* of sorrows, so that she could truly say with Susanna, Dan. 13:22: *I am straitened on every side.* And with David, 1 Par. 21:13: *I am in a great strait on every side.* And then, as the Church sings, “the flowers of roses surrounded her,” that is, the infinite kinds of martyrdoms, which are figured in roses, whose redness attests martyrdom. For this reason she is also called *a rose planted in Jericho* (Sir. 24:18). Jericho is interpreted “moon,” which has brightness second after the sun, and designates the blessed Virgin, who after Christ transcends every creature. The rose has the redness of vehement burning, in which two things are figured: the highest perfection of love, and the martyrdom of most intense sorrow. For the more ardently she loved, the more deeply was she wounded. Hence she says in the Canticles 2:5, according to another reading which Gregory adopts: “I am wounded with charity.” The rose therefore is red, but the moon white. And because the rosy color is pleasing in whiteness, the Son, who is white and ruddy, willed the mother to be made like himself in all things, as he in all things except sex, as man, was made like her. And therefore he would not leave her without martyrdom. The rose, therefore, in the moon: martyrdom

of mind in virginal flesh, that is, in the white virgin, who is called *fair as the moon* (Cant. 6:9). For the sun of justice being turned into darkness by the death of the body, this moon was turned into blood by the martyrdom of the soul (Joel 2:31). Again, Apoc. 6:12: *The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood.* Or, the moon is the Church, which at the dying of Christ was turned into blood, because sprinkled with the blood of many martyrs.

The novelty of this martyrdom was shown in Isa. 66:7–8. Whence, marveling, he exclaims: *Before she was in labor she brought forth*, etc. *Who hath ever heard such a thing?* To be in labor (*parturire*) properly is, before the birth and in the birth, to labor, to bring forth, to produce a fetus. But Mary, before she was in labor, brought forth; because, as the Church sings, without pain she bore the Savior of the ages; but long after she was in labor, because in the Son's passion she felt the pains of a woman in childbirth. (Look under the title on the glorious childbirth of the Virgin without sadness and pain, and there you will find this well expounded.)

Again, that the martyrdom of the other saints was not so bitter is most manifestly clear. There was not such a Son, there was not such a mother, there was not such charity as between mother and son, there was not so unworthy a death, there was not such sorrow. For the mother knew what manner of Son he was, whence conceived, and how, and the rest of this kind. And therefore the more tenderly she loved, the more deeply was she wounded, having no consolation at all, as other martyrs, as has been said above, but having all tribulation. For her bowels were swallowed up in maternal sorrows beyond what man or Angel can weigh, yet not even unto despair; for the Lord suffering was to his mother the shade of noonday, as is said, Sir. 34:19. At noonday the sun burns and shines, and the sun of persecution in the passion of Christ was as at noonday; because no more evident or grievous persecution of a mother could be than to see the death of her only-begotten Son, who was the only one of his mother. There was therefore then *(p. 158)* to the blessed Virgin the sun of persecution at noonday. Hence Sir. 43:3: *At noon the sun burneth the earth.* For at the noonday of the passion the sun, that is, the persecution of Christ, scorched the earth, that is, earthly men, namely the Apostles, who were earthly; because the shepherd being struck, the sheep of the flock were dispersed (Zech. 13:7). But in the blessed Virgin alone the Church stood, nor did the heat of noonday scorch her; and thus the Son was then to her the shade of noonday.

And therefore she can truly say to her risen Son: *According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, my son, thy consolations have given joy to my soul* (Ps. 93:19). And the Son seems to have said to her: *I arose, and am still with thee* (Ps. 138:18). It seems however from the words of the Virgin herself that the joy of the rising Son did not fully correspond to the sorrow of the mother compassionating the Son; for the mother says, as if speaking of these things, Cant. 4:6: *I will go to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.* Myrrh she calls the bitterness of her compassion in the Son's passion, and says mountain of myrrh on account of the acerbity and heap, or vehemence, of that sorrow. But after the sorrow she adds of the consolation, for the joy of the rising Son: *I will go to the hill of frankincense.* The fragrance of frankincense shows the pleasing odor of the Lord's resurrection, the consolation of which odor she calls the hill of frankincense, to which she declares she will go for the alleviation of sorrow. By this, however, that she says mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense, since a hill is smaller than a mountain, she seems to hint that then consolation did not correspond to sorrow; for she fully saw the dying Son and the sorrow of the dying, but did not fully see the glory of the rising.

It is to be noted also that in the passion both the mother compassionated the Son and the Son the mother, as if reciprocally. Hence Augustine, speaking to Christ: "Thou wast pierced, O Lord, by the nails outwardly, more harshly inwardly by the compassion of the virgin mother sharing all these things with thee; for the Son suffering, of the mother could most truly be said that of Isaiah 53:4: *Surely she hath borne his sorrows, and carried his griefs*, namely through compassion." To hint at this the mother stood by the cross of the Son. (You will find this expounded under the title on Mary's charity toward her only-begotten.)

And note that languor (*languor*) is said as if "long anguish" (*longus angor*); for since she conceived the Son she was never but in languor. She languished with fear from the nativity of the Son to the passion, since she always knew that his life was sought by ambushes. She languished with sorrow all the time of the passion until she received him risen again. She languished with love after the ascension, in a way by pious desire more happily, but more wonderfully tormented, because she did not hold him sitting in heaven. On account of this third languor she says, Cant. 5:8: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem*, that is, O ye angelic powers inhabiting the heavenly Jerusalem, *that ye tell my beloved*, that is, my Son, *that I languish with love*. For thus the Son, though he is the highest fruit of joy, became to her so long a cause of martyrdom, that so many and so sharp swords without cessation pierced her most dear soul.

We must therefore attend, and constantly recall, that she was so devoted a coadjutrix to the redemption of the world, that as there was no sorrow like the sorrow which the Son sustained for the redemption of the world, so there was no sorrow like that sorrow which she bore in her heart for the same cause. What therefore the Son brought to the world by his passion, this the mother also conferred on the world by her conversation, reconciling the guilty and sinners by compassion, the redemption of the whole world having been acquired through her childbearing. The Son also laying down his soul for the world's salvation, the mother, though she did not lay down her soul for the world, exposed it nevertheless, and did what she could. And this had been prefigured *(p. 159)* in Gen. 2:18, where it is said of Christ the new Adam, as to the state of the world's redemption: *It is not good for man to be alone, let us make him a help*, etc. (You had this sentence better noted above, under the title on her love for the Only-begotten, where the mother is read to have stood by the cross of the Son.)

To designate this martyrdom also, as by a certain presage, she was named Mary, which is interpreted "bitter sea." (Look above, under the title on her name.)

You have, then, the first cause: how the sword of the Son which pierced the soul of the mother is reckoned to her as martyrdom. *Second*, because whereas the other martyrs suffered for the faith, Mary suffered for charity. Hence she says in the Canticles 2:5, according to another reading which Gregory adopts: "I am wounded with charity." And as charity is greater than faith (1 Cor. 13:13: *The greatest of these is charity*), so the martyrdom of Mary, however great, surpasses the martyrdoms of the saints. *Third*, because the others suffered in the body, Mary in the heart, which is more. Sir. 25:17: *Every wound is sadness of the heart. Fourth*, because the others were martyred by diverse swords, Mary by the same sword as the Son. Hence: *Thy own soul*, etc. *Fifth*, because the others by diverse blows, the mother by the same blow as Christ. Hence it was said to her, John 19:26: *Woman, behold thy son.* In all these things the martyrdom of Mary is pre-eminent over the martyrdoms of all the saints.

Chapter 13: Mary Was Exalted Above All the Orders of Angels

The eleventh: that in her assumption she was exalted above all the orders of Angels and of holy souls. Hence it is sung on her assumption: "I saw one beautiful as a dove, ascending above the streams of waters." These waters, as blessed Bernard says, are the angelic virtues and the heavenly peoples. These waters are invited to the praises of the Creator in Psalm 148:4–5. Hence: *Let the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord.* The two streams are the Angels and holy souls. Or the streams of waters are the orders of Angels, namely Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Virtues, Powers, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim.

Again, the powers of heaven and the orders of the saints ought to be arranged and enumerated, namely Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and all the just of this kind. For on account of the privilege of her ascension above all the orders of the saints she glories, Cant. 2:4, where she says: *The king brought me into the cellar of wine.* For every order of saints and Angels is content with its own cellar, that is, its own mansion; but Mary by a special privilege was brought into all, who, as she is believed to have

attained the merits of all, so also the rewards of all, as one to whom neither the continence of Virgins, nor the sobriety of Confessors, nor the patience of Martyrs, nor *(p. 160)* the zeal of Apostles, nor the knowledge of Prophets, nor the faith of Patriarchs, nor the purity of Angels is believed to have been lacking; nay, as she surpassed all the orders of the saints in merits, so also in rewards. Jerome: "As much as Mary obtained of grace on earth beyond others, so much she holds of singular glory in heaven." For if *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him* (1 Cor. 2:9), what has he prepared for her who bore him and who, as is certain, loved him above all? Again, Jerome: "If in the house of the Father there are many mansions, we believe that the Son granted to his mother in her assumption a more splendid one." Blessed Bernard: "Neither on earth was there a place more worthy than the temple of the virginal womb in which Mary received the Son of God, nor in heaven than the royal throne on which the Son of Mary exalted Mary."

And on this account, of the assumption of the mother can fittingly be expounded what Psalm 17:11 says of the ascension of the Son: *He ascended upon the Cherubim, and he flew; he flew upon the wings of the winds. He ascended upon the Cherubim*, which is interpreted "fullness of knowledge"; because no human knowledge can attain how high she ascended, or to how great a glory. Nor does it say "upon the Seraphim," although it is true that she was exalted above that order too, at the right hand of the Son: hence, *The queen stood on thy right hand* (Ps. 44:10), etc.; because above the Seraphim there is nothing but the *hierothesia*, that is, the sacred order of the Trinity, to which the Virgin is subject. There follows: *And he flew*, that is, he ascended swiftly. Or, *he flew*, that is, he flew away from human understanding. *He flew upon the wings of the winds*, and this in two ways: in the present, above the virtues and merits of holy souls; in the assumption, above the rewards of the Angels and the saints. Souls are called winds. Hence Job 28:25: *Who made a weight for the winds*, that is, a body for souls. And perhaps on this account "he flew" is put twice. It is said, then: "I saw one beautiful as a dove, ascending above the streams of waters." Nor is it implied that she ascended merely above them, but into some higher retreat above them. Nor does he determine whither she ascended, but whence: for as far as that the one who says this could follow her; from then on she, as it were, vanished from his eyes, so that where she ascended he either could not grasp or was not permitted to say. For she herself testifies that she was exalted above the Angels when she says, Cant. 3:4: *When I had a little passed by them*, namely the Angels, *I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him, and I will not let him go.* For there she found her beloved where the throne is set for the king's mother beside the king, where she now hears from him with joy: "Mary, behold thy Son." As if he said: Behold him whom thou didst bear, whom thou seest shining in so great majesty. For once she heard from the same one, in a far different state, said to her: *Woman, behold thy son* (John 19:26). For what place of joy would there be, where not only was the mother passed over when a stranger was put in her place and her own Son taken away, but was even disregarded and unrecognized, when she was called not Mary but "woman"? But those former things have now passed away. Therefore in her assumption there was restored to her, with great fervor, both the presence of the Son and recognition and affection, and it is said to her: "Mary, behold thy Son."

But if it is asked whether Mary had greater glory in her assumption, when her flesh was wholly clothed with the sun, as is said in Apoc. 12:1, or in the conception of the Son and her pregnancy, when in her own flesh she embraced the whole Sun of justice (hence Jer. 31:22: *A woman shall compass a man*), I confess I do not know; to me, however, saving the opinion of my elders, it seems more glorious to receive the king as guest *(p. 161)* than to be a guest with the king. That glory, however, was more hidden when she received the king, and all the glory of the king's daughter was from within (Ps. 44:14); this one more manifest, when she was received by the king with royal magnificence: that more secret, this more solemn.

Chapter 14: Mary Crowned in Heaven

The twelfth prerogative of Mary is considered in the crown of ineffable glory with which she was crowned in heaven at her assumption, when the true Assuerus, whose name is interpreted “blessed” or “blessedness” and who signifies Christ, said to Esther the queen, whose name is interpreted “lifted up among peoples” and who signifies Mary, who was exalted even above the choirs of Angels and of all the blessed to the heavenly kingdoms. He said to her, I say, as we read in Esther 15:11 [Vulgate addition]: *Come near, and touch the sceptre.* Come hither, and hold the sceptre, receive the royal dignity, be lady of heaven and earth, be queen and empress of Angels and men, sit at my right hand in glory, thou who didst always stand at my right hand, serving for eternal things, *in gilded clothing* (Ps. 44:10), that is, in an immaculate body. For it was most just that, since Christ, the Word of the Father, was made flesh of her flesh and bone of her bones, where the Son was, there should his mother be.

Again, of the coronation of Mary the Son says to her, Cant. 4:7–8: *Thou art all fair, O my love,* etc. (You have all this expounded under the title on the beauty of Mary.) *Come therefore, thou shalt be crowned* — by manifold victory, namely, because thou hast triumphed over *the top of Amana, from the top of Sanir and Hermon,* that is, over the malice of the devil, which is signified by the top of Amana; over worldly wisdom, which is signified by the top of Sanir; over heretical perfidy, which is signified by the top of Hermon. Amana is said to mean “God of watchings” and designates the whole college of demons, who gnaw man with the tooth of temptation and always watch for his overthrow, as Job says, 30:17–18: *In the night my bone is pierced with sorrows.* As if he said: In the night, namely when I do not look out for myself, my bone, that is, the strength of my virtue, is pierced with sorrows, that is, with temptations, which are causes of sorrows. And he adds: *And they that feed upon me,* namely the tempters, *sleep not, and with the multitude of them my garment is consumed,* namely the ornament of good conduct. Peter agrees with this, saying: *Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. 5:8). The head of this college which is designated by Amana is that prince of demons whose head the blessed Virgin crushed. Sanir is interpreted “night bird,” which flies by night, and sees, and is blinded by the sun. These are the Philosophers and wise men of this world, who are blind to the light of divine wisdom, but see keenly for the wisdom of this world and for malice. Of whom *(p. 162)* Jeremias says (4:22): *They are foolish and senseless children: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.* Over these the blessed Virgin triumphs, and for this victory is crowned: because she bore the Wisdom by which the wisdom of this world is proved folly. She is also crowned from the top of Hermon, that is, from the leaders of heretics: for she alone has destroyed all the heresies in the whole world. Hermon is interpreted “anathema,” or “separated.” These are the heretics, of whom, under the name of Ephraim, Osee says to Juda, that is, to faithful and Catholic men who are partakers of idols, Hos. 4:17–18: *Ephraim is a partaker of idols: let him alone. Their banquet is separated.* As if he said: Heretical perfidy partakes with idolatry. Do thou therefore, Catholic man, let him alone, lest thou communicate with heretics: *their banquet is separated:* for the doctrine, perfidy, and false religion of heretics is anathematized.

She is crowned also *from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards.* Dens signify the torpor and softness of lust. By lions are understood the proud, the wrathful, the powerful of this age, whom lust nevertheless so softens like lions, that in the dens of their desires they grow numb and wither. Hence of the harlot woman it is said in Proverbs 7:26: *She hath cast down many wounded, and the strongest have been slain by her.* The leopard is of many colors, and marked with spots or stains. It designates those who mingle evil with good works, whom for their diverse color the Lord reproves through Jeremias, 12:9, saying: *Is my inheritance to me as a speckled bird?* Such, when they ought to be humbled by the evil work by which the good work is infected, are nevertheless puffed up into pride by that very good work, which pride is expressed by mountains, when it is said: *From the mountains of the leopards.* And since help is given through the blessed Virgin both to these and to those who are signified by the lions, therefore she is said to be crowned from the dens of the lions and from the mountains of the leopards. And note that in Apoc. 12:1 Mary is said to be crowned with stars; here the Son promises her that she shall be crowned from wild beasts or mountains.

And what is this, but that the wild beasts become stars through the grace and prayers of Mary, so that they may befit the head of so great a queen, that a crown of stars may seem to be presented to her which had been promised from wild beasts? *And this is the change of the right hand of the Most High* (Ps. 76:11).

From the top of Amana: that is, not only from those who are found in sin with the rest, but who above the rest are sinners. For often where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded (Rom. 5:20) through her, and so out of us sinners she prepares for herself a new crown in heaven. Sanir, which means "night bird" or "stench," signifies the lustful, because *the eye of the adulterer observeth darkness* (Job 24:15): and the lustful man flies by night to the corpse of the harlot, loving darkness and hating light; and such stink to God and to men. Hence Isa. 34:3: *Out of their carcasses shall rise a stink.* Amana is interpreted "restless" or "turbulent." These are the impatient and the restless. Hermon is interpreted "anathematization." These are the sacrilegious excommunicated; yet if they repent they can be reconciled through her. Of these the head and top are those who in crimes of this kind excel others. The dens of the lions are those whom cruelty and pride please, who gape after slaughters and plunder. The mountains of the leopards are the great teachers of heretics and hypocrites. Where we have Sanir, some books have Scir, which is interpreted "hairy," and signifies the appetite of the flesh. As therefore of stones are raised up the children of Abraham (Matt. 3:9), so of beasts are created stars. What is therefore promised to them from the impious is paid from the justified. So also David is crowned *(p. 163)* with the diadem of the king of Rabbah (cf. 2 Kings 12:30; 1 Par. 20:2). And the Maccabee fights with the sword of Apollonius (cf. 1 Macc. 3:12).

Again, by reason of her victory and her fight, since she fights unceasingly against our adversaries, she is called *terrible* (Cant. 6:3, 9), namely to the malignant spirits themselves, *as an army set in array.* For all the armies of the saints follow her as queen, ordered according to their states, according to their proper dignities and merits, so that under her and with her they may do battle for us against the devil by prayers and patronage. Hence Cant. 7:1: *What shalt thou see in the Sulamite but the companies of camps?* (Look for why Mary is the Sulamite, under the title on her appellations.) For in her we see the companies of camps clinging to her, that is, the blessed armies of the saints. Hence of her, Sir. 43:9: *A vessel of the camps on high.*

Again, it was most just that, since the mother had crowned the Son in exile, she should be crowned by him in the kingdom, of which coronation it is said, Cant. 3:11: *Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see king Solomon*, etc. There is a threefold evil going forth. First, from truth to error: by this we go forth from God through pride. This is the going forth of heretics. Hence Cant. 1:7: *If thou know not thyself*, etc. Second, from what abides to what passes away: by this we go forth from our neighbor through avarice. This is the going forth of the avaricious. Of this kind was Judas (cf. John 13:30). Third, from honorable things to base: by this man goes forth from himself through lust. This is the going forth of the voluptuous. There is a threefold good going forth. First, from the flesh to beauty (*speciem*) through contrition. This is sorrow and labor. By it we are led from virtue to virtue. Second, from nature to those things which are above nature through meditation on the divine law. This is comeliness and savor. By it we go from mansion to mansion. Third, from the world to heaven through the dissolution of body and soul, or through contemplation. This is glory and honor. By it we pass from labor to rest.

Daughters of Sion. This address is directed to all clerics, principally to theologians, above all to religious, who are called daughters because of the privilege of love and the summit of contemplation: daughters, not on account of sex, but on account of the fruitfulness of offspring. Not sons, a name which sounds of strength. *Go forth* from the darkness of ignorance, from the habit of carnal eyes, *daughters of Sion.*

And see king Solomon, that is, Christ the true peacemaker, *in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him*, the blessed Virgin. Other mothers bind their sons with the chain of original servitude; but she crowned this Son with the great comeliness of original purity and innocence, that is, she conceived and bore him already crowned. Or, his mother is grace. For him, as Augustine says, not the mother concupiscence, but grace begot.

The diadem with which this mother crowned him was of the gold of most noble wisdom and of the most precious gems of virtues, to which no others are comparable; she encircled his head, that is, his mind, with admirable comeliness, after the manner of a crown or diadem. Or, the gold is divinity; the silver, the white and pure humanity — silver, namely, many times tried in the fire of the Holy Spirit; the precious stones, the totality of the virtues. Or, the diadem is of purest gold, the flesh of Christ fashioned by the Holy Spirit out of the gold of the virginal substance; the precious stones, the created virtues. Or, by the gold mixed with silver is meant the divine wisdom, which mingled itself with silver, that is, fitted to itself a body from the substance of the Virgin, who was silver tried many times in the fire of the Holy Spirit; and so a crown of electrum was made, on account of the gold of divinity, namely, and the silver of white humanity (cf. Ezek. 1:4, 27). For the splendor of the divinity somehow grew pale in the whiteness of the humanity — not indeed by diminution or any other injury, but by accommodation to our knowing.

And note that the humanity of the Savior *(p. 164)* is fittingly called a diadem (*diadema*), as it were "taking away two" (*duo demens*), namely the beginning and the end: that is, original sin, which is the beginning of all evil, and eternal punishment, which is the end to which every mortal sin tends. Hence the Apostle, Rom. 6:21: *The end of those things* — that is, of sins — *is death*, namely eternal. Rom. 5:19: *For as by the disobedience*, etc. By reason of this coronation Solomon says of Mary, Prov. 12:4: *A diligent woman is a crown to her husband.* And Christ himself, Isa. 61:10, according to another reading, where we have *As a bridegroom decked with a crown*, reads: "he hath bound a mitre upon me," etc. The head mitred: the Word incarnate. Or, this mother is the synagogue, which crowned him with a diadem of thorns (John 19:2). Or, this mother is the whole Church of the saints, of which Apoc. 12:2: *A woman having in the womb*; she now crowns him, as it were, out of the just, but in the judgment shall crown him with glory and honor.

As to what follows: *In the day of his espousals*, it is fittingly applied in these four readings. For the day of his espousals is the day of his conception or nativity according to the flesh: for in the virginal womb human nature was wed to him, as Augustine says. Hence it was said in Psalm 18:6: *And he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride-chamber.* It can also be understood of the day of the espousals of the blessed Virgin; and a certain gloss wants this, at the place, *When his mother Mary was espoused* (Matt. 1:18): at the Angel's announcement she conceived. Or, because he then spiritually espoused her to himself, when he associated her with himself by such great grace that he should take his most sacred flesh from her flesh. That also was the day of the gladness of his heart, that is, as much of the bridegroom himself as of the blessed Virgin herself. For who would doubt that, from so beloved a human nature, from the salvation so desired by the bridegroom himself according to the man, from the very bond of that union, in which was the most certain security of the same salvation, from that sweetest kiss, ineffable gladness came forth? And who can sufficiently express in words the joy of the most sacred Virgin herself, who on that very day both knew and felt that she was made the Mother of God, who knew she had in her womb the treasure of our redemption, the glory of the Angels, and the singular joy of the whole human race, and, to sum up all in one word, God and the Son of God?

Or, the day of the espousals is the day of the passion, when he became to both the Church and the synagogue a *bloody spouse* (cf. Exod. 4:25). He became a bridegroom of bloods to the Church inasmuch as his blood was sprinkled upon the children of the Church, and upon the very garments of his flesh, namely for the redemption of her children; hence he is also called the pelican. To the synagogue itself also he became a bridegroom of bloods, that is, of blood upon blood, namely on account of the slaughter made of them by Titus and Vespasian, as to the slaughter of bodies, and as to the slaughter of souls through guilt and eternal punishment, which is the twofold death. And the passion is an espousal, because it is the confirmation of the conjugal pact. For then *his testament was confirmed by his death* (cf. Heb. 9:16). That day was also the day of the gladness of the heart of the synagogue, for it rejoiced most madly at his death. It was for the bridegroom himself a day of gladness: for the enemy triumphed over, for the most noble prey of the human

race snatched from the hostile hand, for the most beloved bride, the Church, confirmed to himself. Hence he says, Luke 12:50: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened*, by desire, namely, etc.? Therefore it was to be perfected in joy. For joy is nothing else than the obtaining of what is desired. And these daughters are invited to see him in the mockery of the cross and in the diadem of thorns, that they may admire his humility, patience, and charity, and abhor the sins for the killing of which he was killed, and be ashamed to be ungrateful for so great a grace, and that *(p. 165)* they are not warmed with so great a fire of love, nor made secure by so great a pledge of obtaining what has been promised.

Again, the day of the espousals is the day of judgment, when the daughter, or the mother, the Church, will crown him in all the elect; and then the Church herself will be *a diadem of the kingdom in the hand of her God* (Isa. 62:3). And then will be a day of gladness both for the bridegroom and the bride, and of the glorification of his dearest ones. Blessed Bernard expounds thus: "*Go forth, ye daughters of Sion*: worldly souls, weak and delicate, having nothing of strength or usefulness, and therefore daughters, not sons: go forth from the sense of the flesh to the understanding of the mind; *and see king Solomon*; he does not say king Ecclesiastes, or king Idida. This king, who signifies Christ, has these three names: he is Solomon, that is, peaceful in exile; or Ecclesiastes, that is, he will be the preacher in the judgment; Idida, that is, the beloved of the Lord, he will be in the kingdom, everywhere king. In exile the ruler of morals, in judgment the discerner of merits, in the kingdom the distributor of rewards. In exile meek, in judgment just, in the kingdom glorious. In exile lovable, in judgment terrible, in the kingdom admirable. Go forth therefore, that you may see king Solomon in exile, that you may securely be able to see Ecclesiastes in judgment, and at last Idida in the kingdom. And see him *in the diadem*, that is, in the crown of mercy, wherewith his mother crowned him, namely Mary; because he was born of her with the crown of mercy. Hence he says, Job 31:18: *From my infancy mercy grew up with me*, etc. And on account of this crown he is lovable. In judgment he will be crowned with the crown of justice, and then terrible. At last in the kingdom with the crown of glory, and then admirable. See him therefore in the crown of mercy by imitating, that afterward you may see him in the crown of justice without fearing, and at last in the crown of glory glorying with him forever."

Here ends Book III of the work on the praises of the blessed Virgin Mary.

Book IV: On the Virtues of Mary

Chapter 1: On the Humility of Mary

(p. 166) About to describe with care the incomparable virtues of the glorious Virgin, we first take refuge in her grace, humbly begging that she will graciously pour back upon us out of her abundant fullness. For in her hand are both we and our words (cf. Wisd. 7:16). Hence, as often as we desire to speak of her, we must cry out to her: Lady, Lady, open to us, and prepare for the poor man out of thy abundant sweetness.

First, then, we must treat of her humility, which among all and each of her virtues deserved to hold the principal place, because it was the guardian, and as it were the mistress, of the other virtues. Jerome, in that homily "You compel me, O Paula," near the end of the homily: "What is nobler than the Mother of the Lord, what more splendid than she whom the splendor of the Father's glory chose? What more chaste than she who bore the body of Christ without contagion? And yet in her the Lord professes to have regarded humility alone, which humility is the guardian of the other virtues. For she had placed the lofty exercises of her merits in the safe harbor of a fixed station, and therefore she is divinely illumined. Hence the Lord says: *To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?* (Isa. 66:2). For he did what he had promised, and *regarded the humility of his handmaid*; and therefore *all generations shall call her blessed* (Luke 1:48). For concerning humility the Master himself and Lord of the Angels taught on earth, saying, Matt. 11:29: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart*, etc. And this lesson of his the most blessed Virgin kept before all others, although she kept all the other words of the Son, of the Angels, and of Simeon himself in her heart (cf. Luke 2:51). Blessed Mary, therefore, as Jerome says in the same place, did not learn from her Son to build the heavens, nor to create Angels, nor to work the glorious miracles of the Godhead, but only to be humbled, and to gather the other lessons of the virtues within the keeping of humility."

(p. 167) But now let us see the meaning of those two verses which, the Savior having been conceived, out of the overflowing fullness of grace she poured forth with ineffable joy among the other verses of her Canticle: *He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because he that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name* (Luke 1:48–49).

He hath regarded, she says. Because the question here is of a regard of grace, we must consider carefully how God by grace regards man. For the very word "regard" (*respectus*) denotes a certain emphasis, so that to regard seems to be something more than to see: for to regard is, as it were, first to visit the cast-off and the forsaken. For God is said to be as it were turned away from man when, by the severity of judgment, he withdraws the gifts of his grace; but when, appeased by mercy, he restores what was withdrawn, he turns himself again to him by a regard of grace. Well, then, does Mary testify that the Lord regarded humility alone in her: because the propitiation of the Godhead which human nature lost in our first parents through pride, it recovered in Mary through humility. For because the Word of the Father took in her the substance of flesh, which he would unite to himself, he regarded in mercy, as it were, that nature to be exalted which he had before cast off. God regarded the humility of Mary, to whom, for the merit of humility, he gave to conceive his Son in the flesh, and to bring forth of her flesh true God and man, the Savior of all men, so far as it lies with him. The virtue of which humility she presently defines, adding: *Of his handmaid*; for because she humbly acknowledged herself a handmaid, therefore she deserved to be, in a way above her measure, a mother. She emptied herself after the example of her Son, taking the form of a handmaid. For which reason God also exalted her, and gave her a name which is above all names after the name of her Son, that in her name every knee should bow, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (cf. Phil. 2:9–10), except the knee of her Son, who nevertheless was subject to her, and Joseph on her account (Luke 2:51); and before her, as is believed, he often knelt, as a son before his mother.

God, then, regarded the humility of his handmaid. He does not say that he regarded her virginity, but her humility: for on that side he loved her more; and where love is, there is the eye. Or, *he regarded*, that is, he approved, as Augustine glosses it. Therefore she could say to God with far more truth than David that of Psalm 30:8: *Because thou hast regarded my humility, thou hast saved my soul out of distresses.* For the Lord had turned away his face from every woman because of the sin of Eve; but having perceived the scent of the nard of the blessed Virgin's humility, and the smoke of the little rod, of which we shall speak below, he regarded, that is, he looked back, as it were behind his back, at the humility of his handmaid; and so he turned himself to *the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary* (Ezek. 44:1). The gate is Mary; the way of the gate, the humility of Mary. And besides, humility is the way by which one comes to the grace of the mother and the Son.

Again, humility (*humilitas*) is so called as if "hidden on the ground" (*humi latens*). For humility lay hidden in the heart of the Virgin; but meanwhile, she herself not knowing it, the merit of her humility was rising like a little rod of smoke even to the Lord of majesty sitting on his throne. And this very humility of hers, which alone is capable of grace and alone deserves to be filled, was as it were a most capacious vessel, in which she received grace abundantly both for herself and for us, that of her fullness we might all receive grace for grace (John 1:16). In her person also it is said to Assuerus: *Thy face*, that is, thy regard with which thou hast regarded the humility of thy handmaid, *is full of graces* (Esther 15:17). He took note, *(p. 168)* for the Lord, regarding the humility of the handmaid, namely the capacity of that vessel, poured grace into her according to that capacity. This is the custom of the Lord. Hence Matt. 25:15: *To every one according to his proper ability the Lord gave talents.* This proper ability is properly humility. And because she who was so great humbled herself so much, the Son of God also, for love of her, humbled himself so much; and at the moment when she said, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me*, etc. (Luke 1:38), *he bowed the heavens*, and *broke them open* (cf. Ps. 17:10; Isa. 64:1), and descended into her. Because the humility of Mary ascended so far to God, so far did the divine sublimity humble itself to Mary.

Again, Prov. 31:18 is said of the valiant woman, who properly is Mary: *She hath tasted, and seen that her traffic is good.* In traffic wine is given and something else is received, as Augustine says. The blessed Virgin, indeed, set her humility before God, saying, *Behold the handmaid*; and the Lord, regarding its preciousness, desired her, and gave himself to her for her humility. And as is said in French, that a bargain is a find, so it was done here. Hence: *Thou hast found grace with God* (Luke 1:30). For the chief beauty of the blessed Virgin is her humility, of which properly it was said: *The king shall greatly desire thy beauty* (Ps. 44:12).

He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid. By this saying, *of his handmaid*, the humility of Mary is commended. Now there are two things, humility and humiliation, and both are found in Mary in an excellent degree. Humility is within, in the virtue of the mind; humiliation is without, in abasement before human opinion. Humility is sometimes had without humiliation, namely when some just man, though not appearing contemptible before men, yet keeps within, before God, the merit of humility inviolate; when the world is crucified to him, yet he is not crucified to the world, because the human glory which he receives unsought outwardly, he inwardly despises by the virtue of humility. But he has humility with humiliation who is both humble before God and contemptible before men. To such a one the world is crucified, and he to the world (Gal. 6:14): because by humility he despises the world, and by humiliation is despised by the world. But humiliation cannot be had without humility. Mary, therefore, who was humble before God and, for God's sake, abject before men, testifies that she was regarded by God in both: because both her humility became acceptable before God, and her humiliation before men was changed into glory.

Hence she adds: *For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.* For up to that time barrenness had borne reproach among men; and she preferred the integrity of virginity to the marriage bed. But whence in the former, carnal generation she bore as it were the sentence of a curse, thence now by every generation she is deservedly praised with blessing, she to whom alone of all women it was granted both to

have the fruit of fruitfulness and not to lose the integrity of virginity. God, then, regarded her humility and took away her humiliation. And therefore, she says: *From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*

Again: *He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid.* The word *handmaid* is a servile name, and there is a fourfold servitude. The first, of condition, whereby all things ought to serve their Creator, as a work its maker, and to obey his dispositions and follow his ordinances, so that as they were made by him, so they proceed only under him and according to him. The second, of necessity: because evil wills are said *(p. 169)* to serve God, who, though they strive against his commands, are by his ineffable disposition so constrained that they can bring nothing to effect without his nod. Hence the saying: "Everything that opposes him fights for him." They serve, then, though unwilling, his disposition, who are not willingly subject to his precept. The third, of fear, when we fulfill the divine precepts not from love but from dread. The fourth, of love, when we obey his commands willingly: because we love the one who commands, and seek in our service no other advantage outside himself than that, walking according to him, we may be able to come to him. For this is to do for his sake what he commands, to do what he commands for the sake of attaining him.

Of these four servitudes, the one commended in this place seems to be that which is according to the debt of condition. This our first parents in paradise were unwilling to render to their Maker: because, lifted up in pride, they scorned to be under him by whom they were made, and wished perversely to be like him in majesty, who were not equal to him in nature. Fittingly, therefore, grace answers to guilt. Eve, through pride not considering that she was a creature and the work of God, wished to be made equal to God; but Mary, humbly subjecting herself to her Maker, named herself a handmaid: and therefore the one was cast off and the other chosen; he despised the proud, and regarded the humble; and what the proud woman lost, the humble one received. Therefore she says: *He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid.* He regarded humility, he regarded humiliation. He regarded humility, rewarding the humble; he regarded humiliation, exalting the humbled. This you have had distinguished above.

It follows: *For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed*, who shall recover the lost blessedness through the fruit of my womb, of which they were deprived through the fruit of the forbidden tree: all shall call me blessed, so that it is now a small thing to have borne in the past generation the reproach of barrenness, I who shall be called blessed by every future generation for the fruit of my fruitfulness. *From henceforth*, she says, as if she said to Elizabeth herself, with whom and in whose presence she was speaking: from the time that through thy mouth he has opened the great things which the Lord hath wrought in me, from henceforth he will magnify the same by making them manifest to all generations.

All generations: all, she says, that are generations of heaven and generations of earth. Hence the Apostle, Eph. 3:15: *Of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named.* And deservedly do all generations call her blessed, who bore to all generations life and glory; in whom the Angels find glory, the just grace, sinners pardon, forever. Deservedly do the eyes of all creation look upon her: because in her, and through her, and of her the gracious hand of the Almighty re-created whatever it had created. *All generations*: for the generations of heaven, that is, the Angels, call her blessed, because through her they were restored. The generations of earth that preceded her, namely the Patriarchs and Prophets, call her blessed, because through her they were drawn out of hell. The generations of earth, namely the Apostles and Saints who lived with her bodily, call her blessed, because through her childbearing they were redeemed. Her generations that follow, such as we are, call her blessed, because through her we are redeemed and enlightened by grace.

Otherwise: *All generations shall call me blessed*, that is, the three generations which had perished. The first without father and mother, as in Adam; the second of a father without a mother, as in Eve; the third of father and mother, as in Noe, Abraham, and all the rest; but the fourth generation, of a mother without a father, which was in Christ, freed the three aforesaid; in figure of which it was said to Abraham of his seed, Gen. 15:16: *In the fourth generation they shall return hither*, namely to the land of promise, from the servitude of Egypt. *(p. 170)* Otherwise: by *all generations* she means three generations, namely of heart, of mouth, of

work, which ought unceasingly to call Mary blessed and proclaim her so, that it may be said to her: *Generation and generation shall praise thy works, that is, every generation, and they shall declare thy power. They shall speak of the magnificence of the glory of thy holiness*, etc. (Ps. 144:4–5).

Again, the generations of the heart are faith, hope, charity, humility, obedience, fear, reverence, thought, desire, exultation, piety, mercy, remembrance, intention, sighing, love, and the like, by all of which we ought to bless Mary, as was shown above. The generations of the mouth are praise, honor or honoring, preaching, confession, magnification, blessing, singing, prayer, thanksgiving, salutation, and the like, by all of which we ought to bless Mary, as was assigned above. The generations of work are cleanness, the giving of the hands, pure lifting up, good working, and the other exercises that were assigned above. The generations of the heart, then, regard the love of Mary; the generations of the mouth, her veneration; the generations of work, imitation of her and good working, to the glory of her name. Hence it is said in Psalm 102:1: *All that is within me, bless his holy name.*

Blessed, therefore, is Mary, and blessed her humility, which brought forth God for men, gave life to mortals, renewed the heavens, purified the world, opened paradise, and freed the souls of men from hell. O truly, I say, glorious humility of Mary, which becomes the gate of paradise and is built up as the ladder of heaven! The humility of Mary was assuredly made the heavenly ladder by which God descended to earth, as Augustine says.

An explanation of the second verse: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me.* **What great things did he do in Mary?** It was a great thing for Mary that she bore in her womb the Word of God the Father, clothed with her flesh. It was great that, when she confessed herself a handmaid, she became the mother of her Maker. But if all these things are great, they are not impossible to him by whom they were done, because he is mighty. These are the great things: that a creature should bring forth her Creator, a servant-woman bear her Lord; that through her God should redeem the world and recall the dead to life. Blessed Ildephonsus: "These are the great things: that through this Virgin God should become man, the Word become flesh, the Son of God, the maker of all, become the son of that mother whom he himself had formed, and that, ruling, he should by being born be subject to the handmaid whom he himself had created; and so the handmaid should have in her subject the Lord, and the Lord have the handmaid for his superior." (You will find many things of this sort in the ninth privilege of Mary.)

He that is mighty, she says, *hath done to me great things.* And singularly great, because singularly mighty. And she did not say: He can do this or that, but, *he is mighty*, that you may understand him as the Almighty, who is called mighty absolutely, because he can do all things. Mary, then, confessed the Lord mighty, and did not say more: because his power can be believed, since it is; but what kind and how great it is cannot be comprehended at all. Therefore she confessed his power alone, and did not presume to discuss it: because it cannot be known how great it is, of which it is most truly known that it is immense. For he is supremely mighty, because he can do all that is possible. Nor is he less mighty because he cannot do impossible things: for to be able to do impossible things is not to be able, but not to be able. Indeed, of power God can do all things, but of justice he can do only what is just. Hence on that text of Matt. 26:39, *Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me*, Origen says: "As to his justice, who is not only mighty but also just, nothing is possible except such things as *(p. 171)* are just." Therefore one says elegantly of Christ: "Because, though he can do all things, he cannot do vices." This alone is lacking to him alone. But such an inability, if such things ought to be so called, makes him more mighty.

For this reason Mary says: *Because he that is mighty hath done to me great things.* She does not say "through me," nor "in me," he did great things, but "to me." For what was done in her for the salvation of all was, by the privilege of election, singularly ordained to her glory. And therefore she said "great things," and did not add what kind: since all the works of God exceed the capacity of the human mind, and especially the sacrament of redemption and the mystery of the incarnation of the Word are plainly ineffable above all. For

nothing more wonderful was ever done than that God should become man, and that the incomprehensible nature should so unite to itself the substance of a body as to be no less immense in it than it was in itself, nor less in itself because it had been wholly in her. These, then, are the great things, and ineffably great, which were done in Mary for the salvation of all, and were done to Mary for singular glory. Therefore she says: *He that is mighty hath done to me great things.*

It follows: *And holy is his name.* It is holy in itself, and in us his name is sanctified when we are sanctified in his name. What is his name? His fame; his name, the knowledge of him; faith in him, his name. This name is holy with the saints: because it is glorified and blessed by the saints, and blasphemed by the perverse, as the Apostle says, Rom. 2:24. Therefore, because he did great things to her, his name is sanctified: because, while the Word is wonderfully born in the flesh, the glory of God is declared among men through the Word. Hence he says, John 17:4: *I have glorified thee on the earth*, etc. And so *he that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is his name.*

The Lord also did great things for Mary on earth, exalting her above all men; great things in heaven, exalting her above all Angels; great things in hell, subjecting to her all the powers of darkness. Again, Bede: "When Mary says: *The Lord hath done to me great things*, she attributes nothing to her own merits, referring the whole greatness to the gift of him who, being essentially mighty and great, is wont to make his faithful ones, from small and weak, strong and great."

It follows: *And his mercy is from generation to generations to them that fear him.* To me, she says, he did it, yet not singularly to me alone, but excellently to one. Nevertheless *his mercy is from generation to generations*: no one is excluded from grace, but *in every nation he that feareth the Lord and worketh justice is acceptable to him* (Acts 10:35). *In generation and generations*, that is, into all generations. In this grace, then, nothing distinguishes man but the fear of God. So let Greek or barbarian, male or female, slave or free, fear God, and he shall be saved. Afterward she explains more fully this mercy which is shown to them that fear, and the order of human redemption, saying: *He hath shewed might*, etc.

Again, the humility of Mary is signified by nard, of which she herself speaks, Cant. 1:11: *While the king was at his repose*, that is, Christ, at his repose, that is, in the bosom of the Father, not yet made visible, *my spikenard*, that is, humility, *sent forth the odor thereof*, that is, an unaccustomed one. Nard is a humble and warm herb, and very properly signifies humility. Hence she says significantly, *my nard*: because her humility proceeded more from the warmth of charity than from the knowledge of truth. For there is a humility which truth begets, which consists in knowledge and is in the intellect. For if you look at yourself without dissimulation in the light of truth, you will be, *(p. 172)* assuredly, vile in your own eyes, although you do not yet allow it in the eyes of others. You will be humbled, therefore, from truth and not from charity. There is another humility which charity forms and informs, and this is in the affection. If you have it, you will wish, so far as in you lies, that all should hold of you the opinion that you know in truth to be the case with yourself. I say, so far as in you lies: because there are many things in us which it is not expedient for others to know, since it could harm those who knew. Hence blessed Bernard says: "The truly humble does not wish to be proclaimed humble, but to be reputed vile." Otherwise, if out of private love of yourself or fear of vileness you refuse to make known to others what you are, you are proved to love truth less, and it is to be feared lest you incur that of Proverbs 20:10: *Diverse weights, and diverse weights*, etc., both are abomination before God. For you undervalue yourself in secret, weighed in the balance of truth, and outwardly, lying of another price, you sell yourself at a greater weight than you received from her. Hence it is said, Prov. 27:21: *As silver is tried in the fining pot*, etc., so is a man tried by the mouth of him that praiseth. And this temptation is the heavier the greater he is who praises. The humility of Mary therefore proceeded from love too, she who had no sin for the sake of which she should be humbled; and therefore it is well signified by nard.

Again, the humility of Mary is most precious. Hence Prov. 31:10: *Her price is from afar and from the uttermost coasts.* Because Christ gave himself to her for humility, as was shown above, it is signified by the

gold of Solomon's throne, which was "exceeding yellow-red" (*fulvum nimis*), in French *or fin*. For the humility of other saints is pale gold. Hence: *The hinder parts of his back with the paleness of gold* (Ps. 67:14). But Mary is exceeding yellow-red gold, that is, most precious. (Look under the title on the throne.) For as the preciousness of gold surpasses all metals, so the humility of Mary surpassed every degree of humility. For the more preeminent Mary was in virtues, the more wonderful in her was humility.

The humility of Mary in heart and understanding. Feeling nothing great of herself, nor esteeming nor thinking it, she was the daughter and imitator of her father David, who says: *If I did not think humbly*, etc. (Ps. 130:2). But of the Lord she thought great things, saying: *My soul doth magnify the Lord* (Luke 1:46), not myself: for the Lord is honored by the humble alone, etc.

In thought. Hence the bridegroom, commending her for the humility of her thoughts, says, Cant. 6:4: *Thy hair is as a flock of goats which come up from Galaad.* Those hairs are humble thoughts, which arise from the heart as from the head, and come up from mount Galaad, that is, from the loftiness of her perfection, which they commend, and of which all the testimonies of the Scriptures speak. From this mount the flocks of her humble thoughts came up, when, considering her own height, which divine munificence was honoring so greatly, she made herself and her things small through humility, as hairs are fine, thin and slender, naming herself a handmaid. And well is it said, *came up*, although they came down: because this coming down in her own eyes was in the eyes of the Lord a great going up.

In the eyes and in sight. Hence she seems to have said with David: *Neither have my eyes been lifted up* (Ps. 130:1). Again, 2 Kings 6:22: *I will be little in my own eyes*, etc. For *the eyes that fail, and the hungry soul give glory and justice to the Lord* (Bar. 2:18). For she was not like the generation *whose eyes are lofty, and their eyelids lifted up on high* (Prov. 30:13); nor like that woman *whose fornication shall be known by the haughtiness of her eyes, and by her eyelids* (Sir. 26:11); nor *(p. 173)* of those daughters of Sion *who walked with nods of their eyes* (Isa. 3:16). Nay rather she is believed to have prayed that of Sirach 23:5: *Give me not a haughtiness of my eyes, O Lord.*

In hearing, according to the counsel of the Holy Spirit, who had taught her, saying: *Incline thy ear*, etc. (Ps. 44:11), that is, hear humbly the message of Gabriel. So she also did. And this inclining of the ear, as to herself, was as it were a raising of the ear as to God. Hence she also says with the Son, Isa. 50:4–5: *He wakeneth me in the morning, in the morning he wakeneth my ear, that I may hear him as a master. The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I do not resist*, etc. (Look below under the title on her obedience.)

In smell: for she was not of those whose spirit is in their nostrils. Isa. 2:22: *Cease ye from the man whose breath is in his nostrils*, etc. Nor was she as the rhinoceros, which bears its one horn, by which pride, which loves singularity, is signified, in its nose. Nor was it needful that *the indignation of the Lord's arrows should drink up her spirit* (Job 6:4), that is, the spiritedness of pride, because there was none in her.

In speech and voice. Hence, hearing the greatness and multitude of the promises that the Angel made her, she answered as the humblest of women: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38), so that this "second" (*secundum*) may be taken in the nominative case. For the first word of the Angel was: *Hail, full of grace.* The second was: *The Lord is with thee.* And that second word she wished to be done to her, namely that the Lord should be with her by taking flesh from the substance of her flesh. By reason of voice or speech also she could truly say what Moses said to the Lord, Exod. 4:10, according to another translation: "I am of slender voice," etc. Slenderness of voice is humility of speech: for she was not of those who say: *Our lips are our own* (Ps. 11:5). Nor of those to whom it is said, 1 Kings 2:3: *Multiply not words, boasting; let old things depart from your mouth*, etc. Nor was there in her mouth *the rod of pride* (Prov. 14:3). For on account of this humility of voice or speech the Son commends her from her voice, Cant. 2:14: *Let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet*, etc. Again, Cant. 4:9 commends her for the humility of both mind and voice, saying to her: *Thou hast wounded my heart … with one hair of thy*

neck. (Look below under the title on her beauty, and you will find it well expounded.) She was humble in voice in another way also: because she never gloried in the melody of a slender voice; nay rather she is believed to have had a groan in place of a song. Or, she is more often compared to the turtledove and the dove than to the lark or the nightingale. Cant. 2:12: *The voice of the turtle is heard*, etc., namely when she answered Gabriel: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc.

In work, namely when she ministered to Elizabeth her kinswoman, who was younger than herself. And she even exceeded this degree when, praised so manifoldly by the Angel and by Elizabeth herself, saying, *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke 1:43), she was not proud. In this also, that she did not blush to be purified according to the law, though she did not need purification, since she had not conceived of man: for she knew that *he that worketh pride shall not dwell in the midst of his house* (cf. Ps. 100:7).

In the bowing of neck and head, of which the raising is a sign of elation, the lowering a sign of humility: for she was not of those daughters of Sion who *walked with stretched-out necks* (Isa. 3:16). (Look below under the title on her beauty, where the neck is treated.) But rather, after the example of David with covered head (2 Kings 15:30), and after the example of Achab humbled before the Lord (3 Kings 21:29), *(p. 174)* with head bowed she is believed to have walked, for which Achab is read to have been commended by the Lord.

In taste, since she never tasted anything which, tasted, would bring death to the soul. As the first mother Eve desired the poisoned apple, which through disobedience she devoured, and by a deadly taste led her husband and all her posterity into the servitude of misery.

In touch: for she is believed to have handled the members of her Son with all humility, reverence, and trembling, most certainly knowing him the Only-begotten of God.

In gait: for she *walked not in great matters, nor in wonderful things above herself* (Ps. 130:1). Nor was she of those daughters of Sion who *walked with composed step of their feet* (Isa. 3:16). Nor like her to whom it is said, Ezek. 25:6: *Because thou hast clapped thy hands, and stamped with thy foot, and hast rejoiced with all thy heart*, etc.

In dress, and in every motion and gesture. (Look up her outward dress under the title on the vine, where the bark of the vine is treated; and under the title on the rod, where the bark of the rod is treated.) For she knew that *a man is known by his look*, that is, by the adornment that appears outwardly, and that *the attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man show what he is* (Sir. 19:26–27); and that it is not so fitting to be adorned with dress as with morals, as Jerome says. She knew also that prohibition of Sirach 11:4: *Glory not in apparel at any time.*

Again, note that the blessed Virgin was so full of humility that the more she was exalted by God, by Angels, and by men, the more she cast herself down. For when from the whole universe of the human race she was singularly chosen to become mistress of the Angels, queen of heaven, advocate of men, empress of the world, ruler of the age, mother and nurse of the Creator, yet she so disposed and cast herself down that she called herself nothing other than the handmaid of God, though she foresaw that she would become the mother of the same Lord. For she wished to pass freely through the eye of a needle, which is long and narrow: for nothing great or gross can pass through it. Nor is it enough to enter it, but it is necessary to pass through: for he who enters and does not pass through profits nothing. He enters and passes through who brings to a better consummation what he has well begun. For whoever has to pass through a very small door, the more he contracts and humbles himself, the more easily he enters. But as soon as he raises himself, so soon he strikes and shuts himself out from the door. On this account the Lord says, Matt. 18:4: *Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child*, etc. Blessed Maximus: "Wouldst thou be great in heaven, and exceedingly great, be small on earth, and exceedingly small: so shalt thou have an easy entrance in heaven

and a lofty place."

Chapter 2: On the Simplicity of Mary

(p. 175) By reason of simplicity Mary is compared to the dove, which is the most simple of birds. Hence the Son says to her, Cant. 2:13–14: *Come, my dove, in the clefts of the rock.* Now simplicity is as it were the foster-sister of humility. The simple man is he who intends one thing only. Hence Ps. 26:4: *One thing I have asked of the Lord*, etc. Again, Luke 10:42: *One thing is necessary.* And "simple" (*simplex*) is said as if "without a fold" (*sine plica*), that is, without duplicity.

There is a threefold simplicity: true, feigned, indiscreet. The true is of the just, which has discretion for its companion. This the Lord commands, Matt. 10:16, saying: *Be ye wise as serpents, and simple as doves.* Such the blessed Virgin had above all creatures. The feigned is of hypocrites, who compose themselves according to the outward man in countenance, gesture, dress, and the like, that they may be believed religious. And these are sheep's clothing, but within all is perverse and wolfish. The indiscreet is of fools, who are like *a dove that is seduced, having no heart* (Hos. 7:11).

Three inconveniences are wont to follow simplicity, against which Mary guarded herself most excellently. The first is rashness: for the simple are easily deceived; hence they are compared to the seduced dove, as was said. But Mary, in place of rashness, had prudence of spirit, by which she discerned well that it was an Angel of God, to whom she ought to consent. The second is weakness: for the simple easily fall, because they know not how to resist. But she was a prudent and strong woman, who crushed the head of the ancient serpent. The third is timidity, by which they do not dare to attempt arduous things. But she had confidence, faith, and sure hope, by which she believed that God would be incarnate of her, and answered boldly and devoutly: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc. Her strength and confidence appeared in this, that Ezechiel and Daniel and blessed John also, seeing Angels, are read to have fallen down; but she, seeing the Angel, was troubled, but not disturbed, and could endure the angelic sight without falling.

Chapter 3: On the Fear of Mary

The blessed Virgin was a woman fearing God, and likewise filial or chaste fear is the foster-sister of humility. Therefore, Luke 1:30, Gabriel said to her: *Fear not, Mary.* Fear, moreover, prepared in her a place for the Holy Spirit coming, according to that of Isaiah 66:2: *(p. 176) To whom shall I have respect, but to the poor little one, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?* The poor little one (*pauperculus*) is properly poor and humble, such as Mary was. (You will find the causes of her fear at the Angel's entrance below, under the title on her bashfulness.)

Chapter 4: On the Excellence of Mary

Of the venerable excellence of Mary, to be extolled with every proclamation, in the eyes of the supreme Trinity (which excellence answers to her most excellent humility in her own eyes), she herself speaks, Sir. 24:5, saying: *I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the firstborn before all creatures. I came out of the mouth of the Most High*: because he spoke, and they were made (Ps. 32:9). *I came out of the mouth*: because by the word of the Most High I was created. If it is asked how so humble a virgin is introduced commending herself, here is the answer. Praise is not dangerous except because of vanity; but since she is the mother of truth, whom she bore of herself, all manner of vanity is far from her, and all manner of truth is in her; and therefore she can praise herself. Again, since Solomon says, Prov. 27:2: *Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth*, it can be said that it was not she who spoke but the spirit of prophecy. She says, then: *I came out of the mouth of the Most High*: because he spoke and they were made. But again, if it is asked to what purpose that is put for the praise of the Virgin which is common to all, we answer: because she is the

principle of Christ according to his humanity, who is the mouth of the Father; and because the whole Trinity spoke specially of her, as if speaking of Christ, Gen. 2:18: *It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like to himself.*

It follows: *The firstborn before all creatures*, that is, more worthy than every pure creature.

Again, of the excellence of her creation she herself speaks in the same place a little after (Sir. 24:14): *From the beginning, and before the world, was I created. From the beginning*, that is, by God the Trinity. Hence Prov. 8:22, where we have *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways*, another translation says: "The Lord created me in the beginning of his ways." Or, *from the beginning*, that is, from eternity I was created in the foreknowledge of God. Or, *created*, that is, foreseen to be created in a certain privileged manner. Or, *From the beginning of the creation of the world I was created*, that is, prefigured to be created by the creation of light, from which the body of the sun was made, as some say. For as in that light light was given to the world, yet somewhat obscure, and from that light were made the luminaries which gave greater light, such as the sun, so the blessed Virgin gave light to the world with respect to the former time, yet not so much as the sun, that is, Christ, who was born of her. Gen. 1:3: *God said: Let there be (p. 177) light.* Esther 8:16: *To the Jews a new light seemed to arise.*

Or, *From the beginning of the time of grace I was created*, literally as to the soul. Or, *created*, that is, begotten by father and mother. For the time before grace was an ending of time or of life, because it was all in death: hence the time of grace is called a beginning. And it was an ending as to time and the life of nature and of grace: for all died by nature, nor was life repairable before the resurrection of Christ. And also as to the life of grace: because all things were under sin (Gal. 3:22). *From the beginning*, therefore, that is, in the time of grace, where all things were begun and renewed, I was created, literally; and therefore I am called the dawn, which is the end of night and the beginning of day. For she was the end of the law and the beginning of grace. (See under the title that Mary is the dawn.)

And before the world, that is, from eternity, and before these worldly times rolled on. Or, *before the world*, that is, more worthy than all ages (*saecula*), that is, than all men and women of all ages.

Again, on account of the excellence of her state she says in the same chapter: *I dwelt in the highest places* (Sir. 24:7).

In her sanctification: for she was most excellently sanctified, and in her sanctification vehemently exalted: because she was cleansed from all foulness of earthly corruption, and colored and tinged as it were from black color into white; and then was given her *the glory of Libanus* (Isa. 35:2), which is interpreted whiteness. (Look under the title on her sanctification.)

In her nativity: because she was sanctified before she was born: for she was born a daughter of grace, whereas all others are born children of wrath (Eph. 2:3); which was signified in this, that she was the daughter of Anna, which is interpreted grace. Hence Cant. 6:8: *She is the only one of her mother.* On this account also it is said of her nativity, Esther 8:16: *To the Jews a new light seemed to arise, joy, honor, and dancing.* For at her birth a new light arose for every just man because of the knowledge of the truth, which before was unknown; joy because of escape from prison; honor because of the casting down of the enemy; dancing because of the recovery of salvation. For her sanctification was the pledge of our sanctification, her nativity the pledge of our spiritual nativity, and also of our redemption: for she was born that she might wash away the guilt of paternal prevarication, repair innocence, appease the wrath of the strict judge, open the gate of heaven, and confer liberty on captives. Therefore she says: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth*, etc. (Sir. 24:25).

In her life according to human custom: because she vowed virginity, although the barren woman was cursed in the law; she was most humble, although many are proud of their virginity; she was faithful and

believing, although what was promised her seemed impossible, namely that a virgin should conceive and bear remaining a virgin.

In the wonderful conception of the Son of God. For she conceived, the glory of virginity remaining, as no other. She conceived in the womb, that is, from an intrinsic cause, not as other women, who receive from outside that whence they conceive, namely the seed of man. Origen: "Happy navel of chastity, which marital embrace never touched." For she conceived by the ear, that is, by faith in what was said: for faith cometh by hearing (Rom. 10:17). Hence she says, Cant. 5:4: *My beloved*, that is, God the Father, *put his hand*, that is, his Son, *through the hole of my ear*, etc. And so her conception was singular and surpassing all others.

In the bearing of the Son: for she was fruitful without corruption, pregnant without burden, a mother in childbirth without pain, as blessed Bernard says. And this is clear from the fact that at the very beginning of her conception, when women are more miserably afflicted, as the same blessed Bernard *(p. 178)* says, with all alacrity she went up into the hill country with haste (Luke 1:39), not at a slow pace, as is the way of those weighed down with some burden. And so it is most manifestly clear that, pregnant with the Son of God, she was not burdened.

In the singularity of childbearing: for without pain, nature marveling, she brought forth her Begetter. Hence Isa. 66:7–8: *Before she was in labor, she brought forth; before her time came to be delivered, she brought forth a man child. Who hath ever heard such a thing? and who hath seen the like to this?* (You will find this a little below, under the title on her childbirth.) Or otherwise: because many other women have borne kings and princes, but she alone the Son of God. Or otherwise: many other women bore sons who afterward were crowned as kings, but were not born kings; but she alone it was who had crowned her Son in her womb with the diadem of glorious flesh. Hence Cant. 3:11: *Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, … wherewith his mother crowned him.* She brought forth a king already crowned. Hence he says, Matt. 2:2: *Where is he that is born king*, etc.? By reason of this most excellent dignity she compares herself to the cedar, which is called the king of trees. Hence she says, Sir. 24:17: *I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus.*

In the nursing of the Son: because the Virgin alone had milk of this kind; and this milk is called heavenly, not earthly or fleshly, on account of her most excellent dignity. Hence the Church sings: "The Virgin alone nursed with a breast full from heaven." Nor did any other than the Son of God taste of her milk. Hence he himself singularly glories, Cant. 5:1: *I have drunk my wine with my milk*, which was wholly mine. And though the name of the virgin is said to be poured out, Cant. 1:2: *Thy name is as oil poured out*, yet it is not said that her breasts were poured out.

In singular dominion over the Son of God, who is also her own Son, King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15). Hence Luke 2:51 says: *He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them*, namely to Mary and Joseph. Augustine there: "This woman had this singularly, that she saw subject to her, in the solemnity of his birth, him whom not only human but even angelic nature venerates and adores as most high." (Of this you will find much in the ninth chapter on her privileges.)

In singular ministration before the Son of God. For many others, men and women, received Christ in their houses for a day, or two or three; but she in the proper house of the virginal womb not only one day or two, but nine months. Again, others fed him with common foods, and perhaps gave him some garment; but she of her own flesh brought to him naked, that is, to pure God, the clothing of flesh, and of her own milk ministered nourishment. And of the other works of mercy you can assign in this way. And on this account she says by antonomasia: *In the presence of him I ministered* (Sir. 24:14), that is, to his good pleasure.

In singular contemplation. (You have had this above, under the title "Full of Grace," at the beginning of the chapter.)

In singular action or good operation: because to the Son of God, who was at once rich and poor, she excellently showed the six works of mercy. Hence in the judgment the Son will be able to say to her excellently that of Matt. 25:35: *I was a stranger, and you took me in*, namely in the tabernacle of thy virginal womb. Hence Job 31:32, as if in the person of Mary: *The stranger did not stay without*, namely the Son of God. (Assign here the pilgrimage of Christ.) *My door was open to the traveler*, of which traveler it is said, Jer. 14:8, as if speaking to the Son of God: *Why wilt thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man turning aside to tarry?* Who, namely, as a wayfarer, since he had not where to lay his head (Matt. 8:20), *(p. 179)* except that he was received and lodged in the womb and in the virginal house.

Again, *I was naked, and you covered me* (Matt. 25:36), namely with the garment of thy virginal flesh. Hence it had been said to Mary: *The holy which shall be born of thee*, etc. (Luke 1:35). Again, Luke 2:7: *And wrapped him up in swaddling clothes* — behold the garment; *and laid him in a manger* — behold the bodily lodging. On this account Christ calls himself a grain of wheat (John 12:24–25) which is sown naked but rises clothed (1 Cor. 15:37). On this account also she is compared to the fleece of Gedeon (Judges 6:37 ff.): because with her wool, that is, virginal flesh, she clothed the Lamb of God; whence also the Son says to her, Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh*, etc.

Again, *I was hungry, and you gave me to eat* (Matt. 25:35). Hence Jerome says that with needle and distaff she earned whence she fed herself and the Son. Hence Cant. 2:16 says that Christ feeds among the lilies. And these lilies blessed Bernard interprets as the hands of blessed Mary, saying: "The hands of Mary are certain most white lilies; nor will the lover of lilies complain that he finds nothing among the lilies, whatever he finds among the hands of Mary."

Again, *I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink* (Matt. 25:35), namely of virginal milk, which I alone drank. This can also be understood of the drink of faith, with which Mary above all gave him drink, figured by the Samaritan woman, to whom Christ said, John 4:7: *Give me to drink.*

Again, *I was sick, and you visited me* (Matt. 25:36). Which was fulfilled when Christ was crucified and she stood by the cross, when God the Father smote the Son for the salvation of the people (Isa. 53:8), and *he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins, and with his stripes we are healed*, as is said there.

Again, *I was in prison, and you came to me* (Matt. 25:36). As if Christ were imprisoned in the prison of our mortality when he was born of the Virgin a true man, and Mary then came to him as a mother to her Son lying in the cradle. But then most of all he was imprisoned when placed in the sepulchre. Whence in his person Jeremias says, Lam. 3:6: *He hath set me in dark places, as those that are dead for ever.* Again, ibid., v. 53: *My life is fallen into the pit, and they have laid a stone over me.* Then, although this is not read in the Gospel, it is not doubted that the most pious mother came to the sepulchre of the Son. Hence Jerome: "How wretched and impious it would be to think of the mother that, when the other holy women had such care for the burial of the Lord, she should have been absent. God forbid."

In singular passion or martyrdom. (Of this you will find enough in her tenth privilege.)

In singular passing or ascent from the world to God, from earth to heaven, from exile to the fatherland, from misery to glory. Hence her passing is called an assumption, when namely she ascended from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved (Cant. 8:5). (You will find this plainly expounded under the title on the aromatics of the enclosed garden.)

In singular burial, where she could not be pressed down by the bonds of death, nor was her body dissolved into ashes: because as the Father did not suffer his Holy One, namely Christ, to see corruption (Ps. 15:10), so neither his special holy one, that is, Mary.

In singular exaltation: since she was not only exalted with the Angels, but exalted above all choirs of Angels. *(p. 180)* (Look under the eleventh prerogative of Mary.)

In singular session at the right hand of the Son, as is believed, on the throne of glory: for she is designated by Bethsabee, the mother of Solomon, who signifies Christ, for whom by the command of her son a throne was set by the throne of the king, and she sat at his right hand (3 Kings 2:19).

In singular power. For though she can say most truly with the Son: *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth* (Matt. 28:18), yet she says excellently: *In Jerusalem is my power* (Sir. 24:15), the power, namely, of commanding whatever I will, as well to the angelic virtues as to holy souls, and of introducing whom I will. Sir. 42:23: *In every necessity all things obey him.* (Of these things you will find much under the title on her power.)

Again, by reason of her excellence Mary is called a woman out of all (Eccles. 7:29), a woman namely gathered out of all good women, having in herself all the goodnesses, universal and singular, of all good women. Eccles. 7:29: *One man among a thousand I have found.* Which some expound of Samson, who slew a thousand (Judges 15:15). Others of David, who slew ten thousand (1 Kings 18:7). *A woman among all I have not found.* Therefore Solomon also complained, Prov. 31:10, saying: *Who shall find a valiant woman?* (Look under the title that Mary is a woman.)

Again, by reason of her excellence it is said to her, Cant. 4:10: *The odor of thy ointments is above all aromatical spices.* As if it were said: Thy sublimity conquers all grace, thy dignity surpasses all excellence. To this also pertains that she is called *terrible as an army set in array* (Cant. 6:9). For she is as terrible to the demons as she is venerable to Angels and saints, that is, as the whole army of Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, Angels, Confessors and Virgins, and of all who have fought in order against the devil. For because she has the privileges of all the saints heaped up in herself (whence she says, Cant. 7:13: *All fruits new and old, my beloved, I have kept for thee*), she is as terrible to demons as the whole collection of all the other saints.

Again, on this account among stones she is compared to the topaz, which is said as if *topandion*, that is, "all-colored," from *pan*, which is "all," and *zion* or *dian*, which is color, and signifies every virtue. Yet in the commentary on the Apocalypse it is said to come from Topandem, which is an island of Egypt where it is found: for the topaz is receptive of every color. For she was endowed with the best natural gifts, and receptive of all grace and virtue. Yet she appeared as if from Ethiopia, when she fulfilled in her purification the law given about women who had conceived of man.

And note that she excels not only the dignity of all the saints, but also the dignities of all the heavenly powers. For she is above the Angels in glory: because she merited more, namely that the Son of God took human nature from her, who would not take angelic nature. Heb. 2:16: *For nowhere doth he take hold of the Angels, but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold.* Above in childbearing: since she bore the Lord of the Angels. Above in honor: since God placed her above the choirs of Angels; and therefore she is admirable even to the Angels themselves. Hence they say, Cant. 8:5: *Who is she that cometh up*, etc., *leaning upon her beloved*, when they themselves are beneath the beloved? Above in virginity: because in frail flesh she lived, what the Angels do not, free of the vices of the flesh. Above in revelation: because, as Bernard says: "The Lord revealed the secret of his incarnation to her before any of the Angels, with the exception *(p. 181)* of Gabriel alone, who certainly could be found among his own of such excellence as to be held worthy of such a name and message."

Above in contemplation of God: because, since she is now risen again, as is truly believed, her eyes behold *the king in his beauty* (Isa. 33:17), not only intellectual eyes but also bodily eyes, such as the Angels do not have, who see with intellectual eyes only; whence they are also called intelligences. Again, she is above the Angels because the Son of God nowhere took hold of Angels (Heb. 2:16), that is, the angelic nature, but took hold of the seed of Abraham, in her and of her, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Again, because to none of the Angels did the Father ever say: *Thou art my Son* (Heb. 1:5), but this he said to the Son of Mary at the baptism (Matt. 3:17) and at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:5). Again, because to none of the Angels did the

Father subject the world, but to the Son of Mary, as is said in Psalm 8:8 and Heb. 2:8: *For in that he hath subjected all things to him, he left nothing not subject to him.* But the whole excellence of the mother is derived from the excellence of the Son.

Again, by reason of her excellence, by which she excels all angelic dignity, the Church sings on her assumption: "I saw one beautiful as a dove ascending above the streams of waters." Because she was not only exalted with the Angels, but above all the choirs of Angels. Of which waters it is said, Dan. 3:60: *Bless the Lord, all ye waters that are above the heavens.* And Apoc. 22:1–2: *He shewed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof.* For they are the first who proceed from the fountain of divine goodness. But because Mary ascended with the Angels and above the Angels, it is said, Cant. 8:5: *Who is she that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?* Heaven is called the desert according to the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4). *Flowing with delights*, namely the Son's delights. In the word "flowing" abundance of delights is noted. Hence Eccles. 1:7: *All the rivers run into the sea.* For since it is the Son's delight to be with the sons of men (Prov. 8:31), singular to him are the delights of being with the mother of whom he took flesh. For while he is in every creature by essence, and in the just by grace, he is more excellently in her by grace, who was full of grace, and most excellently and simply by union. Whence he made her the place of delight.

Again, she flows also with the delights of the Angels, of whose orders she exemplified in herself each one by her virtues. For since the office of Angels is to minister, as is said in Heb. 1:7, she somehow expressed in herself the form of Angels when she ministered to Elizabeth. Hence she says: *In his presence I ministered* (Sir. 24:14).

Again, she announced lesser things with the Angels, who announce lesser things, when she said to the servants of the wedding: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye* (John 2:5). Greater things with the Archangels, when she instructed the Apostles. She expressed Virtues when, the Apostles themselves failing in the passion, she stood undaunted by the cross of the Son, though already pierced by the sword of the Son's passion. Hence it was said: *Who shall find a valiant woman? The heart of her husband trusteth in her* (Prov. 31:10–11). And in her constancy Christ could have confidence, who then, descending to those detained in limbo, did not return without spoils, bringing them out of the lake. She exemplified Principalities in herself when through humility she cast down the pride of the devil. Hence Gen. 3:15 is said to the serpent: *She shall crush thy head*, which is pride. Powers, when through poverty of spirit she despised the cupidity of all *(p. 182)* worldly power, singing that: *He hath put down the mighty*, etc. (Luke 1:52). (Take up here her poverty.) Dominations, when through the modesty of virginity she trampled the uncleanness of pleasure: because in her the spirit so ruled the flesh, because in her the fomes was extinguished. Hence she *made fine linen* (Prov. 31:24) when she clothed Christ with flesh. "The Canaanite, changed," when in herself, by the refreshment of the Holy Spirit, she extinguished all carnal motions. Thrones she described in herself when she was made the seat of the highest King, to whom the King said: "Come, my chosen one, and I will set in thee my throne." Cherubim, "fullness of knowledge," which she transformed into herself when she received in herself him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). Seraphim, which is "burning," when with burning desire she followed the ascending Son, crying: *Draw me after thee* (Cant. 1:3). And when she seemed to say to the Angels in prayer: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love* (Cant. 5:8).

By reason of her excellence she herself, Mary, is called *fair as the moon* (Cant. 6:9), that is, the universal Church: because whatever beauty other saints have in part, Mary has in whole. For none of the saints is found like her in glory, as is said of Abraham, Sir. 44:20. Like, I say, in humility, in holiness, in charity, and so of the other virtues, all of which she had in the superlative; and as many virtues as she had, so many beauties she had in herself; and therefore she is called *most beautiful of women* (Cant. 5:17). And therefore she was called and named by the Angel *full of grace* (Luke 1:28). And this is her proper name, as "Mary." Hence Isa.

62:2: *Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name*, that is, the Angel, or the Son who is the mouth of the Father, first named through the Angel. Therefore she also says, Sir. 24:25: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth.* And well *all grace*: because no virtue was lacking to her, neither the purity of Angels, nor the faith of Patriarchs, nor the knowledge of Prophets, nor the zeal of Apostles, nor the patience of Martyrs, nor the sobriety of Confessors, nor the innocence or humility of Virgins. Blessed Bernard: "Whatever gift has been given to any saint, we do not believe it denied to so great a Virgin."

But if it is asked, whence so great an excellence to her? It can be answered: from this, that *he that is mighty hath done to her great things* (Luke 1:49): great things on earth, exalting her above all men; great things in heaven, exalting her above all Angels; great things in hell, subjecting all the powers of darkness. Therefore it can be said of her as of the Son that of Isaiah 48:14: *He will do his pleasure in Babylon*, that is, in hell, *and his arm in the Chaldeans*, that is, in houses. For the Chaldeans are interpreted "strong," or "as it were breast."

Again, from this, that she is abounding in spiritual riches, conspicuous in goodness, eloquent in wisdom, to be feared by all the living in power, illustrious in lineage, desirable in form, incomprehensible in immensity, unfailing in eternity, whose dominion reaches from sea to sea; who also by gift of her Son reaches *from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly* (Wisd. 8:1). She reaches also everywhere on account of her cleanness (Wisd. 7:24).

Again, from this, that the Virgin was chosen to be the Mother of the Lord, that the immaculate might be born of the immaculate; and that, as *(p. 183)* in heaven he had an immortal and eternal Father, so on earth he should have a virgin and incorrupt Mother. And because in heaven such as the Father, such the Son, therefore on earth such as the mother, such the son. In heaven with the Father eternal and immense, on earth with the mother immaculate and meek. In heaven with the Father incorrupt and sublime, on earth with the mother virgin and humble. In heaven the image of the Father, on earth the imitator of the mother. And so the excellence of Mary is from this, that the Son of God according to his humanity deigned to be made like to her. Therefore he also made his mother such, according as God, as he willed to be made of a mother according as man. On this account it is said of the mother and the Son, Hos. 10:1: *Israel is a vine full of leaves*, that is, Mary; *the fruit*, that is, Christ, *is made like to it.*

Chapter 5: On the Preciousness of Mary

Of the preciousness of Mary it is said, Prov. 31:10: *Her price is from afar, and from the uttermost coasts.* (Look for the exposition under the title that Mary is called a valiant woman and a good woman.) Again, Prov. 3:15: *She is more precious than all riches*, etc. (You will find this a little below.) Again, Wisd. 7:9 is said of wisdom, and can fittingly be expounded of Mary: *I compared not to her any precious stone*, that is, any saint: *for all gold in comparison of her is as a little sand.* For every saint, in respect of Mary, is sand in respect of gold. *And silver in respect to her shall be esteemed as clay*, that is, the wise and eloquent of the world in respect of her wisdom and eloquence.

Again, Job 28:13, 17 is said of wisdom, and can fittingly be expounded of the excellence of Mary: *Man knoweth not the price thereof*: because there is no price that can be compared to her; because she is more precious than all riches, bodily and spiritual. And *all things that are desired cannot be compared to her* (Prov. 3:15). *Neither is it found in the land of them that live in delights*, that is, voluptuously and delicately: *in the land*, that is, in the soul; but rather in the land of them that live laboriously. *The depth saith: It is not in me.* The depth is the heart of man: fluid through vices, dark through folly, deep through avarice, gloomy through unbelief, fervid through pride, unsearchable through guile, and the like. Such a heart she does not inhabit by grace. *And the sea*, that is, the mind bitter through envy and anger (adapt the seven properties of the sea to the seven capital sins), *saith: It is not with me.* For wisdom, or Mary, flees from earthly things in proportion as she finds no rest in them, as Gregory says. *The finest gold shall not be given for it* (Job 28:15). As if he said: She is more precious than the finest gold. Prov. 3:14: *The purchase thereof is better than the*

merchandise of silver and gold, etc. The finest gold (*obrizum*) is pure gold without any stain. Other men *(p. 184)* can be gold, but not finest gold: because not without fault, at least venial, as she alone.

Nor shall silver be weighed in exchange for it (Job 28:15). Literally, whatever is short of God is incomparable to Mary. Or thus: by gold, the holy Angels, shining with the clarity of justice and infected by no contagion of fault, who are not comparable to Mary: because Christ did not assume angelic nature to redeem us, but human, from the substance of Mary. By silver, holy men, pure and eloquent, all of whom she transcends in holiness: because *there was not found the like to her* (Sir. 44:20). *It shall not be compared with the dyed colors of India* (Job 28:16), that is, the wise of the world, who, lacking virtues, lie that they are other than they are, by compositions of words as by superinduced colors. *Nor with the most precious stone sardonyx*, by which can be signified Adam in the state of innocence, whose name is interpreted "red earth," who even when he was wholly innocent could not be compared to Mary by comparison of equality. Or, by the sardonyx, martyrs reddened with their own blood, whose bodies are of earth, whose martyrdoms nevertheless are not comparable to the martyrdom of Mary, who suffered in the soul, which is impassible according to Jerome. Whence she is more than a martyr. Or, by sardonyx, the fathers of the Old Testament pursuing certain earthly things. For sardonyx is like red earth. But she sought nothing earthly, nothing carnal. Or by the sapphire, which is of the color of air, that is, any saint of the New Testament seeking heavenly things alone. Or, by the sardonyx are signified men, who were made of red earth in Adam; by the sapphire the Angels created in heaven; both of whom wisdom and Mary far surpass. *Neither gold nor glass shall equal it* (Job 28:17), that is, the saints now blessed who already shine with clarity, which is by gold; whose consciences lie open to one another, which is by glass, in which such liquor appears outwardly as is contained inwardly. For there, as Gregory says, the corpulence of the members does not hide the mind of each from the eyes of another. Or, by gold the saints of the Church militant, shining with virtues; by glass the saints of the Church triumphant, shining through with purity. The city itself is *pure gold like to clear glass* (Apoc. 21:18): because the Church militant is like the triumphant.

And a little after, Job 28:19: *The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it*, that is, anyone formerly black with sins, but now converted to the faith, enriched with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and as it were adorned with many colors, many kinds of virtues. Topaz is called as if *topandion*, that is, all-colored. The sense is: Not equal to her shall be anyone, however perfect, resplendent in every kind of virtue. *Nor shall it be compared with the cleanest dyeing*, that is, all the baptized, though shining in every kind of virtue, shall not be compared to her: since the most glorious Virgin excels all. Therefore also that fits her which is said of the Son, Isa. 40:15: *Behold the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance.* Ibid., v. 17: *All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity*, that is, in comparison with him.

Chapter 6: On the Glory of Mary

(p. 185) The glory of Mary consists in this much, that of her from the beginning of the world many glorious things have not only been said, but also figured. For she is that city of which the Psalmist says, Ps. 86:3: *Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God.* Nor have they only been said, but are said daily, and will be said unto eternity. But what are the glorious things? That all generations call her blessed. (Look under the title on her humility.) For Christ, the Son of Mary, is *yesterday, and today, and the same for ever* (Heb. 13:8). And he who inspired the ancients to foretell glorious things of his mother under enigmas, the same also enlightens certain moderns not to be silent about glorious things of her; and even to the end of the world he will always enlighten some, that they may always add something new to the praise of the mother.

The glory of Mary: priestly and royal nobility. Hence: *All the glory of the king's daughter is within* (Ps. 44:14), that is, of Mary, the daughter of David. (Look for the exposition under the title that Mary is a daughter.) On this account also she is called the rod of Jesse, from whom the royal tribe immediately had its

origin.

In sanctification, holiness conferred on her. Hence Ezek. 3:12: *Blessed be the glory of the Lord*, that is, Mary, *from his place*, that is, from the mother's womb. Hence she could say that of Job 31:18: *From my infancy holiness grew up with me, and from my mother's womb it came out with me.* Note *grew*: because Mary's holiness was always increasing, but ineffably at the conception of the Savior.

All manner of gracefulness. Hence Prov. 11:16: *A gracious woman shall find glory*, namely of all manner of goodness and virtuousness.

Full tranquillity of conscience, which sin did not gnaw, of which the Apostle, 2 Cor. 1:12: *For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience.* And Job 29:20: *My glory shall always be renewed*, etc.

Spiritual and true poverty, of which the Lord says, Isa. 42:8: *My glory I will not give to another.* The glory of the Lord is to have preferred poverty. And this glory the Son most excellently gave and inspired in his mother. And so it should be expounded: "to another," namely than Mary.

Most singular humility, which God regarded and loved, and by the merit of which he filled her with every virtue and grace. Sir. 43:10: *The beauty of heaven is the glory of the stars.* Mary is heaven, whose beauty is humility, which beauty the Lord desired according to the word of the Psalmist (Ps. 44:12); *the glory of the stars* is the adornment of the other virtues, of which humility was the case and storehouse.

Primitive and fruitful virginity. For she, by the familiar counsel of the Holy Spirit, *(p. 186)* first vowed virginity, and for the merit of this vow God gave her singular fruitfulness. Hence Isa. 35:2: *The glory of Libanus is given to it.* Libanus is interpreted whiteness, by which virginity is signified.

Singular fruitfulness, her flower preserved. Hence it was said to her, Luke 1:35: *The holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.* Of this glory it is said, Hos. 9:11, where he speaks of Christ and Mary: *Their glory from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.* (Expound in inverted order, and seek the exposition.)

Most excellent motherhood: for she was made the Mother of God. Blessed Bernard: "This is the singular glory of our Virgin and the excellent prerogative of Mary, that she merited to have the one and the same Son in common with God the Father." Again, God the Father says, Isa. 42:8: *My glory*, that is, my Son (for a wise son is the glory of the father, cf. Prov. 10:1), according to another reading, *I will not give to another* than Mary: because to Mary alone was this privilege due.

By her childbearing the captivity of the human race was redeemed and liberty restored. And this is one, and chief, of those glorious things which are said of the city of God, that is, blessed Mary. For through her God sent redemption to his people (Ps. 110:9). And John 8:36, her Son, who is the common Son of God and of her, says: *If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*

Singularity of the highest honor, since in temporal death she was not pressed down by the bonds of death, which are putrefaction, worm, and incineration; but in soul and body, as is truly believed, though not preached, she was assumed into heaven by her Son. Hence she herself says with the Son: *Thou hast held my right hand, and by thy will thou hast conducted me, and with glory thou hast received me* (Ps. 72:24). (Look for the exposition under the title on her holiness.) Therefore it is said, Cant. 8:5, that she ascended from the desert flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved. (Look for the exposition under the title on the aromatics of the enclosed garden, at the end of the chapter.)

Felicity of the glorified body with its dowries, conferred on her before the day of judgment, in figure of which it was said, Esther 15:4: *On the third day … Esther was clothed with her glory*, etc. For Miletus, bishop of Sardis, writing to the Laodiceans, says that he heard blessed John the Apostle simply preaching that at the prayers of Peter and the other Apostles, on the third day after her passing, as is believed, the Son of

God raised his most blessed mother.

Above the angelic nature our humanity is exalted in her, as in the Son. Hence Ezek. 10:4: *The glory of the Lord was lifted up from above the cherub.* Judith 16:27 is said of Judith herself, in figure of Mary: *Judith was going forth in the festival days with great glory.* The festival days are the days of the month of August, in which month are many and great feasts. Or, the festival days are the days of eternal clarity, of which Prov. 3:16 says: *Length of days is in her right hand.* And in Ps. 83:11: *One day in thy courts is better*, etc. The day is one continuous clarity; but it is said in the plural, "days," because in paradise there is one clarity of the sun, that is, Christ; another clarity of the moon, that is, Mary; and another clarity of the stars, that is, of the other saints (cf. 1 Cor. 15:41). Again, of this elevation it is said to Christ, Ps. 8:2: *Thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens.* Mary is called the magnificence of God, because she was magnified by God and magnified God: passively, namely, and actively. Passively: because God magnified her by giving her his Son. Hence she said, Luke 1:49: *He that is mighty hath done to me great things.* For three great things God did. The first great thing, sanctifying her in the womb. The second greater, filling her with grace. The third greatest, taking flesh of her. Actively: because *(p. 187)* she magnified him by humbling herself so much under him, as what is not moved in itself is exalted by the humbling of another. Therefore she said: *My soul doth magnify the Lord*, etc. (Luke 1:46).

Over the whole heavenly court, plenary power conferred on her. Hence she says: *In Jerusalem*, namely the heavenly, *is my power* (Sir. 24:15), of commanding, namely, the angelic virtues and holy souls at my good pleasure, and of introducing into that kingdom whomsoever I will. (You will find this much better below, under the title on the omnipotence of Mary.) Nor is singular omnipotence given to her in the kingdom of heaven only, but in three kingdoms, namely of the heavenly, the earthly, and the infernal, that in her name every knee should bow of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (Phil. 2:10). On this account it is fitting for her alone, after the Son, to say that of Matthew 28:18: *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth*, etc. On this account, in figure of Mary, it was said to Judith, 15:10: *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem*, etc. (Look for the exposition under the title, "Blessed art thou among women," after the middle of the chapter.)

The impetratory virtue of her prayers. For she shows to the Son her womb and breasts, nor can there be a refusal where these memorials of clemency plead together, more eloquent than any tongue, as blessed Bernard says. For she obtains from the Son, for those for whom she prays, the grace of compunction: which was signified when she obtained wine for the wedding guests (John 2:3). She obtains for the same the grace of reconciliation, signified by the woman of Thecua, who reconciled to his father David the fratricide Absalom (2 Kings 14). She obtains for them the washing away of sins, signified by Abigail, who offered herself as a handmaid to wash the feet of David's servants (1 Kings 25:41). She obtains the blotting out of the devil's handwriting, signified by Esther, who made the letters of Aman void (Esther 8–9). Of which handwriting it is said, Col. 2:14: *Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us*; which Mary did, the Son mediating.

The unfailing eternity of her mercy. Hence Hos. 14:7: *His glory shall be as the olive tree.* The olive signifies mercy: because as the liquor of its fruit, that is, oil, floats above every liquor, so mercy above every virtue. And because the olive is always green and unfading, it signifies the unfading eternity of her mercy. On this account she says: *Unto the world to come I shall not cease* (Sir. 24:14), namely toward the wretched, and to have mercy.

Her kindness never denied to any sinner, however great, that is, if he turn to her with his whole heart: and this is clear in Theophilus, who had denied her together with the Son. On this account the Church sings of her: "Singular Virgin, meek among all," that is, above all.

How her benign zeal has mercy on the ungrateful and unworthy also: of which can be understood that of Psalm 9:12: *Declare his endeavors among the nations*, which endeavors, namely, are to be zealously proclaimed.

Virginity emulated in countless persons after her example. Hence: *After her shall virgins be brought to the king*, etc. (Ps. 44:15); for *of young maidens there is no number* (Cant. 6:7).

The unfailing eternity of her memory among Christians. Hence Sir. 39:13: *Her memory shall not depart away, and her name shall be in request from generation to generation.*

Chapter 7: On the Honorableness of Mary

(p. 188) Of the honorableness of Mary can be expounded what is said of wisdom, Sir. 15:1–2: *He that containeth justice*, that is, holding justice together with the other virtues, in heart, mouth, and work. Which is to say: he who is adorned with justice and the other virtues: because only such are worthy to serve Mary. *Shall lay hold on her*, namely Mary, as with a double hand, namely intellect and affection, or love and service. *Shall lay hold*: the word "lay hold" denotes a certain haste and firm retention. He shall lay hold as of a thing long desired. He shall lay hold, as a noble bird its prey, her namely, Mary, to serve her, praise her, work for her honor. *And she will meet him*, Mary herself namely: meet him who loves her, serves her, imitates her. She will meet him, I say, through the joy and glory of conscience, which follow from the love, service, and imitation of Mary: thus rewarding him in the present. Or, she will meet him in death, freeing him from eternal sorrows and from the power of the devil: because, as is said, Wisd. 10:9: *Them that observe her she delivered from sorrows.* But how will she meet him? As a mother honored by her servants or sons, she gently receives them and nourishes them and adopts them as sons: therefore she is called mother.

It follows: *And as a woman from virginity she will receive him.* Mary is called woman (*mulier*): because she softened (*emollivit*) the Lord, and softens hard hearts, and for the fruitfulness of good works which she does not cease to bestow on the creatures of the Son. I say woman, not departing from virginity. She is also called virgin: because she gives constancy and cleanness of mind, and as it were re-virgins dissolute bodies, conferring the grace of chastity.

Mary honored by God:

Because from eternity predestined and chosen. Hence Prov. 8:23: *I was ordained from eternity, and of old.* Therefore of her is sung: "God chose her, and preferred her."

Because begotten of patriarchs and kings. Hence is sung: "The nativity of the glorious Virgin Mary, from the seed of Abraham, born of the tribe of Juda, of the illustrious stock of David."

Because separated from the mass of perdition, and sanctified in the womb. Hence Cant. 2:2 is said of her: *As the lily among thorns*, etc. Again, Ps. 45:5: *The most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle.*

Because she arose a daughter of grace. Hence Num. 24:17: *A star shall rise*, etc. For this reason she was the daughter of Anna, which is interpreted grace.

Because heaped up with every charism. Hence she is called full of grace.

Because inspired by the Holy Spirit to vow virginity first.

Because most dutifully saluted by one of the highest Archangels. Hence: *Hail, full of grace* (Luke 1:28).

Because chosen as mother of God. Hence Isa. 62:4 is said: *Thy land shall be inhabited (p. 189)*, that is, thy flesh shall be made fruitful, because the Lord hath been well pleased in thee.

Because by the work of the Holy Spirit made pregnant with the Son of God. Hence Luke 1:35: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, etc. And therefore that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of

God.

Because made a mother, her virginity saved.

Because by the virtue of faith she obtained every good. Hence it was said to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed: because those things shall be accomplished*, etc. Blessed Matthew in his legend: "In the conception of the Son of God the faith of Mary became the wife of the Holy Spirit."

Because burdened by no weight in carrying the Son. Blessed Bernard: "Because the yoke of the Lord is light, Mary could be made pregnant, not burdened."

Because in bearing the Son she was tortured by no pain. Hence the Church sings: "The Virgin mother, knowing not man, bore without pain the Savior." Blessed Bernard: "What wonder if he brought no pain to his mother, who came to take away the pains of the whole world?"

Because by the Son of God, who is also her own Son, she was set over him. Hence Luke 2:51: *And was subject to them*, namely Mary and Joseph on account of Mary.

Because at her nod and hint the water at the wedding was changed into wine by the Son (John 2).

Because by the Son, passing from this world to the Father, she was commended to the virgin disciple (John 19:27).

Because in the place of the supreme master she was substituted to teach the Apostles.

Because in temporal death she was not pressed down by the bonds of death, which are putrefaction, worms, and incineration. On this account she is compared to the cedar, which is imputrescible, and whose sap consumes worms; and which is incombustible, because ashes are not made of it by fire.

Because before the general resurrection she was adorned with glory of body and a double robe.

Because she ascended into heaven leaning upon her beloved, as is said, Cant. 8:5.

Because above all the orders of Angels she was placed at the right hand of the Son on the throne of glory.

Because over all creation she was endowed and distinguished with plenary power by her omnipotent Son at her coronation.

Chapter 8: On the Loftiness of Mary

By reason of her greatness or height or loftiness or sublimity or eminence, Mary is compared to the cedar, which is a tall tree, most eminent above all trees. Hence it is called by some the king of trees; which Mary, in that she was made Mother of God, neither seemed to have a like before her nor to have one after. Hence blessed Bernard: "This is the singular glory of our Virgin," etc., as above. For this she says of herself, Sir. 24:17: *I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus.* (Look under the title on the cedar.)

Otherwise: Mary was high, because after the manner of Saul (1 Kings 10:23), from the shoulder and upward she was eminent above all saints. From the shoulder, in which is good work: because of her own substance *(p. 190)* she actively exhibited all works to the Son of God. From the neck, through which the voice passes, in which is understood the efficacy of prayer, or wisdom in words. From the head, in which is perfection of senses and maturity of wisdom, after the likeness of the material head, in which the perfection of the outward senses is found. Otherwise: by the shoulder is signified good work done in concord, by "upward" contemplation. In these two neither a like before her, etc.

Or, the height of Mary is her humility: because he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:11). Or her height was a withdrawal from the spiritual earth and an approach to heaven. The spiritual earth is earthly pleasure, earthly opulence, earthly glory. From the first she withdrew through virginity, from the second

through poverty, from the third through humility. And through these three she approached above all creatures, by merit, to heavenly and earthly things.

Chapter 9: On the Virginity of Mary

Since this whole book is sprinkled with the glorious chastity or virginity of Mary, therefore on this virtue in this chapter we shall say fewer things.

Chastity is defined thus: Chastity is a virtue restraining all unlawful motions, which merits so much the more as it more strongly represses the incentive of the carnal fomes. Chrysostom: "Carnal chastity is to know no woman; spiritual chastity is to be faithful to God." And this is properly the twisted byssus and the white byssus (Apoc. 19:8). Again, true chastity is the repudiation of every carnal pleasure. Of this virtue there are three species: virginal integrity, conjugal modesty, widowed continence.

Virginity is the integrity of the genital gate, which has no merit unless the mind be incorrupt. And virginity is called as if "green begotten" (*viror genitus*). Describing meritorious virginity, Jerome says: "That virginity is the sacrifice of Christ, whose mind no thought and whose flesh no lust defiles." Such was the virginity of Mary. There is, however, as it were a double virginity, of which one closes and the other opens paradise. Which may be seen in Eve and Mary. For Eve, a virgin indeed, but proud, wishing to be made equal to God in knowledge, and covetous, because not content with what was granted her, disobedient to God's command and unbelieving of his threat, yielding to diabolic temptation and ill-believing the serpent's words, one of the number of the foolish virgins, nay the most foolish of all, hearing, looking, smelling, desiring, touching, eating, and handing to her husband the fruit forbidden her, and afterward excusing herself and attributing her sin to another, closed paradise to us. On the contrary, Mary, a virgin most humble, subjecting herself to God in all things, never wavering from her purpose, a lover of poverty, obedient to the divine will in all things, whence believing the angelic promise, one of the number of the prudent virgins, nay *(p. 191)* the most prudent of all, discreetly guarding all her senses, attributing nothing of good to her own merits but all to divine goodness, opened paradise to us.

Render each to each by contrast. Therefore of these two virgins at paschal time the Church sings: "The gate of paradise was closed to all through Eve, and through the Virgin Mary has been opened again." The virginity of Eve, therefore, was proud; the virginity of Mary, most humble: that covetous, this poor; that wavering, this steadfast; that impoverished, this enriched, whence she is called full of grace; that humbled, whence: *Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee* (Gen. 3:16); this exalted, whence it was said to her: *The Lord is with thee* (Luke 1:28). And Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me.* And other such things. And so you will be able to trade manifoldly about this matter.

Again, note that Eve (*Heva*) is said from *a*, which is "without," and *eu*, which is "good," as if "without good": because the good given her by the Lord she took away from herself, and from her husband, nay from all her posterity: because the gate of paradise was closed to all through Eve. But to Mary was said *Ave*, from *a*, which is "without," and *vae*, as if "without curse": because she was not only without curse as regards herself, but also freed us from manifold curse, so far as in her lay.

Again, the virginity of Eve is cleanness without good work, and such virginity rather closes than opens paradise; and of such virginity nothing remains but mourning and lamentation, either here or in the future. Hence Judges 11:38: the daughter of Jephte bewailed her virginity for two months. Month (*mensis*) is from *mene*, which is "defect," because in two months the moon twice fails. The first defect is not to do good. Hence to the foolish virgins, not having oil of mercy in their vessels, namely in the vessel of the heart, through piety and mercy in affection; in the vessel of the hands, through mercy in work and effect; in the vessel of the mouth, that by word as by example others be invited to the like, the door of divine mercy is shut (Matt. 25:8 ff.). On this matter you will find as much as you wish in our treatise "Blessed are the clean of

heart" (Matt. 5:8). The second defect is that good is sometimes done, but not with a good end or due intention. Of workers of this sort it is said, Matt. 6:2: *Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.* And for both defects mourning is to be made.

Again, three inconveniences are wont to follow virginity, which were not in Mary. The first is pride, which easily follows virginity: because virgins are easily lifted up into pride, and perhaps for that reason the lamps of the foolish virgins are extinguished (Matt. 25:8), because they are full of the wind of pride. Augustine: "Virginity is to be preached, not only that it may be loved, but admonished that it be not puffed up." The same: "The greater the good of virginity I see, the more I fear the madness of pride." The second is tepidity of love: because he to whom less is forgiven, loves less (Luke 7:47). For because virgins are free from the offence of the flesh, they are sometimes not kindled to so great a force of love: for much kindled Magdalen to love, because she felt the remission of so great a fault. Hence: *Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much* (Luke 7:47). The third is sterility. For the argument is such: she is a virgin, therefore sterile. Therefore it is said of Mary, Cant. 8:5: *Who is she?* that is, how great in praise and admiration worthy, who with virginity had humility, with integrity fervent charity, with incorruption fruitfulness?

Again, on account of the excellence of her virginity *(p. 192)* it is said, Luke 1:26–27: *The angel Gabriel was sent … to a virgin*, as if by excellence. Blessed Bernard: "A virgin in flesh, a virgin in mind, a virgin by profession," etc.

Again, of the chastity of Mary Chrysostom says: "O ineffable praise of Mary! Joseph believed more her chastity than her womb, and more grace than nature." For he believed it more possible that a woman could conceive without a man than that Mary could sin.

Again, Mary is called Virgin by antonomasia: which Luke noted, saying: *Gabriel was sent to a virgin.* As if he said: To the Virgin of virgins. For Mary is called Virgin of virgins for three reasons. First, because, as the saints say, she first among the others vowed virginity: therefore she is the standard-bearer and exemplar of virginity. Second, because she was more a virgin than the others. Cant. 2:2: *As the lily among thorns*, etc. Third, because remaining a virgin she became a mother: which no other did. She is therefore a virgin before the others, more than the others, and without the others.

Again, Mary is the untouched virgin (*virgo illibata*). Hence of the gate by which she is designated it is said, Ezek. 44:2: *No man shall pass through it*, that is, her husband Joseph: and in this the integrity of her flesh is noted. It follows: *And it shall be shut to the prince*, that is, the devil, who is called the prince of the world (John 14:30). Because she lay open to no temptation of the devil. In this, therefore, that it is said, *And it shall be shut to the prince*, the perfect cleanness of her mind is commended. And from this twofold integrity she is properly and singularly called the untouched virgin. (You will find this more fully under the title on the gate.)

The virginity of Mary was manifoldly privileged.

Prefigured by certain patriarchal works. For it was prefigured in the crystalline window which Noe made in the ark, according as the Hebrews relate (cf. Gen. 6:16), which excluded water as a window, and illuminated the ark as crystalline, receiving light from elsewhere. The ark is Mary; the crystalline window, her virginity, which excluded from her the water of carnal pleasures, and by which she was worthy to receive in herself Christ the true light. Hence one says elegantly: "If crystal be moistened and be put in the sun, it sparkles with fire. Neither the crystal, nor in the birth the seal of modesty, is loosed."

Foretold by the Prophets. Hence Isa. 7:14: *Behold a virgin shall conceive*, etc. (Look for the exposition below under the title on the virginal conception.) Ezek. 44:2: *This gate shall be shut*, etc. (Look for the exposition under the title that Mary is the gate.)

Promised again to the Church for a great gift of God, to which it was said, Isa. 60:13: *The glory of Libanus shall come to thee*, that is, of virginal whiteness, O Church militant and triumphant.

Prefigured in certain holy women of the Old Testament. For it was figured in the virginity of Rebecca, of whom Gen. 24:16 reads that she was *a most beautiful maid, and a virgin most fair, and unknown to man.* And David says to Mary: *The king shall greatly desire thy beauty* (Ps. 44:12), that is, thy virginity.

Blessed by God the Father. Hence, in figure of Mary, Axa said to her father Caleb, Josue 15:19 and Judges 1:15: *Give me a blessing, father; thou hast given me a southern and dry land, give me also a watery land,* etc. (Look for the exposition at § 7 of the enclosed garden, where the garden is called watered.) For this reason it was also said to Mary: *Hail, Mary, full of grace,* etc., *blessed art thou,* etc. (Luke 1:28).

Desired by the Son of God, who had said, Mich. 7:1: *My soul desired the first-ripe figs,* etc. The first-ripe figs: primitive virginity. For the fig bears fruits most sweet and most savory, and its *(p. 193)* leaves emit a white milk. In the whiteness of milk, the whiteness of virginity. The fruit of the fig also is not divisible, as are acorns, nuts, and chestnuts: and in this the indivisibility of her virginity, of which it is said to her, Cant. 7:1: *The joinings of thy thighs are like jewels.* In that the fig is named from fruitfulness, the grace of maternity; in that this fruit when ripe turns black, a sign of humility; in the sweetness and savor of the fruit, to the Lord the sweet and savory vow of virginity in Mary. (Look for the rest under the title on the aromatics, where the fig is mentioned.)

Inspired by the Holy Spirit in the virgin heart. For she first, without any human precept, counsel, and example, divinely inspired, uttered the vow of virginity, as blessed Bernard says. For this, that the Son of God might be fed in her, she was prepared by the whole Trinity. Hence Cant. 2:16 says Mary of the Son: *My beloved to me, and I to him who feedeth among the lilies.* For the Virgin, divinely inspired, knew that the Son of God desired the lilies of virginity in which he might feed, and vowed virginity. As if she said: He desired lilies, lilies I present to him, that is, the double virginity of flesh and of spirit: which is noted by this, that she says "lilies" in the plural, not one lily only.

Confirmed in the Virgin by God the Trinity. Hence she herself says: *And so was I established in Sion* (Sir. 24:15). Sion is interpreted "mirror": because virginity is like glass. For as glass receives and emits the sun's ray without its own dissipation, so Mary's virginity, untouched, conceived and bore the Son of God. And Mary hinted at this confirmation answering the Angel: *How shall this be done, because I know not man?* (Luke 1:34).

Adorned with the pearls of all the virtues. For she was a vase of solid gold, adorned with every precious stone (Sir. 50:10), namely the jasper of faith, the hyacinth of hope, the carbuncle of charity, the sapphire of contemplation, the sardonyx of martyrdom, the topaz of universal virtue and all-manner beauty. And so of the other stones by which the other virtues are designated.

Beloved by the Lord, by virtue of humility, above the other virtues. Hence Bernard: "That Mary's virginity pleased God, humility without doubt did." The same: "I dare to say, without humility not even Mary's virginity would have pleased the Lord." By reason of these two virtues, virginity namely and humility, Mary is signified by the candlestick (Exod. 25:31; 37:17), in which were lilies, which signified virginity, and little knobs (*sphaerulae*), figuring humility. For these two virtues are the two handmaids with whom Esther, that is, Mary, or the faithful soul, enters by merit to the true Assuerus, who is Christ (Esther 15:5 ff.). For Mary can truly be called a golden candlestick: because gold is purged in fire, proved in the furnace, extended by hammers, and brought forth into the form of a candlestick, and so made an instrument of fire and light. So the blessed Virgin was purged by the fire of the Holy Spirit in her sanctification, proved in the Son's passion. Hence she says to the Father or the Son: *Thou hast tried me by fire* (Ps. 16:3), etc. But nothing of dross was found in her: because she neither hindered the Son's passion nor cursed the crucifiers, but, after the Son's example, as is truly believed, interceded for them. Again, as by certain hammers she was extended by manifold tribulation, and so fashioned into a candlestick: for she burned with the fire of charity and shone with works of eminent charity. Hence Prov. 31:18: *Her lamp shall not be put out in the night*:

because many waters of tribulations could not quench her charity (Cant. 8:7). Well also is her virginity a candlestick: because still in her light walks an innumerable multitude *(p. 194)* of men and women, imitating the footsteps of the queen of virgins, to whom Isa. 60:3 says: *And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light,* etc.

First conceived by the Virgin herself. Blessed Bernard: "O prudent virgin, O devout virgin, who taught thee that virginity pleases God? What law, what justice, what page of the Old Testament either commands, or counsels, or exhorts, to live in the flesh not carnally, and to lead on earth an angelic life?" (Look for this and much else in the third homily of blessed Bernard on *Missus est Gabriel*, about the middle.)

Watered by the waters of the Holy Spirit to fruitfulness. Gen. 2:5–6: *For the Lord God had not rained upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the earth: but a spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth.* (Look for the exposition under the title on the virginal conception, at the end of the chapter.)

Made fruitful by divine grace alone, not by human work. Hence Cant. 4:16 the Son says to the Holy Spirit: *Come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow*, that is, the virtues will breathe, of the Virgin namely her virginity, humility, and all the rest. For this it is said to Mary, Cant. 7:2: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat*, as to fruitfulness, *set about with lilies*, as to virginity. Lilies in the plural: because she was a virgin before the birth, in the birth, and after the birth. Or, lilies in the plural: because she kept her virginity untouched in all her senses.

Consecrated by the divine birth. Blessed Bernard: "How great veneration do you think she deserves, in whom fruitfulness exalts humility, and the birth consecrates virginity."

Fitted of herself alone, above nature, to bear fruit. Hence it was said to her: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb* (Luke 1:31), that is, from the womb. Again that: *The holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God* (Luke 1:35). *Of thee*, that is, of thy flesh, of thee alone, and not of thee and a man. For this the Son says of the Father, Isa. 49:5: *Who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring back Jacob to him.* (Look for the exposition under the title, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb," after the beginning of the chapter.)

Honored with a most glorious fruit. Hence Gen. 2:9: *The Lord God brought forth out of the ground*, namely of the virginal flesh, *every tree fair to behold, and pleasant to eat of.* The tree of life also in the midst of paradise, that is, of the virginal womb. (Look for the exposition under the title on the trees of the enclosed garden.)

Most highly ennobled by the motherhood of God, who deigned to become the son of virginity. Hence blessed Bernard: "This is the singular glory of our Virgin and the excellent prerogative of Mary, that she merited to have the one and the same Son in common with God the Father." For this she also says of herself, as a cedar, which is the king of trees, exalted in Libanus, that is, in the whiteness of virginity. For on this account she was made queen of paradise, who had first been made mother of God: which was impossible unless she had been a virgin.

Necessarily prepared, that Christ might take flesh from her. For it was fitting that our Redeemer be just with God, mortal with men. For this it was fitting that he have a virgin mother, that in a mortal mother the mortal be conceived, and in a virgin the just be conceived. It was also necessary that whoever was conceived through a mother's corruption was conceived in original sin. But no sinner could save another sinner, being in the same damnation with the guilty. Hence the human race said, Sir. 51:10: *I looked about for the succour of men, and there was none.* It befitted God not to be born but of a virgin; it befitted a virgin to bear none but God. To this, therefore, was virginity necessarily prepared in Mary, because to no other virgin than Mary was this privilege due.

(p. 195) **It imitated, as by pattern, the forming of the first man**, namely that as the first Adam was formed of virgin earth, so the second Adam of a virgin mother according to man should be formed. Hence Gen. 2:7: *The Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth.* Gal. 4:4: *God sent his Son made of a woman*, etc.

The transgression of the first woman, namely Eve the virgin, sufficiently expiated through her. Blessed Bernard: "Vehemently did one man and one woman harm us," etc. (Look for the thirty-fourth cause.)

The angelic ruin repaired through her. Hence Mary says of herself: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven* (Sir. 24:8). Circuit (*gyrus*) is perfect roundness: and in this the full and perfect restoration of the angelic ruin is noted.

Chapter 10: On the Purity of Mary

Of the purity of Mary blessed Bernard says: "The grace of God is a most pure balsam, and requires a most solid vase." The purity of this vase, that is, of Mary, who is the receptacle of all graces, is her virginity; the solidity, her humility; the filling, her fruitfulness. Gregory: "The burning bush that was not consumed, the virginal purity which was made fruitful with offspring." Jerome: "So great was Mary's purity that she merited to bear the King of Angels, and merited to be the house of the purifier of all." Blessed Anselm says that "Mary shone with that purity than which under God a greater cannot be understood." Otherwise Wisdom would not have entered into her, as Fulbert says, which *entereth not into a malicious soul, nor dwelleth in a body subject to sins* (Wisd. 1:4).

On account of her most pure purity she is compared to the sun, whose ray neither water softens, nor stench corrupts, nor fire burns, nor sword cuts, nor glass resists. By reason of clarity also she is compared to the sun: because the sun is clearer than all luminaries. Hence the sun is said by Tully to be as it were *solus lucens*, that is, shining alone, beyond the other luminaries of heaven. The sun's purity, therefore, is Mary's purity. For a thing is clearer in proportion as it is purer; purer in proportion as it is more purged and cleaner from filth. Continence and abstinence cleanse the body, which two are first necessary: because as the sun does not penetrate glass unless first baked, so neither does the clarity of God penetrate the heart of man unless first his body be penetrated. An example of a certain most holy pontiff of the English, whose body was of such clarity through the virtue of continence and abstinence that as he stood before the altar with outstretched hands, the sun's ray entering through the glass shone through his hands as if they were glass. But the soul is chiefly cleansed by pure confession, intent reading, devout meditation, fervent prayer, divine contemplation. Or, *(p. 196)* the sun's ray signifies in the Virgin the purest ray of vision, which ineffably illumined her mind by her contemplations.

According to this the sun is called the eye of heaven: heaven being the Church, illumined with saints as heaven with stars. Of this heaven Mary is the eye by reason of her purity: because as the eye illumines the whole body, so Mary illumines the whole Church, which is the body of her Son, by the rays of the examples of the saints. Hence is sung of her: "Whose illustrious life illumines all the Churches."

Chapter 11: On the Bashfulness of Mary

Of the bashfulness of Mary, which was the guardian and paranymph of chastity, we say, Luke 1:29: *Who having heard, was troubled at his saying*, etc. Note that she is said to be troubled, not disturbed. Troubled, that is, held in suspense by the novelty of so great a matter, and struck with great wonder. For hearing the new form of salutation, she knew not what the Angel meant. And therefore she thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. Manducator says that, troubled by the novelty of the salutation, she thought what manner of salutation this should be, weighing in this word, *Ave*, the conversion of the name Eva, and searching the sacrament of that very change, namely that as Eve was the cause of malediction, so she should be the cause of benediction. For because she was a virgin, at the unexpected event she ought, as

bashful, to be afraid; but because a most prudent virgin, she could not be overcome by sudden fear, but, ruled by counsel, thought circumspectly what manner, that is, how new, how unheard-of, how most useful, how admirable, how sweet, and how pleasant this salutation might be. Then was fulfilled that of Psalm 67:9: *The earth was moved*, that is, troubled, *and the heavens dropped at the presence of the God of Sinai*; and fulfilled was that prayer of the Church, Isa. 45:8: *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just*, etc. For then God the Father set apart a free rain for his inheritance (Ps. 67:10): because then the Son came down willingly like rain upon the fleece.

Again, she was troubled at the unusual and until then unheard-of salutation. For she had heard Angels speaking to women and men, she had heard the blessings of the law, but such a salutation, such a blessing she had never read or heard. Therefore she was troubled, but did not speak, as the daughter and imitator of David saying: *I was troubled, and I spoke not* (Ps. 76:5). And that she is troubled is of virginal modesty.

And manifold causes of her trouble can be assigned.

The first, because, being a bashful virgin, she was afraid at the coming of an Angel appearing in the form of a man, seeing herself shut in a chamber alone with one alone: and this sounds, *The angel being come in unto her* (Luke 1:28). Ambrose: "It is the way of virgins to tremble, and to fear at every entrance of a man, to dread all addresses of a man." And she who was afraid at the sight or hearing of an Angel would doubtless greatly dread the touch *(p. 197)* of a man. Again, at the sight of the Angel she was troubled, being unaccustomed to the visions of men or visitations. Again, because human frailty does not bear the angelic presence. Hence Zachary was troubled seeing (Luke 1:12).

The second, because she heard herself praised: which was of great virtue: for he who is truly humble blushes at his praises; and while almost all are wont to rejoice therein, she was troubled, not exhilarated or elated, after the example of the Son, who, when the Gentiles sought to see him, John 12:23, answered: *The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.* And a little after, v. 27: *Now is my soul troubled.* For it would have been good for Ezechias if he had been troubled, not exhilarated at the coming of the messengers of the king of Babylon (Isa. 39).

The third, because, being full of the prophetic spirit, and knowing that fullness was not to be had while the law remained, since the law brought nothing to perfection (Heb. 7:19), she wondered how she was called by the Angel full of grace.

The fourth, because she was called blessed among women, she who always desired to be blessed among virgins: therefore she thought what manner of salutation this should be, which from the beginning seemed to be suspect. But when in the promise of the Son the danger to virginity plainly appeared, she could not dissemble but said: *How shall this be done?* etc.

The fifth, because she wondered how she was called blessed among women, when she knew all women to be accursed in their mother Eve: and therefore she thought what manner of salutation this should be, which called her both woman and blessed.

The sixth, because, saluted by the Angel, she was compelled by answering to break the silence which she dearly loved, or to interrupt her prayers. Which appears from this, that he had addressed her twice before she answered. Whence it is said, Sir. 41:25: *Be ashamed … of them that salute thee, for silence.* Again, Sir. 7:15: *Repeat not the word in thy prayer.*

The seventh, because she feared for her treasure, that is, virginity. For fearful virgins are wont to fear even in safety, recalling that of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 4:7: *We have this treasure in earthen vessels*, which are easily broken and cannot be repaired. The earthen vessel, namely the lamp, is the human body; the treasure, chastity or virginity, of which Prov. 3:15: *She is more precious than all riches: and all things that are desired are not to be compared to her.* Sir. 26:20: *All weighing*, namely of any temporal thing, that is, all temporal things

however great in weight and value, *is not worthy of a continent soul*, that is, in comparison of a continent soul. He does not say continent body, but soul: because continence of the flesh without continence of consent and will is nothing before God.

The eighth, because of the uncertainty of what was said. The Gloss: because she knew not whether what the Angel said, *The Lord is with thee*, was past or future.

And note that this trouble was not of anger or sorrow, but of bashfulness, fear, and wonder. And the bashfulness was twofold: because she seemed to be as if alone with a man, and because she was commended with such great praise. And the fear twofold: from the angelic presence, which frail nature shrinks from, and from ignorance of the cause. The wonder was for the greatness of what was announced to her. Hence Ambrose: "From bashfulness she fears, from prudence she wonders at the new form of salutation." And hence is noted in her here a threefold virtue: virginal bashfulness in that she is troubled, fortitude of mind in that she is not disturbed so as not to deliberate, prudence in the deliberation itself. Blessed Bernard: "That she is troubled is of virginal bashfulness; that *(p. 198)* she is not disturbed, of fortitude; that she thinks, of prudence."

And note that bashfulness properly is not a virtue, but is a state and perfection of the virtues, and especially commended in women. Hence Sir. 7:21, after saying, *Depart not from a wise woman*, he adds, as if expounding what is a wise woman: *For the grace of her modesty is above gold*, that is, her gracious bashfulness is better than all gold. Again, bashfulness is properly a gift of grace. Hence Sir. 32:14: *Before bashfulness shall go grace*, etc. Again, Sir. 26:19: *A holy and shamefaced woman is grace upon grace*, that is, bashful. (Look above under the title "Full of Grace.") Again, the greatest sign of bashfulness was that when on a certain day she wished to speak with the Son, she did not presume to enter the house where he was speaking or interrupt his discourse, but, standing outside, reverently waited (Mark 3:31).

Again, Ambrose, speaking to virgins of the blessed Virgin: "With her the modesty of each of the virtues always remained as companion, unmoved: because bashfulness ought altogether to be indivisible from virginity, without which true chastity cannot rightly be kept." The same: "Bashfulness must be indivisible from virginity, without which virginity cannot be." Again, the companion of virginity, and as it were its foster-sister, is humility, of which the sign is virginal bashfulness, by equal conjunction and name of bashfulness. For virginity is often called modesty (*pudor*). Therefore it is said to the soul having no bashfulness, Jer. 3:3: *Thou hadst a harlot's forehead, thou wouldst not blush.* For chastity is kept with difficulty where bashfulness is not had. The same: "Never therefore did blessed Mary go forth without the guardian of her modesty. Therefore whatever virgin desires from her a reward and implores her help ought to imitate her example. So imitate her in manners, follow her in charity, and thus you will be able securely to implore her help." For to this end Christ chose a virgin mother, that she might be to all an example of chastity, who as in a mirror reflects the form of virtue.

Chapter 12: On Virginal Fruitfulness

Of the virginal fruitfulness and virginity of Mary it is said to her, Cant. 7:2: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies.* In this verse it is shown that every manner of chastity was in the blessed Virgin — virginal, conjugal, widowed — that she might have in herself every degree, fruitful, and obtain every fruit, namely the hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold: and that virgins, widows, and married women might venerate her.

It is said then: *Thy belly*, the carnal namely, *is like a heap*, in which every manner of chastity is noted; *of wheat*, in which is fruitfulness *(p. 199)*; *set about with lilies*, in which the threefold chastity abovesaid.

By what is said, *A heap of wheat*, it is hinted that the Son of God is full, who calls himself a grain of wheat (John 12:24). For that grain of wheat was potentially a heap of wheat, from which grain, namely, so great a

spiritual harvest has been multiplied by God's fructifying, since this grain fell into the earth, that is, in the valley of Gethsemani: for unless this grain had first fallen into the virginal womb as into fertile earth, cultivated by the exercise of the Holy Spirit, by the incarnation, and afterwards on the cross had been dead, it would have remained alone: but by these two the one grain became a great heap. Fittingly indeed the virgin's womb is figured by Gethsemani, which is interpreted "valley of fatness," or "valley of fatnesses": valley for humility, fatnesses for the fruitful impregnation of charisms, with which fattened she brought forth her grain. Of the first fall, Isa. 9:8: *The Lord sent a word*, that is, the Son, *the Lord*, that is, the Father, *into Jacob*, that is, into the people of the Jews. Hence the Son says, Matt. 15:24: *I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. And it hath fallen upon Israel*, that is, upon the blessed Virgin, who rules with the Son in heaven and on earth: for Israel is interpreted "prince with God." Of the second fall he says, Ps. 103:19: *The sun*, that is, Christ, *knew*, that is, approved, *his going down*, that is, his death.

It follows: *Set about with lilies*, in which is signified that the virginity of Mary was the rampart of all her virtues, and as it were the outwork. The spiritual womb also, that is, the mind or memory of the Virgin, was made pregnant with the spiritual wheat, which is the Word of the Father, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid (Col. 2:3). Or also when, the Son now born, she kept all the words that were said of him, pondering them in her heart (Luke 2:19), and then heaped up the wheat of the holy Gospel, which she afterward presented to the Apostles to ruminate. (You will find this authority expounded morally below, under the title on the beauty of the members of Mary, where the belly is treated.)

Again, by reason of fruitful virginity and virginal fruitfulness it is said, Luke 10:42, that this Mary chose the best part, which shall not be taken away from her. (You have had this expounded above under the title "Blessed art thou among women," about the middle of the chapter.) Or otherwise than is had there: Mary chose the good part by first vowing virginity; the better, by giving faith to the angelic words, when by faith she conceived the Savior; the best, when she was exalted in the assumption above all orders of the supernal spirits. And so she, best, chose the best part, which shall not be taken away from her. Morally: he chooses the good part who is contrite with bitterness and receives pardon; the better, who truly confesses and receives grace; the best, who perseveres in good and in death receives glory. And so Magdalen, of whom it was literally said, chose the good part, the better, the best, and that is properly the one which cannot be taken away: for if you have received pardon through contrition, or grace through confession, this twofold can be taken away from you if you suffer a relapse: but the best, that is, Christ or eternal glory, never. Nor can any have this best part but Mary, that is, a soul bitter for sins.

Chapter 13: On the Conception of the Virgin without Lesion of Virginity

(p. 200) The glorious conception of the Virgin without lesion of virginity Jeremias describes, 31:22, saying: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth: A woman shall compass a man.* Well is it said "created": because to create is to make something new which was not before. Well also is it said "created": because in his incarnation the creator of all was made a creature. Hence the Father says of the Son, Isa. 45:8: *I the Lord have created him*, man namely.

The Lord: he does not say the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, but Lord singularly: because there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4:5). Because there is one most high Creator of all, almighty (Sir. 1:8). And this word "Lord" stands for the Trinity of persons: because the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, the benignity of the Holy Spirit wrought the conception of the Virgin and the birth: because the works of the Trinity are inseparable.

New. You will find this expounded below.

Upon the earth: because the conception and birth of the Virgin transcend all human understanding. Hence blessed John says, John 1:27: *The latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose*, that is, to explain the union

of the Word. Again, Isa. 53:8: *Who shall declare his generation?* His, that is, Christ's; or his, that is, the Virgin's, how namely she bore him who made himself: for both are ineffable. Or perhaps it is said "upon the earth" because for the salvation of men the Son of God was made man, and nevertheless by his passion the angelic ruin was repaired.

A woman, that is, the Virgin Mary, *shall compass* in the bosom of her womb. That is the Gloss. *A man*, that is, Christ, who at the very moment of his conception was a perfect man as to wisdom and virtue, and also as to the lineaments and organization of his members, as the Master says in the Histories. For he had as much wisdom, as much virtue when conceived as when grown: which was very wonderful, nor in any way happens ever: since he is singular. Of his wisdom, Sir. 1:1: *All wisdom is from the Lord God, and hath been always with him, and is before all ages.* Of virtue, 1 Cor. 1:24: *We preach … Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* And so he was twofold perfect, namely in body as to the lineaments of his members, and in soul as to knowledge and virtues.

She shall compass, I say, not from elsewhere but of herself: because from her substance alone, without seed of man, by the sole operation of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ was built. Hence she says, Sir. 24:8: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven*, that is, him who closes all things, *I have compassed*, that is, clothed with virginal flesh. Hence the Son says to the mother, Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh. Alone*, that is, without help of man: for she was a way untrodden by men. Therefore also the Angel said to her, Luke 1:31: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb*, that is, from *(p. 201)* an intrinsic cause: because the cause of his conception was within, not without: and therefore most properly the whole Christ according to humanity was the Son of the Virgin, as most properly the whole Son of God according to divinity. This is also what the Son says of the Father, Isa. 49:5: *Forming me from the womb*, etc. (Look under the title, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.")

She shall compass a man: she shall not receive from another man, she shall not conceive a man by human law, but within untouched and entire bowels she shall enclose a man. A man, I say, comprehensible: because him whom the whole world does not contain, made man, she enclosed in her bowels. For of every other woman conceiving it is said, Sir. 36:23: *A woman shall receive every male*, that is, she will conceive, the man having been received.

She shall compass, I say, so truly that, the Lord entering and going out, the Eastern gate persevere continually (Ezek. 44:1). Well is Mary called the Eastern gate: because through her entered into the world the true Orient, who visited us from on high (Luke 1:78): and because through her grace rises in us, and access lies open to the true Orient, that is, Christ, who rose of her: and she herself is the beginning of our rising to life. But the Western gate was Eve, who was the beginning of our entrance to setting and death. But through Mary the Lord God of Israel entered in the incarnation, and went out in the nativity, and she always remained shut to the prince, that is, to the honor of the prince, namely Christ.

Christ is called man (*vir*) for manifold reason. For the greenness (*viror*) of the divinity: or because he was always green by unspotted holiness and all manner of virtue: in which is noted immunity from sin and inability to sin: for he lacked original sin, which the integrity of his mother proves, and actual sin, which the divinity of the Father [proves]. Therefore Peter calls him *a lamb unspotted* (1 Pet. 1:19), because he was not sprinkled with the stain of original sin, and *undefiled*, because he lacked all contagion of actual. Therefore also he is called a candlestick (Exod. 37:17). (Look above under the title, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.")

For virtue (*virtutem*): because he is the virtue of God (1 Cor. 1:24). Hence Ps. 23:8: *The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.* Again, Luke 11:21–22: *When a strong man armed*, etc. *But if a stronger than he*, etc. Jer. 46:12: *The strong hath stumbled against the strong, and both are fallen together.*

For boldness, which manifestly appeared in the passion. Hence John 18:4–5: *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said to them: Whom seek ye? They answered him: Jesus of*

Nazareth. Jesus saith to them: I am he, etc.

Because male. Hence he is designated by the paschal lamb, of which it is said, Exod. 12:5: *It shall be a lamb without blemish, a male of one year.* Again, Apoc. 12:4: *The dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered*, namely of a man child, etc. Isa. 66:7, of the blessed Virgin: *Before her time came she brought forth a man child*, that is, Christ, who was also on every side manly, and had nothing of infirmity opposed to any of his virtues.

Because generative, that is, able to beget sons, not carnal but spiritual. Hence John 1:12–13: *But as many as received him*, by faith namely, *he gave them power to be made the sons of God*, etc.; *who are born not of blood*, etc., *but of God.* James 1:18: *Of his own will hath he begotten us by the word of truth*, etc. Hence also he says, Isa. 66:9: *If I that give generation to others, shall I be barren? saith the Lord God.*

Because nothing womanish in him: for he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth (1 Pet. 2:22). Nay, in the passion he overcame womanish *(p. 202)* delights, suffering against delights, enduring against troubles patiently.

Because of perfect age, spiritual. Hence in Exod. 12:5 he is called not only a male but also a year-old (*anniculus*), in which perfection of age is noted: for he came to the fullness of age, namely to the thirtieth year. And if a month be taken for a day, you find in thirty years about as many lunar months as there are days in the year, namely three hundred and sixty-six. Rightly, however, about the thirty-fourth year he chose to suffer, which is the middle of human age: for until then the age and strength of man advance; then he is at a standstill; afterwards he begins to decline. Hence Hab. 3:2: *In the midst of the years thou shalt make it known.* For in the midst of human age the Lord made known his salvation, and remembered his mercies, when he gave Christ for us. Hence neither before that age was he permitted to be slain: because his hour was not yet come (John 7:30). And at such an age he was a man, a fighter for us, and willed to suffer, that he might draw old and young to salvation.

Because of perfect spiritual greatness, from whom many have arisen. Zach. 6:12: *Behold a man, the Orient is his name, and under him shall he spring up.* For he who is under him is just.

Because never softened by prosperity. Hence John 6:15, when some would make him king, he fled into the mountain.

Because never broken by adversity. Hence in the passion, as though desiring yet more to suffer for the salvation of the human race, he said: *I thirst* (John 19:28).

Again, *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth: A woman shall compass a man* (Jer. 31:22): a thing new to the whole earth, a novelty that the whole world cannot contain.

If it be asked, what is that new thing? Namely that fruitfulness of offspring should be added to the integrity of virginity, so that, remaining an entire virgin, she should be a fruitful mother; that having the joys of a mother with the honor of virginity, as she had had no like before her in making such a vow, so she should have none after her in bearing virginally. Hence there fits her that of Wisd. 3:13: *Happy is the barren, and the undefiled, who hath not known bed in sin, she shall have fruit in the visitation of holy souls.* Happy the barren, that is, the Virgin, and well happy Mary: because blessed among women. *Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God* (Matt. 5:8). *In the visitation of holy souls*, namely when holy souls shall see face to face the king in his beauty (Isa. 33:17). Gal. 4:27: *Rejoice, thou barren*, etc. Isa. 54:1: *Give praise, O barren*, etc.

New, he says; well new, that a virgin was made a mother, God man, father son, and a daughter a genitrix. Well new, that a tiny little girl enclosed in her womb a perfect man, greater than heaven and earth; that remaining a virgin she conceived; that she bore a son remaining a virgin. Isa. 7:14: *Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son.* And in this place this noun, *Virgin*, is put by diasyrmus. For truly this was new and unheard of from the beginning of the age: else it would not be new, unless, above nature and against the

accustomed course of nature, a Virgin had borne God and man without the embrace of a man.

Again, well he says *new*. For three marvelous novelties, wonderfully singular and singularly marvelous, such as neither have been done nor are to be done more upon earth, that omnipotent majesty wrought in the assumption of our flesh, when God and man, mother and virgin, faith and the human heart were joined together.

Again, this novelty the Church asked of the Lord, in Sir. 36:6: *Renew the signs, and change the wonders (p. 203)*.

Man wished to become God, and God was made man. From man woman was made, and from woman man was made. Are not these wonders changed — that is, changed for the better? But the signs also are renewed. Once a dry rod flowered, now a virgin has borne. Once a brazen serpent fixed upon a pole healed those who looked upon it (Num. 21:9); now Christ fixed [on the cross] heals those who believe. Truly new, and surpassing all novelty, that in the virginal birth the length is recognized to be short, the breadth narrow, the height subjected, the depth flooded; there is recognized light not shining, the Word not speaking, water thirsting, bread hungering; joy saddened, security fearing, salvation suffering, life dying, strength made weak; there power is ruled, wisdom is instructed, virtue is sustained; he who refreshes the Angels is nursed at virginal breasts, and cries in the cradle, who consoles the wretched. On the other side there is seen sadness gladdening, fear strengthening, passion saving, death vivifying, infirmity strengthening. These things are new, that the old man may be marvelously renewed by the new. But not less new, nor less to be wondered at, is it that a frail young girl carries him whom the world scarcely sustains the bearing of; that a virginal breast, more capacious than all the amplitude of the heavens, encloses him wholly within, who measures heaven with a span and holds the whole earth in a fist. The greatest, therefore, is the greatness of Mary, who is found worthy to receive and sufficient to contain the presence of immeasurable divinity.

Again, someone has most elegantly said of such novelty, in prose: "The Lord's salvation dawns; the blessing promised to the seed of the Patriarch is fulfilled. A new birth is given to the Virgin, an eternal state to fallen man: a wonderful conversion in things! Length is made short, breadth is seen compressed, depth is levelled. Height, brought low, is subjected; virtue lies prostrate; power is ruled; weak strength totters. Health languishes, confidence fears, splendor grows foul, gladness weeps, consolation is saddened. Prudence undergoes discipline, glory subjects itself to lowliness, refreshment lacks food. Bread is found hungering; the unfailing fountain dries up with thirst; liberty is pressed under a yoke. Behold, he who never began begins; he stays in place, not knowing to be placed; and life suffers death. Who has seen this? Who has learned this? Who suffices to wonder at this enough? And what is the miracle? What is this? The very progress fails — nay, by his own failing God repairs the failing of the age. For death restores the reward of life, the fall's state, the end the beginning, fear strengthens constancy. Flight makes a safe refuge, pain furnishes the joy of salvation, shame brings glory. Remaining therefore what he always was, and assuming what he had not been, the eternal serves time. So love overcomes what was enjoined; so the great accommodates himself to the small, God to the human body."

Note also that the blessed Virgin was made fruitful without corruption: for she conceived without foulness and itching, because from the Holy Spirit. Master Richard of St Victor: "The Holy Spirit knows not how to corrupt a virgin, but to sanctify; the Holy Spirit knows not how to diminish the cleanness of the Virgin, but to increase it; knows not how to defile, but to glorify."

Again, on that place, Luke 10:38, *Jesus entered into a certain town (castle)*, blessed Anselm says: "The gate by which he entered is faith: because when she believed, the things were perfected in her by the Lord which were spoken to her by the Angel. Nor, because Jesus entered, was this castle violated. For Jesus saves, does not violate; makes firm what is broken, does not break the solid; according as his name, so also his work."

(How Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit, how the Holy Spirit came upon her, how the power of the Most High overshadowed her, you have had expounded above, under the title "Of the first delectable enclosed garden," according to all the expositions which on such matter we have been able anywhere to find.)

(p. 204) Again, Athanasius in his dialogue: "The Only-begotten of God was incarnate, by his secret mystery, which he himself knows; ours it is to believe, his to know." And this is what is sung: "A sign of novelty thou hast heard; only believe, and it is enough," etc.

Again, of this secret Christ says, Isa. 24:16: *My secret to myself*, namely of the conception of the Virgin and my entrance into the Virgin; *my secret to myself*, namely of my going forth and her childbearing. As therefore no one knew in Christ's incarnation the Virgin's conception, so let none presume, in Christ's nativity, to discuss the virginity of the Virgin mother, lest the beast touching the mountain be stoned (cf. Exod. 19:13; Heb. 12:20). Therefore it is said, Isa. 53:8: *Who shall declare his generation?* His, that is, Christ's. Or his, that is, Mary's, how namely she bore him who made himself. John the Baptist, John 1:27: *I am not worthy to loose the latchet of his shoe*, that is, to explain the union of the Word. As if he said: Neither in sense do I fully understand his generation, nor even what I perceive am I able to narrate in words.

Again, of the conception and birth of the Virgin it is said, Isa. 7:14: *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*, etc. Above, the Prophet had said: *The Lord himself shall give you a sign.* For many signs the Lord had given before through the Patriarchs and Prophets, but this wonderful and ineffable sign he willed to give through himself on account of the excellence of the sign: which is so fulfilled that the nature of the one born is proved from the virgin, and marvelously proclaimed from the operation of the deity. And this sign neither did divinity work without man, nor humanity without the divinity of the Word. And this is the sign which is always contradicted (Luke 2:34), and is still contradicted by some. The Prophet says therefore: *The Lord himself shall give*, not another; *to you*, O house of David, a sign of salvation and liberation. Here three things are noted by this pronoun, *himself*: the liberality of the Lord, the sublimity of the work, the presence of the work. Hence the sense is: The Lord himself, without anyone's merit, himself, not another, himself present shall give you a sign, not any whatever, but unheard-of, but new, but wonderful, but excellent, which none could give but God alone. And what sign? *Behold a virgin shall conceive*, and a virgin shall bear. For this noun, *Virgin*, in this place is held by diasyrmus. In this is signified that both were to be clean, the flesh generating and the flesh generated. Therefore the son of such a mother in childbirth alone could sing that canticle: *Without iniquities was I conceived, and without sins did my mother conceive me. A son* of God and her own, namely God and true man, singularly a son, not sons, as Helvidius the heretic said, against whom Jerome writes the epistle on the perpetually preserved virginity of blessed Mary.

And his name shall be called Emmanuel, which is interpreted *God with us.* And so in this name, Emmanuel, a twofold nature in Christ is designated: for *God* is the name of the divine nature; that it is said *with us* designates the communion of human nature. And note that it is not said of God that we are with him, but conversely of us that he is with us, that we may understand not as though man returned to God, but God as if following man's footsteps even into exile. Hence it is said, Luke 1:78: *The Orient from on high hath visited us.* What therefore man lost in the first man, namely to be with God, this he seems to have recovered in the new Adam, man. Another reading has: *Thou shalt call, O thou Judah*, that is, thou shalt invoke in dangers, *his name*, that he may deliver thee: his name, I say, Emmanuel. And according to this reading it is read connected, *His name Emmanuel*, that is, this name thou shalt call to thy aid, that is, the reality of this *(p. 205)* man, that is, Christ, true God and true man. Some books have *He shall be called*, but wrongly: and he who puts *He shall be called* follows the sense more than the words (cf. Matt. 1:23).

And note that where we have *Virgin*, the Hebrew has *Alma*, which is taken in two ways in Hebrew: for a young girl, and so the unbelieving Jews take it; and for "apocryphal," that is, hidden, which is a periphrasis, that is, a circumlocution, for virgins. Hence the Angel found her in a chamber. Again, this name, *Alma*, in the Punic tongue sounds "virgin," and in the Latin tongue "holy." And because the Jews use almost all

languages, therefore here the Prophet put this noun *Alma*, as it is Punic, or Latin, or at least as it is Hebrew in the second signification, that is, for "hidden," and so Jerome takes it here.

Behold a virgin shall conceive. With prophetic certitude he shows the future as present: and therefore says *Behold*, which is a demonstrative adverb for the eye: because he foretells the Word invisible to be made visible through the assumption of flesh. And this is that new thing (Jer. 31:22). *Behold*, in wonder: a virgin shall conceive of the Holy Spirit, and a virgin shall bear the Son of God and her own; and she shall call, according to what was said by the Angel, Luke 1:31: *Thou shalt call his name Jesus.* Or, thou shalt call, O Judah, his name Emmanuel, that is, believing him true God and true man, thou shalt invoke him in dangers.

It follows, Isa. 7:15: *He shall eat butter and honey*, that is, he shall eat every food suited to man, as true man. And he puts the part for the whole. *That* (*ut*), that is, although he know: because even then he will be a man perfect in knowledge and virtue. Or thus: He shall eat butter and honey, yet so that even in infancy he know to refuse evil, that is, all sinners, and to choose good, that is, all the good: which shall be done manifestly on the day of judgment, when he shall separate the sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:32). And daily he does it as God. Jerome: "By these words we perceive that in the infancy of the Savior divine wisdom was not diminished in him, although it is said, Luke 2:52: *Jesus advanced in wisdom*, etc., *with God and men*, not simply but ostensively [by manifestation]. And this is said that the truth of the human body might be proved. For infancy does not prejudice divine wisdom, nor did the adult know more than the little child, but the little child showed less wisdom than the adult." (Look for the blessings of the fruit, and you will find it there.)

Otherwise: *Butter and honey shall he eat*, that is, every food of infant and man. By butter, which is made from milk, infantile food, by honey manly food is understood. As if he said: So shall he be an infant that he shall be also a man perfect in knowledge and virtue. And not only then shall he be infant and man, but also God. *That he may know to refuse evil and choose good*, that is, may have then discretion of good and evil, which cannot be in a mere man while he is an infant. And *ut* is put for *although*.

Mystically: *Butter and honey shall he eat.* Butter is the fatness of good work, honey the sweetness of contemplation: and these two are the food of the just. Or, butter the mystery of the incarnation. Hence Job 29:6: *I washed my feet with butter*, etc. Gen. 18:8: *Abraham took butter and milk*, etc. Honey, the sweetness of the deity. Hence Prov. 25:27: *As it is not good for a man to eat much honey, so he that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory.* Ibid., v. 16: *Thou hast found honey, eat what is sufficient for thee*, etc. These Christ ate: because for the nourishment of his members he converted these things, and for their delight, that he may know to refuse evil and choose good in his members. For to this end is all the doctrine and exhortation of Christ, that we may flee evil and choose good. Hence Ps. 36:27: *Decline from evil, and do good*, etc. But note that, if thou wouldst *(p. 206)* feed on this food as a member of Christ, it is needful that, when others are led into Babylon, that is, into the confusion of sin, thou remain in the midst of the land, that is, in Jerusalem. Hence Isa. 7:22: *Butter and honey shall every one eat that shall be left in the midst of the land.*

Again, that these words may be understood spiritually, note that butter is pressed from the udders. Hence Prov. 30:33: *He that strongly presseth the udder to bring out milk, bringeth out butter.* In butter, therefore, is figured Christ's humanity. And butter has four principal properties. It is fat, and this fatness refers to the mystery of the conception. For Christ received as it were the fatness of butter in the conception, when with the unction of charisms he was anointed above his fellows (Ps. 44:8), and when the fatted calf was prepared in the womb of the Virgin, that for the returning prodigal he might set out a rich banquet, that he might fatten with his fatness all the elect invited to that banquet. Isa. 25:6: *The Lord of hosts shall make unto all people a feast of fat things*, etc. It is sweet, and this sweetness refers to the humility of the nativity: for if thou piously recall the humility of his nativity, the poorness of the swaddling clothes, and the like, what wilt thou find but sweetness? It is liquefying, and this liquefaction refers to the fervor of the passion, where by drops of graces he made some fat with charity, others sweet with humility, some strong with the constancy of the passion,

and the like. It is nutritive, which nourishment refers to our sacraments of redemption. This butter is pressed out as from two udders, namely Judea and the Gentile world. Hence Christ descended, made man, not only from the stock of David but from the rock of the desert through Ruth, that is, from the hardness and infidelity of the Gentile world. Isa. 16:1: *Send forth, O Lord, the lamb,* etc.

Honey is drawn from flowers, in which his divinity is noted, and honey has three principal properties, though also many others. Honey is purgative: because God alone justifies the impious from sins, and alone forgives sins. Conservative: because by increasing grace it directs the just. Sweet and nutritive: because after grace he gave glory, after merit he renders the reward. This Emmanuel therefore refused evil, because by dying he destroyed death; and chose good, because by rising he repaired life.

Or otherwise: *Butter and honey shall he eat.* In milk are two things. Cheese, which signifies the sickness of sin, because it is not sound. Butter, which is sound. Between these our Emmanuel divided: because he assumed human nature without sin, and so did not eat cheese. Again, the bee has honey and a sting. Honey is mercy, the sting justice. Between these our Emmanuel divided: because, coming to save us, he took mercy and as it were laid justice aside. But be not deceived: for coming to judgment he will resume the sting. (Look under the title on the garden, where Christ is called a bee.)

Otherwise: *Butter and honey shall he eat.* Why did he not say bread and flesh, when he would have said the truth on account of the mystery? For honey and butter are the delights of unclean and poisonous flies. The poisonous bee works and fights for honey, so that often it lays down its life for it. Butter is the fatness of milk, into which unclean flies plunge themselves out of greediness, often even to death. In this, therefore, that our Emmanuel ate these two, it is signified that for love of us he descended to participation, not only of men, not only of beasts of burden, but even of unclean and poisonous flies. To participation, I say, not in guilt, but in punishment and death. Who therefore may despair that man can henceforth become a partaker of heavenly delights, since the Lord of majesty for men's sake descended even to the delights of flies? Behold how much for love of us he emptied himself, who of his own will subjected himself to such want.

Again, Christ is honey: because from heaven *(p. 207)* he descended by means of the dew of grace, which filled his mother.

And it is honey, so to speak, as a certain sweetly flowing thickness of dew: for if we consider the heart of Christ, nothing is more kindly than it, and its sweetness incomparably exceeds all sweetness. This honey, moreover, descended from the heights to the depths, and *his going out is from the end of heaven* (Ps. 18:7): because from the supercelestial storehouse, that is, from the heart of the supreme Father, into the virginal storehouse, that is, the heart and womb of the mother. Therefore Isaiah prayed, 45:8, as if speaking to the Father and the Holy Spirit: *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just.* For the Father dropped this honey down by begetting, the Holy Spirit dropped it down by ineffably uniting it to the wax of virginal cleanness: and therefore Christ is compared to a honeycomb. The Father dropped dew by sending him whom he begot, the Holy Spirit dropped dew by inspiring him to whom he united: because Christ was begotten of the Father, and conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Again, Christ is milk: for its surpassing whiteness, behold inmost cleanness; and for its exceptional sweetness, behold supreme piety and full benevolence. Because the Lord's breast had milky whiteness in the integrity of highest and inmost purity, and milky sweetness in the fullness of highest and inmost piety.

Again, of the dignity of the virginal conception and birth it is said, Gen. 2:5–6: *There was not a man to till the earth*, that is, the blessed Virgin, *but a fountain went up out of the earth*, namely Christ, fountain of grace, who, born of the Virgin, went up from the earth; he did not come down as a sinner. Again, the Son to the Father, Ps. 21:10: *Thou art he that hast drawn me out of the womb.* Here is noted the dignity of Christ's nativity, who had the Father as it were in the place of a midwife, whom, conceived without carnal concupiscence, the Father drew out of the womb of the virgin mother, her integrity and chastity remaining.

Whence Ezek. 44:2: *The Lord God of Israel hath entered in by it* — in his incarnation into her womb, and in his nativity into the world — *and it shall be shut to the prince*, that is, to the honor of the prince; and it always remained so. It follows, Ps. 21:10–11: *My hope* (supply, *thou art*) *from the breasts of my mother*, that is, according to the humanity by which I sucked the breasts: because according to the deity the Father is not the Son's hope.

It follows, on immunity from sin: *Upon thee I was cast, or thrown, or confirmed, from the womb.* For we are cast into wrath in the womb and from the womb: because we are all born children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). Christ was confirmed in God from the womb: because he was conceived, carried, and born without sin, as has been said above.

Chapter 14: On the Virgin's Childbirth without Pain

Isaiah, wondering at the glorious childbirth of the Virgin without sorrow and pain, exclaims, 66:7–8: *Before she was in labor, she brought forth: before her time came to be delivered, she brought forth a man child. Who hath ever heard such a thing? and who hath seen the like to this?*

(p. 208) And there are here four noteworthy things, namely who bore, how she bore, whom she bore, what manner of child she bore.

Who bore is intimated when he says, *She brought forth*: for it is intimated that some woman bore. But her wonderful name, as ineffable, he passed over in silence, which is Virgin mother. He noted the manner, when he says, *Before she was in labor. Whom she bore* he hints where he says, *She brought forth*, whose name, as ineffable, he passes over in silence, which is God man, Word infant. *What manner of child she bore*, where he says, *a man child.*

On account of these four he says that such a thing was never heard: as a Virgin mother, God man, Word infant. But such a thing it behooved to be the beginning of our redemption. For our perdition entered through a woman produced from a man alone. Because of this it behooved our redemption and reparation to be through a man produced from a woman alone, that there be a likeness in contrary. Such a mode of reparation Ecclesiasticus asked, 36:6, saying to the Lord: *Renew the signs, and change the wonders.* It was a wonder that the Lord produced a woman from Adam, the first man, alone. The wonder was changed when from a woman alone the second Adam was produced. This is the fourth generation, of which it was said to Abraham (Gen. 15:16) that his seed in the fourth generation should go out freed from the servitude of the Egyptians. The first kind of generation was molding, when Adam was molded of earth. The second, the forming from the rib. The third, propagation: for so the sons of men are born of parents according to propagation. The fourth kind is propagation from a woman alone: but this fourth generation, given to the human race, was the cause for the seed of Abraham to go out of Egyptian servitude, as it were from the tyranny of the devil.

This name, *virgin mother*, Isaiah expressed not only figuratively but literally, 7:14, when he said: *Behold a virgin shall conceive.* Here the virgin is expressed. *And bear a son*: here the mother is expressed. But Jovinian the heretic says: "In Mary I accept the name of mother, but the name of virgin I do not admit." And when the aforesaid is told him, he says he does not receive the Old Testament. But not only is this name drawn from the Old Testament; nay, as though renewed by the Evangelist, it is confirmed by the Gospel. Matt. 1:23: *Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son*, and the rest. Again, Luke 1:26–27: *The Angel Gabriel was sent … to a virgin*, etc. Again, Matt. 1:18: *When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.* Argue therefore thus: To a Virgin the Angel was sent. Matt. 1:18: Before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Therefore not of adultery: therefore her virginity was not violated, neither by spouse nor by adultery. Therefore when she had already conceived, so was she a virgin, so to a virgin was Gabriel sent. So therefore from the Old and New Testaments this name, *virgin mother*, is gathered: at which Isaiah wondering, 66:8,

says: *Who hath ever heard such a thing?*

The second wonder: how she bore. Hence it is said: *Before she was in labor, she brought forth.* To be in labor (*parturire*) is to travail before the birth and in the birth. What therefore is *before she was in labor she brought forth*, but that, without pain preceding or accompanying, she gave forth the birth? But who ever heard such a thing? For a law was given to women, Gen. 3:16: *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.* And John 16:21: *A woman when she is in labor hath sorrow*, etc. It is therefore the law of nature that a woman be first in labor before she bears; but Mary was not subject to this law: because without pain, that is, without injury to the natural parts, she bore the Savior. But in his passion she was in labor, she who long before had borne him. For then there were in her pains *(p. 209)* as of one in labor. Hence there, that is, in the Son's passion, the pains of one in labor. For then was fulfilled in her what Simeon had foretold her, Luke 2:35: *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.* For not less, if it be right to say so, did the sword of the passion pierce the mother's heart than the Son's body: for it passed through the Son's members, but *pertransivit*, that is, perfectly passed through the mother's viscera: because then *all the wound was the sadness of her heart* (Sir. 25:17). Which was afterwards shown to blessed John, Apoc. 12:1–2, where he says: *A great sign appeared in heaven*, etc., down to *and crying out, being in labor, and in pain to be delivered.* A great sign, Virgin mother: neither before nor after was the like seen, neither in heaven nor on earth. (All this you will find expounded in that sermon on the assumption: *A great sign appeared in heaven*, etc.) *She crieth out being in labor and is in pain to be delivered.* This cannot be understood literally of Mary; some then so expound it of her, that she who long since had borne without pain, while her Son hung on the cross, being in labor cried out, if not by voice yet by desire or devotion. Augustine: "In the ears of God, not words but desires make voices." And then she *was in pain to bear*, that is, as if she were to bear. For as great or greater is believed to have been then the torture of her mind as the bodily torture of a woman in labor. See how she bore and was in labor.

Note that the blessed Virgin had in the womb by faith: because as soon as she believed and consented, she conceived, and cried out with the desire of devotion, being in labor from the affection of thought: because her birth brought her no more pain than another woman's thought of bearing. Or, having in the womb the Son whom without pain she bore in the nativity, she cried out interiorly in heart, martyred in the Son's passion, being in labor when she saw him hanging on the cross; and she is tormented by abstinences, vigils, prayers, fasts, *that she may bear*, that is, make herself worthy of so great a birth. And yet, as is said a little below, before her stood the devil, wishing to devour the Son: because even through Herod he wished to kill Christ.

The third wonder: whom she bore, namely God man: and this suited the necessity of the human race. For peace between God and man a mere man could not reform: because he was in the same condemnation with the guilty. Therefore Job complained, 9:33, in the person of the human race, saying: *There is none that may be able to reprove both, and put his hand between both.* Gregory: "Christ alone, God made man, could both reprove man and stand in the way of God lest he strike." You see therefore how fitting the title of redeemer, God man, and this was long before prophesied. For Isaiah had said, 54:5: *Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, shall be called the God of all the earth.* Again, Isa. 33:22: *The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king: he will save us.* Not only is he God, but man. Hence Ps. 86:5: *This man is born in her*, etc. Again, he is man, and who hath known him? Jer. 17:9, according to another reading. Three wonders were done in the incarnation: God man, Word infant, and a believing heart. The Word which was in the beginning with God (John 1:2). The Word by which the Father spoke, and all things were made. The Word at whose thundering in judgment the dust will hear and return into bodies. The Word at whose [speaking] in the passion the stones were rent and the monuments opened. But someone will say: How, if he is Word, is he an infant? For if an infant, he does not speak (*fatur*); if he does not speak, he is not Word: how therefore is he both Word and not Word? Therefore with Isaiah let us say: *Who hath ever heard such a thing?* You have heard the Word, hear the infant. Luke 2:12 it was said to the shepherds: *You shall find the infant*, etc. Isa. 8:4: *(p. 210) Before the child know to call his father and mother, the strength of Damascus shall be*

taken away. For when this infant entered Egypt, the idols of Egypt fell down, as he had foretold, Isa. 17:1, where the strength of Damascus was taken away, that is, of the devil, licking blood, that is, who delights in sins, whose power was so weakened that he could not make his idols stand.

The fourth wonder, namely what manner of child she bore: because a male, that is, a warrior and a begetter. A warrior it behooved him to be: because then the strong man armed kept his court, that is, the world, and in peace was his possession, that is, the human race (Luke 11:21); but when the Lord fought and engaged against the devil in the passion, the prince of this world was cast out (John 12:31). And then was fulfilled that of Isaiah 19:20: *They shall cry to the Lord because of the oppressor, and he shall send them a savior and a defender to deliver them.* A begetter also it behooved him to be: because our first parents had begotten us all children of wrath. Eph. 2:3: *We were by nature children of wrath.* That we might therefore become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17), we had to be regenerated: else we should not enter into the eternal inheritance, but by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). John 3:5: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* Isa. 66:9: *If I that give generation to others, shall I be barren? saith the Lord God.* Behold, it appears what manner of child the virgin bore.

The first man lost, by the fault of his transgression, the glory of incorruption, the prerogative of dignity, the abundance of fullness: the glory of incorruption, by which he was made immortal; the prerogative of dignity, by which he was made to the likeness of God; the abundance of fullness, by which he was placed in the place of pleasure. You hear of the stripping of immortality, where of the forbidden tree you read: *In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death* (Gen. 2:17). The degradation of honor and the subtraction of dignity, where from that sublimity of the likeness of God he fell into the likeness of a beast. *Man, when he was in honor, did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them* (Ps. 48:13). And he was emptied of the abundance of fullness when, cast out of the place of pleasure, he incurred that sentence of malediction, Gen. 3:17–19: *Cursed is the earth in thy work: with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,* namely thine own. Behold the threefold loss in the despoiling of incorruptibility, of dignity, of beatitude.

But the merciful and compassionate Lord, according to the riches of his goodness, willed not to hold back his mercies in his anger, but was found as ready to succor as the devil was found prone to destroy. For with the Lord there is mercy, and with him plentiful redemption (Ps. 129:7). But the redemption would not be plentiful unless our redeemer fully restored fallen man. According, therefore, to the threefold loss, from the gift of his compassion he receives a threefold promise: the promise of recovering immortality, the promise of recovering dignity, the promise of recovering beatitude. *Thy dead shall live, my slain shall rise again* (Isa. 26:19): behold the promise of hoped-for immortality. *I will give them in my house and within my walls a place, and a name better than sons and daughters* (Isa. 56:5): behold the recovering of dignity. *The eye hath not seen, O God, besides thee, what (p. 211) thou hast prepared for them that wait for thee* (Isa. 64:4): behold the repromise of restoring felicity. Behold, as has been said, a threefold promise according to the threefold loss.

Behold now again, according to the threefold promise, receive and note in these a threefold sign. *Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son*: behold the first. *And his name shall be called Emmanuel*: behold the second. *Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse evil and choose good*: behold the third. You have therefore one sign in the mother, two in the offspring. A sign of incorruption in the mother, a sign of recovering dignity and fullness in the offspring. Hear of the mother: *Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son.* How great think you this is, how mighty, how wonderful, how unaccustomed, how astonishing, of what kind or how great a thing the sign? From the beginning of the age it has not been heard that a virgin conceived, a virgin bore, and after the birth remained inviolate. Human nature therefore receives in the

blessed Virgin Mary certain pledges or first-fruits of its future incorruptibility: the integrity of virginal incorruption. Why, I ask, is life in this life not lived without corruption, unless because human nature is not sown without corruption? For the root of our corruptibility begins to sprout from the very hour of conception. But behold, in blessed Mary it is cut off there whence it seemed to have sprouted. And we know that when the root is cut off, all the fruit from it afterwards withers. *Behold*, he says, *a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son.* In that it is said a virgin shall conceive and a virgin shall bear, it is openly shown that both were to be clean, the flesh generating and the flesh generated. The son of this childbearing woman could therefore alone, for this part, sing a new canticle to the Lord (cf. Ps. 50:7): *Without iniquities was I conceived, and without sins did my mother conceive me.* It is manifest, therefore, that he came to the destruction of sin who, in the very entrance into the world, did not contract the stain of sin from his mother's flesh, but destroyed it.

If, therefore, his conception alone availed so much as to destroy the fomes of concupiscence and the root of all corruption, what, I ask, could his nativity, circumcision, baptism, conversation, humility, fasting, patience, obedience, passion, crucifixion avail in the expiation of his body? If so much availed what was done in one hour, or rather in a small portion of one hour, what could the times of so many years avail, spent in the mystery of our redemption? He who could, at the time of his conception, cleanse the maternal viscera by the infusion of his grace — why should it not be believed that he can cleanse those who have willed to be partakers of the same grace, when and how he will? Why should it not be believed that he can cleanse that nature in any one of us, which in the blessed Virgin he could not only purge, but honor and glorify? In this he glorified her, that God gave to Mary something above nature. He did in her something that was against nature, something that was according to nature, something that was above nature. Against the nature of our infirmity it was that a virgin conceived. According to nature it was that he was conceived in the womb and formed and at last born at the lawful times of birth. Above nature, not only of this our infirmity but even above the nature of the first condition, it was that a virgin conceived without virile seed. It was of purity, that without concupiscence there could be a sowing. Of honor, that she made her offspring clean from every contagion of sin. Of glory, that she conceived not from a man but from the Holy Spirit.

Certainly, if our Emmanuel had willed to be born of both sexes, and reason required this, he could have cleansed both for sowing a clean offspring. But if from *(p. 212)* both he took flesh, he would surely have receded farther from the likeness of his own property, and approached less to ours.

For it would be unlike his own property, if he who in the divinity had only a father should have in the humanity a father and a mother. In this likewise he would be more unlike us, if he had two fathers, which we cannot. But reason also plainly demanded that, as there was one principle in the propagation of our race, so there should be one principle in the repair of our race. It was fitting therefore that the repairer of our race be born either of a man alone or of a woman alone. But if he took the feminine sex from a man, he would confound the order of nature, exalting the feminine sex above the masculine; and the same person would be called son by the divinity and daughter by the humanity. But if the sex he assumed were the masculine, man would indeed have a double consolation in this part of honor, woman none. And certainly, if he had willed to be formed from a man, he would draw the matter indeed from the substance of our flesh, but in his incarnation the operation of nature would have nothing, and in this he would depart farther from the property of our nature. O how much honor or dignity he conferred on women, or on those born of women, in that the creator of all, the savior of men, willed to be born of a woman after the manner of those who are born! Of a woman therefore he ought to be born, whom it behooved, in so far as reason allowed, to be made like in all things to his brethren (Heb. 2:17). But that he ought not to assume a feminine [nature] from the feminine sex, the reason shown above makes clear: for it would confound the order of nature, as was said, and, the consolation of women being doubled in this, the male sex would have nothing like a singular privilege.

Chapter 15: On the Faith of Mary

The faith of Mary is noted, Luke 1:45, where Elizabeth says to her: *Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished*, etc. For when a little after, v. 48, Mary had said: *For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed*, she showed both that the Angel's promise would be fulfilled and that she would not transgress her own profession. For she who had vowed virginity, and knew by the Angel's teaching that she was to bear, with wonderful faith believed both that her vow was to be fulfilled, and did not withdraw herself from the divine ordinance. But the greatest magnanimity of faith was that she both believed and hoped that could be done in herself which had never been heard of in heaven or on earth. Again, Origen: "By the faith of Mary the race of the fallen is raised up, which had before been cast down by a woman's rash credulity." Again, Blessed Matthew in his legend: "In the conception of the Son of God, Mary's faith was the spouse of the Holy Spirit." Again, Mary, believing the Angel's words, conceived the Savior by faith; and therefore she is said to have conceived through the ear. Hence also Elizabeth says to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed: because those things shall be accomplished*, etc. For in the conception of the Son *her beloved*, that is, God the Father, *put in his hand*, that is, the Son, into her, *by the hole of her ear* (cf. Cant. 5:4). Master *(p. 213)* Hugh of St Victor: "The believing Virgin conceived the Word through the word, that an incorrupt generation might follow an immaculate conception."

Again, the faith of Mary is compared to a grain of mustard seed, which is a humble grain, fervent, and removing humor from the head. In the faith of Mary humility was joined: hence *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me*, etc. Fervent through the love of the Holy Spirit, of whom she conceived, and of the Son of God whom she conceived. It took away the humor of the head. For as the head is the beginning of a thing, so is conception of the animate: and this when she believed the Angel saying: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:35).

Again, if Abraham is so much commended by the Apostle (Rom. 4:3) for that against hope of nature he believed in hope of grace, namely that an old man could beget a son of Sara, old and barren, how much more is Mary to be commended, who at the first word of the Angel believed that she could bear a son without seed of man, and, remaining a virgin, bring forth not only a man but the Son of God.

The faith of Mary also, which is its root, has been made manifest through the whole world. Hence she can truly say that of Job 29:19: *My root*, that is, the faith by which I believed the Angel, *is spread out by the waters*, that is, everywhere made manifest. Waters are peoples (Apoc. 17:15). The waters that pass are the saints, who have not here a lasting city, but seek one to come (Heb. 13:14).

Chapter 16: On the Hope of Mary

The hope of Mary is noted in her answer to the Angel, where she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me*, etc. (Luke 1:38). For unless she had truly believed, firmly hoped, and fervently desired that what the Angel promised could be and would be, she would never have answered: *Be it done to me*, etc. Therefore she seemed to say to the Lord: *I have hoped in thy word* (Ps. 118:81), namely what thou hadst commanded me through the Angel.

Chapter 17: On Mary's Love of God

(p. 214) Mary loved the Lord as all the canonical Scriptures proclaim he is to be loved, and her charity is the form and exemplar of the charity of all the saints. And therefore we have noted as it were conjointly both of her charity and of the charity of the saints, so that from the form of her charity may shine forth how faithful souls ought to imitate her in charity at least from afar. And note that love (*dilectio*) is said as it were "binding two" (*duos ligans*), namely the lover to the thing he loves, that is, the loving to the loved: for the love of lover and loved is as it were a certain union, chiefly in goods, and naturally that which is loved converts its lover into its own nature. And this is clear in the Savior, whom the love he had for the human race made to bind and unite to himself human nature, when the Word was made flesh.

Mary loved God *with her whole heart*: because her heart was not inclined to the love of any thing more than of God, nor was she delighted in any appearance of the world more than in God, esteeming all good to be in God, so that for all these she loved God alone.

With her whole soul: because she had a most certain mind in truth, and was firm in faith. Hence it was said to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*, etc. And this also appeared at the time of the Lord's passion. And note that the love of the heart is one thing, the love of the soul another. The love of the heart is in a manner carnal, so that we love God even carnally; but this cannot be done unless we have first withdrawn from the love of every worldly thing. The love of the heart, therefore, is not understood but felt in the heart: because it is in a manner carnal. But the love of the soul is not felt in the heart, but understood: because the love of the soul is judgment.

With her whole mind: because all her senses were free for God, her intellect ministered to God, her wisdom was occupied about God, her thought handled the things that are God's, her memory recalled those things alone which are good, so that she might say with the Apostle, 1 Cor. 14:15: *I will sing with the spirit, I will sing also with the mind.* So Chrysostom expounds.

Otherwise: Wisdom has its seat in the heart. Hence Prov. 2:10: *If wisdom enter into thy heart*, etc. *With the whole soul*, which is put for the will. Hence John 12:25: *He that hateth his life* [soul], etc., that is, his own will. She loved therefore God the Trinity with her whole heart, that is, with the whole of that which is to know, as regards the Son; with her whole soul, that is, with the whole of that which is to will, as regards the Holy Spirit; with her whole strength, that is, with the whole of that which is to be able, as regards the Father; so that these three, which are necessary in fulfilling every good work, namely to know, to will, and to be able, as it were corresponded to the Trinity.

Otherwise: Mary loved the Lord her God. She loved the Lord, to whom fear and service are due, fearing him chastely and filially, and serving him from pure love. She loved God by faith, believing in him through love working. She loved *thy* God, guarding him with love solicitously: for it is familiar to anyone solicitously to guard what is his own.

(p. 215) Again, she loved with her whole heart, directing all the thoughts of her heart to God or referring them to God; with her whole soul, turning all the affections of the soul to God; with her whole mind, occupying all human reason, by which she understood and discerned, in divine things; with her whole strength, persevering continually in these: and so nothing remained in her which was not subject to divine love. So Isidore expounds.

Again, she loved from the heart: because *Deus* is interpreted "seeing," to whom every heart lies open. Hence 1 Kings 16:7: *Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart.* She loved with her whole heart, because he is Lord: for whatever a servant has belongs to her lord. And this as regards the four affections, which are: Love: for she loved nothing besides him. Fear: for she feared nothing besides him, or except for his sake. Sorrow: for she grieved at nothing except at losing him: hence she said to him, Luke 2:48: *Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.* Joy: for she rejoiced not except in him, and in recovering him, or in those things she knew pertained to him.

Again, she loved with her whole heart, that is, with her whole intellect, leaving no place for error in the confession of divinity. With her whole soul, that is, will, willing nothing contrary to him. With her whole mind, that is, memory, remembering nothing by which she might think less of him. And this triple mode of loving corresponded to the three precepts of the first table, which pertain to the love of God. The first: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God* (Mark 12:29; cf. Deut. 6:4). To this corresponds the mode of loving with the whole memory without forgetfulness, that thou think that the one God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The second: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* (Exod. 20:7). To this corresponds the mode of loving with the whole intellect without error, that the Christian name be not taken in

vain, that he be not thought to be made through whom all things were made. The third: *Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day* (Exod. 20:8). To this corresponds the mode of loving with the whole will without contradiction, that thou keep the sabbath from servile work: because God commanded. And note that Moses and Matthew do not put but three in the mode of the love of God. But perhaps Luke, 10:27, attended to four reasons on account of which God is to be loved, and above all things on account of each; and on that account he put four. First, because he is creator in being. Second, because conserver in being. Third, because creator in well-being. Fourth, because glorifier in best-being. Or, the four are reduced to three, so that the member, *with all thy strength*, is referred to each of the other three as a mode, so that the sense be: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all the strength of thy whole heart, and with all the strength of thy whole soul, and with all the strength of thy whole mind.* With the whole heart, because Lord; with the whole soul, because God; and with the whole mind, because thy.

Otherwise: With the whole heart, that is, intellect, that all thy intellect be subject to the intellect of God. With the whole soul, that is, with the whole will, that all thy will be subject to the divine will. With the whole mind, that is, with the whole memory. What follows, *with all thy strength*, understand as above. Augustine: "With the whole heart, that is, with the whole intellect without error. With the whole soul, that is, with the whole will without contrariety: for there the will gathers itself wholly, where nothing is contrary to it. With the whole mind, that is, with memory without difficulty and without forgetfulness. These cannot be fulfilled in the way [of this life]." Gregory thus: "With the whole heart, with the whole soul, with the whole mind, that is, above all things: and it is an insistence of words which signifies the excellence of love." Master Hugh of St Victor thus: "With the whole heart, that is, devotion, as regards virgins; with the whole soul, that is, discretion, as regards confessors; with the whole mind, that is, perseverance, as regards martyrs."

(p. 216) Again, Blessed Bernard: "Love with the whole heart, that is, wisely; with the whole soul, that is, sweetly; and with the whole strength, that is, strongly; with the whole mind, that is, mindfully." For so Mary loved: wisely against the concupiscence of the eyes. For he who loves temporal things, his intellect is turned away from the eternal. Sweetly against the concupiscence of the flesh: for he who sweetly loves God reckons all carnal sweetness poison, as it truly is, and judges whatever separates from God more bitter than gall, saying of lovers of pleasures: *Their wine is the gall of dragons* (Deut. 32:33). He who loves sweetly also says: *How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord*, etc. (Ps. 30:20). Strongly against worldly and human fear, fearing nothing those who take away temporal things or kill the body. Mindfully against the pride of life: for he who loves mindfully recalls incessantly the justice of God, which for one thought of pride first thrust the Angel into the fire of Gehenna. Hence 2 Pet. 2:4: *If God spared not the angels*, etc. So Job loved, saying, 31:23: *I always feared God as waves swelling over me, and his weight I was not able to bear.*

Mary loved strongly the Father, to whom power is attributed, and this from the irascible power, fulfilling that of Ecclesiasticus 7:32: *With all thy strength love him that made thee*, etc. Wisely the Son, to whom wisdom is attributed, from the rational power. Sweetly the Holy Spirit, who is the sweetness of the Father and the Son, from the concupiscible power. Hence also she is said to have conceived of the Holy Spirit. But as there is one substance in three persons, so singular and unique was Mary's love in the three properties above said. Mindfully the humanity of the Son, to whom he says, Isa. 49:15: *Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee.* But this memory, as regards us, is to be referred to Christ being born, suffering, judging, and it destroys the threefold concupiscence. The memory of him being born destroys the concupiscence of the eyes, when, wrapped in swaddling clothes, he lay in the manger. The memory of him suffering, the concupiscence of the flesh, which seeks delights, when scourged and nailed he hung on the gibbet. The memory of him judging, the pride of life, when God will break every proud one.

Again, Mary loved wisely: because the unction with which she was full taught her of all things (1 John 2:27). For she was full of a twofold unction, that is, Christ, who is interpreted "anointed," and the grace of the Holy

Spirit. And note that it is said that this unction teaches of all things that are simply, such as spiritual and heavenly things, not those that are in a certain respect, such as temporal things and pleasures.

Mary loved wisely, that is, discreetly: because reasonable was her service (Rom. 12:1). For the prudent Virgin knew that *the king's honor loveth judgment* (Ps. 98:4), that is, discretion, and that *whatever sacrifice thou offerest, thou shalt season it with salt* (Lev. 2:13). That is, discreetly as above: for she was indeed the new vessel in which salt was put in the incarnation of the only-begotten of God (cf. 4 Kings), and by salt wisdom or discretion is designated. That is, discreetly, not foolishly showing the familiar goods which the Lord did to her, but wisely hiding them: for she was a *wise and silent woman* (Sir. 26:18), keeping and pondering in her heart whatever was said of the Son: for she knew that he who reveals the secrets of a friend, that is, of Christ, loses faith (Sir. 27:17). That is, discreetly, doing in secret the spiritual goods she did for the Lord. Hence she was found by the Angel shut in her chamber, with the door shut upon herself, entreating her Father *(p. 217)*, as blessed Bernard says.

Gregory: "It suffices the just to be seen by him from whom they expect to be rewarded." She herself also teaches us to love in this way. Hence she hid her newborn Son at once under the veil of swaddling clothes, teaching us to hide the birth of our good work. Therefore also Moses was hidden three months (Exod. 2:2). Month (*mensis*) is said from *mene*, which is defect. For in us there is a threefold defect: of heart, of mouth, of work. Therefore the less good we gain, the more it is necessary for us to hide it and solicitously to preserve it, after the example of a poor merchant, who the less capital he has trades the more carefully. That is, discreetly, for every service she did the Lord asking him alone as reward, not human praise, or anything of the sort. As if she said that of the Apostle, Phil. 3:8: *I count all things to be loss, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ.* Augustine: "With this end and this zeal God is to be worshipped, that the worship of him be itself the reward. For he who worships God that he may merit something else, now worships not God, but that which he desires to obtain." That is, solicitously, lest she offend God by word or deed, nod or sign, thought or desire, or the like, recalling that of Micah 6:8: *I will shew thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: Verily to do judgment, and to love mercy, and to walk solicitous with thy God.*

Mary loved *sweetly*: because sweetness was generated in her from a threefold remembrance, of mercy, of grace, and of glory. Of mercy, by which God in her sanctification had remitted original sin. Of grace, by which he had filled her to every virtue and every good work. Of glory, by which she hoped to be rewarded above merit. Because she reckoned the bitternesses of the present age sweet, and sucked the floods of the sea as milk for love of her Only-begotten. Because in a manner she seemed sweet in the anguish of the passion of her Only-begotten, although she compassionated in mind, from desire of the virtue and salvation of the human race. Hence: "Sweet the wood, sweet the nails" — not only to Christ suffering, but also to the mother compassionating, who through the bitterness of the torment knew that the human race would return to the sweetness of paradise. Hence Luke 15:32: *It was fit that we should make merry and be glad* for the return of the prodigal son to the mercy of the purest father. Ibid., v. 9: *Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost.* John 16:21: *A woman when she is in labor*, etc. Which can be understood of the mother and the Son. For in the Son's passion the mother in a manner gave birth: because then for the first time she felt the pains of childbirth. Hence of her it had been foretold, Isa. 66:7–8: *Before she was in labor, she brought forth*, etc. *Who hath ever heard such a thing?* But the human race having been redeemed by the passion, hell despoiled, and the Son raised, *she no more remembereth the anguish, for joy* (John 16:21). (Below you will find this.)

Mary loved *strongly*, loving in all her strength him who made her (Sir. 7:32), and fearing nothing besides him. Matt. 10:28: *Fear ye not them that kill the body*, etc. For the perfect fear of the Lord makes one love strongly. Hence Prov. 14:26: *In the fear of the Lord is confidence of strength*, etc. Patiently enduring for him whatever adversities, according to that of Proverbs 12:26: *He that neglecteth a loss for the sake of a friend*, that is, Christ, *is just.* For no adversity departing from his love: because, as is said, Prov. 17:17: *He that is a*

friend loveth at all times, that is, in adversity as in prosperity: for he who does not love Christ in adversity as in prosperity is not a friend. For no adversity, not even for fear of death, denying or deserting *(p. 218)* him, as presumptuous Peter did: and this appeared manifestly in the passion, when the disciples fled, she stood undaunted by the cross (John 19:25): for there was no fear in her charity, since she loved perfectly. 1 John 4:18: *Perfect charity casteth out fear.* Because her love was *strong as death* (Cant. 8:6): because as death does not die, so her charity never fell away. Hence she says to the Son, Jer. 31:3: *I have loved thee with a perpetual charity.* For fulfilled in her was that of Ecclesiasticus 13:18: *Love God all thy life.* Because, if it could be done according to the good pleasure of the divine will, she desired to die for him and with him, and spared not her life for love, as neither did the Son. For him, as she seemed to say with David, 2 Kings 18:33: *Who would grant me that I might die for thee, my son Jesus!* With him, because although she did not lay down her soul for the redemption of the human race, she nonetheless exposed it, and did what she could.

Again, the blessed Virgin loved *mindfully*, according to that of Ecclesiasticus 37:6: *Forget not thy friend in thy mind.* Isa. 49:15: *Can a woman forget*, as above. Therefore also she says, Cant. 1:12: *A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, he shall abide between my breasts.* As if she said: My beloved to me singularly and specially, he is the bundle of myrrh, that is, the gathering of many bitternesses bound with the tie of tenacious memory: and this bundle shall abide between my breasts, that is, in my heart, which is enclosed between the breasts: because I cannot but compassionate him, I cannot but die with him, whom I bore, whom I nursed, who for me bore so many bitternesses; and the Son seems as it were to have persuaded her to this, Lam. 3:19, saying: *Remember my poverty and transgression, the wormwood and the gall.*

Otherwise, that the exposition may suit both Mary and the faithful soul: *My beloved*, who loves me and is loved by me, is to me, loving him and imitating his passion, a bundle of myrrh: and this bundle shall abide between my breasts. The sum is: The whole heap of tribulations and passions of my beloved which he sustained for my salvation will never fall from my memory. But the beloved of Mary was properly to her a bundle of myrrh in the passion, when he was given myrrh to drink, as is said, Mark 15:23: *And they gave him wine mingled with myrrh*, etc., and when, taken down from the cross, he was anointed with myrrh and aloes. But to herself she says as if distinctively that he was a bundle, nay the greatest burden (*fascem*): for she compassionated him more than all, since *every wound is the sadness of the heart* (Sir. 25:17), because she loved more than all. For myrrh is medicinal to the sick. Therefore the Lord, in the passion which he sustained for the salvation of the great patient, that is, of the whole world, took wine mixed with myrrh from the soldiers.

And note that the faithful soul calls him a bundle (*fasciculus*), not a burden (*fascis*): because it counts light, for love of him, whatever labor and sorrow threatens; and because the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18): for that is momentary, etc. (2 Cor. 4:17). Is it not a bundle, whose burden is light, and yoke sweet (Matt. 11:30)? I do not say that the harshness and bitterness of death was light in itself, but hard and heavy; but the imitation of it is light to one who loves. Therefore she did not say simply, *A bundle of myrrh is my beloved*, but added *to me*: because to one truly loving nothing is difficult. Therefore also she calls him beloved, showing that the force of love overcomes every trouble of bitterness. Hence blessed Bernard to his monks: "There will be one day for us a huge heap of glory, which is now a bundle of myrrh."

It follows: *Between my breasts he shall abide (p. 219).* This, literally, when the mother carried him in her arms. *Between the breasts*, that is, in the principal part of my heart he shall abide even to the end. *He shall abide*, never departing thence. Or, he shall abide as to all the circumstances of the passion. Which is shown by the binding of the bundle. The breasts of the spouse, whether Mary or the faithful soul, are compassion and congratulation. Or better, according to the sense of the letter, gratitude and humility, which most of all detain and delight the spouse: for by the very fact that we recognize ourselves through humility as unworthy of such great benefits, and through gratitude cease not to give thanks, we retain Christ with us inseparably

and delightfully, who says, Prov. 8:31: *My delights were to be with the children of men.* On the other hand, nothing more drives away and removes the spouse than pride and ingratitude. The spouse therefore, because she is conversant between prosperity and adversity, places this bundle between her breasts, that neither glad things lift her up nor sad cast her down. Blessed Bernard: "Thou also, if thou art wise, wilt imitate the prudence of the spouse, and wilt not suffer this so dear bundle of myrrh to be taken from the principal part of thy breast even for an hour, that thou also mayest say: *A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me*, etc."

Otherwise: Christ was a bundle in the old law, but between the breasts of Mary he was made beloved, and gentle and sweet. For as blood, horrible in itself, is made in the breasts milk, which is sweet and delightful to see: so the Son, who in the law was terrible, between Mary's breasts was made mild. Hence she also is called the mother of mercy. *He shall abide* (*commorabitur*), he says, and by the composition of the word it is designated that Mary is the dwelling not of the Son alone, but of the whole Trinity, and a joyful dwelling. Hence on this account that verse of Psalm 86:7 seems to be understood thus: *The dwelling in thee is as of all rejoicing*, namely of the three persons.

Mary's love is inseparable, as of spouse to bridegroom, of beloved to the beloved, of mother to the only-begotten. Of this inseparability she herself says, Cant. 3:4: *I held him, and I will not let him go.* Again, Cant. 8:6: *Jealousy is hard as hell*, that is, her love. Because as hell, which it once has received, never lets go, so her charity never fell away, never let go the beloved. Hence she could truly say to the Son that of Jeremiah 31:3: *I have loved thee with a perpetual charity.* Again that of 2 Kings 1:26: *As a mother loveth her only son, so did I love thee.* Again that of the Apostle to the Romans 8:35 ff.: *Who shall separate us from the charity of Christ? Tribulation*, etc. Ibid.: *I am sure that neither death nor life*, etc., and he puts eleven adjectives. If therefore the soldier of the king loved his king so much, how much do you think the mother of the King loved the King her Son? Surely much more.

Inseparable: which pertains to loving strongly. Hence Cant. 8:6: *Love is strong as death, jealousy hard as hell.* Which is understood of the charity of Christ first and principally, which was well strong as death: because through charity he deigned to die. John 15:13: *Greater love than this no man hath*, etc. And that we might not die eternally, his soul was separated from his body, which is to die temporally. The charity of Mary also was strong as death, nay stronger than death: because she loved the Son so much, and so much desired the redemption of the human race, that she desired to die for the Son, or with the Son for the world's salvation, as was said above. In them also is charity strong as death who die to the world, that love may live in them: for death takes away temporal things and removes the use of the senses.

Hard also as hell was her jealousy, that is, her love: because no violence of persecutions broke her constancy, as those who are in hell can be broken by no violence of torments. Again, of charity it is said a little after: *Many waters have not been able to quench charity, (p. 220) neither can the floods drown it* (Cant. 8:7). *Many waters*, that is, all manner of penalties which she sustained in the Son, could not quench the charity of Mary: namely because the waters were absorbed by the ardor of her charity itself, as water is absorbed by the heat of the sun or of heated iron. Hence of her charity it is said, Wisd. 16:17: *In the water*, namely of tribulation, which extinguishes all things — namely imperfect charity — *the fire*, that is, Mary's charity, *had more power*, and the water forgot its quenching nature. It follows: *Nor the floods*, that is, the assaults of tribulations however great, *can drown it.* Nay, the more strongly it was driven, the more firmly it stood: because it was founded upon the firm rock which is Christ (Matt. 7:25; cf. 1 Cor. 10:4).

Again, *inseparable*: because the love of the Son absorbed in her every other love, as a great fire absorbs the fire of a candle. For love is the fire which the Lord came to cast on the earth (Luke 12:49), which, namely, more vehemently than fire inflamed the soul of his mother. Hence she herself says, Cant. 5:6: *My soul melted*, etc., as the hardest metal can be melted by the vehemence of fire.

Insatiable: because her charity was that fire of which it is said, Prov. 30:16: *The fire never saith: It is enough.* For she had tasted that the Lord is sweet, who says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger* (Sir. 24:29). Therefore she said: *My soul hath thirsted after God the living fountain* (Ps. 41:3). For as a living fountain always wells up new waters, so her Son, who is the fountain of life, ministered to her continually from himself new delights; nay even the whole Trinity, of which she was the dining-room. Hence some say that, though a wayfarer, she comprehended. Wisd. 18:16: *It reached even to heaven, standing on the earth.*

Singular: because outside God she sought nothing, saying: *One thing I have asked of the Lord*, etc. (Ps. 26:4). For her charity was a vehement and well-ordered will, as blessed Bernard defines. Augustine, of the Lord: "Whatever is besides him is not sweet to me; whatever my Lord wishes to give me, let him take away the whole, and give himself to me." For he who loves Christ for the temporal things which he bestows, his love is not singular but adulterous. As a harlot loves a lecher and applauds him as long as he has something to give, but drives him out when naked: so the lover of temporal things loves Christ. Hence: *He will confess to thee when thou shalt do well to him* (Ps. 48:19). Of such love it is said, Prov. 26:20: *When the wood faileth*, namely of temporal benefits, *the fire shall go out*, that is, the love will cease. Again, her love was singular: because it neither had its like, nor will have.

Mobile, not slow, not sluggish, not torpid, but swift, moving, and promoting. Hence, having conceived the Savior, she went up into the hill country with haste to rejoice with Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–40), fled with the Son into Egypt at the Angel's command (Matt. 2:13–14), and brought the Son back into the land of Israel, Herod being dead (Matt. 2:20–21). Hence she is also designated by the litter of Solomon: because with all agility and fervor of mind she bore herself about to any good exercises according to the good pleasure of the divine will. Of this mobility blessed Bernard: "He who loves more ardently runs more swiftly, and arrives sooner." And because she loved more ardently, whence as if unrestrained she says: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. 1:1), and all day says in the Canticles, 5:8: *I languish with love*, therefore she ran more swiftly than all, and arrived sooner at the prize of eternal life, the robe of immortality, as is believed, already put on.

Unceasing, that is, persevering: because *(p. 221)* her charity never fell away. Which is understood of perfect charity. Hence she also says to the Son, Jer. 31:3: *I have loved thee with a perpetual charity.* For her charity was like the charity of the Son, of which, John 13:1: *Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.* To which he himself also invites all the faithful, John 15:9, saying: *Abide in my love.* Again, Matt. 10:22: *He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.* For to beginners a reward is promised, but to those who persevere it is given, as the authority says.

Fervent and hot. For her love is fervor and heat. Heat: *there is none that can hide himself from the heat thereof* (Ps. 18:7). Fervor: for she loves fervently, as blessed Bernard says, who is so inebriated with love that he thinks not of majesty. So Mary loved when she said: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. 1:1). And in this word it well appears that she was inebriated. If it be asked, with what wine? she herself answers, Cant. 1:13: *A cluster of cypress is my beloved to me.* A great cluster, and strong wine, and from much drinking of strong wine drunkenness follows. For the nearer she approached to God, who is fire, the more she was inflamed with charity: for God himself is charity. Therefore blessed Bernard says: "Mary, because she loved more than all, God the Father wrought in her a singular miracle." Therefore she herself also says, Cant. 5:6: *My soul melted*, namely through the burning of charity, as metals melt through the vehemence of fire. Again, Cant. 2:5, according to another translation which Gregory gives: "I am wounded with charity." And note that the fire of charity burns sweetly but does not hurt: it kindles, but for purgation: for it consumes guilt if it finds it, not nature, but purges and cherishes and nourishes it. As, on the contrary, the fire of concupiscence nourishes and cherishes guilt, and in great part hurts and consumes nature.

Penetrating and keen. For charity enters and penetrates, nor ceases until it come to that which it loves. For it suffices not that it love the absent unless it possess the present. Nor is it enough that it be with God unless it

be in God. Nor does it deem it great to be led to all truth unless it be brought into all truth, that it may cleave to it, and as far as possible become one with it. For this is the voice of charity: *It is good for me to adhere to my God* (Ps. 72:28). Such truly was Mary's love.

Unbending and upright. Unbending: because it turned not aside to anything else outside God. Upright, which is the same: because she loved God without reflection toward temporal things. Cant. 1:3: *The upright love thee.* Others are bent. He is upright whose intention is directed to God for God's sake. For there are those who love God when he has done them good, or that he may do them good, whose love, though it tend to God, nevertheless is reflected back to themselves. And such love is like *fantille*, in French. Of these it is said, Isa. 59:8: *Their paths are crooked to them*, that is, bent back upon themselves, curved again toward their own advantage. It follows in the authority: *Everyone that treadeth in them knoweth not peace.* Morally: The good soul does not stretch itself forward to covet present goods, nor backward to look with delight at past evils, nor to the right, to pour itself out in prosperity through incontinence, nor to the left, to exceed in adversity through impatience, but upward brings forth its increase, upward has the heart where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: and such a soul rightly loves God, and rightly praises: because *praise becometh the upright* (Ps. 32:1).

Intent and inmost. Intent: because through desire of love it always looked toward God. Inmost, not superficial: because it flowed not out to exterior things. For such charity is compared to the fat lodged in the bones (*pinguedo inossata*). Hence Cant. 1:6: *Tell me whom (p. 222) my soul loveth*, that is, my inmost will and affection.

Large and ample: because she both loved and loves all things that are God's — Saracens, Jews, Christians — yet in one way and another. Hence she seems to say to all kinds of men that of the Apostle to the Philippians, 1:8: *For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*, that is, of my Son.

Affectionate and tender. For she becomes most tender and affectionate toward the things that are God's. Hence it is read, among other things, that she told Theophilus that she greatly loved the Christian race, and especially those who run with right faith and pure conscience to her temple.

Chapter 18: On Mary's Love of the Son

Having seen how Mary perfectly loved God the Trinity, it remains to see how Mary loved the Son, God and man.

1. Mary loved the Son, God and man, *naturally*, and more than any other mother could love her offspring. For it is wont to be said that a child is naturally loved more by that parent whose seed abounded in his conception than by the other. Therefore Mary naturally loved her Son more than any other woman: because Christ drew the whole matter of his flesh from his mother's flesh. Hence it was said to Mary, Luke 1:31: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb*, that is, from an intrinsic cause, not as other women, who receive from outside that whence they conceive, namely the seed of man. The same is figured by this pronoun, *thee* (*te*), which is discretive, where it follows: *That which shall be born of thee* (Luke 1:35), that is, of thee alone, not of thee and Joseph, that is, of thee and a husband. To intimate this the Son said to her, John 19:26: *Woman, behold thy son.* Wholly thine: because *thy* is a discretive pronoun. (Of this matter you have had more above, under the title, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.")

And note the example of the two harlots, between whom Solomon gave judgment concerning the child, whom he gave to the true mother (3 Kings 3:26 ff.). These two women are the synagogue and the Gentile world. The synagogue as it were divides Christ, saying that he was born of Joseph and Mary. Hence is sung: "Let the unhappy Jew blush, who says that Christ was born of the seed of Joseph." The Gentile world wants him preserved whole, believing him to be born of the Virgin alone: and therefore the former lost him, and the latter obtained him.

Carnally, in a good sense, which is to love with the whole heart, as above: because she cherished and nourished the flesh of Christ with such devotion, such zeal, that, suspended from the love of her own flesh — nay of all flesh — for love of his flesh, she subjected all the affections of her heart to the necessities of the crying, hungering, nursing, growing child, and the like. Nay, she even honored him out of her own substance: she who received in the lodging of her womb him who had gone forth from the bosom of the Father, clothed the naked, that is, pure, God with virginal flesh and swaddling clothes, and by consent administered the conceived *(p. 223)* from her own flesh, and nourishment from her own milk. According to the nature of the assumed humanity she fed him hungering, gave drink with virginal milk to him thirsting, visited him weak through infancy and lying down — not only visited, but attended him by bathing, cherishing, soothing, carrying — and rendered him wholly all the other services of humanity. When at last he was seized and crucified, she was present as at one placed in prison, and other such things. Hence under the figure of her person it was said, Luke 10:40: *But Martha was busy about much serving.* Read the homily of blessed Anselm: "Jesus entered into a certain town." Therefore she could fittingly say to him: *My flesh and my heart hath fainted away* (Ps. 72:26). And therefore thou, Lord of my heart, shalt henceforth be my portion for ever.

And so among other birds she can be compared specially to the nightingale (*philomela*), which is said from φιλέω, which is "I love," and μέλος, which is "song," as it were fainting in song for love. Hence Mary could say to the Father: *My soul hath fainted after thy salvation*, etc. (Ps. 118:81). The salvation of the Father, and our savior, is the Son of God. Again, Cant. 2:5: *Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples: because I languish with love.* Well, however, does Mary, or the faithful soul, say that she languishes: because the more she kindles herself to the love of the spouse, so much the more she languishes from the love of temporal things; as is the custom of the languishing, to loathe those things by which common life is driven. Nor does she say she is sick, but that she languishes, to note a persevering desire: for *languor* is said as it were *longus angor*, "long anguish." Nor ought such languor be healed until the friend be led into the bridegroom's chamber. Which truly is established of the glorious Virgin. Therefore on that, *I languish with love*, Gregory says: "Badly healed is the soul that languishes not with the wound of charity."

Spiritually, which is with the whole soul. Because God is spirit (John 4:24). Again, 1 Cor. 6:17: *He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit*, namely by unity of love and grace. Hence Luke 2:35 Simeon said to her: *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.* Saying *thy own*, he insinuated one soul of mother and Son. For this union, which is made by love, is spiritual: because love is a fire, which ignites the matter cleaving to it and converts it into its own nature: and because Mary adhered to God more intimately than every creature by love, saying to him: *My soul hath stuck close to thee* (Ps. 62:9), therefore she was made more spiritual than every creature. Hence also she is called soul, and not flesh. Prov. 25:25: *Cold water to a thirsty soul*, that is, to Mary, *and a good messenger*, that is, Gabriel sent to her, *from a far country*, that is, from heaven.

Manfully, which is with the whole strength. Hence she was also designated by Eve, who was called *Virago*, because she was taken from man (Gen. 2:23). But Mary is a *virago*: because from her was taken a man, namely when, from greatness of faith consenting that Christ become man from her substance, she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me* (Luke 1:38). *Virago* also, that is, acting manfully, by first vowing virginity without any precept, counsel, or example. Hence in her figure it was said, Judith 15:10–11: *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel*, etc. *Because thou hast done manfully, and thy heart has been strengthened, because thou hast loved chastity*, etc. (Look under the title, "Blessed art thou among women.") She acted manfully also in many other ways, which it would be long to narrate, but most of all she acted manfully and loved manfully in the Son's passion, so that for the title of her praise and glory it suffices that so great a force of love had kindled her mind that, when the disciples fled, forgetful of frail sex, she herself, with tears and standing by, was tormented, condoling with the dying, and, though she did not lay down her soul for her Son, she exposed *(p. 224)* it nonetheless. For who of sound head would say that such a mother, by such a Son so beloved, loved her only-begotten Son — and such a Son — less than David loved

Absalom the parricide, who said, 2 Kings 18:33: *Who would grant me that I might die for thee, my son Absalom?* Jerome: "Afflicted by the bitterness of her grief, and with her heart fixed to the pain of the cross, as one who grieved more than all because she loved more than all, she could not be the first to run to the tomb, though afterwards, as is truly believed, she was frequent and, when she could, was not wanting." These are the weights of Mary's love, which outweigh the merits and glory of all holy souls.

Communicative and generous. For her charity toward us appeared in the annunciation of the Son, when she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38): desiring to procreate the Son who should become our servant: and therefore she named herself handmaid, because the offspring follows the womb. Which the Son also intimates to the Father, saying: *I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid* (Ps. 115:16). For the Son of the Virgin served us, by the good pleasure of his mother, even to the washing of feet, nay to the endurance of the passion: because the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a redemption for many (Matt. 20:28). Therefore we also owe to the mother and the Son a return of service, that to the place whence the rivers come they may return (Eccles. 1:7). Hence he himself says to us, Zach. 11:12: *If it seem good in your eyes, bring hither my wages*, etc. So also and deservedly the mother herself can say.

Again, communicative, which appeared in the nativity of the Son, when namely him from whom she had such great delights, whom she held enclosed in her womb, she bore with joy, so as to communicate, as more than liberal to us and without envy, her delights, which she alone would possess if the Son had not been born from her womb. Therefore it is said, Isa. 9:6: *A son is given to us*: not to herself, because better could he not be born to her than he was born. But though the blessed Virgin allowed him to go forth from her womb, yet she excellently retained him in mind.

Again, communicative, when she would not retain the born one as her own, but him whom she knew to be born for the salvation of the world she, wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in the manger like bread in a cloth, in common. As if she said to the ox and ass: Behold your fodder, the hay namely of the flesh of my Son. Whence she is designated by that woman who gave her son to be eaten (4 Kings 6:28).

Again, communicative, when on the fortieth day she presented him in the temple, where the whole world assembled, as if wishing to put the whole world into possession and salvation of him; and for the work of the whole world Simeon received him into his arms (Luke 2:28). For she knew that, as Tully says, the possession of no good is pleasant without a companion.

Again, communicative, because so great was Mary's charity toward us that in a manner she gladly sustained the death of the Son, and desired with him, if need were, to die for the redemption of the human race. For then, on account of the exceeding charity with which she loved us first (cf. Eph. 2:4), she gave her begotten for our wickedness, and the fruit of her womb for the sins of our souls (Mic. 6:7). Hence also she stood by the cross of the Son, as Ambrose says, not to consider the Son's sorrow, but to await the salvation of the world. Or, perhaps for this she came to the cross, that she might see the Son who was to taste death transitorily — he who drank of the torrent in the way — but to live forever, because *(p. 225)* rising from the dead he dies no more (Rom. 6:9). Or, she came also that she might see Jesus, that is, the savior, procuring the salvation of men, dying to the world, but to live to God. And this seems the better cause.

Again, for another cause his mother stood by the cross of Jesus (John 19:25). For though she most certainly knew that her Son placed on the balance of the cross was a price sufficient for the sins of the whole world, yet if anyone should calumniate that this price was less than sufficient, she was ready to expend herself, provided she could so conform herself to the divine will. As a seller of pepper is so eager for gain that, the pepper put on the balance though sufficient, he is ready still to add more if he sees the buyer refuse that addition: and this is to be understood piously and referred to our understanding. For this she interposed herself between the cross and the North, lest the devil, signified by the North, might hinder those who wished

to come by faith to the stretched-out arms of the Savior, as the right-hand thief did, and as that centurion seems to have done, and those who were with him, who seeing the things that were done said: *Indeed this was the Son of God* (Matt. 27:54).

So great also was her charity toward us that from the time she conceived the Son she desired him to suffer for the salvation of the world, as Ambrose seems to wish. Hence it can be said and believed with confidence that, as it is said of the Father, John 3:16: *God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son*, namely for the world, etc.: so can it be said: Mary so loved the world, that is, sinners, as to give her only-begotten Son, etc., for the salvation of the world. Therefore also it is said, Isa. 9:6: *A son is given to us*, namely by the Father, by the mother, by himself, by the Holy Spirit. For if Abraham was so obedient and conformed his will so far to the divine will that he was willing to immolate his only-begotten son whom he loved, Isaac (Gen. 22:3 ff.), and yet not for the salvation of the world, what dost thou think should be believed of Mary, daughter of Abraham? On this account also the Son had foretold of the mother, Luke 10:42: *Mary hath chosen the best part*, namely to conform herself in all things to the divine will.

Chapter 19: On Mary's Love of Neighbor

Having seen of Mary's charity toward the Only-begotten, it remains to see of her love of neighbor. Matt. 22:39: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, that is, to enjoy God, to see God, to possess eternal life. Or thus: *As thyself*, that is, freely, not simoniacally: for a man loves himself freely, not for any utility he thinks to obtain therefrom. Similarly and freely thou must love thy neighbor, without hope of any temporal emolument. So Mary loves us, who needs not our goods: for though *(p. 226)* she loves those who serve her, she does not twist that love toward her own advantage but toward theirs: and therefore she desires to be served, that in us she may find merit which she may be bound to repay.

Or, as Augustine says: "A man loves himself for what he is, not because he is father, or brother, or sister to himself." Similarly we ought to love our neighbor for what he is, not because he is father, or brother, or anything to us.

Or, *As thyself*, that is, as thou wouldst be loved. Which in two ways must be fulfilled, namely by keeping both parts of justice. Matt. 7:12: *All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them.* This is the first part of justice. Tob. 4:16: *What thou hatest to have done to thee by another, see thou never do to another.*

Again, in three ways the neighbor is to be loved: by wish, by word, and by benefit, namely by heart, mouth, and work. In wish is noted good desire, that thou desire for him whatever good thou desirest for thyself. In word is noted instruction, correction, prayer, and the like. In benefit, the exhibition of counsel, aid, and works of mercy. Of the first, Phil. 1:8: *God is my witness, how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.* Of the second, 1 Thess. 5:14: *Rebuke the unquiet, comfort the feeble-minded*, etc. Of the third, Gal. 6:2: *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ.* Those who bear one another's burdens are those bestowing on each other counsel and aid. In these three ways Mary loves us, desiring every good for us, ceaselessly praying for us, both for the just that they fall not and for sinners that they rise again. But heaven and earth are full of her mercy and benefits, nor is there any that hideth himself from her heat.

Otherwise: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* (Matt. 22:39). Lev. 19:18: *Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself.* The Septuagint say neighbor. There the interlinear Gloss: "As thyself, that is, from which thyself, namely from the affection and effect of charity. Or, in which thyself, namely in God. Or, on account of which thyself, namely on account of God. Or, to which thyself, that is, to grace in the present and to glory in the future. Or, how thyself, namely above one's goods and one's own body and short of God." He who thus loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law (Rom. 13:10). On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets (Matt. 22:40). Augustine says that by the name of neighbor every man is understood. Again, on

that of Matthew 18:15 and Luke 17:3: *If thy brother shall offend against thee*, etc., Augustine says: "When, in my hearing, anyone does an injury to my brother, I think it done to me." An example is Moses, who slew the Egyptian injuring his brother (cf. Exod. 2:12).

Chapter 20: On the Cardinal Virtues of Mary

(p. 227) Having treated of the three theological virtues of Mary, we must see how she had the four cardinal virtues, namely justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance.

1. She had indeed *justice*, with which, after the example of her Son, she was clothed as with a breastplate (Isa. 59:17). For as a breastplate is impenetrable by darts and lances, so her justice and immunity from sin could never be penetrated by any temptations, which are the javelins of the enemy. It was needful that the strong woman be clothed with such a breastplate, since she had been prepared by God for this, that with her aid that strong man who diligently guarded his court should be overcome by one stronger coming upon him, namely the Son of God (Luke 11:21–22). For then God delivered Sisara into the hand of a woman (Judg. 5:24 ff.): of that unique Hebrew woman who wrought confusion in the house of Nabuchodonosor (Judith 14:14).

There are three principal degrees of justice by which our blessed Virgin ascended to the summit of all virtues. First, to be subject to a greater. Second, not to be preferred to an equal. Third, to be subject to a lesser. The first begins; the second advances; the third consummates. Therefore Mary obtained not only justice but all justice, who, when she was made mother of the eternal King, and knew it, did not disdain to minister to Elizabeth, the mother of a king's soldier — the mother of the supreme God to the mother of a mere man, the mother of the Lord of all to the mother of a purchased slave. Hence Elizabeth says to her: *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke 1:43): the mother of the Savior to the mother of the herald, the mother of the highest Word to the mother of the voice. But what the Lord was afterwards to say to John, Mary could say to Elizabeth: *Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice* (Matt. 3:15), that is, perfect humility.

Again, because in all things she observed consummate justice, therefore she was figured by Anna, *whose countenance was no more changed into divers* [moods] (1 Kings 1:18). And this justly: for Anna is "grace," and she is called full of grace. Again, justice renders to each his own, and she rendered to the saluting Angel a discreet answer, namely, *How shall this be done?* To God, praise and thanksgiving, saying: *Magnificat*, etc. To men, sufficient instruction, saying, John 2:5: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.* Again, she rendered the things that are Caesar's to Caesar and the things that are God's to God (Matt. 22:21). For she rendered God to the world, whom the world had lost through Eve; and the world, that is, lovers of the world, as far as in her lies, she never ceases to render to God by prayers, merits, and examples. For through her especially God was made the world's and the world God's.

(p. 228) 2. *Prudence* is the discernment of good and evil, with the desire of the one and the loathing of the other. Otherwise: Prudence is to despise the world and all things that are in it by contemplation of divine things, and to direct every thought of the mind to the divine alone. So Macrobius describes prudence in the Dream of Scipio. In the Gospel of Matthew, 25:1 ff., of the five prudent virgins it is read, by whom five prudences are signified, all of which are to be found in Mary, who was a most prudent virgin.

Prudence consists in avoiding evils: because it makes shrewd. Hence the Lord commends this, Matt. 10:16: *Be ye wise as serpents.*

Her *first* prudence was that she guarded herself from the vanity of the world. Hence she was found by the Angel sitting at home, or perhaps praying, as blessed Bernard says. Not at the doors of the house, like that Solomonic woman (cf. Prov. 9:14 ff.), but rather, as is believed, in a chamber, knowing that in all things that are outside it will be said, *Woe, woe* (Amos 5:16), and recalling what befell Dinah from wandering abroad,

who was corrupted for this reason, because she was a wanderer (Gen. 34:1 ff.). Hence she was signified by Sara the wife of Abraham, lying hid in the tent (Gen. 18:1–2), and by Sara the daughter of Raguel, praying in the upper chamber of her house (Tob. 3:10), and by Judith, who remained shut in her chamber, that is, in the secret oratory, with her maids (Judith 8:5), that is, humble and clean thoughts and holy affections: and by this, when the Angel Gabriel entered to her, then the Angel of great counsel entered to her heart. Hence Gabriel said of him: *The Lord is with thee.*

The *second*, that she guarded herself from wandering, against what the Psalmist complains, Ps. 39:13: *My heart hath forsaken me.* For this reason especially that may be understood of her which the Lord had said, Hosea 2:14: *I will lead her into solitude* — of the mind, namely — *and I will speak to her heart.* Into solitude she was led by the Lord when alone she was shut in the chamber. To her heart the Lord spoke through the Angel saying to her: *Hail, full of grace*, and the rest that follow.

The *third*, that she was troubled in her exaltation, after the example of David her father, who says: *Being exalted I have been humbled and troubled* (Ps. 87:16): against this, that Lucifer was proud of his exaltation, and against those who keep their flatterers with them, in whose praises they glory.

The *fourth*, that she thought about the salutation. (You will find this a little below.) For because the Virgin was prudent she considered prudently and discreetly not only what she would say but to whom she would say it, and what it befitted her to say.

The *fifth* prudence appeared in interrogation and brief answer. Prov. 17:27: *He that moderateth his words is wise and prudent*, etc. (Below, under the title of her words, you will find all these fully.)

And note that three women who figure Mary are commended for prudence. The first, Abigail, who was most prudent and beautiful (1 Kings 25:3). And she by prudence guarded against the evil threatening her husband and house, and appeased David, angry against foolish Nabal, by the subtlety of her words. And note that Abigail is interpreted "my father's exultation": because the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit exult in her; and she, by praying, obtained from David that he not forthwith kill Nabal the foolish and most wicked, that is, the human race.

The second, the Thecuite woman, to whom Joab said, 2 Kings 14:2: *Mourn for the dead*, etc. And she as it were abolished the evil that had already happened, reconciling Absalom the fratricide to David his father. So *(p. 229)* Mary with prudent words reconciles to Christ the murderers of the Brother, that is, of her spirit.

The third, the woman in Abela, 2 Kings 20:19 ff., who said to Joab: *Seekest thou to destroy the city, and to overthrow a mother in Israel?* And she threw the head of Seba, who had raised sedition against David, to Joab, and the city was saved. So Mary under her feet crushed Barabbas, that is, the devil, who for the sedition he had raised in heaven, which is the kingdom of the true David, and the murder he perpetrated in the sedition when he killed himself and his accomplices — whence also he is called a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44) — was sent into the prison of hell (cf. Luke 23:25).

Again, the glorious Virgin is the most prudent of virgins, having the lamp of most entire virginity, and the oil of mercy in all her vessels: in the vessel of the heart through the affection of mercy, in the vessel of the hands through the effect, and in the vessel of the mouth through the kindness of prayer.

Mary was prudent: because prudently thinking what the angelic salutation might be. For since under the law there was no woman without malediction, either of sterility, as virgins, or of corruption, as mothers, she rightly thought how *Hail* should be said to her. Since she knew that under the law there is no fullness of grace, because the law brought no one to perfection (Heb. 7:19), she wondered how she was called full of grace. When she had heard: *Thou shalt conceive and bring forth*, she compared the words of Isaiah, 7:14, saying: *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*, with the words of the Angel saying: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son*, etc., certain of the fact, but doubtful of the manner.

Mary was prudent in mouth or speech: because, certified of the manner when it was said to her: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, etc., the faith that she had in her heart she expressed with her mouth, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc. Again, prudent in speech: because with highest devotion she asked that what was promised her be fulfilled, adding: *Be it done to me according to thy word.*

In work: because, having conceived the Son of God, spontaneously and most devotedly she humbled herself to serve Elizabeth, a young virgin to an elderly woman, and she stayed with her three months, as Ambrose says in the book on Virginity.

Chapter 21: On the Poverty of Mary

By poverty, which is the contrition of spirit, that is, humility, there is no doubt Mary was the poorest. By poverty also, that is, abdication of temporal things: hence Jerome calls her a money-making woman (*quaestuaria*), who with needle and spindle earned wherewith to live and nourish her Son, so that of her literally that of Proverbs 31:19 can seem to be understood: *She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers (p. 230) have taken hold of the spindle.* And note that, though poor, she is not read to have begged anything, or to have asked her Son for temporal things.

And that she was the poorest is clear from this, that in her own city, that is, Bethlehem, which from her father David was owing to her as by hereditary right, about to bear the Son of God, she found no lodging: because she perhaps had not wherewith to hire it, and therefore withdrew to an inn, and there bore the Savior. In this also, that the Son being born she had not skins wherewith to cover him in mid-winter, but wrapped him in swaddling clothes. Again, in this that she could not lay him in a bed or chamber, whence she laid him in a manger. In this also that she was betrothed to a carpenter, as the Jews say (cf. John 6:42), and such are almost everywhere poor.

In this so great poverty, however, she is proved to have been most generous: for though she took hold of the spindle to seek her living, she opened her hand to the needy and stretched out her cloak to the poor (cf. Prov. 31:20), not solicitous for the morrow. For it must be believed that those blessed kings who recognized her Son as King and Lord of heaven offered him not a little but something great, generously. Hence it is said, Matt. 2:11: *And opening*, not their purses, but their treasures, *they offered him gifts*, not a single gift: and with immense gifts they presented Joseph and Mary, as it is read in the apocryphon on the Infancy of the Savior. Some say, however, that therefore it is said of the Magi, *they found the child with Mary his mother* (Matt. 2:11), not with Joseph: because by divine disposition it was brought about that when they came Joseph was absent, lest they should believe Christ to be born of him. Hence on that place Hilary says that Joseph is not read, after the nativity of Christ, to be called Mary's husband: in which it is intimated that before the nativity he was called her husband as a nourisher by office, but after the child was born he is not called husband, that by this it might be insinuated that, the child being born, the consolation of the child could suffice.

But what did Mary do with such great gifts, which about her are not believed to have been sumptuous? Surely she opened her hand to the needy, and is believed to have expended all to the uses of the poor, taking thought neither for the twenty-eighth day of purification which followed, nor even for the morrow. For the greatest proof of her poverty was that, bringing her Son to the temple, she had not wherewith to buy even one single little lamb: though in the Holy Land many lambs are found, and are had for a small price. For who doubts that, if she could have had a lamb, according to the precept of the law (Lev. 12:6 ff.), she would have offered it most devotedly with her Son: nay certainly, if the law commanded, and she could have them, a hundred or a thousand lambs. For it is thus read there: *And when the days of her purifying are expired, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of a year old for a holocaust.* But God, compassionating his mother's poverty and foreseeing it, added a little after: *And if her hand find not sufficiency, and she is not able to offer a lamb, she shall take two turtles or two young pigeons.* Ambrose seems to wish that she offered both oblations, namely of the turtle and the dove.

Again, perhaps on account of her poverty God willed that she be betrothed to a craftsman (*faber*) who from his art might sustain her. Again, since Christ says, *I am poor and needy* (Ps. 69:6), and the Apostle, 2 Cor. 8:9: *You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich he became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich*, it is clear that the mother was not rich but poor, that *(p. 231)* she might be made like the Son. Similarly since he himself says, Matt. 8:20: *The Son of man hath not where to lay his head*, the same is clear. Again, since other holy women following the Lord ministered to him of their substance, as is said, Luke 8:2–3, it is clear that the mother had not wherewith to minister to him, she who would have spent it more willingly, and he would more fully have accepted her ministry.

Again, by reason of poverty she herself is compared to a rod (*virga*), which occupies little earth: because if she had had where to lay her own head, there she would much more willingly have laid her born Son than her own head. It is evident, however, that she was poor in spirit, that is, in will, not of necessity, since her Son, whose is the earth and the fulness thereof (Ps. 23:1), could and would deny her nothing, as appeared when at her nod he changed water into wine (John 2:3 ff.).

Deservedly, by poverty, she gained the kingdom of heaven: because, as is said, Luke 6:20: *Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.* And note that one kind of martyrdom is voluntary poverty. Hence blessed Bernard: "A wonderful kind of martyrdom is voluntary poverty. For what is more wonderful, or what martyrdom is graver, than to hunger amid feasts, to thirst amid cups, to be cold amid garments, to be pressed by poverty amid the riches which the world shows, the malignant offers, our appetite desires? It is wonderful to touch fire and not be burned, to gather thorns and not be pricked, to pass over stones and not be hurt. For riches are fire, thorns, and stones."

Again, because she was a lover of poverty, and in the law where temporal things were promised, it is said of her, Apoc. 12:1, that she had the moon under her feet, that is, all glory of the world and all mutable things under her affections. Therefore she is called mother of fair love (Sir. 24:24), because in no part was there in her love of earthliness, which defiles and darkens the soul, but she loved God before all things and nothing with him: and this is fair love, which she herself sent forth into light, as a mother sends the Son whom she bore in the womb into light in birth: and therefore she is called mother of fair love. Therefore it was said of her, Isa. 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse.* Jesse, because father of David, and therefore head of the kingdom, can signify the people of the Jews. The root of that people was temporal things: because they served for earthly things and were rooted and founded in them. Isa. 1:19: *If you be willing*, etc. From this root the blessed Virgin came forth through contempt of temporal things. She also was the rod rising out of Israel (Num. 24:17), which struck the leaders of Moab, that is, temporal things, by which the sons of this age are ruled, as the saints by the Spirit of God, while she reckoned all things as dung. The ascent of this rod, and the abundance of delights, and the leaning upon the beloved the synagogue wondered at when it said: *Who is this that cometh up*, etc. (Cant. 8:5): because the synagogue itself was descending and in need of delights: for it was pressed under the world, and leaned upon it, and did not dwell in heaven, but under the sun, where is nothing but affliction of spirit (Eccles. 1:17 and 2:11).

Chapter 22: On the Riches of Mary

(p. 232) 1. Having seen of Mary's poverty, we must see of her riches. *Why is Mary called a treasure?* And first note that she is called the *treasure of the Lord*. Hence Wisd. 7:14: *For she is an infinite treasure to men: which they that use are become the friends of God, being commended for the gifts of discipline.* A treasure is where the riches of diverse works are laid up piecemeal, as it were, so that they may be found there together in one heap. *Thesaurus* is a name composed of Greek and Latin: for the Greeks say θέσις, "laid-up" or "laying-up," the Latins *aurum*, "gold," which joined sounds "laid-up gold" or "repository of gold." Mary therefore is a treasure: because in her, as in a treasury (*gazophylacium*), the Lord laid up all the gifts of graces, merits, virtues and prerogatives, gifts and charisms: and from the treasure he himself bestows

generous stipends on his soldiers and workmen. And these are the riches that *add very many friends* (Prov. 19:4), namely God, the Angels, and holy men. This treasure also is called infinite, that is, inexhaustible, *to men*, that is, to those using reason: *which they that use*, working according to her counsels and examples, and to her glory and honor, *are become partakers of the friendship of God*, that is, are made friends of God. For she herself says with the Son, John 14:21: *He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father* and my Son. Again that of John 15:14: *You are my friends, if you do*, etc.

Note that some have Mary or Christ in the heart by love, others in the tongue by praise, others in a book by writing, others in the hand by operation, without which the three aforesaid do not suffice, because the proof of love is the exhibition of work: and these alone will be rewarded. Hence it is said in the judgment, Matt. 20:8: *Call the laborers and pay them their hire*, and them alone.

Commended for the gifts of discipline, that is, made commendable to God and men on account of the gifts of discipline, which is the ordered correction of morals, which the examples of Mary teach. Or, on account of the scourges of divine correction which they keep in themselves and bear patiently.

Mary is called *thesaurus* (treasure): because a treasure is hidden and shut up; and the Angel found Mary shut in her chamber, not playing in the street. It is solicitously guarded; and of Mary Psalm 90:11 says: *He hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee.* (Look under the second title on the garden.) Confidence is placed in it: hence Baruch 3:18: *They that treasure up silver and gold, in which men trust*, etc.; and of Mary it is said, Prov. 31:11: *The heart of her husband trusteth in her.* It possesses the heart of its possessor: hence Matt. 6:21: *Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.* Similarly the heart of the Lord is on Mary, who is his possession actively and passively. Passively: hence she herself says, Prov. 8:22: *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways*, etc. Actively: *(p. 233)* hence, her Son being born, she could say with Eve, Gen. 4:1: *I have possessed a man through God.* From it soldiers and servants are rewarded: because the hire is the fruit of the virginal womb. It is composed of precious and many durable things. It is continually increased according to the ability of the treasurer. In time of necessity, utility, and honor it is spent. From it are brought forth by the father of a family new things and old (Matt. 13:52). For in her were the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden (Col. 2:3), which are intimated in the New or Old Testament. By the father of a family is understood the Order of Preachers.

And note that three things are chiefly wont to be treasured: namely gold, silver, and precious stones. In gold are principally designated charity and wisdom, virginity and obedience; in silver, sonorous and tinkling prayer, or eloquence; in precious stones, the whole of the virtues is figured.

Mary can also be called a treasure or *gazophylacium*, that is, a vessel or hearth where riches are laid up, that is, Christ the true treasure hidden in this treasury. Hence it is said to him, Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God*, namely in the virginal womb. This treasure the virgin carried, going to visit Elizabeth: virginal bashfulness hid it: John, shut up in the womb, perceiving him, leaped for joy: Elizabeth, publicly manifesting, exclaimed. For she is the golden urn containing this treasure (Heb. 9:4): in which urn was laid up the gold of the deity. Hence she says, Cant. 5:11: *His head is the finest gold.* Laid up also is the silver of the most pure and white humanity, many ways tried by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

2. Again, concerning the multitude of her riches, which were not temporal, carnal, corruptible, worldly, but eternal, spiritual, incorruptible, and heavenly, and are and shall be, the Holy Spirit says to Mary, Prov. 31:29: *Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all.* This verse is contained under the letter ר (*resh*), which is interpreted *wisdom*, by which alone spiritual riches are gathered; and the praise suits Mary specially, to whom specially the praise of the Church is given and attributed, since she is the more honorable and more beautiful member under the head in the whole body of the Church. And apart from the series of the Glosses it can be expounded thus of the glorious Virgin: *Many daughters*, that is, angelic virtues, to whom she herself says, Cant. 5:8: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem*, etc. Or, *Many*

daughters, that is, consecrated virgins: hence in Psalm 44:9–10: *Myrrh, and stacte, and cassia*, etc.: *out of the ivory houses, whereby the daughters of kings have made thee glad*, etc. Or, *Many daughters*, that is, penitent souls, of whom it is said, Ps. 44:13: *And the daughters of Tyre with gifts*, etc. Or, *Many daughters*, that is, souls confessing their sins and the praises of God, who are the daughters of Judah. Or, *Many daughters*, that is, contemplative souls, who are the daughters of Sion, that is, of speculation.

Of the first, that is, angelic virtues, blessed Bernard says: "Virginity indeed was in her such as that of the Angels, but in a fragile body, which is not the Angels' lot." Hence, having surpassed the riches of all, she the more clearly displays the mark of her celestial origin, while we see angelic likeness retained by her in the region of unlikeness, and the glory of the celibate life usurped on earth by an exile. Jerome: "To live in the flesh and beyond the flesh, that is, beyond the vices of the flesh, is not an earthly life, but a heavenly." Hence to acquire angelic glory in the flesh is of greater merit than to have it. For to be an Angel is of felicity, but to be a virgin is of virtue, while by strength with grace one strives to obtain what the Angel has by nature. Yet both, to be a virgin or an Angel, is not an earthly life, but a heavenly *(p. 234)*. But to the virginity of others sterility is annexed and pride lies in wait: but the virginity of this one humility guarded and fruitfulness adorned.

Of the second, that is, of consecrated virgins, it can be said that, if they are virgins, she is the queen of virgins, who first vowed virginity without any human precept, counsel, or example: whence she also merited this name, that she should henceforth be called Virgin of virgins or Queen of virgins, and from her all others take example, but she from none. And while all others are sterile of carnal fruit, she is virgin and mother together. And if others be humble, she is the most humble: and the more humble than all, the more sublime than all: because she neither seemed to have a like before her nor to have a successor. Again, if others be merciful, she is the mother of mercy, having as it were two breasts, which we ought to ask continually to suck, as children the breasts of their mother. These are purity of flesh against luxury, and humility of mind against pride. Hence we ask:

Deliver us from our faults, make us meek and chaste. And so: *Grant a pure life.*

Again, if others are full of good works which they bestow on the poor, yet these do it from another's substance: but Mary, not only to any poor but to the very Son of God, of whom that is specially expounded, *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor* (Ps. 40:2), bestowed all works of mercy from her own substance, fulfilling that of Proverbs 3:9: *Honor the Lord with thy substance.* And therefore blessed above all: hence it was said to her, Luke 1:42: *Blessed art thou among women*, that is, above all women.

Again, if others are commended for faith, she much more, who at the first word of the Angel believed that could be fulfilled in her what had never been heard, neither in heaven nor on earth, namely that she could conceive and bear remaining a virgin. Hence also through greatness of faith she answered: *Be it done to me according*, etc. (Luke 1:38).

Again, if others are commended for being in anguish for their own sins, namely the daughters of Tyre, which is interpreted anguish, she is much more to be commended, that she so compassionated the sinful world that most willingly with the Son she would have compassionated for the world's salvation: for if she laid not down her soul for the world, she nevertheless exposed it: and what she could, she did, and for this she is believed to have stood by the cross of the Son.

Again, if others, namely the daughters of Judah, are commended for confession of sin and of praise, she much more worthily sings the canticle of divine praise, *following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth* (Apoc. 14:4): for she had no sins which she could confess.

Again, if others are commended for the grace of contemplation, her contemplation is truly singular. (Look under the title of her contemplation.)

Again, if others are beautiful and prudent, she is the most beautiful of women (Cant. 5:9), and most prudent, designated by Abigail, who was most prudent and beautiful (1 Kings 25:3). And so thou canst assign it for the charisms of all the virtues.

It is said therefore: *Many daughters*, that is, angelic virtues and holy souls, *have gathered together riches* of diverse virtues and works, merits, rewards. *Thou*, discretively, O blessed Virgin, *hast surpassed them all*, by excellence of humility, by the fruitfulness of virginity, and the virginity of fruitfulness: for virginity excluded not fruitfulness in thee, nor did fruitfulness violate virginity, which is to thee a singular glory. *Thou hast surpassed*: because as *(p. 235) the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters*, says Christ of Mary (Cant. 2:2). For the thorn, though it bring forth flowers, is nevertheless incomparable to the lily. Every man, moreover, is a thorn, to whom the earth of his body and conscience brings forth thorns and thistles, except the glorious Virgin. Or, therefore Mary is said to surpass all daughters: because, as Jerome says, to the rest grace is given by parts, but upon Mary the fullness of grace infused itself wholly. Or thus: *Thou hast surpassed them all*, and this threefold: by sanctification, by which thou wast purged of all the foulness of earthly corruption; by fullness of knowledge, by which thou wast free of all cloud of error; by highest contemplation, by which thou wast free of all tumult of worldly action.

Otherwise: *Many daughters*, etc. Foreseeing the dignity and excellence of the blessed Virgin, Solomon asserts that the virtues which he attributes singly are in her universally, saying: *Many daughters*, that is, virgins. He does not say all: because there are foolish virgins, who keep continence for human praise: but the prudent seek to please only the eyes of the interior judgment. Therefore it is said: *Daughters have gathered*. From the very exposition of the word he notes the use of free will with grace: because we are God's helpers, who mercifully worketh in us to will and to accomplish: for *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy* (Rom. 9:16). *Riches*, not bodily, but spiritual. *Thou singularly and discretively hast surpassed them all* in merit and reward: because, as Jerome says, to the rest grace is given by parts, but upon Mary the fullness of grace infused itself wholly. Hence she is called full of grace.

Otherwise: By this that Solomon puts the past tense, saying, *have gathered*, this seems to be understood of the holy women of the Old Testament, by whom she is figured, who shone with diverse virtues. Sara is commended for faith, Heb. 11:11: *By faith also Sara herself, being barren, received strength to conceive seed.* But Mary was more faithful than Sara, who doubted of the promise, but Mary did not. Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*: because she never wavered concerning the Angel's promise. Rebecca for beauty (Gen. 24:16), who was a most beautiful virgin. But Mary more beautiful, Wisd. 7:29: *For she is more beautiful than the sun.* Rachel for lovableness, Gen. 29:18: *Jacob loving Rachel*, etc. But Mary more lovable, in whom was consummated that love by which old hatreds were recalled. For this in the Canticles she is so often called beloved. Lia for fruitfulness. But Mary more fruitful: because though she bore but one, yet in that one she bore the salvation of all. Matt. 1:21: *For he shall save his people*, etc. Debbora for wisdom: whence she was a prophetess and judged the people (Judg. 4:4 ff.). But Mary wiser, who was built into a house of wisdom (Prov. 9:1). Esther for humility and detestation of worldly glory, who said to the Lord, Esther 14:16: *Thou knowest … that I abominate the sign of pride*, etc. But Mary far more humble, whose humility God regarded (Luke 1:48), and through her cast down the ancient pride of the devil. Judith for fortitude: because she slew Holofernes (Judith 13:10). But Mary stronger, who crushed the head of the ancient serpent, Gen. 3:15: *She shall crush*, etc. On account of all these and many other things it is said: *Blessed art thou among women* (Luke 1:42), that is, above all women, as Jerome glosses.

3. Again, of the multitude of her riches she glories, and says with Wisdom, Prov. 8:18: *With me are riches (p. 236) and glory, superb wealth and justice.* As if she said to those who scorn to serve and love her: If my love does not move you to seek and love me, at least let cupidity move you: because *with me are riches and glory*,

that is, glorious riches, which namely make their possessors glorious. But temporal riches are called dung (Phil. 3:8), that from the very vileness of the word they may be vile. But spiritual riches, namely virtues, merits and good works, are *opes superbae* (superb wealth), that is, super-eminent, not seeking the low. Hence to the Church it is promised, Isa. 60:15: *I will make thee to be an everlasting pride.* Again, *superbae*: because they are given to those who go higher (*superius*), that is, above their own sense and own will. For this Mary says to her servant: *Friend, go up higher* (Luke 14:10). These riches exalt the heart from earthly to heavenly things. Sir. 40:26: *Riches and strength lift up the heart,* etc. And these riches are acquired by good operation. Hence Prov. 10:4: *The hand of the strong getteth riches.* Again, such riches make their possessors strong. Prov. 10:15: *The substance of the rich man is the city of his strength,* etc. Or, the wealth of virtues is called *superb* from the effect: because it makes a man proud with a holy pride, which is indignation against vices and sins. Eccles. 1:18: *In much wisdom is much indignation.* Isa. 63:5: *My indignation itself helped me.* Jerome: "Son, learn holy pride." The Philosopher: "If I knew that men would be ignorant and the gods would pardon, still I should disdain to sin." And these are the riches that *add very many friends,* namely God, the Angels, and the saints. This holy pride proceeds from the fat of graces, of which in Ps. 62:6: *Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness.* Hence Deut. 32:15: *The beloved grew fat, and kicked,* against vices and sins.

And justice is with me, without which the rest avail not. With these riches wisdom, Christ, and Mary enrich those serving and loving them. Hence it is added a little after, Prov. 8:20–21: *I walk in the ways of justice* — that thou also mayest walk in the ways of justice, if thou wouldst meet Christ, wisdom, or Mary — *in the midst of the paths of judgment,* that is, of discretion. Literally: Mary walked the ways of the precepts, circumcising the Son, and carrying him with the legal victims to the temple of the Lord, and such like. She walked also in the midst of the paths of judgment, that is, through the paths of counsels with discretion, emitting the vow of virginity, and the same ways she taught us by example. It follows in the authority: *That I may enrich them that love me,* with the riches abovesaid which fill. For temporal riches empty. *And may fill their treasures,* that is, the places where riches are laid up, which are the three powers of the soul. For by the prayers of the mother the Lord fills the rational with perfect knowledge of the highest truth, the concupiscible with perfect love of the highest goodness, the irascible with perfect glory of exultation.

Note that riches are fourfold: temporal, spiritual, celestial, supercelestial. The first are temporal, which he gives commonly to the good and the evil, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the evil, etc. (Matt. 5:45). But to the sons they are given for sustenance, to the wicked for reward, Matt. 6:2: *They have received their reward.* For this reason *better is a little to the just man, than the great riches of the wicked* (Ps. 36:16). Hence Solomon prays, Prov. 30:8: *Give me neither beggary nor riches,* etc. Study on this matter.

The second, spiritual, that is, gifts and virtues, which truly make their possessors rich. Gregory: "If, brethren, ye desire to be truly rich, love true riches." Of these it was said above.

(p. 237) The third are *celestial* riches, that is, the joys of paradise. Hence of the just man, Ps. 111:3: *Glory and wealth shall be in his house,* that is, in paradise, where he dwells in mind. And with such riches the inner man is fed by hope. Hence Ps. 36:3: *Dwell in the land,* namely of the living, *and thou shalt be fed with its riches.* The eye is fed by beauty, the ear by melody, the smell by sweetness, the taste by sweetness. Therefore it is said, Isa. 64:4, and 1 Cor. 2:9, that *eye hath not seen,* as to the first; *nor ear heard,* as to the second; *nor hath it entered into the heart of man,* as to each. Therefore it is said: *How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord,* etc. (Ps. 30:20).

The fourth are *supercelestial* riches, namely the exemplar virtues in God, such as the goodness of God, the mercy of God, and so of the others. Rom. 11:33: *O the depth of the riches,* etc. To see these is to have them. These the Lord will give us when we shall see *the king in his beauty* (Isa. 33:17) and *as he is.*

Chapter 23: On the Generosity and Mercy of Mary

Of the generosity and mercy of Mary it can fittingly be said that, since she is supremely rich, and supremely liberal also, it is evident that she is supremely generous and merciful, fulfilling that of Tobias 4:8–9: *According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly*, etc. Again, Wisd. 11:24 it is said to her: *Thou hast mercy upon all, because thou canst do all things*, etc. Again, Prov. 31:29: *Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all.* Again, Sir. 14:13: *According to thy ability stretch out thy hand to the poor and give*, etc., that is, to the sinner. Again, Sir. 35:12: *Give to the Most High according to what he hath given*, etc. For to the Most High is given what for his honor is bestowed on his poor. And note that he says, *according to what he hath given*. Esther 2:17 it is said that Esther had grace and mercy above all women, etc., by whom Mary is signified. Therefore she ought to give according to the grace and mercy she received, according to that of Ecclesiasticus 31:18: *Understand the things that are thy neighbor's by thyself.* For Christ ascending on high … gave gifts to men (Eph. 4:8). Likewise Mary, the true and unique imitator of the Son, since she ascended into heaven, will give gifts to men. For neither ability nor will can fail her. She is queen of the heavens, she is merciful. Unless perhaps either the Son of God is not believed to honor his mother, or anyone can doubt that the bowels of Mary, in which for nine months that very charity which God is rested bodily, passed wholly into an affection of charity. Hence we also say to her: "Hail, queen, mother of mercy," recalling that she can, as queen, and will, as merciful, help us. Securely indeed must one enter *(p. 238)* that court where the door is open, and none who enter are hindered by a porter, none excluded by a chamberlain, where all the citizens of that city receive our prayers.

We must therefore cry continually to the queen of mercy: because, as blessed Bernard says, he is deservedly not heard who dissembles to cry. A queen is wont to be munificent, generous, and liberal. And she is called not only queen of mercy as to the power of having mercy, but also mother of mercy as to the affection of having mercy, showing mercy more willingly to the creatures of her Son than any mother to the sons of her womb. Hence she says, Isa. 49:15: *Can a woman forget her infant*, etc., as above under the title of charity. She is also the vessel of mercy prepared by the Lord for the time of showing mercy, which is now. Whence she is designated by Esther, who is interpreted "prepared in time." She is also called mother of mercy, that is, of Christ, who is called mercy by antonomasia. Hence Ps. 143:2: *My mercy and my refuge*, etc. Therefore someone says of this mother: "To whom shall the children of misery flee, if the mother of mercy repel them?" For this mother wishes us all good things, as a mother her children. Hence she seems to say to Christians that of the Apostle to the Philippians 1:8: *For God is my witness how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*

She is also the fountain of mercy: because as a fountain through underground channels always receives water and always pours it back, so the blessed Virgin is a fountain and well of living waters, which flow from Christ to her and from her to us with impetus from Libanus (Cant. 4:15), that is, from the whiteness of the kindness of both. For this mother disdains not sinners, as neither does a good mother her scabby son: because for sinners she recalls herself to have been made the genetrix of mercy: for where there is no misery, mercy has no place. Gregory: "Because we are always in misery, we always need mercy." Therefore also she is compared to the moon, which among all the planets is nearest the earth. So Mary among all the saints condescends more to sinners, who are designated by the earth: for as the earth is the vilest element, so the sinner is the vilest of creatures. Therefore also sinners can say to her that on their account she was made mother of mercy: for unless man had sinned, the Son of God would not be incarnate, nor would she become mother of God. It remains therefore, etc.

For this reason a certain versifier courteously says to her:

Hasten to have mercy on the wretched, blessed Virgin. For if thou rememberest thyself, the wretched made thee blessed. Therefore bless the wretched, whose cause has blessed thee.

And that other:

Do not abhor sinners, Without whom thou wouldst never be, Worthy of so great a Son. If they were not to be redeemed, Thou hadst no reason for bearing A Redeemer.

Again, on account of the usefulness of her mercy she is compared to the sun, which is more useful than all creatures under heaven: so also is that mercy which her bowels poured out upon the earth, namely her Son. By her also, reigning in the heavens, mercy is ministered to all the faithful. Which also she first is read in the Gospel to have besought of the Son for man, John 2:3, where she said: *Son, they have no wine.* As if she said: Son, men fasting and dry need the mercy of thy piety and love, that the wine of divine grace may henceforth gladden those whom the insipid taste of legal observance has hitherto saddened.

Even now Christ converts the waters of sinners into the wine of graces, by the prayers and merits of his mother, and even the waters of miseries into the wine of consolations. For this mother pleads for us with unspeakable groanings (Rom. 8:26), when through the infusion of her grace she makes us groan and obtain by praying the pardon of our sins.

(p. 239) Again, Mary is naturally clement and merciful, and her piety always receives nourishment. Hence most specially fits her that of Job 31:18: *From my infancy mercy grew up with me, and it came out with me from my mother's womb.* And note *grew*. She herself also, as far as in her lies, has mercy on all: because she can do all things, and *overlooketh the sins of men for the sake of repentance* (Wisd. 11:24). Again, Sir. 35:26: *The mercy of God and of his mother is beautiful in the time of affliction, as a cloud of rain in the time of drought.* And her mercy is compared to a cloud: because like a cloud it mercifully hides sinners from the heat of the sun, that is, from the wrath of the Son: and because it overshadows them and refreshes them from the heat of concupiscences, and like a rain by a certain grace makes them fruitful to good works.

Again, by reason of mercy she is called Star of the Sea: because she ministers the light of consolation and grace to those placed in bitterness: for where there is misery, there only has mercy a place. Nor is it wonder if she is solicitous for sinners, since for their salvation she conceived him who *came not to call the just, but sinners to repentance* (Matt. 9:13). To designate this also, at the hour in which she bore the Savior in Bethlehem, a fountain of oil is said to have burst forth at Rome and flowed down to the Tiber. For Rome had always been as a certain sewer of sin, and she bore for sinners him who was born for this, to take away the sins of the world: for to this he came, to cleanse the stables of our hearts: and therefore he willed to be born in a stable. Hence she is also designated by Joseph, whose hands served in the basket (Ps. 80:7). A basket is a vessel for carrying out filth.

Again, she is not only one of the number of the prudent virgins, but the most prudent of all, having the lamp of most entire virginity and the oil of mercy in all her vessels: in the vessel of the heart through affection, in the vessel of the hands through effect, in the vessel of the mouth through the kindness of prayer. If it be asked, whence has she such great mercy? Surely from this, that she received the Son of God in the incarnation as oil, who of pure mercy without anyone's merit deigned to be incarnate in her. But as the vessel in which oil was laid up, the oil being drawn out, remains imbued and oiled, so the blessed Virgin, vessel of mercy, is wholly oiled by the mercy of the Son.

She is also called *a fair olive tree in the plains* (Sir. 24:19), and the liquor of the olive is oil. (This you will find under the title on trees, where Mary is called an olive: and under the title on the name of Mary, where it is said, *Thy name is as oil poured out* [Cant. 1:2].) And well *fair olive*, that is, replete with every spiritual beauty through mercy, which is the glory of her virtues. Hence it is said, Hosea 14:7: *His glory shall be as the olive tree*, etc. *In the plains.* For communality: for her mercy and grace is common to all who invoke her in truth. As if she said with the Son that of John 6:37: *Him that cometh to me I will not cast out.* And therefore *young maidens*, that is, faithful souls, *have loved her exceedingly*: because *oil poured out is her name*. But in order that this olive tree may pour her oil into thee, thou must have an empty vessel. For she is that woman of whom it is read, 4 Kings 4:3–5, who filled the empty vessels with oil at the command of

Eliseus, that is, of Christ: but full ones by no means: because as the Philosopher says, he rather spills who pours into what is full. Empty vessels are hearts emptied of the love of earthly things, and washed from the uncleanness of mortal sin, and made clean again by true confession and the shedding of tears, closed below by contempt of temporal things, open above by desire of heavenly things, gaping through desire of grace, and capacious *(p. 240)* through depth of humility and breadth of charity.

Therefore, to conclude in few words, so great is Mary's mercy that none is repelled by her, none excluded, none who serves her given to oblivion. All, as far as in her lies, she gathers, all fleeing to her she receives and welcomes, she is wanting to none unless one who perhaps has been wanting to her. And therefore blessed Bernard says to her: "Let thy mercy be silent, blessed Virgin, if there be anyone who, having invoked it in his necessities, remembers that it failed him. We indeed, thy little servants, rejoice with thee in thy other virtues, but in this rather for ourselves. We praise virginity, we admire humility: but mercy tastes sweeter to the wretched. This we embrace more dearly, remember oftener, invoke more frequently." The same, speaking of Mary's mercy: "This is she who obtained the reparation of the whole world, who procured the salvation of all. For it is evident she was solicitous for the whole human race, to whom it was said: *Fear not, Mary, thou hast found grace* which thou soughtest. Who then, O blessed one, can search out the length, breadth, sublimity, and depth of thy mercy? For the length of thy mercy will succor, until the last day, all who invoke it. The breadth fills the globe of the earth, so that most truly it may be said: *The earth, O Lady, is full of thy mercy* (Ps. 118:64). The sublimity found restoration for the supernal city. The depth obtained redemption for those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. For by Mary's mercy heaven has been filled, hell emptied, the ruins of the heavenly Jerusalem repaired, life that was lost given to the wretched who awaited it." Therefore of her charity and mercy can be understood that of Job 11:8–9: *It is higher than heaven, and what wilt thou do? deeper than hell, and how wilt thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*

5. Again, by reason of mercy she is called *fountain of mercy*, of which fountain he made himself a stream, of whom the Psalmist says, Ps. 58:18: *My God, my mercy.* And again: *My mercy and my refuge*, etc. (Ps. 143:2), and *all whose ways are mercy and truth* (Ps. 24:10). For not, as Augustine says, is there a certain mercy and a certain truth, but *all the ways are mercy and truth.* Since therefore Mary has borne mercy, what else is her womb than the very treasure of mercies? And therefore she is called mother of mercy. O most beautiful generation of Christ: for first he had the father of mercies, then the mother of mercy. What therefore else could be born of these but mercy?

Again, Mary's generosity imitates and resembles the generosity of her Son, who gives more than is asked. Hence Luke 23:43, when the right-hand thief asked that he might have his memory, Jesus answered him: *Amen I say to thee: This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* Likewise Rebecca, who in the figure of Mary received much within, answered Eliezer asking water to drink, Gen. 24:18–19: *Drink, my lord … yea and I will draw water for thy camels also*, etc.

Again, by reason of her mercy it is said to her, Cant. 1:2: *Oil poured out is thy name.* Which name, poured out, if one will gather it again, he will be able to find a savor for his palate, medicine for his wounds, light for his darkness. Will the mother of mercy, who is full of grace, be able to despise him who invokes her name from the inmost of his heart? Will she be able or willing to repel him who salutes her with true heart? For to the mother of the King of kings, queen of heavens and lady of Angels, if she wills to save anyone, nothing will be hard. It is the liberty of queens that anyone already condemned *(p. 241)* by a definitive sentence for crimes and misdeeds — even one then with the halter about his neck, or already hanged on the gibbet, or with his head already laid on the block under the sword, and already to be punished by capital sentence, or to be put to any such death — if the queen come upon him and find him still breathing or already drawing his last breath, she can set him free; I do not reckon that the queen in the kingdom of her Son has less jurisdiction or ought to enjoy lesser privileges. If God does nothing great or small that he reveals not to his servants the

Prophets (Amos 3:7), how much less will he do anything great or small which he reveals not to his mother? Gen. 18:17: *Can I hide from Abraham,* etc. For she knows how to prepare food for a languishing soul in sweetness, knows to bind up wounds, knows with light hand and gentle touch to press down a swelling, to cast out poison, to give hope and certainty of life and length of days. Hence she says: *In me is all grace,* etc. (Sir. 24:25).

7. Again, from Mary's generosity sinners receive manifold benefit. First, that until the day of judgment she ceases not to succor. Hence she says: *Even to the age to come I shall not cease* (Sir. 24:14). Therefore blessed Bernard says: "In straits, in dangers, in doubtful things, think of Mary, invoke Mary." Second, that she ceases not to restore lost grace. Blessed Bernard: "Desiring to find grace," etc. Third, that until then she ceases not to direct ships, that is, the minds or souls of the faithful, to the harbor of salvation, which is paradise: for she is the star of the sea. Fourth, that she deigns to meet her servants in death. Hence Jerome writes to a certain virgin: "What a day that will be, when Mary the mother of the Lord shall meet thee accompanied by choirs of virgins," etc. Therefore of virgins it is said that they went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride (Matt. 25:1), that is, Christ and Mary.

Chapter 24: On the Piety, or Compassion, of Mary

Of the piety or compassion of Mary blessed Bernard speaks on that place of John 2:3: *The wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine.* Blessed Bernard: "For she had compassion on the bashfulness of the servants, as one merciful and most kind. What shall proceed from the fountain of piety but piety? Does not he who held an apple in his hand keep the odor of the apple for the rest of the day? How much, then, must the virtue of piety have affected those bowels in which that very piety which Christ is rested nine months. For he filled her mind before her womb: and when he came forth from the womb, he departed not from her soul."

Again, an example is of an electuary in a pyx, which, drawn out, leaves its odor. Again:

The jar, once freshly imbued, will long keep the odor.

(p. 242) She, however, is steeped all the more, the fresher she is and the more thirsting. For she is exceedingly compassionate, and bears bowels of piety over the afflicted.

Again, if a queen carried a begging-basin (*bachinum*) for some most wretched person, no one would refuse her his alms. What then if thou shouldst devoutly ask Mary to gather prayers for thee in paradise through the orders of the saints? For a certain holy man says to Mary: "We know and believe, O Lady, that when thou prayest for us to thy Son, all the other saints will pray, all will help; but if thou keep silence, none will pray, none will help."

Again, of the mercy and piety of Mary the Son speaks, commending her, Cant. 4:5–6: *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies, till the day break and the shadows retire.* The two breasts of the blessed Virgin, from which the sweetness of pious succor is sucked like milk, are the affections of piety and mercy, which like roes with keen sight consider who needs help, and how much; and through such consideration they run swiftly like young roes. And on account of the various ways of succor they are signified by young roes, which are marked by a beautiful variety. They are also called twins, that is, companions and alike: for the works of mercy and piety are very like each other, and issue as it were from one fountain. It is said, moreover, that these young roes feed among the lilies: because the benefits of mercy and charity, which die and fail among the ungrateful, are nourished and thrive in those who for the whiteness of chastity, and the fragrance of good works, are likened to lilies. These breasts of the blessed Virgin do not cease to give their milk to drink throughout this whole present life, that is, *till the day break*: till that day come which will breathe upon bodies re-formed from dust the spirit of life and the life of glory; and *till the shadows retire,* that is, till the shadows of present misery fail (cf. Cant. 2:17 and 4:6).

Chapter 25: On the Kindness of Mary

Such is the kindness of Mary that no one ought to fear to approach her. Hence blessed Bernard, in that sermon on the Assumption, *A great sign*, etc. (Apoc. 12:1): "Why should human frailty tremble to approach Mary? Nothing austere is in her, nothing terrible; she is wholly sweet, offering milk and wool to all. Turn over more diligently the whole series of the Gospel history; and if perchance anything reproving, anything hard, if finally any sign of indignation should occur in Mary, then hold her suspect henceforth, and fear to approach. But if (as they truly are) all things that pertain to her are found full of piety and grace, full of meekness and mercy, give thanks to him who in most kind compassion has provided thee such a mediatrix, in whom nothing could be suspect. In short, she is made all things to all; to the wise and to the foolish she has made herself a debtor with most abundant charity; to all she has opened the bosom of mercy, that all may receive of her fullness: the captive, redemption *(p. 243)*; the sad, consolation; the sick, healing; the sinner, pardon; the just, grace; the Angel, joy; finally the whole Trinity, glory; the person of the Son, the substance of human flesh, so that there is none who can hide himself from her heat. With all the marrow of our hearts, then, with all the affections of our inmost parts, let us venerate this Mary; for such is the will of him who willed that we should have the whole through Mary."

She also in her meekness received the engrafted word, which is able to save souls (James 1:21). Hence the Angel said of her Son to Joseph her husband, Matt. 1:21: *For he shall save his people*, etc. This word was engrafted or inserted in her nature, teaching that the Word of God, which enriches us, we should receive in meekness. 1 Thess. 2:13: *You received the word*, etc.

Again, her meekness appeared in the passion of her Son, when she neither provoked nor could be provoked: for although she endured many things, she was never moved to anger or to a hard word.

Chapter 26: On the Sweetness of Mary

Of the sweetness of Mary, blessed Bernard: "Why should human frailty tremble to approach Mary? She is wholly sweet," etc., as above. Again, the Son says to her, Cant. 6:3: *Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely*, etc. This sweetness we ought to recall and praise continually, according to Ps. 144:7: *They shall publish the memory of the abundance of thy sweetness*, etc. On account of this sweetness the Church says to her: "Thou art made beautiful to behold, and sweet to touch, in thy delights, holy Mother of God."

Mary is therefore sweet, that is, mild and meek, whose charity is not provoked by our evils. Again, sweet: because sinners do not find her scrupulous, as above: "Why should he tremble to approach Mary?" Again, sweet, that is, of good odor. For she is the rose in Jericho, most delicate to smell. As it is also said of her Son in Ps. 33:9 that the Lord is sweet to all, so too it must be said that the Lady is sweet to all.

Chapter 27: On the Sweetness of Mary

(p. 244) Concerning the sweetness (*dulcedo*) of Mary it is to be noted here that it is general and universal. Hence it is said of her, Wisd. 8:16: *Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness.*

Mary is sweet first in her fruit, that is, the Son, from whom comes her chief sweetness: for from the Son she drew all her sweetness. Of this fruit the faithful soul says, Cant. 2:3: *Her fruit*, namely Mary's, *was sweet to my palate.* (Look for the exposition under the title, *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*) Sir. 11:3: *The bee is small among flying things*: because Mary is more humble than the Angels and all contemplatives, who are the winged creatures of both paradises; and the fruit of her has the beginning of sweetness, in contrast with the first fruit of Eve, which had the beginning of bitterness.

In spirit. Hence she says, Sir. 24:27: *My spirit is sweet above honey.* For honey is made by bees out of sweet and bitter: it is read that the king of the bees sends bees to the sea to bring thence the salt waters of the sea, and to put them with the sweetness of flowers, and so to make honey out of sweet and bitter. But Mary's spirit has nothing of bitterness, but is wholly sweetness. For as a pyx retains the odor and savor of the electuary it contains, so the spirit of the blessed Virgin retains the sweetness of Christ, who rested in her womb for nine months; and although he was born from her womb, he never departed from her spirit or mind. Or her spirit is sweet for this reason: because it is the special storehouse of the Holy Spirit himself, who is properly named the sweetness of the Father and the Son. Or, sweet above honey: for it transcends all the sweetness of worldly or carnal pleasures. Of this honey, Prov. 5:3: *The lips of a harlot are a honeycomb dropping.* But only those who have experienced it know. Or, *my spirit*, that is, my spiritual love, by which I am loved and I love, is *sweet above honey*: for it exceeds all temporal sweetness.

In thought. Hence she says with her Son, Jer. 29:11: *I think thoughts of peace, and not of affliction.* And she is that prince of whom it is said, Isa. 32:8: *The prince shall devise such things as are worthy of a prince.* Sir. 24:39: *From the sea hath her thought abounded.* (Look for the exposition in Book II, chapter 3.)

In regard. Hence we pray: "Turn those thy merciful eyes toward us." For her face is full of graces (Esth. 15:17). On this account, Cant. 5:12, her eyes are compared to doves *which are washed with milk*: because her regard is suffused with the sweetness of piety and mercy. On this account she is also compared to a flower, a rose, lilies, and a violet. For a flower gives fragrance and is gladly looked upon; so also the Spouse gladly looks upon her. Hence he says to her, Cant. 2:14: *Shew me thy face.*

In hearing: for most willingly she hears the prayers of sinners faithfully invoked by them *(p. 245)*. Hence it is said in Psalm 10 according to the Hebrews, 17: *Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart.* Note *the preparation*. Hence she herself says with her Son, Isa. 65:24: *Before they call, I will hear*, namely them. Again, on this account the Spouse says to her, Cant. 2:14: *Let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet.*

In smell, namely of her virginity, signified by that virgin who is set before the rhinoceros: when the rhinoceros perceives and discerns her by smell, he grows gentle of his own accord, and reclines in her lap and falls asleep. (Look under the title, *That Mary is a virgin.*)

In breath. Hence the Spouse says to her, Cant. 7:8: *The odor of thy mouth like apples.* (Look under the title on the breath and mouth of Mary.) Hence she says of her smell and breath: *I yielded a sweet odor like cinnamon and balm*, etc. (Sir. 24:20).

In taste. Hence she says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger* (Sir. 24:29), as of food of most excellent savor. For she is the manna, having a taste like honey (Exod. 16:31). She is also the hidden manna, which is promised to him that overcometh (Apoc. 2:17). She is the bread from heaven granted to Christians, as Augustine expounds, having in herself all delight and the sweetness of every savor. (Look under the title, *That Christ is manna.*)

In touch: for she holds the Son, lest he strike sinners at once. Hence she says, Cant. 3:4: *I held him, and I will not let him go,* etc. (Look at the twenty-first cause.) And this was figured when she bound her Son's hands in the cradle. She is also sweet in touch: for she is the mother of mercy, and it is the part of a mother to touch her child gently and sweetly. The children are sinners, on whom she knows how, with a light hand and a gentle touch, to press down the swelling, to cast out the corruption, to bind up the wounds, to offer hope and the assurance of mercy; and therefore she says: *In me is all grace*, etc. (Sir. 24:25).

In embrace. Hence at her salutation, and by the example of her, as it is gathered from pictures, Elizabeth became a prophetess, and John leaped (Luke 1:41). Again, she is sweet in embrace, that is, to be embraced through love. Hence Prov. 4:8: *Thou shalt be glorified by her, when thou shalt embrace her,* namely by love

and by service, as with two arms.

In gait. Hence she says, Sir. 24:8: *I have walked in the waves of the sea*, namely with my familiars, to snatch them from the shipwreck of sins. The waves of the sea are the temptations, continually succeeding one another, which we suffer as long as we are on the sea of this world, etc.

In stature or standing. Hence she says, Sir. 24:9: *I stood in every land*, that is, I am always present at hand to those who faithfully invoke me.

In feeding. For she feeds our affection, since she is the bread of all delight and the manna of every savor.

In drink. She gives our understanding to drink of the water of saving wisdom.

In tongue. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 4:11: *Honey and milk are under thy tongue*, that is, in thy words sweetness of every kind: for we speak with the tongue. Or thus: The spiritual sweetness of thy words transcends all the bodily sweetness of honey and milk. Or thus: By honey is meant the sweetness of inmost wisdom, which through her is given to the greater; by milk, the grace of simple teaching, which suits the lesser. Or: *Honey and milk under thy tongue*, that is, in the meditation of the heart a singular sweetness, which was given her from the honey of the divinity of her Son and the milk of his humanity. Well said, *under the tongue*: for it lies open not to everyone, but only to those to whom it is given to experience it. Or thus: *Honey and milk under thy tongue*, that is, in thy womb God and man: for in the moment in which she uttered from her mouth, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38) *(p. 246)*, she conceived God, who is figured by honey, and man, who is figured by milk.

In lips. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 4:11: *Thy lips, my spouse, are a dropping honeycomb.* A honeycomb (*favus*), according to Isidore, is named from the Greek φάγω, which is *to eat*. And Mary says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger*, enticed by the sweetness of my savor. Rightly are Mary's lips compared to a dropping honeycomb: for as a honeycomb at the lightest touch drips the honey itself, so from the fullest overflow of her sweetness all receive who thirst to touch her with full faith, sincere love, and devout prayer. And note that a honeycomb drips even without any touch or movement, when it has more honey than its cell can hold. Mary indeed received into the bosom of her charity and humility, in good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over, of the heavenly honey, which is the grace of God; and this was designated by the fact that after it was said to her, *Hail, full of grace*, there is added, *The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:35). Why then should the Holy Spirit have come upon her who was full of grace, unless to make her overflow? Dripping, I say, as if trickling in different directions: above, to the Angels, who through her childbearing are restored; below, to the captives, who through her are drawn out of hell; to the right, to the just, who through her are illumined with the gifts of grace; to the left, to the unjust, who through her are justified.

Thy lips: this is said with regard to that response by which the world was saved, namely, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me*, etc. (Luke 1:38). (Look above where it is distinguished how she served us with each of her members, where the lips are treated.) Her lips also drew this sweetness from the lips of her Only-begotten, when he kissed her as a mother kisses her little child, and the Son himself granted that maternal petition: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. 1:1). (Look under the title on her beauty, where the lips are treated.)

In words. Prov. 16:24: *Well-ordered words are a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul, health to the bones.* That is, the words of Mary, of which it is said, Sir. 43:28: *By his word all things are composed.* For those seven words of the blessed Virgin which are read in the Gospel were composed by the heavenly artificer, that is, the Holy Spirit, who had filled her. And therefore, as there are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, so there are found in the Gospel seven words of Mary, which are called a honeycomb of honey: because as in the honeycomb there is wax, the instrument of light, and the sweetness of honey refreshing the taste, so in her words, and in

the knowledge of sacred Scripture, there is truth illuminating the understanding and goodness of every kind refreshing the affection. Her words are also medicinal, according to Wisd. 16:12: *Neither herb nor mollifying plaster,* etc. Indeed John the Baptist, foreseeing the sweetness of her words, while still enclosed in his mother's womb, at her entrance leaped and played, and at the coming of his Lord strove to burst forth from his mother's womb, hearing her voice. For the honey-flowing voice of Mary is incomparable with the utterances of the Angels, as John the Evangelist says of the speech of the Saviour.

Mary is sweet in the kiss, which the son and Elizabeth experienced; and at her kiss, which is presumed from the Scriptures, Elizabeth became a prophetess, and John leaped and played, and was filled with the Holy Spirit, while still in his mother's womb.

In song. Hence she is signified, Exod. 15:21, by Mary the prophetess, who took a timbrel and sang this song: *Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously magnified,* etc. For she is the leader of the virginal choir, of which it is said, Apoc. 14:3: *No man could say the canticle,* etc. Virgins, indeed, are accustomed, literally, to sing more sweetly than the corrupted.

(p. 247) In jubilation. She exults, indeed, following the example of that Mary, accompanied by the virginal choir, for the drowning of the spiritual Pharaoh and the liberation of the faithful people; and the Angels and the blessed gladly hearken to her jubilation, and indeed Christ himself, who says to her, Cant. 8:13: *The friends hearken,* namely to thee: *make me to hear thy voice.* These friends are the Angels and the blessed.

In utterance. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 4:3: *Thy speech is sweet,* most of all when she pleads with her Son for sinners. Again, Ps. 118:103: *How sweet are thy words to my palate! more than honey to my mouth.* This happens most of all when those seven words of hers which are found in the Gospel are chewed over in devotion, and her praises are sung.

In voice. Hence the Son says to her, Cant. 2:14: *Let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet,* that is, favorable for obtaining, when thou pleadest for the needs of sinners.

In answering: namely, when she answered the Angel: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38). Of this answer blessed Bernard says to Mary: "Make haste, O Lady, to answer the word which the earth, which the nether world, which the heavenly ones also await. The King himself, too, and Lord of all, as greatly as he has desired thy beauty, so greatly does he desire the assent of thy answer, in which he has surely purposed to save the world."

In salutation: as Elizabeth experienced, Luke 1:44, saying: *Behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.*

In love. Augustine: "Nothing is sweeter than love." But no love of any creature is comparable to the love of Mary: therefore nothing is sweeter than she.

In name. Hence, on account of the sweetness of this name, Mary, it is said to her, Isa. 26:8: *Thy name, and thy remembrance, are the desire of the soul.*

In naming. Hence Bernard says to her: "O great, O pious, O much-loved Mary: thou canst not even be named without kindling, nor thought of without refreshing the affections of those who love thee; thou never enterest the gates of pious memory without the sweetness divinely implanted in thee."

In preaching. Hence she compares herself to cinnamon giving fragrance (Sir. 24:20), which spices wine; so too her name is the wine of preaching.

In savor. Hence Augustine also calls her the hidden manna: because she contains in herself all delight and the sweetness of every savor (Wisd. 16:20). Hence the verse fits her most excellently: *How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lady, which thou hast hidden for them that love thee* (Ps. 30:20). For the taste of the manna was, as it were, like honey (Exod. 16:31). Every other sweetness, compared with hers, is bitterness.

Hence a certain one says to her in prose: "Every sweetness turns bitter, is rejected and grows foul, to those who have tasted thee beforehand." For she is that honey, by the tasting of which the eyes of Jonathan, that is, of the just, were enlightened (1 Kings 14:27). (Look for the exposition under the title on the seven rods.) Therefore the Catholic Church salutes her thus: "Hail, Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness," etc.

Mary is sweet in the odor of her mouth. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 7:8: *The odor of thy mouth like apples.* (Look for the exposition under the title on her mouth.)

Of her womb, which is compared to a heap of wheat set about with lilies (Cant. 7:2), because they are of the greatest odor; and to an ivory pyx full of various ointments, that is, the divinity and humanity of the Son. *(p. 248) Of the Son* dwelling in the womb, which womb is called a full field. Gen. 27:27: *Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed.*

Of her humility, which is signified by nard. Hence Cant. 1:11: *While the king was at his repose, my spikenard sent forth the odor thereof.*

Of her breasts. Cant. 1:1–2: *Thy breasts are better than wine, smelling sweet of the best ointments.*

Of her cheeks. Cant. 4:3: *Thy cheeks are as a piece of a pomegranate.* (Look for the exposition under the title on her cheeks.)

Of spices. Hence the Son says to the Holy Spirit, Cant. 4:16: *Come, O south wind*, that is, O thou Holy Spirit: *blow through my garden*, breathe upon Mary thy grace; *and let the aromatical spices thereof flow*, that is, the odors of holy repute.

Of ointments. Cant. 4:10: *The odor of thy ointments is above all aromatical spices.*

Of garments. Cant. 4:11: *The scent of thy garments*, that is, of the virtues with which the Holy Spirit adorned thee, *is as the scent of frankincense.*

Of prayers. For there was a golden vial full of odors, that is, most holy prayers (Apoc. 5:8).

Mary is sweet in the diffusion of examples: for her renowned life illumines all the Churches.

In the greatness of her promises. Hence she says: *He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded*, etc. (Sir. 24:30). (Look for much on this under the title on the obedience that we owe her.)

In every good work. Prov. 31:19: *She hath put out her hand to strong things,* etc.

In every large giving or recompense. Hence, Wisd. 7:11, human nature says: *Now all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.* (Look at the third chapter of Book II, under the title that we owe Mary love.) *In the reconciliation of sinners*, as far as in her lies. Hence: *Unto the age to come I will not cease* (Sir. 24:14), namely to make sinners at peace with her Son.

In inheritance. Hence she says: *My inheritance is above honey and the honeycomb* (Sir. 24:27). Inheritance, that is, charity destined to endure for ever, by which I am loved and I love. Hence *my inheritance*, that is, my hereditary and unfailing sweetness, *above honey and the honeycomb*, that is, transcends all sweetness, manifest and hidden. For in honey the sweetness is open; in the honeycomb it lies hidden. Or otherwise: *My inheritance*, that is, the eternal kingdom, which falls to me by inheritance by reason of my Son. For as long as a mother has a son to whom a kingdom is due, and the son does not depart from the obedience of his mother, she is lady. But the blessed Virgin has a Son to whom, as heir, the kingdom of heaven is due, and he in no way departs from her obedience: therefore she is Lady. This Lady therefore says: *My inheritance*, that is, the kingdom of heaven, *above honey and the honeycomb*. Note that whatever is sweet is either naturally sweet, like honey extracted from the wax, or artificially, like the honeycomb. It is as if she said: My inheritance is above honey and the honeycomb, that is, above all natural and artificial sweetness.

In the eternity of her memory. Hence she says: *My memory is unto everlasting generations* (Sir. 24:28). (Look for the exposition at the third chapter of Book II, under the title that we owe her constant memory.)

Of the memory of Mary can be said and expounded what is said of the memory of Josias, Sir. 49:1–2: *The memory of Josias is like the composition of a sweet smell made by the art of a perfumer*; that is, it is sweet and fragrant, like an aromatic odor compounded by the work of a perfumer. As his presence was, such is his memory. *In every mouth*, generally of great and small, *as honey shall be sweetened (p. 249) his memory.* As if he said: As honey delights the taste of him who eats, and the more it is chewed the sweeter it is found, so the memory of Mary delights him who speaks of her; and the more one speaks of her, the more he is delighted in her memory. *And as music at a banquet of wine.* As if he said: As the harmony of musical instruments is sweet and pleasant at a banquet of wine, which delights, so her memory is sweet and pleasant not only to the speaker, but also to the hearer. Osee 14:8: *The memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Libanus*, as above. Sir. 32:7: *A little gem of carbuncle in an ornament of gold, and the comparison of musicians at a banquet of wine.*

He therefore compares her memory with three things: the odor of the perfumer's work, which delights the smell; the sweetness of honey, which delights the taste; the harmony of musicians, which delights the hearing. Her memory is sweet in the heart, in the mouth, and in the ear; and this also on account of three things, according to Rabanus. For the fame of her virtue surpasses every odor, the sweetness of her modesty every sweetness, her zeal in rendering the worship of God every song.

Josias, indeed, taught the people to repent of the transgression of the law. Hence it follows, Sir. 49:3–4: *He was directed by God unto the repentance of the nation*, namely the Jewish nation, that is, unto the teaching of penance: because he taught them to repent. *And he took away*, that is, removed, *the abominations of wickedness*, that is, the shrines and idols by which the impiety of idolatry is celebrated. *And he directed his heart to the Lord*, namely the heart of the people, by teaching and by example. *And in the days of sinners*, that is, in the time when the sin of idolatry reigned, and the transgression of the law, and the violation of the worship of God, *he strengthened godliness*, that is, he established the worship of God to be firmly observed. In like manner the blessed Virgin alone destroys all heresies, governs the Christian people by doctrine and example, and in manifold ways invites us to the worship of God.

Chapter 28: On the Holiness and Sanctification of Mary

Of the holiness of Mary blessed Bernard says: "This is Jerusalem, the holy city, which by the prerogative of her merits transcends every creature, for the voiding of all the power of the enemy; who alone in the whole line of human generation can say after the Son: *The prince of this world hath nothing in me* (John 14:30). Again, Joel 3:17: *Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall pass through it no more.* Again, as Anna says in her canticle, 1 Kings 2:2: *There is none holy as the Lord is*; so it can be said most truly of the Lady: There is no lady holy as our Lady is."

And note that each of the explanations of this name, *sanctus, sancta, sanctum* (holy), is to be found in Mary. *Holy* means the same as *clean*. Hence the Lord, Lev. 19:2, and 1 Peter 1:16: *Be ye holy: because I am holy.* But she is the cleanest of the creatures *(p. 250)* of God, as is plain.

Again, *sanctus* is derived from *sancio, sancis*: hence *sanctus* as if *sancitus* (ratified). And she was holy, that is, firm and confirmed in good. Hence she says: *And so was I established in Sion* (Sir. 24:15). Again, *sanctus* is said as if it were ἅγιος, that is, *without earth*, namely without earthliness. And her conversation was wholly heavenly. Again, *sanctus*, that is, dedicated to the Lord, given namely and appropriated. Hence Luke 2:23: *Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.* But she was wholly God's, and no one's but God's. Hence she says, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me, and I to him.* And almost everywhere in the Canticles the Son calls her his own. Again, *sanctus* as if *sanguine tactus* (touched by blood), or *sanguine*

tinctus (dyed by blood), according to Isidore. Hence blessed Agnes: "His blood hath adorned my cheeks." And she was touched or dyed by the blood of the Son through compassion. Hence she is called *as a rose in Jericho* (Sir. 24:18). Touched, when the sword passed through her soul. Dyed, because that sorrow is reckoned to her for martyrdom. Again, Mary's exterior form was holy against uncleanness of deed, her will holy against uncleanness of depraved desire, her heart holy against uncleanness of depraved thought, and so she is most holy.

Blessed Bernard, in the fourth book *On Consideration*, near the end: "Holy affection makes holy, and it is itself twofold: the holy fear of the Lord, and holy love. With these two, as with two arms, the perfect soul perfectly embraces, holds and keeps the Bridegroom, saying: *I held him, and I will not let him go* (Cant. 3:4). To be feared in him are the power which nothing can resist, and the wisdom from which nothing can be hid; for it is fitting that thou fear perfectly him to whom neither an eye is wanting, seeing all things, nor a hand, able to do all things. Him too is to be loved who is love," etc. In all such holiness, however, or any other, no soul is holy as our Lady is.

And for this reason she says to her Son, as blessed Maximus the Bishop expounds, Ps. 72:24: "*Thou hast held my right hand*, etc. Thou hast held me, that I might never fall": understanding that it was not from herself but from God that she never fell. "*And in thy will*, that is, in the fulfilling of thy will, *thou hast conducted me* from virtue to virtue. Thou hast conducted me, I say, that I might not err; and *with glory thou hast received me*, that I might not fail. Thou heldest me in purity, conducted me in truth, received me in brightness." These words designate the three states of the Christian life, namely the state of innocence, of justice, and of glory.

The Lord holds the left hand of some, not the right: those whom he permits to prosper in these days, and reserves for the punishments of hell, of whom it is said: *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell* (Job 21:13). He holds the left hand and the right of those who so pass through temporal goods that they do not lose the eternal, as Abraham, David, Isaac, to whom it is said: *If riches abound, set not your heart upon them* (Ps. 61:11). Neither the left nor the right, of those who are both deprived of temporal goods and frustrated of eternal, to whom James says, 4:2: *You covet, and have not*, etc. The right, not the left, of those whose minds he guards in the love of eternity, while the outward condition of want he regards as nothing. Hence: *He is at my right hand, that I be not moved* (Ps. 15:8). Thus he held the right hand of blessed Mary. Hence he also says to her, Isa. 42:6: *I have taken thee by the hand, and preserved thee*, etc. For the Lord took Mary's hand and preserved her: because in the womb he sanctified her, and from then on made her remain in the purity of the virtues, not only so that she did not sin, but so that she could not sin. Jeremias and John the Baptist and others sanctified in the womb, though they did not sin, yet could sin; but not the blessed Virgin. Hence she says, Sir. *(p. 251)* 24:15: *And so was I established in Sion*, etc.

For in the very moment of her consent, when the Saviour was conceived, she was established, that is, confirmed in good, so that from then on she could not sin; and this *in Sion*, that is, while still placed in the Church militant, which was a special privilege for her. For other saints are not so confirmed in this life that they can no longer sin, but only in the heavenly Jerusalem. And therefore she alone could glory and say: *Thou hast held my right hand* (Ps. 72:24): behold the state of innocence. Her left hand the Lord did not hold: for he permitted her to endure many sorrows and tribulations. Hence: *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce* (Luke 2:35), that is, the sorrow of the Lord's passion. It follows, Ps. 72:24: *And in thy will thou hast conducted me.* Hence elsewhere she says: *Lord, in thy will thou gavest strength to my beauty* (Ps. 29:8). *In thy will*, not in my merits: behold the state of justice. *And with glory thou hast received me*: behold the state of glory.

Again, concerning the holiness or sanctification of Mary it is to be noted that unless she had been fully purged she could not have brought forth such fruit, and unless she had been free from the contagion of all vices she could not have begotten the Son of God. For that a virgin might conceive and a virgin bring forth, she needed the highest holiness and purity. Now of all evils there are, as it were, two roots, concupiscence

and ignorance; from these two roots she was perfectly purged when the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her. (You will find this under the title on the delights of the garden.)

Again, in the sanctification of Mary by the coming of the Holy Spirit and the overshadowing of the power of the Most High, only that remained in the Virgin which was for penalty; all that withdrew which was for guilt. Viciousness withdrew entirely; penalty remained. Carnality was taken away; calamity was not removed. And this was that marvel of which the Prophet says: *Come and behold ye the works of the Lord, what wonders he hath done upon earth, making wars to cease even to the end of the earth* (Ps. 45:9–10). For from the land of the flesh all strife was taken away, and full peace was made there. In the bow and arrow the stroke is artful; in the sword and spear, powerful. The bow, therefore, is fraudulent temptation; the arms, violent temptation. Neither of these had any place in her after her sanctification, nor could they now have any access. The shield is excuse, which has no place where excuse cannot be had. The fire is divine love, by which these shields are burned, which left nothing in her. Hence, as regards the impossibility, she would have to be excused. For divine love so strengthened her in every good that from then on no defect of any kind could befall her at all, nor anything that would be subject to any excuse.

It seems, therefore, according to this, that from the hour of the Holy Spirit's coming upon her, from the hour of the power of the Most High overshadowing her, she was not only perfected in all grace, but also confirmed in every good and gift that she had received. In the other saints it is held to be magnificent that they cannot be overcome by vices; in her it is held to be wonderful that she could not be assailed by any vice, even slightly. And this was in her beyond measure wonderful, and singular beyond all the other saints: that so great corruptibility could meet in her with incorruptibility, and conversely. Corruptibility in what pertains to penalty, incorruptibility in what pertains to guilt. But it profited her for the crown of future glory, and us for a lesson in patience, that she bore the yoke of our passibility with so great a purity. For what is believed to have been done in her as to the removal of sin is hoped to be future in all the saints: future, I say, but *(p. 252)* not in their body still mortal, but in their body already made immortal: *for this corruptible must first put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality* (1 Cor. 15:53).

Of the sanctification of the blessed Virgin the Psalmist speaks, Ps. 45:5: *The Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle.* But since she was sanctified to this end, that she might be made worthy to conceive the Saviour, he first speaks of her conception, saying: *The force of the river maketh the city of God joyful.* The force of the river, that is, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon her, makes joyful the city of God, namely the blessed Virgin, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwelt corporally (Col. 2:9). And from this there was in her a unity of citizens, that is, a full concord of sensuality and reason. And it is well called a *force* (*impetus*): because as soon as she answered the Angel, *Be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38), she straightway conceived the Son of God; and from this she was vehemently made joyful. Hence she said to Elizabeth: *My spirit hath rejoiced*, etc. (Luke 1:47).

It follows: *The Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle.* The tabernacle is the same as that city, that is, the blessed Virgin, in whom the Most High armed himself with the arms of our mortality, with which he fought against the devil, as the Psalmist had asked, Ps. 34:2: *Take hold of arms and shield*, etc. This tabernacle the Most High sanctified when, in her mother's womb, he purged her of original sin, so that she might be born wholly clean.

It follows, on the faith in her conception, Ps. 45:6: *God is in the midst of her*, that is, in her womb, of the Virgin namely, *she shall not be moved*. He shall not be moved from the deity to the humanity, so as to leave the one in assuming the other; rather the same shall be God and man; and this is: *shall not be moved*, that is, shall not be wholly moved. For in a certain manner he was moved by a motion of piety, but not by a motion of alteration, when he humbled himself to enter her womb; but he was not wholly moved, because he did not lay aside the divinity.

It follows: *God will help her in the morning early*, that is, in the beginning of her life, while she was still in the womb, the dawn taking away the darkness of original sin. And he calls the rising of grace in her the *dawn*. Another reading has: *God will help her with his countenance.* Or better: *God will help her early in the morning*, as was expounded, at dawn, that is, with the brightness of the virtues which were then infused into her. So the Gloss expounds *dawn*. Job 7:18: *Thou visitest him early in the morning.* For in her sanctification the heavenly goldsmith removed all the rust of original guilt from the silver of her virginal flesh and soul, so that each vessel might come forth most pure: first, for the receiving of the gifts of graces; second, for the Son of God about to assume flesh. Therefore it had been foretold, Prov. 25:4: *Take away the rust from silver, and there shall come forth a most pure vessel.* And these are the words of the Father to the Holy Spirit. Nor was the rust of original guilt taken away only then, but this vessel was adorned with every precious stone, that is, every spiritual charism. (You will find this better under the title on the privilege of virginal flesh.)

Chapter 29: On the Obedience of Mary

(p. 253) Of the obedience of Mary she herself speaks, Cant. 5:6: *My soul melted*, through the fire of charity, made ready, namely, like melted metal, to run down into all the moulds of the divine will, *when my beloved spoke* to me through Gabriel, asking me to be his mother; to whom I offered myself as handmaid, knowing that he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

Note that it is proper to melted metal to flow downward. So Mary did in obeying: when she was asked to be the mother of God, which was to her the highest dignity, she named herself handmaid, which was the highest humility. And therefore she attributed to her soul a melting, which is proper to metal.

Again, by reason of obedience Mary is compared to gold, where she is called ark, throne, seat. She is compared with nearly all the vessels of the temple and the tabernacle that were of gold. For gold is more workable than all metals, and the more workable, the more fit for the making of delicate works. Of this gold, by the art of the Holy Spirit, was fashioned that vessel, the wonderful work of the Most High, in which the Son of God ate his honeycomb with his honey, and drank his wine with his milk (Cant. 5:1).

Again, in the obedience of Mary was fulfilled what the Lord had long before foretold, Osee 6:6, that he desired obedience rather than sacrifice, and the knowledge of God, etc. (The Vulgate there reads: *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice: and the knowledge of God more than holocausts*; cf. Matt. 9:13 and 12:7.)

Again, by reason of obedience she can say with her Son that word of Isa. 50:4–5: *He wakeneth in the morning, in the morning he wakeneth my ear, that I may hear him as a master. The Lord God hath opened my ear*, etc. He has arranged the words elegantly, in testifying that the ear was first raised before it was opened. Now he has a raised ear who has his hearing made ready not for single whisperings, or for speech muttering from the earth, but for the things that are from above, for which it is good that the ear be opened. For the ear is bowed down which diligently attends to secular words. *In the morning*, says Mary, her ear was raised, who from the beginning of her age had a hearing made ready for heavenly words, and taught us to have it. The Lord had raised and opened the hearing of Mary. Hence, like a young girl with a raised ear, she easily and willingly received the angelic words, at which she was troubled; and she is not read in the Gospel to have heard any word before that one. And from her hearing the beginning of our restoration was taken, so that the remedy might enter where the sickness crept in, and by the same footsteps life might follow death, light darkness, the antidote of truth the poison of the serpent, and the hearing through which death entered into the world become the gate of life.

Chapter 30: On the Omnipotence of Mary

(p. 254) Of the omnipotence of Mary, Fulbert of Chartres speaks in that homily, *Approbatae consuetudinis*, etc.: "Indeed, the Mother of the Lord is everywhere commanding, everywhere magnificent, according to

charity toward the heavenly ones, and, through discretion, over the wretched. She sent an Angel to the aid of the great father Blasius, and raised up the soldier who slew his enemy Julian the apostate. This is she who powerfully snatched the bond of Theophilus from the devil and gave it back to the captive as a sign of liberty, and powerfully rescued the man himself, humbly invoking her, from the very jaws of the devil. It is certainly ready to her hand to send the holy Angels into ministry, and at her good pleasure to shatter the pacts of hell, so that of her that word of Ecclesiastes 8:3–4 may fittingly be said: *He shall do whatsoever pleaseth him. And his word is full of power: and no man can say to him: Why dost thou so?* Again, Wisd. 12:12: *Who shall say to thee: What hast thou done? or who shall withstand thy judgment?* In the same place, v. 18: *For to be able is at hand when thou wilt.* Again, Wisd. 16:13: *Thou art he that hast power of life and death, and leadest down to the gates of death, and bringest back again.* She it is who puts to death, as in Julian; and gives life, as is plain in Theophilus; she leads down to hell, and brings back. Sir. 42:24: *In every necessity all things obey him.* Hence she says with her Son, Isa. 46:10: *My counsel shall stand, and all my will shall be done.* Job 23:13: *His soul hath done whatsoever it would*," etc.

Therefore her hands are also called *turned* (Cant. 5:14), because she has it ready to hand to do whatever pleases her, as the art of turning is ready and unimpeded. *Golden*, because whatever she does proceeds from the charity of God and neighbor. *Full of hyacinths*, that is, of heavenly virtue. Again, Wisd. 7:27: *Being but one*, that is, singular, in piety, charity and protection: *she can do all things*, by the gift of her Son, by whom, the Omnipotent, she was made omnipotent; *and remaining in herself*, that is, remaining perfectly unchangeable in goodness, power and mercy: *she reneweth all things*, that is, man, for whom all things were made and who has a share with every creature. She renews man, I say, by grace in the present, and by glory in the future. *And through nations*, that is, in every people, without respect of persons, *she conveyeth herself into holy souls*, by pouring in grace; souls which she does not find holy, but makes holy by her grace. *She maketh the friends of God*, that is, those who love God and are loved by God, *and prophets*, that is, she kindles them to the love of God and illumines them to the knowledge of him. Hence she is also called the illuminatress. For she is queen of that city of which her Son is king, and king and queen rejoice in the same privileges according to the laws. Now the power of the common mother and the Son is the same, since she was made omnipotent by the omnipotent Son: *for there is no power but from God* (Rom. 13:1). Hence she says with her Son, Matt. 28:18: *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.*

(p. 255) Yet she is excellently powerful in the triumphant Church. Hence she says, Sir. 24:15: *In Jerusalem above is my power*, namely of commanding what I will to the angelic virtues and holy souls, and of doing according to my good pleasure, and of bringing in those whom I will.

Again, as the Son of Mary is King of kings and Lord of lords (Apoc. 19:16), so Mary, the mother of Christ, is queen of those who rule themselves well, and Lady of those who have dominion over themselves. Rule therefore thy sensuality, chastise thy body and bring it into servitude, if thou desirest to be enrolled in the household of so great a queen.

Again, by reason of her power Mary is called the *rod of the power of the Lord*. (Look under the title on the rod, where Mary is called the rod of power, after the treatise on the seven rods.)

Again, in this most manifestly appears the omnipotence of Mary, that, as is read in her miracles, she has delivered many already sure of their damnation, many choked in waters, many dead unexpectedly, who while they lived had commended themselves to her patronage; many who had died without penance in mortal sin she powerfully rescued from the very jaws of the devil, and brought back to life so that they might do penance. For she is as ingenious and subtle for the salvation of sinners as the devil is ingenious and subtle for their damnation. By what justice, however, or by what right she saves the damnable and those who have died in mortal sin without penance, who is sufficient to tell? It is certain, however, that she does so, and that she does it with justice preserved. And as evidence of this she is called a *fountain sealed* (Cant. 4:12). For this fountain of mercy is so overflowing that her consolations flow always, yet with the seal of justice whole and

unbroken; because she knows so ingeniously how to do mercy that she does not break justice.

Again, of her, as of the Son, may be said to the Son himself that word of Psalm 8:8–9: *Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, sheep*, that is, the simple, *and oxen*, in whom four (see under the title on feet). *All* (*universas*) is in the feminine on account of fruitfulness. *Moreover*, he says this to note the diversity of the good and the wicked. *The beasts of the field*: the luxurious, wandering through the fields of license, where Abel is slain. *The birds of the air*: the proud. *The fishes of the sea*: the covetous, *who walk through the paths of the sea*. In these three elements demons dwell, but not in the element of fire: because not in what is bright.

Again, by reason of her power it is said that *the moon*, that is, antonomastically, that foolish one, the devil namely, who *is changed as the moon* (Sir. 27:12), from brightness into obscurity, is *under her feet* (Apoc. 12:1), that is, fully subject to her; and this by the virtue of humility. Hence in Psalm 17:10: *He descended*, that is, ineffably humbled himself. *And darkness*, that is, the devil, who is called *darkness* formally because he lacks light, and effectively because he effects the darkness of sin, is *under his feet*, which are humility and virginity, with which she crushed the head of the ancient serpent, namely pride and concupiscence.

Chapter 31: On the Wisdom of Mary

(p. 256) The truth of the wisdom of Mary is most easily proved if we attend to how she spoke with the Angel. For who, in so young a girl, would not marvel at such constancy of speech, prudence of questioning, facility of faith? No wonder: for the light of understanding was given to her heart. For he who united himself to her gave her both to perceive faithfully, and to utter profitably, and to fulfil effectually. And this is the threefold cord that is not easily broken (Eccles. 4:12), which draws our souls, after the example of Mary, out of the pit of dregs and misery, and draws them after her to the heavenly kingdoms: that is, if we perceive rightly, if we speak worthily, if we confirm it by our living.

To her wisdom pertains what is said of her, Luke 2:19: *But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.* In this authority Mary is commended in three respects. First, for perfect memory, against forgetfulness. Hence it is said: *She kept all these words.* And on account of this keeping her womb, that is, her memory, is compared to a heap of wheat (Cant. 7:2). The wheat by which birds and men are fed is the word of God. A heap of wheat is a great accumulation of the words of God. Therefore it is said: *She kept all these words*, etc. For this reason she is often to be asked by us to deign mercifully to reveal to us the mysteries of the Scriptures. And note that it says *these words*, that is, Gospel words, not worldly. Again, in that it adds the demonstrative pronoun, saying *these words*, it shows that we ought to keep the words of God carefully in the secret of our heart, according to that: *Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against thee* (Ps. 118:11). She is commended also for careful conferring, against negligence. Hence it is said, *pondering* (*conferens*). She is commended also for sealing, against boasting. Hence, *in her heart*. By this too, that it says *words*, deeds are understood also, as it is said, Isa. 39:2: *There was not a word*, that is, a thing worthy of a word, *that Ezechias shewed not to the messengers of the king of Babylon.* In that also which is said, *She kept all these words*, it is shown that she herself was the book of the generation of Jesus Christ. In this authority also the great discretion of Mary is noted. Hence the Gloss says there, from Ambrose: "Mary, no less chaste in mouth than in body, divulges to no one the secrets which she knew; but searching them with a silent heart, she reverently awaits the fitting time when God wills these things to be made known," according to that of Ecclesiastes 3:7: *A time to keep silence, and a time to speak.* Sir. 20:7: *A wise man will keep silence till a time; but a lascivious and imprudent man will not regard a time.* James 1:19: *Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak. Pondering in her heart:* not only the words of Mary, but also those deeds which she had seen fulfilled around her, with those which she had read were to be fulfilled in the Prophets.

For the Angel *(p. 257)* had said to her: *Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb* (Luke 1:31). Isaias had foretold, Isa. 7:14: *Behold, a virgin shall conceive.* She knew that she was sprung from the stock of David.

He had foretold, Isa. 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse,* the father of David. And in Psalm 131:11: *Of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy seat.* She knew that she had conceived in Nazareth of the Holy Spirit. She had read, Isa. 9:6, of the Son to be made flesh, according to another reading: "He shall be called a Nazarene." She knew that she had given birth in Bethlehem. She had read, Mich. 5:2: *And thou, Bethlehem,* etc., *out of thee shall come forth a ruler.* She compares, therefore, the words of the Prophets with the deeds, and in all things has an argument of faith. If, then, Mary humbly learns from the shepherds, we also ought humbly to learn from priests. Sir. 6:35: *Stand in the multitude of ancients that are wise, and join thyself from thy heart to their wisdom, that thou mayest hear every discourse of God.* And if she herself keeps silence at the precept of the Apostle, we ought, after his precept, to wish rather to be taught than to teach.

Again, Luke 2:51, it is said once more: *And his mother,* that is, the mother of Christ, *kept,* as if under a seal, says the Gloss, *all these words,* etc. All that she knew to have been said or done of the Lord, or by the Lord, whether she understood it or could not yet understand it, she committed all to memory, so that when the time came for preaching or writing his incarnation, she might explain everything sufficiently, as it had come to pass, to those who asked; and thus she is believed to have dictated to the four Evangelists many of the things they wrote. So let us also, by frequent meditation on the deeds and sayings of the Lord, repel importunate thoughts, and labor to instruct others.

Again, *His mother kept all these words in her heart,* that is, she laid them up in the chest of memory: for, as it is said, Prov. 25:2: *It is the glory of God to conceal the word.* And Tob. 12:7: *It is good to hide the secret of a king. All*: not only words, but deeds also; for *word* is sometimes put for a thing. See, then, that thou restrict not the demonstration only to the words which are said here, but extend it to all the deeds and sayings that are contained in the Gospel history, knowing that at some time they would be written, and the writers would have recourse to her. Therefore she herself says, Cant. 5:7: *They took away my veil from me,* that is, they snatched from me the unveiling of the secrets of my Son, which I had before covered as under a cloud and a veil of silence, and which were hidden with me. *The keepers of the walls,* that is, the Apostles. The walls that fortify Jerusalem, that is, the Church, are the Prelates. The keepers of these walls are the greater prelates, who guard the lesser, such as the Apostles were.

Again, by reason of wisdom Mary is compared to gold. (Look for the exposition under the title on the throne.) For it was not fitting that the vessel of heavenly wisdom should be without wisdom. Hence she herself shows knowledge of the Scriptures, and of what the Lord had said to the holy fathers, as she holds in her canticle, saying: *As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed,* etc. (Luke 1:55). *She sought out the wisdom of all the ancients,* that is, sought it with her heart, *and was occupied in the Prophets. She kept the narrations of renowned men, and entered withal into the subtilties of parables. She sought out the hidden meanings of proverbs, and conversed in the secrets of parables* (Sir. 39:1–3). Expound it thus. It says, then: *the wisdom of all the ancients,* that is, the teaching of the Patriarchs and Prophets. Or, *the wisdom of all the ancients,* that is, the savor and knowledge of heavenly things which the ancients had, *she sought out,* that is, sought beyond other things. *And was occupied in the Prophets,* that is, in prophetic understandings she was at leisure, cares being despised. *The narration,* that is, the teaching, *of renowned men,* that is, of the Apostles and Evangelists, *(p. 258) whose names are in the book of life.* Luke 2:19: *Mary kept,* etc., as above. *Narration*: namely what the Apostles were to narrate, or the renowned men, the Patriarchs and Prophets, or those blessed shepherds to whom her childbearing was announced by the Angels, and that happy Simeon who, receiving her Son offered in the temple, narrated to her with prophetic certainty very many things about the future (Luke 2:34–35). *And entered into the subtilties of parables,* that is, into obscure and hidden subtleties, *she entered withal,* searching diligently, the literal or figurative surface being pierced. *The hidden meanings of proverbs,* that is, the mystical and moral sense, *she sought out,* that is, sought with her whole heart. *And in the secrets,* that is, in the hidden allegories of figurative utterances that are to be understood, *she*

conversed, by studying and meditating. For if all these things are truly said of any true sage, much more truly can and ought they be said of the mother of incarnate Wisdom.

For this reason, then, for her knowledge of the Scriptures, the Son commends his mother, Cant. 4:2, saying: *Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep that are shorn, which come up from the washing.* The flocks of shorn sheep are those who, laying down the burdens of possessions like fleeces, have left all for Christ; the more they withdrew from the world, the more freely were they able to understand the sacred Scriptures. Nor did the darkness of sins make an obstacle for them: for, frequently washed in the tears of penance and devotion, they *went up from virtue to virtue, to see the God of gods in Sion*, which is interpreted *a mirror*; that is, that with the eye of a clean heart they might behold God in the mirror of the Scriptures. To all these, therefore, who like the flock of the Lord have ruminated in the pastures of sacred Scripture, are likened the teeth of the Virgin, that is, her sense and studiousness, with which she plucked, ground, chewed, ruminated and incorporated into her soul, as it were, the choicest green herbs of sacred Scripture.

Again, she was and is *a woman sensible and silent* (Sir. 26:18). Sensible she was in asking how what was promised her would be done, where she said: *How shall this be done?* More sensible in consenting that it be done, when she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me*, etc. Most sensible, in praising and magnifying God for the benefit received, saying: *My soul doth magnify*, etc. Hence she could truly say that word of Solomon, Eccles. 1:16: *I have gone beyond all in wisdom that were before me in Jerusalem: and my mind hath contemplated many things wisely.* This was when she pondered in her heart all the things that were said; and this is the habit of the wise.

Again, by reason of wisdom Mary is designated by that wise woman who had delivered the city of Abela by her wisdom (2 Kings 20:16 ff.). She is designated also by Abigail (1 Kings 25:3), who was a most prudent and beautiful woman, by whose wisdom and subtlety of words foolish Nabal was for a time delivered from death. So by the wisdom of Mary and the subtlety of her prayers the foolish world was delivered. Again, Sir. 39:12: *Many shall praise his wisdom, and it shall never be forgotten.* In the same place, v. 14: *Nations shall declare his wisdom, and the church shall shew forth his praise.* And it is to be noted that she is not only wise, but also the teacher of the wisdom of God, which she teaches by words, prayers and examples. Hence it is said of her, Wisd. 8:4: *She is the teacher of the discipline of God*, etc. Therefore she says, Sir. 24:46: *I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy*, etc. (Look for the exposition in the twenty-seventh cause.)

Again, of her it is said specially, Prov. 31:26: *She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue. She hath opened her mouth:* namely the mouth of the understanding, to draw in wisdom by study. Hence, *(p. 259) Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it* (Ps. 80:11). Or the mouth of the affection, to draw in wisdom by desire. Hence, Ps. 118:131: *I opened my mouth, and drew breath*, that is, spiritual understanding. Or the mouth of the body, to declare the wisdom by which divine things are known. Hence of her can be understood that of Ecclesiasticus 15:5: *In the midst of the Church*, namely the primitive Church, *he shall open her mouth*, she who was made the teacher of the Apostles.

To wisdom, I say, to be taught; not to foolishness, or vanity, or scurrility. Or also to the wisdom which is the Son of God, to be drawn in, when she vowed virginity and humbled herself so greatly: for these two virtues in her chiefly pleased the Most High. For Eve opened her mouth to foolishness when, doubting, she answered the serpent: *Lest perhaps we die* (Gen. 3:3); Mary to wisdom, when, believing, she said, Luke 1:38: *Be it done to me*, etc.

And the law of clemency, that is, of the Gospel, which teaches clemency, where Christ says, Matt. 9:13: *I came not to call the just, but sinners.* For the old law was a law of severity, which taught to render eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But the law of the Gospel is of clemency, because it remits sins; because it absolves the guilty, as the adulteress (John 8:11); because it leads the condemned back into paradise. *On her tongue:* because all these things she procures for us by praying.

Again, by reason of wisdom it is said, Sir. 24:35–36, of that king born of David: *Who filleth up wisdom as Phison.* He, namely the king, fills wisdom, that is, the blessed Virgin, who is called *wisdom* emphatically: either because she is wise above all, or because she is the mother of Wisdom, that is, of Christ; and the generation ought to be univocal. And a little after, v. 36: *Who filleth up understanding as Euphrates.* For he filled her as to the knowledge of the Scriptures. For he who opened the sense of the Apostles that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45) much more fully filled his mother with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, when the Holy Spirit came upon her (Luke 1:35); indeed, when Wisdom descended into her, that is, the Son of God, because he is the Lord of sciences (1 Kings 2:3); and who, before preaching to other cities, for nine months preached the Gospel to her heart, and made manifest to her the uncertain and hidden things of his wisdom (Ps. 50:8). Nor only for nine months, but also for the whole time in which, as a young man, he dwelt with the Virgin, that is, the son with the mother. Blessed Anselm: "What of God did she not savor, in whom the wisdom of God lay hidden, and from whose womb he fitted a body for himself?" That king, therefore, filled the understanding of the Virgin as Euphrates does, that is, abundantly, as there is great abundance where the Euphrates overflows. (Under the title *full of grace* you will find much of this kind.)

Again, by reason of wisdom she herself is called *the knowledge of the truth*: emphatically so, as chiefly knowing, and effectively, namely making the truth to be known, so that when known it may be sought, when sought it may be found, when found it may be received; for *he that seeketh, findeth* (Matt. 7:8). For she made the light of truth that fails not to arise in the heavens, that is, in the Churches, as is said above in the same chapter (Sir. 24:32), and so *the Gentiles walk in its light* (Isa. 60:3); and for this reason she is honored by all. Hence it is said to her, Judith 15:10: *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem*, etc.

Again, by reason of wisdom she says of herself, Sir. 24:8: *I have penetrated the bottom of the deep*, that is, the depth of Scripture, of which Gen. 1:2: *Darkness was upon the face of the deep*, that is, in the bark of the letter: because the dark water is in the clouds of the air, not in the bottom of the mysteries, *(p. 260)* where the light is greatest, where she saw more deeply than all others.

Again, by reason of wisdom she is compared to the honeycomb, which is the nourishment of light and the vessel of sweetness, containing in its various cells of the letter, or of understanding, the sweetness of heavenly wisdom. Again, *her will was in the law of the Lord* (Ps. 1:2): because she willed and fulfilled whatever was commanded in the law of the Lord, but rejected whatever was forbidden in it. *And in his law she shall meditate*, like an animal ruminating. Hence, Luke 2:19: *pondering in her heart* day and night, that is, in things plain and things obscure.

Again, after the ascension of her Son she became the teacher of the Apostles and of the Evangelical preachers, and then was fulfilled that prophecy of Micheas 4:2: *For the law shall come forth from Sion*, a new law, namely, *and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*, that is, from the blessed Virgin, designated by Sion and Jerusalem.

Again, because her Son had revealed to her the uncertain and hidden things of his wisdom, therefore she says, Cant. 1:3: *The king hath brought me into his storerooms* (*cellaria*), that is, Christ has made manifest to me the secrets of the holy Scriptures, which are called storerooms because there is the bread of the strong, the milk of children, the wine of the devout, and all things necessary for the soul, as in a cellar the things necessary for the body. And she well says that the king *brought her in*, that is, led her within, namely right to the marrow of the spiritual sense. Hence she herself says: *I have penetrated the bottom of the deep*, as above. *Cellaria* are so called as if they were *celati lares*, hidden dwellings for laying up riches; or as if *cellarum lares*, because they contain many cells for preserving various provisions. Or again, she then penetrated the bottom of the deep, literally, in her Son, when she sent her Son to limbo to free those who were detained there. Then also she penetrates the bottom of the deep when, by the illumination of her grace, she visits the deep and inscrutable heart of the sinner (Jer. 17:9).

Again, Job 28:11: *The depths also of rivers he hath searched,* that is, of the sacred books, namely the four Gospels, which are the four rivers of paradise; the blessed Virgin searches them, that is, causes them to be searched. Of these she says, Sir. 24:40: *I, wisdom, have poured out rivers.* And the things hidden under the veil of the letter she brought forth into the light of spiritual understanding.

Again, from the words of Mary her holiness, her charity and her wisdom can easily be weighed. For she is not read in the Gospel to have spoken more than seven words, and these seven words are to be referred to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, who had filled her. She spoke twice with the Angel, twice with Elizabeth, twice with her Son, once with the servants; and not even once is she read to have spoken with her husband. In this it is signified that a religious person, and especially a nun and a girl, ought to speak very rarely; and then with God in prayer and reading, or with an Angel, that is, a priest of angelic and honorable conversation, in confession, or with an Elizabeth, an elder, that is, a mature and holy woman, in mutual but rare consolation; or with servants, and this before all, not in a corner, in asking for necessaries. And note that whatever she spoke, she referred either to her own humbling, or to the praise of God, or to the edification of her neighbors. Therefore of her can be fittingly said that of Ecclesiasticus 43:28: *In his word all things are composed.* 1 Peter 4:11: *If any man speak, let it be as the words of God.* Col. 4:6: *Let your speech be always in grace seasoned with salt.* Eph. 4:29: *Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth: but that which is good, to the edification of faith, that it may administer grace to the hearers.* Sir. 21:28: *The words of the prudent shall be weighed in a balance.* Therefore *(p. 261)* she could truly say, Prov. 8:8: *All my words are just, there is nothing wicked nor perverse in them.*

Therefore she also invites us to the guarding of our tongue and the imitation of her words, saying with Wisdom, Wisd. 6:12: *Covet ye my words, love them, and you shall have instruction.* Expound this authority thus. *Covet*, that is, with all desire hear and search out my words, which admonish the course and ordering of the Christian life; for *sermo* (discourse) is so called as if it were *seriem monens*, warning of the course. *Love them*, that is, show that you love them by the performance of works; for the proof of love is the performance of the work, as Gregory says. *And you shall have instruction*, that is, the ordered correction of morals. As if she said: If you love my words, which are words of wisdom, you shall have instruction, and you shall keep it. Therefore we can say to Mary what Jeremias, 15:16, says to the Lord: *Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was to me a joy and gladness of my heart.* He says two things, joy and gladness: because from the observance and love of her words there follow deliverance from punishment and the bestowal of glory.

Again, of her words it is said, Prov. 16:24: *Well-ordered words are a honeycomb.* For her seven words which are found in the Gospel were composed by the heavenly artificer, that is, the Holy Spirit, who had filled her; and therefore, as there are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, so her seven words are contained in the Gospel, and are called a honeycomb of honey: because as in the honeycomb there is wax, the instrument of light, and the sweetness of honey refreshing the taste, so in her words, and in those of sacred Scripture, there is the knowledge of truth illuminating the understanding, and goodness of every kind refreshing the affection. They are also medicinal and preservative, after the manner of honey: for they heal the languors of the soul, and preserve from sin. Of the first it is said, Wisd. 16:12: *Neither herb nor mollifying plaster*, etc. Of the second, Ps. 118:11: *In my heart I have hidden thy words, that I may not sin against thee.*

But let us now look at her words, and first at the first word. The Evangelist says: *And Mary said to the Angel: How shall this be done?* (Luke 1:34). Note that the blessed Virgin, before this word, is not read in the Gospel to have spoken any other; nor did she answer immediately at the first word of the Angel, until the Angel had addressed her twice, and she had well premeditated, according to that of Ecclesiasticus 32:12: *Hear in silence, and at the same time inquire.* To hear belongs to faith, for *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17). To be silent belongs to hope, for it is said, Isa. 30:15: *In silence and in hope shall your strength be.* To inquire belongs to charity, for love is a garrulous thing. She indeed heard, and was silent, and inquired. This is the

order. Filial and chaste fear also made her inquire the good pleasure of God. Sir. 2:19: *They that fear the Lord will seek after the things that are well pleasing to him: and they that love him shall be filled with his law.* And she was a woman who feared God, and her love was strong as death (Cant. 8:6).

How unwillingly would she have forestalled her husband, so as to go to speak with him, she who, when the Angel came to her, and saluted her, and promised good things, and therefore addressed her twice, scarcely consented to speak one word? And in this, quiet and taciturnity are set before good women to be emulated. Let the garrulous and wandering woman of Solomon, impatient of quiet, and those like her, blush (Prov. 7:10–11). Therefore, since the virgin was prudent, she considered not only what she should say, but also to whom, and what it became her to say. Hence it is well said: *And Mary said to the Angel*; not "she," or "to him." As if to say: She spoke as Mary, and as to an Angel. For it became a Virgin, and such a Virgin, to speak briefly *(p. 262)* and quietly, and to declare her purposed continence, especially where danger to it seemed to threaten. And as to an Angel, whom it was fitting to question briefly, as a wise one. Sir. 6:36: *If thou see a man of understanding, watch to hear him in the schools, and to imitate him in deeds.*

How shall this be done? etc. It is said, Sir. 19:4: *He that is hasty to give credit is light of heart, and shall be lessened.* Eve was light of heart: because she believed quickly, and, examining neither the word nor the speaker, easily consented (Gen. 3:1 ff.). She was drawn, indeed, by a double cord: for sublimity was promised, and pleasure persuaded, and to these two men are easily inclined. But Mary wished for neither, because she was humble and a virgin. But, desiring the benefit not only of herself but of all, she prudently inquired. *How shall this be done*, which thou sayest, that a virgin should conceive and bear a son, *seeing I know not man?* The Interlinear gloss: Behold, she touches on the fact that she knew chastity. *I know not*, that is, I have purposed not to know, and I persevere in my purpose. Or, *I know not*, that is, I have a vow of not knowing. For happy is that purpose in which firmness agrees with purity. For however pure the deliberation may be, it has less, if strength and firmness of counsel be lacking. But where there is no purity, strength does not obtain grace, but incurs the offense of obstinacy. Since she had both, that is, purity of purpose and firmness of counsel, it is said of her, Prov. 31:25: *Strength and beauty are her clothing*: beauty in the purpose of continence, strength in the firmness of counsel.

These seven words are commended as dictated by the Holy Spirit. Hence she seems to say with the Psalmist, Ps. 44:2: *My tongue is the pen of a scrivener that writeth swiftly.* This scrivener is the Spirit. As if the Virgin said: What I speak, I speak not from myself, but from the Holy Spirit. For as the hand of the scribe moves the pen, so the Holy Spirit moves my tongue. And 2 Kings 23:2: *The Spirit of the Lord hath spoken by me, and his word by my tongue.* Matt. 10:20: *For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father*, etc. Much more strongly, then, did the Holy Spirit speak by her whom he had filled throughout. For as a pen does not write what it wills, but what the writer wills, so also she brought forth those words which the Holy Spirit was writing and dictating in her heart. It follows: *That writeth swiftly:* because the Holy Spirit, to whose grace slow undertakings of things are unknown, quickly and suddenly taught her to answer and to speak.

And well is Mary's tongue called the pen of the scribe, that is, of the Holy Spirit. First, because this reed had grown in the waters of grace and doctrine. Hence her voice is, according to Jerome, that of Ps. 22:2: *He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment.* Second, because this reed was empty within, through humility. Third, because it was smooth outside, and without knots, through honorable conversation. Fourth, because it was gathered at the fitting time for its office, the time namely of mercy, which began from her rising. Fifth, because it was sharpened through subtlety. Sixth, because it was cut through the removal of everything superfluous: for she spoke nothing in the Gospel that was not to the purpose. Seventh, because it was split through the discretion of words. Eighth, because it was full of the ink of grace, which was poured out on her lips (Ps. 44:3). Ninth, because it was held in the right hand: for her life and works agreed with her words. Hence it was also said to her: *For thy voice is sweet* (Cant. 2:14). Tenth, because it drew its line from left to right: for whatever she spoke, she referred all her words to the humbling of herself, the honor of God, the

edification of her neighbor, and so to eternity, which is signified by the right hand.

(p. 263) It follows: *That writeth swiftly:* because as soon as she answered, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me*, etc., this pen wrote, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in human flesh, as on a little leaf of parchment, the Word made flesh; which leaf was taken by the scribe from her virginal flesh. And more swiftly did she write than all other women, whose offspring are not formed save after a long interval of time. Of this writing it is said, Apoc. 19:12, where he treats of the Son of God and Mary: *Having a name written, which no man knoweth but himself*, supply: and his own, to whom he reveals it. Or, *knoweth* fully. The name which she wrote is Emmanuel, that is, *God with us*. Hence it follows, vv. 13 and 16: *His name is called the Word of God… and he hath on his garment*, that is, in his humanity, *and on his thigh*, in which is the generative power (this is said because he begot a spiritual offspring for the Father), *written*, indelibly, namely as to his humanity: *King of kings and Lord of lords*, that is, Lord of all lords. Hence it is said: *God, the Lord of gods* (Ps. 49:1). For because he so humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, *there was given to him a name which is above all names* (Phil. 2:8–9). For as to his humanity he died and was exalted, not as to his deity.

The first word of Mary was therefore this: *How shall this be done, seeing I know not man?* (Luke 1:34), that is, I have never purposed to know, etc., as above. And this word the Spirit of wisdom, who had filled her, dictated to her. It was also a word of fortitude and chastity. Hence: *Seeing I know not man.* And in this word she teaches us to speak chiefly and first about inquiring into the will of God, as she herself did: for on hearing of the danger to virginity, that is, that she should become a mother, having long premeditated, and finding no way in which this could be done with the purpose of virginity safe, not doubting of the thing, but of the manner, with the bridle of modesty broken, she asked: *How shall this be done, seeing I know not man?* The Gloss: It is plain, then, that she believes it is to be done, who asks how it shall be done. For she does not doubt that a virgin will bear; for it is read, Isa. 7:14: *Behold, a virgin shall conceive.* She knew also that what she had heard from the Angel must be fulfilled. But how it would be done she had not read, nor had she heard from the Angel in what order it was to be fulfilled. And therefore she asked: for the mystery *hidden from ages* (Col. 1:26), not foretold by the Prophets, was reserved for the Angel. Therefore she said to the Angel: *How shall this be done?* etc. In this word also the constancy of her mind is denoted: for she answered constantly: *I know not man.* In this also she is the contrary of Eve, who, doubting, answered the serpent: *Lest perhaps we die* (Gen. 3:3), and at the first word of the devil wavered.

The second word, when, having understood that she could conceive and bear while remaining a virgin, she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.* Behold the word of fear, which is the foster-sister of humility. And in this word are noted prompt obedience, prompt devotion, prompt faith, prompt consent. Hence she says: *Behold.* Humility also is noted. Hence: *handmaid.* Religious discretion. Hence: *of the Lord*; not of the flesh, not of the world, not of the devil. Faith, hope, charity. Hence: *Be it done to me according to thy word*, by which thou hast said: *The Lord is with thee*; not according to my prayer, which I would not have dared to make, that I should become the mother of God. For unless she had believed and hoped that it could be done, and that what was promised her would come to be, she would not have answered: *Be it done to me according to thy word.*

(p. 264) The Angel had said to her: *The Lord is with thee*: in which charity is noted: for *he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him* (1 John 4:16). Of her faith Elizabeth says: *Blessed art thou that hast believed* (Luke 1:45). Of her hope she herself says: *I have greatly hoped in thy word* (Ps. 118:81). For grace was poured abroad in her lips, answering thus, and therefore the Lord hath blessed her for ever (Ps. 44:3). In this word also the devotion of prayer is noted: for in saying *Be it done to me*, etc., she desires with great devotion that the promise of the Angel be fulfilled. In this word we are instructed, humbling ourselves before God, to ask for his grace. Hence Judith 8:14, 16: *Let us ask his indulgence with tears poured forth… and let us humble our souls before him.*

Again, of this word that she answered, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me*, etc., she herself says: *My heart hath uttered a good word* (Ps. 44:2). *Uttered*, as from a fullness: for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (Matt. 12:34). *My heart:* in this she commends her word from the inward savor, which is the true love of the heart. *A good word*, by which the world was reconciled to God. For in this word, *Be it done to me*, the pact of human reconciliation was made firm, and the marriage of the divine and the human nature. In this word also she conceived the Son of God. But the word of humility went before the glory of the conception, because, as it is said, Prov. 15:33: *Humility goeth before glory.* Blessed Bernard: "This is the singular glory of our Virgin, and the excellent prerogative of Mary, that she merited to have the one and the same Son in common with God the Father."

The third word was when she saluted Elizabeth, as if congratulating her on the gift which she had learned that she had received. In this, benevolence is noted: for to salute is the same as to wish another salvation. Behold a word of understanding, at the utterance of which Elizabeth understood that Mary had conceived her Lord. Hence she said: *And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke 1:43). For at her salutation John, enclosed in the womb, understood his Lord to be enclosed, and in his own measure rejoiced at his coming. In this word we are instructed that we ought to wish our neighbors salvation, and to speak with them of their salvation, which is *to salute*, and to congratulate them on the benefits bestowed on them by God; and this they do who have spiritually conceived Christ.

The fourth word was when, before Elizabeth, she said: *My soul doth magnify the Lord*, etc.; namely when, blessed Elizabeth magnifying her, she took care rather to magnify the Lord. For he who is truly humble desires not that he himself be praised by men, but God, as Augustine says. And on this account it is said, Sir. 3:21, that God is honored by the humble. And this word was a word of wisdom, of humility, and of thanksgiving. And in this word we are taught to give thanks to God for the benefits received from him, and to attribute to him all that belongs to humility, and to magnify his power. Hence she said: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name* (Luke 1:49).

And note that in her canticle, as she follows the praises of the Lord, she spoke somewhat at length, whereas everywhere else she spoke briefly, nor did she pour herself out in any word except in the praises of the Saviour: thereby intimating to us that in the praises of God we ought to speak at length, indeed never to be silent, according to that of Isaias 62:6–7: *You that are mindful of the Lord, hold not your peace, and give him no silence.* And this is against those who in choir, while others sing and chant the psalms, are silent like statues, though at other times they are by no means able to restrain the tongue.

(p. 265) The fifth word. John 2:3: *Son, they have no wine.* Behold a word of piety, charity and compassion. This speech also was a most certain index of her inborn meekness and virginal modesty: for, reckoning the shame of others as her own, she could neither bear nor dissemble the failing of the wine. Where indeed she was rebuked by her Son, and did not answer him, as one meek and humble of heart; nor yet did she despair, but admonished the servants to do whatsoever he should say to them. (Above, under the title on his piety and compassion, look for the exposition of that word, *They have no wine*. And under the title, *The Lord is with thee*, near the end of the chapter.) To say *they have no wine*, however, is to announce to God in prayer the lack of grace which many suffer, and to ask for them the wine of compunction, devotion and grace. And in this the blessed Virgin is found to have been the first in the Gospel to intercede for man.

In this also we are taught to ask of him what we need, who is the sufficiency of every good. James 1:5: *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God.* Now as to what Christ answered: *What is it to me and to thee, woman?* (John 2:4): he did not deny his mother, but distinguished his power: because it was not from the nature which he had received from the Virgin, but from the power of his divinity, that he had to work the miracle, as Augustine says. And perhaps, as blessed Maximus says, because the mother, by the failing of the carnal cup, was suggesting it to the Son, who had come to offer to the nations of the whole world the new chalice of eternal salvation. For what the mother asked was of temporal grace; but what Christ was preparing

was of everlasting joy. Nor yet did it irk the most kind Lord, when great things come, to bestow small. And therefore his mother, knowing that rebuke of the Lord and her Son to be not the pretext of an offense from one angered, but the bearing of a mystery by one wondering, and foreknowing the future in spirit as the mother of God, and foreseeing the Lord's will, solicitously admonished the servants, saying: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye* (John 2:5). And the Lord, relieving the shame of the rebuked mother, and now opening his majesty, said to the servants as they waited: *Fill the waterpots with water.*

In this too, that he answered his mother so sharply, he taught us, and especially religious, not to be so solicitous about the kinsmen of our flesh.

Again, of this miracle blessed Maximus says against certain unbelievers: "He changed the waters into wine who from the beginning created them into snows, hardened them into ice, turned them for the Egyptians into blood, and bade them flow for the thirsting Hebrews from the dry rock, which nourished the innumerable multitude of peoples with the trickling of a new fountain of life from the breasts of a mother." Morally: As through Mary wine was obtained at the wedding, so through the twofold bitterness of penance, which is signified in the name Maria, which is said to mean *bitter sea*, the wine of grace, and devotion, and inward consolation is obtained.

And adapt four or five other interpretations, namely that she is the illuminatress, the illuminated, the illuminating, the Lady, the star of the sea, the fruitful Virgin, the bride of Joseph, the widow, and the like.

The sixth word, when she said to the servants, John 2:5: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.* Behold a word of counsel, in which we are taught to invite others, as far as we can, to the fulfilment of the divine will. For this is the counsel of the saints, as the Gloss says there: *God, who is glorified in the council of the saints,* etc. (Ps. 88:8).

The seventh word, when she said to her Son, Luke 2:48: *Son, why hast thou done so to us?* that is, that thou shouldst remain with us ignorant of it. *Behold, I and thy father* (the reputed one), grieving at thy absence, *sought thee.* But, alas! many today grieve more over the loss of a penny than over the loss of Jesus. Which is plain *(p. 266)* from this, that they do not seek him, lost through sin, by the sorrow of penance. Behold a word of knowledge, which is attributed more to human than to divine things.

In this word we are instructed to correct delinquent sons, since she corrected even one who was not delinquent, and not to commend them before their faces if they have done anything good, as she herself is not read to have commended her Son for being in the things that were his Father's. Again, in that she prefixed *Son*, correction in meekness is noted. It is to be noted also that she would not dare to correct him as God, but as her Son: and therefore she said, *Son.* She prefixed also: *Son, why hast thou done so to us?* Behold discretion: for she did not rebuke him at once, but sought the cause why he had done so. In that also she said, *And thy father*: since she had conceived not of Joseph but of the Holy Spirit, she closed to the impious the sacrament of the Lord's incarnation: for if they had known him, they would not have crucified him (1 Cor. 2:8), and so we should not have been redeemed. Again, in that Mary says, *Sorrowing we sought thee,* she teaches us that he who wishes to find Jesus, that is, salvation, ought to seek him with sorrow.

It follows: *And he said to them: How is it that you sought me?* etc. (Luke 2:49). He does not rebuke them because he is sought, but shows where he ought rather to be sought, namely in divine things. Hence he adds: *Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?* As if to say: Know this; and he openly shows that the temple in which he was, and the doctrine which they were hearing, were his Father's, which is against the Manichee. *And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them*: for they did not yet grasp the mysteries. And note that Mary now wonders at the mystery, but afterward, advancing, she asks for a miracle from the same. John 2:3: *They have no wine.*

It follows: *And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth* (Luke 2:51). That as the Son of God he might exercise the things that are his Father's, and as the son of man he might keep obedience to his mother. Hence it follows: *And was subject to them.* Augustine: "This singularly that woman had, that she saw subject to her in the solemnity of his birth him whom not only human but angelic nature venerates and adores as most high."

On account of such words, which Christ gladly hearkens to, he says himself to his mother, and to any faithful soul that imitates his mother, Cant. 2:14: *Let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet*, etc. Again, Cant. 7:9: *Thy throat*, that is, the words that proceed from the throat, *like the best wine*: for her words are piercing, and savory, and delightful to every just soul. The same is said, Sir. 50:30: *Blessed is he that is conversant in these good things; he that layeth them up in his heart shall be wise always.* For the words of the mother of truth are the words of the Son, who is truth. Hence the Son says to her, Isa. 51:16: *I have put my words in thy mouth*, etc.

Chapter 32: On the Taciturnity of Mary

(p. 267) Of taciturnity, which is a sign of wisdom, the Son commends his mother, Cant. 4:1: *How beautiful art thou, my love*, etc. *Thy eyes are those of doves, apart from thy taciturnity*, that is, besides it. So says another translation, which Ambrose cites. For she is wholly spiritual and simple as a dove, in whose form the Holy Spirit was seen to descend upon Christ (cf. Luke 3:22 and John 1:32). For it is no mean virtue to keep silence, as Ambrose says; and therefore Mary is commended for taciturnity, who, conferring all words in her heart, silently kept them.

For it is notorious and commonly said that the female sex is reproved for much speaking and for lack of circumspection; nor is it a wonder, since at the first noxious suggestions speech was altogether taken away from the serpent, and in some measure restrained in the woman. Here you can set down Eve's hasty answer, without any weighing of the serpent's words, from which all evil arose; and Mary's thinking what manner of salutation the angelic one was, from which all good arose. Blessed Bernard also: "After the endowments of greater graces, he proclaimed with worthy praises, in Mary the Mother of God, the greatest of all women, the gravity of her silence."

She herself also says of her taciturnity, as if commending herself, Eccles. 8:2: *I observe the mouth of the king*, that is, my mouth, which is royal, so that she speaks nothing but what befits a king and a queen, namely words of gentleness and clemency, words of piety and justice. For she is the *woman sensible and silent* (Sir. 26:18), who *sat solitary, and held her peace, and raised herself above herself* by the contemplation of God (Lam. 3:28). Since she was sensible, that is, full of sense, and silent, she was not mute, but speaking at the fitting time. There was a time to keep silence and a time to speak, as Ecclesiastes says, 3:7. Her time of silence was before the death of Christ; of speaking, after. She had to keep silence in the presence of the Word; nor ought the moon to shine when the sun is present, just as the moon does not shine in the presence of the sun. But when the Word had become mute through death, she had to reveal the mysteries which she kept in her heart against the scandal of the cross: for she knew them above all others. Hence she could say that word of Isaias 24:16: *My secret to myself*, as regards the state of conceiving, bearing and giving birth. *My secret to myself*, as regards the knowledge of him who was conceived: for above all others she had the knowledge of the divinity. The moon, too, ought not to shine while the sun is present; but when the sun is tending through death to its setting, she ought to send forth rays of light and doctrine against the darkness of night. Hence she is also called *fair as the moon* (Cant. 6:9).

She was troubled also at the angelic salutation: because the silence which she greatly loved she was compelled to break by answering. She thought also what manner of salutation this was. And would that our nuns, and recluses, and religious women, by keeping silence, would think how they will answer in the judgment, where for *(p. 268)* every idle word men shall render an account (Matt. 12:36)!

She was sensible also and silent in her inward words, which are thoughts and affections, or the desires of the heart, which speak to God. Hence it is also said of her, Isa. 32:8: *The prince*, that is, Mary, designated by Sara, whose name is interpreted *prince*, *shall think such things as are worthy of a prince*, thoughts namely of peace, and not of affliction.

Chapter 33: On the Subtlety of Mary

The subtlety of blessed Mary appeared in this, that she contemplated heavenly things so subtly that, by the guidance of her own reason, grace illuminating it, she seemed to see that the Son of God desired virginity, which she therefore, perhaps, vowed, that she might satisfy his good pleasure. As if she said by her vow: He desired lilies; lilies I present to him. In this also her subtlety appears, that she knows so subtly how to show mercy to the wretched that she does not break the seal of divine justice; and about this chiefly her studiousness is occupied, of which the Psalmist says, Ps. 9:12: *Declare his studies among the Gentiles.*

Chapter 34: On the Action of Mary

Of the action of Mary it is to be noted here that to her Son, who is the poor man pre-eminently, that is, the Son of God, of whom pre-eminently that word of Psalm 40:2 is expounded, *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor*, she showed the chief works of mercy, with chief love and in a chief manner. Hence she says: *In his presence I have ministered* (Sir. 24:14), that is, she supplied for his good pleasure from her own and chief substance: for from the purest bloods, according to Damascene, or from virginal flesh, which was silver many times tried in the fire of the Holy Spirit, she supplied him with a garment, and from her own milk she supplied food. By reason of the garment the Son can say that word of Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh.* By reason of the food, that of Matt. 25:35: *I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink.* For milk is both food and drink to a child.

(p. 269) On this account, in the judgment the Son will be able to recall to her, more excellently and principally than to any other creature, that word of Matt. 25:35: *I was a stranger, and you took me in*, namely in the tabernacle of the virginal womb, which is therefore to be called a royal palace, because the heavenly King dwelt in it for nine months in peace. For she is signified by Martha, of whom it is read, Luke 10:38: *Jesus entered into a certain town: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house.* And this is what Job says, 31:32, as if speaking in the person of Mary: *The stranger did not stay without*, that is, the Son of God, who says through the Psalmist, Ps. 38:13: *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were*, namely Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the rest, of whom it is said, Heb. 11:13: *Confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth.* It follows in the person of Mary: *My door was open to the traveller.* And this is what she said, Cant. 5:6: *I opened the bolt of my door to my beloved*, etc. Of this traveller it is said, Jer. 14:8–9, as if spoken to the Son of God: *Why wilt thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man turning aside to lodge? Why wilt thou be like a wandering man?* This traveller, since he had not where to lay his head, was lodged by Mary in her house, or virginal womb. Hence she herself says: *He that made me rested in my tabernacle* (Sir. 24:12): in the tabernacle of the soul as God, in the tabernacle of the body as God and man. And this is what he himself said, Sir. 24:11: *In all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord*, that is, in the blessed Virgin Mary: in her body for nine months, and from her soul never to depart. On this account he says of Mary in Psalm 131:14: *This is my rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.*

And note that Mary was made the hostess, or lodging, not only of the Son of God, but of the whole Trinity, whose noble dining-room she is. Hence in the person of Mary Job says, 29:4 ff.: *When God was secretly in my tabernacle*, that is, the Son in my womb. *When the Almighty was with me*, that is, God the Father by indwelling grace. *And the rock poured me out rivers of oil*, that is, the Holy Spirit poured into me the gifts and charisms of all graces. As the Father also had commanded, Sir. 36:10: *Fill Sion*, that is, Mary, *with thy*

unspeakable words.

I was naked, and you covered me (Matt. 25:36): with thy seamless tunic, namely of virginal flesh. Luke 2:7: *And wrapped him up in swaddling clothes*: behold the covering; *and laid him in a manger*: behold the material lodging. (On the twofold seamless tunic with which Mary clothed her Son, look under the title that Mary is the fleece, namely in that chapter: *He shall come down like rain upon the fleece.*) Of the nakedness of the Son when he descended into the Virgin, blessed Ildefonsus says: "How Christ entered the Virgin, no one knows; how he went out, the going out alone knows. Without a garment, God, so to speak, enters, who, to say it truly, goes out clothed in flesh. To the house of his own work he came; he carried only the garment of flesh. Again, he who had come returned, but he went forth otherwise than he had entered. Entering this house he carried off no spoils of modesty, but going out he enriched its integrity," etc.

Again, by reason of this garment Christ compares himself to a grain of wheat (John 12:24–25), which is sown naked, as the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 15:37, but rises clothed with its husk as with a kind of tunic.

Again, on this account Mary was figured in the fleece of Gedeon (Judges 6:37), because from a portion of her wool, that is, of virginal flesh, *(p. 270)* she clothed the Lamb of God. (Look under the title that she herself is the fleece.)

I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. Hence Jerome says that the blessed Virgin earned with needle and distaff the means by which she fed herself and the Only-begotten of God. On this account, Cant. 2:16, it is said that the spouse feeds among the lilies. And these lilies blessed Bernard calls the hands of the blessed Virgin Mary, among which the Son of God was fed. Blessed Bernard: "The hands of Mary are certain most white lilies; nor will the lover of lilies complain that he has not found among the lilies whatever he finds among the hands of Mary."

I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink, namely the drink of virginal milk, which I alone drank; and this no other boy ever drank; nor did he himself suck the breasts of any woman other than his own mother. Hence he was figured by Moses, Exod. 2:7, who, as they say, would suck the breasts of no other woman than his mother's. On this account it was said to him, Luke 11:27: *Blessed are the breasts that thou hast sucked.* And this too remains, that he sucked only the breasts of his virgin mother. Hence he also says, Cant. 5:1: *I have drunk my wine with my milk*, namely the virginal milk, which was wholly mine. On this account, although it is said to the blessed Virgin, *Thy name is as oil poured out* (Cant. 1:2), it is not said that her breasts were poured out.

I was thirsty can also be understood otherwise, of the drink of faith, with which Mary gave him to drink more specially than any creature, when she answered the Angel: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me*, etc. Hence she was signified by the Samaritan woman, to whom Christ says, John 4:7: *Give me to drink.* Therefore also she was figured, Gen. 24:18 ff., by Rebecca, a most beautiful virgin and unknown to man, who from her pitcher, which signified the faith of Mary, gave drink to Eliezer and the camels, that is, to Christ and the saints: for by humility she pleased God, but by faith she conceived the Holy of holies, that is, Christ, who sanctifies all the saints.

I was sick, and you visited me (Matt. 25:36). Christ was sick in the penalties of human nature which he took upon himself, which are hunger, thirst, heat, cold, sickness and death. Therefore Christ says: *My strength is weakened through poverty* (Ps. 30:11). And so the pious mother not only visited him thus sick through infancy and lying in the cradle, but attended him continually by bathing, cherishing, soothing and carrying him, and most devoutly ministered to him all the services of humanity which the assumed nature required. On account of which it is said in the figure of Mary, Luke 10:40: *But Martha was busy about much serving.*

Otherwise: Christ was sick when he was crucified, and struck by the Father for the salvation of his people, and wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins, and by his bruise, that is, by his flesh made livid

with the sorrows of the passion, we were healed (Isa. 53:5). And then his mother visited him, standing by his cross (John 19:25).

I was in prison, and you came to me (Matt. 25:36). Christ was imprisoned in the prison of our mortality, of which prison Psalm 141:8 says: *Bring my soul out of prison*, etc.: when he was born of a true virgin a true man, and Mary came to the little boy himself, as a mother to her Son lying in the cradle. But then especially was he sent as into a prison when he was placed in the sepulchre. Hence in his person Jeremias had foretold, Lam. 3:6: *He hath set me in dark places, as those that are dead for ever.* The same, ibid., v. 53: *Fallen (p. 271) is my life into the pit, and they have laid a stone upon me.* Then, although this is not read, it is not to be doubted that Mary came to the burial of her Son. Hence Jerome: "How wretched it will be, and impious, to think of the mother that, when the other holy women had so great a care for the Lord's burial, she herself absented herself. Far be it."

Chapter 35: On the Action and Contemplation of Mary

By reason of action and contemplation it was said to Mary by the Angel: *Hail, full of grace*, namely of the grace of heavenly gifts: for by the power of contemplating she was in a certain way endowed with the heavenly country. Hence it was said of her, Wisd. 18:16: *It touched the heaven, standing on the earth.* And she herself says with her Son: *I set the Lord always in my sight* (Ps. 15:8). For as great as is the difference between the odor and the taste of an aromatic spice, so great is the difference between the contemplation of Mary and that of the other saints. For as she received from Christ a singular active office, namely to carry his human nature, to nurse it, to wrap it in swaddling clothes, to bathe, cherish, nourish, feed, give drink to, soothe, embrace and kiss it, and to render the other services of humility, so (to say what the devotion of my heart suggests) he also granted to his mother singularly to experience the sweetness of his divinity. Hence to the fullness of grace the Angel added: *The Lord is with thee.* Therefore great men have thought of the mother, and still think, that as a wayfarer she was enjoying (*fruebatur*); which we neither assert nor deny.

Again, by reason of both lives, the active namely and the contemplative, she is signified by Lia and Rachel, by Martha and Mary. But she was perfect in each life, which neither of these sisters was. For Martha, who was troubled about many things, and busy about much serving (cf. Luke 10:40 ff.), had no leisure for divine contemplation. Mary, who sat at the feet of the Lord and heard the words of the Lord, neither helped her weary sister nor was busy about serving, and gave no attention to action. Neither, therefore, fulfilled the offices of both lives. But the blessed Virgin, as has been shown, so rendered to her Son all the works of the active life that in the meantime she in no way departed from divine contemplation. And this was in Mary an angelic perfection: for the Angels, when they are sent to us, so minister outwardly that they nevertheless do not depart inwardly from the contemplation of God, as Bede and blessed Gregory say.

Again, by reason of both lives Mary is called *all fair* (Cant. 4:7): because all the virtues, active as well as contemplative, met in her, and rendered her admirable above all creatures. Through the active virtues she had a most clean will; through the speculative, a most purified mind. She was therefore all fair, both in the flesh, by the purity of virginity, and in the will, by perfection *(p. 272)* of action, and in the mind, by the consummation of speculation; and neither in the flesh had she a stain of contagion, nor in the mind a wrinkle of duplicity.

Again, by reason of her contemplation she herself says, Cant. 2:4: *The king hath brought me into the cellar of wine*, that is, into the meditation of heavenly joys. *The king*, not the servant, that is, not fear of punishment, which sometimes makes one think of heavenly things. Not the friend, that is, desire of reward, but the king himself, that is, the love of the Spouse, who makes me meditate on heavenly things. Intimating, therefore, that not from fear of punishment, as a maidservant, nor from love only of reward, as a hireling, but from sole love and charity of a father, as a daughter, she was brought into the cellar of wine, which is the meditation of spiritual things, not into the water-cellar, which is the knowledge of temporal things; and so spiritual grace

was conferred upon her. She says, therefore: *The king hath brought me into the cellar of wine*, that is, he conferred on me the abundance of all spiritual goods. Or, this cellar of wine is the grace of contemplation, which contains manifold cups. The first, purity of mind. The second, rest of mind. The third, security of mind. The fourth, joy in the Holy Spirit. The sense is therefore: *The king hath brought me into the cellar of wine*, that is, he conferred on me the grace of contemplation, with whose cups he has manifoldly inebriated me.

Again, by reason of contemplation it was said of Judith, in a figure of Mary, Judith 11:19: *There is not such a woman upon earth in look*, etc., namely of contemplation: because more clearly than all other saints she contemplated God, and heavenly and eternal things.

Again, by reason of contemplation she says to the Spouse, Cant. 7:13: *The mandrakes give a smell in our gates*. By the mandrakes are signified the studies of contemplation, which so make a man sleep in his delights that he neither feels nor heeds the cutting off from his carnal enemies. She says, therefore: *The mandrakes give a smell in our gates*, namely in the gates of the five senses, which are then ours if the odor of the mandrakes reaches them and shuts out from them the worldly odor: for if the soul sleeps well within, it closes its senses to external things. And such truly was the contemplation of Mary.

Book V: On the Beauty of Mary

Chapter 1: On the Spiritual Beauty of Mary

(p. 273) Of the spiritual beauty of Mary, which consists in the virtues of the soul, the Spouse says to the blessed Virgin his mother, Cant. 4:7: *Thou art all fair, O my love,* sanctified in the womb from original sin. Again, *all fair,* with the actual mortal fomes thoroughly subdued. *And there is not a spot,* even of venial sin, *in thee,* at the conception of the Son of God, the fomes being thoroughly extinguished. And therefore thou art all fair in work, all fair in body, and there is not a spot in thee, in the heart. All fair in work, through simplicity. Matt. 6:22: *If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome.* All fair in body, through virginal chastity. Wisd. 4:1: *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory! for the memory thereof is immortal,* etc. All fair in heart, through humility, which is to be without spot. Therefore, in a figure of Mary, it is said of Esther, Esther 2:15: *Esther was exceeding fair, and of incredible beauty: and she appeared to all eyes gracious and amiable. Exceeding fair,* through the brightness which is the form of the virtues. *Of incredible beauty,* through unusual chastity: for it was unheard of from the ages that any person before the blessed Virgin should have made a vow of perpetual virginity, which vow she first made without any human precept, counsel or example, by the sole inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as blessed Bernard says; and therefore her beauty is called incredible. Or, *incredible beauty*: the fullness of all the virtues in the superlative degree. Hence Isa. 66:8: *Who hath ever heard such a thing?*

She appeared to all eyes gracious and amiable, through her humility, which God regarded: for where love is, there the eye is. And note that it says *to all eyes.* First, to the eyes of God the Trinity himself, who regarded her humility and desired to look upon her beauty. Hence the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit say to her, Cant. 6:12: *Return, return, O Sulamitess: return, return, that we may behold thee. Sulamitess* is interpreted *mortifying* or *mortified.* This is Mary, who mortified the flesh in herself, and every heat of lust, and was in a certain way mortified by the world in the passion of her Son. It is also interpreted *scarlet,* and in scarlet her most fervent charity *(p. 274)* is figured. She was also scarlet, because she was dyed red in the blood of her Son through compassion. In that also which is said, *that we may behold thee,* and the verb is put in the plural, the Trinity of persons is noted. Therefore the Spouse also says to her, Cant. 2:14: *Thy voice is sweet* to hear, *and thy face comely* to look upon. Second, to the eyes of the Angels and of all the blessed, who desire to look upon her as upon the Son (1 Peter 1:12). Third, to the eyes of men: for it is believed that almost no one could look upon her, as long as she was in the world, who did not immediately love her; yet she was never loved illicitly. (You will find this under the title on the properties of the cedar.)

And note that Esther, who is described as so beautiful, is interpreted *hidden*: in which the faithful soul is morally taught to hide both her beauties, as Sara did, hiding herself in the tabernacle (Gen. 18:9); Rebecca, covering her face with a veil (Gen. 24:65); Judith with her maids, that is, with clean and humble thoughts (which the name *maid* sounds), and with holy affections, remaining shut in her chamber (Judith 8:5). And here *chamber* means a secret oratory, of which Matt. 6:6: *When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber.* Mary shut in her chamber (Luke 1:28). Again, of these three things it is said once more of Judith in the person of Mary: *There is not such a woman upon the earth, in look, in beauty, and in sense of words* (Judith 11:19). *In look* of conversation, *in beauty* of body, *in sense of words,* that is, in inward words, that is, purity of thought.

Otherwise: *Thou art all fair,* namely in body and soul. In body, through the integrity of incorruption, and the unimpaired purity of all the senses. In soul not only all fair through humility, but most fair, or fairest, through the perfect fullness of all the virtues. Hence she is also called *the fairest among women* (Cant. 5:9 and 17): and this is said twice there. She is also called *fair as the moon* (Cant. 6:9), that is, the universal Church: because whatever beauty the other saints have in part, she has in whole. For none of the saints was found like her in humility, and so of each of the virtues. Truly fairest, who had in herself as many beauties as virtues,

and each in the superlative degree. And therefore she is truly called singular. Virginity indeed preserved her immune from all uncleanness of flesh and of the senses, so that her eyes did not see vanity, her ears did not hear a wicked tongue, her mouth did not taste what when tasted would bring death, and so of the other senses. Interior humility perfectly shut out from her pride, the mother of every spiritual vice.

Otherwise: *Thou art all fair.* For the whole soul is fair in which there is nothing of spiritual foulness, that is, of vice and sin, and from which nothing of spiritual beauty is lacking, that is, of grace and virtue. Such truly was the glorious Virgin, who neither had a first like her, nor will have one, in either respect. On account of the first it is said of her, Wisd. 7:25: *She is a pure vapor,* and therefore *nothing that is defiled cometh into her*. (You will find the reasons under her seventh privilege.) Of the second she herself says, Sir. 24:25: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth*, etc. And she well says *all grace*: for no virtue was lacking to her, neither the purity of the Angels, nor the faith of the Patriarchs, nor the knowledge of the Prophets, nor the patience of the Martyrs, nor the sobriety of the Confessors, nor the innocence or humility of Virgins. Again, of these two Fulbert of Chartres says, in that homily *Approbatae consuetudinis*: "We confidently assert that she was vacant of no kind of virtue, of whom the messenger asserted that the fullness of the grace of God was in her. We constantly also assert *(p. 275)* that her soul and the flesh which the Wisdom of God the Father chose and made his dwelling for himself were most pure from every uncleanness and malice, Scripture attesting that *wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins* (Wisd. 1:4)."

Otherwise: Mary is called *all fair*: because all the active virtues, all the contemplative virtues met in her, and made her admirable above all creatures. And this also was her incredible beauty. Through the active virtues she had a most clean will; through the speculative, a most purified mind. She was therefore all fair in the flesh, by the purity of virginity; and in the will, by the perfection of action; and in the mind, by the consummation of speculation. And neither in the flesh had she a stain of contagion, nor in the mind a wrinkle of duplicity. And such a mother and spouse Christ showed himself, *not having spot or wrinkle* (Eph. 5:27).

Otherwise: *Thou art all fair.* For there is a certain creature wholly deformed, namely the devil, and whoever knowingly dwells in any criminal or mortal sin, of whom it is said, Lam. 4:8: *Their face is now made blacker than coals*, etc. Isa. 13:8: *Their faces shall be as faces burnt.* Joel 2:6: *All faces shall be made like a pot.* And another creature partly fair, partly deformed, namely the just man, having no mortal sin, though many venial. James 3:2: *In many things we all offend. Who can understand sins?* (Ps. 18:13). 1 John 1:8: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* Such go into purgatory. There is also a third creature wholly fair, namely a child dying in his white baptismal robe, or a soul going out of purgatory, of which sort immediately fly to the chamber of the Spouse.

Otherwise: Mary is called *all fair* principally from the generation of the divine Word her Son, who is *the brightness of the Father's glory* (Heb. 1:3); who is *the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror* (Wisd. 7:26). *Into whom the Angels desire to look* (1 Peter 1:12). Whose beauty the sun and the moon marvel at, as blessed Agnes says.

All fair. For as iron drawn from the fire is not only fiery, but is wholly fire; and as air illumined by the sun, which while it inflames the air impresses its heat upon it and clothes it with color, is made wholly sun; and as a drop of water poured into a jar of the best wine wholly passes into the savor, the odor and the color of the wine; and as clear and pure glass, illumined by the sun, passes into the splendor and color of the sun; and as white and pure wool, dyed in the blood of the murex or shellfish, is wholly colored according to the quality of the dye: so the soul of Mary, filled with the Holy Spirit, and most of all with that heavenly light, that is, with the Son of God descending into her, has not only already been made luminous, but is wholly deified. And as the Son of God, assuming flesh, was formed in it as a son taking flesh from the substance of his mother, so the blessed Virgin announced to us a certain divine and ineffable thing by the omnipotence of God. Hence she also says, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me, and I to him.* But what the Beloved is to her, what she is to the Beloved, she does not say: because that is so great that words fail to explain it, and it is

inscrutable to the wayfarer, for we are commanded to believe, forbidden to discuss, as Ambrose says. Some, however, expound it thus: *My beloved to me, and I to him,* that is, he from me alone, and I alone bore him. Others thus: *My beloved to me*, subject namely and obedient as a son to his mother, *and I to him*, obedient and compliant as a daughter *(p. 276)* to her father, as a handmaid to the Lord, as a creature to the Creator. For if he that is joined to the Lord, which is done by love, *is one spirit* with him (1 Cor. 6:17), by the unity namely of love and grace, how much more are the soul of Mary, from which he never departed, and the body, in which incarnate Wisdom dwelt for nine months, deified, and by the Son, who is fire, wholly made fiery? For as the water at the wedding was turned into wine (John 2:9), where wine did not come in, nor water go out, but the one was made the other, not by successive replacement, but by the origin of change; not by an exposition of reason, but by the obtaining of wonder: so also Mary, who before was water, by the conception of the Son of God was as it were turned into wine, rejoicing the heart of man above all things after Christ. And perhaps because she in this way was both water, which is the drink of the poor, and wine, which is the drink of the rich, therefore she says, Sir. 24:29: *They that drink me shall yet thirst.*

Again, it is to be noted that Mary is not only called *fair*, or *all fair*, but also *beautiful* (*speciosa*), that is, filled with every bodily and spiritual beauty (*species*): because according to the Grammarians, nouns ending in *-osus* signify fullness. For the beauty of a woman consists chiefly in two things: in bright color, which pertains to the liveliness of faith, and in the composition of the members, which pertains to honesty of manners. And therefore her beauty is designated by a sevenfold beauty which is found in Scripture. Hence the Church sings to her: "Thou art made beautiful and sweet," etc.

The first is the beauty of the olive. Sir. 24:19: *As a fair olive tree in the plains.* The second, the beauty of the dove: hence is sung: "I saw a beautiful one as a dove." The third, the beauty of Libanus. Cant. 5:15: *His form as of Libanus.* The fourth, the beauty of heaven. Sir. 43:1: *The beauty of heaven in the vision of glory.* The fifth, the beauty of fire. Num. 9:16: *By night it covered the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire*: because the charity of Mary protects the Church in tribulation. The sixth, the beauty of the rainbow or bow. Sir. 43:12: *Look upon the rainbow, and bless him that made it: it is very beautiful.* The seventh, the beauty of the sun. Wisd. 7:29: *For she is more beautiful than the sun.*

The glorious Virgin is therefore an olive, through the effect of piety; a dove, through the gentleness of meekness; Libanus, which is interpreted *whitening*, through the whiteness of virginity; fire, by reason of protection, as has been said; heaven, that is, *casa elios*, that is, the house of the sun, through the fruitfulness of her womb, the filling of her womb, or the bearing in the womb; a bow, as to the incarnation of the Word: for a bow is from the rays of the sun and a moist cloud, as the Gloss says on Genesis, which was done in the incarnation, when the Sun of justice, who is the brightness of the Father, about to enter Egypt, that is, about to come into the world, *ascended upon a light cloud* (Isa. 19:1), that is, united to himself most clean flesh without the weight of sin, which was done in the virginal womb: and so he was made as it were a kind of bow, which is made in a day of rain; the sun, as to the generation of the Son: because as the sun without its own corruption begets a ray, so also the virgin her Son.

Again, the beauty of the olive consists in the continuity of greenness, and signifies in the Virgin the sincerity of faith, which delights the eye of the mind, as greenness delights the eye of the flesh. Sir. 40:22: *The eye desireth grace and beauty.* This beauty was prefigured by the beauty of the first daughter of Job, who was called Day, in which the brightness of faith is noted, etc. (cf. Job 42:14).

The beauty of the dove consists in the change and variety of color about the neck, and signifies in the Virgin the truth of doctrine, which is understood in the neck: because she was the teacher of teachers and the mistress of the Apostles. *(p. 277)* Hence a certain Gloss says on that word, *Thou art all fair*, that the spouse is fair by preaching. This beauty was prefigured by the beauty of the second daughter of Job, who was called Cassia (cf. Job 42:14). For cassia has purple leaves: and in leaves words are noted, in purple the passion of Christ. What then by purple leaves, if not the doctrine of the passion, which is believed to have most of all

abounded in the Virgin in affection and effect? Hence also Luke, to whom among the other Evangelists the description of the Lord's passion is appropriated, is said to have learned the series of the Gospel from the glorious Virgin.

The beauty of Libanus consists in the continuity of whiteness: for there the snows are continual. Jer. 18:14: *Shall the snow of Libanus fail from the rock of the field*, that is, from a firm mind the refreshment of the Virgin? And it signifies the whiteness of virginity, of which beauty it is said: *The eye shall admire the beauty of its whiteness* (Sir. 43:20). This beauty was figured by Abisag the Sunamitess, who was a virgin *exceeding beautiful* (3 Kings 1:4), who warmed the feet of David as they grew cold. So Mary warms the affections of the Son toward love of us by her prayers, when she feels them growing cold toward us because of our sins.

The beauty of heaven consists in the vision of glory, as it is said, Sir. 43:1, and signifies in the Virgin the loftiness of contemplation. Sir. 36:24: *The beauty of a woman cheereth the face of her husband*, that is, the height of contemplation delights the face of the speculative understanding. This beauty was prefigured by the beauty of the third daughter of Job, who was called Cornustibii (cf. Job 42:14). For what is Cornustibii but constancy and firmness in the praise of God, which is proper to contemplatives, namely to praise God without intermission in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles? Of this threefold beauty of the daughters of Job it is said at the end of Job that *there were no women found so beautiful as the daughters of Job in all the earth* (Job 42:15).

The beauty of fire consists in flaming and shining fervor. Augustine in the book *On the City of God*: "What is more beautiful than fire flaming, vigorous, shining? What more useful than fire warming, curing, cooking?" And this beauty signifies in the Virgin the ardor of charity. This beauty was figured by Esther the queen, who was of *incredible beauty*: because charity is the queen of the virtues. Master Richard of St Victor: "Charity is deservedly called the queen of the virtues: because he loses the name of virtue who does not serve charity."

The beauty of the bow consists in the two colors which are principal in it, celestial blue and fiery, and signifies in the Virgin honesty of conversation. For to this end, that one may live honestly with others, one must both weep with them that weep through compassion in adversity—behold the celestial-blue color—and rejoice with them that rejoice through congratulation in prosperity—behold the fiery color. This beauty of hers was prefigured by Abigail, who was *most prudent and beautiful* (1 Kings 25:3), who had compassion on her husband in adversity, and congratulated king David in his prosperity.

The beauty of the sun consists in the emission of a shining ray, and signifies the fruitfulness of the womb. And this beauty was figured by the beauty of Susanna, of whom it was said to the elder: *Beauty hath deceived thee* (Dan. 13:56).

Again, of the beauty of Mary the Church sings on her Assumption: "I saw a beautiful one as a dove descending," etc. Mary is called *beautiful* by antonomasia, as the moon is called *fair*. Hence: *Fair as the moon* (Cant. 6:9). And although it can be understood that she is called *beautiful as a dove*, yet it is better that she be understood as simply *beautiful*; and that what is said, *as a dove*, be referred to what is said, *descending*. Truly Mary is beautiful, who *(p. 278)* is compared to every beauty. To the beauty of trees. Hence: *As a cedar*, etc. (Sir. 24:17). To the beauty of gardens and fountains. Hence: *My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed* (Cant. 4:12). To the beauty of gems. Hence: *His belly as of ivory, set with sapphires* (Cant. 5:14), that is, with heavenly colors. Again: *His hands are turned and as of gold, full of hyacinths* (Cant. 5:14). Behold a threefold beauty, of works, of metals, of stones. To the beauty of lights. Hence: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising*, etc. (Cant. 6:9)? To the beauty of herbs. Hence: *My spikenard sent forth the odor thereof* (Cant. 1:11). To the beauty of flowers. Hence: *As a rose plant in Jericho* (Sir. 24:18). And Cant. 2:2: *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.* To the beauty of fruits. Hence: *As a piece of a pomegranate*, etc. (Cant. 4:3). To the beauty of buildings. Hence she is called ark, throne, seat, ship, and the like. To the beauty of vessels. Hence it is said, Sir. 43:2: *An admirable vessel*, etc.

To the beauty of members. Hence she is commended from each of her members in the Canticles, as we shall show below.

Again, Cant. 1:14: *Behold thou art fair, O my love, behold thou art fair! thy eyes are as those of doves.* Behold, the voice is of admiration; the rest is of commendation: but the repetition of beauty is a confirmation of love, or a sign of a twofold beauty, interior in virtue, and exterior in conversation. Or, a twin beauty of the twin affection of charity. Or, the beauty of the understanding, which is the knowledge of truth, and the beauty of the affection, which is the love of goodness. Or, faith and operation. Or, humility and innocence. Or, the beauty of the active and of the contemplative life. Or, this doubling pertains to the two talents, which are knowledge and operation. Or, to the two parts of justice, which are to decline from evil, and to do good. Or, to the conversation of cloistered and of secular persons. Or, to the rule of prelates and the obedience of subjects. Or, the beauty of the spouse is doubled on account of the beauty of penitents and the cleanness of the innocent. And it is said to her: *Behold thou art fair, O my love*, who lovest and art loved. The demonstration of the adverb does three things: admiration at the beauty of the spouse, and emulation in others; it also notes that the beauty of the spouse is ready to hand. But the pronoun doubled notes distinction and signification. And truly fair: because *thy eyes are as those of doves*, that is, affection and intention simple, without a fold, namely of error and of depraved love. This simplicity of the eyes renders the whole body of the Church, or of good works, fair (cf. Matt. 6:22 and Luke 11:34). Or, *of doves*, that is, thou lookest simply upon God: because thou seekest nothing else than him.

Again, there are four beauties of Mary or of the faithful soul. The first in the chastity of the body, the second in the purity of conscience, the third in exterior conversation, and the fourth in the contemplation of divine things. Of these four, Lam. 4:7: *Her Nazarites were whiter than snow, purer than milk, more ruddy than the old ivory, fairer than the sapphire.* The whiteness of snow is cleanness of flesh; its cold, the refreshment of the heart. These two are in the first beauty. The whiteness of milk, which is the food of little ones, is innocence of mind and simplicity of conscience. These two in the second. The whiteness of ivory, which with the process of time turns to redness, is innocence of work and fervor of charity. These two in the third. The sapphire has a heavenly color and signifies contemplation—behold the fourth. And these four beauties are as it were derived from the beauties of the Spouse, from whom the spouse receives all her *(p. 279)* beauty: because the Bridegroom is fair by nature, the bride fair by grace. The first beauty of the Bridegroom was in his mortal body. Hence *beautiful above the sons of men* (Ps. 44:3). The second appeared in the transfiguration, when *his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow* (Matt. 17:2). The third in the resurrection, the flesh being glorified. Hence Isa. 63:1: *Who is this that cometh from Edom?* etc. *This beautiful one in his robe*, that is, in glorified flesh. The fourth in the divinity. Hence Isa. 33:17: *His eyes shall see the king in his beauty.* In the first the Lord honored our infirmity; in the second he showed the quality of future beatitude; in the third he exhibited the truth of future incorruption; in the fourth he reformed the image lost in Adam.

Chapter 2: On the Bodily Beauty of Mary

Again, in the authority cited above: *Thou art all fair*, etc. And again in the Canticles, 1:14: *Behold thou art fair, O my love! behold thou art fair!* the Spouse seems to attribute to her a twofold beauty, bodily namely, and spiritual. Of the spiritual it has been said, yet less sufficiently: but we shall still speak of it. If anyone, however, asks about the bodily beauty of the blessed Virgin, it seems to me most fitting that it can be said and believed that she was beautiful above the daughters of men, who clothed with the substance of her flesh the Only-begotten, beautiful in form not only above the sons of men, but even above thousands of Angels: for she would not fittingly be called *all fair and without spot*, unless according to the disposition and figure of the body and the color of the face she appeared most beautiful and without spot. But perhaps, as is found written in the apocryphal work on the infancy of the Saviour, no one could fully look upon her face. Hence it

is said, Matt. 1:24–25, that Joseph took Mary, *and he knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn son*, etc. And Chrysostom says, as some assert, that in the Gospel of the Nazarenes it is read that Joseph could not look upon Mary face to face: because the Holy Spirit had thoroughly filled her from the conception of the Son of God, so that he did not know her on account of the splendor of her countenance. Of this beauty a certain one says elegantly to her in prose:

Thou hast put on beauty, Thou hast shone more than the sun, When thou didst cover the blessed members of Christ With the embroidered tunic of thy flesh.

Others say that from the time Joseph knew and believed that Mary had conceived of the Holy Spirit, he held her in such reverence that he never dared to look upon her face: whence he did not know of what sort her countenance was. The like is read of Moses, Exod. 34:29, and 2 Cor. 3:13, that the children of Israel could not look upon the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance: because his face *(p. 280)* appeared horned from the fellowship of the speech of the Lord. If then the face of the Prophet appeared so beautiful from the fellowship of the speech of the Lord, what dost thou think of the face of the mother of that Word himself?

Again, by reason of bodily beauty and virginity she herself is figured by Rebecca, of whom it is read, Gen. 24:15–16: *Behold Rebecca came out*, etc., *having a pitcher on her shoulder, an exceeding comely maid, and a most beautiful virgin, and unknown to man.* On this account also she herself is figured by nearly all the women who are commended for bodily beauty in the Bible, as were Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, the three daughters of Job, Noemi, Abisag, Abigail, Bethsabee, Susanna, Judith, Esther, and many others.

Of the beauty, however, and most excellent honesty of her members a certain one speaks thus: "To the singular excellence of the members of the blessed Virgin it is not necessary to add human praises, since from her most holy life and from the form of every virtue she shines forth: her conversation indeed on earth is both proposed to all the saints to be imitated, and is also made admirable even to the Angels; which indeed not only delighted, but also provoked the divine regards. For what else were her members, if not certain spiritual tongues, which the Holy Spirit, tempering with the plectrum of his melody, moved by the presence of his dignity into a harmony of angelic likeness? For the same Spirit who had kindled her soul with the fervor of his heat also suspended the offices of her members in the same habit. Whence nothing else sounded in their motions but the nectar of divine and human wisdom, expressed from that ineffable sweetness which in the Trinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit the essence of the divine majesty communicates, or the concord. To the excellence of this purity we know no holiness of any saint to reach, save of Mary alone, who was the nearer to the holy divinity, the more she was adorned with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who kept her members as it were in a certain virginity, that is, altogether in the integrity of holiness, so that they were subject to no corruption at all, while no filth of worldly vanity or of carnal allurement usurped anything for itself from their office."

Again, of the beauty of Mary, yet more interior than exterior, the Holy Spirit says to her in Psalm 44:12: *The king*, that is, Christ, *shall greatly desire thy beauty.* And note that by exterior beauty, which consists in the members, is designated interior beauty, which consists in the virtues of the soul; and in these consists the beauty of Jacob, that is, of Mary, who at once and together overthrew all vices, which beauty Christ loved.

Here the writer begins to commend Mary from the beauty of each of her members and senses, and inserts certain special things concerning the beauty of Christ, of the Church and of the faithful soul, mystically and morally, according to the testimonies of the Scriptures and the expositions of the greatest theologians. And he begins from the head of Mary.

In the due disposition of the head. Cant. 7:5: *Thy head is like Carmel: and the hairs of thy head as the purple of the king bound in the channels.* Carmel is interpreted *the knowledge of circumcision*; royal purple is dyed in certain channels, and by what is said to them, *bound in the channels*, freshness is designated. The sense therefore is: *Thy head*, that is, thy mind, is prudently circumcised, and *thy hairs*, that is, thy thoughts, are

dyed in the memory of the blood of the Lord's passion, and so thy thoughts are affected as if they saw fresh blood dripping from the wounds of the Son. For the bundle of myrrh abode between her breasts, until she was assumed to that joy which swallowed up every sorrow.

Again, the head of Mary, that is, the mind, is compared to Carmel on account of the eminence of contemplation and of divine knowledge, and on account of the fatness of the graces, from which *(p. 281)* comes the manifold fruit of good works: because Carmel is a high and fat mountain. And by reason of the interpretation: because she prudently circumcised from herself every illicit thing, both from her flesh and from her spirit. And from the head, that is, her mind enriched with the charisms of all the graces, the rule of each of her members proceeded, as through the head the whole body is ruled.

Again, it is to be noted that Carmel is interpreted *the knowledge of circumcision*, which the faithful soul has, knowing what it ought to cut off from itself, and what not. Again, on Carmel Elias slew the priests of Baal (3 Kings 18:40), after he had offered sacrifice in fire from heaven, and afterward, putting his head between his knees in prayer, obtained rain. Behold a fitting order: that first thou circumcise from thyself every superfluity in members and senses, as Christ taught by his circumcision; afterward that thou overcome thyself, as he did the priests of Baal, in the sacrifice of a contrite heart, the fire of charity being kindled, and that thou immolate to God the sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving; then that thou humble thy mind, by which a man is known by God, as he, prone upon the earth, put his face between his knees, which are flexible: because after all these things a man ought to feel humble things of himself; and so thou wilt be able to obtain the rain of grace. And each of such graces we have through the operations and examples of the Virgin, whose head is compared to Carmel.

Of the hairs of the mother can be expounded what is said of the hairs of the Son, Cant. 5:11: *His locks as branches of palm trees, black as a raven. Locks*, that is, her holy thoughts, adhering to her head, that is, to Christ, through love, *as branches*, that is, as the leaves of palm trees, which are therefore called *branches* (*elatae*), because they are erect and tending upward, meditating continually on heavenly things, little or never on earthly, as also the leaves of the palm tend straight upward against the custom of other trees. Her thoughts were also *raised* through charity and piety, thinking of the salvation of the human race. And *sharp* on account of the subtlety and liberty of thinking: because fantastic thoughts did not molest her; for she thought what she willed, and nothing but what she willed.

Black as a raven, on account of humility: for humility is said from *humus* (the ground), whose proper color is blackness. Or *black*: because they were blackened by the sorrows which the Son suffered. The thoughts of the Virgin were therefore ample by liberty, dilated by piety, sharp by subtlety, lofty by uprightness, black by humility. *As a raven*, which is a bird carefully incorporating carcasses into itself. So the blessed Virgin, who recalls that she was made the mother of God for the sake of carcass-like sinners, is believed to think continually of snatching them from the devil and incorporating them into the Church, of which she herself is the neck, through which as a medium the food descends into the belly.

Mystically: The locks of the Church which immediately adhere to Christ the head, and are subtle and thin, and when cut do not feel pain, are spiritual men, not puffed up with pride, not heavy with riches, and who, suffering for Christ, do not grieve but rejoice. And they are *as branches of palm trees*, that is, as the tops of palms which are high, erect, and crown the victor, and signify the height and excellence of good work, and the uprightness of holy intention, and the triumph of perseverance which merits the crown. They are also *black*, that is, blackened by penance, such as Job was, saying, 30:30: *My skin is become black*, etc. *As a raven*, that is, with a true and native blackness, not painted: and this against hypocrites, *who disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast* (Matt. 6:16). Or, *as a raven*, whose voice is *cra*, who namely through the longanimity of hope say with Jacob: *My justice shall answer for me to morrow* (Gen. 30:33). In the yellowness of the hairs, or saffron color, *(p. 282)* or as it were a certain gilding, understand the ruddiness of meditations or thoughts concerning God. Cant. 5:11 says of Christ: *His head is as the finest gold.*

Well, however, are the thoughts of the Virgin comparable to locks and to hairs, on account of the many properties of hairs. The hairs of Mary, that is, her thoughts, are slender by humility. (Look for spiritual slenderness under the title on aromatics, where Mary is called a *pillar of smoke*.) Soft by kindness. Hence she says with her Son, Jer. 29:11: *I think thoughts of peace, and not of affliction.* Isa. 32:8: *The prince shall devise such things as are worthy of a prince*, namely what is for the honor of God and the utility of the neighbor. Flexible by obedience and compassion. Bloodless without carnal affection. Insensible by the lightness of patience. Subtle by the ineffable contemplation of the deity. Wisd. 5:16: *Their thought is with the Most High.* Wisd. 6:16: *To think upon her is perfect understanding.* Thin by voluntary poverty. Lean by abstinence and sobriety. Long by final perseverance. Soundless, not murmuring in tribulation. Round by the desire and love of eternity. Continually growing by continual improvement. Sometimes raising themselves by the seeking of eternal things, by the contemplation of heavenly things, by the uprightness of intention. Therefore her locks are compared to the branches of palm trees, as above concerning the locks. Sometimes letting themselves down by self-examination. Sometimes curling. Sometimes as it were flowing down over the shoulders, that is, flowing downward by pious compassion. The shoulders of the Church are those who piously support the burdens of fraternal infirmity: and over such, when they are afflicted, the pious Virgin bears pious bowels. Sometimes bound together by the zeal of discipline. Often washed by tearful and devout recollection of the Son and of heavenly things. Combed and parted by most ordered discretion. Hence Luke 1:29: *She thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.* Behold discretion. Rooted in the head, that is, in Christ the golden head, by faith, hope and charity. Immediately adhering to the head itself by sincere love, which unites the lover to the beloved. Hanging down from the head itself by true humiliation. Hence she herself said, Luke 1:49: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me.* Again: *By the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Cor. 15:10). Chiefly adorning the head itself from which they arise, that is, Christ, by glorious magnification. Hence: *My soul doth magnify*, etc. 1 Cor. 11:7: *The woman is the glory of the man.* Warming the head itself from which they arise by pious prayer: for Mary is Abisag, who warms the feet, that is, the affections of the man David as they grow cold, toward love of us (3 Kings 1:3). Sometimes gathered into a braid by the faith of the Trinity and of unity. Sometimes restrained by a mitre or veil or head-covering, by the hiding of the secrets of the heart. Tawny, saffron or golden through charity. White or as it were silver through chastity. Black and as it were raven-like through penance or sorrow. Cant. 5:11: *His locks … black as a raven*, as above. As it were growing gray through wisdom, most of all when after the ascension of the Son she conferred with the Apostles concerning the truth and the whole series of the Gospel. As it were ruddy through most bitter compassion for the suffering Son, and continual recollection of his passion: for the thoughts of the Virgin were as it were dyed in the always fresh memory of the Lord's passion.

With such hairs, that is, with holy meditations and thoughts, the mind of the blessed Virgin herself was adorned before God, and it was a great part of that inward beauty which Christ the Lord, King of kings, desired and loved. Again, in these hairs her head, that is, her mind, was protected from every cold of unbelief and from every heat of any concupiscence, and by their grace she was held amiable and desirable to God the Trinity himself and to the holy Angels. Hence they also said to her, Cant. 6:

(p. 283) 12: *Return, return, O Sulamitess! return, return, that we may behold thee.*

Morally: Holy thoughts warm, protect and adorn the mind from which they arise, as was said above, and most of all when the anguish of the Lord's passion is brought back to the mind, which is armor sufficient against the infestation of every kind of temptation, as it is said, 1 Peter 4:1: *Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought.* But spiritual baldness, which is to lack such holy thoughts and meditations, most wickedly disfigures the head of the soul, that is, the mind, and most of all dishonors it, and exposes it to the frost of unbelief and to the heat of any temptation: and therefore the Lord threatens the daughters of Sion, that is, sinful and proud souls, Isa. 3:24: *Instead of curled hair, baldness*, etc.

Again, by reason of the hairs Mary is compared, Cant. 4:14: *Spikenard and saffron*, etc. For saffron has golden hairs, such as we believe the Virgin literally had, and such we have seen in relics at Rouen. Truly indeed her thoughts were golden: because hanging from and having their origin in the golden head of the deity, as was said above, and charitably patient, wise and obedient, all of which are noted in gold.

Again, Cant. 4:1, it is said to the Virgin: *Thy hair is as flocks of goats, which come up from mount Galaad.* Flocks of goats, that is, of roes, are the flocks of all contemplatives, who with the keenness of contemplation see sharply like roes, and ascend to the vision of heavenly things from him, and through him, who is the mountain of mountains, who is mount Galaad, heaping up in himself all the testimonies of the Scriptures: for Galaad is interpreted *a heap of testimony*. To all these flocks, however, are compared the hairs of the Virgin, that is, her spiritual thoughts, subtle, and sweetly adhering to her head, Christ: for she more subtly than all the flocks of contemplatives penetrated with the eye of contemplation the secrets of the supreme divinity.

In the plainness and whiteness of the forehead, by which namely the forehead is sometimes suffused as with a certain rosy redness, is designated the bashfulness of the Virgin. Plainness has regard to simplicity, whiteness to cleanness, redness to charity. But the forehead of the faithful soul is the blushing of the Christian name and bashfulness, lest she dare namely to think, speak, hear or do anything dishonest, either by nod, or by sign, or by gesture, or by laughter. But the forehead of the sinful soul is shamelessness or obstinacy. Of the first, Jer. 3:3: *Thou hadst a harlot's forehead: thou wouldst not blush.* Of the second, Isa. 48:4: *Thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy forehead as brass.* The forehead also of the devil are those who *proclaim their sins as Sodom* (Isa. 3:9). Of such it is said, Ezek. 3:7: *For all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and an obstinate heart.* But holy bashfulness is the stone with which Goliath is to be struck in the forehead, that he may be cast down from the height of his presumption (cf. 1 Kings 17:49 ff.): because to be confounded for one's sins brings grace and glory (Sir. 4:25).

In the beauty or clarity of the eyes. The eyes of Mary are understanding and affection. Or, the identity of thoughts and works. Or, simplicity and uniformity of countenance: for she is Anna, that is, grace, *whose countenance was no more changed* (1 Kings 1:18). Nor could the grace of Mary, made fruitful by the contemplation of heavenly things, ever be torn away or delayed. Therefore the Spouse says to her, commending her for the beauty of her eyes, Cant. 1:14: *Behold thou art fair, O my love! behold thou art fair! thy eyes are as those of doves.* He says *behold* twice, making one demonstration to the eye, another to *(p. 284)* the understanding. He says *fair* twice, to hint that there is in her what the eye of flesh merits from without, and what the eyes of the mind love from within. Or, in this he also commends her for a twofold love, namely of God and of neighbor. For charity is the beauty of the soul. Wisd. 4:1: *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory!* Or, in this he commends her for the beauty of the understanding, which is truth, and of the affection, which is goodness. Or, he commends her for innocence as regards herself, and beneficence as regards the neighbor. Or, for the love of every good and the hatred of every evil. It follows: *Thy eyes are as those of doves*—you will find this below.

Again, from the eyes the Spouse commends her, Cant. 4:9: *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck.* Another reading says: *Thou hast struck us to the heart*, namely the whole Trinity: *thou hast wounded my heart* with the wound of charity, not of sorrow, that is, thou hast delightfully drawn me to thy love, that I might love thee deeply from my heart. *With one*, that is, in the unity of thy eyes, namely of affection and understanding, which in thee are so one that the affection desires nothing else than what the understanding indicates is to be desired. *Thou hast wounded my heart with one hair of thy neck*, which another reading has, that is, in the unity of thy thoughts, which so adhere to Christ their head that they say nothing else than that of Psalm 26:4: *One thing I have asked of the Lord*, etc.

He therefore says that he is wounded by charity and struck to the heart with one of the eyes and with one hair of his mother: because this unity triumphs over his heart, and no oblivion blots out the recollection of her,

just as it cannot be that the wound of the heart is not continually felt. Or, by one hair is designated her singular and unique humility, which after the manner of a hair was slender and thin, lacking the burden of worldly things and the grossness of temporal things, that she might the better ascend and enter through the eye of a needle, that is, the end of the passion. Her humility was also round, as a hair is round: because for the love of eternity she so greatly humbled herself, not for the sake of empty glory, as hypocrites, who wickedly humble themselves, and whose interior, that is, intention and affection, *is full of deceit and fraud* (Sir. 19:23).

It follows: *Of thy neck.* In this it is noted that the blessed Virgin was humble not only in mind, but also in voice. By the neck, which contains the throat, in which the voice is formed—whence of certain ones it is said: *They shall not cry out with their throat* (Ps. 113:7)—is signified the humility of her words: because through humility the word of obedience sounded, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38). Therefore by one hair, the singular humility of her mind. And because *of thy neck* is added, the singular and unique humility of her voice. And by this twofold humility she deeply wounded the heart of Christ himself with the wound of love, so that she was made to him sister and spouse as regards the human nature which he assumed from her, in which he was wounded unto death on the gibbet of the cross. Therefore he says: *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse.*

Again, Cant. 5:12, it is said of the eyes of the Spouse, and it can be expounded of the eyes of Mary: *His eyes as doves upon brooks of waters, which are washed with milk, and sit beside the fulness of the streams.* In the dove are noted simplicity and innocence. Namely that doves sitting upon brooks of waters look upon the waters which flow at present, and those which have already flowed, and those which will flow. So also the eyes of the Virgin, through columbine simplicity and innocence, perspicaciously behold in the mirror of the Trinity past, present and future, the shadow of the hawk, that is, of the devil. Her eyes are also compared to doves *which are washed with milk*: because *(p. 285)* her regard is suffused with the sweetness of piety and mercy. And these eyes see subtly like doves: because they *sit beside the fulness of the streams*, that is, beside the waters of saving wisdom.

Otherwise: *His eyes as doves*, that is, chaste and simple, *upon brooks of waters*, that is, beside the streams of the Scriptures, in which the Virgin studied, *which are washed with milk.* In milk two things: whiteness which pertains to chastity, sweetness which ought to be referred to piety. Hence we pray: "Those thy merciful eyes," etc. But if thou wilt that these eyes look upon thee, thou must become poor in spirit, that is, humble: because the eyes of Christ and of Mary look upon the poor. The devil *beholdeth every high thing*, that is, every proud thing, as it is said, Job 41:25. Again, *The eyes of the Lord are upon the just* (Ps. 33:16 and 1 Peter 3:12), as the eyes of a mother upon her child, lest he fall; and if he has fallen, that she may raise him up. Hence he says to his servant: *I will fix my eyes upon thee* (Ps. 31:8). And they *sit beside the fulness of the streams* of the Scriptures. And note, *sit*, not fly across, or walk about, against those who cannot sit to their books, and against certain riding monks, who cannot sit in the cloister.

Again, Cant. 7:4, it is said to Mary: *Thy eyes as the fishpools in Hesebon, which are in the gate of the daughter of the multitude.* Hesebon is interpreted *a girdle of mourning*, that is, mourning girding, to be understood intransitively: because the mourning of penance girds a man, and restrains the matter of sins and the flux of sin, as a bandage girds the wounded and restrains the flux of blood. And this seal suits penitents, who in the mourning of the soul recall their sins and the punishments of hell, and thence are humbled: because as it is said, Prov. 12:25: *Grief in the heart of a man shall bring him low*, etc. For to such the eyes of the blessed Virgin are as fishpools, that is, regards of mercy, her manifold washing-place. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the just, the eyes of the Lady upon sinners. And these eyes are said to be *in the gate of the daughter of the multitude*, that is, of the Church, of which she herself is the gate. Or, *Her eyes*, that is, understanding and affection, *as fishpools*: because she contains the waters of doctrine and of mercy, with which she nourishes the lesser who are in Hesebon, which was a certain city before whose gate was a

fountain flowing round the city, nor did anyone enter into it except through the fountain. Similarly no one enters the Church except through baptism. And these fishpools are said to be *in the gate*, that is, in her who is the gate of the Church: because except through her the faithful do not enter unto life, *of the daughter of the multitude*, that is, the multitude of children.

Again, of the eyes of the mother it can fittingly be said as it is said of the eyes of the Son, Apoc. 1:14: *His eyes were as a flame of fire.* Which has four properties: for it illumines and warms, terrifies and burns. For the regard of Mary illustrates the elect with the light of wisdom, and warms them with the love of justice; but the reprobate and the demons she terrifies with the fierceness of threat, and the uncorrected she burns with the fire of damnation, as is plain in Julian the apostate. Otherwise, these eyes are flaming through charity and illuminate the body of Christ which is the Church: because her renowned life illumines all the Churches; and because they burn demons and sins. Prov. 20:8: *The king that sitteth*, etc. (Look above at the twenty-fourth cause.)

Morally: The two eyes of the soul are the twin love of God and of neighbor. Or, in doing good and avoiding evil. Or, the understanding which looks to faith, and the affection which looks to charity. But the understanding is to be purged from error, the affection from vice. Hence Jer. 4:4: *Take away the foreskins of your hearts, ye men of Juda, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem*, that is, of the Church or of religion. The foreskin of the understanding is error, the foreskin of the affection is malice. Hence Jer. 4:14 says to the soul: *Take away the evil of thy heart.… (p. 286) How long shall hurtful thoughts*, that is, erroneous ones, *abide in thee?* These eyes also ought to be as doves, that they may foresee the hawk: for as bodily eyes are sharpened by the inspection of waters, so spiritual ones by the consideration of sacred Scripture, that the cunning of the devil may be foreseen.

Again, faith purifies the eyes of the faithful soul. Hence Acts 15:9: *Purifying their hearts by faith.* Hope elevates them to the Lord. Hence Ps. 122:1: *To thee have I lifted up my eyes*, etc. Charity and cleanness join them to God. Matt. 5:8: *Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.* Again, Isa. 33:17: *His eyes shall see the king in his beauty*, that is, clean and charitable eyes.

Again, the eyes of the faithful soul ought to be as doves, not as of a raven or a vulture, which always have their eyes toward carcasses; not as of a hawk or a heron, whose eye is toward blood and rapine; but as of a dove, which sit upon brooks of waters, that is, of the Scriptures, that they may foresee the cunning of the devil, and flee from him that persecutes. And these doves ought to be *washed with milk*, that is, with works of charity and piety, than which nothing is sweeter, cleansed from sins, and to *sit beside the fulness of the streams*: for those who clearly see what is to be seen in the Scriptures are sitting and dwelling by the streams of tears, which streams are then *most full* when they bewail not only their own sins but also those of others: nor have they only tears of penance, but also of devotion, that is, both irrigations. And such are well called eyes: because thus they foresee against the cunning of the devil in the brooks of Scripture, and by works of mercy they provide for themselves against the accusation of the neighbor, lest he be able to say against them: Thou hast killed me, because thou hast not fed me; and against the discretion of the judge, by sending to him a legation of tears.

In the fitting plainness of the cheeks. Cant. 1:9: *Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtledove's.* In a woman's cheeks five things are noted: whiteness, redness, beauty, bashfulness, and the chewing of foods. Of the first four you will find much in this chapter. But she chewed the food of the Gospel for the Apostles and Evangelists and all their followers, whose truth, words and order she had kept in her heart (Luke 2:51). It is therefore said to her: *Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtledove's*, that is, thy interior beauty is comparable to the properties of cheeks and to the properties of the turtledove.

Here the Spouse begins to commend the spouse and most of all his mother: for the beauty of a woman appears most of all in the cheeks. The cheeks are continuous with the ears, through which the whole beauty

of the virtues of the spouse is poured in: because *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17): so also the other virtues. Therefore Ps. 44:11 ff. says: *Hearken, O daughter*, etc., as far as *thy beauty*. And this can be noted in that she patiently heard the Angel announcing the Son of God. The cheeks of the turtledove have not hairs, but feathers, which retain no vestige of waters, and help for flight: in this it is noted that she perfectly renounced all the superfluities of the world, which are signified by hairs. Cleanness of heart also and the beauty of the virtues can be noted in this, and by these three she *flew upon the wings of the winds*, namely in the assumption above all the orders of the Angels.

Of the cheeks of the spouse also the Spouse says to her, Cant. 4:3: *Thy cheeks are as a piece of a pomegranate, besides what is hidden within.* Pomegranates literally are the same as *mala granata*, and are called *punica* from the Punic region, in which they grow and abound. But they are called *granata* on account of the multitude of grains, and when broken they emit a greater fragrance of odor than when whole. A piece of a pomegranate also shows redness and whiteness. In the cheeks, as has been said, consists the beauty and *(p. 287)* fairness of a woman. The blessed Virgin is also called beautiful on account of the redness of natural beauty, of virginal bashfulness, of outstanding charity, and of singular patience, and on account of the whiteness of innocence, of virginity, and of immortality, and also on account of immunity from sin.

Besides that, that is, besides that *which is hidden within*, known to God alone, manifest to no one: for how great is Mary's beauty, he alone knows who gave it. Or, *besides that which is hidden within*, that is, besides the inward beauty of the virtues, which was hidden from all men, even from herself. Or, this is said morally to the faithful soul: *Besides that which is hidden within*, that is, besides that vision by which thou shalt see thy Spouse with unveiled face: for now *thou seest through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face* (1 Cor. 13:12). Or, *besides that which is hidden within*, that is, besides the brightness of eternal retribution, which is not now seen. Hence Isa. 64:4: *Eye hath not seen.* Col. 3:3: *Your life is hid.* 1 John 3:2: *Now we are the sons of God*, etc. Again, morally: The grains of a pomegranate do not appear until the apple, that is, the fruit, is opened; so the virtues of the soul now lie hidden, but when the Lord shall have opened the hidden things of hearts, and shall have made manifest the hidden things of darkness, then they will be open. Otherwise: *Besides that which is hidden within*, that is, besides the beauty of interior love, by which other things are fair and commendable, which is well said to be hidden, because it is known to God alone: for *man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart* (1 Kings 16:7).

Otherwise: *Thy cheeks are as a piece of a pomegranate.* The cheeks of the faithful soul, the spouse of Christ, are her twofold patience. The first in the labor of actions; the second in the sorrow of passions. And these two are called cheeks: because in these most of all appears the maturity and virility of the faithful soul, and they are as a piece of a pomegranate containing grace, that is, the germs of the virtues, and the purposes of holy action, white with purity of intention, and red with fervor of charity, through the breaking of tribulation which is patience. For what of holy germ or good purpose the bark of patience has within itself, the breaking of tribulation makes manifest. For what blessed Job had within in time of peace was hidden; but what or how much this was, tribulation made manifest.

Again, the breaking of a pomegranate drips wine sweet and wholesome to the taste: in which wine are signified compunction, devotion, compassion and cheerfulness, which ought to accompany the patience of a holy soul. The sense therefore is: *Thy cheeks are as a piece of a pomegranate*, that is, thy patience white and ruddy, with the four said properties of wine.

It follows: *Besides that which is hidden within.* This is said generally against all those who with marvelous zeal adorn and cultivate their exterior things, and leave their interior things altogether uncultivated, choosing rather to please men who judge those things that appear, than God who beholdeth the heart; and all such cursed hypocrites are they to whom the Lord says, Matt. 23:25–26: *Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside*

may become clean.

Again, of the cheeks of the Spouse, Cant. 5:13: *His cheeks are as beds of aromatical spices set by the perfumers.* Which can be expounded of the mother and the Son thus: The perfumers who compound the pigments of sweetness and of spiritual delights in the soul are the seven spirits which are before the throne (Apoc. 1:4), namely the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, and the rest. These perfumers in the natural powers of the soul of Christ or of the blessed Virgin herself *(p. 288)* planted, as in beds orderly, the aromatics of graces and virtues, in which the beauty of her soul consists, as in the cheeks the beauty of the face is considered.

Otherwise: In the cheeks are beauty, shame and bashfulness. Comparable to this member are those who have the grace of bashfulness, whom namely it shames to think, speak, do or hear foul things, whose honesty and the beauty of the virtues adorn the Church; and this most of all if they be comparable to beds of aromatical spices, so that namely as in beds aromatic herbs are planted, so in their minds the germs of the virtues are planted by the perfumers, that is, by the holy Doctors, who from the Apostles and Prophets took and harvested the aromatics of sermons and of holy works, which they handed on to others.

Otherwise: *His cheeks are as beds of aromatical spices set by the perfumers.* Three things can be noted in the cheeks: fear in pallor or abstinence, love in redness or bashfulness, in the beard manly strength or constancy of mind. *As beds.* A bed is first ploughed with the ploughshare of contrition, second sown with natural and gratuitous gifts, third watered with graces and tears. Of the first, Osee 10:11: *Juda shall plough,* namely the area of the heart after contrition by confessing sins one by one. Of the second, Matt. 13:27: *Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field?* Of the third, Ps. 103:13: *Thou waterest the hills from thy upper rooms.*

Of aromatical spices. Threefold aromatics: natural goods namely, the five senses, and the ingenuity of the heart, which are instruments of meriting. Gratuitous and spiritual gifts, which are the cause of meriting. Hence 2 Cor. 6:1: *We exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain.* Good operations and pious exercises, lest faith die without works. *Set by the perfumers*, who are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father creating gives the gifts of nature; the Son preaching the examples of the virtues in good operation; the Holy Spirit the gratuitous gifts by the infusion of charisms. These beds are watered with waters from fountains, which are the eyes in the pouring forth of tears; with waters from wells, that is, deep groanings of the heart in contrition; from fishpools, that is, the French *mares*; from rains; from dew. The fishpool is penance, rain is prayer, dew is devotion of mind.

In the fitting coloring of the face. The face of the soul, as blessed Bernard says, is the intention of the mind, from which comes the uprightness of work, as from the face the beauty of the body. Of this face the whiteness is cleanness, the redness bashfulness: which two things beautify the soul and increase grace. Two cheeks in this face: the thing and the cause, namely what thou intendest and on account of what. Or, the two cheeks in the face where the beauty of a woman consists in whiteness and redness are in the soul chastity and charity, by which two virtues God knows the soul by approval, if each be twofold, as the cheek is twofold. Whiteness: purity of intention and of action. Redness: charity toward God and neighbor. But a beautiful face, as Augustine says, is when the face is cheerfully affected, evenly measured, brightly colored. Cheerfully affected is that soul which, whatever good it does, works cheerfully. 2 Cor. 9:7: *God loveth a cheerful giver.* Evenly measured: when it does all things at the due time, in due order, with due intention, that is, to the glory of God, to its own salvation, to the example of the neighbor, so that each thing may hold its place, allotted becomingly. Brightly colored: when the whiteness of chastity and innocence is laid under the redness of charity, patience and martyrdom. For a bright color is whiteness mixed with redness.

Otherwise: To this end, that the soul may please her Spouse, first it is necessary that the whiteness of chastity be laid under, which is the color receptive of all colors, as is plain in images, seats and shields to be painted. And this color ought to be twisted byssus, that innocence may be joined to chastity. Or, that outwardly in the

body, and in the mind *(p. 289)* or will inwardly, each of these virtues may be preserved. But the whiteness of innocence is referred to the neighbor, the redness of charity to God. But a twofold redness is designated by scarlet dyed twice, that thou mayest love God: both because he is thy God who created thee, because he first loved thee, and because he was made man for thy love. Thou oughtest also to love thy neighbor as to the soul: because he was created like thee unto the image of God; and as to the body, that thou mayest do him good. Hence Sir. 17:12: *He commanded them*, namely men, *every one concerning his neighbor.* Again, Sir. 18:12: *The mercy of man is toward his neighbor*, etc. Sir. 31:18: *Judge of the disposition of thy neighbor*, that is, what thou owest to thy neighbor, from thyself. For that thou owest him in his necessity which thou wouldst believe owed to thee if placed in his state. Or thus: *Judge of the disposition of thy neighbor from thyself*, that is, from thy frailty think of the frailty of others.

A twofold redness also is necessary, namely of bashfulness, as it were on the left cheek, concerning those things which pertain to the left, that is, vices and sins: for he who is ashamed is wont suddenly to be suffused with redness. Of charity on the right, that thou mayest love God for the obtaining of the gifts of graces which pertain to the right. Of bashfulness for sins the Psalmist says, Ps. 43:16: *All the day long my shame is before me*, etc. Of those who have not this bashfulness Jeremias says to the sinful soul, 3:3: *Thou hadst a harlot's forehead: thou wouldst not blush.* But to this redness, that is, bashfulness for sins, first the whiteness of chastity ought to be laid under, that the sinful soul may have a firm purpose of abstaining thereafter from sin.

Again, it is to be noted that three things principally are wont to be red in a brightly colored countenance or face, that is, the forehead and the twofold cheek. By the forehead charity, by the right cheek patience, by the left blushing for sins. The forehead of the soul therefore blushes when, from the love of Christ, of Mary and of the saints, and lest he scandalize the neighbor, one is ashamed to say, do or even think foul and dishonest things.

And note that as certain cloths are first wont to be dyed in a certain redness, as it were somewhat obscure, that they may at length receive a bright redness: so a penitent soul ought first to be overspread with a certain somewhat obscure redness, that is, bashfulness for sins: otherwise it cannot receive the bright redness of true patience, or of meritorious charity, which twofold redness is necessary, namely that from charity he patiently endure tribulations who recalls that he has sometimes mortally sinned.

Again, the whiteness of innocence suits the forehead of the soul, where is the seat of bashfulness which is a virtue. So colored was the glorious Virgin, of whom it is said, Sir. 26:19: *A holy and shamefaced woman is grace upon grace*, that is, bashful. (Look above under the title on the bashfulness of Mary.)

The whiteness also of virginity was laid under in her to the redness of patience and of charity, and this as it were in a twofold cheek, by which she was a virgin in mind and body. Hence of her it is said, Prov. 31:22: *Fine linen and purple is her clothing.* Twisted byssus: twofold virginity, or virginity and innocence. Byssus and purple: the lily with the rose. The whiteness also of innocence was laid under in her to the redness of patience and of charity: because no one can truly love unless he has lived innocently. On this account it is said to her, Cant. 1:9: *Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtledove's*: behold the redness of charity. On this account also this is named *the first gold* in Proverbs (Prov. 3:14): because these three virtues, namely chastity, innocence, charity, begin and consummate every good.

Again, therefore it is said, Cant. 4:3: *(p. 290) Thy cheeks are as a piece of a pomegranate.* In a pomegranate the bark prevails—behold charity; the grains are red—behold bashfulness, or patience, or the native color of the Virgin. It is also to be noted that that soul can be said most brightly colored, and expressly most like her Spouse, who, having the whiteness of innocence as it were laid under, is afflicted with many tribulations, and yet does not desert her innocence, but endures all things patiently. For as God suffered who was *a lily among thorns*, when he went forth *wearing a crown of thorns* (John 19:5), so also the blessed Virgin who suffered in her Son. Hence 1 Peter 3:17: *It is better, if the will of God be so, to suffer for doing well, than for doing ill.*

For never was a more fitting joining seen than of the lily of innocence and of the rose, that is, of bloody compassion. Therefore it is said of the soul: *Fine linen and purple is her clothing* (Prov. 31:22).

Again, on this account of the saints it is said, Apoc. 12:11, that they overcame the devil *by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto death.* The Lamb is innocence, the blood is passion. For because after the example of the Lamb, that is, of Christ, they suffered innocently, therefore they overcame the devil. *The word of testimony*: the hearing of sacred Scripture. *They loved not their lives*, that is, animal life, *unto death* exclusively, that is, they did not love so much that that love would exclude death. This properly suits martyrs. Hence the Apostle, Acts 20:24: *Neither do I count my life more precious than myself.* Or thus: *By the blood of the Lamb*, that is, by faith in the passion of the Lamb, with whose blood the doorposts are to be marked (Exod. 12:22–23), that is, understanding and affection, against the destroying Angel. Cant. 8:6: *Put me as a seal*, etc. Or, *by the word of testimony*, that is, by open confession of the faith. Or, *the word of testimony*: open preaching as regards prelates.

Of the whiteness of Mary it is said, Wisd. 7:26: *She is the brightness of eternal light*: because through her the eternal light will be seen, that is, the Father and the Son, so that that of Psalm 35:10 may suit her: *In thy light we shall see light. In thy light*, that is, in the Son who illuminated thee, or whom thou didst bring forth as the true light, etc.

Again, Sir. 43:20: *The eye shall admire the beauty of its whiteness.* And he speaks of snow literally, by which Mary is designated, on account of the refreshment of the Holy Spirit and the native whiteness of virginity which is a begotten greenness.

Again, on account of whiteness she herself is compared to a lily, Cant. 2:2: *As the lily among thorns*, etc. Again, Isa. 35:2: *The glory of Libanus is given to it.* Libanus is whiteness, the glory of which whiteness was given to her in sanctification, when before she was blackened by original sin. Morally: To the faithful soul the whiteness of innocence is necessary. This is the whiteness of the sheep. Gen. 31:8: *All the white ones shall be thy wages.* This ought to be in beginners. Another is the whiteness of a garment: this is of reputation in those who are advancing. Hence Eccles. 9:8: *At all times let thy garments be white.* Another is the whiteness of snow, namely purity of conscience in the perfect. Lam. 4:7: *Her Nazarites were whiter than snow.* Another is the whiteness of milk, that is, the purity of simple doctrine: this in preachers. All these whitenesses Mary had above all others.

Again, by reason of redness she herself is compared to the bush which seemed to burn (Exod. 3:2). Again, to a shining star (Num. 24:17); to a rose plant (Sir. 24:18). Again, to the litter of Solomon, whose ascent was of purple (Cant. 3:9). Again, on account of this redness *(p. 291)* her cheeks are compared to a piece of a pomegranate (Cant. 4:3), as above concerning the cheeks. Again, her lips are as a scarlet fillet (Cant. 4:3), as below concerning the lips. On this account also she herself is called the Sunamitess (Cant. 6:12), that is, scarlet. She was also wholly flaming through charity after the likeness of heated iron: because Christ, who is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24), dwelling in her, so colored her, who is the son of the charity of the Father himself.

Again, in coloring, as has been said, consists a great part of this beauty. And note that Christ as it were twice colored his mother, as it were twice discolored her, as it were twice recolored her, as will be shown below. Of the coloring: *Hail, full of grace* (Luke 1:28). Of the discoloring: *Woman, behold thy son* (John 19:26). Of the recoloring: "I saw a beautiful one as a dove." Christ colored his mother in sanctification, dyeing her as it were from a black color into white: and then *the glory of Libanus* (Isa. 35:2), which is interpreted whiteness, was given to her. He also colored her in his conception by the infusion of a fuller grace than she had before: whence she was then called *full of grace*. For he conferred on her the grace of fruitfulness, and preserved unimpaired the whiteness of virginity, and then the exterior beauty was increased in her by the redness of bashfulness, and the interior beauty by more fervent charity. For she was bashful at the entrance of the

Angel, who appeared in the form of a man: and therefore *she was troubled at his saying* (Luke 1:29): for when before she was, as is truly believed, not only white, but most white like the flower of a lily, looking upon the Angel who had entered unto her in the form of a man, she is believed to have been overspread with a rosy redness. But on account of her charity it was said to her: *The Lord is with thee*: because *he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him* (1 John 4:16).

He discolored her in the opinion of men, who, seeing her to have a child, reckoned her corrupted. Hence she herself says, Cant. 1:4: *I am black*, in the judgment of men who reckon me corrupted, *but beautiful*: because a most pure virgin. Others expound that place otherwise, as it were literally. For the blessed Virgin says, as if speaking to other virgins or to faithful souls wishing to imitate her, concerning the fact that Joseph, finding her pregnant, suspecting adultery, *was minded to put her away privately*, as it is said, Matt. 1:19. She says therefore: *Daughters of Jerusalem*, that is, who sigh for the peace of the heavenly Jerusalem as a son for his mother, *I am black*, that is, marked with the crime of adultery falsely objected to me, and so I am *as the tents of Cedar*, that is, to be cast out by my husband Joseph from his house, as Ismael, the father of Cedar, with his mother Agar was cast out from the house of Abraham (Gen. 21:14). Cedar is interpreted *darkness*, or *mourning*, or *mourning*, or *dark*, or according to some *blackness*: because he dwelt in tents, cast out from among men, *his hand against all, and the hand of all against him*. So Mary and the saints are reckoned abject and vile by heretics, but *not having here a lasting city, but seeking one to come*, they fight in the tabernacle of the body against the flesh, the world and the devil; and such a fight ought not to be exercised without a twofold mourning, interior through sorrow, and exterior through the pouring forth of tears which burn the devil. But although I appear black outwardly, yet *I am beautiful* inwardly: because lacking every spot, and adorned with every virtue: and this *as the curtains of Solomon*, who was beautiful outwardly, and adorned with royal adornment: so I inwardly am adorned with every beauty of the virtues. And it is an extrinsic likeness drawn from Solomon to intrinsic things, whose *(p. 292)* curtains some affirm to have been black. And so the letter is to be joined: *I am black as the tents of Cedar, but beautiful as the curtains of Solomon*, which were soft and strong and after the manner of skins stripped of flesh and thinned, hyacinthine, and dyed red. And such was Mary: strong by patience, soft by obedience, as it were marked with a variety of virtues, separated from all carnality and carnal pleasure by virginity, thinned by poverty and humility, hyacinthine by contemplation and the desire of heavenly things, dyed red in the passion of her Son by the martyrdom of the soul. And in all these the faithful soul ought, as far as she can, to imitate Mary.

It follows: *Do not consider me that I am brown, because the sun hath altered my color* (Cant. 1:5), namely the sun of justice. As if she said: Have no regard to such a suspicion: because the sun of justice so as it were discolored me exteriorly by such a suspicion, when I conceived him, but inwardly colored me very much, as the material sun discolors certain fruits with pallor, and beautifies certain with redness.

It follows: *The sons of my mother*, namely of the synagogue, that is, the unbelieving Jews not believing that I, a virgin, conceived, *fought against me*, with detractions and curses, and held me in contempt, saying at least that I had conceived of my husband Joseph: and because they contemn me, they have occasionedly *made me keeper in the vineyards*, that is, in the Churches of the faithful Gentiles and of Jews converted to the faith, for whom I pray to my Son, and who say to me: "Pray for the people, intervene for the clergy," etc.: but *my own vineyard*, that is, the unbelieving synagogue, *I have not kept*: because they do not believe me to be the mother of God, nor seek help from me, nay they curse me and hate me: and therefore for such I cannot pray, at least as devoutly as for the faithful.

He also discolored her in the passion with a certain blackness of sorrow, when the sword, that is, the passion of the Son, passed through her soul. Hence she herself also says, Cant. 1:5: *I am brown, because the sun hath altered my color*, that is, my Son suffering eclipse and setting. On account of this blackness of sorrow also she herself says, Cant. 1:4: *I am black, but beautiful*, etc. Black exteriorly by the pressures of tribulations, beautiful by charity. Or, black on earth, beautiful in heaven. Or, black to the eyes of the foolish, beautiful to

the understanding of the wise. Or better, *black*, because the fire of the passion of her only-begotten, of which he himself says, Ps. 16:3: *Thou hast tried me by fire*, etc., blackened her: for fire dyes black those things which it burns. Or, *I am brown*, that is, worn out with mourning of mind, despised, obscured, overcast, discolored: because *the sun hath altered my color* by dying; the sun obscured and overcast made me of a different color, for whom in the passion *there was no beauty, nor comeliness*, as it is said, Isa. 53:2.

Or morally, these words suit the faithful soul doing penance from love, so that she can say: *I am black* by the filth of penance, *but beautiful* with spiritual beauty, because *the sun* of justice *hath altered my color*. For the heat of this sun, that is, the love of Christ, of which heat it is said: *Neither is there any that can hide himself from his heat* (Ps. 18:7), makes one grow black and pale. Hence the Poet: "Let every lover grow pale." Pallor is the color of the dead: because he cannot truly love God who is not dead to the world. Lam. 5:10: *Our skin was burnt as an oven, by reason of the violence of the famine*, etc. Job 30:30: *My skin is become black upon me, and my bones are dried up with heat*, that is, with tribulation. So also can that be expounded: *I am black* with bodily miseries, *but beautiful* with heavenly desires.

It can also be said that the glorious Virgin was discolored when she was made wholly bloody by the martyrdom of the soul.

(p. 293) when the Son expired. Hence it is said, Joel 2:31: *The sun*, that is, Christ, *shall be turned into darkness*, by the death of the body, *and the moon*, that is, Mary, *into blood*, by the martyrdom of the soul. Again, Apoc. 6:12: *The sun became black as sackcloth of hair: and the whole moon became as blood.*

Christ recolored his mother in the resurrection, when the sun rose again, which rising restores to all things their proper colors, when namely the joy which she had or had had of the Son's resurrection wiped away from her soul the cloud of all sadness. He also recolored her in the preaching of the Apostles, when by their preaching it became known to the whole world that Christ had been born of the Virgin Mary. Hence Ps. 18:5–6, of the Apostles: *Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth*, saying of Christ: *He hath set his tabernacle in the sun*, that is, his flesh, which he assumed from her, who namely was a virgin clear and bright as the sun through purity of every kind. Or, this recoloring was done in her assumption, when she was crowned with glory and honor, and colored with the glory of immortality. Hence then is sung: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising*, etc. (Cant. 6:9)?

Again, the beauty of the face consists in part in the extension of the skin, which is done by penance. Hence to the penitent soul it is said through Jeremias, 31:4: *Thou shalt again be adorned with thy timbrels*, etc., that is, with the mortification of the flesh, which is the most becoming adornment of the soul. Otherwise *thy wrinkles shall bear witness against thee* (cf. Job 16:9), namely when thou dost not do penance. Again, therefore to the sinful soul it is said, Isa. 54:2: *Enlarge the place of thy tent, and stretch out the skins of thy tabernacles, spare not: lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.* (Look for the exposition, etc.)

Again, it is to be noted that for coloring souls and as it were painting them Christ gave from the precious vessel of his body blood and water: blood for reddening, water for whitening: because it is proper to water to whiten what it washes, that they might be made like him who *is white and ruddy*. Of which blood, namely, the least drop was worth more than all creatures: but without this coloring every soul is pale and of a different color, and unworthy to be joined to Christ the Lord in spiritual marriage.

Again, that the color of the faithful soul may remain fresh, the face of the soul ought more frequently to be renewed by recalling the Lord's passion, as with rose-water, because from the side of him who suffered water distilled together with blood, etc. (John 19:34).

In the raising and fitting disposition of the ears. The raising of the ears is the uprightness of obedience. 1 Kings 3:10: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* Of the raising of Mary's ears she herself says with her Son, Isa. 50:4: *In the morning he wakeneth, in the morning he wakeneth my ear*, etc. (Look above under the title

on the obedience of Mary.)

There ought to be two ears, namely understanding and affection, that one may hear after Mary's example humbly for oneself, as she heard the Angel; patiently against oneself, as she heard the mockers of her Son. Therefore it is said, Apoc. 2:7: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.* He indeed has ears who has the sense of retaining and understanding, and the affection of loving and meriting those things which are promised, as Mary had. But he somehow lacks ears who has no care for the heavenly goods which are promised him. *What the Spirit saith to the churches.* The Spirit in that place by no means designates the person of the Holy Spirit alone, but the holy and undivided Trinity itself, which is believed one deity and is adored as one God: for *(p. 294) God is a spirit* (John 4:24). He says therefore: *What the Spirit saith*, that is, what God promises *to the churches*, in the plural, not to this Church or that: because what is promised to this one or that according to distinction will be faithfully paid to each if they hasten to the fulfilment of the commandments.

And note that this Spirit says, that is, teaches, or commands to the churches four things principally, namely precepts, prohibitions, counsels and promises: to all of which it is to be obeyed, that we may do the precepts, avoid the prohibited, embrace the counsels, desire the promised, having a heart ready, and again ready, for these and those.

Ears ought not to be moved except when the head is moved, that is, except to those things which God wills: because the ears are of the head itself. John 8:47: *He that is of God, heareth the words of God.* So in all things and only so was Mary moved: for bestial are the ears which are shaken, as is plain in asses, and dogs, and stags, and the like. Open in front, that is, to spiritual things; closed behind to temporal things. Therefore it is said, Isa. 50:5: *The Lord God hath opened my ear.* 1 Kings 9:15: *Now the Lord had revealed to the ear of Samuel*, etc. Circular, that they may not disdain to receive the truth from anyone. Sir. 3:31: *A good ear will hear wisdom with all desire.* For not to care from whom thou learnest is one of the seven keys which unlock knowledge. Or, circular and entire, that they may obey perfectly and entirely. Hence the Son to the Father: *But a body thou hast fitted to me* (Ps. 39:7; *aures autem perfecisti mihi*). Mild and not hairy, which is to hear meekly, etc. Sir. 5:13: *Be meek to hear the word of God*, etc. James 1:21: *With meekness receive the ingrafted word*, namely of God, etc. Clean and purged from the dregs of scurrilous words. Hence Chrysostom: "Do not leave dung in thy ears." Sins are dung. Detractors therefore who announce to thee the sins of others fill thy ears with dung. For some have canine ears full of flies, that is, of flatteries and rumors, or, what is worse, of serpents and earwigs, that is, of detractions and lies, which kill the soul. For into dogs earwigs enter through the ears into the brain, and thence death. Jer. 9:21: *Death is come up through our windows*, namely of the ears and of the other senses: whence of blessed Silvester it is read: "From detractions and lies as from serpents he turned away his ears, knowing that the poison of envy entering through the ears kills the soul of the wise." Augustine: "As if there is no spectator, there is no player, so if there is no hearer, there will be no detractor." As often therefore as such harmful things have entered thy ears, it is necessary that thou have the purgative of humble confession. Ears are wont to be purged with the little finger. Uncovered most of all in men, that they may diligently understand what is said to them by the Lord. 1 Kings 9:15: *The Lord had revealed to the ear of Samuel.* Hollow through humility. Hence it was said to Mary and to any soul of faith: *Incline thy ear*, etc. (Ps. 85:1). And they are purged with the little finger, which figures humility. They are adorned with gold, of which earrings are made: because the reward of obedience is the brightness of eternal clarity (Prov. 25:12: *A golden earring*, etc.). Gen. 24:22, Eliezer gave Rebecca earrings and bracelets.

Again, it is to be noted that some have ears cut off, which is a sign of robbery, who namely obey partially, and not wholly. An example is Malchus, whose right ear Peter cut off (John 18:10). (Look under the title on obedience.) Others have reversed ears, that is, *bestornées* in French, whose opening is from behind, that is, to those things which they ought to have put behind their back. Others have asinine ears. Hence Persius: "Who

has not the ears of an ass?" These are they who gladly hear the harp of preaching, *(p. 295)* and yet send nothing to their heart, nor into operation, which is to trample the lyre. Others have the ears of the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears, unwilling to hear the voice of the enchanters, that is, of the preachers, or of the physician that healeth wisely (Ps. 57:5–6), as another reading says. Others, however, live luxuriously, and thence become deaf literally.

In the due quantity of the nose and the opening of the nostrils. Cant. 7:4: *Thy nose is as the tower of Libanus, that looketh toward Damascus.* Damascus is interpreted *drinking blood*, that is, the devil, who always thirsts to drink the blood of sinners. Against his snares is set the nose, that is, the discretion of the blessed Virgin, who senses his malice beforehand and foresees it from afar as from a watchtower: whence also she is compared to a tower, from which the attacks of enemies are seen from afar. She therefore both looks from afar against the enemy, and as a tower strongly sets herself against him for us, and is called *the tower of Libanus*, as if situated on mount Libanus, which is interpreted *whiteness*, that by this it may be shown that by the whiteness of virginity as with a foot she is able to crush the head of the serpent, that is, concupiscence. Or also as regards herself she was the tower of Libanus founded upon the rock, that is, Christ, on whom alone she leaned. Hence Cant. 8:5: *Leaning upon her beloved*, which tower of Libanus namely is the stable height of her whiteness, of innocence namely, and of virginity, continually looking toward Damascus, that is, sin.

Again, by the ministry of the nose the humors of the head are purged, and by the help of Mary the vices and depraved manners of our mind, which is the head of the soul.

Again, the nose is the way of the spirit: because she herself is the way by which the Holy Spirit comes to us, namely for our justification and consolation, and sometimes as it were withdraws from us for our humility. Hence Cant. 4:16: *Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden*, that is, the conscience of the faithful soul. Again, Cant. 8:14: *Flee away, O my beloved*, etc.

Again, the nose ministers to the soul, that is, to the life of the flesh, respiration, and Mary to the spiritual life of our hope respiration. Hence she says: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Sir. 24:25). And this is plain in Theophilus and many others, who unless they had hoped in her mercy would have despaired of the mercy of God.

Again, the nose discerns between stench and odor: and she, fostering virginity, turned herself to it as to aromatics, and cast far from herself the corruption of the flesh as a stench.

Again, by the nose is noted the motion of indignation: and she by holy pride detested whatever was vile and filthy, and by humility abominated all the glory of the world.

Again, this nose was not small, because discretion was not lacking to her; not large, because presumption did not abound in her; not crooked, because on no occasion did she decline from the right. Of these three impediments it is treated, Lev. 21:18. And therefore she was fit to minister to the Lord. Hence she says: *In the holy dwelling place I have ministered before him* (Sir. 24:14). (Look under the title on the servants of Mary.)

Morally: The nose of the soul is discretion, *(p. 296)* which with provident sagacity ought to discern evils as a stench, and goods as an odor, that she may reject the foul and retain the fragrant. It is therefore said to the faithful soul: *Thy nose is as the tower of Libanus, that looketh toward Damascus* (Cant. 7:4), namely as a tower founded on mount Libanus, that is, on Christ, who is the firm Rock (Matt. 7:24–25). Isa. 2:2: *A mountain on the top of mountains.* Mount Libanus, that is, whiteness which by grace whitens black sinners. So therefore the nose, that is, the discretion of the soul, *as a tower*, that it may be regularly stretched neither to the right through prosperity, nor to the left through adversity, but straight toward heaven, as a tower is raised with a plumb-line and stands immovably. And this discretion ought continually to look *toward Damascus*, that is, the devil, as was said above of the blessed Virgin, that she may manfully set herself

against the coming tempter. James 4:7: *Resist the devil, and he will fly from you.* Or, Damascus, the metropolis of Syria, a city much hostile to the children of Israel, is a collection of demons and of impious men, always an enemy to the children of God, to whom discreet men ought manfully to set themselves.

Otherwise: In the nostrils are sagacity and discretion, that the faithful soul may sagaciously discern what is the odor of life unto life, what the odor of death unto death, what the fragrance of the virtues, what the stench of vices. And such is *the tower of Libanus*, on account of the fortitude of constancy, and the height of virtue, and the whiteness of continence: because Libanus is called whiteness. And such a one ought always to look out for herself and for others *toward Damascus*, which is interpreted *a drink of blood*, or *drinking blood*, and signifies the devil, who continually thirsts for the blood of our souls, against whom one must always look out to guard against his snares. Or, *the tower of Libanus*, that is, the custody of whiteness, which is the cleanness and innocence of the soul: because these two things most of all make one white before the Lord. And well is the nose, that is, the discretion of the faithful soul, compared to a tower: because he who truly has the virtue of discretion cannot be bent to sin, and is stable in good, as a tower is stable and inflexible. *Which looketh toward Damascus*: because such a soul keeps herself from the snares of the devil, who always strives to take away our spiritual life, which is in the blood of Christ.

The nose holds the most eminent place in the face: because provident directors of spiritual things ought to be placed in higher positions. But unless discretion be circumspect, vice easily enters under the cloak of virtue. Therefore it is forbidden, Lev. 21:18 ff., that a man who has a small or a large or a crooked nose offer his breads to God. Small: defect of discretion, against which it is said, Eccles. 7:18: *Be not foolish, lest thou die before thy time.* Large: presumption of one's own discretion or knowledge: against which it is said, Rom. 11:20: *Be not highminded, but fear.* Again, 12:3: *Not to be more wise*, that is, to investigate, *than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety.* Or, a large nose: presuming of the eminence of one's own holiness, or believing oneself alone holy, as is to be seen in Elias saying: *I alone am left*, etc. (3 Kings 19:10, 18). And the Lord, wishing to cut this presumption from his mind, said to him: *I have left me seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not been bowed before Baal.* Gal. 6:3: *For if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.* Or, a large nose: excessive discussion of one's own or another's action, against which it is said, Eccles. 7:17: *Be not over just*: because there is a just man that perisheth in his justice. Rom. 12:3: *Not to be more wise*, that is, to investigate, etc., as above. Crooked: when someone who seems to himself knowing declines from the right on some occasion, as those who *turn aside victims into the depth* (Osee 5:2).

Thou hast two nostrils, which are fear and hope. The left nostril is fear, for sensing beforehand the stench of hell. Hence Ps. 54:16: *Let them go down alive into hell.* Micheas 4:10: *Thou shalt come even to Babylon*, which is interpreted *confusion*, and designates the confusion of infernal punishments, where there is no order: *there shalt thou be delivered.* Or also for sensing beforehand the cunning of the devil. Whence of the strong horse it is said, Job 39:25: *He smelleth the battle afar off*, etc. Hope is the right nostril, *(p. 297)* which already in the present feeds beforehand and is fed, and feeds its household with the odors of paradise, and makes it run into the odor of the ointments of the Lord and of Mary.

The nose is ordered above the mouth and the lips. Above the mouth, that after the example of the ape thou mayest discern what is to be eaten, what drunk, what rejected. Job 6:6: *Or can an unsavoury thing be eaten that is not seasoned with salt?* As if he said: No. For often the death of the soul is in the pot of meats, in the pot of drinks (cf. 4 Kings 4:40). With this nose, that is, with this discretion, our first parents were lacking: whence death overflowed upon all their posterity. The nose is also ordered above the lips, with which we speak and kiss, that thou mayest discreetly take care in both.

It is the way of the spirit, by which namely the spirit is drawn in and sent forth. Isa. 2:22: *Cease therefore from the man, whose breath is in his nostrils*, etc. Draw in therefore by desiring, by praying, as much as thou canst, the spirit of life by which thou mayest live spiritually. Hence: *I opened my mouth*, namely the mouth of

the heart, that is, desire, the mouth of the body by praying, by confessing: *and panted* (Ps. 118:131). And send forth the same spirit into others after the example of the Lord, who breathed into the face of man the breath of life, Gen. 2:7: *And man became a living soul.* So also we by teaching, admonishing, counseling, ought for sinners themselves to breathe the breath of life by praying, that they may revive from the death of sin, after the example of Eliseus, who lying upon the child put his mouth upon the mouth of the child, etc., and the child gaped (4 Kings 4:34–35).

Again, in the nose is noted the motion of indignation, that by holy pride thou mayest detest every sin, and set at naught every worldly height that exalteth itself against God.

Again, by the nose and nostrils is understood the discernment of things smelling sweet and of things foul, that whatever is filthy in the sight of God may displease thee; whatever smells sweet to the good may smell sweet to thee; and that thou mayest turn thyself to the fame of every good as to aromatics.

Again, mocking is done by the contraction of the nose: because some say that fame is a certain vein of the nose, by which when contracted the nose is wrinkled, and the face is disfigured, that thou mayest show thyself a rebuker, most of all to detractors: because *a sad countenance dissipateth a tongue that backbiteth* (Prov. 25:23). Again: *The man that in private detracted his neighbor, him did I persecute* (Ps. 100:5). And this nose is compared to the tower of Libanus, which is interpreted *whiteness*, that thou mayest withdraw thyself from all, and abominate those things which can blacken the soul or the fame.

And note that there is a threefold kind of mockery, which is noted in Psalm 21:14 ff. Opprobrium is a reproach which is inflicted on one absent, not hearing nor seeing. Mocking (*subsannatio*) is done to one present, not seeing but hearing, and is properly done with a wrinkle of the nose. Illusion is inflicted on one present hearing and seeing, as the Lord was mocked in the passion.

In the beauty of the lips or of the mouth. Cant. 4:3, it is said to the spouse: *Thy lips are as a scarlet fillet: and thy speech sweet.* The lips of the Church are the lips of the blessed Virgin, which are said *as a fillet*: because by her prayers and examples she binds and unites the hairs, that is, the just, lest they flow away from the head and from one another, lest they be scattered by errors and vices, and binds them with the bond of peace and of mutual charity. But a fillet (*vitta*) is so called from *binding*: because by it the hairs or the breast itself are bound after the manner of a binding fillet. This fillet is called *scarlet*: because dyed red with the vermilion of the blood of her Son through compassion, the memory of whose passion she breathes into our hearts. These lips are the understanding and the affection of the blessed Virgin, from which is formed and proceeds every interior speech, that is, thought and desire.

Again, these lips are called a fillet: because the hairs of the soul, that is, thoughts and *(p. 298)* does not suffer our desires to flow wanderingly, or to be scattered, or to be drawn away from Christ. Therefore from the office of restraining such hairs they are called a fillet; from the office of forming interior voices they are called lips. On account of kindness and meekness they are compared to a fillet which is soft; on account of charity and continual memory of the Lord's passion they are called scarlet: from which comes the supreme restraint of the hairs of the soul.

Or, literally, the lips of Mary with which she formed her sweet words are called scarlet: because they kindle to the love of God and of neighbor; for scarlet has a flaming color; with which lips also she forms her sweetly flowing prayers for us in the sight of her Only-begotten.

Again, Mary's lips are scarlet: because she is believed to have taught the Evangelists the scarlet of the Lord's passion and its order, and most of all, as is said, through blessed Luke. With which scarlet also, through continual recollection and compassion, her understanding and affection were colored; nay she herself was wholly scarlet through the imitation of the Lord's passion and the mortification of her own flesh, so that she could truly say that of the Apostle, Gal. 6:17: *I bear the marks of my Son Jesus continually in my body*. But

every soul ought to have this scarlet fillet on her head, that is, in her mind through recollection, and most of all in prayer. Hence 1 Cor. 11:5: *Every woman praying or prophesying with her head not covered, disgraceth her head.* That so the speech of the soul itself may be sweet to God to hearken to.

Another reading says: "Thy lips are as a scarlet cord, and thy speech sweet." Expound of the cord as of the fillet. The scarlet cord is that threefold cord which with the preaching of the Trinity mixes the word of the scarlet of the passion: and as this preaching binds our thoughts in Christ and keeps them in him, so does the blessed Virgin's intercession, because her speech is sweet to God. And this scarlet cord, that is, charitable prayer proceeding from her lips, draws souls out of the depth of sin, as a cord draws water from a well: for *the waters are peoples* (Apoc. 17:15): but the well is the abyss of sin. Hence the prophet prays: *Nor let the pit shut her mouth upon me* (Ps. 68:16). Read the Gloss of Augustine.

The beauty of the mouth consists in the due coloring of the lips, and moderate thickness, and modest opening or aperture of the mouth itself.

But the due coloring of the lips is that outwardly they have the color of the lily, inwardly of the rose. Hence Cant. 4:3: *Thy lips are as a scarlet fillet*, as above. Again, Cant. 5:13: *His lips as lilies*, etc. Which is truly to be felt of the lips of the Virgin, which were modest as to the lily, charitable in prayers as to the rose.

They were preserved from superfluous thickness by humility, when she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38). And from excessive thinness, when she said: *All generations shall call me blessed: because he that is mighty hath done great things to me*, etc. (Luke 1:48–49). But with such lips it was fitting that to the lips of the Son, who is white and ruddy, be offered the happy kisses of human reconciliation, in which lips namely there should be purity, charity, humility and maternal authority. From which also she obtained that happy kiss which she asked, Cant. 1:1, saying: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.* She herself made a new kiss among all creatures, namely between heaven and earth, between the divine nature and the human, between virginity and fruitfulness, between the human heart and faith, between God and man, between Angel and man, between man and man, namely Jew and Gentile: all of which were most at variance, and when that kiss was made all kissed one another. Therefore also she is called *(p. 299)* a dove, which among all birds alone knows how to kiss. Therefore of the lips of Mary the Father says, Isa. 57:19: *I created the fruit of the lips, peace.* (Look on the first page of this book.)

Again, from the sweetness of the lips the Son commends his mother, Cant. 4:11, saying: *Thy lips, my spouse, are as a dropping honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue*, etc. For it is credible that the Virgin mother most often kissed her Son so beloved, and conversely the Son his mother, as if granting that maternal petition: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. 1:1), and most of all when he was a little child and sat in her lap. Hence Augustine in a certain sermon on the Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary: "O happy kisses impressed by the lips of her that nursed, when among the frequent signs of creeping infancy, as a true Son from thee he played with thee his mother, when as true Lord from the Father he commanded." And therefore he commends her from the sweetness of the lips literally, and mystically from the sweetness of dripping speech: because commonly, which is noted in the dripping of this honeycomb, she was praying God for the human race. On account of which also he had said to her a little above: *Thy speech is sweet* (Cant. 4:3), as was expounded above.

It follows: *Honey and milk under thy tongue.* Honey and milk, that is, sweetness of every kind. Or, by honey the sweetness of wisdom, which is given through her, and her prayers for the greater. By milk simple doctrine, which suits the lesser. *Under the tongue*, that is, in the meditation of the heart. And these three things are from the honey of my divinity and from the milk of my humanity. Or thus: So great is the spiritual sweetness in thy words as is the bodily in honey and in milk: and this *under the tongue*, because it lies open not to everyone, but only to those to whom it is given to experience it. For pearls are not to be cast before swine (Matt. 7:6).

It follows: *And the odor of thy garments* (Cant. 4:11), that is, the fame of thy good works bestowed by thee on me as man.

Again, in Psalm 44:3 the Son of God is commended for eloquence, where it is said to the Spouse: *Grace is poured abroad in thy lips; therefore hath God blessed thee for ever.* Which is to say: Thy words are gracious. Hence John 7:46: *Never did man speak like this man.* Eccles. 8:4: *His word is full of power.* Matt. 7:29: *He was teaching as one having power.*

But because the Church sings this verse of Mary and of virgins, let us expound it of the blessed Virgin and of her lips. It is therefore said to her, with regard to that answer, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc.: *Grace*, that is, abundance of graces, so that this name, namely *grace*, be taken collectively: *is poured abroad*, that is, not only poured for thee, but poured abroad, that is, distributed and abundantly given to the whole world: *in thy lips*, that is, in thy answer, by which the world was reconciled to God, and men were converted to God and cleansed from sins, according to that of John 13:10: *You are clean*, etc.

Or, this is said to the Spouse: *Grace is poured abroad in thy lips*, that is, in the kiss with which thou didst kiss human nature, uniting it to thyself. Of which kiss, Cant. 1:1: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.* For in this kiss grace was poured abroad *(p. 300)* to man. Hence Osee 6:3: *He shall come to us as the early and the latter rain*, that is, coming in the flesh he will give us preventing and subsequent grace. Therefore human nature says, Wisd. 7:11: *All good things came to me together with her*, that is, with wisdom, which is the Son of God. Behold how great a pouring abroad of grace, namely all good things.

Or, this can be said of the Apostles, who were the lips of Christ, through whom he himself spoke, in which lips the grace of the Holy Spirit was poured abroad. Gregory: "All we who preach Christ are the organs of truth."

Again, of the lips of the mother the same can be understood, in which a singular grace was poured abroad, when she gave her Son the sweet kisses of our reconciliation, as was said above. *And therefore hath God blessed thee*, not with the blessing of the left hand, by which he gives temporal things, but of the right, by which eternal things are given. Therefore it follows: *For ever*, of which Prov. 3:16: *Length of days is in her right hand.* Or thus: *God hath blessed thee for ever*, that is, with a blessing leading unto eternity.

On account of the moderate opening or aperture of the mouth she herself is compared to the river Phison (Gen. 2:11), which, as some say, is interpreted *the mouth of a teat*: for the mouth of a teat seems always to be closed, and yet it gives forth milk. And the mouth of the blessed Virgin was always as it were closed by the censure of discreet silence, and yet when she spoke she gave forth a sweet word. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 4:11: *Honey and milk under thy tongue.* And from her words her spiritual infancy is nourished, as children from milk.

Again, to the honesty of the mouth the sweetness of the breath contributes much. Hence the Son to his mother, Cant. 7:8: *And the odor of thy mouth like apples.* By the odor of Mary's mouth are signified her prayers and petitions, which are wholly aromatic. Hence she says of herself: *I yielded a sweet odor like cinnamon and aromatical balm* (Sir. 24:20). And that prayers are odors is had, Apoc. 5:8, where the four and twenty ancients are said to have golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. The Son therefore says to his mother: *The odor of thy mouth*, that is, thy aromatic prayers, is pleasant and delightful to me *like the odor of apples*. Or, as *they that separate the precious from the vile* are *as the mouth of the Lord* (Jer. 15:19), so in a certain way those can be called the mouth of Mary who devoutly confess, praise, preach and elucidate her. And the odor of such, that is, fame and opinion, ought to be like the odor of apples which are fruits and signify good works, not only of sons, that is, of words, that they may not only speak of her, but for her imitation and honor work what is good. Or therefore the Son commends his mother from the odor of her mouth: because the opinion of the doctrine and wisdom which proceeds from her words placed in the Gospel, and confidence in her prayers, draw men to the worship of the Son, as the odor of apples allures the

taste to eating. The odor of the mouth therefore is the fame of good speech.

And note that from the mouth interior odors are emitted: and therefore the odor of her mouth is well compared to the odor of apples, since she was the storehouse of all aromatics, that is, of all virtues and of all charisms.

To the commendation of the mouth also a gracious tongue contributes much, that is, well gracious, from εὖ which is *good*, and χάρις which is *grace*, of which it is said, Sir. 6:5: *A gracious tongue in a good man aboundeth.* Conversely of a tongue not gracious it is said, Sir. 20:21: *A man without grace is as a vain fable.* But of the tongue of Mary it is said, Sir. 36:25: *If there be a tongue of healing, there is also of soothing and of mercy.* The tongue indeed of Eve was not of healing, but of weakening: because disobedient to the precept of God she persuaded her spouse to illicit eating, and proudly excused her sin (cf. Gen. 3:1 ff.). Her tongue therefore was a tongue of pride and of disobedience: and therefore neither of soothing nor of mercy, but of provocation and of vengeance: because she provoked the indignation of God to vengeance. But the tongue of Mary was a tongue of healing, on whose tongue sounded *(p. 301)* humility when she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*; obedience, when she added: *Be it done to me*, etc. (Luke 1:38): and therefore her tongue is of soothing and of mercy: because she mitigated the wrath of God, and continually obtains his mercy for us.

Her tongue was also gracious: because the doctrine of her words is useful and fruitful. Again, Sir. 40:21: *The flute and the psaltery make a sweet melody, but a pleasant tongue is above them both.*

Morally: If thou hast a tongue of healing in confession, Christ will have a tongue of soothing and of mercy in the remission of sin. Hence 2 Kings 12:13: *And David said to Nathan: I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David: The Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die.*

Again, to the beauty of the mouth clean, white and hidden teeth contribute much, of moderate quantity, and of as it were circular ordered disposition. Cant. 4:2, Mary is commended for the beauty of her teeth, where Christ says to her: *Thy teeth as a flock of sheep, that are shorn, which come up from the washing, all with twins, and there is none barren among them.* (You had this expounded in one way above, under the title on the wisdom of Mary. Look there.)

In the brightness and sweetness of the throat. Hence the Son says to his mother, Cant. 7:9: *Thy throat like the best wine. Thy throat*, that is, prayers proceeding from the throat: *like the best wine*, which consoles and relieves the sorrows of the afflicted. Or thus: *Thy throat*, that is, words proceeding from the throat, *like the best wine*, namely savory through devotion, sweetly piercing to those who are lazy to do good: for they stimulate the sluggish to run, to love and to pray. For if *the words of the wise are as goads* (Eccles. 12:11), what dost thou think of the words of the mother of wisdom? Her prayers also pierce the heart of the Son. Hence he himself says to her, Cant. 4:9: *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse.* And thence they elicit mercy for sinners, etc.

Her words also are sweeter than any wine through the inward consolation with which they make glad the heart of man, so that to her as to the Son it can be said: *How sweet are thy words to my palate*, etc. (Ps. 118:103). They are also intoxicating: because when discreetly weighed they alienate the mind from carnal sense. They also intoxicate the Son, and make him forget our sins. And so thou wilt be able most easily to adapt to the words and prayers of Mary the other properties of the best wine.

Or: *Thy throat*, that is, the doctrine which is contained in thy words, is *like the best wine*: because it delights the devout and draws them away from worldly cares, and so intoxicates that it makes them sober, not that it makes them mad. But the Virgin, hearing herself so commended by the Beloved, snatches the word from his mouth, and adds: *Worthy for my beloved to drink* (Cant. 7:9), that is, pleasing to him, for drinking, that is, that he may thence give others to drink: pleasing also to his lips, that is, to preachers, and to his teeth, that is,

to expositors, for ruminating, as is plain in Luke, and the other Evangelists, and in the sacred Expositors.

Otherwise: The throat judges foods by taste, as it is said, Job 34:3. It retains the good and vomits the bad. This is the virtue of discerning spiritual prayers, which as wine by heat expels the dregs, that the best wine may remain clarified and defecated. By these words therefore the discretion of the Virgin in prayers is commended, who asks only that which is discreetly asked, that which is good, that which is pious and purged from every spot. But she herself, these words having been heard from the Son, takes the word from his mouth, and adds: *Worthy for my beloved to drink, and for his lips and his teeth to ruminate (p. 302)* (Cant. 7:9). As if she said: This wine, that is, this deprecatory word of mine compared to the best wine, is worthy for my beloved to drink, namely that it may please him and that he may delight in it; and this same wine is worthy of his lips, and is worthy of his teeth for ruminating. The lips take in drink and sense its savor. This word therefore is said worthy of the lips of Christ: because it is worthy that a kind favor receive it, and that it taste well and please the divine goodness. And as the best wine is swallowed without difficulty and with delight, so she worthily says that her petitions are to be admitted by the Son with all facility and delight. But because the taste of that which is drunk quickly passes, but the savor of that which is ruminated remains long, she adds of that wine that it is worthy of his teeth for ruminating, that she may thus show that the Son delights in his mother's petitions not perfunctorily, but as one affected by a pleasing sweetness, etc.

In the uprightness, whiteness and fitting dimension of the neck. Hence it is said to the Church, Cant. 1:9: *Thy neck as a tower of ivory* (cf. Cant. 7:4; the print here has *sicut monilia*). On account of uprightness this neck is compared to a tower. On account of whiteness to ivory: hence it is said, Cant. 7:4: *Thy neck as a tower of ivory.* For she herself is the neck of the Church on account of the conjunction of the divinity which is through the head, and of the humanity which is figured by the body: because in her womb was made the conjunction of the divine and the human nature, and the human race was united to Christ its head, that in human nature we may be one with God.

Neck (*collum*) is said as if *column*: because it is rigid and round and supports the head, as a column a capital; so Mary was never inclined by sin, but always erect, because *she touched the heaven standing on the earth*, and this through the contemplation of heavenly things, and as it were round through the desire of eternal things, and for nine months she bore in her womb Christ our head, to whom she seems to say that of Psalm 24:21: *The innocent and the upright have adhered to me*: because *I have waited on thee*, that is, I have held thee up, by loving thee above all things. It joins the head to the body, and she herself Christ to the Church, of which he himself is the head, and she the body, and this in a twofold way, namely corporally, by begetting Christ, and spiritually, by reconciling him to sinners. It rises above all the members after the head in the body: and she herself after Christ, who is our head, is the most excellent of the members of the Church. It is supported by a twofold shoulder: so also she herself is to be borne by the faithful of the Church. Hence of wisdom or Mary it is said, Sir. 6:26: *Bow down thy shoulder, and bear her*, that is, submit thy acts to her teaching. Bow down through humility and obedience; bear through fortitude and patience.

Mary is called the neck of the Church. As the body, unless it adhere to the neck, cannot adhere to the head: so he who would not adhere to this neck by true love cannot be united to Christ, who is the head of holy Church. As by the medium of the neck human words are formed, so she before her Son is our advocate. Blessed Bernard: "Our Lady, our mediatrix, our advocate, reconcile us to thy Son, commend us to thy Son, present us to thy Son," etc.

As by the medium of the neck there descends into the body whatever is necessary to it, foods, drinks, potions, medicines, and the like: so also through her as a medium Christ comes to us, who is the medicine of our souls, and whose flesh and blood are truly food and drink (John 6:56).

As through the neck the interior air is emitted and the exterior drawn in, so through her our devotion is presented to God, and the mercy and grace of God are restored to us. Spittle from *(p. 303)* the head is drawn

into the body by the neck: and through her grace is obtained from God for the human race, with which the interior man is anointed and soothed. Job 7:19: *How long wilt thou not spare me,* etc., *that I may swallow down my spittle*, that is, that I may delight in the savor of thy sweetness in contemplation? The Word is emitted. For from her the Word of the Father made flesh appeared to us, and through her true salvation was transmitted to us from the Father. John 1:14: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory*, etc. Here assign concerning the Word, etc. Spiritual food is ministered to the members of Christ, that is, to the faithful: because through her as a medium man ate the bread of Angels in holy communion. Or, a threefold spiritual food: pardon of sins, grace of merits, glory of rewards. Words are uttered: because in the sight of God, since she is our advocate, she speaks good for us, and by her well-sounding prayers, as often as we repent, she reunites us, severed from the Son by sin, to the same. Isa. 59:2: *Your iniquities have divided between you and your God*, etc.

Again, the neck is sometimes bent. So Mary is flexible toward God through obedience and humility, toward us through piety; sometimes it is raised, and this as regards herself through contemplation.

Again, this neck is plain through the equity of justice, smooth through meekness, beautiful through honesty of life, white through purity of every kind. It is wont to be veiled by good women for the hiding of bodily beauty, which is to be believed of the neck of the Virgin.

It follows: *As necklaces* (*monilia*) (Cant. 1:9), which are so called from *munire* (to fortify), or from *monere* (to admonish). Through the neck the word is emitted: and Mary was so fortified with the virtue of discretion that whatever word she emitted pertained either to the glory of God, or to her own humility, or to the utility of the neighbor, according to that of Ecclesiasticus 43:28: *In his word all things are composed.*

Or, *monile* is said from *monere*: because Mary, who first vowed virginity, by word and example admonishes all to the virtue of chastity.

Or, *monile* is said from *monas*, that is, from unity: because with a certain bite it unites either part of the head-covering: and so fortifies a woman's bosom, lest an adulterer put forth his hand. For a necklace has three offices: it adorns exterior things, hides interior things, drives off corrupters. Or better: the necklace which closes the bosom, as has been said, is the seal of modesty, lest a foul motion infect chastity. And this seal does three things: it hides interior things, lest if any foul thought arise against the purpose of chastity it break forth outwardly; it adorns exterior things, that a bashful and modest gravity may appear; it restrains an unchaste hand from illicit touch, lest namely the devil the adulterer send in depraved thoughts, or depraved delights, which are sendings through evil Angels. In like manner also Mary unites the right part and the left of the seamless tunic of the Lord, which designates the Church, that is, actives and contemplatives, or Jews and Gentiles converted at the end. With the adornment of the virtues she beautifies her own, with the cloak of charity she veils their sins lest they appear before God for vengeance, she terrifies and draws away from them the corrupters of souls, that is, the demons.

And note that necklaces are wont to be fashioned of gold, silver and gems. In like manner of the gold of heavenly wisdom, of the silver of ringing and perfect eloquence, and of the gems of every good operation this necklace was as it were fashioned by the hand of the heavenly artificer, that is, by the operation of the Holy Spirit or of the wisdom of God. Hence it is said to her by the Son, Cant. 7:1: *The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, that are made by the hand of a skilful workman.*

(p. 304) Otherwise: By the neck of the Virgin is designated her humility: because the lowering of the neck is a sign of humility, as the raising of the same is a sign of pride. Hence Isa. 3:16: *The daughters of Sion are haughty, and have walked with stretched out necks*, etc. Again, Job 15:26, it is said of the proud: *He hath run against God with his neck raised up*, etc. It is therefore said of the humility of Mary, Cant. 4:4: *Thy neck is as the tower of David*, that is, thy humility is a tower, that is, as the humility of David, which renders him impregnable in every adversity. Or thus: *Thy neck*, that is, thy humility, that is, thou art humble *as the tower*

of David, that is, of Christ. And this word *as* is not a note of likeness, but an expression of truth. Such is that of John 1:14: *We saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten*, that is, truly of the Only-begotten, etc. But why is the humility of the Virgin compared to the humility of David, when the Virgin was incomparably more humble than David himself? Surely because in a mere man greater humility could not be found, and so neither a more fitting example taken.

Again, of this neck it is said to the Virgin, Cant. 7:4: *Thy neck*, that is, thy humility, *as a tower of ivory*. *As a tower*, that is, raised to heavenly things, for love of which thou humblest thyself. Or, *as a tower*, that is, the defense of the innocent and continent who are ivory. Ivory also as regards thyself through the whiteness of innocence and the coldness of continence.

Mystically the neck of the Church are those who transmit the food of the word of God for the nourishing of others: because *by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God* (Matt. 4:4) the members of his mystical body, which is the Church, are nourished. This neck are the preachers and doctors, through whom Christ emits his voice and draws food to the body, as has been said, of whom it is said to the Church: *Thy neck as a tower*, on account of constancy and fortitude, namely that they be not *carried about with every wind of doctrine*: *of ivory*, on account of the refreshment of abstinence and the whiteness of chastity and innocence: for ivory is cold and white. The bulwarks of this tower are the authority of Scripture, which enclose and protect us (Cant. 4:4). Gregory on Ezechiel, speaking of this neck, of this tower, and of its bulwarks: "In the neck is the throat, in the throat the voice." Therefore the neck of the Church is her sacred utterances. In the thousand of shields, which is a perfect number and signifies universality, is designated our whole munition, which is in sacred utterance. And so by shields and bulwarks the same is figured, that is, the sentences or authorities of sacred Scripture, which is the tower, that is, the fortification of the Catholic Church.

Or also, the neck of the Church are the holy intercessors, who join the body to the head, that is, the Church to Christ, by their prayers and examples.

Morally: The neck of the faithful soul is charity, which principally joins the body of the elect to Christ the head. Which is called a *tower*, on account of its height, by which it towers above the other virtues. *A thousand shields*: the sacred utterances perfectly protecting all believers. Prov. 30:5: *Every word of God is fire tried: he is a buckler to them that hope in him. They hang upon it*, that is, upon the tower of charity: because the whole law is perfected by charity alone. In Matthew 22:40 it is said: *On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.* Rom. 13:10: *The love of our neighbor worketh no evil. The fulfilling of the law is charity.*

Or, *a thousand shields*: the universality of the virtues: because each virtue is a shield in its contest against all the darts of that vice which is directly opposed to it. And it is certain that all the virtues hang upon charity as upon a mother informing their motions. 1 Cor. 13:1: *If I speak with the tongues of men*, etc. And *(p. 305)* this same universality of the virtues is *all the armor of valiant men*, that is, that with which all the elect are armed against enemies to be overcome, which armor is described by the Apostle, Eph. 6:11: *Put you on the armor of God*, etc. (You will find much on these under the title that Mary is a tower.)

In the fitting composition of the shoulders. The shoulders of the faithful soul: the right of piety, the left of compassion: which two ought to support the burdens of fraternal infirmity, in which consists the fulfilment of the divine law. Hence Gal. 6:2: *Bear ye one another's burdens; and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ.* Those who bear one another's burdens are those who give counsel and help to one another. And this is to be done after the example of Christ, who bore our sins on his shoulders affixed to the cross, which we could not bear. 1 Peter 2:24: *Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree*, etc. *Sins*, that is, the punishment of sins. And of this bearing the Philosopher says: "Nothing so proves a friend as the bearing of a friend's burden." Again, Rom. 15:1: *Now we that are stronger, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to*

please ourselves. Isa. 41:6: *Every one shall help his neighbor, and shall say to his brother: Be of good courage.* Gen. 49:14–15, it is said of Issachar: *Issachar shall be a strong ass lying down between the borders. He saw rest that it was good: and the land that it was excellent: and he bowed his shoulder to carry, and became a servant under tribute.* Issachar is interpreted *a man of reward*, or *he is my reward*, or *mindful*, or *remembering the Lord*. This is the just man, who so greatly loves the eternal reward that he as it were matrimonially joins himself to it in thought, and by avidity adheres to it inseparably. Again, who says of Christ, *he is my reward*, and constitutes him alone his reward. Again, who always remembers the benefits of God, and never delivers the Lord himself to oblivion.

A strong ass, reckoning thyself stupid to the world, that thou mayest be wise to God. Adapt the other properties of the ass, and assign the good ones to the good, and the bad to the bad. *Strong* for enduring for Christ and for the hope of eternal reward the molestations inflicted on him by his own flesh, or by the world, or by the devil. Strong also for supporting the burdens of fraternal infirmity.

Lying down between the borders, that is, between the seaside and the mountains, namely between the bitterness of contrition and penance, and the eminence of life. Or, these borders are our entrance into the world, and our going out from the world. In these he dwells as it were perseveringly, who always thinks of these. Or, *between the borders*, that is, neither yet in the body. Hence: *And I live, now not I* (Gal. 2:20). Nor yet outside the body. Job 7:15: *So that my soul rather chooseth hanging.* These borders can also be called the present life and the eternal life, between which the soul of the just man is as it were suspended. Or, *in the borders*, that is, in the going out of this land which is of those who die: which is done when for bare thin sustentation after the example of the ass which feeds on straw and thistles, he is content with vile and few things: and this is done most of all by continual memory of death. Hence Jerome: "He easily contemns all things who always thinks that he is about to die. And as it were placed at the beginning of the land of the living by hope and desire, he somehow already tastes beforehand the goods of that land."

Note that there are some who dwell between these borders, but not in the borders, because they do not think of these, to whom it is said, Judges 5:16: *Why dwellest thou between two borders, that thou mayest hear the bleatings of the flocks?* The flocks which are of brute animals signify brute sensuality, whose suggestions poison the soul: whence they are called *hissings* which are of serpents, which hissings he hears who consents to them. Therefore one must not dwell between the borders, but in the borders themselves aforesaid, that there may continually be brought back to memory a vile birth and *(p. 306)* an uncertain death, according to that of Ecclesiasticus 7:40: *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.*

It follows: *He saw rest that it was good.* He saw with the eye of the understanding by contemplating, with the eye of the affection by tasting beforehand. Hence: *I remembered God, and was delighted* (Ps. 76:4). *I remembered God* as to the understanding, *and was delighted* as to the affection.

He saw. By this it is hinted that he was already there in mind; otherwise he would not see. Hence among worldly varieties let our hearts be fixed there where true joys are.

Rest of eternal beatitude, which is given to the just after the labors of the present life. Apoc. 14:13: *From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors.*

That it was good. Here there is not good rest. Hence of certain ones it is said: *They are not in the labor of men*, etc. (Ps. 72:5).

And the land of eternal stability, *that it was excellent.* And here two things are noted, namely rest, or the defect of every evil in paradise, and the abundance of every good by this that it says *excellent*, where there is lack of nothing (Deut. 8:9). Again, *that it was good*: because there one does not labor, but one arrives at it only through labors.

And having seen these two things, *he bowed his shoulder to carry*. The shoulder of charity which makes all things light. A twofold shoulder namely, that is, patience which is the left shoulder for enduring evils inflicted on oneself, and kindness which is the right shoulder for supporting through compassion evils inflicted on neighbors. For charity is as it were a twofold shoulder: *it is patient, it is kind* (1 Cor. 13:4); this bears by enduring, that by having compassion. Or, by the shoulder is signified fortitude in good, which the good ass of the Lord puts under to carry his light yoke, not the yokes of five oxen which they buy for themselves, wretched ones wishing to satisfy the service of their five senses. These are the asses of the devil putting themselves under his most heavy yoke.

It follows: *And he became a servant under tribute.*

In the length, fortitude and flexibility or vigor of the arms. (Under the title, How Mary is to be served with each of the members, you will find concerning the arms.)

The words of Mary or of the faithful soul, Cant. 3:4: *When I had a little passed by them*, and she speaks of the watchmen, that is, the Angels: *I had passed by them*, namely by contemplating more loftily: *I found him whom my soul loveth.* For we believe nothing above the Angels except the Spouse and Mary. Every creature therefore is to be passed by as a way by which one comes to the Spouse; even the Spouse himself, inasmuch as he is man, is to be passed by as a way, not to be embraced as the end, as Augustine says. On account of which he himself, inasmuch as he is man, calls himself the way (John 14:6): he calls himself the truth and the life, but inasmuch as he is God. *I held him*, as with the two arms of twin charity, which are long through perseverance, and flexible through obedience: and with the twofold hand of good operation for the honor of God and the example of the neighbor. *And I will not let him go*, that is, I will not cease to love or to work well, *till I bring him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that bore me*, that is, till I have made him known and loved to the whole Church which bore me and nourished me. In which it is shown that each one should hold the Spouse when found, and not let him go until they have made him known and loved to the whole Church as far as they can. Or, to the whole Church and to his people, that *curtain may draw curtain* (Exod. 26:3 ff.). And *he that heareth, let him say: Come* (Apoc. 22:17).

In the whiteness, plainness, extension and moderate quantity of the hands. Of her hands Mary says, Cant. 5:5: *(p. 307) My hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers were full of the choicest myrrh.* By hands, works; by fingers, the discretion of works. *Choicest myrrh*: most perfect mortification of the flesh and of carnal pleasures. In these words, however, Mary shows fulfilled in herself what the Angel had promised her, saying, Luke 1:35: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, etc. For the Holy Spirit came upon her, and so clothed her from above, that all that was carnal in her was absorbed, and by the spirit, carnality being mortified, spiritual affection alone ruled in her.

She says therefore: *My hands dropped with myrrh.* For I am so absorbed in spiritual grace that nothing of carnal or worldly concupiscence lived in me; nay rather my hands and my fingers, that is, my works and the discreet distinction of my works, bore witness by the perfection of mortification. And note that above the Son says of his mother: *I have gathered my myrrh with my aromatical spices* (Cant. 5:1). In the word *gathering* abundance is noted. Again, Sir. 24:20, Mary says: *I yielded a sweet odor like the best myrrh.* That myrrh is choice which without wound and cutting of the bark flows from the tree, and designates that bitter mortification of the flesh which the soul brings forth, wounded by no wound of sin. Such myrrh the Lord gathered in the Virgin, because although she had not the wound of sin, yet she took care to mortify herself in manifold ways: and therefore she well says that her fingers are full of the choicest myrrh: and such myrrh is properly the Lord's. Hence he says: *I have gathered my myrrh*, etc.

Again, of the hands of the Spouse the spouse says, and it can fittingly be understood of the hands of Mary, Cant. 5:14: *His hands are turned and as of gold, full of hyacinths.* Turning is readier and swifter than the other arts, holds the rule of justice, and most beautifully cuts round the hollow of the work. In the same way

all the works of Christ or of Mary were cut round, so that although they were done with a certain readiness and swiftness of working, yet they never swerved from the rule of justice. Or, the hands of Mary are called *turned*: because as the art of turning is readier than other arts, so Mary is readier than all the saints to do good.

Golden on account of the wisdom of working: because wisdom is signified in gold, and she so ingeniously knows how to bestow mercy on the wretched that she does not break the seal of divine justice. Or, *golden* through charity, which likewise is signified in gold: because from mere charity she bestows on us the gifts of mercy, of grace and of glory, fulfilling that of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 16:14: *Let all your things be done in charity*.

Full of hyacinths. For hyacinth is a stone of ethereal color: because whatever Christ wrought in the body, whatever the mother or the Son does or did in work, all proceeded from the fountain of wisdom, and always proceeds, all shines and shone with heavenly intention. Or, *full of hyacinths*: because she intended nothing else than heavenly rewards in her works. The hands of the Virgin are also said to be *full*, namely of good works: because she herself more abundantly than all creatures does good, or the Son through her to all creatures. Hence of her human nature says, Wisd. 7:11: *All good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands*, that is, the gifts of graces.

Otherwise: *His hands are turned*, that is, revolving, ready namely to work in every direction, as what is wrought on a lathe is revolving in every part. Or, *turned*, that is, cut round about, and presenting certain circles to those who look, as everything cut on a lathe is polished round. Because in their works they expressed circles *(p. 308)* circles of perfection of every kind and of spiritual conservation. For a circle is a return from the same to the same. For as he wrought all things from the Father, so also to him and into him he referred all things by thanksgiving. Hence he says, John 14:10: *The Father who abideth in me, he doth the works. Golden* through wisdom and charity, which two gild all works, and make them desirable and lovable. Or therefore *golden*: because they could not be hurt or burned by any fire of tribulation. *Full of hyacinths*, that is, of precious works alone and of heavenly color, that is, which rather showed heaven, and proved that he came from heaven and was heavenly. Hence he says, John 5:36: *The works which the Father hath given me to perfect… give testimony of me.* And his works, after the likeness of hyacinth, are clear in clear hearts, obscure in dark ones: because hyacinth in serene weather is clear, in dark and cloudy weather appears obscure. For to those who were illumined with wisdom and grace his holy heavenly and divine works appeared, but to those dark through unbelief and folly magical and seductive, as to the Jews and Pharisees.

Again, the beauty of the hands consists in operation and extension: and Mary *hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor* (Prov. 31:20), and always opens them. And she has hands stretched out, not contracted, after the example of the Son, who stretched out his hands, and did not contract them, on the cross. And in this she is the contrary of Eve, who contracted her hand, snatching the forbidden fruit.

Again, of the whiteness of the Virgin's hands blessed Bernard says on that of the Canticles, 2:16: *My beloved to me, and I to him, who feedeth among the lilies.* Blessed Bernard: "The hands of Mary are certain most white lilies; nor will the lover of lilies complain that he has not found among the lilies whatever he finds among the hands of Mary." Or, the whiteness of her hands consists in this, that *she did no sin* (1 Peter 2:22). And therefore according to the purity of her hands it was retributed to her by the Lord.

The beauty of the hands also consists much in the fitting conjunction or jointing of the fingers, because a finger is as it were decently joined: and these fingers which designate discreet works are upright through intention, flexible through obedience, slender through mortification, white through innocence, long through perseverance, fortified with nails through final patience of adversaries, because the nail is the end of the hand.

Mystically: The hands of the Church are the good workers, who according to the counsel of the Apostle to the Galatians, 6:10, while they have time, work good unto all: of whom it is said, Cant. 5:14: *His hands*, that is, of Christ, *are turned.* Work that is done on a lathe is done swiftly and without error. So every good work is to be done without error, that the intention of the worker may be pure, which is done when he works to the honor of God, for the salvation of the soul, and for the example of the neighbor.

First, to the honor of God, that thou attribute not to thyself, but to the Lord, whatever good thou hast done, saying with Isaias, 26:12: *For thou hast wrought all our works for us, O Lord.* And having done whatever good thou couldst, say, humbling thyself: *I am an unprofitable servant* (Luke 17:10). Sir. 10:29: *Extol not thyself in doing thy work*, etc.

For the salvation of the soul, that thou intend it namely. Sir. 30:15: *The health of the soul is the beauty of justice.* Gregory: "He who wishes to have mercy on his neighbor, let him draw the origin of showing mercy from himself."

For the example of the neighbor. Matt. 5:16: *So let your light shine before men*, etc. One must also work swiftly, as work is done on a lathe. Hence Prov. 3:28: *(p. 309) Say not to thy friend*, that is, to Christ begging in the poor: *Go, and come again: to morrow I will give to thee*: when thou canst give at once. Heb. 4:11: *Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest*, that is, to work those things which make for entrance.

Again, *turned*, that is, ready: which suits hands that work for God, so that having done one good work of one kind, they at once transfer themselves to doing another, after the example of Christ our master and Lord, whose every action is our instruction, who by day preached and wrought miracles, but by night prayed, that no empty time might pass which he did not spend on the work of our salvation.

Golden. In gold three things: wisdom, obedience, charity. Wisely therefore, that is, discreetly one must work, that he always prefer the worthy and the good to others. Sir. 12:1: *If thou do good, know to whom thou dost it, and there shall be much thanks for thy good deeds.* Again, wisely, that thou flee ostentation and transitory praise: because as Gregory says, they have greatly made light of their goods who believe that the praises of men suffice for their remuneration. Again, wisely according to the counsel of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 8:13: *Not that others should have ease, and you be distressed*, etc. Obediently, that is, according to the precept of the Gospel, or of a spiritual father, after the example of the Lord saying, John 14:31: *As the Father hath given me commandment, so do I.* Charitably. Hence 1 Cor. 16:14: *Let all your things be done in charity.*

Full of hyacinths: full that thou mayest abundantly do good. Tob. 4:8: *According to thy ability be merciful*, etc. Let us prepare for ourselves a harvest of good works by manifold sowing: and the more abundantly we desire to be filled, the more largely let us confer upon him from whom we have received all.

Otherwise: *Full of hyacinths*, in the plural, that for eternal retribution, which will be manifold, the work may be fully done: because as it is said, Isa. 66:23: *From month to month*, etc. *Month* is said from *mene* which is *defect*. There will therefore be *month from month*: because from the defect of good operation there will be a defect of glorious retribution.

Or, *full of hyacinths*, that thou mayest abound in good works to this end, that at length in heavenly things there may be given thee a dwelling with the saints. Again, hyacinth has the grace of obtaining: because those who have wrought well in the present will obtain mercy in the future. Again, those hands are full of hyacinths which work fully for eternal retribution. Those are as it were full of mud which work for earthly things, that is, for glory or temporal gain.

Otherwise: The hands of the Church are those who *labor with their hands the thing which is good, that they may have something to give to him that suffereth need* (Eph. 4:28). And they ought to be *turned*: for a lathe in its circling always holds the same way, and swerves in nothing, and turning is readier and more expeditious than the other arts. Likewise good workers in the Church of God ought to be ready, swift and expeditious, not

lazy in good works, and to swerve in nothing, but always to hold the way of the divine precepts. But the hands will be *golden*, if such workers burn with the fire of charity, and shine through wisdom, which two are signified in gold which shines and is of a fiery color. And they ought to be *full of hyacinths*. Hyacinth is a gem of ethereal color, and signifies hope and the desire of heavenly goods: because good works are to be referred to the retribution of heavenly goods, not to the glory of human praise.

Again, it is to be noted that the hand is twofold, namely left and right: in which we are taught that a twofold operation is necessary to a Christian, that he work the works of penance: because he has sometimes sinned, and this as long as he was on the left of the present life. *(p. 310)* And this John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2), Christ (Matt. 4:17), Peter (Acts 2:38) taught, that by three so great witnesses all the world might believe concerning the doing of penance. And all three had the same theme, namely *Do penance*, etc.

The other hand ought to be, namely the right, for doing works of mercy for obtaining eternal retribution, which is signified by the right hand. Hence Cant. 2:6: *His right hand shall embrace me.* In this twofold hand ten fingers, and in each finger three joints. Two hands, as has been said: the works of penance and of mercy for the honor of God and the example of the neighbor. Ten fingers: the fulfilment of the Decalogue, to which both penitents and the merciful are bound. Namely that the precepts pertain to the love of God and of neighbor. In almost each finger three joints, that whatever thou workest pertaining to penance or mercy, thou mayest attribute to the Father to whom power, and to the Son to whom wisdom, and to the Holy Spirit to whom will is attributed. For in every meritorious work these three things are required, namely to know, to will, and to be able. Therefore when a psalm is chanted we say: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." *Psalm* is said from ψάλλω which is *to touch*, and designates operation. But good operation is not done without the help of God the Trinity, who says, John 15:5: *Without me you can do nothing.* And therefore all is to be attributed to him by thanksgiving, that *unto the place from whence the rivers come, they return* (Eccles. 1:7), that we may say with Isaias, 26:12: *All our works*, etc., as above.

And note that the thumb, which is stronger than the other fingers, has only two joints, which are magnanimity in prosperity, lest one be dissolved by it, and patience in adversity, lest one be broken by adversity: and so the thumb signifies fortitude, whose daughters are magnanimity and patience, as has been said. The index which follows: prudence or wisdom, which indicates to us what is to be done. The three articulations of this finger: memory of past things, understanding of present things, providence of future things. The third is called the middle, and is justice, which teaches us to hold the mean, and to render his due to all. Three articulations: to render to superiors obedience and reverence, to equals peace and help, to inferiors discipline and protection. The fourth is called the medicinal, and signifies temperance. Three articulations: modesty in the tongue, sobriety in taste, and continence in touch. Behold thou hast the four cardinal virtues. The fifth is called the little finger, and designates humility which is the guardian of the other virtues. Its three articulations: to subject oneself to an equal, to a greater, to a lesser. This finger is also called the auricular from the ear which it purges, and by the ear obedience is figured: for humble obedience blots out sins committed through hearing. Again, the little finger consummates the hand, and is humility which consummates and perfects all the virtues. Which consummation the Lord commanded, Luke 17:10, saying: *When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants.* The little finger also is very strong, and without it the whole hand perishes: because no operation is good before God, or of memory, without humility, and it is she who more strongly attacks the devil and triumphs over him. Hence of Josue it is said, Sir. 46:7: *In going down he cut the adversaries in pieces*: because he who goes down through humility destroys the power of demons, etc.

In the fitting disposition, hardness and smallness of the breasts as regards virgins. Of the breasts of the blessed Virgin it is said, Cant. 1:1: *Thy breasts are better than wine*, etc. In the same place, v. 3: *We will be mindful of thy breasts above wine: the upright love thee.* (Look back under the title on loving Mary.) To her also it is said, Cant. 4:5: *Thy two breasts (p. 311) are like two young roes*, etc. (You will find this expounded

above under the title on the piety and compassion of Mary.)

The breasts of the Virgin can be called the love of God and of neighbor, with which she nourished her senses. Or, breasts signify virginity, teats fruitfulness.

Again, of the teats of the mother the Son says to her, Cant. 4:10: *How beautiful are thy breasts, my sister, my spouse! thy breasts are more beautiful than wine*, etc. A certain one says that breasts properly belong to virgins, and teats or nipples to matrons. And the blessed Virgin is said to have both, namely breasts and teats: because she is both virgin and mother, which no other is. It is therefore said: *How beautiful are thy breasts*, etc. For what is more beautiful in the eyes of an afflicted sinner than piety and mercy, which are signified in breasts and teats? These breasts also are more beautiful to sinners than the austerity of severity which is signified in wine. Or also, *than wine*, that is, than the austerity of the law punishing without mercy. Or, *than wine*, that is, than every carnal and temporal joy. Or also, *than wine*, literally: because wine makes glad the flesh, but these breasts make joyful the mind.

Otherwise: *How beautiful are thy breasts*, that is, with how great reverence and honor are they to be embraced and extolled, as it is said, Luke 11:27: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck.*

Again, of the breasts of the mother the Son says to her, Cant. 7:8, with regard to the time of the passion: *I said: I will go up into the palm tree, and will take hold of the fruit thereof: and thy breasts shall be as the clusters of the vine*, etc. As if he said: I said that I will go up into the palm, that is, I revealed my passion to my disciples, and also to the Jews themselves. Of the first he says, Matt. 20:17–18: *Jesus took the twelve disciples apart, and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem*, etc. He also said to the Jews, John 12:32: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.* It is also sufficiently credible that, speaking with his mother in secret, he had foretold to her his passion and resurrection. The sense therefore is: I said to my mother that I will go up into the palm, that is, I will be exalted on the cross, and will take hold of its fruits, that is, the utilities coming from my very crucifixion, which are resurrection, ascension, the sending of the Holy Spirit, this as regards me; the remission of sins, this as regards men; the subjugation of demons, the manifestation of the Scriptures, and the like. These fruits also are all who are to be saved, of whom the last part are the Jews, of whom the remnant shall be saved.

Otherwise: I said, that is, from eternity I disposed, that I will go up into the palm, that is, into the triumphant tree of the cross, and will take hold of the fruits, namely of my victory, resurrection namely, and ascension, and the faith of the Apostles. Or, *its fruits*, that is, redeemed men, whom he took hold of first in the penitent thief and those detained in limbo. And then amid the anguish of death, in the hour of my indignation against the crucifiers, when I shall meditate in my hard spirit through the heat of the day (Isa. 27:8), when namely my spirit exasperated in the heat of the passion shall think of the punishments of the wicked and of vengeance, then, I say, *thy two breasts shall be as the clusters of the vine*: for I shall remember that I assumed flesh from thee, that I sucked milk from thy breasts, I shall remember the mystery of my incarnation. And that recollection as a drink of wine will make me forget present irritation and indignation, lest I hasten to vengeance. Which the Prophet had foreseen, saying to him: *When thou art angry, thou wilt remember mercy* (Hab. 3:2).

Or, generally the breasts of the Virgin are compared to the clusters of the vine: for from breasts milk is expressed, and from clusters wine which *(p. 312)* makes a man glad and intoxicates him, and makes him forgetful and easy to pardon injuries inflicted on him, and liberal in giving great things. Altogether indeed in this manner the milk which the holy lips of the Lord expressed and drew from his mother's breasts delighted him, and with a certain unutterable sweetness intoxicated him, that he might not thereafter remember, but easily pardon us the injuries inflicted on him, and largely give us graces and virtues in the present, and in the future everlasting glory.

Again, of the breasts of the mother the Son says to her, Cant. 7:7: *Thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes. Thy stature.* (You will find this a little below, under the title on the stature of Mary.) For another reason also Mary's breasts are likened to clusters, in which a wonderful prerogative of meriting is shown in the Virgin, who merited no less by pouring milk from her breasts for the nourishment of her Son, than the martyrs merited, who are figured by clusters, by pouring their blood through martyrdom. For the reward of all works is weighed according to the root of charity.

Again, of her own breasts Mary says to the Beloved, Cant. 7:11–12: *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us abide in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vineyard flourish, if the flowers be ready to bring forth fruits, if the pomegranates flourish: there will I give thee my breasts.* In this authority is shown the solicitude which the glorious Virgin bears for the Church of God. Hence she says to the Beloved: *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field,* that is, let us visit those who are in the field, and by the name of preaching cleave the earth of human hearts. *Come, my beloved, let us abide in the villages*, making dwellings with those who dwelling in one through love live by one right. *Let us get up early to the vineyards* to be planted in faith. *Let us see if the vineyard flourish* by the beginning of a good work, *if the flowers bring forth fruits* by the completion of a good beginning. *Let us see if the pomegranates flourish*, whose red flower shows the desire of imitating the Lord's passion in faithful men, who are designated by those trees. And the Lady adds: *There will I give thee my breasts,* that thou mayest taste my intercessions for the Church, which proceed from my breasts, by which above we said her piety and mercy are designated. And in this it is shown that for such things she herself gladly prays.

Again, of the breasts of the virgin the companions of Christ say, Cant. 8:8: *Our sister is little, and hath no breasts.* And these are the words of the companions of Christ, namely of the holy prophets, who as it were present the blessed Virgin to the Lord as fit for this, that he assume flesh from her, and say: *Our sister,* the Virgin Mary, *is little* through humility of mind, clean also and pure as a tender young girl, who does not yet have breasts. But Christ, as if accepting the Virgin offered to him, adds: *What shall we do to our sister in the day when she is to be spoken to?* On that day namely when the Archangel Gabriel shall speak to her. And the companions being silent, the whole Trinity answers, saying: *If she be a wall, let us build upon it bulwarks of silver: if she be a door, let us join it with boards of cedar* (Cant. 8:9). To which words the Virgin answering is introduced, as if she said: Be it done to me as you have said, and build upon me bulwarks of gold or of silver: because *I am a wall* (Cant. 8:10). She also adds: *And my breasts as a tower, since I am become in his presence as one finding peace.* The blessed Virgin indeed is a wall on account of the firmness of her purpose of preserving virginity. Her breasts are as a tower on account of the surpassing fruitfulness of the divine offspring. She is also a wall of our defense, and upon her the whole Trinity built bulwarks of silver: for this the whole Trinity built in her for the defense of the Church, that by her well-sounding prayers *(p. 313)* she may drive back the enemy. And this is signified in silver, which sounds sweeter than the other metals.

When therefore she had said: *I am a wall,* she added: *And my breasts as a tower.* As if she said: My mercy and my piety, with which as with breasts I nurse the children of the Church with the sweetness of helps, are a tower, namely a fortification, a refuge, and a security of sinners. And this is so, from the time that grace was thus accepted, thus I was made pleasing before him, that is, by God’s good pleasure, that I should be as one finding peace, that is, truly finding and making peace between God and man, that I should be peaceable as the mother of the true Peacemaker, the mediatrix, mother of the Mediator.

But what is said: *If she be a door, let us join it with boards of cedar* (Cant. 8:9), understand thus: Although Christ calls himself a door (John 10:9), and the mother here is called a door, yet in one way and in another. For Christ is called a door, that is, an opening or a way through which one enters unto life, which belongs to him alone. Hence of himself he says distinctively, John 10:9: *I am the door,* I, not another. A door is also called a joining of boards, by which entrance into the house is shut against the malevolent. Hence it is also said here: *If she be a door, let us join it with boards of cedar.* The blessed Virgin is a door in the Church, who

withstands malignant spirits, lest they enter and approach her devout ones as they will. And this door is joined with as many boards by the holy Trinity as there are virtues and privileges of dignities in her. And these boards are called of cedar: because they are incorruptible and fragrant, and through humility rooted deep they grew into immensity.

Again, of the breasts of Mary or of the faithful soul or of a religious person the Spouse says to her according to another exposition, Cant. 4:5: *Thy two breasts like two young roes that are twins*, etc. The binary twice placed, namely *two*, signifies the double love which the soul ought to have toward God or neighbor: or the knowledge of the two Testaments, by which she ought to govern herself: or faith and operation. He says *thy* to distinguish them from the breasts of the flesh and of the world. (Look under the title on gluttony.)

Like two young roes that are twins. Two diminutives, namely *young roes* and *twins*, signify a double humility, namely interior and exterior.

Five things moreover are noted in the young roe. First, a double fatness, of charity and devotion, or of grace and charity. Hence, Ps. 62:6: *Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness.* This suits preachers and orators, that is, contemplatives, who are our intercessors, who without the gift of grace and without charity do not obtain. Therefore there follows in the verse: *And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*

Second, sharpness of sight for taking care of itself. Hence the Apostle, Eph. 5:15: *See therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly.* And also that it may contemplate eight parts, namely above and below, before and behind, within and without, downward and to the left.

Third, swiftness which is through obedience: because as blessed Bernard says: "The word of God runs swiftly, and desires to have a swift follower." And through operation. Hence, Eccles. 9:10: *Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly*, etc.

Fourth, a beautiful distinction or variety of hairs: in which is signified the variety of graces, virtues, good works, and honest studies. For such are clothed with garments of divers colors (Ezek. 16:10).

Fifth, the climbing of steep things, namely through contemplation, that although the heavy body converse here in the region of bodies, because as Gregory says, the proper place of flesh is the earth, yet the conversation of the soul or spirit is in the heavens *(p. 314)* in the region of spirits, that is, of the Angels, that in the general resurrection it may draw its body to itself: because now the animal body is sown, but it shall rise a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:46). But if the spirit now converse in the region of bodies, as in a brothel, or a tavern, and the like, at length it shall be drawn by its body to the region of bodies, that is, to the land of misery and darkness, etc. Hence, Ps. 145:4: *His spirit shall go forth*, namely of such a false cleric, false monk, false religious, false Christian: *and shall return into his earth*, that is, due to him: because he would not have the land of the living. Or, *his* which he purchased at the price of evil works. *In that day all their thoughts shall perish*, that is, their perverse thoughts which separate from God (Wis. 1:3) shall be the cause why they perish forever.

61. Again, the breasts of the faithful soul are, as regards God, the intellect the left for knowing him, and affection the right for loving him. Or, gratitude and humility. (Look under the title on the charity of Mary, how she loved God with remembrance.) As regards herself, justice the left for punishing herself through penance and discipline, because she has sinned, and this against presumption: mercy the right against despair. Ecclus. 30:24: *Have pity on thy own soul, pleasing God.* As regards the neighbor, compassion and congratulation. Hence, Rom. 12:15: *Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep.* Compassion the left for others' evils. He had this who said, 2 Cor. 11:29: *Who is weak, and I am not weak?* etc. Congratulation the right for others' goods. The same Apostle was not without this, saying to the Philippians, 2:17–18: *I rejoice, and congratulate with you all. And in the same manner do you also rejoice, and congratulate with me.* Without breasts of this kind every soul is little, and *hath no breasts* (Cant. 8:8): nor is

she marriageable, that is, fit to be joined to Christ, nor can she have the milk of efficacious doctrine, etc.

These breasts also, that they may be a sign of spiritual virginity, ought to be as it were small and hard in the reputation of the one who has them, so that however much you have had compassion, you always seem hard to yourself: however much you have congratulated, you judge it little.

62. In the rectitude of the back, that it be namely without all swelling and hump. The back of Christ, of Mary, and of the saints is their patience. Upon which back sinners continually build, namely Jews, pagans, heretics, and blasphemers, and persecutors of the saints, and upon which they prolong their iniquities. But they have a straight back who suffer for eternal things. Those indeed have a swollen back who suffer for temporal things or for their own faults, as merchants and malefactors. But the back is so called from this, that its surface is hard and as it were stony for bearing burdens and enduring blows, etc.

63. In the due disposition of the belly. Hence, Cant. 7:2, it is said to her: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies.* (Look under the title on the virginal fruitfulness of Mary.) Again, of the belly of the Son the mother says, Cant. 5:14: *His belly as of ivory, set with sapphires.* And it can fittingly be expounded of the Virgin's womb. His belly is not as other bellies, in which the devil creeps on breast and belly (Gen. 3:14), but is ivory through virginity. For as with ivory its whiteness is born, so with the flesh of Christ and of Mary herself the whiteness of virginity was born, which is a greenness begotten. And because the sapphire is of heavenly color, the belly of the mother or of the Son is said to be *(p. 315)* distinct, that is, beautifully marked with sapphires, that is, with certain conformities with angelic nature, which is noted in the sapphire. For virginity is the sister of the Angels, as blessed Thomas the Apostle says. For in the Angels there is virginity and the incorruptibility of the same virginity. In the Angels also every motion is subject to the divine will. With this multiple beauty therefore the belly of the mother and of the Son are marked, and distinguished from other bellies. For in the flesh of both there was incorruptible virginity, and both in the flesh of the Son and of the mother, no motion which discorded from God's good pleasure. Another translation: It does not only liken the cleanness of the flesh of Christ or of the Virgin herself to angelic cleanness, but even prefers it, saying: *His belly*, that is, of the Son or of the mother, *as an ivory pyx upon a sapphire stone.* In this pyx moreover the Father sent to us that medicinal ointment, namely the body of Christ, by which the human race was healed, and with whose odor the whole Church of the faithful is sprinkled. (Look under the title on vessels, where Mary is called an apothecary's shop.)

Mystically these words are said of the Church: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies.* The belly of the Church: because the belly is the tenderest part of the body, it signifies women who are called daughters on account of the tenderness of piety and compassion. And because the belly is the seat of bodily fruitfulness, and a figure of spiritual fruitfulness. And because spiritual foods are cooked and digested through meditation in the belly of memory, as bodily foods in the carnal belly.

Like a heap of wheat, which broad from below tends into a cone. For spiritual persons pour themselves out widely in vigils, fasts, disciplines, and other bodily exercises. And they are terminated in a cone: because the more perfect they are in charity and the broader in works of mercy and penance, the more they judge and believe themselves lesser and less perfect: in which they show that they belong to the ark which was finished in one cubit. And it is well said *like a heap of wheat*: because they ought with all zeal to heap up wheat, the word of God, with which the dove, that is, the faithful soul, ought to be fed and nourished, that namely after the example of the Lord's mother they may keep and confer all the Lord's words in their hearts.

Set about with lilies, as it were on every side, namely both in heart, and in senses, members, and motions having the whiteness of lilies: and therefore *lilies* is put in the plural: because chastity of body does not suffice without chastity of mind. Nor would even this double chastity suffice without chastity of the senses, members, and motions, and of both bodily and spiritual actions.

65. Otherwise: *His belly as of ivory, set with sapphires.* The belly of the Church is the married, who are more fragile and tenderer in the Church: and because they cannot altogether contain, it is permitted them to use marriage. And this belly ought to be ivory, that those who use marriage may be firmest in conjugal chastity, that they be broken by no adultery: because ivory is the bone of the elephant, a most chaste animal, and ivory is a most firm bone, cold, white, and hard. This belly is also said to be set with sapphires, as neither wholly flesh, nor wholly sapphire, but distinct with flesh and sapphire. For the married man inasmuch as he thinks the things that are of God is a sapphire, which is of heavenly color: inasmuch as he thinks how he may please his wife, he is flesh: and such a one is divided according to the distinction of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 7:34, because he thinks the things that are of God and the things that are of the world: for unless he thought the things that are of God, he would not be divided: and if he thought only the things that are of the world and how he might please his wife, he would not be set with sapphires.

Or, by the belly can be understood any infirm persons in the Church of God, who can become strong before God, if this belly be ivory through coldness against the heat of luxury, and white against every other uncleanness, and solid against vanity and inconstancy, and at least set with sapphires, even if it cannot be wholly sapphireine, that thus it may treat temporal things, that it forget not eternal things.

(p. 316) 66. In the fitting position of the navel. Cant. 7:2, the Spouse says to her: *Thy navel is like a round bowl never wanting cups.* By the navel the infirmity of carnal concupiscence is designated. Hence through Job the strength of Behemoth is said to be *in the navel of his belly* (cf. Job 40:11). But in this Virgin the navel so dried up and hardened that it was as dry wood, having no humor of carnal concupiscence; and, as by turned work, like a bowl her navel was circumcised within and without from every exterior and interior temptation. Nor does this bowl need cups, with which he might be given drink who cries on the cross: *I thirst* (John 19:28). But from this bowl he drank wine and milk: for with the milk of virginal whiteness he found the mortification of her own flesh, which has an austere savor, mixed in as wine, that he might delight equally in both.

67. Otherwise: *Thy navel*, that is, thy chastity, which occupied in thee the place and seat where in other women lust reigns. Hence the Lord reproaches the soul sordid through lust, Ezek. 16:4: *In the day of thy nativity thy navel was not cut.* Thy chastity, I say, is *like a round bowl*, that is, round, because thou containest thyself for the love of heavenly things: and it is perfect, because thou art chaste in heart, in members, in manners, and in senses, as a turned work is round and perfect. A bowl, I say, *never wanting cups*: because it never suffers the thirst of carnal concupiscence: for he who thirsts needs cups. Or thus: *Never wanting cups*, that is, the irrigation of grace: because thou art wholly full of grace. According to some, a *crater* is a cup having four little handles.

68. Otherwise, that this be said of the Church: *Thy navel is like a round bowl.* The navel is in the middle of the body; Mary is in the middle of the Church, which is the body of her Son, without respect of persons; made with the lathe of the teaching of the Holy Spirit; full, through humble meekness, without the scruple of any sin; able to say much more truly than David: *Without iniquity I have run the way of the commandments of God* (cf. Ps. 118:32), and I have directed others by example. This bowl is concave through humility, spherical through the intention of the heavenly reward, capable of wine and of every liquor, that is, of every grace. Of precious material: because sanctified in the womb, and redeemed by the blood of her Son. Closed below and open above, by contempt of temporal things and desire of heavenly things. It is held by the hand of the Holy Spirit, or of the Son, who is the hand of the Father. The mother gives us, her children, to drink of manifold wine. (You will find this under the twelfth title, in the section on the garden, where she is called a vine. Look also under the title on the golden and silver bowl, under the title on vessels.) *Never wanting cups*, which her Son, who is *the true vine* (John 15:1), supplies to her, namely the gifts of graces; and her sufficiency, which is from God, overflows into and flows upon those who with the hand of good operation take hold of this bowl, and as it were put it to their mouth, devoutly preaching her great deeds and sweetly

singing her praises.

Mystically: by the navel, in which is the generative power and the fervor of desire as regards women, can be designated the holy preachers, whose desire or fervor for spiritual offspring in the Church of God is a bowl, by which is served the wine of doctrine *springing forth virgins* (Zech. 9:17). And it is round, that is, circular, planed, polished, and trimmed round about, so that it has nothing wrinkled, nothing angular, but all simple and true: the life and doctrine of the preachers wholly perfect, and an image *(p. 317)* of eternity preferring and love. For perfection and eternity are noted in the circular figure. *Never wanting cups*: because the abundance of saving wisdom they never lack in themselves, and into others it always overflows: because they administer it sincerely and piously to others.

Morally: The navel of the faithful soul is zeal, or piety, or the mother of both, charity, for the reasons said above. *Never wanting cups* of saving wisdom, which never fail charity: because *the unction teacheth of all things* (1 John 2:27). “For where charity is,” as Augustine says, “what is there that can be wanting? For he who is charity cannot be wanting to charity: nor does he permit anything of his own to be wanting to her, who has placed his whole self and his own in the hands of charity.”

In the equal solidity of the legs and shins. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 7:1: *The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, that are made by the hand of a skillful workman.* The thighs in men, the femora in women, and these femora are comely as jewels, that is, they are joined to one another through chastity, as jewels join two parts of a tunic. Note that the joint of the Virgin’s thighs is said not only chaste or modest, but also admonitory of chastity. For which reason it is compared to jewels (*monilia*). And they are called *monilia* as it were admonishing (*monentia*) chastity: for by her example she admonishes and invites us to the cleanness of continence.

But these jewels are said to be made by the hand of a skillful workman. For the craftsman the Holy Spirit wrought in her thighs this joint, this prerogative of chastity, who extinguished in her the whole tinder of carnal concupiscence by the dew of heavenly grace coming upon her.

Again, of the legs or shins of the Spouse it is said, Cant. 5:15, and it can fittingly be expounded of the legs or shins of Mary: *His legs as pillars of marble, that are set upon bases of gold.* Another translation says: “His shins pillars of marble.” These legs are temperance in prosperity, and patience in adversity, which two sustain and support the whole building of the virtues.

Or morally: The shins which are strong as marble columns, and bear the whole compaction of the body, are fortitude and perseverance, which bear and sustain the jointure of all virtues and holy works. And those columns, that they may be able to bear this building, *are set upon bases of gold*, namely charity and wisdom, which are signified in gold: for fortitude ought to be founded in wisdom lest it precipitate itself, perseverance in charity, otherwise it will fail, and will not stand.

71. In the due division and rectitude of the feet. Of the feet of Mary and of the saints it is said, Ezek. 1:7, of the holy living creatures: *Their feet*, that is, affections, *straight feet*, through due intention: *and the sole of their foot as the sole of a calf’s foot*, which is cloven through discretion, having a hoof through final patience, is firmly fixed through stability in good, tramples the earth by contemning lower things, impresses a circular figure by seeking and loving the things that are above.

Note that by the feet affections are signified: because by affections the mind approaches to God, and recedes from itself and from God. But the two feet of the faithful soul are a double affection. The right foot is the desire of pleasing God, or solicitude how it may please him to whom it has approved itself (2 Tim. 2:4). The left is the zeal how it may profit the brethren. And these two feet carry the soul into heaven. The two feet of the sinful soul are proper sense and proper will: and these carry into hell. The two feet of the just soul contrary to these are obedience against proper will, and humility against proper sense. Chrysostom: “Feet are

the motions of the soul, *(p. 318)* by which it goes not from place to place, but from evil to good, and conversely." Gregory: "To will with the mind is to go." Augustine: "The soul walks not with feet, but with manners."

Again, our feet with which standing, sitting, walking we trample the earth, but not lying down, teach us that our affections ought assiduously to trample earthly things, except for the moderate necessity of the body.

Again, of the feet, that is, the affections of the mother that of the Apocalypse, 1:15, can be said: *And his feet like unto fine brass.* Χαλκός in Greek, *aes* in Latin. Christ was golden through patience, which does not murmur in scourges, as neither does gold in the strokes of hammers. He was brazen through the clear sound of open preaching, as in a burning furnace: because he did all things from the vehement fervor of charity. What he says, *his feet*, signifies the lower part, namely humanity. But our feet, that is, affections, are to be shod with dead skins, namely to be fortified with the examples and conversations of the saints who went before: otherwise if our affection be naked, it will be able to fear much in the desert of this way the venomous bite of the ancient serpent, and also of those three serpents of which it is treated, Deut. 8:15. (Look under the title that Mary is a vine.)

Again, feet are affections: because as bodily feet carry the exterior man, so affections the interior.

These feet are sometimes burned, namely by anger, hatred, or envy. Prov. 6:27–28: *Can a man… walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?* From these the shoe is to be taken away, that is, dead works for the sake of cooling. Josh. 5:16: *Loose thy shoes from off thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy* (cf. Exod. 3:5), that is, the Church, or the house of religion. Sometimes they are dissolved by cold, that is, by the torpor of negligence. Therefore it is said, Matt. 24:20: *But pray that your flight be not in the winter*: because the torpor of negligence binds the feet. These are to be shod with the shoes of the world, that is, with the examples of the dead saints as with dead skins. Jer. 2:25: *Keep thy foot from being bare*, etc. Exod. 12:11, by those who are shod the paschal lamb is eaten. Sometimes they are dashed against a stone, that is, by hesitation of faith. Hence: *Lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone* (Ps. 90:12). *And the rock was Christ* (1 Cor. 10:4). These are to be washed with the butter of divine mercy, and cherished with the oil of grace, which was poured into the wounds of the wounded man (Luke 10:34). And these two Christ the rock bestows. Job 29:6: *I washed my feet with butter*, hoping in the mercy of God. Or, I cleansed my affections by contemplation of the humanity of Christ, which is by butter, and of the divinity which is by honey. Hence there follows: *And the rock poured me out rivers of oil*, that is, Christ gave serenity of conscience. Sometimes they are defiled with the pleasure of the flesh, which is mud and mire. Lam. 1:9: *Her filthiness is on her feet.* Why? because she hath not remembered her end. These are to be washed with water. Hence, John 13:5 and following, the Lord washed the disciples' feet. To whom Peter: *Lord, not only my feet*, that is, affections, *but also my hands*, that is, works, *and my head*, that is, the wandering of the senses. Or, *head*, that is, the intention which is to be ordered toward heaven. Sometimes they are soiled with the dust of vain glory. Hence it is commanded to the Apostles, Matt. 10:14 and Luke 9:5: *Shake off the dust from your feet.*

Morally: Feet, that is, affections, ought to be shod, that is, fortified with hyacinth, that is, with heavenly desire, that we may be able to go to meet Christ in the air coming to judgment. Again, the feet of the Church sustaining her in grace and virtue, and Christ the head of the Church *(p. 319)* carrying him through the world, are preachers, of whom it is said, Isa. 52:7: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet*, etc. These ought to be dipped in the oil of spiritual grace or mercy, and to be watered with the abundance of spiritual charisms. Hence it is said of Aser, Deut. 33:24–25: *Blessed be Aser with children, let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. His shoe shall be iron and brass. As the days of thy youth, so also shall thy old age be.* Or, the feet of the Church are the ministers of lower works, who while they exercise lower offices for necessary uses through extreme ministries as feet cling to the earth. But such are to be washed with butter as Job says, 29:6: *I washed my feet with butter*: because according to Gregory, with the voice of frequent admonition as with an infusion of fatness they ought to be watered, that if anything has

been torn by the roughness of the ways it may be healed.

Again, of these feet it is said, Apoc. 1:15: *And his feet like unto fine brass*: because as brass is likened to gold, so also they themselves, although from afar, strive to imitate the greater ones, and as much as they can to be assimilated to those who are signified by gold.

In the commendable honesty of stature or of steps. Of the stature of the mother the Son says to her, Cant. 7:7: *Thy stature is like to a palm tree*, etc. Stature, that is, the rectitude of good intention and the discretion of holy operation, is likened to a palm, that as the palm, that is, the triumphant tree of the Lord's cross, is terrible to malignant spirits, so the blessed Virgin by the merit of her rectitude may terrify and cast out malignant spirits. Of this stature or standing it is said, John 19:25: *There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother*. And it is well said, *stood*: because when all the Apostles wavered in faith at the time of the Lord's passion, she herself stood immobile in faith, since she was that earth of which it is said, Eccles. 1:4: *The earth standeth for ever.* (Look under the title on the earth.)

Or therefore he says: *Thy stature is like to a palm tree*: because as the sign of the cross which is designated by the palm is a special armor against the devil, so is the invocation of the name of the blessed Virgin which is Mary. Hence blessed Bernard: "They do not so fear," etc. (Look under the title on the name of Mary.)

Or thus: *Thy stature*, that is, thy right intention, and thy good operation directed toward heaven, *is like to a palm tree*: because it disdains to be bent to earthly things, and desires to be rewarded in heavenly things, and seeks only that prize which the Lord will someday give to the soul victorious over the vices: of which, Apoc. 2:17: *To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna*, etc.

Of the steps of the mother the Son says to her, Cant. 7:1: *How beautiful are thy steps in shoes, O prince's daughter!* These shoes are the testimonies of the holy fathers and their examples. Ezek. 16:10, the Son says to the mother: *I shod thee with violet coloured shoes: and I girded thee with fine linen*, etc. And because she was shod with violet, therefore her steps are said to be beautiful in shoes. For her feet, that is, thoughts and works, shone with the beauty of spiritual devotion and intention as feet in hyacinthine shoes. And because she was dyed with the fine linen of chastity and bound with the girdle of virginity which is twisted fine linen, therefore there follows: *The joints of thy thighs*, etc., where above.

Book VI: On the Titles of Mary

Chapter 1: Mary, Mother

(p. 320) 1. *Mother, friend, sister, dearest, daughter, spouse, Wife, or widow, good woman, virgin, virago, Princess, queen, and first, handmaid, minister.*

Mother. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:24: *I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope.* Some books have *of greatness*, that is, of fortitude.

Love is fair when it is natural, singular, and integral. Natural, when it is shown to him to whom it is due, that is, to God. Singular, when the faithful soul admits no lover besides him, as blessed Agnes said. Integral, when, according to Augustine, one loves with the whole heart, that is, with the whole intellect without error, with the whole soul, that is, with the whole will without contrariety, with the whole mind, that is, with the whole memory without forgetfulness. But although this cannot be fulfilled on the way, we know nevertheless to what we are bound. Or, integral, so that, according to blessed Bernard, one loves sweetly, lest one be enticed by any blandishments; strongly, lest one be broken by any adversities; wisely, lest one be seduced by any error; with remembrance, lest one forget the beloved. And the first love is fair, the second fairer, the third fairest.

And it is called *fair love* to distinguish it from a threefold foul love: worldly love, which is foul; carnal, which is fouler; malicious, which is foulest. The first is of vain glory and earthly substance, the second of gluttony and lust, the third of iniquity and wickedness, namely in hatred and anger. Of the first it is said, Jer. 2:5: *They have walked after vanity, and are become vain.* This of vain glory. Again, Lam. 4:5: *They that were brought up in scarlet have embraced the dung*, that is, temporal things. This of earthly substance. Of the second, Ecclus. 13:1: *He that toucheth pitch*, that is, gluttony that ensnares and lust that defiles, *shall be defiled with it.* Of the third a certain authority says on that of Ps. 51:5: *Thou hast loved malice more than goodness*, etc.: “He who loves malice does not forsake it.” Therefore such love is foulest and worst, etc.

And of fear: add, of fair fear. Fair indeed is that fear of God *(p. 321)* which neglects nothing (Eccles. 7:19). He has this fear who does nothing of what is to be omitted, and omits nothing of what is to be done. Again, who says nothing of what is to be kept silent, and keeps silent nothing of what is to be said. Again, who thinks nothing of what is not to be thought, or conversely. But worldly and human fear are foul fears. Servile fear, however, is fair, which, if it does not expel the sin that it finds, yet prevents sin from coming. Fairer is initial fear, of which it is said: *He that feareth God neglecteth nothing* (ibid.). Fairest is filial fear, of which: *The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever* (Ps. 18:10).

And of knowledge: supply, fair. Fair is the knowledge which is from faith and the knowledge of sacred Scripture; fairer that which is through revelation and prophetic understanding; fairest that which, from the very revelation of faith, has the presence and experience of the thing believed. And this will be in the fatherland, of which the Lord says, Luke 10:24: *Many prophets and kings have desired*, etc.

And of holy hope. Holy and fair is the hope that comes from faith and merits. Holier and fairer is that which is from revelation and the testimony of conscience, of which the Apostle says, 2 Cor. 1:12: *Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience.* Holiest and fairest is that which is through a security that cannot be lost, of which the Apostle says, Rom. 8:38–39: *I am sure that neither death, nor life*, etc., *shall be able to separate us from the love of God*, etc. These are the precious generations with which the glorious Virgin promises to fill those who pass over to her. Hence she says: *Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits* [literally, *my generations*] (Ecclus. 24:26). And all these are expounded in many other ways.

And note that love is for the acquiring of rewards; fear for the preserving of what has been acquired: because, as it is said, Ecclus. 1:17–18: *The fear of the Lord is the religiousness of knowledge. Religiousness shall keep*

and justify the heart, etc. Isa. 33:6: *The fear of the Lord is his treasure.* Knowledge is for the kindling of desire, that what we know we may desire the more. Hope, *which confoundeth not* (Rom. 5:5), is for confirmation. And these generations are those plants (*emissiones*) of which we read, Cant. 4:13, which proceed from her unceasingly and abundantly as streams from a fountain. (Look at the beginning, under the section on the enclosed garden.)

Otherwise: in that the blessed Virgin invites us to her generations, she admonishes us to the movements of contemplation according to its fourfold matter, namely, what is to be desired, what is to be fled, what is to be believed, what is to be hoped. God is to be desired, sin to be fled, hell to be feared, the heavenly fatherland to be hoped for. Love moves to seeking, fear to fleeing, knowledge to believing, hope to hoping. Of these four she calls herself the mother; namely of fair love, which she received from God the giver and brought forth into the light. Fair love is to love nothing beneath God. For in whatever way dung is touched, it stains: therefore she counted all things as dung, that she might gain Christ (Phil. 3:8).

For Abraham, Isaac, and the other saints, Sara and Rebecca and the other holy women of the Old Testament, had holy love, yet not fair with every kind of fairness: because their love was divided, and so not fair in every respect: because *he that toucheth pitch*, that is, temporal things through love, *shall be defiled with it* by some defilement. But the love of Mary was pure: because undivided, because she fully despised temporal things, and was in nothing defiled by them. Likewise she first vowed virginity: and therefore she is called the mother of fair love, which *(p. 322)* she discovered and brought forth into the light, as a mother the child whom she had conceived. For as she afterward conceived the Son of the Holy Spirit, so also she had first conceived of the Holy Spirit the purpose of virginity and poverty.

Again, she did not touch pitch, that is, the flesh, lest she be defiled by it (Ecclus. 13:1): but she lived in the flesh beyond the flesh, and in the world above the world. For she took *the wings of an eagle* (Isa. 40:31), that is, virginity and voluntary poverty, and flew *upon the wings of the winds*, that is, the Patriarchs and Prophets. For she is the woman to whom *were given two wings* (Apoc. 12:14), namely virginity and poverty, that she might flee from the face of the serpent who subjected the first woman to the curse. Gen. 3:16: *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth.* Therefore it was said to her, Luke 1:28: *Blessed art thou among women.*

She is also the mother of fear, teaching to flee what is to be fled: and she is the mother, because she brought this forth into the light, because she first declined not only sin, but also the occasions of sin. Which is clear from this, that, magnified through the conception of the Son of God, she humbled herself in the service of Elizabeth (Luke 1:40), fulfilling that of Ecclus. 3:20: *The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things.* Therefore she is called *the gate shut* (Ezek. 44:2), namely to the occasions of sins. Therefore, as it is said, Nah. 1:15, *Belial shall no more pass through her, he is utterly cut off*: because she crushed the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15), that is, even the beginning of temptation; signified by Jahel, who with the hammer of fear struck the head of Sisara (Judg. 4:21), and by Judith, who cut off the head of Holofernes (Judith 13:10).

And of knowledge, that is, of faith revealed, which revelation of faith was made by her and in her: because she gave the example of believing what is to be believed. Hence it was said to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed.* For she is the moon, by the example of faith illuminating the dark world. Hence, Cant. 6:9: *Fair as the moon.* And she is the star, by the example of faith leading the Magi to Christ (Matt. 2:9). She is also the dawn, ending the night of unbelief, and bringing in the day, that is, the light of faith. She is also the mother of *the Sun of justice* (Mal. 4:2), and the lamp of grace and of faith set upon the candlestick (Matt. 5:15). And therefore she is the mother of knowledge.

And of holy hope. Because by the example of her hope she taught what is to be hoped for. For she knew that *one thing is necessary* (Luke 10:42), and that first is to be sought *the kingdom of God* (Matt. 6:33). And for this reason she *asked one thing of the Lord* (Ps. 26:4). For this is the moon from which the feast day began (Ecclus. 43:7). The feast day is the day of eternity. For in her was the beginning of the feast day: because she

despised all earthly things, gaping after the things above. For this reason, by the example of her hope, she was to us a pillar of cloud by day, that is, in prosperity, and of fire in the night of adversity. She was also an example not only of hope, but of holy hope, that is, unmoved. For when the stars fell from heaven, that is, the disciples from the faith, and said: *But we hoped* (Luke 24:21), etc., she alone remained fixed in the firmament, that is, in Christ, who is the firmament dividing *the waters from the waters* (Gen. 1:6). For her lamp, that is, her faith, was not extinguished in the night of the Lord's passion. Or, she is called the mother of holy, that is, of firm, hope: because she gives the grace of persevering in good. Or, the mother of holy hope: because she is contrary to Eve, who hoped wrongly that she would become as God, and therefore died. But this mother is of holy hope: because by giving birth *(p. 323)* to life she revoked the sentence of death; signified by Esther (Esther 7:3 ff.), who revoked the sentence of death. Again, for this reason also she says in the same chapter: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Ecclus. 24:25). All hope: because the hope of every good. Good is twofold: that which is the end, namely life; and that which is toward the end, namely virtue. And she is the hope of life, because through her we hope to have life; and of virtue, that is, of constancy. As if she said: In me is all hope of having and continuing life. For in her is our hope, the hope namely of life, and of virtue through confidence of obtaining: because she is *the bow in the clouds* for a sign of justification (Gen. 9:13), because those justified through her ascend.

Otherwise: *In me is all hope.* For in her is all hope, both of the ancients and ours. Or, *all hope*: because hope is to be placed in no other than in Christ and Mary. For *cursed be the man that trusteth in man* (Jer. 17:5). Of having eternal life, and of the virtue of the way by which one fights against vices. Or, *all hope of life.* For before the nativity of blessed Mary death reigned in the world, which was brought in by our first parents, *who with their hands and words called it to them* (Wis. 1:16). But through Mary, who bore Christ, death was choked. Hence Christ says, Hos. 13:14: *O death, I will be thy death.*

Otherwise: Mary could truly say these words after she had conceived the Saviour. As if she said: In me, through the assumption of flesh, is he from whom is all hope of threefold life — the life of nature, the life of grace, the life of glory — and of virtue. Because he himself *giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not* (Isa. 40:29).

Or: *In me is the hope of all virtue*: because she had in herself every theological and cardinal virtue. Which virtues also she supplies by her prayers and examples to those who hope in her. We owe hope therefore to the blessed Virgin: because, as it is said, Prov. 29:25: *He that trusteth in the Lord*, that is, in Mary, who in Syriac is interpreted *Lady*, *shall be set on high*, that is, shall be lifted up: and this in the present and in the future. Shall be lifted up, that is, above the flesh, the world, and the devil through grace in the present; shall be lifted up through glory in the future.

3. Otherwise: *I am the mother of fair love*, etc. Note that she says four things which can and ought to be referred to the Son, who is fairest and to be loved supremely, alone to be feared, to be known with all zeal, and in whom alone hope is to be placed. She says therefore: *I am the mother of fair love*, that is, of Christ, who is fair. Hence, Heb. 1:3: *Who being the brightness of his glory*, etc., and this properly according to the divinity. And in Ps. 44:3: *Beautiful above the sons of men*, and not only above the sons of men, but also above thousands of Angels. For a certain one says that his beauty according to his humanity was as great as appeared in the transfiguration, but that he appeared despicable to men: which we do not say by way of asserting, but of reciting. Again, Wis. 7:26: *He is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror*, according to the deity. 1 Pet. 1:12: *On whom the Angels desire to look*: and whose beauty the sun and moon admire: and this as regards the divinity. Again, he is *beautiful above the sons of men*, and *white and ruddy*: this as regards the humanity.

4. *Of love.* Christ is emphatically called love (*dilectio*), as it were binding two (*duos ligans*), as regards the two natures, namely God and man, that is, man assumed by God into the unity of person when the Word was made flesh. For through the love which he had for the human race he bound human nature to himself:

because love is of the lover and *(p. 324)* of the thing loved, as it were a certain union, chiefly in good things: and naturally that which is loved converts its lover into its own nature. Through the love also which he has for us, he binds us to himself: because *he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit* with him (1 Cor. 6:17), namely by the unity of love and grace. Hence the Psalmist: *It is good for me to adhere to my God,* and so on (Ps. 72:28). Through the love also with which he loves man, he binds man himself to himself, and as it were glues him together, lest he flow away through vices and sins. For *the heart of a fool,* that is, of a sinner, is *like a broken vessel* (Ecclus. 21:17). Or also, *of fair love,* that is, of Christ, as was said above, who alone loves fairly, and from whom fair love is had: for he himself is charity (1 John 4:8). Therefore fair love: because charity is the form and the gilding or beauty of the virtues.

Or therefore Mary is called the mother of fair love: because she makes her lovers and friends like to Christ her Son, who is fairest, refashioning in them through grace the likeness of the Son which they had lost by sinning. Which appeared in Theophilus: for after he was reconciled to the Son, the mother mediating, having received the most holy communion, his face shone as the sun.

5. *And of fear,* that is, of Christ, who alone is to be feared. Hence he himself says, Matt. 10:28: *Fear ye not them that kill the body,* etc. Much less then are they to be feared who take away reputation, or temporal substance, or anything of this kind. *But rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.* Supremely also is it to be feared lest Christ be lost by sinning: for God is understood as fear. Wherefore the poet said: "Fear first made gods in the world." Of this fear, that is, of God, Jacob says to Laban, Gen. 31:42: *Unless the God of my father Abraham, and the fear of Isaac,* that is, the God of Isaac, *had stood by me,* etc. Ecclus. 32:22: *The stranger and the proud will not dread fear,* that is, God, says the Gloss, who is the fear and love of the faithful. Or, *will not dread fear,* that is, God threatening eternal punishments.

6. *And of knowledge.* For Christ is emphatically called knowledge: because he alone knows all things, and because he alone gives the grace of true knowledge: for God (*Deus*) is interpreted *seeing.* And *all things are naked and open to his eyes* (Heb. 4:13). For *his eyes are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men* (Ecclus. 23:28). (You had this authority excellently expounded under the title *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb*.)

But Christ is called knowledge (*agnitio*) from knowing (*agnoscendo*) in the active sense: because when Christ was sacrificed on the cross, he acknowledged his Father by obedience, his mother by care, his household by mercy. He acknowledged his Father by obedience, saying: *Father, not my will, but thine be done* (Luke 22:42). His mother by care, assigning her to John, when he said: *Woman, behold thy son* (John 19:26). His household by mercy, whose sins, that is, the punishment of sins, he mercifully bore *in his body upon the tree* (1 Pet. 2:24). And therefore he is called lamb (*agnus*) from knowing (*agnoscendo*), or from ἁγνός, which is *pious*. For as a lamb by its bleating alone knows its mother, and at once runs to her: so Christ, seeing his mother beside the cross, ran to her with the affection of pious compassion, and commended her to the disciple. Knowledge also in the passive sense: because the mother knew her crucified Son when all the Apostles fled, and persevered with him.

(p. 325) And of holy hope. For Christ is our hope. Hence, Ps. 70:5: *O Lord, my hope from my youth.* And he is a holy hope, that is, immovable and firm: because one must hope in him firmly and immovably. Hence, Ps. 61:9: *Trust in him, all ye congregation of people.* Again, Ps. 70:1: *In thee, O Lord, I have hoped, let me never be put to confusion.* Gen. 49:10: *He shall be the expectation of nations.* Hab. 2:3: *If it make any delay, wait for it,* namely through the long-suffering of hope: *for it shall surely come.* Coming in the first advent to confer virtue, which is toward the end; he will come in the second to confer eternal life, which is the end. Therefore he himself says: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Ecclus. 24:25).

Or, *all hope,* that is, the hope of every good, present through the conferring of grace, and future through the reward of glory: because *the Lord will give grace and glory* (Ps. 83:12). Or, *all hope,* of the ancients and of

the moderns. And well does he say *in me*: because *cursed be the man that trusteth in man* (Jer. 17:5), namely in himself, or in another.

Of eternal life, and of the virtue of the way by which one fights against vices. Therefore Christ is compared to the flower, without which there is no hope of fruit; nor without his grace is anything of good to be hoped for.

One must hope in Christ. Because he is most generous, *giving to all abundantly, and upbraideth not* (James 1:5). Hence, Esther 2:18: *Assuerus gave gifts according to princely magnificence.* Because he gives temporal things for the sustenance of the elect, and eternal things in reward; but to the reprobate he gives temporal things here in reward. Hence of them he says, Matt. 6:2: *Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.* Therefore it is said of him, Prov. 3:16: *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and glory.* Because he exhorts us to ask. Hence, Matt. 7:7: *Ask, and it shall be given you.* John 16:24: *Hitherto you have not asked anything*, etc. Because he gives more than is asked. Hence he said to the thief, who asked to be remembered when he came into his kingdom: *Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise* (Luke 23:43).

8. Otherwise: *I am the mother of fair love*, etc. These can be the words of the Virgin after she had conceived the Saviour, enumerating the benefits of her motherhood, enumerating her virtues by which she was made fit to bear the Saviour. She says therefore: *I am the mother of fair love.* Fair love is the charity of the Virgin, by which she loved God, which the contagion of sin did not stain.

And of fear, because in her it prepared a place for the Creator and the Holy Spirit, begetting humility in her when she was frightened at the excellence of the angelic salutation. Hence the Angel said to her: *Fear not, Mary*, etc. (Luke 1:30). And then was fulfilled in her that of Isa. 66:2: *To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?*

And of knowledge, in which faith is noted. For through faith, which is noted there: *Be it done to me*, etc., she conceived the Son of God, and knew by experience the things which she had previously believed. Hence it was said to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished*, etc.

And of holy hope, which it is clear she had when she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38). For unless she had believed and hoped that what was told her could be done and would be, she would not have answered so.

9. Again, the blessed Virgin is called the mother of grace. Mother, as it were having the principle of conception from another: because the Lord created *(p. 326)* in her the fullness of all spiritual good, which she as a mother brought forth into the light. Therefore she says: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49).

Therefore she herself also says: *In me is all grace* (Ecclus. 24:25), namely operating, co-operating, and consummating. And note that the letter is to be ordered thus: *In me is all grace of life*, or *of the way, and of truth*; and this *all* is diasyrmic [i.e. distributive], so that it can be said *all grace*, or *the grace of all life*, or *of every way*. Or, *all grace*, that is, all that makes one gracious. Or, *all grace*: because when Christ descended into the Virgin, all the fullness of charisms descended into her. *And of that fullness we all have received, and grace for grace* (John 1:16). For since upon Christ rested *the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding* (Isa. 11:2), and Christ rested in her, as he says of her: *This is my rest*, etc., *here will I dwell*, etc. (Ps. 131:14), it is clear that the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit rested in her, and filled her through and through. Isa. 66:2: *To whom shall I have respect*, that is, upon whom shall my Spirit rest, *but to him that is poor and little*, etc.

Of the way and of the truth, that is, of Christ, who is *the way and the truth* (John 14:6).

Or intransitively, *all grace*, which is life and truth. Or, all grace productive of life and truth. Or, all grace of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. And in this she briefly gathers all things, and shows that nothing good is lacking in her, either pertaining or necessary to this life or the future.

Or, *of the way and of the truth.* Another reading: *of the true*, namely of the way which leads to life, and of the truth which teaches that way.

Or morally: *All grace of life*, active and contemplative. Hence it is signified by Martha and Mary (cf. Luke 10:38 ff.). Read Anselm, how she fulfilled both lives in herself, in that homily: *Jesus entered into a certain town*, etc. Or, of the life of innocence and of penance, by which two the soul lives spiritually. Or, of a threefold life: for life is threefold, vegetative, sensitive, and rational. The vegetative life is that of those beginning to live through faith and charity: because they, as it were plants, live the life of grace and grow, but do not yet perceive spiritual things: because *the sensual man perceiveth not*, etc. (1 Cor. 2:14). Similarly, 1 Kings 3:7: *Samuel did not yet know the Lord.* The sensitive life is that of the proficient, who taste the gifts of God, but without discerning what those goods are. Gen. 49:14–15: *Issachar shall be a strong ass… he saw rest that it was good.* The rational life is that of the perfect, *who by custom have their senses exercised* (Heb. 5:14). Such was Jacob, Gen. 32:30, saying: *I have seen God face to face*, etc. All these graces Mary always had excellently.

And of truth. Truth is threefold, of heart, of mouth, and of work, against a threefold woe, which is vanity, falsity, simulation. But in her was the grace of all truth: because she had truth of heart without vanity, truth of mouth without falsity, truth of work without simulation.

10. Or according to that reading: *In me is all grace of the way.* And this *all* is diasyrmic. As if she said: In me is the grace of every way. For the way to salvation is threefold: virginal, conjugal, widowed. In the first is virginity with barrenness, in the second fruitfulness with corruption, in the third piety with solicitude for earthly things. But in this virgin was the grace of every way that leads to salvation: because she was a virgin without barrenness, fruitful without corruption, pious without solicitude for earthly things.

Or therefore she says: *In me is all grace of the way (p. 327) and of truth*, that she may show herself immune from the grace of death and of falsity, of which it is said, Prov. 31:30: *The image is deceitful, and beauty is vain* [the edition notes that the Vulgate has *Fallax gratia*, "favour is deceitful"]. Expound thus: *The image is deceitful*, that is, the glory of human praise: because no one attains what it promises: and *beauty is vain*, that of chastity without humility, or exterior beauty without interior, or that of the exterior work without right intention and the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom and the guardian of the virtues. Some books have: *Favour is deceitful*, by which we are in favor with the world. For it is nothing but a kind of betrayal, like the kiss of Judas, by which he betrayed the Son of man (Luke 22:47–48).

And note that certain persons have cavilled at this word: *Mary, mother of grace*, since the Trinity alone is the mother of grace. To these it can be said that the humanity of Christ, of which she is the mother, is called grace. Heb. 2:9: *That through the grace of God*, that is, the Son made man, *he might taste death for all.* And Christ is called grace, either because he gives gratis, or because he was given to us gratis by the Father. He says *for all*, because he was a sufficient price, although not an efficient one for all.

There follows in the authority: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Ecclus. 24:25). Peter Comestor: "For as through her we have received the grace of the life that now is, so through her we have the hope of the life that is to come, and we shall have the fruit of the glory that will endure for ever."

Again, Mary is the mother of life, namely of Christ, by whom all live; whom when she bore from herself, she in a certain way regenerated all who were to live from him. For although she carnally bore an only Son, yet in him she was made especially the mother of a great multitude of sons, of whom Christ is *the firstborn* (Rom. 8:29). Hence it was significantly said, Luke 2:7: *She brought forth her firstborn son.* For she is Anna,

who, previously barren as regards the purpose of virginity, in this manner bore very many. Therefore it is said, Ecclus. 36:14: *Israel*, that is, the faithful people contemplating God, *whom thou hast likened*, that is, united through faith, or made co-heir, *to thy firstborn*, that is, to Christ, who is *the firstborn of the dead*, that is, the resurrection, *and the prince of the kings of the earth* (Apoc. 1:5). For as Eve was called *the mother of all the living* (Gen. 3:20) in the life of nature, so Mary is the mother of all the living in the life of grace. For Eve is interpreted *life*, or *mother of the living*. She also was for this reason prefigured by Sara, who, although she carnally bore to Abraham only one son, to whom the Lord said, Gen. 21:12: *In Isaac shall thy seed be called*, yet was called the mother of the whole Israelite people. Hence, Isa. 51:2, it is said to the Jews: *Look unto Abraham your father, and to Sara that bore you.* So also Mary carnally bore only one true Isaac, that is, Christ, who is our laughter and our joy, etc., as above.

She is also the mother of life, but Eve was the mother of death: because through her the life which we had was taken from us, but through Mary it was restored. For Mary carried life, and opened to us the gate of life, and showed a new way to life by vowing virginity, and this by example. Hence there befits her what Micah says of the Son, 2:13: *He shall go up that shall open the way before them.* For her life was always in ascent, and where she reigns with the Son, she by her prayers brings sinners in.

Again, in another way, Mary is the right life through example, and her Son is the blessed life. Because as Christ was born of Mary, so from the right life through grace is born the blessed life through glory. For rectitude, justice, and merit go before; beatitude, glory, and reward follow, each to each.

(p. 328) 13. Again, Mary is our mother, whom her children ought to know, a certain natural piety of faith dictating to them, so that at the invocation of her name they first or most of all take refuge in all necessities and dangers, as little ones to their mother's bosom. And this mother has as it were two breasts, which we seek to suck when we say: *Nos culpis solutos*, etc. ["Loosed from our faults …"]. These are meekness of heart against pride, and purity of flesh against lust. Or, her breasts are mercy and prayer, with which she nourishes us, so that it may be said: *Cast thy care upon our Lady, and she shall sustain thee* (cf. Ps. 54:23).

Again, she is the mother of those rising from sin: otherwise, unless you have first risen from sin, you will never be able to glory in this mother. Prov. 31:28: *Her children rose up*, etc.

Chapter 2: Mary, Friend

Friend. Hence she is so often called in the Canticles *friend* (*amica*) and *beloved*: and this for many reasons.

And a friend (*amicus* or *amica*) is so called as it were a sharer of love (*amoris consors*), or as it were a guardian of the soul (*animi custos*). Or, according to Isidore, from *hamus*, that is, from the chain of charity: whence also hooks (*hami*) are so called, because they hold each other. Again, *amicus* from *a*, which is *without*, and *mene*, which is *defect*: for he alone is truly a friend who does not fail his friend in necessity.

Mary is the friend of Christ. Because she is loved by him with great zeal. Hence Christ says of her, Zech. 1:14: *I am zealous for Jerusalem and Sion with a great zeal*; namely Mary, designated by Jerusalem and Sion for many reasons. For she is for this cause designated by Esther, whom king Assuerus loved above all women. Therefore also it is said of her, Wis. 8:3: *The Lord of all things hath loved her.* But especially by reason of humility she is loved by the Lord. Hence in her figure Lia said, Gen. 29:32: *The Lord saw my affliction* [literally, *my humility*]: *now my husband will love me.*

Because she served not in fear, but in the bond of charity, seeking no other profit from her love than the Beloved himself. Hence she says, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me.* As if she said: He alone suffices me, I seek nothing else. Therefore also she says, Cant. 3:4: *I found him whom my soul loveth*, that is, my inmost will and affection: *I held him, and I will not let him go.* For this reason also she ought to be called a cordial friend: which well appeared in the passion of her only-begotten, when the sword of the Son pierced the soul of the

mother. For *he that is a friend loveth at all times* (Prov. 17:17), that is, both in prosperity and in adversity.

Because she was conscious of his secrets: which clearly appeared in the incarnation, when he revealed to her his counsel concerning the redemption of the human race before he revealed it to any *(p. 329)* of the blessed spirits, except Gabriel, as blessed Bernard says: namely, that Gabriel was of such excellence among his fellows that he was held worthy of such a name and such a message. Hence when Master Hugh of St Victor asked St Bernard on what ground he said this, he answered that each one abounds securely in his own sense, where what is thought does not run against either certain reason or manifest authority. For flesh and blood did not reveal to Mary the mystery kept secret from eternal ages, but the Father who is in heaven made his Son known to her through the Angel. This also appeared when the Angel announced to the blessed Virgin the conception of Elizabeth (Luke 1:36). For it was fitting that the Virgin should know through the Angel the Word soon to be divulged everywhere, before she heard it from man, lest the mother of the Lord should seem removed from the counsels of the Son, if she had remained meanwhile ignorant of the things being done so near. Gen. 18:17: *Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?* Amos 3:7: *The Lord God doth nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.* Much more to his mother, who is a great prophetess, as is clear in her canticle. Therefore also Eliseus [the print reads *Elias*] wonders, 4 Kings 4:27, that the Lord had hidden from him the death of his hostess's son. Therefore also the Lord says to the Apostles, John 15:15: *I will not now call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you.* Morally: if you wish to become a friend of God, reveal to him your counsels, that is, your sins. Hence, Ps. 36:5: *Commit* [literally, *reveal*] *thy way to the Lord, and trust in him, and he will do it,* that is, he will forgive your sins. Again, Prov. 16:3: *Lay open thy works to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be directed.*

Because she conformed her will to the divine will in all things. For in this conforming or conformity true friendship is most certainly proved. Hence Tully: "To will the same and not to will the same, that indeed is friendship." And this the blessed Virgin did with her whole heart when, understanding through the Angel that the Son of God wished to take flesh from her, she at once answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me,* etc. (Luke 1:38).

Because she fulfilled in all things the commands of her friend Christ: which is proper to lovers. Hence, John 15:14: *You are my friends, if you do,* etc. Likewise Christ himself fulfilled the commands and the will of his mother, when he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, *and was subject to them* (Luke 2:51).

Because she was a most faithful helper to her Son for the redemption of the world, when she wove for the Son of God from her virginal flesh the tunic which he offered on the cross to God the Father as a sacrifice for the salvation of all, *for an odour of sweetness.* Therefore it had been foretold, Gen. 2:18: *It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help.* For that literal Eve was not a help to her husband, but rather a destruction. (You will find this better in the tenth privilege of Mary, near the end of the chapter.)

Because neither in prosperity nor in adversity did she desert her Son, nor was she deserted by him: which is the sign of true friendship. Hence, Prov. 17:17: *He that is a friend loveth at all times,* that is, in adversity and prosperity, both in deed and in name. For true friendship is a joining of loving souls, not a continuation or contiguity, but a mixture, which does not suffer any of the things mixed to be touched without the whole being touched. Hence Tully: "To will the same," etc. True friendship also is contracted not only by words, but by deeds. Hence, 1 John 3:18: *My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth,* that is, in true deed. Again, true friendship is not fed by exterior benefits, but by love. Hence Tully: "This we call true friendship, *(p. 330)* whose whole fruit is in love." Therefore it is said, Ecclus. 6:7: *If thou possessest a friend, in temptation,* that is, in his adversity, *possess him.* As if he said: If you have any friend, do not abandon him in the time of his adversity. For so Mary did to Christ, and so she possessed him when he was in the last necessity: and neither friend nor female friend remained with him who did not somewhat withdraw from faith in him, except the Virgin alone. Hence the Son says to the Father: *Friend and neighbour*

thou hast put far from me (Ps. 87:19). Again: *Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me*, etc. (ibid., v. 9). But Mary alone truly believed, and she remained at the foot of the cross. Therefore he himself said in Ps. 140:10: *I am alone until I pass.* He says, Isa. 63:3: *I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me.* Certainly it is true, Lord, that there is not a man with thee, but one woman is with thee, who received in her heart all the wounds which thou didst receive in thy body. (Look for this under the title *The Lord is with thee*, about the middle of the chapter.) She was not deserted by the Son: because he then assigned her to the disciple to be kept, fulfilling what he had promised her: *I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee* (Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5).

Because she was proved in necessity. Hence, Prov. 17:17: *A brother is proved in distress.* The same can be said of a sister and a friend.

Because she honored her friend Christ in all things, attributing to him wholly whatever good she received from him. Hence she said: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49). As if she said: *By the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Cor. 15:10); and this was through humility: because God is honored by the humble alone (Ecclus. 3:21). She was also honored by him when, exalted above all the choirs of Angels, she sat down in glory at his right hand.

Chapter 3: Mary, Sister

Sister. Hence Christ says, Cant. 4:9: *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse.* (Look under the title on the beauty of Mary's eyes.) Again, Cant. 8:1, Mary, asking with great desire for the incarnation of the Son, says: *Who shall give thee to me for my brother* in human nature, a brother also in the teaching of the law? Which she expounds, adding: *sucking the breasts of my mother*, namely of the synagogue, or of the law, whose breasts Christ then sucked when he fulfilled in himself the sacraments of the law, or when he questioned the Doctors, who were the breasts of the synagogue (Luke 2:46). *Who*, I say, *shall give thee to me… that I may find thee without, and kiss thee.* She desires to find him alone, namely in the divine nature, in which he is alone, and has no human partnership. She desires to find him *without*, that she may not only know him in the prison of the flesh, but may find the immensity of the deity, which is enclosed by no limit, and contains and encloses all things. *(p. 331)* And she desires so to find him that she may kiss him, that is, that seeing him present as face to face, she may delight in his love.

Mary is the sister of Christ, who is the Son of God the Father by nature, and she is the special, nay most special, daughter of the same Father by grace: and so much the more special a sister of Christ, as they two are one blood and one flesh. Of whom, 1 Cor. 6:16: *They shall be two*, namely Christ and Mary, *in one flesh*, the virginal. Again, she is the sister of Christ through the most chaste, sincere, and most fervent love which is wont to be between brother and sister. Hence he himself says, Zech. 1:14: *I am zealous for Jerusalem*, etc., as above concerning the friend. Again, sister: because she is his co-heir and shares with him the kingdom of the Father, *heir of God and joint heir with Christ* (Rom. 8:17). Therefore she is his sister, conformed and connatural to him through identity of nature, and a co-sharer of the eternal inheritance.

She is also supremely loved by him: because *no man ever hated his own flesh* (Eph. 5:29). Like is known by its like, and loved by it: because *birds resort unto their like* (Ecclus. 27:10). Likewise, Ecclus. 13:19: *Every beast loveth its like*, etc. And the purer Mary is in nature and the more like to Christ in manners and virtues, the more is she loved by him as a spiritual sister.

She is also the sister of the Christian people by nature, which is the highest glory for the Christian people itself, if there were anyone to take note of it: namely, to have as sister the queen of Angels and of men; nay, what is more, to have as sister the spouse of the Father, the mother of the Son, and the friend of the Holy Spirit, the queen also of the heavenly kingdom, where she has full power of bringing in whomever she will, of commanding whatever she will, of obtaining whatever she asks of the Son. Therefore she can truly say

with the Son, Matt. 28:18: *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.* Therefore also she says, Ecclus. 24:15: *And my power was in Jerusalem.*

She is the sister of the companions of Christ, that is, of the Angels, or of the Patriarchs and Prophets, who say of her, Cant. 8:8: *Our sister is little, and hath no breasts.* (You will find this under the title on the beauty of Mary, where the breasts of the mother are treated.)

She is the sister of the holy Angels through virginity, charity, and humility, and especially on account of the integrity of celibacy. Therefore they say, Cant. 8:8: *What shall we do to our sister in the day when she is to be spoken to?* etc. (Look under the title on the breasts of Mary.)

Chapter 4: Mary, Dearest

Dearest. Hence the Spouse says to her, Cant. 7:6: *How beautiful art thou, and how comely, my dearest, in delights!* In that it is asked twice how beautiful she is and how comely, and the name of beauty is doubled, it is designated that she is wonderfully, inestimably, and immeasurably beautiful and comely.

Again, she is called beautiful in faith, comely in good operation. Or, beautiful in the virtues, *(p. 332)* which illuminate and adorn the spirit, comely in the virtues which grace and purify the flesh, dearest to her spouse in the delights of spiritual charisms.

Or a comparison can be made, so that it may be said that she was made dear to the whole Trinity when she was sanctified in the womb; dearer, when she was made pregnant with the Only-begotten of God; dearest, when in the assumption she was brought into the bridal chamber of the spouse, and crowned with the glory of immortality.

Or, *dearest*: because she was redeemed by the blood of her Only-begotten, and most dearly loved by him. Or therefore she is called *dearest in delights*, because, like a delicate woman who loathes coarse and common foods and can taste nothing but certain spiritual things, so she too, rejecting whatever is bitter or harmful to the soul, gave herself only to supercelestial delights, which are so eaten that they are always hungered for, and so satisfy that they always take away loathing. And this is *food better than food* (Ecclus. 36:20), namely the Son of God, who says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger*, etc. (Ecclus. 24:29). For this reason she says of the Son, who is manna *having in it all that is delicious* (Wis. 16:20): *My beloved to me* (Cant. 2:16). As if she said: I care for no other delights, etc.

Again, *dearest in delights* is that soul which as it were loathes certain goods in order to pass over to better ones, as an authority says on that of Ps. 83:8: *The saints shall go from virtue to virtue.* One must not always insist on one virtue, but go from virtue to virtue, until the God of gods be seen in Sion.

Chapter 5: Mary, Daughter

Daughter, whom the Holy Spirit instructs in Ps. 44:11: *Hearken, O daughter, and see.* Hear as a scholar, you who are engaged in the school of the Holy Spirit, whose school is of faith and of morals and of good works. Hear, that you may be able to believe the things which are to be told you by the Angel: because *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17). Hear, that is, give audience in your heart through silence to the Word of God, your spouse. Ecclus. 32:9: *Hear in silence, and for thy reverence good grace shall come to thee.*

Daughter, on account of the fatherly solicitude for you. Ecclus. 42:9: *The father waketh for the daughter* [literally, *the daughter of the father is hidden*]. This is Mary, whom the Angel found shut in her chamber.

Daughter, on account of the guarding of your father's nobility, lest you degenerate from it. Cant. 7:1: *How beautiful are thy steps in shoes, O prince's daughter*, that is, of Christ according to the deity, who is *the prince of the kings of the earth* (Apoc. 1:5).

Daughter through imitation of the Father. Ruth 3:10: *Blessed art thou, my daughter,* etc. *And see* your frailty according to human nature, that you may humble yourself in your own eyes and exalt God. Cant. 1:7: *If thou know not thyself, O fairest,* etc.

And incline thy ear (Ps. 44:11–12), that you may humbly *(p. 333)* obey the divine will, and not presume of yourself. *And forget thy people and thy father's house. And the king,* that is, Christ, *shall greatly desire thy beauty,* especially the spiritual beauty which consists in the virtues. But Mary, taught by the Holy Spirit, heard the heavenly messenger and believed: because *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17). And she saw and understood. She inclined her ear to obedience, and her heart to discipline. She forgot her people and her father's house: because she cared neither to increase her people by the multiplication of offspring, nor to leave an heir to her father's house. But whatever of honor she could have had among the people, whatever of earthly goods from her father's house, she counted all as dung, that she might gain Christ (Phil. 3:8). Nor did her intention deceive her: because she both claimed Christ as Son for herself, and did not violate her purpose of chastity. And therefore *full of grace*: because she both did not lose the grace of virginity, and moreover acquired the glory of fruitfulness. And in these things chiefly consists the beauty of which there follows: *And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty,* comely with every beauty of the virtues: because *thou art all fair, and there is not a spot in thee* (Cant. 4:7). For Mary was signified by Ruth, who left her people and her father's house for the sake of Noemi, which is interpreted *beautiful,* that is, for the love of spiritual beauty: and therefore Booz, that is, Christ, desired her, etc.

Otherwise: *Hearken* to the salutation of Gabriel, *O daughter* of God, that is, O thou blessed Virgin. *And see* the Scriptures of the prophets, and compare them, since they are fulfilled in thee. *And incline thy ear,* that through the mediation of obedience thou mayest conceive the Son of God by faith in what is said: for *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17). *And forget thy people,* that is, care not for the blasphemies of the Jews, *and thy father's house*: which she also did; to signify which her father is not named in the genealogy (Matt. 1:16). Or, the people of carnal desires, *and thy father's house,* namely of Moses, that is, the ceremonies of the law. *And the king,* that is, Christ, *shall greatly desire thy beauty,* as above.

And note that after he said: *Forget thy people,* he adds: *And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty*; namely, if you live in the manner of a pilgrim, you will be loved by the Lord: because *the Lord loveth the stranger* (Deut. 10:18). And because she did this, therefore she says, Cant. 1:5: *I am brown, because the sun hath altered my colour.* As if she said: The sun has darkened me, because I am a pilgrim. Num. 12:1: Moses took an Ethiopian wife. And therefore you ought to forget your people for Christ, since *he is the Lord thy God*: Lord by governance, God by creation, thine by sonship. Nor is it a great thing if you leave your people, and submit yourself to him, since he for love of you left his heaven, and gave his whole self to you. Jer. 12:7: *I have forsaken my house,* etc. He is God, who so humbles himself toward you; which is noted by what is added: *And they shall adore him,* namely all the faithful, since in his name every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, etc.

Again, in Ps. 44:14: *All the glory of the king's daughter is within, in golden borders,* etc. Mary is the daughter of king David according to the flesh: because Mary is *of royal descent* (*regali ex progenie*). Daughter of the supreme King, that is, of God the Father, through creation and grace. Whose glory is that she is the hostess and the dining-hall of the whole Trinity. Whose glory is the testimony of a good conscience. Whose glory is all within, when she carried Christ in her womb, who says of her, Zech. 2:5: *I will be in glory in the midst thereof.* Whose glory is that she had within her the teacher of the Angels teaching her. Whose glory is that she kept all the words of the shepherds, of the Magi, and of Simeon in her heart. Whose glory is within, that is, in a pure conscience. Hence it is so often said of her: *Besides that (p. 334) which is most beautiful and lieth hid within* (Cant. 4:1 and 3). There the Gloss: "If she sought glory without, she would not have within the glory which the king would desire." *Within*: because as a prudent virgin she had oil, that is, the brightness of a good conscience or of piety and mercy, in a threefold vessel, namely of heart, mouth, and

work, with the lamp of most entire virginity. Or, *within*, that is, in conscience, not in vain things. *Within*: for outwardly she was reputed corrupted, but she had joy within over her incorruption. Hence she says, Cant. 1:5: *Do not consider me that I am brown*, that is, that I am reputed corrupted: *because the sun*, namely of justice, *hath altered my colour.* In the same place, v. 4: *I am black* outwardly, because I am reputed corrupted, *but beautiful* inwardly, because a most pure virgin. Therefore when she is commended in the Canticles it is so often repeated: *Besides what is hid within, and besides that which lieth hid within* (ibid.).

And this glory within is *in golden borders.* The golden borders are the works of the humanity of Christ, in which his pure charity shines, which is designated by gold. And because he did all things humbly, they are compared to borders, which are the last and least part of a garment. And these works especially increase the glory of the Virgin his mother. Or, the border, which is the last and least part of a garment and is counted as it were for nothing, is humility, which always seeks the last place, not presuming of itself. In which humility, golden through charity and through preciousness and through obedience and through virginity — because all these are signified in gold — the Virgin will glory, saying: *Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed* (Luke 1:48). Therefore the glory of the king's daughter is within, where God sees; in golden borders is the glory of Mary in golden humility. Or, the border, the last part of the garment, is the perseverance of the Virgin in golden charity: which appeared in the passion, when she stood perseveringly beside the cross of her Son, wounded with charity.

Morally: *All the glory of the king's daughter*, that is, of the faithful soul, who is the daughter of God by creation, formation, and re-creation, ought to be within, where God sees, that is, before the Lord, not from without; against hypocrites, who are signified by Herod, who is interpreted *glory of the skin*, or *glorious in skins*, that is, in the exterior things of the world.

Mary was the daughter of Babylon when she was born in the womb, because we are all born *children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3): but we by both nativities, in the womb and from the womb. She, however, only in the nativity in the womb: because she was conceived with original sin, but soon after sanctified, she came forth wholly pure. Num. 24:17: *A star shall rise*, etc. And this is one reason why she was prefigured by Esther, who was brought from Babylon to king Assuerus, as Josue [*sic*] and the Master in the *Histories* say.

Daughter of the King, that is, of God the Father, in her sanctification and her nativity from the womb. Hence it is then sung: *Regali ex progenie Maria* ["Mary of royal descent"]: because she is the daughter of the grace of God; which is signified in this, that she was the daughter of Anna, which is interpreted *grace.* For the grace of God makes kings and queens. Daughter of Sion in the conception of the Saviour. Sion is a mirror, which gives back to one who looks into it his own image. And she is the mirror without spot, into which faithful souls ought continually to look as with a double eye, namely of faith and of love: and she was then the daughter of Sion when she was made the mother of the Saviour, who reformed in us his image, deformed through the old Adam. Therefore it is said to her, Zech. 2:10–11: *Sing praise, and rejoice, O daughter of Sion: for behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall be my people, and I will dwell in the midst of thee: and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me to thee.* And *(p. 335)* these are the words of the Son to the Virgin, wishing to take flesh from her.

Daughter of Juda. Juda is interpreted *praising, confessing, and glorifying.* She was therefore the daughter of Juda when she praised and glorified God for the benefits received, saying: *My soul doth magnify*, etc. And when she confessed that whatever good she had received was from him, saying: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me*, etc. (Luke 1:49).

Daughter of Tyre, which is interpreted *distress*, in the passion of her Son, when the sword of the Son pierced her soul, and she could truly say with Susanna, Dan. 13:22: *I am straitened on every side*, etc.

Daughter of Jerusalem in the assumption, when she was translated to the vision of eternal peace.

Morally this is said to the faithful soul, and especially to a religious person. *O daughter* through faith, as was expounded above of Mary. *Hearken*, not to the tongue of the flesh, which suggests delightful things, or of the world, which suggests vain things, or of the devil, which suggests wicked things. Blessed Bernard: "Happy the soul that does not hearken to these tongues, namely by consent, though it may hear them by suggestion: but that soul is much happier, if indeed there is any, to which they do not speak at all." Ecclus. 28:28: *Hedge in thy ears with thorns*, that is, fortify your hearing with the goads of the fear of God, *and hear not a wicked tongue*: wicked (*nequam*) from killing (*necando*), that is, which kills souls. For from unlawful hearing, when Eve heard the hissing of the serpent in paradise, the damnation of the whole world sprang up. It is said therefore to the faithful soul: Hear the word of God, because *blessed are they who hear the word of God* (Luke 11:28). Daughter, through the recollection of your own infirmity, etc., as above. *And see* the examples of the saints. Heb. 13:7: *Considering the end of whose conversation, follow their faith.* And thus admonished by words and instructed by examples, *incline thy ear*, that you may humbly obey the divine will. And because the love of the world and of carnal parents draws many back from the service of God, he adds: *And forget thy people and thy father's house.* Gregory: "We ought to acknowledge the bond of earthly kinship, but, if it hinders our course, to ignore it."

But in this verse many things are noted which befit religious. First, obedience. Hence: *Hearken.* Second, faith, through which we are made daughters. Hence: *Daughter.* Or, hope, because those who hope in God serve for eternal things. Or, charity: because it belongs to daughters and sons to love their fathers.

Again, note that the Psalmist, wishing to praise this daughter for her beauty, first invites her to faith, which brings in beauty; and therefore he begins from hearing, from which is faith (Rom. 10:17).

See through circumspection: behold prudence. See in eight directions: above, the rewards; below, the torments; within, the dignity of the soul; without, the vileness of the body; behind, the past life; before, the pressing of temptations; to the right, the deceitfulness of worldly prosperity; to the left, the usefulness of present adversity.

Otherwise: *Hearken* to the canonical hours, sermons, and conferences, precepts and prohibitions, the counsels of prelates, the prayers of the poor, the sacred readings, the divine inspirations. Hence: *I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me* (Ps. 84:9). *See* books, that you may attend to reading. *See* the cross, that the memory of the Crucified may be imprinted on your heart. *And forget not the kindness of thy surety* (Ecclus. 29:20). Lam. 1:12: *O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.* For this reason lamps burn by night before the Crucifix. *See* the examples of the saints. Heb. 13:7: *Considering*, etc. *See* your conscience. Jer. 2:23: *See thy ways in the valley, know what thou hast done. See* the judgment of God. Dan. 7:9: *I beheld (p. 336) till thrones were placed. See* the rewards of the just and the punishments of the reprobate. Isa. 66:24: *And they shall go out, and see*, etc.

And incline to the poor *thy ear*. Ecclus. 4:8: *Bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor.* Or, *incline*, that whatever good you hear, you may hear humbly. *And forget thy people.* The heart of man is as a city full of a people of thoughts, often tumultuous, quarrelsome, contentious. *And thy father's house*: the cohabitation and company of sinners, who are the house of your father, namely of the ancient devil. Hence, John 8:44: *You are of your father the devil.* But to such the Lord gives power to become the sons of God, when they are willing to leave sins and the company of sinners. *And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty*, as above concerning Mary. Of which beauty, Cant. 2:14: *Shew me thy face*, as far as *comely.* And this is no small thing, since he himself is the Lord — not the devil is Lord, not an earthly one — but God by creation, thine by re-creation; and not only thine, nay, of all. Hence, Ps. 44:12: *And they shall adore him*, all things that are. Phil. 2:10: *That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.*

Otherwise: *Hearken, O daughter*: he says this in the person of the Prophets and Apostles, and says four things to her: hearken, see, incline, forget. From these four comes spiritual beauty. Hence he adds: *And the*

king shall greatly desire thy beauty.

Hearken. James 1:19: *Let every man be swift to hear*, etc. *See*, that is, believe and understand: because *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17). *Incline thy ear*, that is, obey with humility. This is the way of coming to God. Isa. 55:3: *Incline your ear and come to me: hear, and your soul shall live.* So is wisdom received. Ecclus. 51:21: *I bowed down my ear a little, and received her. And forget thy people*, namely of Babylon, that is, the assembly of the wicked, *and thy father's house*, of the devil, says the Gloss: literally also he teaches his own to leave their kin for God, and to go out of their father's house. Hence, Gen. 12:1: *Go forth out of thy country*, etc. And if you do these four things, the king, that is, Christ, *shall greatly desire thy beauty.*

Expound each well: *beauty* (*decorem*), that is, the comeliness of the heart, which consists in the four things aforesaid. Therefore he did not say *form* or *fairness*, but *comeliness.* Give the reason: because interior comeliness pleases God more than exterior.

And he says three things of this king, to note how great a thing it is to be desired by him. First, that he is the Lord. For it is a great thing for a good handmaid if her Lord, being very noble, takes her as wife. He is also, what is more, God in essence. And also, what is greater still, he will become wholly yours, to do whatever pleases you. Fourth, that he is so great that men and Angels adore him with *latria.* Hence there follows: *And they shall adore him*, etc. (Ps. 44:12).

Chapter 6: Mary, Spouse

(p. 337) Spouse. Hence Mary says through the Psalmist, Ps. 17:17: *He sent from on high* the little joys of charisms and graces through Gabriel the groomsman, when he said to me: *Hail, full of grace* (Luke 1:28). *And he took me*, namely as spouse. The Church also is called the spouse of Christ: because she is joined to the heavenly spouse by spiritual love. She is also called wife: because through his grace she is made fruitful for the procreation of many spiritual children.

Again, it is said to Mary the spouse, Cant. 4:8: *Come from Libanus, my spouse*, etc. And Mary is called the spouse of Christ by a certain likeness. For he who wishes to take a spouse first chooses one who pleases him. Therefore it is sung of Mary: "God chose her, and chose her beforehand." And he said to her: "Thou alone pleasest me." The Church also sings: "Alone without example thou didst please the Lord," that is, Christ. Second, the spouse is adorned and cleansed: which was done in the sanctification, when she was cleansed from original sin and adorned with the gifts of the Holy Spirit: and then the king desired her beauty. Third, she was joined to Christ by words of the present, when she answered the Angel: *Be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38). Fourth, namely in the assumption, she was brought into the bridal chamber of the spouse. She was therefore chosen in predestination, cleansed and adorned in sanctification, joined to Christ in his conception, taken up to the bridal chamber in the assumption.

Otherwise: Mary is the spouse of the Son: because in marriage gifts are wont to be made. For the wife gives something to the husband on account of the marriage, and the husband dowers the wife. For Mary gave to Christ flesh from her flesh, in which he suffered. Hence also in the passion he said to her: *Woman, behold thy son* (John 19:26). But he gave her as it were a double dowry: grace first, whence she was called *full of grace*; and at length glory on high, because *the Lord will give grace and glory* (Ps. 83:12). For this reason, in the figure of Mary, Lia said, Gen. 30:20: *God hath endowed me with a good dowry.* Therefore it had been foretold of her, Prov. 11:16: *A gracious woman shall find glory.*

Of this marriage certain persons expound that word of Adam, Gen. 2:24, after he awoke from ecstasy or sleep, in which he had foreseen the fall of the human race and the manner of its repair. Hence, awaking, he prophesied, saying: *Wherefore*, namely for the repairing of the fall of the human race, God made man, or the Son about to take flesh, *shall leave father*, coming into the world, because he went forth from the Father; *and*

mother, that is, the synagogue, from which he was born according to the flesh; *and shall cleave to his wife*, namely the Church of the Gentiles, or *to his wife*, that is, Mary: and in this sacrament that new and wonderful thing shall come to pass, namely that *they shall be two in one flesh*, that is, mother and Son, Virgin and Christ; whereas according to the due course of nature three are wont to be in one *(p. 338)* flesh, namely father and mother and son. To this point is what the blessed Virgin herself says, Cant. 6:2: *I to my beloved*, without father singular and only: *and my beloved to me*, he is singularly the only Son.

Otherwise: *Wherefore*, as was expounded above, *a man shall leave father and mother*. The Son of God as it were left his Father when he descended from his bosom to the earth, and received himself into the bosom of the Virgin, whence he assumed the man whom he would give for his spouse. He as it were left his mother also when, as it were casting aside the affection of his mother, he gave on the cross for the Church the body which he had assumed from her. Which Church, namely, he so united to himself that he is the head, and she is the body. Which was figured when, as it were disregarding his mother, he said to her of John: *Woman, behold thy son* (John 19:26).

And note that the Son calls his mother sister and spouse, Cant. 4:9: *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse*, etc. (Look under the title on the beauty of Mary's eyes.) Sister on account of the fellowship of human nature. Spouse on account of the unshaken constancy of faith. For when in the time of the passion the faith of the Apostles was shaken and wavered, she, as a faithful spouse, clung constantly to her spouse without wavering of faith. She also, as a spouse more familiar with her spouse, obtains a greater portion in the goods of the spouse. In her fidelity the spouse greatly trusts, as it is said, Prov. 31:11: *The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils.* Because whomever she frees from the devil by her prayers, merits, and examples, she adds and assigns to the dominion of her spouse. Again, because as whatever spouse and bride have is common to both, so whatever the son has, the mother has, and conversely. Hence the Son seems to say to her that of John 17:10: *All my things are thine.* And she to the Son, Luke 15:31: *Son, all I have is thine.* Yet in one way and in another: because the son does not have all from the mother, but the mother has all from the son.

4. But how greatly the heavenly spouse desired this spouse is shown, Ecclus. 36:24, where it is said: *The beauty of a woman cheereth the countenance of her husband, and a man desireth nothing more* [literally, *above every desire of man she brings in longing*]. For the beauty of a woman humbles a powerful man, softens a severe and austere one. And the Lord so desired and chose the beauty of this woman, that she so far drew on his desire, that the Almighty was humbled to our infirmity, and he who is the life of the living was softened to love. Again, of this spouse it says, Ecclus. 36:25: *Her husband is not according to the children of men.* And a little after, v. 26: *A help like to himself, and a pillar of rest.*

5. And see how this spouse is opposed to the first spouse. The first, namely Eve, was formed from the rib of her husband; and from the flesh of this one her husband was formed. Which he asked, Ecclus. 36:6: *Renew thy signs, and work new miracles.* It was a wonder to form woman from the rib of man. The changing of wonders is that from the flesh of a woman alone a man was formed. But when the flesh of the woman was formed from the bone of the man, it was a sign that through woman human nature would be weakened. But the renewal of signs was made when from the flesh of a woman a man was made; by which it was signified that through this renewal human nature would return from infirmity to firmness. Hence also it is to be noted that the first spouse was made as a help to the man, the Lord saying: *It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself* (Gen. 2:18). But woman is a weak help to man. Here, however, it is said: *Her husband is not according to the children of men* (Ecclus. 36:25): because he is not *(p. 339)* the son of men, that is, of father and mother, but the son of man only, that is, having a mother alone, and therefore excelling all men in dignity. And *a help* of the spouse is said to be *like to him*, namely according to the spouse, who is the help of the spouse, and a pillar and firmament and rest: and such a help is Mary, because the spouse wishes to help no one who is not at once helped by the spouse: and through this she is to us a help,

a firmament, a pillar, and a rest, etc.

6. It is to be noted that many betrothals of Mary are assigned in the Glosses, and some are literal and some mystical.

The first Bede gives: that she was therefore betrothed to Joseph, that through him the origin of Mary might be traced, since they were of the same tribe: nor was it the custom of the Scriptures that the names of women should be traced in genealogies. And John Damascene supplies here (*De fide orthodoxa* IV, 15), who says that Mary descended from David through Mathan. For he says that Mathan begot Panther, and he begot Barpanther, and he begot Joachim, the father of Mary. And in this those heretics are confounded who said that she had neither father nor mother, but angelic flesh: and this perhaps they took from the fact that her genealogy is not traced, but only that of Joseph. For the Angel would not have said, Luke 1:36, that Elizabeth was Mary's kinswoman, unless she were her kinswoman on her father's side or on her mother's side.

The second cause: lest she be stoned as an adulteress, if, not having a husband, she were seen to have a child. For she was of priestly stock, and it was commanded, Lev. 21:9, that the daughter of a priest caught in adultery or fornication should be punished with death.

The third: lest the infamy of a violated virgin be imputed. For the Lord did not wish the credibility of his birth to be established by injuries to his mother. For *the saints must have a good testimony of them who are without* (cf. 1 Tim. 3:7). Nor ought a veil of excuse to be left to virgins living with a sinister reputation, in that the mother of the Lord also seemed defamed. Finally, what could they have ascribed to the Jews, what to Herod, if they seemed to have persecuted one born of adultery? And how would he say: *I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil* (Matt. 5:17), if he seemed to have begun from an injury to the law, since the childbearing of an unmarried woman is condemned by the law? Moreover, a husband is brought in as a richer witness of her modesty, who could wipe out the injury and avenge the reproach, if the sacrament were not known.

The fourth cause is that she might have the solace of a husband, going and returning in Egypt, as Origen says.

The fifth: that greater faith is given to the words of Mary, and the cause of a lie is taken away. For an unmarried pregnant woman would seem to have wished to cloak a fault with a lie. But a betrothed woman had no cause for lying, since the reward of marriage and the grace of nuptials is the childbearing of women.

The sixth cause, which Ignatius gives, is that the prince of the world, seeing her betrothed, could not hold her childbearing suspect: for it was the Lord's counsel to deceive him, and so he deceived him. Hence the Apostles are bidden to keep silence about Christ, the healed about their cure, and the demons about the Son of God. Mary therefore is said to be betrothed to a man, that she might seem to be without share in marital fellowship. Nor let it move anyone that she is called his wife by Matthew. For not the taking away of virginity, but the celebration of the nuptials is declared. Nor yet that which Matthew says, 1:25: *Joseph knew her not till she brought forth her son.* For as it is said in Isaiah: *Even to your old age I am the same* [literally, *until you grow old, I am*] (Isa. 46:4). Did Christ cease to be after their old age? He who states a cause thinks it enough to say what pertains to the cause; he does not require superfluity. For it is enough for him to establish the cause taken up, and to put off the incidental one. And therefore he who had taken up the incorrupt mystery of the incarnation, *(p. 340)* did not think the testimony of Mary's virginity should be pursued more fully, lest he be believed a defender rather than an asserter of the mystery. And note that this clause is to be understood thus: *He knew her not till she brought forth her son* (Matt. 1:25): not that he knew her afterward; but this *till* is put for *and.* As if he said: He did not know her, and so she brought forth. Or, *till* is put for the eternal, as there: *Until I make thy enemies thy footstool* (Ps. 109:1). Or, *till* is put for *never*, as there: *The raven did not return to the ark till the waters were dried up upon the earth* (Gen. 8:7), that is, it never returned. Others gloss thus: *Till she brought forth*, that is, neither before nor after.

The seventh cause is mystical: that the betrothed virgin is a type of the Church, which as a virgin conceives us of the Spirit, and as a virgin brings us forth without groaning. And therefore perhaps blessed Mary, married to one, was filled by another. Because both the individual churches are filled with the Spirit and anointed with grace, and yet for the hope of the work they are joined to a priest, as Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Hence in certain churches on the vigil of Christmas the priests perform the whole office of the hours in the type of Joseph.

The eighth cause can be that, through Christ being born of a Virgin and a betrothed woman, both states might be approved, and the hope of salvation be given to both; against the heretics who say that there is no salvation in marriage.

The ninth cause is that which Chrysostom gives. Because it was to come about that all the saints should be born of the Church, a virgin, Christ was born of one betrothed and a virgin, lest the Lord should be born less worthily than the servants.

And note that this marriage had three goods, namely faith, offspring, and sacrament: precious faith, most excellent offspring, most sacred sacrament. For the marriage of Mary and Joseph signified that marriage which was enacted in the bridal chamber of the Virgin, namely of the human nature and the divine. And as Joseph did not violate the blessed Virgin, so neither did the human nature corrupt the divine: nay, as Joseph profited from Mary, so the human nature from the divine.

7. Again, Mary is the spouse of the Son. Hence, Cant. 3:11: *Go forth and see, ye daughters of Sion,* as far as *in the day of his espousals.* The day of espousals was for Christ the day of his conception, or of his nativity according to the flesh. For in the virginal womb human nature was wedded to him, as Augustine says. Hence it is said in Ps. 18:6: *And he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber.* It can also be understood as the day of the espousals of the blessed Virgin herself: and to this tends a certain little gloss there on Matt. 1:18: *When she was espoused,* she conceived at the Angel's announcement. Or, because he then spiritually espoused her to himself, when he associated himself with her by so great a grace that from her flesh he took to himself the most sacred flesh.

Chapter 7: Mary, Wife

(p. 341) Wife, prefigured in Gen. 3:20, where it is read: *Adam called the name of his wife Eve: because she was the mother of all the living.* Apoc. 19:7: *The marriage of the Lamb is come,* that is, the time of taking flesh. *And his wife hath prepared herself,* that is, rendered herself fit, that he might take flesh from her. She prepared herself, I say, through freedom of choice. But because this does not suffice without the help of grace, he adds, v. 8: *And it is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen,* that is, with chastity, *glittering* to others by example, *and white* as regards herself; and this especially when she vowed virginity. Isa. 35:2: *The glory of Libanus,* that is, the whiteness of virginity, *the beauty of Carmel,* that is, good exterior conversation. Therefore it is said of Mary, Ecclus. 6:31: *For the beauty of life is in her,* etc. This wife was prefigured, Judg. 5:24, where it is read in the figure of Mary: *Blessed among women be Jahel, the wife of Haber the Cinite,* etc.

Blessed Mary is called the wife of Christ: for if every soul is spiritually the wife of God, she is especially called wife on whom he conferred more graces. But in the contract of marriage the custom is that the wife gives something to the husband on account of the marriage, and the husband dowers the wife. What the blessed Virgin gave to Christ on account of the marriage is signified in the naming of the spouse, when it is said: *Haber the Cinite.* Haber is interpreted *wounded,* or *bruised*; Cinite, *mourning.* For Christ took in the Virgin, and she gave him by her consent, the nature in which he was wounded, and made livid, and mourning: for he mourned for our sins, as it is said, Heb. 5:7, that he might give for us not only the blood of the flesh, but also the tears of the soul. For as from wounded flesh blood flows, so from his soul, wounded

through compassion, tears flowed. And because the kind of sin is twofold, namely open, which is called a wound, and hidden, which is called a bruise, he bore for us wounds and bruises. Isa. 53:5: *He was wounded for our iniquities, and by his bruises we are healed.* But the Lord as it were dowered the Virgin twice, first with grace, second with glory, as was said above concerning the spouse. (Of this Jahel you will find at the end of the first section on the garden, where the garden is called enclosed.)

Again, of this wife it is said to Christ in Ps. 127:3: *Thy wife as a fruitful vine, on the sides of thy house. Thy wife*, namely Mary, *as a vine.* For she says that she is a vine. Hence: *As the vine I have brought forth*, etc. (Ecclus. 24:23). Abounding in a multitude of spiritual children: because she is the mother of all the living in the life of grace. *On the sides*: because she always loved seclusion. Or, *on the sides of thy house*, that is, of the Church, which she goes about to protect against the going about of the devil, who *goeth about seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. 5:8). Of the love of this wife toward her husband the Apostle says, Eph. 5:28–29: *He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh*, etc.

Chapter 8: Mary, Widow

(p. 342) Widow, designated by that widow of the Gospel who cast only two mites into the treasury (Luke 21:2–3), who put in more than all the rich, according to the Lord's sentence. One mite was her humility, which made her very small in her own estimation, and which makes a man esteem himself very small. Hence it is said to the Angel of the church of Philadelphia, Apoc. 3:8: *Behold, I have given before thee a door opened, which no man can shut: because thou hast a little strength*, that is, humility. For to such the door of paradise is open: because *glory shall uphold the humble of spirit* (Prov. 29:23). The other mite is faith, which is compared to a grain of mustard seed (Luke 17:6). These two mites Mary put as it were into the treasury, which is Christ, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3), when she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38): behold the first mite. *Be it done to me*, etc.: behold the second. And she is well said to have offered more than all: because she was humbler than all and more faithful than all. And this *more* refers to value, not to number: for the Lord does not consider how much is given to him, but from how much: for he attends more to the charity of the giver than to the quantity of the gift, and according to the intention of charity he repays glory or a crown. For no one offered God a more precious offering than the vow of virginity, which she first offered, as blessed Bartholomew clearly says. She is also said to have put in all her living: because she gloried in humility alone, and it was said to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*, etc. For through humility the soul lives the life of grace, and *the just shall live in his faith* (Hab. 2:4). Or, the two mites are a double humility.

Again, by that widow of Sarephta is signified Mary, who fed Elias, that is, Christ: from whose pot the meal did not fail, nor the oil from the cruse (3 Kings 17:10 ff.). She is also designated by that widow who filled the empty vessels with oil (4 Kings 4:1 ff.). (You had this expounded under the title on the mercy and generosity of Mary.)

Chapter 9: Mary, Good Woman

(p. 343) Good woman. And note that this name, *woman*, sometimes refers to sex. John 2:4: *Woman, what is that to me and to thee?* Again, John 19:26: *Woman, behold thy son.* And by reason of sex the blessed Virgin is called woman.

She is also called woman on account of fruitfulness, of which it was said above, under the title that she is called the mother of the human race, near the end of the chapter. Again, on account of her due subjection to Christ. Hence: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc. (Luke 1:38).

Again, *woman* is said according to the female sex, not according to the corruption of integrity. Hence as soon as she was made from the side of the man, not yet touched by the man, she was called woman. Hence, Gen.

2:22: *The Lord God built the rib into a woman.* Or, because *woman* (*mulier*) is said as it were *softening* (*emolliens*) the lord, or the hero, that is, Christ. She is called *woman* by antonomasia. For Christ before his incarnation was as it were hard in his divinity: because he could not hunger or thirst, be warm or cold, be wearied or be sick, or die. These are the seven defects which we suffer in the present life, all of which Christ took upon himself, made man in the Virgin, who clothed him with mortal flesh. Hence the Son says to the mother, Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh.* For he bore all our defects except four. Ignorance: because he is the wisdom of the Father (1 Cor. 1:30), and *all wisdom is from the Lord God, and hath been always with him, and is before all time* (Ecclus. 1:1). Blessed Bernard: "God is the Lord of knowledge, and he alone knows not ignorance: because he is wholly light without darkness, wholly an eye that is never deceived, because it is never closed" (*De consideratione* IV). For *his eyes are far brighter than the sun* (Ecclus. 23:28). (You will find this authority excellently expounded under the title *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb*.) Forgetfulness: because nothing is past to him, nothing future, but all things present. Therefore he says to Moses, Exod. 3:14: *He who is hath sent me to you.* Sloth: because *he hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way* (Ps. 18:6), namely of the commandments of the Father. Hence he says in Ps. 61:5: *I have run in thirst*, that is, in the desire which I had for the salvation of the human race. The titillation of sin: because his body was figured in the ark of Noah, in which all the animals were at peace, that is, all the motions of his sensuality. For before the incarnation the Son of God was as it were solid gold. Hence the spouse says, Cant. 5:11: *The head of my beloved*, that is, his divinity, *is as the finest gold.* But it was solid, that is, a mass, without any form of humanity. But in the incarnation this gold was sent by the whole Trinity into the furnace, which was the virginal womb. Ecclus. 43:4: *Keeping a furnace in works of heat*, etc. And there it was ineffably melted *(p. 344)* by the work of the Holy Spirit, that it might as it were run down into our moulds, which are hunger, thirst, mortality, passibility, as above. And it received the forms or characters of human nature. Job 28:1: *Gold hath a place wherein it is melted*, namely the womb of the Virgin; the melter is the Holy Spirit.

2. In another way also the blessed Virgin softened the Son of God, who was as it were hard before he became incarnate: because he was offended with the human race on account of the sin of Adam. Hence, as it were angry, he thrust the whole human race into hell. Hence Job says to him, 30:21, in the person of the human race: *Thou art changed to be cruel toward me, and in the hardness of thy hand thou art against me.* But the blessed Virgin softened and placated him made man, and reconciled the human race to him. Hence also at his birth it was sung by the Angels: *Peace to men of good will* (Luke 2:14). For this reason also Christ himself in the Gospel much more often calls himself the son of man, that is, of the blessed Virgin, than the Son of God: because he was softened through her. And in this also he commends to us that he mercifully deigned to be for us. (Apply the example of the rhinoceros below, under the title that Mary is virgin.)

In this also he confounds our pride, who always reckon our lineage from the worthier side as regards the world; as the mule did in the assembly of the animals, saying that he was the grandson of the horse, and not wishing to acknowledge that he was the son of an ass. Likewise we too glory in a noble parentage, and do not speak of a rustic one.

3. Again, otherwise: Mary so far softened the Lord, and still softens him by her merits and prayers, that he now patiently tolerates greater sins, who once most harshly avenged lesser ones. For it is certain that the modern Sodomites or lustful sin much more gravely than the ancients sinned, who were atrociously punished. For the blessed Virgin was not yet born, the Word was not yet made flesh. Hence human nature was then far lower and less worthy than it is now. For Christ, assuming it and uniting it to himself, conferred the greatest dignity on it. Hence, Wis. 7:11, human nature says of incarnate wisdom: *All good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands*, that is, the gifts of graces. Hence those who pollute themselves with the foulness of carnal vices do the greatest injury to the mother and the Son. But the longer and more mercifully he spares them now, the more strictly and unmercifully will he at length take

vengeance on them. Hence: *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation, but to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented: and especially them who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness*, etc. (2 Pet. 2:9–10). The canonical epistle of Jude, vv. 7–8: *As Sodom and Gomorrha, and the neighbouring cities, in like manner having given themselves to fornication*, that is, having fornicated against nature, *and going after other flesh*, that is, an undue concupiscence, *were made an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire. In like manner these men also defile the flesh*, etc.

Again, it is to be noted that Eve, who was a weak woman, so exasperated God and as it were made him hard, that he as it were forgot his mercy toward human nature. But Mary, who was a valiant woman, so softened God made man that he truly forgot punishment and vengeance toward man; whom, that the Son might lead him back to him from whom he had withdrawn through sin, the Father formed or created that very Son from the womb of the Virgin as his servant (Isa. 49:5). Hence he says, Isa. 45:8: *I the Lord have created him*, namely the man. For truly Eve was a weak woman, who was at once weakened at the first word of the devil, Gen. 3:3, saying: *Lest perhaps we die.* She also *(p. 345)* softened her husband, offering him the deadly taste of the apple. And this softening was designated by this, that the woman was formed from the bone of the man, as you had under the title that Mary is spouse. But Mary, the valiant woman, was strengthened at the word of the Angel, which appeared when she said: *I know not man* (Luke 1:34). And when from a woman, namely from the Virgin, a man, that is, Christ, was formed, human nature was made firm in both sexes. For it was fitting that salvation should proceed from a woman, that the remedy might answer to the sin, to the honor and glory of God, and that *where sin abounded, grace might more abound* (Rom. 5:20).

Again, Mary is called woman for another reason. For a mother is wont to be more merciful to her children than a father. But God the Father gave his Son as father and king of justice, and to temper his justice he gave us the mother of piety and the queen of mercy. For often what the justice of this Father would justly condemn, the mercy of this mother mercifully frees. Hence the justice of the Son and the mercy of the mother say as it were to each other: *I will kill and I will make to live*, etc. (Deut. 32:39). (Look above, the twenty-first cause.) For this also she is described as standing as advocate at the right hand of the Son, that is, in his better goods: because the queen of mercy is most fitting with the king of justice.

This is the woman of whom it was said to the serpent, Gen. 3:15: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman.* As if he said: See the friendship made between you and the woman, namely Eve. But I will put enmities between you and a certain other, namely Mary, who shall crush your head. There follows: *And thy seed and her seed.* Which was fulfilled when Herod, the seed of the serpent, at once after he was born persecuted Christ, the seed of Mary. Hence it is said, Apoc. 12:4: *The dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered*, namely of a man-child, *that, when she should be delivered, he might devour her son.* Well is it said *stood*: because *he shall neither slumber nor sleep* who attacks Israel, as neither he *that keepeth Israel* (Ps. 120:4).

She shall crush thy head, which you proudly raised, exulting over man cast down. Or, *thy head*, that is, the capital vice, which is pride, *the beginning of all sin*, as it is said, Ecclus. 10:15, with the foot of humility; or carnal concupiscence with the foot of virginity. And these two feet carry the faithful soul into paradise.

And thou shalt lie in wait for her heel, that is, for the foot, namely Christ, who is the foot supporting all things, for whom the devil lay in wait principally, in the desert, in the garden, on the cross.

Of the faithful soul thus: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman*, that is, the sinful soul who had sinned through softness. As if he said: She will repent, whence you will grieve. *And thy seed*, that is, the other demons, *and her seed*, that is, the works of penance and of mercy, which will unnerve your strength. *She shall crush thy head*, that is, the beginning of suggestion: *and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel*, that is, you will always follow her to deceive her.

This is the valiant woman who was sought by Solomon, saying, Prov. 31:10: *Who shall find a valiant woman?* But until it came to Mary, she was not found. Hence there follows: *Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her.* He says *far* with regard to the state of time, namely from the time of Solomon to the childbearing of the Virgin.

Mary was valiant against the flesh through virginity, whose vow she first made. Hence she then *girded her loins with strength, and strengthened her arm* (Prov. 31:17), and thus *(p. 346)* despised the law which cursed such women. Against the world through poverty: to signify which she was found by the Angel shut in her chamber. For the lovers of the world are out of doors, that is, in the occupation of seeking exterior things. But to such it will be said, Amos 5:16: *Alas, alas.* Hence Esau the hunter lost the blessing which Jacob acquired, *a plain man that dwelt in tents* (Gen. 25:27 ff.). And to Mary it was said: *Ave.* And this too she did above the law, which promised temporal things. Against the devil through humility, whose head she crushed, as has been said. Against every kind of sin through patience: because she bore all adversities with equanimity, and manfully despised all prosperity for the love of her spouse. And it was fitting that she should be a valiant woman who was to bear a man-child, and such a man-child as would cast out the prince of this world, and snatch the needy from the hand of the stronger, that by his own power he might humble the glorious of the earth.

And note that this name, *woman*, is here put only for sex, as has been said, not for corruption, or for breaking, or frailty, or softness: for properly *mulier* is said as it were *molliens*, namely one who has suffered the softness of carnal intercourse. Mary can also be called woman on account of the fruitfulness of spiritual offspring, as was assigned above under the title that she is called woman, near the end of the chapter.

There follows: *Who shall find?* A question is made with *who.* For inquiry, John 9:36: *Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?* For wonder, Isa. 60:8: *Who are these, that fly as clouds?* In the same, 63:1: *Who is this that cometh from Edom?* etc. For express commendation, as here: *Who shall find?* The Gloss: Of what kind, and how great? Again: *Who is as the Lord our God?* etc. (Ps. 112:5). For blame and contempt, Ecclus. 13:29: *The poor man spoke, and they say: Who is this?* For difficulty and rarity, Prov. 20:9: *Who can say: My heart is clean?* etc. Matt. 24:45: *Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant?* In Ps. 23:3: *Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord?* that is, how rare is he?

Who shall find? As it were none, save Christ alone, who, by reason of her fortitude, by which she first vowed virginity, and of the humility which he regarded in her, gave himself to her as the price and reward, chiefly of this twofold virtue.

And note that mention is made here of finding. Likewise, Luke 1:30, it was said to Mary: *Thou hast found grace with the Lord.* For as it was a finding for Mary to have such a Son, so it was a finding for Christ to have such a mother. Hence as Mary can say of the wisdom of God taking flesh from her: *All good things came to me together with her* (Wis. 7:11), so also Christ of Mary: *All good things came to me together with her.* Because I was born clean of the clean, immaculate of the immaculate, and a virgin of a virgin. Or, *all these good things* are the virginal members which he fitted to himself from her flesh, which, sacrificed on the cross, sufficed to redeem the world.

Or, *Who shall find?* Here is noted the greatest difficulty: because neither could another sufficiently valiant woman be found, nor could any other than Christ find her. Hence she says, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me, and I to him.*

9. There follows: *Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her.* And note that this exposition is as it were common to Mary, to the Church, and to the faithful soul. It is said therefore: *Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her*, that is, of the finder, says the Gloss. Or, *of her*, that is, of the valiant woman, namely Mary, the Church, or the faithful soul: namely Christ, who gave himself as the price for *(p. 347)* the Church to be redeemed. 1 Cor. 6:20: *You are bought with a great price.* Eph. 5:2: *Christ hath delivered*

himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God, etc. For the price of Mary was from far, namely Christ, who descended from heaven into her womb: because *his going out is from the end of heaven* (Ps. 18:7), and from her he took flesh and blood or body, which he offered on the cross for her as also for us. Hence also it is said to Christ: *Thou hast redeemed the sceptre of thy inheritance* (Ps. 73:2). Isa. 30:27: *Behold the name of the Lord cometh from afar.* Or, *from the end of heaven*, that is, from the most hidden womb itself of the paternal majesty, which neither Angel nor any creature has penetrated, nor been able to search out. Of which womb the Father says to the Son: *From the womb before the day star I begot thee* (Ps. 109:3). And truly Christ is her price, by which he rendered her precious: because from this all generations call her blessed, and through this she is exalted in heaven and glorified on earth. For she is that precious pearl which is brought in as singular in the Gospel (Matt. 13:46), entire in flesh and spirit, so desirable that she turned the divine mind toward herself, and became wholly God's; in the purchase of whom the heavenly merchant, without any exception, sells and exchanges all that he has. Hence it is sung: "O wonderful exchange." This pearl also gave her whole self to God, and, claiming all divine things for herself, made the exchange. For God both chose her, and in exchange for her conferred all that was his, and as it were spent for the having of her all that was properly his, that is, divine things, of which he says, John 16:15: *All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine.* The Father has immortality, eternity, and light: this also the Son and the Holy Spirit have. This the Virgin Mary has; but in one way and in another. And truly Mary is a precious pearl: because, as it is said, Ecclus. 26:20: *No price is worthy of a continent soul.* (Look for the exposition under the title on the modesty of Mary.)

Nor was her price from the earth, but from heaven: because *man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of them that live in delights* (Job 28:13). *Far*, that is, before all others, *and from the uttermost coasts*, namely heaven and earth. In the heavens incorruption, on earth fruitfulness: which two before all others are her price. Or, the uttermost coasts are man and Angel: integrity is the price of the Angel, fruitfulness the price of man. Or, *far*, namely when the evening of the world was declining, her price was paid, namely the blood of Christ, by which she was redeemed and purchased. 1 Pet. 1:18: *Not with corruptible things*, etc.

Or, literally, *the price*, that is, the most excellent and most glorious loftiness of Mary, was *far, and from the uttermost coasts*, when the venerable Magi, coming from distant regions to her most holy childbearing, offered precious gifts to her Son, and showed forth the true nativity of God made man. Or, the uttermost coasts are her uttermost humility, than which none is deeper, none greater, by the merit of which she was made precious in the eyes of the Lord. Or, *from the uttermost coasts*, that is, from the joining of God and man, who are the uttermost ends. Hence, Wis. 8:1, it is said of wisdom: *She reacheth from end to end mightily*, etc. Which joining, namely, was made by the work of the Holy Spirit in her womb.

And four ends can fittingly be adapted to the blessed Virgin. The lower end, her humility, as it were lying hidden on the ground (*humi latens*). The upper end, her virginity, which is not of the earthly life, but of the heavenly. The right and left, charity, as it were extended in breadth to friends and enemies. Or, the right, temperance against prosperity; the left, patience against adversity. And by reason of these ends, that is, of these virtues, she was made so precious.

(p. 348) 10. Otherwise: *Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her*, namely Christ, who is far from our defect through incomparable goodness. Hence, Rom. 9:5: *Who is over all things, God blessed for ever.* Hence he is far from our comprehension through the infirmity of our substance, or through his infinite power. Prov. 30:4: *What is his name, and what is the name of his son, if thou knowest?*

Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price, that is, the precious blood poured out for her on the cross. 1 Pet. 1:18: *Not with corruptible things*, etc. Again, 1 Cor. 6:20: *You are bought with a great price*, etc. The precious pearl of faith. Matt. 13:46: *Who when he had found one pearl of great price.* A precious spirit, that is, will. Prov. 17:27: *A man of knowledge is of a precious spirit.* A precious death, that is, the mortification of

the flesh, or martyrdom. The precious ointment of devotion. Luke 7:37: *A woman… brought an alabaster box of ointment* (cf. Matt. 26:7; John 12:3). The precious fruit of good works, from which comes the heavenly reward. James 5:7: *Behold, the husbandman*, etc. The price by which the soul is redeemed is the virtues and good works. Prov. 13:8: *The ransom of a man's life are his riches.* This price comes *far and from the uttermost coasts*, because *every best gift is from above* (James 1:17).

This is the one Hebrew woman who brought confusion on the house of king Nabuchodonosor. *One*, that is, set apart from all other Hebrew women. *For behold Holofernes lieth upon the ground, and his head is not upon him.* This is literally read of Judith, in the same book, 14:16, in the figure of Mary, who is *one woman*, that is, singular in dignity, power, charity, and protection. Wis. 7:27: *Being but one, she can do all things.*

Woman, as above. *Hebrew*, that is, *passing over*: who passed over from virginity to motherhood while remaining a virgin; from handmaid she passed over to queen; from daughter of God to mother of God. Nor did any other so perfectly pass over the passing world and its concupiscences.

Otherwise: in that she is called *one*, is noted the singularity in the privilege of preservation, by the excellence of holiness. *One* woman, namely, alone and privileged, by a special eminence of virtues and works surpassed all the daughters of the Church. *Hebrew*, that is, *passing over*: because while others pass from evil to good, from good to better, and the like, she especially passed over the way of this world by an unpolluted path. She passed also through water, that is, through the consolation of such childbearing first; but in the passion of the Son, through the fire of manifold tribulation, to the refreshment of eternal life. She is also the Hebrew woman called by grace to nurse the infant Moses (Exod. 2:7 ff.), that is, Christ.

There follows: *She hath brought confusion on the house of king Nabuchodonosor*, that is, on hell, whose limbo she emptied through her Son, and opened heaven to those captives. And therefore the gate of paradise, shut through Eve, was opened again through her. Nor does she ever cease to confound the malignant spirits that attack her servants. For through her *Holofernes lieth upon the ground*, because by her help and example the world is despised, the contempt of which Christ taught by word and example.

And his head is not upon him: because *the prince of this world* through her *is cast out* (John 12:31), namely from the hearts of the elect. For the cutting off of the devil's head is the diminishing of his power.

This is the woman of whom Zorobabel speaks, stronger than wine and the king (3 Esdras 4:13 ff.). For what the wine of libations could not do, nor any king of the Hebrews, she did through her Son. For she freed the human race, for which *(p. 349)* the sacrifices of the law did not suffice, nor any justice of prelates however great. For she broke the horns of the horned serpents, when she crushed lust with the foot of virginity, and pride with the foot of humility.

This is the woman of Canaan who came out of the coasts of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:22–28), that is, from the depth of worldly conversation, who cries to God for her daughter, that is, the sinful soul, whose person also she mercifully transforms into herself, saying: *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David.* And to whom the Son mercifully answers: *O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt.*

This is the woman of whom it is said: *When the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law: that he might redeem them who were under the law* (Gal. 4:4–5), etc. For he who had given the law redeemed the servants oppressed by the law, and poured out for them on the cross the blood which he had drawn from the Virgin, and thus restored to liberty those who were before servants.

This is the faithful woman through whose faith Adam, the unbelieving man, was saved, whom the unbelief of the first woman had deceived — and not him only, but also all his posterity. Hence the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 7:14: *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife.*

This is the gracious woman who found glory (Prov. 11:16): who first was called *full of grace* — behold gracious — and found a threefold singular glory. The first was when she conceived the Son of God, who is

the glory of the Father: because *a wise son is the glory of his father* (Prov. 10:1). The second: because after his conception she could in no way sin. The third, when in the assumption, *leaning upon her beloved,* she ascended into heaven, and sat down in glory at his right hand, that is, in his better goods.

This is *the woman clothed with the sun* (Apoc. 12:1). (Look under the title on the assumption.) She is *the wise woman building her house* (Prov. 14:1). And *whose beauty is for the ornament of her house* (Ecclus. 26:21). This is the diligent woman, as it is said in the same place (ibid., vv. 16, 18–19). She is the woman sensible and silent, holy and modest, stable, and bearing in her heart the commandments of God (ibid., throughout the chapter). She is the *virtuous woman* designated by Ruth (Ruth 3:11). The incomparable woman (Judith 11:19). The woman who *shall compass a man* (Jer. 31:22). The woman *out of all* (Eccles. 7:29). The woman who first gave her son to be eaten (4 Kings 6:26 ff.). The *diligent woman, a crown to her husband* (Prov. 12:4), namely Joseph, and adding to him the years of his life. Ecclus. 26:2: *A virtuous woman rejoiceth her husband*: because she gladdened Joseph, and fulfilled the years of his life in peace, that is, brought them to the end with the fullness of peace. The woman having ten groats (Luke 15:8). She is the good portion: because she is the good woman (Ecclus. 26:3), namely pious and chaste, kind and modest. In these four especially consists the goodness of a woman: if she be kind (*benigna*) in heart, that is, well kindled (*bene ignita*), namely with the fire of charity; merciful in work; modest in speech, which is hard to find; chaste in mind and body. The good woman, *happy is her husband* (ibid., v. 1). The woman where she is not, there is nothing but groaning and want. Ecclus. 36:27: *Where there is no wife, he mourneth that is in want.* For wherever Mary is not through grace, there can be nothing but misery and want.

After this it should have been written how Mary is the woman *out of all*, namely gathered out of all good women, representing in herself the properties of all good women; *(p. 350)* which is to be set out thus: that one begin with Eve, and come down through all the good women of whom we read in the Bible, and show how she had all the good properties of the others and represented them in herself, coming down as far as *the woman clothed with the sun* (Apoc. 12:1).

Chapter 10: Mary, Virgin

1. Virgin. Note that *virgo* is so called from the greener age, as *virga* and *virgula* [a rod and a little rod], and from incorruption, as it were *virago*, because she knows not womanly passion: but yet she is not rightly called *virago* if she does not do manly works, as the Amazons. But *virgo* is said by syncope as it were *virago*, that is, acting manfully. For in that the syncope takes away from the middle is designated humility, which took away from her middle, that is, from her heart, every kind of presumption and the swelling of pride, which, when poured in, it repels. Jer. 2:32: *Will a virgin forget her ornament*, which is her highest beauty, *or a bride her stomacher*, that is, her highest wisdom? For the Virgin Mary acted manfully, nay more manfully than all creatures, when she *girded her loins with strength* (Prov. 31:17), and first made the vow of virginity without any human precept, counsel, and example, by the sole inspiration and familiar counsel of the Holy Spirit, as blessed Bernard says. *She strengthened her arm, and put out her hand to strong things*, when, made the mother of her Creator, she nourished him with all diligence and devotion.

2. This is the virgin who made the fierce rhinoceros grow tame in her virginal lap. Those who have written of the natures of animals say that the rhinoceros or unicorn is a most fierce animal, and of such strength that it can be captured by no art of the hunters. And with its single horn, which it carries on its forehead, as Isidore says, or on its nose, as Gregory says on Job 39:9 ff. — and according to Isidore it is interpreted *horn on the nose* — with this horn, I say, it breaks through whatever stands in its way. But through a virgin it grows so gentle that it can be captured by the hunters. For it is natural to the unicorn or rhinoceros that, when it sees a virgin, it lays itself in her bosom, and, forgetting its ferocity, rests most meekly. This rhinoceros is Christ, whose power, which is designated by the horn, no one resists. Wherefore it is said of him, Isa. 2:22: *Cease ye therefore from the man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for he is reputed high.* And of whom the Psalmist

says, Ps. 28:6, that he is *beloved as the son of unicorns.* And of whom it is read, Num. 23:22, that *his strength is like to the rhinoceros.* The unicorns are the Jews, glorying singularly in the law, from whom Mary descended, whose Son is the only-begotten of God. Of whom the Father says, Matt. 3:17: *This is (p. 351) my beloved son*, etc. Fierce and untamed this rhinoceros seemed when for a single thought of pride he cast Lucifer with his followers out of heaven; for the bite of an apple expelled Adam also from paradise; destroyed the original world by the flood; sank the Sodomites, rained upon with fire and brimstone, into hell; and the like. So in heaven, so on earth this unicorn raged, until our glorious Virgin received him, entering into her town, into her house, that is, into the lap of her virginal womb, as the unicorn into the bosom; and clothed him with virginal flesh, in which he who is incomprehensible according to his deity deigned to be captured by the hunters, namely Gentiles and Jews, and, led as a willing victim to slaughter, suffered himself to be crucified.

The Gloss also says on that of Job 39:9: *Will the rhinoceros be willing to serve thee?* that the rhinoceros, seeing itself captured, dies of indignation. So also Christ died of the indignation which he had against sins. Hence in his person Ezekiel seems to have said, 3:14: *I went away in bitterness in the indignation of my spirit. I went away* as it were willingly, *in bitterness*, namely to the bitternesses of the passion, *in the indignation of my spirit*, which I had against sins.

Chapter 11: Mary, Virago

Virago, that is, acting the man, or acting manfully. For she acted manfully, first vowing virginity without any human precept, counsel, and example, by the sole inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as blessed Bernard says. Therefore it is said of her, Prov. 31:17: *She hath girded her loins with strength*: which appeared when she said: *I know not man* (Luke 1:34). (Look under the title on her words, where her wisdom is treated.)

And note that as the matter of Eve's body was taken from the man, so her name from the name of the man. This virago also did manfully in conquering the devil, as had been foretold, Gen. 3:15: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman*, etc. *She shall crush thy head*, etc. Therefore in her figure it was said, Judith 15:10–11: *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem*, etc., as far as *thou hast done manfully*, etc.

Mary was also a virago: because she made (*egit*) her man, that is, Christ, who so often calls her spouse in the Canticles, when out of the greatness of her faith she consented that from her substance Christ should be made man. Hence, Gal. 4:4, the Apostle says that he was *made of a woman*, etc. Hence also she can say of Christ that of Gen. 2:23: *This now is bone of my bones*, etc. For Eve was called virago, *because she was taken out of man* (Gen. 2:23). Mary is virago: because from her was taken her man. Which was then done when she expressed her consent, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me*, etc. (Luke 1:38).

(p. 352) Or perhaps for this reason Eve was called virago as it were prophetically: because she was to rule over her husband; which came to pass when the husband consented to her in evil. For when a woman becomes a virago, then the man is made womanish. Yet in this Eve prefigured Mary, who, inasmuch as she was mother, was to rule over Christ, and was made a virago when the Son was subject not only to her, but also to Joseph for her sake, as it is said, Luke 2:51.

Morally: any person, whether man or woman, acting manfully, is called a virago. Hence it is said of the mother of the Machabees, 2 Mach. 7:21: *Joining a man's heart to a woman's thought.* Or, because such a woman does the man's part (*virum agit*), that is, manly works, and is of masculine vigor. For the ancients so called strong women, namely viragoes.

Chapter 12: Mary, Princess

Princess, designated in many ways. In Genesis 17:15–16, by Sara, which is interpreted *princess*, or *coal*: and rightly princess, because she is both the daughter of the prince (Cant. 7:1), that is, of God the Father, and the

mother of the prince, that is, of Christ, who is called *the prince of the kings of the earth* (Apoc. 1:5).

But this princess was given by the whole Trinity to the Church, that through her the prince of the world, that is, the devil, who is called prince, that is, the beginning of captivity, might be *cast out* (John 12:31), namely from the hearts of the elect. For this prince took the first woman captive, but by this princess he was taken captive. Hence, Gen. 3:15: *She shall crush thy head*, etc.; which is done not only once, but daily, when the devil is vanquished by just men with her help.

But Mary is called princess (*princeps*) as it were taking the beginning (*principium capiens*), that is, him who says, John 8:25: *The beginning, who also speak unto you.* Or, as it were taking the first (*primum capiens*), that is, him who says, Apoc. 1:8 and Isa. 48:12: *I am the first, and I am the last.*

Or, princess is said from beginning (*principium*) and from principality (*principatus*). From beginning: because she gave to Christ the beginning of being according to the human nature which he assumed from her. Hence Christ says to her, Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh.* From principality: because she was made queen of the heavens in her assumption, and alone with God she rules in heaven and on earth, in the sea and in all the deeps. Hence also she is designated by Israel, which is interpreted *prince with God.* Hence Christ says, Hos. 14:6: *I will be as the dew: Israel*, that is, the blessed Virgin, *shall spring as the lily.* (Look under the title on dew.)

Again, of this princess it is said, Isa. 32:8: *But the prince*, that is, Mary, *will devise such things as are worthy of a prince*, namely *thoughts of peace, and not of affliction* (Jer. 29:11). She also with her Son can fittingly be called *the prince of the kings of the earth* (Apoc. 1:5): because to her principality belong those who, that they may reign in heaven, reign well on earth, and rule well themselves and their subjects.

Chapter 13: Mary, Queen

(p. 353) Queen, of whom it is said to Christ by the Psalmist, Ps. 44:10: *The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety.*

And this queen is commended for many things. First, for promptness in serving or ministering: because to stand by belongs to one who ministers, where it is said: *stood.* Dan. 7:10: *Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him.* 3 Kings 10:8, the queen of Saba said to Solomon: *Happy are thy servants, who stand before thee always*, etc.

Second, for promptness in helping: because to stand by belongs to one who helps. Hence: Stephen *saw Jesus standing* (Acts 7:55), namely as it were ready to help. Again, Apoc. 14:1: *And I beheld, and lo a Lamb stood upon mount Sion*, that is, Christ, who is a lamb through innocence, standing as it were ready to help.

Third, for promptness in contradicting our adversaries who accuse us in the court of her Only-begotten: because to stand by belongs to one who contradicts. And therefore she is called our advocate: because in the sight of God she speaks good for us, and contradicts our adversaries, which are the two offices of advocates. (Look at the twenty-second cause.)

Fourth, for perseverance in the things said above: because to stand belongs to one who perseveres. Hence, Ecclus. 2:1: *Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear*, that is, persevere in this twofold virtue. For she unceasingly and perseveringly helps her servants, and never deserts a man unless she is first deserted by the man. Therefore it is said: *stood.* And with prophetic certainty David put the past for the future.

Fifth, for royal dignity, authority, power, majesty, and the like. Hence: *Queen*, as below.

Sixth, for sitting together at the right hand of the Son. Hence: *On thy right hand*, that is, in thy better goods. Which sitting together is designated, 3 Kings 2:19, where it is said that a royal throne was set for Bethsabee,

and she sat at the right hand of king Solomon.

Seventh, for the beauty and preciousness of her clothing, that is, of her glorified body. Hence: *In gilded clothing*, that is, in a glorified body, as blessed Bernard says.

Eighth, for the multitude of her garments, that is, of virtues or merits or dignities or rewards. Hence: *Surrounded with variety.*

Ninth, for the spreading of good example. Hence: *Surrounded*: that those who have seen, that is, who have understood, may be edified, and invited to the like.

Otherwise, that it may be understood of the present: the dignity and office of Mary were shown to the prophet in spirit. Hence, wondering, he says to Christ: *The queen stood*, etc. In that she is called *queen* is noted the dignity of Mary. *(p. 354)* 3. In the word of standing three things especially are designated: continual ministry, faithful help, ready solace. For she ministered before God the Trinity. Hence she says: *In the holy dwelling place I have ministered before him* (Ecclus. 24:14). And she ministered first to Elizabeth when she was giving birth, as is gathered from Luke 1:56. Then to the Son of God born of her: and therefore she named herself handmaid, whose part it is to minister. Nor to them alone, but she does not cease to minister to us also, after the example of the Son, who *came not to be ministered unto, but to minister* (Matt. 20:28). Again, she stands by and assists as a most faithful helper those who are attacked, and especially her servants, against whom the world, the flesh, and the demons stir up various battles: for she is to her lovers an impregnable wall and a tower of strength, *terrible* to the malignant spirits *as an army set in array*, that is, as the whole company of the saints. She also stood in the present, having the earth under her feet: because she never delighted in earthly things, nay, trod all temporal things underfoot. Hence, Apoc. 12:1, she is described as having the moon under her feet, that is, all mutable things under her affections.

Mary is queen on account of signification. For she is designated by the queen of Saba (cf. 3 Kings 10:1 ff. and 2 Par. 9:1 ff.), and by queen Esther. On account of her royal parentage and the nobility of her lineage. Because *Mary of royal descent*, sprung from the tribe of Juda, illustrious from the stock of David. For she was of the priestly and royal tribe: because she was to bear Christ, who is king and priest.

Unction. Hence it is said to her, Ps. 44:8: *God*, of all by creation, God the Son, *thy* God according to the humanity, *hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness*, by which the Holy Spirit is properly understood, with whom she was filled from her mother's womb. For *God doth not give the Spirit by measure* to her (John 3:34). With whose grace she was not only filled but heaped up, that of that fullness the whole world might receive *grace for grace* (John 1:16). *Above thy fellows*, which are each and every good woman, virgins, widows, and married: which is shown when it is said to her: *Blessed art thou among women* (Luke 1:28).

Espousal, she to whom it was said, Hos. 2:20: *I will espouse thee to me in faith*, etc. (Look above, where Mary is called spouse.)

Dowering, she on whom her spouse the king conferred first grace, second glory, nay also the heavenly kingdom with all its appurtenances in place of dowry. Hence in her figure Lia said, Gen. 30:20: *God hath endowed me with a good dowry.*

Dignity: for she shares, as has been said, the heavenly kingdom with the Son; and she who in the present showed herself a humble handmaid is there honored by all the saints as a sublime queen, according to that of Ecclus. 11:1: *The wisdom of the humble shall exalt his head*; especially when she was crowned with glory and honor.

Power, by which she powerfully comes to the aid of sinners when faithfully invoked by them, as is clear in Theophilus; so that there can fittingly be attributed to her that of Prov. 20:8: *The king that sitteth on the throne of judgment*, etc. And let it be said: The queen that sitteth on the throne of judgment. (Look above, the twenty-fourth cause.)

Largess: for she bestows on her servants the gifts of graces, the garments of virtues, the treasures of merits, and the greatness of rewards. Hence she herself also says, Prov. 8:18: *With me are riches and glory*, that is, glorious riches, etc. (Look under the title on her riches.) For she *giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not* (James 1:5). (Of her largess you will find under the title on her mercy.)

Liberality: for she is liberal: because liberality is a virtue open to all, common in address, sweet in service, retaining *(p. 355)* familiarity with all good men: and this description well befits the liberality of Mary.

Protection. (Of her protection you will find under the title on the garden, section 9, where the garden is called full of hiding places, and the twenty-fourth cause.)

Guarding: for she was given to be guarded to Egeus the eunuch, after the example of queen Esther; by which eunuch is signified Gabriel, or better John the Baptist, a virgin chosen by the Lord. Or also to several eunuchs, who designate the Angels, according to that of Ps. 90:11: *He hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*

Coronation: for she was crowned as queen in her assumption, as the Son had promised her, Cant. 4:8: *Come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned.* Therefore she was designated by Esther, whom king Assuerus took as wife (Esther 2:17), and willed to be queen, and set the diadem of the kingdom on her head, that is, the crown of virtues in the fulfilling of grace, and the crown of glory in the assumption. The head of Mary can be called her humility, by the merit of which she was crowned queen: or also virginity, to which the aureole is due.

The breadth of the kingdom. For the kingdom of Assuerus is described as very broad, namely *from India to Ethiopia, over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces* (Esther 1:1). But of Christ it is said: *He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth* (Ps. 71:8). This literally, which is to say: He shall rule through the whole earth, which is surrounded by the sea: because from every nation some will believe in him through the preaching of the Apostles. *And from the river* Jordan, where he began to rule, the Father saying, Luke 9:35 [cf. Matt. 3:17]: *This is my beloved Son; hear him. Unto the ends of the earth*: because, beginning thence, the Apostles gained through the whole world faithful ones to serve him.

Morally: *From sea to sea.* One sea is penance, the other sea tribulation; the river is the abundance of temporal things; the ends of the earth are the contempt of earthly things and the desire of eternal things. In those who live within these bounds the Lord rules through grace. But the kingdom of Christ and of Mary, which is therefore a kingdom, extends and contains as it were three provinces, of the heavenly, the earthly, and the infernal. And this kingdom is eternal. Hence it is said to him, Ps. 144:13: *Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages.* Dan. 2:44: *A kingdom that shall never be destroyed*, etc.

Otherwise: the kingdom of God consists in two things, namely in mercy and justice: and the Son of God as it were kept justice for himself as half of the kingdom, and granted mercy to his mother as the other half. Hence also she is called the queen of mercy, and the Son the sun of justice. And this as it were sharing was figured, Esther 7:2, where Assuerus said to her: *What is thy petition, Esther, that it may be granted thee? and what wilt thou have done? although thou shouldst ask the half of my kingdom, thou shalt have it.* For the mother's petition was fittingly moderated in these words. For although Assuerus, that is, Christ, reigns in mercy and justice, yet before the blessed Virgin the kingdom was not halved, nor was mercy halved with justice, when the severity of justice was felt more than the clemency of mercy; when Job mourned, 9:17, saying: *He will multiply my wounds even without cause*, that is, without my actual sin. And he says *wounds* in the plural: because the wound was manifold, namely to be born corruptibly, to die miserably, to be condemned for original sin, even the just to be detained in the limbo of hell. The kingdom would be halved if we felt justice and mercy in equal balance: but because our infirmity requires more, and it befits the divine generosity to give more than is asked, the petition was so moderated that there might be less in the *(p. 356)* petition, and more in the giving. In the petition half the kingdom is granted, and in the giving is bestowed what is above

half, namely that *mercy exalteth itself above judgment* (James 2:13).

4. This queen, that is, Mary, was designated by the queen of Saba, of whom it is read thus, 3 Kings 10:2 ff.: *The queen of Saba, entering into Jerusalem with a great train, and riches, and camels that carried spices, and an immense quantity of gold, and precious stones, came to king Solomon, and spoke to him all that she had in her heart. And Solomon informed her of all the things she proposed.* And a little after, v. 13: *And king Solomon gave the queen of Saba all that she desired, and asked of him: besides what he offered her of himself of his royal bounty* (cf. 2 Par. 9:1 ff.). And note that in 2 Par. 9:12 it is read that king Solomon gave the queen of Saba much more than she had brought to him. This queen signifies Mary, who is called queen, as above. Saba is interpreted *conversion* or *kindling.* This is Mary, who converts sinners and kindles their affections through charity. It is said therefore: *The queen of Saba,* that is, Mary, *entering into* the heavenly *Jerusalem* in her assumption. Jerusalem is interpreted *vision of peace*, and signifies eternal life, in which he is seen face to face who is our peace, namely Christ, who by the shedding of his blood on the cross made peace for us with God the Father; whom we now see veiled on the altar under the species of bread and wine: for faith precedes knowledge, and merit its reward, which will be to see him in the future as he is. In our treatise on the Eucharist you will find much of this kind (see the book *De Eucharistia*, dist. 1 [note of the Lyons edition]).

There follows: *She entered into Jerusalem with a great train.* Of the heavenly Jerusalem the Apostle says, Gal. 4:26: *That Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother.* That train of which mention is made here designates that solemn procession of today of the Angels and saints which we believe went forth to meet the Virgin Mary taken up into heaven, to the ethereal bridal chamber in which the King of kings sits on his starry throne. Hence Jerome: “Today the blessed Virgin happily entered the joys of eternal life, the hymn-singing choirs of the Angels answering one another, within the pastures of eternal greenness, where there is one society of the citizens above, where there is the sweet solemnity of the Angels, where after labors and hardships there is the happy and sweet refreshment of souls.”

We believe that the Son was present at this procession, who had gone before her to the heavenly kingdoms, to prepare for her, as he had promised his disciples, a place of immortality in the ethereal mansions, that the queen of mercy might reign for ever with her Son, the king of justice. And this is what is sung in the sequence from the words of Jerome: “Jesus himself also, festive, running to meet thee his mother with the Angels,” etc. Otherwise he would seem less to have fulfilled that commandment of Exod. 20:12: *Honour thy father and thy mother.* Surely he who commanded this did it: because *Jesus began to do and to teach* (Acts 1:1). And to this the Angels bear witness, nay all the saints, who, considering the Virgin ascending from earth to heaven in her assumption, say in wonder, Cant. 8:5: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?* How literally would she lean upon her beloved, unless the beloved were present? And since it is the law and custom that the nobles of the kingdom are bound to be present at the coronation of the king and queen, it is credible that each and all of the orders of Angels and of saints went in person to meet their queen who was to be crowned. And this is what is read, 2 Kings 6:12: *David brought the ark of God out of the house of Obededom into the city of David with joy. And there were with David seven choirs, and calves for victims*, that is, literally, of calves: because they led calves with them *(p. 357)* to sacrifice. David is Christ. The ark is the blessed Virgin. The city of David is paradise. The seven choirs are the whole company of the saints, full of sevenfold grace. The victims of calves are the praise of the victory of Christ, who, sacrificed for us, conquered the devil on the cross. (You will find this in that sermon on the Assumption: *The priests brought in*, etc.)

The Angels also are believed to have been present, to receive their Lady and sister, who led an angelic, nay more than angelic, life on earth, living in the flesh beyond the flesh; through whose childbearing the number of the Angels, diminished by the fall of Lucifer, was made whole again.

The Patriarchs also are believed to have been present, from whose stock she descended, as the Church sings: “The nativity of the glorious Virgin Mary, of the seed of Abraham, sprung from the tribe of Juda, illustrious from the stock of David”; who is the head and glory, the praise and honor of her race. Through whose virginal childbearing they were drawn out of hell and brought into paradise. In whom alone consisted the whole hope of their salvation. For she is the one from whom and through whom holy Jacob, already near to death, hoped for eternal life, saying, Gen. 49:18: *I will look for thy salvation, O Lord.* For through her God himself, our king before the ages, disposed to work salvation in the midst of the earth; which disposition did not lie hidden from the holy Patriarchs.

Nonetheless the holy Prophets also are believed to have been present, Isaias, David, and the rest, who rejoice that what they had foretold of the childbearing of the Virgin, of the humility or passion of the Saviour, of the redemption of the human race, was fulfilled in her and through her; giving her endless thanks, that through her they were found faithful, as Ecclesiasticus had asked, 36:18: *Reward them that patiently wait for thee, that thy prophets may be found faithful.* Give that reward, namely, which *eye hath not seen*, etc. Or, that reward is the blessed Virgin, by which they were rewarded with the presence of the Saviour. Ps. 126:3: *Children are the reward, the fruit of the womb. Them that patiently wait for thee*, that is, who await thy coming, *that thy prophets*, who promised this, *may be found faithful*, that is, truthful, their promise being fulfilled.

The Apostles also, still living in the flesh, were present at her holy passing, and celebrated her obsequies with devout praises and dutiful reverence. At whose prayers also the Son of God is said to have raised her from the dead on the third day. Among whom the blessed Virgin herself, after the ascension of her Son, going in and out, conferred more familiarly about the incarnation of Christ; so much the more truly, as from the beginning she had more fully learned all things through the Holy Spirit and seen all things with her eyes, as Jerome says.

The Martyrs also are believed to have been present at this procession, with whom the glory of martyrdom was not lacking to her. Because she suffered in that part which is impassible, as Jerome says, that is, in her soul, she is not undeservedly reckoned more than a martyr. And as she is called virgin of virgins, so also martyr of martyrs. And therefore the Church sings on this solemnity: “As the days of spring, the flowers of roses and the lilies of the valleys surrounded her.” By the flowers of roses are designated the martyrs, empurpled with their blood; by the lilies of the valleys, the chaste and humble.

The Confessors also are believed to have been present, whose sobriety and temperance or contemplation was not lacking to Mary, who confessed the power of her Son and the manifold grace bestowed on her, saying: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me*, etc. (Luke 1:49). And this is the confession of divine praise.

The most holy Virgins also were present, and the blessed young maidens clinging to her more familiarly, running in the odor of her ointments, and following her whithersoever she goes. Hence in Ps. 44:15: *After her shall virgins be brought to the king.*

This then is the great and numerous train with which the heavenly queen is believed to have entered the heavenly Jerusalem on this day.

(p. 358) There follows: *And riches* (3 Kings 10:2). These riches with which Mary entered Jerusalem are those riches of which it is said, Prov. 31:29: *Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all.* These riches are virginal fruitfulness and fruitful virginity, humble charity and charitable humility, kind mercy and merciful kindness, pious meekness and most meek piety, and the like.

Again, these riches are those twelve prerogatives which were set out above (cf. Book III above). These riches are those incomparable treasures of graces and gifts, of dignity and power, of honor and honesty, of merits and rewards, with which Mary was enriched, when the Lord multiplied to enrich her. By riches of this kind,

which she brought with her beyond human understanding, the glory of the Angels and of the holy souls was increased.

There follows: *And camels that carried spices* (ibid.). The camel (*camelus*) is so called from the Greek χαμαί, which means *low* and *short*: because when they are loaded, they lie down so as to become shorter and low. Or from *camur*, which in Greek means *curved*: because the camel is curved in the back. The camel, which is a humped animal, and when made tame is bent down on bended knees so that it can be loaded, designates the converted sinner, who as long as he was engaged in sins was great in his own eyes through the presumption of pride, humped through the swellings of cupidity and avarice, beastly through the brutishness of gluttony and lust, and the like; but bowed down to penance, he receives with meekness the burdens of whatever satisfaction is imposed on him. By the spices which these camels carry are designated the parts of true penance and satisfaction, namely fasts, vigils, prayers, tears, pilgrimages, and the like: for these, after the manner of spices, are medicinal to the sinful soul, and make it fragrant before the Lord. Hence the Apostle says in the person of penitents, 2 Cor. 2:15: *We are the good odour of Christ unto God, in them that are saved.* Thanks to thee, O Lady, that thou loadest thy camels with spices; that is, sinners, formerly twisted and humped, whom thou mercifully convertest, thou enrichest with fragrant graces, and suppliest to them the will and desire of making satisfaction to thy Son through penance.

There follows: *And an immense quantity of gold* (ibid.). These camels carry gold when sinners, converted through the mercy of Mary, are adorned and loaded with those four virtues which are principally designated in gold, namely cleanness, wisdom, charity, and cleanness [so the print, naming cleanness twice]. But it is said *immense* (*infinitum nimis*): because the reward which will be given for the virtues had here will last for ever: and therefore *immense.* And well is it said *exceedingly* (*nimis*): for however much you have advanced in grace, in virtue, in good operation, and in keeping the commandments of God, it ought never to suffice you, but you ought always to gape after greater and better things, after the example of the Apostle, saying to the Philippians, 3:13: *Forgetting the things that are behind,* etc. And this excess does not refer to vice, but to desire. Hence it is said of the just man: *He shall delight exceedingly in his commandments* (Ps. 111:1). And that: *Thou hast commanded thy commandments to be kept most diligently* [literally, *exceedingly*] (Ps. 118:4). And *exceedingly* notes abundance, not superfluity.

There follows: *And precious stones* (ibid.). These gems designate the virtues, namely humility, chastity, piety, justice, fortitude, prudence, temperance, and the like, with which Mary through grace adorns and loads her lovers and imitators.

There follows: *And came to king Solomon* (ibid.), that is, to her Son, designated *(p. 359)* by Solomon. (Look under the title on the moral throne.)

And she spoke to him all that she had in her heart; and she is their advocate.

And a little after there follows: *And king Solomon gave the queen of Saba all that she desired and asked of him* (3 Kings 10:13). In these words is designated the supreme prerogative of Mary, to whom the Son neither will nor can deny anything. Because she either prays the Father or commands her Son, and is always heard for her reverence, even before she asks: which is noted in this, that it is said *all that she desired* was given her by Solomon. (Look under the title on the ninth privilege of Mary.)

There follows: *Besides what he offered her of his royal bounty* (ibid.), that is, for herself. In these words are designated the gifts and graces which the blessed Virgin had received from God in her sanctification, in the coming upon her of the Holy Spirit, in the conception of the Son of God. In 2 Par. 9:12 it is read that king Solomon gave the queen of Saba much more than she had brought to him.

Morally: if you wish your soul to enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, and to come in death to the true Solomon, it must be a queen, not a slave of sin, as will be set out below. A queen, I say, of Saba, that is,

converted from sin, and intent, that is, enlarged through charity, not straitened through avarice or cupidity; and let it have a great and large train of graces, gifts, and merits, and riches of virtues and good works. For he goes alone who has nothing of virtue, nothing of grace, and so nothing of good operation. But *woe to him that is alone: for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up* (Eccles. 4:10). For *their works follow them* (Apoc. 14:13), that is, those who work them. It is necessary therefore that this queen have camels carrying spices: that is, from the remembrance of her formerly crooked life, to gather and carry together fasts, vigils, tears, and penitential exercises of this kind, which heal the sinful and sick soul after the manner of spices, and make it fragrant before the Lord. It is necessary also that this queen have fourfold gold, namely the gold of chastity, of charity, of wisdom, and of obedience. (Look under the title on the throne.) It is necessary also that she have precious stones, that is, virtues. For of this gold and these gems is composed the crown of the queen, that is, of the faithful soul. Otherwise it is impossible for her to come before the face of the true Solomon.

Otherwise: this is *the queen of the south* (Luke 11:31), namely the faithful soul, or any just man, who ought to come to Christ with a great train. The spices are good repute. The camels are those who humble themselves to bear all these things. The immense gold is much wisdom. The precious stones are good works. Seeing the cupbearers, the preachers, and all the wonders which the true Solomon does, she is astonished. Hence: "I have considered thy works, and was afraid" (cf. Hab. 3:2).

Happy are thy men, who stand before thee always, etc. (3 Kings 10:8). Isa. 21:8: *I am upon the watchtower of the Lord*, etc. She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold; and we owe Christ gold, the purity of conscience; spices, the odor of good repute; and precious stones, the expectation of glory. Prov. 17:8: *The expectation of him that expecteth is a most acceptable jewel.*

Morally: the queen of Saba is the faithful soul, who comes to Solomon, that is, to Christ, in death. Then therefore she tasted all wisdom, of which now scarcely a faint odor is perceived. All wisdom as regards the deity, and the house which he built as regards the humanity, and the meats of his table, that is, the refreshment which is in him.

She had no longer any spirit in her (3 Kings 10:5 ff.), that is, *(p. 360)* beyond what can be believed she wondered and rejoiced. For for joy one sometimes falls into ecstasy. *And she said to the king: The report is true*, namely of the preachers, *which I heard in my own country*, that is, in the world, *concerning thy words*, that is, thy promises, *and concerning thy wisdom: and I did not believe them that told me*, that is, the preachers, *till I came myself, and saw with my own eyes*: because *as we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord* (Ps. 47:9): *and have found that the half hath not been told me.* What wonder? because it could not be told: because neither hath it entered into the heart of man. *Blessed are thy men, and blessed are thy servants*, thy ministers. *Blessed be the Lord thy God*, the Father, *whom thou hast pleased*, O Christ, that is, with the Holy Spirit thou hast pleased, etc.

Book VII: How Mary Is Designated by Heavenly and Higher Things

Chapter 1: Mary, Heaven

(p. 361) Heaven, firmament, sun, and moon, star; horizon, morning star, dawn, light, daybreak, morning, day.

Mary is heaven, chiefly as regards her soul. Hence it is said, Jer. 23:24: *I fill heaven and earth*, that is, the soul and body of Mary. Note that he says heaven before earth: because the Virgin conceived him first in her mind through faith and love, before she conceived him in her womb through the union of nature.

Otherwise: *I fill heaven and earth*, that is, Mary, earth by nature, but heaven by grace. Again, in Ps. 102:19: *The Lord hath prepared in heaven*, that is, in the Virgin's womb, namely by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, or through the wisdom which he himself is, because *wisdom hath built herself a house* (Prov. 9:1). What did he prepare? *His throne.* Ezek. 44:3: *The prince himself shall sit in it*, etc.

Heaven is described thus: Heaven is of a subtle and fiery nature, round, and gathered from the center of the earth by equal distances on every side: whence it is also called vaulted, and is seen as the middle, and is continually turned round with unspeakable swiftness. And heaven (*caelum*) is so called from concealing (*celando*), because it conceals from us the secrets of God: and the blessed Virgin prudently concealed the divine mysteries from the reprobate, but clearly manifested them to the Evangelists. Luke 2:19: *Mary kept*, etc. There Bede: "Mary, guarding the laws of virginal modesty, was unwilling to divulge the secrets of Christ which she knew, but reverently waited for him to divulge them when he would and as he would." Of secrets of this kind it is said, Col. 1:26: *The mystery which hath been hidden from ages and generations.* Isa. 24:16: *My secret to myself*, etc., say Christ and the Virgin. Heaven is also so called from engraving (*caelando*), in another meaning of the word, as it were an engraved vessel, that is, marked out with stars. Heaven is called as it were the storeroom (*cellarium*) *(p. 362)* of the Lord: because thence descend to the earth, that is, to earthly men, *every best gift and every perfect gift* (James 1:17). Heaven is also called as it were *casa helios*, that is, the house of the true sun of justice, in which he dwelt bodily for nine months. A *casa* is properly a small house, in which are noted the humility and poverty of the Virgin.

Mary is heaven. Because heaven is the primary work of God. Hence, Gen. 1:1: *In the beginning God created heaven and earth.* And she is the primary work of God in dignity and in prefiguration. Hence she says, Prov. 8:22, according to another reading: "The Lord created me in the beginning of his ways" [the edition notes that the Vulgate has *The Lord possessed me*]. Ecclus. 24:5: *The firstborn before all creatures.* In the same place, v. 14: *From the beginning, and before the world, was I created*, etc. (Look for all this under the title on her excellence.)

Because it contains the secrets of God, as above. These secrets are the virtues known to God alone, the whole of which she contained in herself. Or, these secrets are the Son, as yet unknown to the world, who is hidden there through the incarnation. Col. 1:26: *The mystery which hath been hidden*, etc., as above. Of this twofold hiding it is so often repeated in the Canticles: *Besides that which lieth hid within* (Cant. 4:1). Isa. 45:15, the Prophet says to Christ: *Verily thou art a hidden God*, namely in the virginal womb.

Because it is highest. Hence the Prophet to Christ: *Thou hast made the most High thy refuge* (Ps. 90:9). For this heaven was so much the higher, the more it was raised from the earth through contempt of the world. For she left far beneath her whatever is earthly, and clung sublimely to supercelestial goods. For which reason it is said of this heaven, Prov. 25:3: *The heaven above, and the earth beneath.* The heaven above, because her soul ruled over the flesh. The earth beneath, that is, the flesh, which served the soul. And in this are confounded the voluptuous and the covetous, who pervert the order of the creature and the ordinance of the

Creator; which two kinds of men care only for the body and earthly things. Again, on account of this height she says, Job 7:15: *My soul rather chooseth hanging*, etc. And Phil. 3:20: *Our conversation is in heaven.* For this reason also she says with the Son, Isa. 66:1: *Heaven is my throne*, because there I rest in mind; *and the earth my footstool*, because I tread all earthly things underfoot. For her conversation was in the governance of spirits. And therefore she was wholly spiritual and in the highest contemplation of eternal things: because *standing on the earth, she reached to heaven* (Wis. 18:16).

Because it is most beautiful, in that it is most luminous, that is, adorned and decorated with the whole array of the luminaries. Ecclus. 43:10: *The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven*, that is, of Mary; that is, the splendor and brightness of the virtues, or the whole array of graces. For which reason she is said to be *surrounded with variety*, and *clothed round about with varieties* (Ps. 44:10, 15). For this reason also she is compared to the topaz. In the sun is noted the Virgin's charity, which illuminates the intellect and inflames the affection. In the moon, humility, which has its light from the sun. Hence she says: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me*, etc. (Luke 1:49). Again that: *By the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Cor. 15:10). In the stars, obedience: *Being called, they said: Here we are; and with cheerfulness they have shined forth* to him, not to themselves, *that made them* (Bar. 3:35). For she ran her course in the most orderly way: since she was not a wandering star. But note that this kind of beauty is on the side of the earth, that is, of earthly men, whom she lights up with the rays of her examples; but of the beauty of this heaven on the upper side, *(p. 363)* that is, toward God and the Angels, there can be said that of Cant. 4:3: *Besides that which lieth hid within*: known perfectly to God alone, and perhaps to the Angels, but only half-fully. For how great is the beauty of Mary he alone who gave the beauty knows to the full.

Because it is most subtle, as above in the description. So also she, through the understanding of divine things. She was also subtle in the understanding of the Lord's incarnation. Blessed Bernard: "To her alone was it given to know, to whom alone it was given to experience." Again, subtle through mercy, which she knows how to bestow on the wretched so subtly that she does not break the seal of divine justice. And about this especially consists her diligence, of which it is said: *Declare his* [here, *her*] *ways among the Gentiles* (Ps. 9:12).

Because it is most hot, since it is of a fiery nature, as above in the description. So also she, through the vehemence of charity and the abundance of the Holy Spirit. For she was made wholly fiery from the time she enclosed in her womb him who is *a consuming fire* (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29). For this reason also her womb is called an oven (Lev. 7:9), heated with the fire of the Holy Spirit: because there the living bread was baked.

Because it is most ordered. Hence the Lord to Job, 38:33: *Dost thou know the order of heaven*, that is, of Mary? As if he said: Not thou, but I alone. For she was ordered in thought, in sight, in hearing, in smell, in taste, in touch, in gait, in every motion and gesture, and the like, according to that of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 14:40: *Let all things be done decently, and according to order*, namely in you. For the motion of heaven is uniform, as it were stable in good. And the blessed Virgin, according to the good pleasure of the divine will, was continually moved through regular obedience, whose rule is the divine will. The motion of heaven also is swift and imperceptible. Because her life was *hid with Christ in God* (Col. 3:3). The motion of heaven also is contrary to the wandering planets. Because the thoughts and works of Mary are contrary to all the malignant, namely both to perverse men, that is, heretics, and to the powers of the air, whom Jude calls *wandering stars, to whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever* (Jude 13).

Again, although heaven always revolves, yet it never grows weary. So Mary, running to the prize, was never affected with weariness: because after the example of the Son *she rejoiced as a giant to run the way* (Ps. 18:6), namely of the commandments of God. Isa. 40:31 is said of Christ, Mary, and the saints: *They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.* Again, heaven always moves forward, and never goes back. Hence it is said of the holy living creatures, Ezek. 1:12: *Every one of them went straight forward: whither the impulse of the spirit was to go, thither they went: and they turned not when they went.* But the wicked on the

contrary *went backward and not forward* (Jer. 7:24). So also she always advanced from virtue to virtue, and never stood still in the way of the Lord, in which not to go forward is to go back, as an authority says.

Because it is illumined by the sun of justice. Hence also she is called *a woman clothed with the sun* (Apoc. 12:1).

Because it is revolving. So also she, when, having conceived the Saviour, she at once visited Elizabeth (Luke 1:39 ff.). When also, at the time of the enrollment, she came from Nazareth to Bethlehem, her delivery being already at hand (Luke 2:4–5). And when, her Son being born, she carried him to the temple (ibid., v. 22). And a little after she took him into Egypt, fleeing by dispensation from the face of Herod (Matt. 2:14). And after four years, as Bede says, Herod being dead, she returned with him into the land *(p. 364)* of Israel (Matt. 2:14). Afterward also she followed her Son as he preached the gospel through villages and towns, and stood by him crucified (John 19:25).

Because it is orbicular and round and turned in the circle of perfection. For the heavenly bodies have a spherical form, as is clear in the heaven, the sun, the moon, and every star. And by such a figure eternity is designated, lacking beginning and end; the appetite and desire for which is figured by the spherical figure; and such appetite and desire Mary had above all creatures. Hence it was said to her, Luke 1:30: *Fear not, Mary, thou hast found grace,* which thou didst seek. Again, since the orbicular figure is without angles, in which doubleness is figured, it designates simplicity: which virtue Mary had above all, who asked one thing and received it, knowing that *one thing is necessary* (Luke 10:42). Of those who are double-minded, and therefore *inconstant in all their ways*, it is said in James 1:8. Zeph. 1:16: *A day of the Lord… against the high corners*, that is, against all the angular and proud. For by this is removed from her all evil singularity and all uncleanness: because, as blessed Bernard says, where there is singularity, there is a corner; there without doubt is dirt, or rust. Where also there is a corner, there is no level. But note that she was even through justice, wholly level through meekness. For there is level where part does not stand out above part. Again, because the orbicular figure is of the greatest capacity among all figures, it rightly figures Mary, in whose womb he enclosed himself, made man, whom the whole world could not contain. Nor was she only as capacious as heaven, nay, she contained heaven itself in herself. Well does she say, Ecclus. 24:8: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven. The circuit of heaven*, that is, him who encloses all things, namely Christ, who is the circle that cannot be encircled. *I have compassed* with the bosom of my womb, *alone*, that is, without the fellowship of a man. And so it is presumed and can be proved that she contains in herself all things which are contained within the circuit of heaven (Esther 13:10). And for this reason she is compared to the rainbow, of which it is said, Ecclus. 43:13: *It compasseth the heaven about with the circle of its glory*, etc.

Because it is extended and spread out. Isa. 40:22: *He that stretcheth out the heavens as nothing, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.* Job 9:8: *Who alone spreadeth out the heavens,* that is, enlarges Mary and the saints through charity. In Ps. 103:2: *Who stretchest out the heaven like a pavilion* [literally, *like a skin*]. For as the skin covers the whole animal, surrounds, contains, and wraps the whole body of the animal, so also heaven embraces and encloses the whole body of the world. So also Mary covers and clothes her lovers with the garments of the virtues. (Look for this in the fourteenth cause.) Her name also is spread out to the ends of all the earth: because *all generations shall call her blessed* (Luke 1:48), according to that of Cant. 1:2: *Thy name is as oil poured out: therefore young maidens have loved thee exceedingly.* It is spread out also through the immensity of mercy, since *there is no one that can hide himself from her heat* (Ps. 18:7): and through the multitude of benefits, because she has become all things to all, that, as far as in her lies, she may gain all. Or, this is the spreading out through charity and love of friends and enemies. Hence she says: *And I walked at large* (Ps. 118:45).

Because it is made solid, through constancy of mind and firmness of faith. Job 37:18: *Thou perhaps hast made the heavens with him, which are most strong, as if they were of molten brass.* And he calls the heavens

Mary and the Apostles.

Because it is gleaming and most splendid, through the spreading abroad of examples: for her glorious life illumines all the churches.

Because it is supremely peaceful: for *he hath placed peace in her borders (p. 365)* (Ps. 147:14): for the enemy had no access to her. Hence it is said to Christ her indweller: *There shall no evil come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling* (Ps. 90:10), that is, the blessed Virgin. For no motion of sensuality repugnant to reason disturbed her peace: and therefore *his place is in peace* there (Ps. 75:3). For she was truly the ark of Noah, which is interpreted *rest*: because he rested in her tabernacle for nine months, as she herself says: *He that made me rested in my tabernacle* (Ecclus. 24:12), both of my body and of my soul.

Because it is laden with God as its indweller, who says of her, Isa. 66:1 and Acts 7:49: *Heaven is my throne*, etc. Again, in Ps. 102:19: *The Lord hath prepared his throne in heaven*, as above.

Because it is the dwelling of the Angels: and Mary is the spiritual, nay also the bodily, dwelling of each of those virtues which are wont to be especially attributed to the Angels, which are *charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity* (Gal. 5:22–23). These are the twelve spiritual or interior luminaries of this heaven, or the twelve stars in the crown of Mary (Apoc. 12:1).

Because it receives nothing unlike itself. Hence it is said to Christ: *Neither shall the wicked dwell near thee: nor shall the unjust abide before thy eyes: thou hatest all the workers of iniquity* (Ps. 5:6). The wicked (*malignus*), that is, fired with an evil fire (*malo igne ignitus*), namely kindled with anger, or hatred, or lust, or avarice. Likewise Mary never received unlike things, that is, vices with virtues: because *no defiled thing cometh into her* (Wis. 7:25). For *what concord hath Christ with Belial*, or light with darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14–15).

Because from it both dew and rain descend to the earth. Isa. 45:8: *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above.* James 5:18: *Elias prayed, and the heaven gave rain.* Likewise from this heaven we have the dew of grace and the rain of sound doctrine; or the dew and rain of manifold refreshment against the heat of vices, and manifold fruitfulness for working well.

Because it has waters above it, as it is said in Ps. 28:3. (Look below concerning the firmament.) And by these waters is signified the abundance of graces which she had from above; or the abundance of tears in the passion of her Son; or rather the upper watering after the ascension of Christ, from the desire of coming to him, when weeping she said to him: *Draw me after thee* (Cant. 1:3).

Because heaven is the governor of the world: and she is the governor of worldly men through the help of her prayers. Ecclus. 43:28: *By his word all things are regulated.*

Because the proper color of this heaven is sapphire, or hyacinth, or as it were mixed of white and sapphire. Adapt colors of this kind to her contemplations.

Because in her, as in heaven, there were as it were twelve spiritual signs, six ascending and six descending.

The signs by which the sun ascends are six. The first, Capricorn, which is the same as a goat, namely a fetid animal, by which is designated the reproach of sin. I do not say of her own sin, because she did no sin, but because she reproached and took ill every sin, as is read in the book of her *Infancy*: and also because she supplies to her servants the grace of reproaching their own sins, and requires of them the reproach of sins. For she is Rebecca, who says to Jacob, that is, to her spiritual son, Gen. 27:8–9: *Son, (p. 366) follow my counsel: and go thy way to the flock, bring me two kids of the best, that I may make of them meat for thy father, such as he gladly eateth.* (You will find this excellently expounded in our treatise on contrition, under the title on the reproach of sin.) Morally, he has this sign in himself who, reproaching his sins, displeases himself through holy indignation. Jer. 3:6: *She hath gone away of herself*, etc.

The second, Aquarius: because she had in herself manifold weeping, and both kinds of watering. (Look in section 7 of the enclosed garden, where the garden is called watered.) Therefore it is said of her, Isa. 15:5: *By the ascent of Luith she shall go up weeping.* Luith is interpreted *jaw*, and by the power of the tears flowing down her jaws she ascended to God. Therefore also the spouse says to her, Cant. 7:4, commending her for the multitude of her tears: *Thy eyes like the fishpools in Hesebon*, etc. (You will find this expounded under the title on the beauty of her eyes.)

The third, Pisces. A fish (*piscis*) is so called from feeding (*pascendo*), and the conversation of Mary is a most savory food. Hence she says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger* (Ecclus. 24:29). (Look for the exposition in section 11 of the enclosed garden.) A fish delights in the sea and is nourished there: and she, in the tribulations which she suffered with her Son and for her Son, exulted, and so was spiritually fattened. Hence it is said of her and the other saints, Deut. 33:19: *They shall suck as milk the abundance of the sea*, that is, the tribulations of the world, as milk, which is sweet and nourishing; that is, they shall draw them sweetly and with desire, as children milk from the breast; after the example of Job 6:8, saying: *Who will grant that my request may come?* etc. And Hab. 3:16: *Let rottenness enter into my bones*, etc. Mary indeed is designated by Rebecca, which is interpreted *much patience*, or *she who received much.* For because she had much patience after the example of her Son, she is believed to have received much reward from him, etc.

The fourth, Aries, that is, the winnowing away of sins. For the ram defends itself with its horns. And it is named from a Greek word which means *virtue.* The two horns of Mary are as it were virginity and humility: for she protected herself from every carnal vice by the purity of virginity, and from every spiritual wickedness by the virtue of humility. And these are the horns which shall be exalted in the future. To her also befits that of Prov. 30:31: *A ram, neither is there any king to resist him*: because she winnowed away from the Church of God all heretical depravity. Morally: the just man is a ram, who namely ought to have two horns, that is, preaching as regards the word, and good works as regards example, and to be strong in the preservation of justice.

The fifth, Taurus, which is a proud animal and fit for sacrifice, and designates a certain holy pride by which one disdains and rejects vices and sins. This the blessed Mary had, since she was most wise: because *in much wisdom there is much indignation* (Eccles. 1:18). Hence she also says with the Son, Isa. 63:5: *My indignation itself hath helped me.* A calf also is wont to be sacrificed to the Lord, and designates the sacrifice of praise for the victory over vices. Hence, Hos. 14:3: *We will render the calves of our lips.* And Ps. 50:21: *They shall lay calves upon thy altar.* And to attribute the victory over vices not to oneself, but to God, *and that sacrifice which shall please God better than a young calf* (Ps. 68:32). And this calf ought to be fattened (Luke 15:23), through the fatness of devotion.

The sixth, Gemini, which is to care for others' business as one's own, and to believe oneself born not for oneself, but for the whole world. And this especially the virtue of charity does, which *seeketh not her own* (1 Cor. 13:5), but puts common business before its own. Hence Jerome says there: "And this the blessed Virgin did, who, having conceived the Saviour, would not *(p. 367)* remain at rest, but at once visited Elizabeth, who was with child, to minister to her" (Luke 1:39). She also desired to die with her Son for the salvation of the world: and if she did not lay down her life, yet she exposed it. And she does not cease to further our business in the sight of God. Hence also she is called our advocate. Such was Moses, and such he showed himself to the people of the Hebrews. Hence also he said to the Lord, Exod. 32:31–32: *Either forgive them this trespass, or if thou do not, strike me out of the book that thou hast written.*

By these six steps the blessed Virgin ascended to such dignity that she was made the throne of the true Solomon. And by these virtues, or works of the virtues, man ascends to God. Hence, Ps. 83:8: *They shall go*, namely the saints, *from virtue to virtue: the God of gods shall be seen in Sion.*

There are also six other signs by which the sun descends.

The first, Cancer, which goes backward: that is, to return to oneself through examination of oneself. This sign was in the heaven of Mary when, the conception of the Son of God being announced to her, conscious of human frailty and of the female sex, and reckoning herself unworthy of so great a dignity, she humbly answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc. (Luke 1:38). Morally: Isa. 46:8: *Return, ye transgressors, to the heart.* Nah. 3:14 it is said to the sinner: *Go into the clay, and tread*, etc. Mic. 6:14: *Thy humiliation shall be in the midst of thee.*

The second, Leo, at whose roaring the animals stand still: that is, the repression of the depraved motions of sensuality and of the tinder of sin. No doubt this sign was in this heaven, if perhaps before the conception of the Son—when the tinder was wholly extinguished in her—she never felt anything of this kind. Morally: when the just man roars through confession and prayer, from the groaning of his heart, depraved motions can go no further. (Look in the third verse on confession, where confession is called groaning, and there you will find of the roaring of the lion.)

The third, Virgo, that is, good barrenness, of which it is said, Wis. 3:13: *Happy is the barren, and the undefiled*, and so on. Under this sign arose our glorious Virgin, who first vowed virginity and rejected the foulness of intercourse with a man. Hence she said: *Because I know not man* (Luke 1:34). Morally: by this sign is understood the consideration of one's own unfruitfulness, by which we are barren and fruitless of good work. Of whom it is said, Matt. 7:19: *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.* Therefore nothing remains but lamentation, mourning, and groaning. Hence, Joel 1:8: *Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth*, etc. For this reason the daughter of Jephte is said to have bewailed her virginity (Judg. 11:38).

The fourth, Libra, that is, the weighing of penance against the quantity of sins; or the weighing of work against the grace given us; or the weighing of thanksgiving against the benefits of the Creator; or the weighing of works of mercy against the quantity of temporal things committed to us, according to that of Tob. 4:9: *If thou have much, give abundantly*, etc. Again, Ecclus. 14:13: *According to thy ability, stretching out thy hand give to the poor.* In the same, 35:12: *Give to the most High according to what he hath given to thee*, etc. And this heaven had it, according to that of Ecclus. 21:28: *The words of the prudent shall be weighed in a balance.* For for each benefit of God she rendered a corresponding thanksgiving, saying: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49), and the like. For this reason it is said in the book of her *Infancy* that she blessed God without intermission. And lest perhaps even in a greeting she should be drawn away from the praises of God, if anyone greeted her first, she answered with "Thanks be to God" for a greeting. For she had read the Psalmist saying, Ps. 12:6: *I will sing to the Lord*, that is, I will praise *(p. 368)* the Lord, *who giveth me good things*, that is, because he has bestowed good things on me. Again, it is said to the Lord of the just man, Ps. 48:19: *He will praise thee when thou shalt do well to him.* For it was especially fitting for her to say unceasingly that of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 9:15: *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.* This same word is also supremely incumbent on us: because he mercifully bestowed on us this Mary. Morally: he has this sign in himself who weighs his penance according to how he has sinned. Hence, Deut. 25:2: *According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be*, etc., as was said above.

The fifth, Scorpio, which flatters with its head but stings with its tail, and signifies sin flattering in the fault but stinging in the punishment. This sign our heaven had in itself in a certain way: because in view of this consideration she guarded herself from every sin, although she often dwelt with her Son among scorpions (Ezek. 2:6). And especially in her Son's passion, when she neither provoked anyone, nor could be provoked by anyone.

The sixth, Sagittarius: because for her Son she bore manifold natural want, as it were a manifold arrow, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, watching, and the like. The passion of her Son also pierced her soul as with a manifold dart, according to the prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:35). Hence she could truly say that of Job 6:4: *The arrows of the Lord*, that is, the sufferings of my Son, *are in me*, through compassion. A verse:

Death, sickness, heat and cold, thirst and hunger, weariness too: whatever these are, they are arrows to me.

Again, that which the Son says of the Father, Lam. 3:12: *He hath set me as a mark for the arrow.* Her humility also is *the arrow of the Lord's salvation* against Syria, which is interpreted *lofty*, and designates pride. This is read in 4 Kings 13:17. Likewise also each of the virtues of Mary overturns and slays the vices opposed to it. By this archer, therefore, is designated the patient endurance of any tribulations whatever for the love of God.

Chapter 2: Mary, Firmament

Firmament, that is, the firmament of which it is said, Gen. 1:6: *Let there be a firmament made amidst the waters: and let it divide the waters from the waters.* Literally: the firmament is the surface of the sensible world, which is said to consist of congealed waters, and above the firmament are waters. Hence the Psalmist says, Ps. 148:4–5: *Let the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord.* And those waters are said by some to be solidified into ice: but it is more truly believed that they are vaporous, and that the dew is said to descend from there. And it is called firmament as it were *firm*, because it is a boundary that cannot be passed. Or because it is made firm by the course of the stars and by fixed and settled laws, as Isidore says.

(p. 369) Mary is called firmament as regards herself, and as regards us.

As regards herself: because she was so made firm in every virtue and grace, especially in the conception of the Son, that afterward she could in no way sin, neither venially nor mortally. Hence she says: *And so was I established in Sion* (Ecclus. 24:15).

As regards us: because she makes her own firm in good, and in them makes firm in good their graces and virtues: and for this reason she is called *the firmament of heaven*, that is, of the Church. Hence, Gen. 1:14: *Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven.* Of which lights you will find below. And since the firmament, according to Gregory, holds the nature of water, which water namely, bound by frost into ice, was afterward solidified into crystal, it well designates Mary, who in this life was as it were flowing water, not as regards fault, but as regards liability to suffering. She was also like ice: because shining through holiness of life. She was like crystal, which *froze from the water* (Ecclus. 43:22), when she conceived the Saviour. (Look under the title on precious stones, where she is compared to crystal.)

Mary is firmament. Because of her especially it was said, Dan. 3:56: *Blessed art thou, O Lord, in the firmament of heaven*, etc. For although all the works of God bless him—since no creature is so despised that it does not seem to contain the praise of God by some singular benefit—yet he is more excellently blessed in the firmament of heaven, which is Mary: not only because she singularly surpasses the other creatures, but also because, by the manifold adornment of her lights, that is, her virtues, after the manner of the firmament she wonderfully shows forth in herself the marvelous power of God; for the lights are placed in her not only that they may shine in her, but also that they may *divide the day and the night*, that is, vices and virtues, and *give light upon the earth*, that is, to earthly men, as is said of the firmament (Gen. 1:6 ff.).

Because after the manner of the firmament she surpasses the other works of God in three ways. First, in the beauty of her condition: because she is *all fair, and there is not a spot* in her (Cant. 4:7). Second, in greatness: because she is virgin and mother, and not of anyone whatever, but of God: hence she alone can say with the Father to the very Son of God: *Thou art my son*, etc. (Ps. 2:7). Third, in sublimity: because she is *blessed among women*, that is, above all women, as Jerome glosses, and placed above all the Angels and holy souls at the right hand of the Son on the throne of glory. Of the height and the beauty, Ecclus. 43:1: *The firmament on high is his beauty, the beauty of heaven with its glorious show.*

Because the firmament is so called for its firmness. And she is a firmament both as regards us and as regards herself, namely actively and passively. Passively: because in the very moment of the conception of the Son of God the tinder of sin was so utterly extinguished in her, and she was so confirmed in good, that she could in no way sin mortally or venially thereafter. Hence she says: *In Sion*, that is, in the Church militant, *was I established* (Ecclus. 24:15), that is, wholly confirmed in good. (Look under the title on the holiness of Mary.) Actively: because she mercifully confirms in good her familiars, however frail. For she it is *who giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not* (Isa. 40:29). Therefore, Ecclus. 3:34, it is said of the servant of Mary: *In the time of his fall he shall find a sure stay* [literally, *a firmament*].

Because the firmament is most splendid. So also she, through the lights of the virtues and the knowledge of the Scriptures. Dan. 12:3: *They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament*, and so on.

Because the firmament is the last and highest in the arrangement of the world: and *(p. 370)* because she was the last and least of the creatures of God in her own eyes through humility, therefore she was made the highest and surpassing all creatures through exaltation: because *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke 14:11): and he who humbles himself more in his own eyes is the more exalted in the sight of God. Therefore it is said, Ecclus. 7:19: *Humble thy spirit very much*, etc. And Ps. 37:9: *I am humbled even very much*, etc., according to another reading [the edition notes that the Vulgate has *I am humbled exceedingly*].

Because the firmament is most remote from the earth: and this through contempt of the world. For she is that *queen of the south*, who *came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon* (Matt. 12:42).

Because the firmament is moved most swiftly and continually, as was said above of heaven, which is revolving.

Because the firmament literally divides the waters from the waters. Hence, Gen. 1:6: *Let there be a firmament made amidst the waters: and let it divide the waters from the waters.* By the waters are understood delights; and Mary, after the manner of the firmament, had the upper waters, that is, heavenly delights, above her through desire: but the waters, that is, the delights of earthly or carnal pleasures, she had beneath her through contempt. For she is *the woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet* (Apoc. 12:1). The upper waters are called crystalline: because heavenly delights are stable and solid. But the lower waters, that is, temporal delights, are slippery, and never remain in the same state, as is said of man, Job 14:2. And they flow to the sea: because, as Gregory says, all human happiness is sprinkled with many bitternesses. Eccles. 1:7: *All the rivers run into the sea.*

Otherwise: the waters are peoples. Hence, Apoc. 17:15: *The waters which thou sawest… are peoples*, etc. And Mary, who is the firmament in her lovers, divides the waters from the waters, that is, those who before were unstable through sins and vices she lifts up from the flood of vices to the desire of eternal things; namely when she *raiseth up the needy from the dust, and lifteth up the poor* in spirit, that is, the humble, *out of the dunghill, that he may sit with princes*, that is, may rest spiritually with the Angels in heavenly places (Ps. 112:7–8). For she is that mouth of the Lord of which it is said, Jer. 15:19: *If thou wilt separate the precious from the vile*, that is, the soul from sin, *thou shalt be as my mouth*, says the Lord. She also makes a firmament of some in whom she is well pleased: which consists of flowing waters that have hardened into ice, when she solidifies and makes firm in good minds which before were fluid, according to that of Job 28:2: *Iron is taken out of the earth, and stone melted with heat is turned into brass.*

Because the firmament, although it revolves most swiftly and continually, yet does not change its place. So Mary, although she was continually moved to good exercises and went forward from virtue to virtue, according to that of Wis. 10:10: *The Lord conducted the just through the right ways*—he *conducted*, he did not make to stand still—yet did not change her proper place, that is, humility, which is the proper place of the just. Or, the place is charity, or peace, where God rests: because *his place is in peace* (Ps. 75:3).

Because the firmament revolves from East to West, and conversely, and yet does not change its place, as has been said. So the just man, on account of the rising of grace or prosperity, is not proud, but is always mindful of his last end, according to the counsel of the wise man, Ecclus. 7:40: *In all thy works remember thy last end*, because they tend toward the setting. Therefore the saints are called westerners. Hence, Isa. 13:20: *Neither shall the Arabian pitch his tents there*—Arabian, which is interpreted *westerner*—and he speaks of Babylon, which signifies the world.

(p. 371) Of this firmament can be expounded that of Ps. 18:2: *The firmament declareth the work of his hands.* The hands with which the Lord worked whatever he did in the Virgin are his wisdom and power. These works the glorious Virgin announced and made known to the Apostles and Evangelists as a gospel, that is, good news: because when Christ ascended she was made their teacher.

Or, otherwise: the special works of God, of which the Prophet says, *I meditated upon the works of thy hands* (Ps. 142:5), are the works of the passion and of our redemption, which she announced. Hence blessed Luke, who more fully describes the Lord's passion, as Ambrose says, is said to have learned his Gospel from her. And then that prophecy of David seems to have been fulfilled: *There shall be a firmament on the earth on the tops of mountains* (Ps. 71:16). For the Lord willed that she should be a firmament on earth below, as he himself is the firmament above. Hence: *The Lord is a firmament to them that fear him* (Ps. 24:14). For on earth there are weak men, whom she makes firm in good, as was said above. There are also just men, in whom she confirms the virtues bestowed on them, and this in good. Hence, Ecclus. 34:19, she is called *a firmament of strength* [Vulgate: *a strong stay*]. And what follows, *On the tops of mountains*, understand of the Apostles, who are the highest among the mountains, that is, among all the saints, and nearer to heaven; in whom, after the ascension of the Son, she confirmed the knowledge of the new law, when *the new law went forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem* (Mic. 4:2). For she is designated by Sion and Jerusalem.

There follows: *The fruit thereof shall be exalted above Libanus* (Ps. 71:16). Libanus is interpreted *whiteness*, and signifies purity of life. The fruit of Mary is Christ, or the good works which are exalted through the purity of her life, which is signified by whiteness. Or, by Libanus, which is called *whitening*, is signified the world, above which the fruit of good works is to be exalted. Or, *the fruit thereof*, namely Christ, of whom she says, Prov. 8:19: *Better is his fruit than gold and the precious stone*, which two things are reckoned more precious by worldly men.

Chapter 3: Mary, Sun

Having seen how Mary is heaven and firmament, we must now see concerning the lights of this firmament, of which it is said, Gen. 1:14: *Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven*, etc.

And first concerning the sun.

Mary is the sun. Hence she is called *fair as the moon, bright as the sun* (Cant. 6:9). Again, Ecclus. 26:21: *As the sun when it riseth to the world in the high places of God, so is the beauty of a good wife for the ornament (p. 372) of her house.* Again, in Ps. 88:38 the Father says of the Son: *His throne*, that is, the blessed Virgin, *as the sun before me*, etc.

Mary is the sun. Because as the sun is a luminary having no equal, and abundantly sufficient for the whole world: so the blessed Virgin "seems to have had none like her before," etc. Again, because she shines everywhere on earth with the brightness of miracles, and will shine until the day of judgment. Hence she says: *Unto the world to come I shall not cease to be* (Ecclus. 24:14). But the other saints after their passing shone for some years in particular places. Because the sun (*sol*) is so called as it were shining alone (*solus lucens*), that is, beyond the other luminaries: for as it is preferred to the other stars in clearness of light and majesty, so in heavenly glory Mary is set above all the saints in honor and glory. Therefore in figure of Mary

it was said of Judith, Judith 11:19: *There is not such another woman upon earth*, etc. For as the sun is the most beautiful of the luminaries of heaven, so Mary is the worthiest of the creatures of God after the soul of Christ. Hence it is sung in the sequence:

As the sun is brighter than the moon, and the moon than the stars, so Mary is worthier than all creatures.

Therefore also she is called *the firstborn before all creatures* (ibid., v. 5), that is, worthier than every mere creature. For in the world there is one sun. And Mary is the one and only mother and virgin. Hence also she is compared to the phoenix, which is the only bird without a father. Hence Sedulius:

She seems to have had none like her before, nor to have one to follow.

Therefore also she is called *chosen as the sun* (Cant. 6:9): which has no equal; nor does she have an equal, nor will she have one for ever. Or she is called *chosen as the sun* for this reason: because as the sun was made to illuminate the whole world, as Genesis says (1:16), so Mary was made by God the Trinity for this, that she might obtain from God for the whole world mercy, pardon, grace, and glory, as a light. Or, *chosen as the sun*: because as the sun, that is, Christ, is *chosen out of thousands* of men (Cant. 5:10), so Mary is chosen out of thousands of women. Hence it is said, Cant. 6:8: *She is the only one of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her.* Therefore also she is called *a woman among all* (Eccles. 7:29), namely gathered from all good women, representing in herself, one and unique, all the properties and virtues of good women. For as she herself says of her Son, Cant. 2:3: *As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons*: so also the Son says in the same place of the mother, v. 2: *As the lily among thorns*, etc. Or, *chosen as the sun*, that is, chosen for this, that she may be as it were a sun. Hence, Ecclus. 26:21: *As the sun when it riseth to the world in the high places of God, so is the beauty of a good wife for the ornament of her house.* For as the sun by its brightness illuminates and adorns the whole world, so the beauty of the blessed Virgin and her life illumine the whole Church, as is sung on her nativity. For as the sun illumines the moon, so Mary illumines the whole Church. Blessed Bernard: “Take away Mary, and what remains but darkness? As, if the sun be taken away, the world is wretched.” This you will find below. Or, *chosen as the sun*, that is, as Christ her Son: therefore without spot, like the sun. Hence also it is said to her, Cant. 4:7: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.* Or, *chosen as the sun*, that is, representing in herself the image of the true sun in the whole range of the virtues. Abbot Egbert to Mary: “Thou art chosen as the sun—that sun, I say, the maker of the sun. For he is chosen out of thousands of men, thou art chosen out of thousands of women. He is chosen out of all things that are, thou art chosen out of all things that are through him.” Or, *chosen as the sun* to illuminate, namely *(p. 373)* the intellect through true knowledge, and to inflame the affection through true love. Or, chosen by God as the sun, because alone, without precedent, she pleased the Lord Jesus Christ, who says: “Thou alone pleasest me.” Hence also he says to her, Isa. 62:4: *Thy land shall be inhabited*, that is, thy flesh shall be made fruitful, *because the Lord hath been well pleased with thee.* Therefore the Church sings of her as if rejoicing with her: “God chose her, and chose her beforehand,” etc.

Again, the sun (*sol*) is so called as it were bestowing its own on all (*sua omnibus largiens*): because whatever she has, as far as in her lies, she shares with all, both good and bad; so that there befits her what is said of the Father, Rom. 8:32: *He that delivered up his own Son for us all*, namely willing him to suffer, *how hath he not also, with him, given us all things?* For to the wicked she obtains pardon and grace, as is clear in Theophilus. Hence it is sung: “Reforming Theophilus to grace.” But for the just she obtains grace, multiplies it, and preserves it. Therefore she is called the dawn as regards beginners. To those who are in the night, that is, who sin deeply, she is a star and a moon; but to the proficient and perfect, as it were a sun. On account of this common sharing it is said of the Father and of this sun, Matt. 5:45: *Who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad.* Therefore also it is said of her, Wis. 6:8: *He hath equally*, that is, in a sharing way, *care of all.* For as *there is no respect of persons with God* (Rom. 2:11), so neither with Mary. Indeed, through the absence of this sun we suffer the darkness of ignorance, the cold and frost of malice, of torpor and sloth: but the splendor of knowledge and the fervor of love we claim from her nearness.

The sun is also so called as it were lifting upward (*sursum levans*): because in its heat it is said to draw up the salt drops of the sea. Amos 5:8: *Who calleth the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth*, etc. The sea is the world. The little drops of the sea are stinking, salt, and bitter sinners, who stink and grow bitter, and are of no account before God. Ecclus. 18:8: *They are esteemed as a drop of water of the sea: and as a pebble of the sand*, etc. *The waters are peoples* (Apoc. 17:15). These waters Mary draws, by the heat of piety and charity, to the worship of her Son by prayers, merits, and examples; and, the saltness of vices being taken from them, she sets them, sweetened as it were through grace, before sinners, who are earth, as an example, that by the example of those before, those after may be converted. Such a drop was Theophilus, whom this sun piously drew to God, who by his example still waters the dry hearts of sinners, that they may not grow sluggish in imploring the mercy of the Lord's mother.

Mary, then, is the sun, which is so called as it were shining alone. For this material sun is the eye of this world, the light of creatures, the mirror of the Creator; than which no worldly creature is more beautiful, none more useful, none brighter; when it shines all the other luminaries are as though they were not. So also should it be said and believed of the glorious Virgin with respect to all creatures, not only men, but also Angels. Hence, Job 25:5: *The moon doth not shine, and the stars are not pure in his sight.* The moon is the universal Church; the stars, each of the just, who in comparison with Mary do not shine, as the light of the moon and the stars is absorbed and does not appear when the light of the sun comes over it. Or, by the moon understand the triumphant Church, by the stars the souls of the good.

Again, Mary is *chosen as the sun*, as was said above, especially in five privileges: in greatness, in power, in usefulness, in brightness, in heat.

Her greatness is her humility: because the quantity of every soul is measured by God according to its humility. Matt. 18:4: *Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of (p. 374) heaven.* (Look under the title on her humility.)

Her power is her faith: because faith is the power of the soul. As much faith as each one has, so much power he has. If much, much. If all faith, all power. Mark 9:22, the Lord said to a certain man: *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* And understand this of living faith, *which worketh by charity* (Gal. 5:6): because dead faith can do nothing, as neither can a dead man. Good works are the life of faith, as coals and wood are the life of fire. Truly powerful and living was the faith of Mary, who alone wrought what had never been heard of, either in heaven or on earth, namely the incarnation of the Son of God, when she answered the Angel: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc. (Luke 1:38).

The usefulness of this sun is the mercy of Mary, than which, after the mercy of God, nothing is more useful to the human creature, as was shown above under the title on her mercy, piety, and generosity.

The brightness of this sun is the purity of the Virgin. (Look under the title on her purity, namely after the title on virginity.)

The heat of this sun is the charity of the Virgin: since charity is the warmth of the soul. For which reason the Lord says, Matt. 24:12: *The charity of many shall grow cold.* For the sun is the fountain of heat, and however great the sun is, it is nothing but fire: for it is hotter than the whole globe of the earth would be if the whole were set on fire. And of the fire of charity the Lord says, Luke 12:49: *I am come to cast fire on the earth: and what will I, but that it be kindled?* Apoc. 3:15: *I would thou wert cold*, etc. (Look under the title on charity in the treatise on the properties of the servants of Mary.)

Again, the sun begins the day by its rising, ends it by its setting, divides it into fixed parts by its course, and distinguishes the night from the day by the splendor of its brightness. So Mary orders the life of the just by the example of her life, so that there seems to befit her that which the Psalmist says of the Son, Ps. 118:91: *By thy ordinance the day goeth on*, that is, the life of the Christian.

Again, the sun by its light penetrates only the cleaner and as it were polished materials, such as glass and crystal, but by no means the coarser ones. Be therefore glassy through penance, which bakes the body hard, since it is a fire; and as it were crystalline through purity, if you desire to be illumined by the rays of this sun, etc.

Again, the sun is the king of the stars: and Mary the queen of virgins, nay, of all the saints, who are the stars of which it is said, Ecclus. 43:10: *The beauty of heaven*, that is, of the Church, *is the glory of the stars*, that is, the dignities of the saints. 1 Cor. 15:41: *Star differeth from star in glory*, etc.

Again, as the body of the sun is not grasped except in its ray, so neither is the dignity of Mary except in her Son. For the worthier the Son, the more excellent the mother.

Again, the sun never waxes nor wanes. Likewise Mary never grew through elation, never diminished through faintheartedness or through the sadness that straitens: because she had neither the corner of fear nor the haughty brow of elation.

Again, the sun is bright, and its brightness is the humility of the Virgin: which is clear from its contrary: because through pride one comes first to inner darkness, and thence to outer darkness.

Again, the whiteness of the sun is the cleanness of virginity; the roundness of the sun, the appetite and desire for eternity, or the eternity of virginity.

Again, the sun does not set, as is said to the Church, Isa. 60:20: *Thy sun shall go down no more.* But it is said, Eccles. 1:5: *The sun riseth, and goeth down*, etc. There Augustine: "This sun, if you do not make a fall, will not make a setting for you." This sun, therefore, does not set as regards itself; but take care for yourself, because if you sin mortally, it will set as regards you.

Again, when the sun rises in the east, then the world is illumined: but when it hides itself in the west, the world becomes *(p. 375)* dark. So when the grace of the mother or of the Son rises upon us, we are illumined: when it sets through our sin, then we are darkened. Therefore it is said to converted sinners, Eph. 5:8: *You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord.*

The sun puts darkness to flight and illumines the dark world: and she drove away all heresies, as the Church sings to her: "Rejoice, Virgin Mary," etc.; and by means of her childbearing she illumined the world, as was said above of the dawn, and she lights up the whole Church with the rays of her examples, etc. The sun is borne above the moon, and she above temporal things. For she is *the woman clothed with the sun*, that is, having the properties of the sun, *and the moon*, that is, all changeableness and all defect, *under her feet* (Apoc. 12:1). The light of the sun never fails. Likewise neither did she fail in the passion of her Son, although then every saint failed. Therefore Solomon says of her, Prov. 31:18: *Her lamp*, that is, her faith, *shall not be put out in the night*, namely of the Lord's passion. Therefore also it is said of her, Cant. 7:7: *Thy stature*, namely that by which thou didst stand in faith, *is like to a palm tree*: because as the palm never loses the greenness of its leaves, so neither did she lose the strength of her faith. Therefore it is said of the just man, Ecclus. 27:12: *A holy man continueth in wisdom as the sun*, etc.

Mary is the sun. Because as the sun illumines the moon, so she illumines the Church. Hence blessed Bernard: "Take away Mary, and what remains but darkness?"

Because, as the Astronomer, that is, the philosopher who rises above the rest, says, the sun is eight times greater than the earth: so Mary in eight privileges is greater than every woman and every saint, nay, than every rational creature: because "she seems to have had none like her before, nor to have one to follow." The first, the new profession of virginity: hence also she is rightly called the Virgin of virgins: because she is the standard-bearer and exemplar of virginity. The second, the excellence of humility. The third, the conception of the Son of God with the flower of virginity unharmed. Hence she is called the unburnt bush (Exod. 3:2). The fourth, childbirth without pain. The fifth, the excellence of her offspring. For many other women bore

kings and princes, she alone the Son of God. Hence she is compared to the cedar. The sixth, a special ministry: because she alone gave hospitality to the Lord in her own womb, Martha and others in an earthly house. (Look under the title on her active life.) The seventh, a bodily resurrection already accomplished, as is truly believed. The eighth, her sitting at the right hand of the Son above all the orders of Angels.

The sun knows no spot, as the moon does. Hence it was said to her, Cant. 4:7: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee*, venial or mortal. The sun is of such generosity that it turns its rays away from no creature, however stinking and filthy, if it is exposed to it, nor does it illumine any, however precious, if it is hidden from it. Likewise Mary does not turn away the regard of her piety from any sinner, however vile, who faithfully invokes her. Nor does she shine upon anyone, however great he may be through learning, riches, or honors, if he neglects to invoke her. Many, however, she goes before so that they may will, and follows them when they will, lest they will in vain, as Augustine says of her Son: "From the time he has risen in the morning, he waits the whole day at the door, ready to enter the house if it be opened to him." Likewise Mary too, from the time she ascended into heaven, seems to say with her Son, Apoc. 3:20: *Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock.* (You will find this expounded under the title in which Christ is called the sun.) Under the rays of this sun the moistened crystal sparkles, which *had frozen from the water* (Ecclus. 43:22), when sinners, formerly hard and cold, bound and frozen by the blast of the north wind, drenched with the tears of bitter compunction, of piety, and of penance, bring forth bright and fiery works, by *(p. 376)* regard of which others are invited to the like.

He who fixes his eyes on the sun puts his shadow behind him. Likewise whoever should steadfastly fix the eyes of the heart, namely the intellect and the affection, on this sun, recalling the poverty of Mary, would most easily put behind his back the shadow of passing things. But because such are few, etc.

Again, the sun brings forth the things that spring from the earth: and she brings forth (*producit*), that is, leads far forward (*procul ducit*) from virtue to virtue, those who by the example of her poverty go out from the earth, that is, from the love of earthly things, and so are born to heaven, as that which rises from the earth grows upward.

Again, the sun has at once splendor and heat, and in these two is designated each robe, namely of the body and of the soul, both of which the blessed Virgin is piously believed to have, so that she shines and glitters like the sun according to the robe of the body, and burns with love like the sun according to the robe of the soul: because *his furnace is in Jerusalem* (Isa. 31:9), that is, perfect love.

Again, the sun by its brightness as it were blinds the weak eyes of Jews, pagans, heretics, and any unbelievers whatever. Ecclus. 43:4: *The sun three times as much burneth the mountains, breathing out fiery rays, and shining with his beams, he blindeth the eyes.* Again, by its illumination it makes imperceptible atoms perceptible. And therefore it is called the sun (*sol*) as it were surveying the paths of all (*semitas omnium lustrans*). Therefore it is said of it, Wis. 7:21: *Wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me*, because it is, as is said below, v. 23: *Having all power, overseeing all things*, that is, making all things perceptible.

Again, of this sun it is said, 2 Mac. 1:22: *When the time came that the sun shone out, which before was in a cloud, there was a great fire kindled, so that all wondered.* Mary is the sun, as has been said; but as long as she was on the way, she was as it were under a certain cloud, of which it is said, Job 26:9: *He withholdeth the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud over it.* (Look under the title on the throne.) But from the time she was glorified by her Son in the assumption, there was kindled with regard to her as it were a certain great fire, the devotion of the faithful, and she is proclaimed wonderful by all who believe rightly.

Again, the sun can be stayed by prayers: hence, Jos. 10:12–13, Josue said to the sun and the moon: *Move not, O sun, toward Gabaon, nor thou, O moon, toward the valley of Ajalon. And the sun and the moon stood still, till the people revenged themselves of their enemies.* The sun is Christ, Mary the moon, to whom prelates, signified by Josue, ought to make supplication in this way for the faithful of the Church. Gabaon is

interpreted *slope of iniquity*, and signifies the world, in which we easily slip from sin to sin. Hence, Lam. 4:18: *Our steps have slipped in the way of our streets: our end draweth near.* Ajalon is interpreted *fields*, in which is signified the freedom of sinning. Hence, Prov. 18:3: *The wicked man, when he is come into the depth*, etc. Christ and Mary, therefore, are to be asked not to move against them, that is, against their advantage, until sinners revenge themselves on their enemies, that is, on the unclean spirits: which is done when she exterminates them by converting other sinners, rooting out vices and planting virtues.

Again, the sun neither waxes nor wanes. Likewise neither did Mary ever grow through elation, nor ever diminish through faintheartedness. She was also like the sun: bright through wisdom, pure through continence, shining through good fame, warm through charity, exalted through the conception of Christ, and the like.

Morally: the sun is the brightness of a good life. Job 31:26: *If I beheld the sun when it shined.* The Gloss: The sun in brightness, a good life in its manifestation. *And the moon going in brightness.* The Gloss: He calls the moon good fame, which shines in the night. But this moon ought to be placed *(p. 377)* under the feet (Apoc. 12:1). *And my heart in secret hath rejoiced* (Job 31:27), by vainly glorying within myself. 1 Cor. 4:7: *What hast thou that thou hast not*, etc.

And I have kissed my hand with my mouth (ibid.). The Gloss: He kisses his hand with his mouth who praises what he does, like the Pharisee who said, Luke 18:12: *I fast twice*, etc. Therefore it is said: "All praise in one's own mouth grows foul." This presumption or pride is *a very great iniquity* (ibid., v. 28), for three reasons: because it is *the beginning of all sin* (Ecclus. 10:15); because it besets longer—hence the Gloss on the Psalm says that it is the first for those who withdraw from God, the last for those who approach him; again, because it least befits man. Hence, Ecclus. 10:9: *Why is earth and ashes proud?*

And a denial against the most high God (Job 31:28). The Gloss: He is convicted of denying the grace of his Author, whoever attributes to himself what he does.

Chapter 4: Mary, Moon

Having seen of the sun, we must see of the moon.

The moon (*luna*), according to Tully, is called by syncope as it were *lucina*, that is, shining by night. Hence Virgil: "Chaste Lucina, be favorable to me." Or as it were the light of night (*lux noctis*). According to Isidore, the moon is called as it were *one of the lights* (*luminum una*). Gen. 1:16: *God made two great lights: a greater light*, that is, the sun, namely Christ, *to rule the day*, that is, the just; *and a lesser light*, that is, the moon, namely Mary, *to rule the night*, that is, to give light to sinners; *and the stars*, that is, the just. Therefore Christ is called *the sun of justice* (Mal. 4:2), because from him is all justice. Mary is the mother of grace, made fruitful namely by God, that is, filled with mercy toward sinners, as a mother is merciful toward her children. For *God doth not hear sinners* (John 9:31), but the mother of God does not repel them. In the sun, that is, in Christ, there is heat, that is, punishing justice, and splendor, namely sparing mercy. In the moon, that is, in Mary, there is the splendor of mercy without the heat of severity: because she does not offend the weak eyes that look upon her, as the heat of the sun does. Blessed Bernard: "What … to Mary," etc. (Under the title on her kindness.)

Because it is always either waxing or waning: but after waxing it wanes, and waxes after waning. But Mary, the more she grew in every virtue, the more she diminished in her own estimation through humility, according to that of Ecclus. 3:20: *The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God.* Therefore she is called *a light that decreaseth in its perfection* (Ecclus. 43:7). (Look a little below.)

Because nothing is so like the sun as the moon, *(p. 378)* yet not altogether like. For no luminary has as much luminosity as the sun, whose luminosity the moon imitates most nearly. 1 Cor. 15:41: *One is the glory of the sun*, that is, of Christ, *another the glory of the moon*, that is, of Mary, *and another the glory of the stars*, that is, of the saints.

Because among the planets none is so near to the sun. Hence: *The queen stood on thy right hand* (Ps. 44:10). 3 Kings 2:19: Bethsabee sat at the right hand of Solomon.

Because there is nothing between the moon and the sun. Hence this moon says: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. 1:1). And therefore no one has known so much of the secrets of the Creator. Hence she says, Cant. 2:4: *He brought me*, namely the king, *into the cellar of wine*: which (*cella*) is so called from concealing (*celando*).

Because it is the lowest of the planets, that is, the humblest of all the saints. No planet also comes so near to the earth or the sea, and none of the saints so condescends through compassion to sinners, who are earth, and especially to those who are made bitter for their sins.

Because it completes its course more quickly than the other planets: and she obtains from Christ more easily than the other saints. Hence, 3 Kings 2:20, Solomon said to his mother, in figure of Mary: *My mother, ask.* Again, Assuerus, Esther 5:3: *What wilt thou, queen Esther?* etc.

Because beyond the other planets it has dominion over the sea. For according to it is the flow and ebb of the sea. Hence Lucan:

The wave of wandering Thetis surges at the hours of the moon.

Therefore the moon is properly to be called the star of the sea. This is Mary, the star of the sea. The sea is the bitterness of penance, by which we are reconciled to God. If Mary stands by us, this sea flows in and abounds in us. Ecclus. 24:39: *Her thoughts are more vast than the sea* [literally, *from the sea her thought abounded*]. If Mary is removed far from us, this sea ebbs and recedes.

Again, the moon sometimes seems to have a rust-colored hue: because through penance she mortified the members of the body, and beat them like metals. Or, this property was fulfilled in the passion of the Son, when *there was no beauty in him, nor comeliness* (Isa. 53:2). And she through compassion was black and darkened.

According to the waxing or waning of the moon the marrow in the bones of animals abounds or diminishes. The virtues and graces are marrow, which water the bones of the natural virtues, without which they fail. But this marrow cannot abound in us except through the grace and prayers of Mary. That marrow is humility, piety, charity, chastity, patience, and the like, of which, Prov. 3:8: *For it shall be health to thy navel, and moistening to thy bones.*

It is dew-flowing: because the moon is said to supply the dew. Hence also Mary is called in the sequence “purple as the violet, dewy as the moon.” For she says: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth* (Ecclus. 24:25).

Because it has its light and beauty from the sun. And Mary attributes whatever good she has to the true sun. Hence she says: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me*, etc. (Luke 1:49). Again, saying with the Apostle, 1 Cor. 15:10: *By the grace of God I am what I am*, etc. Cant. 8:5: *Leaning upon her beloved*, etc.

Because the nearer it comes to the sun, the less luminosity it seems to have: so Mary, receiving into herself the whole sun of justice, reckons herself as it were empty and void, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc. (ibid., v. 38).

Because after its conjunction with the sun it shows itself slender and thin to the eyes of those who look on it. And this appeared well when, having conceived the Son, she visited Elizabeth, much *(p. 379)* less than herself, and most humbly ministered to her in her childbearing (Luke 1:39 ff.).

Of this moon it is said, Cant. 6:9: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun,* etc.? *Fair as the moon,* whose beauty is said to proceed thus: before it appears, it is kindled; kindled, it is made manifest; made manifest, it is filled out. She did not appear, but was as it were in her waning, when she was conceived with original sin; she was kindled in her sanctification; made manifest in her nativity; and then she was as it were *excisan,* in French: because as bodily, so always spiritually she grew from good to better, from virtue to virtue. Her sanctification also grew and was enlarged, and the tinder of sin was weakened in her through the legal offerings. Hence it is said here: *Who cometh forth.* Then indeed this moon appeared horned, and its horns were humility of mind and virginity of flesh, with which horns, that is, virtues, she winnowed away both spiritual and bodily vices. She was as it were a half-moon before the conception of the Saviour, illuminating others with the rays of good examples, namely when she was brought up in the temple. But she was as it were a full moon when she was called by the Angel *full of grace,* and especially when she was made pregnant with the Son of God by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and most fully illumined by the sun of justice. And then she was the most beautiful of the creatures of God. Hence the moon, when it is full, is then commonly called *labele*.

This moon had a threefold fullness. The first was of joy in the angelic annunciation. The second, of grace, in the filling with grace when she was called *full of grace.* The third, of glory, when she was made mother of the Son of God, or also in her assumption. She was eclipsed in the passion of the Son, when she was turned into blood from the passion of her suffering Son. Joel 2:31: *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,* etc. But in her assumption she was *a perfect moon for ever* (Ps. 88:38), which is called perfect when it shines the whole night. And Mary shines at the beginning of the night, that is, for those beginning to be tempted; and in the middle, that is, for those lying in sin; and at the end, that is, for those going out from sin and escaping from temptation.

And note that the blessed Virgin is not compared to the moon according to its present state: because it now has a spot; but to the more perfect moon which will be in the future, when every spot is wholly taken away: when *the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun* (Isa. 30:26). Therefore she is called *a perfect moon for ever.* (Look for these under the title on the throne, near the end.)

Fair as the moon, when she was illumined by the regard of the divinity, by which she merited to be called blessed by all generations, as she herself says: *Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed* (Luke 1:48). When she says, *he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid,* she notes the regard of the divinity. When she adds, *For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed,* she notes the fullness of brightness.

Fair as the moon, which, being as it were naturally dark, is kindled by a light not its own, the solar ray having been received into itself. Hence the moon (*luna*) is called as it were *a light not its own* (*lux aliena*). So Mary, while still placed in the weakness of the body, having received into herself the Holy Spirit as the ray of that supreme majesty, is made fruitful with the true light, the Son of God.

Again, *fair as the moon*: because, illumined by the true sun of justice, she flooded the night of this world with the light of heavenly knowledge and of the Gospel way of life.

Again, the moon waxes up to the fourteenth day, and then appears full: and Mary is believed to have conceived the Son of God about the fourteenth or thirteenth year. And then she appears in *(p. 380)* the middle of the moon—by which is signified the virginal womb—as it were a little image of a man hanging, or as it were a peasant loaded with a bundle of thorns. This is Christ, who, hung on the gibbet of the cross, carried the burdens of our sins, as it is said, 1 Pet. 2:24: *Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree,* that

is, the punishment of sins, which is designated by the thorns. Isa. 53:4: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities*, etc. But about the fifteenth day the moon begins to wane: which also happened to Mary when she heard from Simeon: *Thy own soul a sword shall pierce* (Luke 2:35). Reckon a day for a year, as it is said, Ezek. 4:6.

Again, the waxing moon has its horns toward the rising of the sun, the waning moon toward the setting of the sun: because Christ, whom she had awaited rejoicing as about to be born of her, she awaited sorrowing as about to die for us. By the horns of the moon understand thoughts. In the passion of the Son this moon was darkened through sadness of heart, which is *all the plague* (Ecclus. 25:17): because the sun of justice, which was then eclipsed, and *in whom there was no sightliness* (Isa. 53:2), had no rays to direct upon her. For although she was always full of grace and without the spot of fault, yet she did not lack the spot of human misery; as neither does the moon at present, however beautiful, lack a spot altogether. She was also then in conjunction with the sun, when the brightness of the moon does not appear, when, dying with her Son through compassion, *she stood by his cross* (John 19:25).

Again, the moon illumines the world when the sun withdraws: because when the sun of justice was passing out of the world to the Father through bodily death (John 13:1), she illumined the whole Church by her faith during the three days of the Lord's burial.

Again, when this same sun of justice ascended to heaven, she was left in the world for a time, that she might illumine with her examples that new primitive Church, which was as it were a certain new world—namely the Apostles and the other disciples with the holy women—and might instruct them by her teachings, *persevering with them continually in prayer* (Acts 1:14). She also always illumines the world (*mundum*), that is, the lovers of cleanness (*munditiae*), in place of Christ. This is the new moon of which the Psalmist says: *Blow up the trumpet on the new moon* (Ps. 80:4–5). From this namely we have an argument that preaching should be done on her feasts. *On the noted day of your solemnity: for it is a commandment in Israel*, etc. For her nativity was prefigured in the solemnity which of old was held on the calends, and her nativity began every solemnity of ours. Hence, Ecclus. 43:7: *From the moon is the sign of the festival day.* And a little above in the same place it is said, v. 6: *The moon in all in her season, is for a declaration of times and a sign of the world.* For the blessed Virgin, in all nations, at the time of her appearing, is the declaration of that time of which it is said, Gal. 4:4: *When the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman*, etc. Isa. 49:8: *In an acceptable time I have heard thee*, etc. She is also *a sign of the world*, marking every age, present, past, and future. There follows, Ecclus. 43:7: *From the moon is the sign of the festival day*: for from her arose and went forth all our festivity, namely Christ the Lord, who is our joy. Hence also she is called *the city of our solemnity* (Isa. 33:20).

There follows, Ecclus. 43:7: *A light that decreaseth in its perfection.* This cannot be understood of the material moon: because it does not decrease in its perfection, but after its perfection: for first it is completed through fullness, and afterward it is diminished by waning. But the blessed Mary, when she was announced as *full of grace* and *(p. 381)* chosen as mother of the Lord, which was the perfection of her excellence, answered as it were wonderfully diminishing herself: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38). Accordingly it is said *decreaseth*, that is, is humbled; and it is not said *wanes*, lest it be understood of the diminution of waning. As if he said: When Mary had heard that so great a height was promised her, that she should become the mother of God, and had diminished herself through humility, naming herself handmaid, by this she was perfected and made a full moon: because at this word she conceived the Son of God. Therefore a little after it is added, Ecclus. 43:8: *Increasing wonderfully in perfection.* But there is interposed: *The month is called after her name.* Her name is Mary, and it is interpreted *enlightener*, because she illumines our days and our works. The month therefore is the perfection of our days and works; and this month is so illumined by her that it is *month after month.* The material moon makes month after month in succession, but this moon makes *month from month*: because from the perfection of good works, to which she enlightens us by merits and examples, there will be a month, that is, the perfection of rewards. Hence,

Isa. 66:23: *There shall be month after month, and sabbath after sabbath.* We read of the sabbath on which the Lord rested from all the work which he had done (Gen. 2:2): but from that one no sabbath comes to be for us, nor rest from that rest. But the blessed Virgin says: *He that made me rested in my tabernacle* (Ecclus. 24:12). And from this there is a sabbath for us. And well is the month called after her name: because, according to the enlightenment with which she illumines us, there will be in us the perfection of works, if we have followed her examples.

Again, the moon, when it is first illumined, is called by the philosophers *dichotomos*, from *dis*, which is two, and *tomos*, which is division: because then it appears horned, and its two horns are the love of God and of neighbor, or virginity and motherhood, which met together in her. She was set apart from the others when she was greeted by the Angel beyond the others. Or rather, as the Master of the Histories says: "Mary is designated by the Red Sea, which was divided into two opposite divisions: the one, the vow of virginity; the other, the consent to the marriage which she contracted." Which two things are supremely contrary to each other.

Again, the new moon appears two-horned and as it were having the likeness of a ship: because Mary is a ship, which brings her friends to the haven of their desire. And because the moon looks like a ship, it is a sign that she carries her friends upward, that is, into heaven. Whence, that is, from which heaven, she brings to them, like a ship, whatever is necessary. For this reason it is said of this moon, that is, Mary: *She is like the merchant's ship*, etc. (Prov. 31:14).

The new moon also appears as it were having the form of a razor: because the Lord, as far as in him lies, by the examples of Mary as by a kind of razor cuts off and takes away from us all superfluity; so that of this may be expounded that of Isa. 7:20: *In that day*, that is, in the infusion of grace, *the Lord shall shave*, by the ministry of this razor, *with a razor that is hired*—in French, *afilée*, as some will have it—*by them that are beyond the river*, that is, who have turned their backs on the flood of carnal delights and worldly riches, *the head*, that is, superfluous thoughts proceeding from the mind, which is the head of the soul; *and the hairs of the feet*, that is, unlawful motions and depraved affections; *and the whole beard*, that is, all presumption of one's own manliness.

Again, the moon when it waxes is called *amphikyklos*, from *amphi*, which is around, and *kyklos*, which is circle: because, not yet wholly illumined, it is surrounded by a certain circle of brightness. So she in the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit was surrounded by a special gift for her protection. When full it is called *panselenos*, from *pan*, which is whole, and *selene*, which *(p. 382)* is moon, as it were shining with the whole moon by night. For when the Son was incarnate in her, then she received into herself the perfect light of wisdom, with which she illumined the blindness of the world and darkened the brightness of the other stars, that is, the saints, who in comparison with her shine little. Yet then this moon had a little cloud, not of fault, but of punishment.

Or, it can be said that after the example of the Son she called the sins of others her own; he who says: *Far from my salvation are the words of my sins* (Ps. 21:2). So also she through humility attributed a spot to herself, teaching others to say: *If we say that we have no sin*, etc. (1 John 1:8).

Or, it can be said that she was as it were half-full in her sanctification, full in her nativity, fuller in the conception of the Son, most full in her assumption.

The moon is the Church. The moon is a globular body, as some say, half of which is dark and half luminous: and when the luminous part is turned toward us, then it begins to appear to us until it is seen whole; and when it is turned again, the dark part begins to appear, until the whole luminous part is taken away from us. This is the Church, which on its carnal side is dark, on its spiritual side luminous: and this part is sometimes hidden from men, and sometimes open to them, but is known to God alone.

Others say that the moon has no light except from the sun, but when near the sun it is not illumined on our side, and therefore does not appear: but when it withdraws, it begins to appear to us horned. And this well befits the Church, which has all its light from the sun of justice. And it is darkened in three ways: by eclipse, by the interposition of clouds, and when its monthly courses are ended. So the Church in the time of persecutors is bloody, through the fraud of heretics rusty, through the corruption of false brethren muddy, etc.

Star (*sidus*), which is so called from considering (*considerando*): because it is the star of the sea, which signifies Mary.

Chapter 5: Mary, Horizon

Horizon, which, as some say, is interpreted *a just bounder.*

And they say that the horizon of bodily sight is that circular circumference where, from the failing of human sight, heaven seems to be joined to earth. But the horizon of spiritual sight is where the loftiness of the divinity is inclined to take up human nature. For as there bodily sight fails, so here also the human mind cannot grasp how divinity and humanity are united into one person in the virginal womb. For Christ is the end of our desire: because, having him, nothing further is to be sought; nor should the sight of our mind stop short of this end, lest it be driven back from the contemplation of its Creator by worldly affections or any unlawful desires whatever.

Chapter 6: Mary, Morning Star

(p. 383) Lucifer, the morning star. Mary is called the morning star (*lucifer*).

First, because she bore in herself the true light, that is, Christ, *who is the wisdom of God* (1 Cor. 1:30). Hence *lucifer*, as it were bearing light (*ferens lucem*).

Second, because she illumined the cloudy things of the law and of the Prophets by bringing forth Christ, whom the Prophets had obscurely foretold: because *dark waters in the clouds of the air* (Ps. 17:12), that is, obscure knowledge in the Prophets. Hence she is called *lucifer*, as it were bringing light to the blind (*lucem caecis ferens*).

Third, because she bore in herself light, that is, the abundance of grace, *of whose fulness we all have received.* Hence she is called *lucifer*, as it were fertile with light (*luce fertilis*): because her glorious life gave light to the world. Of this morning star the Church sings on her nativity: “She rises like the morning star among the stars of heaven,” etc. Again, of this morning star can be expounded that of Job 38:32, where the Lord speaks to Job, saying: *Canst thou bring forth the day star in its time, and make the evening star to rise upon the children of the earth?*

And well is the rising of Mary compared to the rising of the morning star: because she rose not dark in her rising, as we do, who are all born *children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3). But she, sanctified before she was born, rose like the morning star, that is, wholly bright, and in hope of a greater brightness, namely of the sun of justice, who was born of her. And this morning star the Lord brought forth in its time, that is, in the time of grace. And this is what the Lord says to Job: *Canst thou bring forth the day star*, etc.? As if he said: Not thou, but I.

Again, Mary is well compared to the morning star: because as the morning star surpasses the other stars in brightness, so Mary surpasses all the orders of the saints in dignity. And *lucifer* is called in Greek *phosphoros*, from *phos*, which is light, and *phero*, which is I carry. (Other things about this morning star you had under the title in which she is called star.)

Chapter 7: Mary, Dawn

(p. 384) Dawn (*aurora*). In French *alba, aube*, from whiteness: because she is wholly white within and without, through holiness of flesh and spirit: hence also she is compared to the lily (Cant. 2:2).

Mary is the dawn. In Latin *aurora* is from gold (*aurum*), that is, from splendor, according to Isidore: because she is wholly shining within and without. Or, it is so called from gold for this reason: because she had gold in herself in three ways. The pure gold of virginal purity. Apoc. 21:18: *The city itself pure gold*, etc. The fire-tried gold of most fervent charity. Apoc. 3:18, it is said to the Angel of Laodicea: *I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried.* The best gold of wisdom (*sapientia*), from savor (*sapor*): because she *tasted and saw*, etc. Gen. 2:12: *The gold of the land of Hevilath is very good.*

As it were *aurea hora*, the golden hour, according to Isidore, because she brought in the golden age, that is, the time of grace. Hence there befits her what is said of Saturn:

Ordering golden ages through all lands.

Aurora is also so called from *aura*, breeze, that is, the grace and breath of the Holy Spirit, by which she was breathed through in her sanctification and always thereafter. Hence, Cant. 4:16: *Come, O south wind, blow through my garden*, that is, Mary, is said to the Holy Spirit.

As it were a dew-dropping breeze (*aura rorans*). For by her prayers and merits we receive the breeze, that is, refreshment, and the dew of grace against the incitements of vices. She is also that breeze of which Eliphaz says, Job 4:16: *I heard the voice as it were of a gentle wind.* Mary indeed is called a breeze on account of the refreshment of grace which she pours into those who love her; gentle, on account of the multitude of her kindness.

As it were *hora roris*, the hour of dew: because in her conceiving the Son of God descended into her as dew. Hence he says, Hos. 14:6: *I will be as the dew: Israel*, that is, Mary, *shall spring as the lily.* (Under the title on the things which descended from above into the enclosed garden.) For she is that bowl which Gedeon, that is, Christ, filled with the dew wrung from the fleece (Judg. 6:38): and from that fullness which he bestowed on the mother, *we all have received grace for grace* (John 1:16). Even now she does not cease to fill with the dew of grace hearts made hollow through humility. Christ also, who is called dew, came through the Virgin into the human heart.

From *auris*, the ear: because she conceived through the ear. Hence she says, Cant. 5:4: *My beloved*, that is, God the Father, *put his hand*, that is, the Son, *through the key hole* [literally, *through the opening*], namely of my ear. Therefore the Church sings to her: “Thou didst conceive our Lord through the ear, that thou mightest be called blessed among all women,” etc. Through the ear, that is, through faith in the things said: because *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17).

Again, *aurora* as it were *avium hora*, the hour of the birds, which then begin to tune their voices in praise of the mother and the Son. These birds are spiritual men, who are the birds of the world. The birds *(p. 385)* of heaven are the Angels, who praise her with one accord. Hence: “The Angels praise thee.” Hence also she can say with the Son, who says, Job 38:7: *When the morning stars praised me together, and all the sons of God made a joyful melody.* She also makes the night birds, that is, heretics, fall silent: because through her *the mouth is stopped of them that speak wicked things* (Ps. 62:12).

As it were opening the mouth (*ora aperiens*) of the birds (*avium*). The birds are faithful souls flying with the wings of the virtues, whose conversation is in the things above; whose mouths she opens to praise her and her Son, and to render thanks continually to the Lord for the benefits of his incarnation and passion. Hence, 2 Cor. 9:15: *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.* The dawn is announced from afar by the watchmen. For from eternity she was preordained to the office of human salvation. So she says, Prov. 8:23: *I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made.* She was also prefigured in the deeds of the Patriarchs, and foretold by the oracles of the Prophets. The dawn ends the night and begins the day: for she was the end

of the law and the beginning of grace. For a certain very long night flowed from Eve up to Mary, which Mary herself ended at her rising. And this was that *solitary night, not worthy of praise* (Job 3:7), which, though dark, was nevertheless marked out by its watches as by certain flashes of light.

The first watch, the illumination of hidden inspiration. This was kept in the times of Noe and Abraham, who by hidden inspiration understood something figurative about her. The second, the instruction of the law. This in the time of Moses and of those who were instructed through the law. The third, the certainty of prophetic foretelling. This in the time of the Prophets. The fourth, the vehement desire of the saints for the fulfilling of the promise made by the Lord. This Simeon, Elizabeth, and Anna had, who, placed as it were at the very point of the dawn now breaking forth, most ardently longed to see not only her, but also her Son. These watches, then, the saints kept from the beginning, if ever they might behold this dawn, if anywhere it might appear, if anywhere it might put forth signs of itself: because they understood that it was both prefigured in mystical things and promised in prophecies.

Otherwise: she put an end to a threefold night, namely the night of the law, which was dark with figures, the night of ignorance, and the night of fault. And she began the light of the New Testament against the night of the law. She brought forth him who made manifest the truth against the night of ignorance, and brought in the light of grace against the night of fault. She also announced that the end of the darkness of malice and of misery was at hand.

Otherwise: through Eve the night went before: because *from the woman came the beginning of sin* (Ecclus. 25:33): through Mary *the day is at hand* (Rom. 13:12). But when the sun of justice was born of this dawn, the darkness was fully divided from the light, as it is said, Gen. 1:14. Scripture also was dark, according to that of Ps. 17:12: *Dark waters in the clouds of the air*: because knowledge was obscure in the Prophets. But as, when the sun comes, which is as it were born of the dawn, the darkness withdraws: so, when Christ was born of the Virgin, the darkness of the Scriptures withdrew. Ecclus. 43:15: *The treasures are opened, and the clouds fly out like birds.* For this reason Job said, 31:35: *Who would grant me a helper* [the edition notes that the Vulgate has *a hearer*], *that the Almighty may fulfil my desire* [Vulgate: *may hear my desire*], *and that he himself that judgeth would write a book?*

The dawn seems to proceed from darkness, and afterward as it were by giving birth to bring forth the sun. So the blessed Virgin proceeded from the ancient fathers, who were in the darkness of sins and in the gloom of ignorance and under the shadow of the law: and she, like the dawn, brought forth for us the true sun. At the rising of the dawn in a certain way the night is bright *(p. 386)* and the day seems dark: because when Mary was born, as it were a certain dawn arose, and human frailty in her was bright through grace, and the eternal day, that is, Christ, was darkened in her through the humanity he assumed, to whom it is said, Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God*, namely under the cloud of our flesh. Divided from the darkness, she divides the light from the darkness: which is figured in Gen. 1:1–2, where it is said: *In the beginning*, namely of human restoration, *God created*, whose special work Mary is. Hence the Psalmist says to him, Ps. 73:16: *Thou hast made the morning light*, that is, Mary, and from her the sun of justice.

Heaven and earth, that is, the soul and body of Mary. *But this earth was void and empty* before the grace of sanctification: *and darkness was upon the face of the deep*, because she was conceived in original sin. *And God said*, as it were by predestining, *Be light made. And light was made* (Gen. 1:3), when he sanctified her. And from that light, according to the opinion of some, the body of the sun was made. But most of all light was made in the whole world at the conception.

She divides the light from the darkness (Gen. 1:4): and this in three ways. Because by her prayers and examples she separates the predestined from vices; to whom it is said, Eph. 5:8: *You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord.* The ancient fathers also were drawn out of limbo through her, numbering himself with whom Job said, 17:13: *I have made my bed in the darkness.* And *the people that*

walked in darkness through her *have seen a great light* (Isa. 9:2). She also preserves sacred Scripture, which is light, from dark heretics. The first brightness of the day. For she was the beginning of the day of grace, which day namely began from her sanctification. Therefore she is called *rising as the morning* (Cant. 6:9), into the full brightness of the day. For this reason also it is said of Christ, Wis. 16:28: *We ought to prevent the sun to bless thee, and adore thee at the dawning of the light.* Rightly is Mary called the rising of the light: for from her arose Christ, who is *the light of the world* (John 8:12). Through this dawn he anticipates the sun who by the intercession of the mother makes the Son propitious to himself. He adores at the rising of the light who by serving the mother softens the anger of the Son.

Partly dark, partly bright: dark through original sin as regards her birth in the womb; bright through her birth from the womb with sanctification. Or "partly" for this reason: because she did not have as great brightness in her nativity as she had afterward in the fullness of grace, in the coming of the Holy Spirit upon her, in the conception of the Son of God.

She is born of darkness, namely of the synagogue: because as the thorn the rose, so Judea brought forth Mary. And she anticipates the rising of the sun by her rising, though she is illumined by the sun that would rise after her. For her nativity preceded the human nativity of Christ, but from his divinity she received all her splendor. Hence, 2 Kings 23:4: *As the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, shineth in the morning without clouds*, etc. Therefore she seems to say that of John 1:30: *After me there cometh a man, who is preferred before me*, etc. For this reason the Church sings to her: “Thou didst bear him who made thee, and for ever,” etc. Blessed Maximus: “Indeed he is the author of Mary who was born of Mary.” To designate this, after the Angel said to Jacob: *Let me go, for it is break of day*, there follows in the text a little after: *And immediately the sun rose upon him, after he was past Phanuel* (Gen. 32:26, 31).

Mystically: as the dawn goes before the sun, so Mary as it were represented to us in her virtues the image of the Son who was to be born of her. By the interposition of a bright cloud she showed the uncircumscribed light to the eyes of mortals. The bright cloud is the most pure flesh of Christ.

Literally: the dawn appears sooner to those who are by the sea than to those who are among the mountains. *(p. 387)* By the sea is meant the bitterness of penance and of tribulations: for this Lady is near to them that are of a troubled heart. She also says of her lover: *I am with him in tribulation* (Ps. 90:15). By the mountains is understood pride and opulence, whose swelling and poured-in fullness repel her. And understand this of the appearing which is through the infusion of grace and mercy. The dawn is midway between night and day. The day is Christ, the night the sinner: for as the Son is mediator between God and man, so the mother is between the Son and the sinner: which appeared in the passion. (Look in the seventeenth cause.) As it is impossible to come from the darkness of night to light except by means of the dawn, so it is impossible to come from the darkness of vices to the light of grace and the virtues except by means of the intercession of Mary. Rising, the dawn gives back to each thing its proper colors: because by night all things are as it were of one color. For the night, as Augustine says, in a certain way takes away the eyes from the world; the dawn restores them. For at her nativity all things were made better, and she is as it were the form and pattern of all goodness. For she was the form of penitents, standing by the cross of her Son (John 19:25). The form of the active, ministering to Elizabeth in her childbearing (Luke 1:56). The form of the contemplative, conversing with Gabriel (Luke 1:34 ff.), and *persevering in prayer* with the Apostles and the holy women (Acts 1:14). She also brought forth Christ, who came into the world for this, that he might repair his image in our souls, deformed through the old Adam. The dawn brings the dew by which the things springing from the earth are nourished. For she brought the dew of all spiritual fruitfulness and of every blessing, by which every spiritual good is nourished and grows strong: and therefore the dawn is called as it were *the hour of dew*, as above. At dawn the flowers that were closed before open out their leaves. Hence Ovid:

Behold, the wakeful dawn from the shining east has opened her purple doors, and her halls full of roses.

These flowers are the saints, who, as it were closed before in the bud, were opened and spread out when she was born. For she was as it were the first lily, through the vow of virginity; her Son as it were the first rose of the New Testament, through the passion of the cross. Therefore she says to the Son: *The innocent and the upright have adhered to me: because I have waited on thee* (Ps. 24:21). Therefore also it is said to virgins, Ecclus. 39:19: *Send forth flowers as the lily*, that is, after the example of Mary.

Again, when the dawn was breaking the manna was gathered by the children of Israel in the desert (Exod. 16:21): because, by her intercession in the desert of this world, it is interpreted as the refreshment of heavenly grace; and, she purifying us through penance, which is signified by the desert, we worthily receive the body of Christ.

Again, the dawn is called red, which is a sign of rain: and the world had in her the fullness of grace. Hence it is said of her, Hos. 6:3: *His going forth is prepared as the morning light, and he will come to us as the early rain*, etc. (Look a little below.)

Again, the dawn puts to flight those thieves of whom it is said, Job 24:17: *If the morning suddenly appear, it is to them the shadow of death.* These thieves are the demons, who steal the treasures of good work; or any vice whatever, which steals the treasure of the virtue opposed to it. Pride is that which steals the treasures of every virtue, as Gregory says. Heretics, who steal the treasure of right faith. Of every thief of this kind it is said, John 10:10: *The thief cometh not but for to steal*, etc. The dawn relieves bodily infirmities: and Mary the languors of souls. For before her rising, through Eve, the whole world was sick, so that *from* (p. 388) *the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there was no soundness therein* (Isa. 1:6). The dawn rouses the clean birds to sing and to praise the Creator, as is clear in the lark: hence also *aurora* is called as it were opening the mouths of the birds (*avium ora aperiens*), as above. For then the birds are gladdened and sing sweetly, that is, spiritual men, who at and of the rising of the Virgin sang with one accord, of whom it is said: *From the midst of the rocks*, that is, of the two testaments, *they shall give forth their voices* (Ps. 103:12). For then the oracles of the Prophets began to be understood. Therefore the Church sings to her: “Thy nativity, O Virgin Mother of God, announced joy to the whole world.” The dawn turns the night birds to flight. These are heretics. For *he that doth evil hateth the light* (John 3:20): because Mary, through her Son, destroyed all heresies, and through her *the mouth is stopped of them that speak wicked things* (Ps. 62:12). Or, the night birds are fanciful thoughts and depraved affections.

The dawn puts an end to sleep, brings in the beginning of work, and is a sign of fair weather. An end to sleep: because then workmen, travelers, and pilgrims rise: for through her was given the grace of working meritoriously, the way of paradise was opened, and the power is given of returning to the heavenly Jerusalem, whereas before her all went down into the Babylon of hell, where there is no order, but everlasting confusion.

Morally: the end of sleep is referred to penance. Hence, Eph. 5:14: *Rise, thou that sleepest.* The beginning of work, to the active life. The sign of fair weather, to the contemplative. This is the dawn of which it was said to Jacob by the Angel with whom he wrestled, Gen. 32:26: *Let me go, for it is break of day.* This Angel is God the Father; Jacob figures the holy fathers, who under the Old Testament, with prayers and tears as with two arms—as is touched on in Hos. 12:3–4, where the wrestling of Jacob is treated—strove to wrest from God the incarnation of his Only-begotten; to whose company it is answered, as it were at the rising of Mary: *Let me go, for it is break of day*: as if to say, Let the urgency of your wrestling now cease: because now the dawn is breaking, that is, that light is being born which will bring forth for you the true sun. But Jacob answered: *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*: because the desires and urgency of the saints ought not to cease until they have received the blessing, that is, until Jacob, that is, the wrestler, becomes Israel, that is, seeing God in the fatherland, and until he can say: *I have seen God face to face, and my soul has been saved* (Gen. 32:30). And note that after Jacob had passed Phanuel, the sun rose upon him. Phanuel is interpreted *contemplating God.* He therefore passes Phanuel who passes those who contemplate God by faith, so that the

sun may so rise upon him that he sees God even with the bodily eye.

Otherwise: so that by the Angel Christ may be signified, who perhaps, having given us his mother, seems to say to one praying to him: *Let me go, for it is break of day.* As if he said: Do not now knock at my door in the first place, but go to my mother. As a young king, in honor of his mother the queen, refers the business of the kingdom to her. And this appeared at the marriage feast (John 2:3), where the servants are believed to have come first to the mother, and she to the Son. Therefore perhaps that saying of Wis. 16:28 is directed to the Father: *We ought to prevent the sun*, that is, to come to Mary first rather than to the sun of justice, *to bless thee*, that is, to obtain thy blessing. *And adore thee at the dawning of the light*, that is, to give thanks for the rising of Mary, through whom the world was illumined.

Morally: *We ought to prevent the sun* by working well, that is, the day of judgment, where all things will be made manifest; *to bless thee*, to have that blessing of which, Matt. 25:34: *Come, ye blessed*, etc.

Chapter 7 (continued): Mary, Dawn

(p. 389) And adore thee at the dawning of the light, that is, believe the nativity of Christ, in whose nativity all things were made manifest which were spoken by the Prophets. And note that when the Angel said to Jacob this word, *Let me go*, etc., he touched the sinew of his thigh, and immediately it shrank (Gen. 32:25). In the thigh generation is designated. For when the blessed Virgin was born, the manner of human generation, which was from man and woman, was changed: because she bore a son without the work of man.

Again, of this dawn it is said, Job 38:12: *Didst thou since thy birth command the morning, and shew the dawning of the day its place?* And in this authority both generations are touched, namely of Christ and of the Virgin. For the Lord commanded the morning, that is, the blessed Virgin, and she shone forth: he showed the dawning of the day, that is, the blessed Virgin, its place, namely that she should end the darkness and begin the light. And what is said, *since thy birth*, is put as it were negatively. If it is understood of the birth of Job, it is plain. But if it is understood thus: *Didst thou since thy birth*, etc., as if he said: Thou didst not do these things since thy birth, but I did them since my birth. And this is understood of the eternal nativity: and this word *since* (*post*) does not denote the end of that nativity, but its perfection. For the nativity of the Son from the Father is always perfect, never past or future: because the Son is always being born of the Father, since that generation is eternal.

Again, of this dawn it is said in Job 3:6, where he speaks of the Jew, who is a member of the devil—the devil being signified by the night—when it is said: *Let a dark whirlwind seize upon that night.* And there is added of the Jew, v. 9: *Let it expect light and not see it, nor the rising of the dawning of the day.* For the Jew was expecting his Messiah, and did not see that light, nor the rising dawn.

Again, of this dawn it is said, Cant. 6:9: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising*, etc.? For the nativity of the Virgin and the rising of the dawn are compared with a fitting and pleasing likeness, as was set out above for many reasons. And this is the voice of the Holy Spirit, as Jerome says, wondering, that is, making the holy Angels wonder; who, being unaccustomed to so wonderful a nativity and so solemn an assumption of the human race in the blessed Virgin (for this authority befits both her nativity and her assumption), as it were wondering, break out into these words: *Who is she*, etc.? (This *Who is she* you have expounded in many ways under the title on the spices of the enclosed garden.) And what is said there, *goeth up*, and here, *cometh forth*, can truly be expounded in the same way. And well is the blessed Virgin said to come forth as the dawn: but all of us, who are born *children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3), come forth as darkness in the sojourn of this misery. Hence, Eph. 5:8: *You were heretofore darkness*, etc.

Who is she, etc.? In these words is noted the holy nativity of Mary, in that she is called the dawn; her holier life, in that she is *fair as the moon*; her most holy assumption, in that she is *bright as the sun*; her most powerful help, in that there is added: *Terrible as an army set in array.* And this question, *Who is she*, is to be

referred to each of the members. She was therefore the dawn in her nativity, as was said above; a full moon in the conception of the Saviour—hence she was then called *full of grace*—which then eclipsed the sun of justice; *bright as the sun* in her assumption, never again to suffer eclipse. Or, so that this authority befits her threefold solemnity. The dawn in her nativity: because through her the day of salvation shone upon the world; and going before the true sun itself for some time, she at length brought him forth to the world, and daily brings him and brings him back to those who piously implore. A full moon in the conception of the Son: to signify which it was *(p. 390)* said to her, Luke 1:28: *Hail, full of grace*; bearing in the middle of herself, in her womb, the man laden with a bundle of thorns, namely Christ her Son, true man, who bore the bundle of our iniquities in his body upon the wood of the cross, where he was crowned with thorns (1 Pet. 2:24). Isa. 53:4: *Our infirmities*, etc. *Bright as the sun* in her assumption, where, having nothing of present ignorance, no thorn of present hardships, she shone with heavenly brightness and burned with the intense fervor of charity.

That cometh forth: into the world from her mother's womb. For she came forth beyond the nativities of others, being born wholly sanctified; she came forth in living beyond the life of others, because without any mortal or venial spot; she came forth in dying beyond the law of the dying, because she was not dissolved by any corruption of the body. And for all these things it is said of her that "she seems to have had none like her before, nor to have one to follow."

That cometh forth. For her whole life was as it were a certain wonderful advance and progress, because she always grew from virtue to virtue: which is noted in the order of these words, where she is compared first to the dawn, second to the moon, third to the sun. She comes forth, therefore, as the day from the brightness of the dawn: somewhat dark, she grows into the splendor of the noonday sun. For if *the path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day* (Prov. 4:18), much more does the path of Mary, who bore the sun of justice, go forward on earth beyond all mortals in every grace and virtue. Hence it is said to her, Prov. 31:29: *Many daughters have gathered together riches*, etc. She comes forth in her assumption, namely from earth to heaven: for the proper place of the flesh is the earth, as Gregory says. She comes forth also in heaven itself above all the orders of Angels and saints. Hence it is sung of her: "I saw the fair one" … "above the streams of waters."

As the morning, as was expounded above.

Rising (*consurgens*), that is, rising wholly together. From this it is conjectured that she was assumed with her body, by the participle of compound form. Or, so that what is said, *as the morning rising*, may be understood of her nativity: because she rose from a falling matter. For others fall in being born, because we are all born *children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3): but she rose together, because clean from original sin: and then *God commanded the light to shine out of darkness* (2 Cor. 4:6), through which light namely *he hath shined in our hearts*, as the Apostle says (ibid.). Or, of her sanctification. For she as it were rose together in her sanctification, when she began to shine. But because her sanctification surpassed the sanctifications of Jeremias and John the Baptist, therefore she is called *rising together*: because among the sanctified she had pre-eminence. Hence blessed Bernard says to the Canons of Lyons: "I think that a more abundant grace of sanctification also descended upon her, which not only sanctified her soul, but also kept her thereafter immune from all sin: which we believe to have been granted to no other of mortals." Or, *rising* from fault, present and future, both as regards original and as regards actual sin.

Chapter 8: Mary, Daybreak

(p. 391) Daybreak (*diluculum*), of which it is said, Hos. 6:3: *His going forth is prepared as the morning light* [literally, *as the daybreak*]. It is called daybreak. The rising of Mary was the daybreak of the day of grace: because up to her lasted the night which the first mother brought into the world. And the beginning of this daybreak was dark through original sin, but soon illumined, namely in her sanctification, as was said above

of the dawn. But the rising of Christ was full day. Hence then is sung that of Isa. 9:2: *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.* Therefore also it was then said to the shepherds, Luke 2:11: *This day is born to you a Saviour,* etc. And *this day* was said though it was night: because of that night the Psalmist had foretold, Ps. 138:12: *The night shall be light as the day,* etc. But the passion of the Lord was as it were noonday. Hence, Amos 8:9: *In that day the sun shall go down at midday,* namely when there is the fullness of heat and light. For at midday the sun is higher, hotter, brighter. For then the Lord showed the great fervor of love, as had been foretold, 1 Kings 11:9: *Tomorrow you shall have relief, when the sun shall be hot.* For the fervor of charity made him suffer. John 15:13: *Greater love than this no man hath,* etc. And then *there was no one that could hide himself from his heat,* when he prayed even for his enemies. Then also was the fullness of light, that is, of knowledge: because then the veil of the temple was rent, that is, the veils of the Scriptures were made manifest. And in a wonderful way the setting of this sun was at the midday of the passion. But in another respect this sun grew mild at its evening, or setting, when it showed the highest mercy; so that the heat itself may be called justice, the mildness mercy.

His going forth is prepared as the daybreak, etc. Daybreak is the beginning of the day, and Mary is the beginning of Christ according to the human nature which he took from her; which Christ is the eternal day according to the divine nature. This daybreak also joins the night, that is, sinners, to the day, that is, Christ, as was said of the dawn: and at this daybreak it began to dawn upon the world.

His going forth is prepared, that is, prepared from eternity through predestination. Hence she says, Prov. 8:23: *I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made.* Or, prepared through sanctification in the womb, that she might be born wholly clean, through whom the world was to be cleansed. Or, prepared through the wisdom of the Father, to whom she says: *Thou art he that hast drawn me out of the womb,* etc. (Ps. 21:10). The preparer is the Holy Spirit, or the whole Trinity.

There follows: *And he will come to us as the early and the latter rain to the earth* (Hos. 6:3). The dative case. Well does he say *as the rain,* namely that she may rain upon us with her grace, and make us fruitful for bearing fruit through good works, and extinguish in us the heat of concupiscences. Adapt to Mary the other properties of rain, which you will find there: De- *(p. 392) He shall come down like rain upon the fleece* (Ps. 71:6). The rain, that is, the grace or doctrine of Christ and of Mary, which binds together two kinds of dust, that is, sinners, so that from them may be made vessels unto honor.

Early and latter. The early rain, according to Jerome, by which the seed that has been sown takes root in the earth, is punishing grace. The latter, by which the grains already swollen are ripened, is perfecting grace. So the Lord promises his coming. And such was the nativity of Mary to the world. Therefore she is to be asked by us assiduously that she may go before the unwilling, that they may will; may follow the willing, that they may not will in vain, as Augustine teaches; that the Lord may be entreated, granting the grace of beginning, of advancing, and of persevering.

Again, as the light of daybreak is always increased and grows to perfect day: so Mary, sanctified beyond the others before she was born, went forward daily holier, and at length surpassed angelic holiness, as was said above of the dawn.

Again, the sun, rising as it were from the daybreak, does not cloud it over, but illumines it: nor did Christ, being born of the Virgin, harm the chastity of the mother, but rather marked it with honor: since from pure he rendered her purer. And note that almost whatever was said above of the dawn can most fittingly be adapted to this daybreak.

Again, at this daybreak God visited man. Job 7:18: *Thou visitest him early in the morning,* etc. *Thou visitest*: the Gloss, thou liftest up. *Early in the morning* (*diluculo*): the Gloss, by the brightness of the virtues. For on account of the brightness of the virtues Mary is called the daybreak. Therefore a little after she had conceived the Saviour, Zachary says, Luke 1:78: *The Orient from on high hath visited us.*

Again, Christ is the daybreak, of whose going forth from the Father it is said, Mic. 5:2: *His going forth is from the beginning*, that is, from the Father, *from the days of eternity*. And this is understood of the eternal begetting. Of his going forth from the womb of the mother is expounded this authority: *As the daybreak*, etc. For as, when the daybreak has gone forth, the darkness of night is put to flight, so when Christ went forth from the virginal bridal chamber the darkness of worldly iniquity and ignorance was put to flight. *And he will come to us as the early and the latter rain*, as above (Hos. 6:3).

Or thus: as long as we are in the temporal life, Christ is to us the early rain, justifying us through faith and works. After death he will be as it were the latter rain, when he will transfer us from the threshing floor to the barns. And this twofold rain is not to be referred to different hours of this day, as some wrongly understand, but to different seasons of one year. Hence it is said there that in the land of promise rain is given twice in the year. Therefore it is promised to the truly obedient, Lev. 26:3–4: *I will give you rain in due seasons.*

Again, *he will come to us as the early and the latter rain.* There he will give us prevenient grace, that we may will, and subsequent grace, that we may not will in vain, as Augustine says.

Chapter 9: Mary, Morning

(p. 393) Morning (*mane*), of which it is said, Isa. 58:8: *Then*, that is, in the time of grace, *shall break forth*, that is, shall be born suddenly and unexpectedly from the dark synagogue, *as the morning*, which seems to proceed from the dark night, *thy light*, O Church, that is, the blessed Virgin, whose renowned life illumines all the churches. *And thy health*, that is, Christ, of whom the Psalmist says, Ps. 26:1: *The Lord is my light and my salvation*, etc. *Shall speedily arise*: because *a present remedy of all is the speedy coming of a cloud* (Ecclus. 43:24), that is, the hastening of the Lord's incarnation. For this morning brought forth for us the day, that is, Christ, who is the eternal day.

And note that many things are read to have happened literally in the morning which are fulfilled spiritually in us by the benefit of this morning, or of this daybreak. By the morning also the infusion of grace is designated.

In the morning the wild beasts and the night birds hide themselves. Hence: *The sun ariseth, and they are gathered together: and they shall lie down in their dens* (Ps. 103:22). And it speaks literally of the young lions roaring after their prey, by whom the demons are designated. Similarly, Job 37:8: *Then the beast shall go into his covert, and shall abide in his den.* The night birds are depraved thoughts. The robbers, that is, the demons, flee away. Exod. 14:24–25: *And now the morning watch was come*, etc. And a little after: *And the Egyptians said: Let us flee from Israel*, etc. The clean birds begin to sing, namely the turtledove of contrition, the nightingale of love, the lark of gladness, and the like. Job 38:7: *When the morning stars praised me together*, that is, with one accord, etc. For then religious men sing the praises of the mother and the Son. Hence: *In the morning my prayer shall prevent thee* (Ps. 87:14). Again: *In the morning I will stand before thee*, etc. (Ps. 5:5). This is to be said to Mary: *I will stand before thee*, that is, I will stand in thy presence, ready for thy service. *To stand by* denotes three things. (Look under the title *The queen stood by.*) Just men slay their depraved motions, lest they be slain by them. Hence one of them says: *In the morning I put to death all the wicked of the land* (Ps. 100:8), that is, the depraved motions of sensuality, of which it is said: *Blessed be he that shall take and dash thy little ones against the rock* (Ps. 136:9). Or, the wicked of the land are the demons, by whose management sins are done on earth. *That I might cut off from the city of the Lord* (Ps. 100:8), that is, from the faithful soul, *all the workers of iniquity*, that is, depraved motions, which bring forth iniquity. For literally the devil tempts more in the morning. Hence, Jos. 8:14: *The king of Hai made haste in the morning, and went out*, etc. For this reason the Cistercians keep watch in the morning, and do not go to bed after Matins, but pray, so that they may thus slay depraved motions.

One must also go out against the enemies in the morning. *(p. 394)* Hence, 1 Kings 11:10–11, it is read that the men of Jabes Galaad, having heard that Saul was coming to their aid, took courage and said to their

enemies: *In the morning we will come out to you.* For then Saul *went into the midst of the camp in the morning watch,* and the enemies were overcome and scattered, *so that two of them were not left together.* Judith 14:2: *When the sun shall rise, let every man take his arms, and rush ye out,* etc. The Egyptians are drowned in the Red Sea of contrition—red on account of the sad remembrance of blood, that is, of sins—and this was done in the morning watch, etc. The darkness of sins is driven out. Job 17:12: *After darkness I hope for light again,* that is, the brightness of grace. Infirmities, that is, temptations, are relieved. Job 8:5: *If thou wilt arise early,* etc. In this morning also the languishing world began to be better, in which *from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there was no soundness* (Isa. 1:6), on account of the sin of our first parents.

Chapter 10: Mary, Light

Light. Mary is compared to light by many properties. Hence, Wis. 7:10: *I chose to have her instead of light,* etc. Gen. 1:4: *God saw the light that it was good,* etc. For this is the light which, after the Son, illumines every light.

Mary is light on account of her beauty: because no mere creature is more beautiful than Mary. Hence it is said of her, Wis. 7:29: *For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars: being compared with the light, she is found before it.* For nothing is subtler than light, as will be shown below. Nothing is purer than light: in which is her simplicity and innocence. Nothing cleaner: in which is the cleanness of her works. Nothing brighter: in which is the light of her examples. Nothing more delightful to human life: in which are noted in her the teaching and the wisdom of her words. Cleanness, then, belongs to virginity, brightness to good repute, grace to speech.

On account of the spreading of its brightness without diminution of itself: because she bore Christ without corruption of herself. Of which light, Ecclus. 1:10: *He poured her out upon all his works, and upon all flesh.* This is said of wisdom, and can be expounded of Mary. On account of its incorruptibility and purity: because it cannot be defiled. Hence, Wis. 7:25: *No defiled thing cometh into her.* As appears in the ray of the sun, which fire does not burn, nor water soften, nor stench corrupt, nor sword cut, nor glass withstand: and so it is incorruptible.

Because it makes visible the things which before did not appear: mercifully setting before the face of her Son those who before stood far from him, as is clear in Theophilus. For she, as it is said, Job 12:22, *discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth up to light the shadow of death.*

Because it enters through the narrowest crack or opening, by pouring in grace. Hence she says with her Son that of Apoc. 3:20: *If any man shall open to me the door, I will come in to him.* (Under the title on the sun.) Again, Cant. 2:9: *Looking through the windows, looking through the lattices.* It is as it were a small crack to greet her devoutly now and then, *(p. 395)* to give alms willingly for love of her, to listen devoutly to her Mass or to a sermon about her, to rebuke most sharply those who blaspheme her or swear by her, to believe firmly her great works, to commend oneself to her protection, and the like. For no one of the creatures of God is equally ready to do good. And through cracks of this kind she pours upon us the light of her graces and mercy.

Because by its illumination it shows the cracks and the narrowest openings to those who are in the house: that is, by the infusion of her grace she makes even the least sins perceptible to those who turn back to the heart. Ecclus. 42:19: *Revealing the traces of hidden things.* She is therefore to be asked assiduously to pour into our hearts the grace of divine fear: because, as it is said, Ecclus. 21:7: *He that feareth God will turn to his own heart*; so that through the illumination of her grace we may be able to understand the openings and rents of our hearts, and repair them.

Because it comes before the eye in order to be seen by the eye. And wisdom, or Mary, *preventeth them that covet her, so that she first sheweth herself unto them* (Wis. 6:14).

Because it illumines the eyes, that is, the intellect and the affection, which are the eyes of the soul: the intellect by the knowledge of oneself and of God, the affection by the love of God and of neighbor.

Because it puts to flight darkness and the train of darkness, that is, ignorance: because she brought forth for the world the eternal truth, which is Christ. John 14:6: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.* Because it spreads abroad splendor. Because from her womb, through his fleshly nativity, went forth that splendor of which Isaiah says, 62:1: *Until her just one come forth as brightness.*

Because it restores to each thing its proper appearance and distinctions, which the darkness had taken away: because in the time of darkness all things are in chaos and confusion. So it was made for the world through the sin of Eve: but when Mary, the true light, came, all things as it were came out of the darkness into their proper forms, namely the states, orders, and ranks of the Catholic Church, and the patterns of the virtues.

Because without respect of persons it offers itself to all who offer themselves to it in due manner. Wis. 6:8: *He hath equally care of all*: equally, that is, in a sharing way. Therefore the Father says to her, Isa. 49:6: *I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles.*

Because it is delightful to sound eyes. Hence, Eccles. 11:7: *The light is sweet, and it is delightful for the eyes to see the sun.* Our spiritual eyes are affection and intellect. Because it is hateful to bleary and unsound eyes: to Jews, pagans, heretics, blasphemers, and the like. Hence, John 3:20: *Every one that doth evil hateth the light.* Augustine: "To an unsound palate bread is a punishment, and to sick eyes the light is hateful which is lovable to the sound."

Of this light it is said, Gen. 1:3: *God said: Be light made. And light was made.* The Psalmist was about to say, Ps. 118:126: *It is time, O Lord, to do: they have dissipated thy law.* And the Lord said: *Be light made*, etc., as if he were already saying to Mary that of Isa. 49:6: *I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles.* For God made this light when he *commanded* the blessed Virgin *to shine out of darkness* (2 Cor. 4:6) and to be resplendent. And he saw that the light was good when through her he illumined the darkness of the world. Hence there follows, Gen. 1:4: *And God saw the light that it was good.* For as *none is good but God alone* (Luke 18:19), so no soul compared with Mary will be found perfect. For as he is *over all things, God blessed* (Rom. 9:5), so Mary is blessed among women, that is, above all women. *And he divided the light*, that is, Mary, from the darkness of original sin. Or, from the darkness, that is, from the thorny Jews, from whom she arose like a rose. *And he called the light Day*, when, at the birth of Mary, it began to dawn upon the world. (This you will find in the following chapter.) By this *(p. 396)* light, as by a kind of eye-salve, those born blind are illumined, so that with healed eyes they may be able to behold the glory of God, here through faith, in the future through hope. But this light the darkness, that is, dark sinners, Jews, pagans, heretics, did not comprehend: because to sick eyes the light is hateful, as Augustine says; and the little rays of this light are the luminousness of her examples.

Again, she was figured by that primary light which is believed to have been created there where the sun rises, and from which, according to some, the body of the sun was made: because from the substance of the Virgin was formed the body of the Son, because he is *the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world* (John 1:9)—supply: who is enlightened.

Again, she was figured by that light which was withdrawn from the dark Egyptians, namely the Jews, and given to the children of Israel, that is, to true Christians (Exod. 10:22–23).

Again, this light is that new light which seemed to rise to the Jews (Esther 8:16), and of which it is said, Esther 11:10–11: *A fountain of grace*, little through humility, *was turned into a light, and into the sun*, into a universal and stable light. For if *the path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day* (Prov. 4:18), how much more the path of her who bore the Sun of justice.

Again, if the Apostles are *the light of the world* (Matt. 5:14), how much more strongly Mary, who bore him who says, John 8:12: *I am the light of the world.*

Chapter 11: Mary, Day

Day (*dies*), from *dian*, which is brightness, as some say. Gen. 1:5: *God called the light Day*, namely when it pleased him that, at the birth of Mary, it should begin to dawn upon the dark world, and that through the day from the day, that is, the Son from the mother, *every man that cometh into this world* should be enlightened.

And note that the day is completed as it were through three spaces of time, namely morning, noon, and evening. Likewise by certain degrees of merits, as by certain spaces of hours, the perfection of Mary's holiness was completed. And these three are to be preached with care. Hence, Ps. 54:18: *Evening and morning, and at noon I will speak and declare*, etc. The morning of this day, when greeting is wont to be more frequent among men, was designated when it was said to her, *Hail*: and from that greeting the dawn of this day as it were began to glitter, and it began to dawn upon the world, which for five thousand years had walked in darkness and in the gloom of sins and of ignorance on account of the trespass of our first parents. And then the Lord, seeing, seems to have regarded the humility of Mary: because he held her as one of his household and familiar, whom he caused to be greeted by the Angel, as it were on his part, with such reverence. For then the Lord *commanded the saving of Jacob* (Ps. 43:5), that is, of Mary, who at once and once for all supplanted all vices. It was as it were the noon of this day when she was called *full of grace*: because, *(p. 397)* as noon has the fullness of heat and light, so also she was then shown to have received every fullness of the gifts which illumine the soul through knowledge and warm it through love.

It was as it were the evening of this day when it was said to her: *The Lord is with thee*—who had withdrawn from our first parents through sin: because as at evening the sun becomes nearer to the earth, so at this word God glides into the lodging of the womb. Note that at that word, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done*, etc. (Luke 1:38), the Virgin conceived through faith, as Fulgentius and Bernard clearly say. *And so there was evening*, namely when *the power of the most High overshadowed* her, *and morning*, that is, when the Holy Spirit came upon her, *one day* (Gen. 1:5), that is, singular.

Evening in the refreshment of the flesh of Christ. Morning in the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Ps. 77:14: *He conducted them with a cloud by day: and all the night with a light of fire.* Evening at the end of the Old Testament; morning at the beginning of the New. Evening, while the kingdom of the Jews is ended; morning, while the kingdom of the Christians is begun. *One day*, that is, singular and alone, in which the Creator of man was made the Son of man, taking on the cloud of our flesh. Two days in one day, as two in one flesh: the Virgin offering flesh, Christ putting on flesh: and there comes to be one day and one, that is, she alone and he alone. In the mother, a special virginity without precedent; in the Son, a singular and unique humility. This day has twelve hours, divided into five and seven. The five pertain to the senses of the virginal body, in which, beyond all, she excelled in a special continence from worldly allurements. The seven, to the mind of the Virgin, on account of the seven graces that preside over the soul, which go forth from the fountain of the one Spirit in a sevenfold stream.

Chapter 12: Mary, Cloud

Mary is a cloud, of which it is said, Isa. 19:1: *The Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt*, etc. According to Isidore, a cloud (*nubes*) is so called from veiling (*obnubendo*). And the blessed Virgin veiled the Only-begotten of God with human flesh. For *obnubere* is to cover.

Mary is a light cloud, which the Holy Spirit in her sanctification freed from original sin as from a certain weight, and in the conception of Christ wholly cleansed from the tinder of sin. And although the Prophet would seem to have spoken better had he said *will descend* rather than *will ascend*—because then *he bowed*

the heavens, and came down (Ps. 17:10)—yet he preferred to say *will ascend*: because the rider is above the thing on which he mounts and by which he is carried. Well, therefore, is it said *will ascend*: because this cloud carried him, and he ruled it. Hence she says: *The Lord ruleth me*, etc. (Ps. 22:1). And Deut. 32:12: *The Lord alone was his leader*, etc.

Another reason: the Lord, descending into the Virgin in the incarnation, took *(p. 398)* human flesh from her, in which he appeared visible to the world, as it is said, Bar. 3:38: *Afterwards he was seen upon earth*, etc., whereas before he was invisible in his divinity. Hence Isaiah says to him, 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God.* And so he ascended into the knowledge of men, who before knew little or nothing of him.

Mary is a cloud: because white through virginity and every kind of purity. Hence, Apoc. 14:14: *And I saw, and behold a white cloud*: white through innocence, virginity, kindness, and immortality of the body, as is truly believed. *And upon the cloud one sitting like to the Son of man.* This was when the Lord ascended upon the swift cloud (Isa. 19:1). *Having on his head a crown of gold.* By the head is meant the divinity, by the crown eternity, by the gold wisdom. The golden crown, therefore, is eternal wisdom. *And in his hand a sharp sickle*, that is, the judicial power which he will exercise in the judgment, when he will cut off the wicked in body and soul from the earth which they loved, and, when they have withered, will put them into the furnace of eternal fire.

Bright through the illumination of grace and the example of a holy way of life; designated by that bright cloud of which we read in the histories, on the work of the fourth day, which illumined the world before the sun was made, and from which, according to some, the body of the sun was made. Therefore it is said, Job 37:11: *The clouds*, that is, Mary and the saints, *spread their light*, namely the light of examples.

Ruddy through natural beauty, virginal modesty, most fervent charity, singular patience. (Look for this under the title on the rose.) Or also, ruddy through the martyrdom of the soul, when the moon was turned into blood through compassion in the passion of the Only-begotten (Joel 2:31).

Hyacinth-colored through her heavenly way of life, or through the contemplation of heavenly things: because she could most truly say that of the Apostle, Phil. 3:20: *Our conversation is in heaven.*

Black through humility (*humilitas*), which is so called as it were lying hidden in the ground (*humi latens*). For as the hyacinth color is properly the color of heaven, so the earthy color is properly black, and by the earth humility is properly figured. Therefore she says, Cant. 1:4: *I am black, but beautiful*: because the blackness of humility is the most excellent beauty of the faithful soul. (You will find this expounded in many ways under the title on the beauty of Mary.) Or, *black*, that is, dark, and full of the drops of the nights, that is, of tribulations, and blackened from compassion and the sorrows of her suffering Son, when for the Son of God and her own *there was no beauty in him, nor comeliness* (Isa. 53:2), and with the darkened Son the mother was darkened.

Suspended as it were between heaven and earth, and this through desire of eternal things. Job 7:15: *My soul rather chooseth hanging, and my bones death.* Job says that he has chosen two things which well befit the blessed Virgin. The first is to be suspended from the world, that is, to be lifted up, so that her *conversation might be in heaven* (Phil. 3:20). Again, Col. 3:1: *Seek the things that are above.* Therefore he says: *My soul chooseth hanging.* The Gloss: the intention of the mind. The second, to die to the world. Hence, Col. 3:3: *For you are dead.* For therefore there follows: *And my bones death.* The Gloss: the strength of the flesh, namely mortification. And two other things follow, namely to despair of the world. Hence there follows, Job 7:16: *I have done with hope*; according to that of Ps. 61:11: *Trust not in iniquity.* Again, no longer to live according to the world. Hence there follows, Job, in the same place: *I shall now live no longer*; according to that of the Apostle, Rom. 12:2: *Be not conformed to this world*, etc. By this suspension also is figured that she is mediatrix between God *(p. 399)* and sinners: for through her and her Son the lowest things have been reconciled to the highest.

Full of water through the abundance of graces and of all gifts. Hence she was called *full of grace*. Therefore clouds (*nubes*) are so called as it were the ships of the rain clouds (*nimborum naves*). This cloud also was laden with the waters of saving wisdom when she *kept all the words* which were said of her Son, *pondering them in her heart* (Luke 2:19).

It is said to be driven by the wind, that is, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, who both impelled her, and drew her, and led her about, and led her on, and guarded her; so that of her may be expounded that of Deut. 32:10: *He led her about, and taught her, and kept her.* For the Spirit of wisdom taught her to answer the Angel. The Spirit of piety drew her to Elizabeth. The Spirit of understanding led her with her Son to the temple. The Spirit of fear impelled her and made her go down with her Son into Egypt; and so of the others.

It makes the earth fit for fruit and fruitful. Hence it is said, Ecclus. 35:26: *The mercy of God is beautiful in the time of affliction, as a cloud of rain in the time of drought.* For she, like a cloud, mercifully hides sinners from the heat of the sun, and cools in them the heat of concupiscences, and makes them fruitful for working well.

It tempers the heat of the sun for fruits, for men, and for animals. The heat of the Sun of justice is his anger, which she moderates and restrains by her prayers, lest he strike sinners on the spot. She mercifully guards and overshadows the things springing from the earth, lest they be harmed by that same heat of the sun. Hence it is said, Job 37:11: *Corn desireth clouds.* It also cools the reapers. Hence also it is called *a cloud of dew*, that is, sending forth dew, *in the day of harvest* (Isa. 18:4). For as a cloud is welcome to the reapers, whom it cools, and makes the dry stubble easy to cut, which it moistens with its dew, so is Mary to those who separate their love from earthly things. Hence also she is called *the pillar of the cloud* (Ecclus. 24:7): a pillar, by sustaining the weak members of Christ; of the cloud, by overshadowing those who are scorched by the heat of temptations.

She tempered for the bleary eyes of mortals the brightness of the eternal sun, and cooled its heat. Hence he says, Ezek. 32:7: *I will cover the sun with a cloud.* And this when *the Lord said that he would dwell in a cloud* (3 Kings 8:12). And when *the clouds* of flesh became *his covert* (Job 22:14). For this reason also she says, Ecclus. 24:6: *As a cloud I covered all the earth,* that is, the flesh, namely from the heat of the Sun of justice, tempering for it the brightness of the divinity.

She was driven by the wind of most vehement persecution in the passion of the Son, and then she was dissolved into many droppings of tears. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 7:4: *Thy eyes like the fishpools in Hesebon.*

Again, of her it is said in Ps. 104:39: *He spread a cloud for their protection,* that is, of the Israelites, *and fire to give them light in the night.* Behold two offices for which Mary was given to us: namely, that she may protect us from the heat of the Sun of justice like a cloud—and therefore she is as it were suspended between the earth and the sun—and that she may illumine us by her prayers and examples like fire, since she is the light showing the light of the virtues; and also that she may protect us against the devil like a wall of fire, and against vices and sins. Hence she says with her Son, Zach. 2:5: *I will be to it a wall of fire round about,* that is, to the Church. And well does she say *round about*, against the circling of the devil, who, *as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. 5:8).

Book VIII: On the Things Which Pertain to the Earth and Can Figure Mary

Chapter 1: Mary, Earth

(p. 400) Earth, ground, soil, mould, dry land, clay, and potter's clay, threshing floor, plain, field, mountain, hill, hollow valley, and deep valley, desert, wilderness, rock, pasture, meadow.

Earth. This is the earth from which man was formed (Gen. 2:7), namely the new Adam, from the slime of the earth, that is, from potter's clay, which is tenacious, workable, and firm, on which works of stone are securely founded. Likewise Mary was tenacious and firm in her purpose of keeping virginity, and workable through obedience. Hence she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38). As if she said: Whatever pleases him, let him do with his handmaid. Behold her workableness. She by her prayers and merits sustains and supports the building of the Church militant. She is workable also for fulfilling our desires, if she is worthily entreated.

Again, this is the earth of which it was said, Gen. 2:5–6, that *there was not a man to till the earth.* For no man worked in that virgin earth from which Christ was formed, who *was made of the seed of David according to the flesh* (Rom. 1:3), that is, as it were from the slime of the earth according to his manhood. *But a spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth.* The surface of the earth, that is, the dignity of the earth, is the Virgin Mary, painted with the beauty of all flowers, that is, of the virtues. Her the Holy Spirit watered, who is the fountain of living water, so that as it were from such slime might be made that man who was placed in paradise *to dress it and to keep it*, that is, in the will of the Father, that he might fulfil it. In paradise also, that is, in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, Christ was placed in the incarnation, when *a woman compassed a man* (Jer. 31:22), that he might work in her *(p. 401)* fruitfulness, and keep her virginity unharmed.

And note that the blessed Virgin before the conception of the Son was as it were earth dry from every harmful moisture. The grace of the Holy Spirit came as a watering spring, and from such a joining the slime was made from which Christ was formed.

Again, this is the land of Hevilath (Gen. 2:11), which is interpreted *grieving* or *travailing*; which two things well befit the blessed Virgin, with regard to the passion of her Son, when she grieved over her offspring. In this land *the best gold* is born (ibid., v. 12), that is, the flesh of Christ, by way of comparison. For good was the flesh of Adam, which was able not to die. Better will be ours after the resurrection, which thereafter will not be able to die. Best is the flesh of Christ, which did not see corruption in the tomb, and through which, when dead, we shall be able to be raised, and when raised, to be glorified. In this land also is found *bdellium, and the onyx stone* (ibid.). Bdellium, according to Pliny, is an aromatic and very fragrant tree, and signifies the soul of Christ, which sprinkled the whole world with all the fragrances of the virtues and of examples. The onyx stone, which is very precious, white in color and showing the likeness of a human fingernail, signifies the deity of Christ, which, though it is *the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror* (Wis. 7:26), *the brightness of his glory, and the figure* of the Father, nevertheless, after the likeness of a human fingernail, was set upon human flesh in the incarnation and adhered to it personally. Mary, therefore, is the land of Hevilath, in which and from which and through which we have had God and man.

And note that it is said that there *the best gold* is born, that is, the flesh of Christ, which was born and formed from her: and there is found bdellium and the onyx stone, that is, the soul of Christ and the deity. Note well.

Again, this is the land of Gerara (Gen. 26:12), in which Isaac sowed, and *found that same year a hundredfold.* Gerara is interpreted *strangers drawing near*: because those who before were strangers to God draw near to him through the prayers and examples of Mary. For those who sow in this land, spending their

temporal goods for her honor, find *that same year*, that is, in the present life, great reward, which is noted by the hundredfold. For she converts some from the error of their way, she makes peace for some with her Son, to some she gives the grace of continence; some she makes humble, some generous, some merciful, some peacemakers; on some she bestows the garments of the virtues; some she makes prophets, that is, wise, as is said, Wis. 7:27; and the like. Behold the hundredfold of the things which you sow in this land.

This is the land flowing with the honey of virginity and the milk of fruitfulness, of which we read, Num. 13 and 14 throughout: and of which the Lord says, speaking of the Jews, Ezek. 20:15: *I gave them a land flowing with milk and honey, the choicest of all lands.*

This is the land of promise, promised to the Jews, given to the Christians, whose fruits are the fig, the grape, and the pomegranate. By the fig is meant the sweetness of Mary; by the grape her love, which ineffably gladdens the heart devoted to her. Or, the power of her prayers, which inebriate Christ and make him forget our sins. The pomegranate denotes the diversity of graces by which she makes us live together in fellowship and charity. Or, by this threefold fruit Christ himself is figured, the fruit of the virginal womb.

This is the land of which we read, Deut. 8:7–9: *The Lord thy God will bring thee into a good land, of brooks and of waters, and of fountains: in the plains of which (p. 402) and the hills deep rivers break out: a land of wheat, and barley, and vineyards, wherein fig trees and pomegranates and oliveyards grow: a land of oil and honey: where without any want thou shalt eat thy bread, and enjoy abundance of all things: whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills are dug mines of brass.* A most excellent land, where one eats to the full. For Mary is a land of brooks, of waters, of fountains, and of rivers, by all of which are figured the gifts and charisms, graces, and virtues, which the world has had through her. She is also a land of wheat: because she brought forth for us Christ, who calls himself *a grain of wheat* (John 12:24–25). She is also a land of wheat, that is, the granary of sacred Scripture, with which, as with wheat, holy souls are fed. She is a land of barley, which is of a cold nature, and from it a drink is made for the feverish to cool their heat: because she brought medicine to those sick through sin. Ecclus. 38:4: *The most High hath created medicines out of the earth*, etc. She is a land of vineyards: because by her we are given to drink of manifold wine, as was said in section twelve of the enclosed garden.

Again, Deut. 11:11–12: *A land of hills and plains, expecting rain from heaven, which the Lord always visiteth, and his eyes are on it.* Again, Deut. 33:28: *The eye of Jacob in a land of corn and wine.* Jacob is the wrestler against vices, who ought always to aspire to the help of Mary.

This is the earth hung upon nothing (Job 26:7) through humility. For true humility, which leans on God alone, sees beneath itself nothing but nothing, that is, its own defects and the vanity of the world. Hence it is said, Lam. 3:1: *I am the man that see my poverty*: that is, manly for this reason, because I know my defects; as the earth, which is firm for this reason, because it is hung upon nothing. Jer. 4:23: *I beheld the earth, and lo it was void, and nothing.* Again, Job 28:5: *The land out of which rose bread*, etc.

Of this earth we read in Ps. 84:1: *Lord, thou hast blessed thy land*, etc. In these verses four things are noted.

The first, the sanctification of the Virgin. Hence it is said: *Thou hast blessed*, that is, thou hast sanctified. And this blessing consists in three things: because the Lord first blessed her by sanctifying her in her mother's womb; second, by extinguishing the tinder of sin in her; third, by granting her the power of begetting. Therefore she was called *blessed among women*: because she conceived with her flower unharmed, carried without toil, brought forth without pain, which no other did. Of the first, namely of the sanctification: *The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful* (Ps. 45:5). Of the second, namely of the extinguishing of the tinder: *The power of the most High shall overshadow thee* (Luke 1:35). Of the third, namely of the power of begetting bestowed: Jer. 31:22: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth*, etc. It is said therefore: *Lord, thou hast blessed thy land*, that is, Mary, who was wholly thine. And this land God alone inhabited, he alone tilled it, and this land bore him alone as its fruit.

The second thing noted here is the freeing and bringing back of our captivity. Hence there follows, Ps. 84:2: *Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob.* For before Mary was born, the devil was taking captive and plundering the whole human race; but through her childbearing the captivity was brought back and the prey was shaken out, as had been foretold, Isa. 49:24: *Shall the prey be taken from the strong? or can that which was taken by the mighty be delivered?* For the devil takes and makes captive the sinner when he consents to mortal sin or desires to sin mortally. Against which the Psalmist prays, Ps. 139:9, saying: *Deliver me not, O Lord, from my desire to the wicked.* But captivity is twofold: of sin and of hell. And of both it is said, *(p. 403)* Isa. 46:2: *Their soul shall go into captivity.* And against the first the Psalmist prays, Ps. 125:4: *Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as a stream,* which, frozen by the cold of the north wind, when the south wind blows is turned into flowing. Of the captivity of hell it is said, Eph. 4:8: *Christ, ascending on high, led captivity captive.* From the captivity of hell those who were held there before were brought back through the childbearing of Mary and the passion of the Son. From the captivity of sin many are daily brought back through Mary to the state of grace. And for this reason there follows in the authority of Isaiah, 49:25: *Yea verily, even the captivity shall be taken away from the strong,* that is, from the devil; or, *from the strong,* that is, by the strong woman, namely Mary. Not, however, of all, but of those who are Jacob, that is, who struggle against vices, not of the slothful. Or of those of whom it is said, Lam. 1:6: *They are gone away without strength before the face of the pursuer.*

The third is the remission of our iniquities through the prayers of Mary. Hence there follows, Ps. 84:3: *Thou hast forgiven* (*remisisti*), that is, thou hast sent back (*retro misisti*), namely behind thy back, *the iniquity*, that is, the heap of sins, *of thy people.* Hence, Isa. 38:17: *Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.* But note that he says *of thy people,* that is, of the humble, namely of those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. And in this is signified our absolution.

The fourth is the covering of our sins. Hence there follows, Ps. 84:3: *Thou hast covered all their sins*: lest man should see them in the present for imitation. Or, lest in the judgment the sinner himself should see them, to his shame; the devil, to mock and accuse; the Angels and saints, to bear witness. Job 10:17: *Thou renewest thy witnesses against me.* God himself, to punish, who will be judge and witness (Jer. 29:23). *Thou hast covered,* I say, with the cloak of the flesh with which Mary clothed thee, stretched out on the cross, of which thou hadst foretold to the sinful soul, Ezek. 16:8: *I spread my garment over thee,* namely lest thy shame should appear. Or, *thou hast covered* with the cloak of charity, which made thee become incarnate, of which, Prov. 10:12: *Charity covereth all sins.* Again, 1 Pet. 4:8: *Charity covereth a multitude of sins.* Thou hast covered them also from the face of the sun, that is, from the anger of the Father, by the interposition of a cloud, that is, of thy flesh, as thou hadst foretold, Ecclus. 24:6: *As a cloud I covered all the earth* [here, *all flesh*]. On account of this covering it is said in Ps. 31:1: *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.* Those which are forgiven in contrition are covered in confession and satisfaction. Of confession, or the purpose of confessing, it is said in the same place, v. 5: *I said: I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord: and thou hast forgiven,* etc. Of satisfaction: *Charity covereth all sins* (Prov. 10:12), that is, works of penance, and mercy done in charity.

Morally: if you wish to be blessed by the Lord, you must be the Lord's land, rendering him worthy fruits as to a Lord. For the demons have their land, of which it is said, Isa. 26:19: *The land of the giants,* that is, of the demons, *thou shalt pull down,* that is, thou shalt draw downward, namely to the land of misery and darkness, etc., into ruin. The land of these giants are those who bear for the demons the fruit of the works of darkness. (A little below look for the good properties of the earth which befit just men.)

Again, of this earth it is said in Ps. 64:10: *Thou hast visited the earth, and hast plentifully watered it: thou hast many ways enriched it.* A sermon on the Lord's Incarnation: "David, the most excellent of the Prophets, to whom especially the promise concerning Christ was made—hence: *Of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne* (Ps. 131:11)—discoursing of the conception of the Virgin, and as it were giving thanks that his

prayer had been heard, *(p. 404)* that prayer of his, *Visit us, O Lord, with thy salvation* (Ps. 105:4), says: *Thou hast visited*, O Lord, *the earth*, that is, thou hast visited Mary. Note the frequentative verb: for God had often visited her through his Angels, his officials, but he visited her in his own person when it was said to Mary: *The Lord is with thee* (Luke 1:28). And then by her merits *the Orient from on high visited us* (Luke 1:78)."

There follows: *And hast plentifully watered it* [literally, *hast inebriated it*], that is, thou hast filled it with grace, which is the best wine. Hence she was then called *full of grace*. *Thou hast inebriated her*: with the spiced wines of all graces; with the *raspatum* of humility; with the white wine of virginity; with the red wine of charity; with the plain wine of meekness or of poverty; with the iron wine of constancy and fortitude; with the strong and hot new wine of divine love; with the clove wine of spiritual gladness; with the *sementatum* of contemplation, which arises from diverse things; with the spiced wine of inner consolation—for *pigmentum* is so called as it were *pius gustus mentis*, the devout taste of the mind; with the aromatic rose wine of perfect love, by which she *desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ* (Phil. 1:23); with the most savory claret of eternal beatitude. (What all these signify, look under the title on the garden, section 12.) This inebriation made her forget her people and her father's house. It gladdened her with ineffable joy. Hence she said: *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour* (Luke 1:47). It supplied her with boldness from the security of conscience. Hence she said of the Father: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. 1:1). It gave her strength. Hence: *Because I know not man* (Luke 1:34). It made her as it were stagger when, chosen as the mother of God, she answered through humility: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (ibid., v. 38). It aroused her appetite when she prayed: *Be it done to me according to thy word* (ibid.). It made her insensible, in a good sense, in the passion of the Son. Hence she seemed then to have said that of Prov. 23:35, through the virtue of patience: *They have beaten me*, namely in my Son, *but I was not sensible of pain.* It made her most generous and most liberal, and the mother of all mercy.

There follows: *Thou hast many ways enriched it*, that is, thou hast enriched her in many ways. And then was fulfilled in her that of Prov. 31:29: *Many daughters have gathered together riches*, etc.

Again, *thou hast many ways enriched it*, giving to her, and to us through her, thy divinity, and taking from her our humanity. Or, *thou hast many ways enriched it*: as, namely, certain little delights and playthings are given to mothers at the birth of children. The first part of this enriching: that she conceived with her flower unharmed, carried without burden, brought forth without pain, remained a virgin after childbirth; she alone as a virgin had milk; she nourished him who nourished her; she carried in her arms and hands him who carries her; she wrapped in swaddling clothes the brightness of eternal light; she was allowed to kiss at her pleasure him *on whom the Angels desire to look* (1 Pet. 1:12); she saw the King of the Angels himself fully subject to her; and other things of this kind. The second part of this enriching consists in the twelve prerogatives of which we spoke above. Literally, those three blessed Magi, coming to the cradle of the Son, are said in an apocryphal writing to have presented Mary with immense gifts, who, *opening their treasures*, not their purses only, offered precious gifts to the Son of God (Matt. 2:11).

Thou hast visited the earth, etc. Note that before the incarnation the heavenly Archbishop stayed as it were wholly in his diocese, that is, in heaven, and the province, that is, the world, cried to the Father: *Visit us, O Lord, with thy salvation* (Ps. 105:4). This being obtained, Zachary says, Luke 1:78–79: *The Orient from on high hath visited us, to enlighten them*, etc. *(p. 405)* Therefore the Son, sent by the Father for this, is called an ambassador in Abdias, where it is said of the Father: *He hath sent an ambassador to the nations* (Abd. 1). And for what? To heal the sick, not to empty money bags or to fill purses. For this reason it is said of this ambassador, Prov. 13:17: *A faithful ambassador is health, but a wicked messenger shall fall into mischief* [here, *an unfaithful ambassador is sickness*]. In his incarnation, then, Christ visited the earth, that is, the world, or man. He inebriated it in his preaching: which appeared in the faithful who were converted, as was shown in Mary. Or in the passion, when that cluster was pressed on the stake of the blessed cross, that men might drink the purest blood of the grape in the sacrament. He enriched it in many ways in the sending of the

Holy Spirit and the bestowal of all charisms, but he will enrich it ineffably in the general resurrection.

Again, of this earth it is said in Ps. 84:13: *The Lord will give goodness*, or sweetness, that is, good affection: which was when he inspired in the blessed Virgin the vow or desire of perpetual virginity. For otherwise she would not have been worthy to conceive the Son of God. Morally: good affection, which is when it delights a man to act well, is had from God alone.

There follows: *And our earth shall yield her fruit.* And elsewhere: *The earth hath yielded her fruit* (Ps. 66:7). Our earth is the blessed Virgin, who by the gift of God was made ours. Hence, Ezek. 20:15: *I gave them a land flowing with milk and honey, the choicest of all lands.* If then this earth is ours, then its fruit is ours, which she seems to hold in her hands in her image, as if offering him to all; but he is received only by those who *put away from them the iniquity that is in their hand* (Job 11:14). And it is notably said *shall yield* (*dabit*, "shall give"), or *hath yielded.* For the earth sown with human seed is not properly said to give, but rather to give back the fruit committed to it. But Mary, who conceived not of man's seed but by a mystical breathing, that is, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, properly gave her fruit: and well *her own*, because neither was any other earth worthy to bear such fruit, nor did such fruit befit any other earth. Therefore it is said *her fruit*, that is, befitting her: because it befitted the Virgin alone to bring forth the Son of God, and God alone to have a virgin mother. Or, *her own*, that is, blessed of the blessed; as the earth, cursed in the work of Adam, gave cursed fruits, namely thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:17–18). Or, *her fruit*, namely wholly hers, not common to her and a husband: because formed from the flesh of the Virgin alone by the work of the Holy Spirit. Hence the Son says of the Father, Isa. 49:5: *That formed me from the womb to be his servant, that I may bring back Jacob unto him.* He does not say "forming me" from the loins of a man; nor does he say from the navel, where in women is the seat of lust; but *from the womb*, the virginal womb, without the work of man and the concupiscence of woman.

Otherwise: she gave her fruit, she did not sell it: because we did not have the price. Therefore the mother says of her fruit, Isa. 55:1: *You that have no money make haste, buy, and eat*, etc. She gave, I say, her fruit *in its season*, that is, in the time of grace. Nor did this earth give her fruit only once, but she continually bears as fruit a remedy for sinners. Christ is called fruit (*fructus*) from *fruor*, I enjoy: because in the present he is our refreshment, but in heaven the enjoyment of Angels and men.

Again, of this earth it is said in Ps. 73:12: *God is our king before ages: he hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth*, that is, in the womb of the Virgin, which by a wonderful property is called the middle of the earth, as the central middle of the circumference. Blessed Bernard: "As a point is fixed in the middle, from which a line begun is extended in length, so Mary among the tribes of Israel *(p. 406)* the least, is set forth as it were extended as an example for the whole world. For to her, as to the middle, as to the hidden things of God, as to the cause of things, as to the business of the ages, look both those who dwell in heaven and those in hell, both those who went before us, and we who are, and those who will follow, and the children of children, and those who will be born of them. Those who are in heaven, that is, the Angels, that they may be restored. Those in hell, that is, the ancient fathers, that they may be rescued. Those who went before, that the Prophets may be found faithful. Those who follow, that they may be converted from sin, and through her be glorified."

Again, in the said circle the small point is the humility of Mary. The circumference is the containing of the whole creation, and especially of those to be saved. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:8: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven*, namely the Church. Or Mary is the center of the world for this reason: because from every part of the world all must have recourse to her in all their necessities, as all lines of the circumference run back to the center.

Otherwise: *God our king*, who is *before ages*: because *in the beginning was the Word* (John 1:1). *He hath wrought the salvation* of the human race by becoming incarnate, by preaching, by suffering. Therefore he

was called Jesus, that is, Saviour. *In the midst of the earth*, that is, in common, or in Jerusalem, which is called *the navel of the earth* (Ezek. 38:12).

In these words a fourfold heresy is refuted. That the Psalmist says *God* is against Nestorius, who said that Christ was a mere creature. That he says *our king*, against the Jew, who said: *We have no king but Caesar* (John 19:15). That he says *before ages*, against Arius. That he says *hath wrought*, against the Manichaean.

This is the earth of which it is said in Ps. 23:1: *The earth is the Lord's*, namely his own, as above, *and the fulness thereof*, namely the virtues and the gifts of graces. Hence she says, 1 Cor. 15:10: *By the grace of God I am what I am.*

This is the earth from which *truth is sprung* (Ps. 84:12), namely the truth of human flesh, which Christ united to himself, God giving the goodness of our redemption. Morally: *truth springeth out of the earth* when the earthly sinner truthfully confesses his sins.

This is the desirable land. Hence of the servants of Mary: *For nothing*, that is, for a brief and very small service, *they had the desirable land* (Ps. 105:24), that is, Mary; to whom he says, Isa. 26:9: *My soul hath desired thee in the night*, namely of the present misery. In the same place, v. 8: *Thy name and thy remembrance are the desire of the soul.*

This is the land *desert, and where there is no way, and no water* (Ps. 62:3), as Jerome expounds, in which the Lord appeared *in the holy*, that he might see, that is, make seen and known, the power and glory of the glorious Virgin. Of which holy one it is said, Luke 1:35: *The Holy which shall be born of thee*, etc. Expound the three adjectives.

This is the land which we ought to inhabit through true love and continual service. Hence it is said to Mary: *The dwelling in thee is as it were of all rejoicing* (Ps. 86:7): and this that we may be fed with her riches. Ps. 36:3: *Dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches*, or delights.

This is the earth of which it is said to God the Father: *Who hast founded the earth*, that is, Mary, *upon its own bases* (Ps. 103:5), namely faith, or humility. Of which the Father says, Isa. 48:13: *My hand also hath founded the earth*, etc. *It shall not be moved*, namely to sin. Or, *it shall not be moved*: because she never wavered by distrusting the angelic promise, or by despairing of the Son's resurrection, as the Apostles did, saying, Luke 24:21: *But we hoped*, etc. Again, *it shall not be moved. (p. 407)* For she never inclined to the right through prosperity, or to the left through adversity, or downward through any temptations of the devil: because virtue is a habit consisting in the mean. Or this is said for this reason: because she was a woman fearing God: and fear is the firmament of the soul. Hence: *Thou hast made his strength fear* (Ps. 88:41).

And it is said of this earth, Eccles. 1:4: *One generation passeth away.* This was fulfilled in the passion, when Peter denied Christ, and the sheep were scattered when the shepherd was struck. Hence the Son to the Father: *Friend and neighbour thou hast put far from me* (Ps. 87:19).

And another generation cometh. This was when the thief believed and repented, to whom it was promised: *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise* (Luke 23:43).

But the earth, that is, Mary, *standeth for ever.* In the word *standing* is noted perseverance in faith. Therefore John notably says, 19:25, that she *stood by the cross of Jesus.* Therefore the Lord had said, Isa. 63:3: *I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me.* He does not say a woman. The winepress is death, which, as the winepress presses wine from grapes, so presses souls from human bodies. But the Lord, pressed in this winepress, pressed the winepress itself: because he conquered death, and from himself, the grape, pressed out for us the cup of wine, or of the purest blood, which we drink at the altar. And then he could truly say: *There is not a man with me*, through firm belief. But this woman alone remained with him through faith. Therefore he says: *I have trodden alone.* And that: *I am alone until I pass* (Ps. 140:10). Therefore also he then said to the Father, Matt. 27:46: *Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani? that is, My God, my God,*

why hast thou forsaken me?

Otherwise: *the earth standeth for ever* (Eccles. 1:4), and among the other elements it alone is immovable and solid. The stable solidity of Mary is her humility, or the firmness of her purpose, which never wavers. For in part the earth can be moved through some accident, as happens in an earthquake, but not as a whole. Hence no building is firm unless it has its firmness from the earth. So neither was Mary ever moved through consent to sin; nay, in her constancy we unstable ones receive firmness through her examples and prayers, without whose help it is impossible to be firm.

Again, of this earth it is said, Isa. 40:12: *Who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth?* The immovable bulk of this earth is the weight of humility, or the firmness of purpose. For weight is the impulse of a thing striving toward its place. For humility has as it were a twofold place: lower in its own judgment—hence humility (*humilitas*), as it were lying hidden in the ground (*humi latens*); higher in God's judgment—hence to the truly humble it will be said in the judgment: *Friend, go up higher* (Luke 14:10). But to the proud it will then be said what was said to Lucifer, Isa. 14:13, 15: *Thou saidst in thy heart, O Lucifer: I will ascend into heaven: and I will say to thee: But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit.* And they imitate him who are of his side (Wis. 2:25).

Again, of this earth, Isa. 40:12: *Who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth?* The three fingers—because the finger is of the hand, which signifies working—signify the working of the Trinity. The first, the thumb, which is very strong, the power of the Father. The second, which is called the index finger, from indicating, the wisdom of the Son. The third, which is called the master finger, the mastery of the Holy Spirit, *whose unction teacheth of all things* (1 John 2:27).

And note that a thing that is hung leans only on that thing from which it is hung, as is clear in a lamp. So also Mary leaned only on divine help. Hence, Cant. 8:5, she is described as *leaning upon her beloved*, etc.

(p. 408) This is the thirsty land of which, Isa. 53:2: *He shall grow up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground.* A thirsty land is called dry and unwatered land, which, although it does not receive moisture from without whereby it might conceive and bring forth some root which afterward might come forth into a tree or plant, yet sometimes, God working, conceives some root in itself and not from elsewhere, which springs up into a plant or tree. So the blessed Virgin, not receiving moisture from without whereby she might conceive within, by divine grace working in her conceived the Son from herself. Hence it was said to her, Luke 1:31: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb*, that is, from thy womb. He, conceived in this way, came forth from the womb true man. Therefore he is said to have come up as a root out of a thirsty ground.

And note that for planting this root a trench was made in this earth through humility; the earth was thrown out through love of poverty; the tree was applied to the earth through the union of natures, which is that latchet which John did not loose, because he did not unfold the union of the Word with the flesh; the root was joined to the earth through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is said, Isa. 53:8: *Who shall declare his generation?* This is the land *in which no man walked* (Jer. 2:6), that is, her husband Joseph, *nor did man dwell*, namely mere man, but the God-man Christ Jesus.

Again, *a land that is not sown*, as it is said in the same place (Jer. 2:2).

Mary is earth (*terra*), which according to some is so called from *terion*, which is *standing*: because *the earth standeth for ever* (Eccles. 1:4), whereas fire and air and water are movable. Or it is so called from being trodden (*terendo*), as regards its upper part, by which it is trodden. Or because it is pressed by the other three elements placed around it. For then she could properly be called earth when her enemies trampled on her in her Son the whole day of the passion.

Ground (*solum*), namely from solidity, and it denotes the solidity and constancy of Mary's mind in her purpose of keeping virginity, and the stability of her faith at the time of the Lord's burial.

Soil (*tellus*), which according to some is so called from raising itself (*tollendo*) on high, actively or passively: because we take (*tollimus*) its fruits from it. Or because its fruits lift us up, that is, nourish us. Or because it lifts us, that is, carries us. Or from enduring (*tolerando*): because it endures the labors of men.

Mould (*humus*), so called properly when it lay hidden under the waters. Hence *humus* is from moisture (*humor*); and Mary is mould on account of the moistening of all charisms and graces. Gen. 2:9: *The Lord God brought forth of the ground all manner of trees, fair to behold.* (Look under the title on wood, where the trees of the enclosed garden are treated.)

Dry land (*arida*), so called properly when the waters had been gathered into one. Gen. 1:9: *Let the waters be gathered,* etc. In the same place, v. 10: *God called the dry land Earth.* He called, that is, he willed, or foresaw, that it should be so called, and made it such as ought to be so called. And she is called dry from dryness: because she was dried by the fire of the Holy Spirit and by her Son, who is *a consuming fire* (Heb. 12:29), from every harmful and carnal moisture. Nor did the waters of earthly concupiscences have any place in her: because the contemplation of heavenly things wholly dried up earthly desires in her. For when the Lord was seen, the thigh of Jacob shrank (Gen. 32:25). Gen. 1:9: *And God said: Let the waters that are under the heaven be gathered together into one place: and let the dry land appear*. For this was fulfilled in Mary. For all the waters, that is, the graces, *that are under the heaven*, that is, under God, were gathered together *into one place*, that is, into the soul of the blessed Virgin, when she was called *full of grace*: and nonetheless she appeared dry, saying to the Angel: *Behold the handmaid*, that is, the humblest among the virtues, as the dry land among the waters. For her humility was truly the abyss of the virtues.

(p. 409) Again, of this dry land it is said in Ps. 94:5: *The dry land*, that is, Mary, *his hands*, that is, Christ's, *have founded* [the edition notes that the Vulgate has *his hands formed the dry land*]. His hands, that is, the gifts of graces, founded it in the depth of humility. Hence elsewhere it is said to Christ: *Who hast founded the earth*, that is, Mary, *upon its own bases*, which was her humility. *It shall not be moved*, to sin, *for ever and ever* (Ps. 103:5).

Clay (*limus*), which is workable earth, designated by the slime from which the first man was formed (Gen. 2:7). For the blessed Virgin was as it were dry land, that is, earth dry from harmful moisture, as was said above, before the incarnation of the Son; the grace of the Holy Spirit came as a watering spring, designated by that spring which *rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth* (ibid., v. 6), and fully watered Mary: and from such a joining the slime was made from which Christ was formed. And *limus* is called as it were *ligans humus*, binding mould. Blessed Bernard: "What is viler than clay? What higher than God? Yet so great a condescension was made, that whatever God did, the clay is said to have done; whatever the clay endured, God is said to have endured."

And argil, that is, potter's clay, which is almost the same as *limus*, namely workable and firm earth, on which works of stone are securely founded. Likewise the blessed Mary was tenacious and firm in her purpose of keeping virginity. Nor did she waver at the angelic promise. She was also workable through obedience, answering: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.* As if she said: Whatever pleases him, let him do with his handmaid. She also shows herself workable through kindness toward our desires, if they are just, to be fulfilled; and she sustains in virtue and grace, by prayers, merits, and examples, the building of the Church militant. She is also the clay ground in which Hiram cast all the vessels of the temple of Solomon, *in the plain of the Jordan, between Socoth and Sartham*, as is read in 3 Kings 7:46. For she is the pattern and exemplar of all virtues, and the form of all goodness.

Mary is earth. Because she is painted with diverse flowers, that is, virtues. Hence, Gen. 2:6: *A spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth.* The surface of the earth, that is, of the dignity of the earth

of paradise, that is, of the Church, is the blessed Virgin, painted and adorned with diverse, nay, with all virtues, as the earth with flowers. Hence it is said: *Surrounded with variety* (Ps. 44:15).

Because she is clothed with diverse kinds of medicinal herbs. For her humility by its example heals pride; her poverty and generosity, cupidity and avarice; her virginity, lust; her kindness, hatred and anger; and so of the others. And so in the flowers is understood the adornment of the virtues as regards herself; in the herbs, the effects of the virtues as regards men. Because the earth is the lowest element: and this through the highest and deepest humility, according to the teaching of the Wise Man, Ecclus. 3:20: *The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God.* And this was most excellently fulfilled in Mary. Again, according to that of Ezek. 32:19: *Whom dost thou excel in beauty? go down.*

Because it is the element that is trodden on: and this through obedience. Hence she says: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.* For it belongs to a handmaid to obey. As if she said: Whatever pleases him, let him do with his handmaid. Or, she showed herself as it were trodden on through the highest patience. Hence she could say: *My enemies have trodden on me,* namely in my Son, *all the day* (Ps. 55:3), namely of the passion.

Because it is the thirsty element: and this through desire of grace. Hence it is said of Christ, Isa. 53:2: *He shall grow up as a root out of a thirsty ground*, that is, Mary. (Look for this thirst in section 6 of the enclosed garden, where the garden is called thirsty.)

(p. 410) Because it is in some places level, through meekness or justice. (Look for levelness in section 5 of the enclosed garden.)

Because in some places it is mountainous, through the highest excellence. Because in some places it is full of valleys, through twofold humility. Because in some places it is open plain. Hence it is said of the land of promise, Deut. 11:11, that it is *of hills and plains.* (Look below for the properties of the plain.)

Because it is immovable as a whole. Eccles. 1:4: *The earth standeth for ever.* (You have this expounded a little above.)

Because it is workable, especially where it is clayey. (You will find this above.)

Because by manifold rubbing it is made more solid. For the more she was struck in the passion of her Son, the more firmly she stood. Hence, John 19:25: *There stood by the cross of Jesus*, etc. Therefore the spouse says to her, Cant. 7:7: *Thy stature is like to a palm tree.* (Look under the title on her beauty at the end of the treatise.)

Because every building is founded on the earth. So whatever good we wish to do, we ought to found it on her through faith in the incarnation, of which she was the minister, and in the things which pertain to her. Hence she says: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Ecclus. 24:25).

Because it receives those who fall, and helps them to rise. As to the first it is said of her servant: *When he shall fall he shall not be bruised: for the Lord putteth his hand under him* (Ps. 36:24). As to the second, Apoc. 12:16: *And the earth*, that is, Mary, *helped the woman*, that is, the faithful soul. Therefore she is to be prayed to continually thus:

Help the falling people who strive to rise.

Otherwise, unless we will to rise, she cannot help. But with our hands, that is, with good works done for her honor, and with our feet, that is, with devout affections, we ought to hang upon this earth and humble ourselves toward her, as one who takes hold of the earth bends toward the earth, so that we may be able to rise again after the fall of sin.

Because it is placed between us and the abyss: because when it is withdrawn, as with Core, Dathan, and Abiron (Num. 16:31–32), at once we go down alive into hell. So when the help of Mary is withdrawn from

us, at once we slip into sin and thence into hell.

Because almost whatever lives, lives from the earth. So also whatever lives through grace lives through Mary, who brought forth life. Therefore she says: *In me is all hope of life* (Ecclus. 24:25).

Because from the earth is taken gold and silver, with which captives are redeemed. And she brought forth him who is the redemption of our souls. For she is the land of Hevilath, where gold is born (Gen. 2:11). (Look above at the beginning of the chapter.)

Because from workable earth are formed certain vessels necessary for diverse uses. And from the substance of her flesh was formed the vessel of the Lord's body, in which vessel was sent to us from the Father that electuary by which the human race was healed.

Because from the earth spring flowers and aromatic herbs, spices and roots, from which medicines are made. Ecclus. 38:4: *The most High hath created medicines out of the earth.* And from her were born the members of the Saviour, by whose being bruised on the cross the human race was healed.

Chapter 2: Mary, Threshing Floor

(p. 411) Threshing floor (*area*). The threshing floor is so called from its being scraped (*eradatur*) for threshing the crops. Or because nothing is threshed on it unless dry (*arida*). Or because it is useless for threshing unless it be dry and parched. For she is the dry floor of Gedeon, on which the fleece was wet (Judg. 6:37–38). Jerome: "The fleece, though it is from flesh, knows not the passions of the flesh. So also virginity, though it is in the flesh, knows not the vices of the flesh."

He shall come down like rain upon the fleece (Ps. 71:6). For the virginity of Mary was made fruitful with the dew of heavenly grace, when the Holy Spirit came upon her, and Christ descended into her in the likeness of dew. Hence he says, Hos. 14:6: *I will be as the dew: Israel shall spring as the lily.* And yet her flesh, after the example of the floor of Gedeon, remained dry, without harmful concupiscence.

Again, by the threshing floor beaten with many blows can be understood the flesh of Mary, beaten with many tribulations and pressures; and by the fleece, the mind of the blessed Virgin herself. The dew of grace first poured into the fleece, that is, the virginal mind, for faith; afterward into the floor, that is, her flesh, for fruitfulness. Hence first it was said to her: *Hail, full of grace* (Luke 1:28). Second: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (ibid., v. 35).

Again, on the threshing floor the grains are separated from the chaff. And by the example, merit, and help of Mary, vices are separated from virtues; and those who persevere in such exercise are worthy of an angelic vision, greeting, and address, like Gedeon.

Chapter 3: Mary, Plain

Plain (*campus*), whose flower the Lord glories that he is, Cant. 2:1: *I am the flower of the field,* which is properly the violet. For these flowers, the violet and the lily, spring from untilled ground. So also Christ from the Virgin, untilled by human working.

Mary is a plain on account of the flower-bearing pleasantness of virginity, and the common sharing of *(p. 412)* piety. Hence blessed Bernard: "Let him be silent of thy mercy," etc. (Under the title on her mercy, after the middle of the chapter.) On account of the spaciousness of charity: because Mary loves those who love her. On account of the tilling of divine diligence. On account of the fruitfulness of motherhood: for there grew the precious grain of that wheat with which birds and animals are fed, namely the Angels and the simple faithful, in the sacrament of the altar as in one manger.

Mary is a plain. Because there grew the hay of the Lord's flesh: because *all flesh is grass* (Isa. 40:6). The hay, namely, which Mary brings forth for beasts, by which also she saves men and beasts, that is, those who live rationally and those who carry the burdens of her commandments.

Because the plain is a common place of pasture: and in her life and examples faithful souls are refreshed and grow fat, as you have in section 12 of the enclosed garden. Mary is also pasture: because pastures of their own accord bring forth grass. Hence: *Let the earth bring forth the green herb* (Gen. 1:11). Again, this pasture is green with faith and virtues and the everlasting perseverance of holiness. Again, it is common, as has been said. Again, it is nourished by the moisture and rains of graces. Again, it gives hay, that is, the grace of knowing oneself to be hay, that is, flesh soon to die, so that one may be humbled. Again, pasture is not raised up: likewise neither was Mary by human working.

Because the plain is frequented by birds, that is, by the Angels. Ecclus. 27:10: *Birds resort unto their like*: because virginity is the sister of the Angels, as the Apostle Thomas says. Because it is always exposed to the sky: and she with open heart always gaped after *the perfect gifts which come down from the Father of lights* (James 1:17). Because there the air is healthier than in the towns: because her grace is the health of the soul, but *favour* of the world *is deceitful, and beauty is vain.* Because a plain is called obedient when its fruitfulness answers to the farmer: and she answers well to her farmer, that is, to the Holy Spirit, when, having conceived the Saviour, she at once visited Elizabeth (Luke 1:40). Because it is level through simplicity, and low through humility. Hence: *The mountains ascend, and the plains descend* (Ps. 103:8). Because it is a place for walking about. Hence she calls her lover to meditate on her, Cant. 7:11: *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field.* In saying *let us go forth*, she shows that she is the companion of those who meditate on her. Ezek. 3:23: *And I rose up and went forth into the plain.* Note: for first one must rise from vices, and go forth from one's carnal self, that one may become spiritual. *And behold the glory of the Lord stood there.* For Mary is the dwelling of glory, that is, of the Son of God: because *a wise son is the glory of his father* (Prov. 10:1). With those also stands the glory of the Lord who are plains according to the properties stated above.

Chapter 4: Mary, Field

(p. 413) Field (*ager*), according to the properties of the plain assigned above. And it is called *ager* from acting (*agendo*), because the blessed Virgin was cultivated by many actions of virtues and by the manifold exercise of the Holy Spirit, and also driven (*agitata*) by many tribulations for her Son and with her Son. Of this field it is said, Gen. 27:27: *Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field*, namely of flowers, *which the Lord hath blessed.* Literally, these are the words of Isaac blessing Jacob. Mystically they are the words of the Father concerning the Son and the mother. And in that the likeness of the mother is assigned to the Son, a special prerogative of Mary is designated: and because in Jacob Isaac understood Christ who was to be born of him, the words he said are referred to Christ and Mary. *A plentiful field*: Mary full of grace. *Which the Lord hath blessed.* Hence it was said to her: *Blessed art thou among women*, etc. (Luke 1:28). Or, the field full of flowers is the virginal womb of Mary, which the Lord blessed at his entering. Hence: *The Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women*, etc. The smell of Christ, then, is as the smell of a plentiful field: because the Son gives forth such an odor of sweetness as proceeds from the mother. For the Son says, Ecclus. 24:21: *My odour is as the purest balm.* And of the mother it is said, Cant. 4:10: *The sweet smell of thy ointments above all aromatical spices.*

Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed. The Father therefore, delighted by the fragrance of the virtues of the Son, in which the odor of the mother breathes and smells like the sweetness of fragrant little flowers, says: *Behold the smell*, etc. And when he says *behold*, he sets before us the mother and the Son as an example. For this adverb is rousing and demonstrative. And first rousing: as, if I wished to show something to one asleep, I would first wake him. Demonstrative: because it

always brings some news, sad or joyful.

The smell of my son, namely *the smell of a plentiful field.* Because Christ was born wholly clean of the cleanest, wholly sweet of the sweetest, wholly merciful of the most merciful, and the like. The plentiful field, then, is Mary, whose fragrance that great patriarch spiritually perceived beforehand, across many intervening generations. Hence for joy he uttered: *Behold the smell*, etc. We also, after many generations, still taste something, even if faintly, of that fullness. This field the Lord blessed: because she is that land which the Lord blessed, and through which he turned away the captivity of Jacob; against what was said to Adam, Gen. 3:17: *Cursed is the earth in thy work*, that is, for thy work, namely for the sin. Because in the work of man the womb of woman conceives in sin and brings forth in pain. But this curse was taken away and the blessing restored when it was said to Mary, *Hail*, and she was announced *blessed among women.*

Again, of this can be understood and expounded that of Matt. 13:44: *The kingdom (p. 414) of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man having found, hid, and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.* The field is Mary, as has been expounded. The treasure hidden in this field is Christ, to whom it is said, Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God*; who for nine months lay hidden in the virginal womb, designated by the golden urn which contained this treasure. And note that three things are chiefly wont to be treasured: gold, silver, and precious stones. The gold is the soul of Christ, the most precious of creatures, as gold of metals. The white silver, the virginal flesh of Christ. The precious stones, the drops of the blood of Christ. By this treasure we have been at once redeemed and enriched: because Christ laid down his soul for souls, his flesh for human flesh, and shed his blood to give life to his children after the example of the pelican: because *the life of all* living through grace *is in his blood* (Lev. 17:14). This is the treasure which he who has is rich, even if he possesses nothing else; and he who has it not is poor, even if he possesses the whole world. (Of this treasure look under the title on the privileges of the virginal flesh.)

There follows: *Which*, namely the treasure or the field, *a man having found, hid.* Well is it said *having found*: for properly it is a finding to have the grace of the Son or of the mother, and a pure benefit, which the services of the whole creation could not have merited. Hence also it was said to the mother: *Thou hast found grace with God* (Luke 1:30). And to the shepherds: *You shall find the infant* (ibid., 2:12). *A man*, that is, a rational being. For not the lion of pride, nor the serpent of envy, and the like, obtain the grace either of the mother or of the Son; nor those who are subject to the other vices.

Hid: for Mary wishes to be loved in secret, who always loved secrecy, and wishes to be served as it were hidden, who always served the Lord in secret and as it were with the door closed: which is noted when it is said: *The Angel being come in unto her.*

And for joy thereof goeth, etc. He who goes is moved from place to place: because true love is never idle, so that whoever loves her is moved assiduously to the pursuits and exercises which he believes will please so great a Virgin. And this *for joy thereof*, that he may serve her joyfully and with gladness, who brought forth joy for the whole world. For there is no greater joy of conscience than to be a familiar of the mother and the Son.

And selleth all that he hath. In selling a certain exchange is wont to be made, so that one thing is given and another received. Likewise here also it is fitting that pride be given and exchanged for humility, lust for chastity, avarice for generosity, and the rest in this manner. He sells, then, all that he has who for the honor of the mother and the Son rejects and tramples on the riches of the world and the delights of the flesh and other pleasant things, and spends in her service whatever he has.

And buyeth that field, that Mary may be his portion in the land of the living. Hence of the strong woman, who signifies the faithful soul, it is said, Prov. 31:16: *She hath considered a field, and bought it.* For such a household the most sweet Virgin wishes to have, and such are worthy to serve. Hence the Church sings: “As the days of spring, flowers of roses surrounded her, and lilies of the valleys”: flower-bearing, namely, like

the rose through charity; and white within and without through twofold chastity, which is noted in the lilies; and as it were valleys through twofold humility. Hence it is that we ask her: “Loosed from our faults,” etc.

Again, of this field someone says in prose (a sequence):

This is that plentiful field, whose odor so pleasant moves the old man to joy; the field to whose honor he who governs all things boasts himself the flower of the plain.

Chapter 5: Mary, Mountain

(p. 415) Mountain (*mons*), which is so called from eminence according to Isidore; or according to others *mons* is called as it were a mass opposed to the rising sun (*moles opposita nascenti soli*). For the immovable mass of Mary’s humility—which humility Christ so loved that he deigned to be born of her—sets itself, on behalf of her familiars, against the heat of the sun of justice, lest it dry them up. James 1:11: *The sun rose with a burning heat, and parched the grass*, that is, the carnal.

This is the curdled mountain, through the integrity of virginity. Hence she says to the Father or to the Son: *Thou hast curdled me like cheese* (Job 10:10).

This is the fat mountain: fat with the fatness of charity, the marrow of devotion, the richness of fruitfulness, the oil of mercy and piety, the butter of meekness, the honey of contemplation, the thickness of singular grace. And note that *fat mountain* is said twice: because both for herself and for all of us the charisms of all graces were given to her.

This is the mountain on which the true Jews ought to adore (John 4:20–21).

This is the mountain signified by the mountains of Armenia, where the ark rested (Gen. 8:4): because, when the flood of sins overflows, she by her prayers sustains the Church and the faithful soul.

This is the mountain of vision, where Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son (Gen. 22:14).

This is Mount Galaad (Gen. 31:21 ff.), which is interpreted *heap of witness*: because in her the testimonies of all the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament meet, and both the oracles of the Prophets and the works of the Patriarchs bear witness to her.

This is Mount Horeb, which is interpreted *table*: because with her milk he was refreshed through whom not even a bird goes hungry.

This is Mount Thabor, which is interpreted *light coming*: because into her first came, and through her came, the eternal light to those sitting in darkness: and in her the Lord of all was transfigured, taking the form of a servant (cf. Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:29).

This is the Mount of Olives, so called from the abundance of olives: and the Lord heaped her with the fullness of grace, and made her the mother of mercy.

This is the mountain *in which it hath pleased God to dwell*, for nine months bodily: and in which, according as he is God, he will dwell *unto the end*, that is, without end, without limit, without measure.

This is Mount Selmon, which is interpreted *shadow*, which is left from light and an opaque body set against the light: and she had a virginal body and the light of graces, by which two we are overshadowed through grace against the heat of vices: and in it, that is, through her, sinners *shall be whited with snow*, that is, above snow. Isa. 1:18: *If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow.*

This is that mountain of which Daniel speaks, Dan. 2:34, from which *without hands (p. 416)*, that is, without the work of man, *that stone was cut out*, that is, Christ, *which struck the statue* of Nabuchodonosor *upon the feet.*

Otherwise: by this mountain is signified the height of human nature in which it was before sin; from which height Christ took flesh as regards freedom from sin. Not, however, that the flesh which Christ took was perhaps such before he took it, but by taking it he made it such. *Without hands*: because the flesh of Christ is the temple of God, figured by the temple of Solomon, in whose building *neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard* (3 Kings 6:7); but its builder and maker was God himself (Heb. 11:10).

Again, she is the shady and thickly wooded mountain (Hab. 3:3), according to another reading, from which God came to us. For thus it is read there: "God will come from Libanus, and the Holy One from the shady and thickly wooded mountain" [the edition notes that the Vulgate has *God will come from the south, and the Holy One from mount Pharan*]. The blessed Virgin is a mountain on account of the eminence of her most holy way of life, which is called Libanus, which is interpreted *whiteness*, on account of the prerogative of virginal purity. This mountain is also called shady: because *the power of the most High overshadowed* her in the conception of the Son of God, who is the inaccessible light, and *dwelleth in light inaccessible* (1 Tim. 6:16). This mountain is thickly wooded through the multitude of all the virtues, which are designated in the thickness of trees: because in it, as if planted by divine wisdom, all the virtues stood around in the superlative degree. (Of this thickness you will find much in section 9 on the garden, where the garden is called thick and thickly set.) It is said therefore: *God from Libanus*, that is, from the whiteness of the virginal womb, *will come* to save us, *and the Holy One* of holies (Dan. 9:24) *from the shady and thickly wooded mountain*, as above.

Again, she is that *mountain of the house of the Lord* raised *above the hills*, that is, the saints, all of whom she surpasses in dignity: and because all are lower than she, as a hill is less than a mountain. Of which mountain it is said, Isa. 2:2: *In the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.* The last days are the time of grace. The house of the Lord is the Catholic Church. The singular mountain is the blessed Virgin. Prepared through predestination from eternity. Hence she says, Prov. 8:23: *I was set up from eternity, and of old*, for the salvation of the human race and the sustaining of the Church. The mountains and hills are the saints of both Testaments. The top of these mountains is the blessed Virgin, surpassing all in grace and merits. Or, she is the mountain on the top of mountains: because exalted above the choirs of Angels.

In the word *flowing* are noted seven properties befitting the servants of Mary. The first is the impulse of fervor: because with haste and impulse all obstacles are to be broken through, that she may be worthily served. The second, the descent of humility: for rivers flow to the valleys, and by humility alone does one come to her. The third, abundance: which is noted in the word *flowing*, that he who desires to serve her may abound in every good work. The fourth, desire: that he may desire to melt in a certain flowing in the desire for her. Cant. 5:6: *My soul melted.* The fifth, permanence: as a river does not leave its bed. For *he that shall persevere unto the end* in her service, *he shall be saved* (Matt. 10:22; 24:13). The sixth, progress: that the servant of Mary may always strive to advance from good to better. The seventh, assiduity: that the servant of Mary may flow assiduously, in desires, in tears, in good works, and in devout prayers.

Mary is a mountain. Because it is broad at the foot or root. The root of Mary is humility, which is *(p. 417)* her foundation, broader and deeper than that of all the saints. Because it is narrow at the summit. The summit of Mary is motherhood, whose manner is incomprehensible and singular without precedent: because *who shall declare his generation?* (Isa. 53:8). In the same, 66:8: *Who hath ever heard such a thing?*

Because it is higher than the adjacent earth, that is, than every mere creature; lower than heaven, that is, than Christ alone, God and man. Anselm: "Nothing is equal to Mary, nothing but God is greater than Mary." Because it wholly exceeds the earth: because in no virtue was there found the like to her. Because it is earth raised above earth: otherwise it is not a mountain. For, made pregnant with the Son of God, she was not only exalted above all men, but contained heaven itself in herself. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:8: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven.* She also *reached to heaven, standing on the earth* (Wis. 18:16): and

therefore she is called *a mountain on the top of mountains* (Isa. 2:2). Because it always adheres to the earth, that is, to sinners, who are earth, through the affection of mercy, saying: *Who is weak*, etc.? (2 Cor. 11:29). Because it strongly protects the land subject to it as long as it is under it: and she protects those subject to her, unless they withdraw from her through mortal sin.

Because it is seen from afar: for through all the regions of the world has gone out the sound of her piety and mercy. Because whatever comes from above, it receives first, and thence it descends to the neighboring valleys. For in the incarnation she first received *every best gift*: and of her beauty the humble receive who draw near to her through true love.

Because all rivers, or almost all, have their source from the mountains: and of her was born he who says, Ecclus. 24:41: *I, like a channel of a river*; from whom the streams of graces flow down to her, and from her to us, which *run with a strong stream from Libanus.* Because it sends forth clear and cool springs at its foot, that is, in charitable affection, to refresh us.

Because it is suited for fortresses and watchtowers: and she is the fortress of the Church and of all the faithful. In her examples also we can watch what is to be fled and what is to be embraced.

Because on mountains there is a greater storm than in valleys or in plains: and in the passion of her Only-begotten she was greatly troubled, and *all the plague* was *the sadness of her heart* (Ecclus. 25:17).

Because the mountain is the dwelling and refuge of wild beasts. Hence, Ps. 103:18: *The high hills are a refuge for the harts*: and she is the refuge of those who flee from the face of the bow, that is, of the divine judgment. Otherwise: she is also the dwelling of those who flee the world: because they are not of the world, whom the world shoots at with detractions and curses. Jer. 9:8: *Their tongue is a piercing arrow*, etc. She also feeds such in the richest pastures. Hence Job says of the wild ass, 39:7: *He scorneth the multitude of the city.* And after a few words, v. 8: *He looketh round about the mountains of his pasture, and seeketh for every green thing.* For this reason it is said to her: *The dwelling in thee is as it were of all rejoicing* (Ps. 86:7).

Chapter 6: Mary, Hill

(p. 418) Hill. Mary is called both mountain and hill. But mountain with respect to the Angels and saints, nay, to the whole creation: and the saints are called hills, Gen. 49:26: *Until the desire of the everlasting hills should come.* For the everlasting hills, that is, the holy Patriarchs and Prophets, desired her. Hence Jacob said, Gen. 49:18: *I will look for thy salvation, O Lord.* And Isaiah, as it were foreseeing her, said to her: *Thy name, O Lady, and thy remembrance are the desire of the soul* (Isa. 26:8). But she is called a hill with respect to the Son alone, who is greater than she, as a mountain is greater than a hill. Blessed Anselm: “Nothing is equal to Mary, nothing but God is greater than Mary.”

Hollow valley. This is the valley abounding in that wheat of which it is said, John 12:24: *Unless the grain of wheat*, etc. Again, Isa. 40:4: *Every valley shall be exalted*, etc. Mary can fittingly be called *every valley*, as she is called *a woman among all* (Eccles. 7:29): and this on account of her humility of every kind, of heart, of voice, of work, and of all the senses. And on account of this she was filled with every spiritual charism. Hence also she was called *full of grace.*

And every mountain and hill shall be made low (Isa. 40:4), namely Christ in the incarnation and passion. Nor is she called only a valley, but a deep valley. Hence Christ says of her, Ps. 59:8: *I will mete out the vale of tabernacles.* For she is a deep valley through twofold humility. *Of tabernacles*: because in her those who are soldiers and pilgrims ought to dwell, according as it is said to her: *The dwelling in thee is as it were of all rejoicing* (Ps. 86:7), holy Mother of God. *I will mete out*: because Christ alone is able to weigh and measure the greatness and the extent of his mother.

Chapter 7: Mary, Desert

(p. 419) Desert, of which the Lord says, Isa. 43:19: *I will make in the desert*, that is, in Mary, who in Ps. 62:3 is called *a land desert, and where there is no way, and no water. I will make*, I say, in this desert *a way*, that is, Christ, who is *the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6). *And in the wilderness* [literally, *in the pathless place*], that is, in Mary herself, who is *the land through which no man passed* (Jer. 2:6), namely her husband Joseph. Hence the Church sings: "A way pathless to men." *Rivers*, namely of graces and gifts. *The beast of the field shall glorify me*, that is, the blind sinner of the world: because they ought always to give thanks for such and so great a gift, by which they return to grace and glory.

Again, Isa. 43:20: *I have given in the desert*, that is, in Mary, *waters*, namely of graces, *and rivers in the pathless place*, as has been expounded, *to give drink to my people, to my chosen.* He does not say only *to my people*, that is, to Christians, but adds *to my chosen*, that is, to the predestined.

Again, Isa. 41:18: *I will turn the desert into pools of waters, and the impassable land into streams of waters.* For Mary was truly a desert (*desertum*), from forsaking (*deserendo*): because she forsook the riches, delights, pomp, and glory of the world, reckoning all such things as dung, that she might gain Christ. She was also a desert because her heart was far from the noise and tumult of the world, nor was it trodden down by the throng of earthly thoughts or cares; but it remained green and flowering, and brought forth all the shoots of the virtues: nor was the voice of man heard there, that is, of what pertains to man; but there sang the turtledove, that is, the Holy Spirit, and the lark of divine praise.

Wilderness (*solitudo*), according to the properties of the desert; and she was truly a wilderness: because separated from the whirlwind of the world and intent on the Creator alone; and into this wilderness of soul the Holy Spirit led her, as he had foretold, Hos. 2:14: *I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart.* This wilderness is contempt of the world, into which she was led when the Spirit of the Lord inspired in her both contempt of the world and love of the solitary life. Of this desert and of this wilderness Isaiah had foretold, 35:1: *The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad*, as has been expounded, *and the wilderness shall rejoice.* Which was when she said: *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*, etc. (Luke 1:47). *And shall flourish like the lily*, namely through her undefiled virginity.

Again, of this wilderness, Isa. 41:19: *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, and the thorn, and the myrtle*, etc. Here seven trees are enumerated, which as it were grew in this wilderness. (You had their exposition in section 9 of the enclosed garden. Look there.)

Again, when the blessed Virgin was born in the wilderness of the world, *instead of the shrub came up the fir tree, and instead of the nettle came up the myrtle tree* (Isa. 55:13). The shrub is crooked, short, and prickly: and the nettle causes itching. Such was the first mother, who at once, on tasting the forbidden food, felt the motions and stings of the flesh, which two things through *(p. 420)* her sprang up in all human flesh. But the blessed Virgin was as it were a fir tree, namely straight, smooth, light, without the prickles of depraved motions and evil concupiscences. She was also as it were a myrtle, which preserves flesh from putrefaction. It is also soothing and tempering: and Mary felt neither itching nor injury of chastity, contrary to the nettle, which stings and burns. Instead of the nettle, then, the myrtle grew, when in place of Eve came Mary, through whom we have consolation and soothing. This is the wilderness in which Ana—which is interpreted *gifted*, or *favored*, or *gift*, or *favor*—found hot waters of grace, which washes the heart, cools it, and makes it fruitful for good inasmuch as it is water, and warms it through love inasmuch as it is hot, as is read in Gen. 36:24. By this Ana understand the just man. Say how; and this especially when he willingly feeds *the asses of Sebeon his father*, as is read in the same place of that Ana.

Wilderness is the friend of innocence, which Mary continually kept. Therefore John, as a youth, "in his tender years sought the caves of the desert."

Of silence. Isa. 6:5: *I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that hath unclean lips.* Behold the cause of the uncleanness of the lips. Therefore of the lover of wilderness and silence it is said, Lam. 3:28: *He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace*, etc. Again, Ps. 54:8: *Lo, I have gone far off flying away*, etc.

Of contemplation. Hence after he has said, *He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace*, he at once adds: *Because he hath taken it up upon himself* (Lam. 3:28), by contemplating heavenly things.

Of virginity, which Dina lost by wandering about (Gen. 34:1 ff.), and Mary kept enclosed in her chamber.

Of long-suffering hope. Hence after the Psalmist has said, Ps. 54:8–9: *Lo, I have gone far off flying away, and I abode in the wilderness*, he adds: *I waited for him*, etc., namely through long-suffering.

Of the angelic greeting, as is clear in Mary, Luke 1:27, and of visitation, as is clear in Zachary, who was alone in the temple (Luke 1:9–10).

Of divine inspiration. Hence Christ says of the faithful soul, Hos. 2:14: *I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart.*

Chapter 8: Mary, Rock

Rock. This is the rock on which was found no trace of the serpent (Prov. 30:19), that is, of the devil: which trace is threefold, pride, avarice, lust. The first humility excluded from her, the second charity, the third virginity. This is the rock of which in Ps. 103:18: *The rock is a refuge for the hedgehogs*, and for the hares, according to another reading. The hedgehogs are great sinners, covered with the thick prickles of sins, who, when they are corrected, arm themselves with their spines, that is, with excuses; yet if they humbly turn to Mary, they can find refuge with her. Or, the hedgehogs are *(p. 421)* humble penitents, bristly through fasts, vigils, sackcloth and hair shirt, and the like. And with such spines he ought to arm himself who wishes to find refuge with her, lest he can be bitten by the flesh or the devil; as the perch, armed with its spines, does not fear the bite of the devouring pike. The hares are timid sinners fleeing from the justice of the Son to the mercy of the mother, as Theophilus did: of such it is said, Prov. 30:26: *The rabbit, a weak people, which maketh its bed in the rock*, that is, its refuge in Mary, and its hope in her mercy. And note that it is said *a weak people*, that is, those who humbly attend to their weakness, and reckon themselves of no worth before God. For she it is *who giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not* (Isa. 40:29), according to their own estimation.

The hare is the penitent. It has great ears. James 1:19: *Let every man be swift to hear*: that after the example of Mary he may hear eagerly of eternal things. Isa. 50:4: *He wakeneth in the morning, in the morning he wakeneth my ear, that I may hear him as a master.* It always moves its lips, through psalmody and prayer. Hence, 1 Thess. 5:17: *Pray without ceasing.* It is called *lepus* as it were *levipes*, light-footed: because it runs swiftly. In Greek, from its running, it is called *lagos.* It is timid. Ecclus. 5:5: *Be not without fear about sin forgiven.* It is swift, so that whatever good it can, it does with all urgency. Ecclus. 31:27: *In all thy works be quick*, etc. It sleeps with its eyes open. Behold caution, that one may fulfil that of Cant. 5:2: *I sleep, and my heart watcheth.* Again, Eph. 5:15: *See how you walk circumspectly.* The same is male and female. Hence, Isa. 26:17–18: *So are we become in thy presence, O Lord. We have conceived, and been as it were in labour.* It gives its skin for clothing, its flesh for nourishment: for the outward way of life of the penitent avails those who imitate it against the cold and the heat of temptations. And the flesh, worn down through penance, is in a certain way the food of the soul of the penitent himself, or of the one who imitates him: because the mortified flesh pledges life to the spirit.

Again, this is the rock against which the little ones of Babylon are to be dashed, that is, the first motions and the thoughts of malice and wickedness, of which in Ps. 136:9: *Blessed be he that shall take*, that is, hold

back, that they may not grow and become great, *thy little ones*, that is, the first motions, which are designated by *the little foxes that destroy the vines* of the Lord of hosts, that is, the faithful soul. Hence, Cant. 2:15: *Catch us the little foxes*, etc.

And dash them against the rock, that is, he brings them to be dashed against Christ, praying that he repress harmful motions and slay such concupiscences. Or, *against the rock*, that is, Mary, by faithfully invoking the help of this rock. For by her help *the head of the serpent* is crushed, that is, the beginning of suggestion. Of this we have an example in blessed Benedict, who, feeling the goads of his flesh rising vehemently against his soul, threw himself into briars and nettles, and, rolling in them for a long while, healed the wound of the mind through the wound of the skin, as Gregory says.

Pasture. The properties of pasture you had above, under the title in which Mary is called a plain (cf. ch. 3 of this Book VIII).

Book IX: On the Receptacles of Waters Which Figure Mary

Chapter 1: Mary, Fountain

(p. 422) Fountain, well, river, stream, torrent, water, pool, channel, and bucket, lake, water jar, basin, conduit, path, aqueduct, laver, fishpond, swimming pool (that is, bathing pool), flood, vein, liquid, cistern.

Fountain, of which it is said, Cant. 4:15: *The fountain of gardens*, namely a watering fountain. These gardens are the Church and the consciences of the just. The stream of this fountain is Christ the Lord, who says, Ecclus. 24:42: *I said: I will water my garden of plants.* For the mother waters the gardens, but by means of her stream, that is, her Son.

And a fountain (*fons*) is so called from pouring (*fundendo*): because it readily puts forth its water. But between this fountain and other fountains there is this difference: that other fountains, because they draw their waters from below, overflow above. But this fountain, because it receives its waters, that is, gifts and charisms, from above, overflows to us below. For this reason it is said that *living waters*, that is, waters making souls live, *run with a strong stream from Libanus*, that is, from Christ, who is *the brightness of eternal light.*

Again, it was therefore said to Mary, *The Lord is with thee*, as a fountain supplying thee with the fullness of graces. And in this sense Christ can be called the fountain, and Mary the channel. And a fountain is the head of rising water, as it were pouring out waters.

This fountain is signified, Gen. 2:6, by that spring which *rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth.* According to some this fountain is understood as the abyss, the mother of all waters, from which all springs and rivers arise: and from that holiness whose whole fullness descended into Mary proceeds the sanctification of all the saints and of everyone. And well is that fountain which signifies Mary said to rise out of the earth: because the whole life of Mary was as it were a certain ascent and a certain withdrawal from earthly things. For fittingly this fountain is said to water *all the surface of the earth.* The earth is the Church. On the surface of the earth appears *(p. 423)* the beauty of the earth, and this surface designates the just, who all have drawn and draw unceasingly from the abundance of Mary.

This is the *fountain sealed* (Cant. 4:12), namely with that seal of which it is said to her by the Son or by the whole Trinity, Cant. 8:6: *Put me as a seal upon thy heart*, etc. And by this seal the beauty of the divine likeness was impressed on her more expressly than on any creature. Or, this seal is the faith of the Virgin, in which she always stood immovable at the time of the Lord's burial. 2 Tim. 2:19: *The sure foundation of God standeth firm, having this seal.*

Otherwise: by her being called a fountain, her fruitfulness; by her being sealed, her virginity. For nothing is called a fountain except that from whose abundance a stream flows. And from this fountain *a river went out of the place* (Gen. 2:10), namely of pleasure, *to water paradise*: namely Christ, from the virginal womb, to water the parched Church with the stream of grace.

Again, the seal or signet of this fountain is virginity, as has been said. For the things that are sealed are sealed for this, that they may remain closed. Therefore also she is called *the gate shut* (Ezek. 44:1–2).

Again, she is called a fountain sealed because she so sealed Christ that his incarnation was hidden both from the devil and from many Angels. Hence also some of them said as he ascended, Isa. 63:1: *Who is this that cometh from Edom?* Therefore Mary can be called a fountain sealed and a fountain sealing.

Otherwise: this is the fountain of mercy, sealed with the seal of justice: for her mercy so exults that her compassions always flow to the wretched, yet with justice preserved. (Look under the title on her omnipotence, at the end of the chapter.) Or, *sealed*, that is, closed: because to few is known the multitude of

her compassions, and the abundance of her graces, and the greatness of her spiritual riches.

This is the fountain of which it is said, Joel 3:18: *A fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord, and shall water the torrent of thorns.* The fountain is Mary. The house of the Lord is blessed Anne, in whom the blessed Trinity dwelt through grace. Or, the house of the Lord, that is, the household of the Lord, the ancient fathers, namely Abraham, Isaac, David, and the others, from whom Mary came forth. Or, from the twofold house of the Lord, that is, from the royal and the priestly tribe. But for what will it come forth? To water with the grace with which she was filled; or with her stream, that is, Christ, *the torrent of thorns*, that is, sinners, who are as it were a torrent running swiftly down into the sea of eternal bitterness. And they are well called thorns, because they lift themselves up through pride, tear through avarice, prick through lust. The first Mary waters, that they may not be burned, with examples of humility; the second with contempt of temporal things; the third with examples of chastity.

This is the fountain of Siloe, whose *waters go with silence* (Isa. 8:6), that is, with intermission: because the benefits of Mary do not flow continually to anyone at all, but when she wills and as much as she wills. And Siloe is interpreted *sent.* Literally, Siloe is a spring near Mount Sion (cf. John 9:7), which does not flow continually, but sometimes is silent, that is, does not bubble up or flow.

This is the fountain of which it is said, Zach. 13:1: *In that day*—a notable day, which signifies the time of grace—*there shall be a fountain open to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: for the washing of the sinner*, as regards men, *and of the unclean woman*, as regards women. Note that here this fountain is called *open*; in Cant. 4:12 it is called *sealed.* Open to friends, sealed to enemies. Open to the clean, sealed to the unclean. Open to the penitent, sealed to the impenitent. Open through *(p. 424)* mercy, sealed through justice. This is that *little fountain which grew into a river, and was turned into a light and into the sun, and abounded into many waters*, etc. (Esther 10:6). (Look in the sermons on the nativity of Mary.)

It is born of the sea, whose waters are bitter: but it puts forth those waters, drawn to itself through channels, that is, underground passages, sweet, with their bitterness laid aside. And Mary was conceived of the most bitter people of the Jews with the bitterness of original sin [Borgnet's note: it is of faith that Mary was conceived without original stain]; but in her mother's womb, as it were under the earth, she was sweetened through sanctification and was born wholly sweet. Hence it can be said of her: "As the thorn the rose," etc. And to her befits that of Job 31:18: *Holiness came out with me from my mother's womb.*

Mary, like a fountain, can rise as high as she descended. And because this fountain descended through humility lower than every creature in the conception of God, so in her assumption above every mere creature. She first waters the earth from which she springs, and only then passes on to water other earth. Of blessed Anne the Church sings: "The heavenly benefit in motherhood," etc. Afterward she watered also Elizabeth her kinswoman and John her little kinsman, not only with grace and recognition, but also with the spirit of prophecy: and then *of her fullness we all have received, and grace for grace* (John 1:16). Springing up from the bottom, it lifts little pebbles, but not great stones. The little pebbles are humble sinners, whom she lifts from the depth of sins to the state of grace; but not so the obstinate and those great in their own eyes. Therefore it can be said of her that *the hungry*, for the grace of conversion, *she hath filled with good things; and the rich*, who do not believe they need anything, *she hath sent empty away* (cf. Luke 1:53).

Small in itself, it becomes known by its long stream. The smallness is humility. The long stream is the great abundance of benefits, in which every creature shares. It is the head of the river, that is, of Christ as to his humanity, who *went out of the place of pleasure*, that is, from the virginal womb, when he was born into the world, made flesh.

It makes manifest the water that before lay hidden in the earth. For through her *the goodness and kindness of our Saviour appeared* to us, who in the land of the living was before *a hidden God* (Isa. 45:15). It as it were empties itself into the waters, that it may fill its stream, attributing nothing to itself, all to God. Hence she

says: *My soul doth magnify the Lord* (Luke 1:46), not myself. Again, saying: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me.* It always springs forth new waters, which it receives from the fullness of God the Father, who also is himself called *the fountain of living water* (Jer. 2:13). It has tempered water at every season. For it cools the heat of vices, and kindles the sluggishness of the hesitant, giving hope of pardon to the despairing.

It has a living source, which a fishpond does not: for her grace, which flees the lukewarm and is at hand for the fervent, knows no slow efforts. It offers an easy draught, which a well does not. She is prone to have mercy, and abhors the unmerciful. It has a continual flow, which the waters of Siloe do not. Hence she says: *Unto the world to come I shall not cease to be* (Ecclus. 24:14), namely to have mercy on the wretched. Therefore it is said to her, Isa. 58:11: *Thou shalt be like a fountain of water, whose waters shall not fail,* that is, the waters of mercy.

It is common and exposed. So also is her grace. Hence she cries, Isa. 55:1: *All you that thirst, come to the waters.* It is led by certain aqueducts to the workshops. For if we had an aqueduct, that is, true humility of heart, it would be at hand for all our necessities. It sends its stream to low places: for *(p. 425)* she reconciles and bestows her Son on the humble. Hence: *Between the midst of the hills,* where the hollow of the valleys is, *the waters shall pass* (Ps. 103:10), that is, the benefits of Mary. It forsakes the mountains, that is, the proud: because swelling repels what is poured in. Springing up and running about, it murmurs sweetly: because her benefits produce in the hearts devoted to her thanksgiving and the voice of praise. Isa. 51:3: *Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of praise.* Therefore those who love her must always say that of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 9:15: *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.* It relieves thirst, that is, the desire of the ancients. For through her came into the world *the desired of all nations* (Agg. 2:8). It relieves also the thirst of concupiscences by the examples of her virtues. It makes the neighboring places green with virtues, flowering with holy desires, and fruitful with good works. Ecclus. 40:16: *The greenness upon every water.*

A fountain serves as a mirror, and by its most pure clearness gives back the image to the one who looks into it: and Mary herself is the *unspotted mirror* (Wis. 7:26) for faithful souls, into which they ought continually to look. (Look under the title that she is a mirror.) And by her purity, which was so great that no greater under God could be conceived, as blessed Anselm says, she was worthy to conceive him, as Jerome says, who reformed in us his image, deformed through the old Adam, when the wax of human nature, warmed by her charity and obedience and made workable, was impressed again with the seal, that is, with the Son of God in the virginal womb.

Otherwise: the face of the father is the son. Hence the Psalmist says to the Father, Ps. 12:1: *How long dost thou turn away thy face from me?* that is, how long dost thou put off sending the Son whom thou art to send? And this face this fountain gave back to us, when the Father regarded the humility of his handmaid. But note that a fountain can give back its image only to those who draw near to the fountain and look into it. The charitable, the clean, and the humble draw near to Mary; the unmerciful, the filthy, and the proud flee from her. And there are two eyes with which one must look into the fountain, namely understanding and affection; or faith and love, that you may think devoutly of her and may be proved to love her through good working. And as the water of the fountain is not corrupted in serving as a mirror, so neither was she in bringing forth Christ, who is properly called *the unspotted mirror* (Wis. 7:26).

Again, a fountain does not freeze like other waters; but her compassions flow continually: because there does not blow the north wind that binds the waters, to which it was said from the beginning by God the Trinity: *Arise, O north wind* (Cant. 4:16), that is, O tempter, depart.

It extinguishes manifold fire: namely material fire, the fire of temptations, the fire of lust, of avarice, of anger, by the examples of her virtues; the fire of sins, and the burning of Gehenna.

The stream or little river of the fountain tends to the sea. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:43: *My river came near to the sea*, that is, my mercy and grace came near to those made bitter through penance and tribulations. Otherwise: *my river*, that is, the people flowing to me, *came near to the sea* of penance.

The fountain is cool in itself, and cools others who taste it. And she, cool through the extinguishing of the tinder of sin, provides us refreshment against the burning heats of tempting vices, if only we *have tasted that she is sweet.*

It is clear and without mud. And she is clear, because without the mud and dregs of wicked motions.

It is savory and sweet, especially to four kinds of men: to workers, to wayfarers, to the poor, and to any who burn with thirst. The workers are those who *(p. 426)* draw the yoke of her commandments and of her Son's. The wayfarers are those who, *not having here a lasting city* in this world, *seek one to come* (cf. Heb. 13:14). The poor are those who, attending to their own defects and fearing the divine justice on that account, beg and seek the mercy of the mother. Those burning with thirst are those who, willing or unwilling, are wearied by the threefold evil concupiscence. And they say to Mary: *For thee my soul hath thirsted*, etc. (Ps. 62:2).

It bestows its waters liberally. And Mary cries with her Son, Isa. 55:1: *All you that thirst*, through desire, *come to the waters* of my graces. And Apoc. 21:6: *To him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely.*

It is frequented by girls, that is, by humble and pure souls: which the name of girl signifies.

It is drawn from more often by little children, the poor, servants, and handmaids. These are the humble, who attend to their defects and serve obediently for the eternal reward: for it is proper to a handmaid to obey.

At the streams of fountains feet, hands, face, eyes, and garments are washed, etc. And through the examples of Mary our affections and works are washed, the inner face and the intention of the mind itself, and the adornments of the virtues, which sometimes contract squalor from the nearness of vices. So then this fountain washes and refreshes sinners, waters the just for bearing fruit, and gives drink to the perfect in their desires.

Chapter 2: Mary, Well

The well (*puteus*) is so called from drinking (*potatione*). And Mary says: *They that drink me shall yet thirst* (Ecclus. 24:29). And a well is a dug pit, from which water is drawn. And she is as it were a dug pit through the deepest humility, from which the earth was thrown out through love of poverty. Cant. 4:15: she is called *the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters*, etc. Note that Mary is called fountain and well in this authority: but fountain as to the common benefits which she shows to whom she wills freely, that is, without the cooperation of free will, as in the sacraments; well as to those things which are acquired from her and through her with labor and the cooperation of free will.

Of living waters, that is, of graces or teachings which give life here of grace, and of glory in the future. And these are called living waters. Waters, because they quench thirst and fulfil the other properties of water in the soul. Living, because they give life to the soul and make it spring up into life everlasting. Hence Mary seems to say with her Son, John 4:13–14: *Whosoever drinketh of this water*, etc.: *but the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting.*

Which run with a strong stream, that is, swiftly, that they may overturn the earth, that is, earthliness, in her lovers. Job 12:15: *If he withhold the waters, all things shall be dried up: and if he send them out, they shall overturn the earth.*

From Libanus, that is, from Christ, who is *the brightness of eternal light*, etc.

(p. 427) Otherwise: these waters run strongly and with a strong stream, bestowing manifold benefits on men: nor are the malignant spirits, our adversaries, able to set a barrier to them. And they run *from Libanus*, that is, from the whiteness of the piety of the glorious Virgin. Or, Libanus is the Holy Spirit, who through grace makes white sinners who before were black; from whom the living waters run, by the prayers of Mary, to her friends: and this with a strong stream, because neither the bestowal of the Holy Spirit nor the generous distribution of Mary knows slow efforts.

Otherwise: Mary is the well of living waters, for she is the book-chest of the Scriptures, which are deep and dark like the waters of a well: because *dark waters in the clouds of the air* (Ps. 17:12), that is, obscure knowledge in the prophets, the full understanding of which was in Mary. And they are called living from their effect: because they confer the life of grace and of glory on her lovers.

The well is deep. John 4:11: *The well is deep.* And Mary is deep through unattainable wisdom, that is, such a depth of graces that the frailty of the human condition does not reach it. Hence, Eccles. 7:25: *It is a great depth, who shall find it out?*

It is dark: because *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man* (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4), nor could the tongue of man utter, how much grace, how much mercy, how much charity, how much piety God bestowed on the glorious Virgin.

It is firmly built with stones from the bottom to the top. Hence it was said to her, Isa. 54:11: *Behold I will lay thy stones in order.* These stones are the oracles and certain works of the Prophets, which foretold and prefigured the coming or the birth of Mary. Or, these stones are the whole body of the virtues, bound together indissolubly with the bitumen of charity and the cement of humility; by which virtues, namely, Mary was made firm in good.

It descends into the bowels of the earth: for because the blessed Virgin descended through humility more deeply than every creature, therefore she is filled more abundantly by the Holy Spirit with the fullness of graces.

It does not have water of itself, but either from a spring or from an underground river. Therefore it is said of its waters that they *run with a strong stream from Libanus.* Libanus is Christ or the Holy Spirit, who filled the Virgin with all good things, so that she also might impart to us of her fullness.

Its waters are drawn with a bucket, which on account of its hollowness designates the humble desire of the heart. Prov. 10:24: *To the just their desire shall be given.* The bucket (*situla*) is so called by contrary from thirsting (*sitiendo*). Apoc. 22:17: *He that thirsteth, let him come,* etc. The chain or rope of this bucket is faith in the things which were done in the Virgin. Or, faith in things past, present, and to come. The links of this chain are the articles which bind us to believe the things which pertain to the Virgin, as was noted under the title that we owe her faith. Or, a threefold cord: the prayer of heart, of mouth, and of work, which ought to be long through perseverance, so that *it will not depart till* the most high Lady *behold* (Ecclus. 35:21). Or, the hollow bucket is humility, capable of grace, which alone deserves to be filled, and always thirsts and gapes after greater things than it has received.

The windlass (*gyrgillus*, in French *le treuil*), which is so called from turning (*gyrando*), because it turns round, from which the rope with the bucket is let down into the well for drawing water, can be called fear by reason of the letting down, or hope by reason of the lifting up. For fear presses the soul down, hope lifts it up. The double handle is the love of God and of neighbor. The putting of hands to it is good working.

Otherwise: if you wish to draw water from this well, that is, to draw grace from *(p. 428)* Mary, you must make of your heart a bucket through desire and humility, that you may be able to say: *My soul hath thirsted* for Mary, who is the fountain and well of living water. You must also turn back *the wheel of your nativity*, that is, of your life, *over the cistern*, recalling all your years in the bitterness of your soul, and all your

defects, until you say from a true heart: *I will speak to my Lady, whereas I am dust*, that is, useless, *and ashes*, that is, consumed by sins. For if you think otherwise of yourself, you are foolish: because you are not greater than our father Abraham, who said this of himself to the Lord (Gen. 18:27).

But if your bucket, that is, your heart, on account of its lightness floats on top like a bladder—which in the common ordeal is a sign for hanging—do as the wise woman who hangs a stone, namely of fear, on the neck of her bucket. For it is expedient for you that a millstone be hanged about your neck, that is, the judicial sentence, and that you be drowned in the depth of the sea, that is, of humble bitterness, so that thus you may be able to draw the water of grace from this well.

This is *the well of him that liveth and seeth* (Gen. 16:14), in effect: because it enlightens the understanding, hence it is called *of him that seeth*; and gives life to the affection, hence it is called *of him that liveth.* This is the rising well, *which the princes dug, and the chiefs of the people prepared, by the direction of the lawgiver, and with their staves* (Num. 21:16 ff.). The well, I say, over which the Lord spoke to Moses, and of which Israel sang this song: *Let the well rise up.* For this well the ancient fathers dug in many ways, revealing some of its mysteries under figure and in riddles, among all which the deepest is the mystery of the incarnation. Of which, Isa. 66:8: *Who hath ever heard such a thing?* Again, Isa. 53:8: *Who shall declare his generation?* Or, this well is both Scripture and Mary, which the princes dug, that is, the holy Expositors, or the Apostles.

This is the *deep well* (John 4:11), on account of the depth of understanding, the depth of which the frailty of human knowledge does not reach; on which Jesus rested and as it were sat down humbled, *wearied with* the *journey* of our redemption. *Altus* is equivocal, meaning deep and high. And Mary is deep through humility, high through holiness of life. Or, *a deep well*, that is, full of deep mercy, to fill the emptiness of the sinner's heart, which is *deep and unsearchable* (Jer. 17:9).

This is the well of seven. For she is signified by Bersabee, which is interpreted *well of seven*, or *well of fullness*: because she brought forth for us Christ, who is the sufficiency of all, because he will be *all in all* (1 Cor. 15:28), and therefore *of fullness.* Again, *well of seven*: because from her, filled with sevenfold grace, are drawn through prayer *the waters springing up into life everlasting.* Truly she is the spiritual Bethsabee, whom Christ loved from the upper room of the paternal majesty, and, desiring her beauty, joined to himself in ineffable marriage. And these waters she had in the depth of her humility, which is designated by the depth of the well.

Chapter 3: Mary, River

(p. 429) River (*flumen*), of which it is said: *The river of God is filled with water* (Ps. 64:10), that is, Mary with the charisms of graces. Hence *full of grace.* Between *flumen* and *fluvius* there is this difference, that *flumen* is the water itself, and *fluvius* is the course of the water. And *flumen* is prior to *fluvius*: because the water is before the running.

Again, *the stream of this river maketh the city of God joyful* (Ps. 45:5), that is, both Churches and the faithful soul.

A river always receives water from its source: and she from the Lord, who is *the fountain of living water* (Jer. 2:13); or from the divine fullness, that she may pour it back to us from herself.

It fortifies the adjoining place. And she keeps devout watch round about her people, that is, the Christians. Hence it is said of the Church, Nah. 3:8: *Waters*, that is, the compassions of Mary, *round about it … the waters are its walls.*

It makes the neighboring places fruitful, that is, the consciences that cleave to her in love. And this with the herbs of holy thoughts and meditations, the flowers of honest desires, the leaves of holy words, the fruits of good works, the greenness of flourishing examples. Ecclus. 40:16: *The greenness upon every water.* But if

the river is taken away, which happens in those who sin mortally, all these things dry up. Job 12:15: *If he withhold the waters, all things shall be dried up.*

It consumes the earth adjoining its banks. And Mary by her prayers and examples consumes the earthliness in the hearts of her lovers. Job 12:15: *If he send out* the waters of graces, *they shall overturn the earth*, that is, earthliness.

It draws light things to itself, that is, those not weighed down with mortal sins. Therefore we must cry to her: *Draw me after thee* (Cant. 1:3). Augustine: "You are not yet drawn? Pray that you may be drawn."

It nourishes fish, and especially those with fins and clean ones, namely the just, who have the fins and little wings of the virtues, with which they leap above the waters; which fish the Lord hungers for. Hence, Luke 24:42–43, he ate a broiled fish.

In this river also was born that only or everlasting fish, namely Christ the Lord, who was caught like a fish in the waters of the human race with the hook of our mortality, that he might confer on us life everlasting; and in whose mouth was found the stater of our redemption (Matt. 17:26); and he is interpreted the only or the everlasting fish. And *piscis* is so called from feeding (*pascendo*), according to Isidore: because the flesh of Christ is truly food. Looking at it sharpens the sight: namely the understanding for knowledge, the affection for love. It quenches thirst, namely the thirst for temporal things, by the example of her poverty; and so of the other vices. Hence she says with her Son, John 4:13: *Whosoever drinketh of this water*, etc.

(p. 430) But it kindles another thirst, since she too is a sea, that is, the desire of eternal things, so that her lover says: *My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God* (Ps. 41:3). Or, the thirst for grace. Hence she says: *They that drink me shall yet thirst* (Ecclus. 24:29).

By its flooding it makes the meadows fruitful, and so produces the richest pastures, *and filleth every living creature with blessing*, that is, with good giving. Ecclus. 40:16: *The greenness upon every water.*

It fills empty places if they are near it: because to the humble, who attend to their defects, she gives the grace of which she is the mother. It seeks the valleys and the sea, and forsakes the mountains, as was said above of the stream of the fountain. It carries those who swim and those who are in a ship. They swim who put off the old man with his deeds and desires like filthy rags, and move their feet and hands, that is, their affections and works, at her good pleasure. It also carries those who are, through true faith, in the ship of the Catholic Church.

It drowns those who linger too long at its bottom. For *he that is a searcher of* her *majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory* (Prov. 25:27). Therefore it is said of her, Ecclus. 43:34: *Be not weary: for you can never go far enough.* Therefore in her the heretics failed, searching with indiscreet searching. For through her *the mouth is stopped of them that speak wicked things* (Ps. 62:12).

It brings necessary things to the city, that is, to the soul: and this when the Word was made flesh in her, who was *made all things to all men*, that, as far as in him lies, he may gain all (1 Cor. 9:22). It also carries shipping with merchandise to the city: for she heaps it with all good things, so that there can be said of her that of Wis. 7:11: *All good things came to me*, etc. It carries superfluities away from it: for Christ, whom she bore for us, was the emissary goat, who carried the sins of the people into the desert (Lev. 16:10), when *he bore our sins in his body upon the tree* (1 Pet. 2:24). Our superfluities also, original and actual, from which he freed us by the benefit of re-creation, or of the Lord's passion.

It purifies filth. For the benefit of justification has taken away from us all unclean things, according as the Psalmist prayed, Ps. 50:4: *Wash me yet more from my iniquity*, etc.

It quenches thirst. In this is understood the benefit of glorification: for until then our soul will thirst for the strong living God, saying: *When shall I come and appear before the face of God?* (Ps. 41:3); but then it will

be satisfied, when the glory of the Lord shall appear, and when we shall be made to drink of the torrent of his pleasure. And these four benefits we have through Christ, whom we have had through Mary.

And note that Mary is signified by those four rivers of the earthly paradise, of which Ecclesiasticus speaks, 24:35, speaking of that king born of David, which king signifies Christ: *Who filleth up wisdom as the Phison*: that is, the Virgin wise with the gifts of graces, signified by the waters of the Phison, which have their source from paradise, and in whose sands precious gems are found. So also the gifts of graces arise from Christ, for whose works eternal rewards are given. This Phison is the river Ganges, which is interpreted *watered garden*, and goes to the region of India.

Change of mouth: namely into the praise of God. For Eve opened her mouth to folly when, doubting, she answered the serpent: *Lest perhaps we die* (Gen. 3:3). But Mary opened her mouth to wisdom when, believing, she conceived, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me*, etc. (Luke 1:38).

Band (*caterva*): because it flows with a band of ten *(p. 431)* great rivers. And Mary came into the world with a multitude of graces, that of her immense fullness all might receive abundantly. Therefore, after she was called *full of grace*, it was also said: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:35): namely, to make thee overflow, and that all may receive of thy fullness.

Mouth of the breast, which always seems to be closed, and yet gives forth milk. So the mouth of the blessed Virgin seemed as it were always closed through the discipline of silence; and whenever she spoke, she gave forth a sweet word; and by her words, as children by milk, spiritual infancy is nourished, if they are weighed with discernment. Bearded rustics do not draw from the breast, but children; and none draw the sweetness of consolation from the Virgin but the lovers of purity.

It compasses the land of Hevilath, which is interpreted *grieving*, or *travailing*. And the blessed Virgin compasses those who grieve through contrition, to console them, and especially those who are in travail with their sins through confession, and with good works through satisfaction.

The Tigris follows: *And as the Tigris in the days of new fruits* (Ecclus. 24:35), namely of seeds, or of the barley harvest. As if he said: as the Tigris in the days of new fruits fills its bed with waters, so the Lord filled the blessed Virgin with the waters and gifts of graces. Hence: *Hail, full of grace* (Luke 1:28). And well *in the days of new things*: because through her the human race was renewed, which through Eve had grown old; namely when that new thing was done in her of which Jeremiah speaks, 31:22, by which new thing all things were renewed. Hence her Son says, Apoc. 21:5: *Behold, I make all things new.*

Again, Tigris is interpreted *swift*, or *arrow*, and it goes against the Assyrians. And the blessed Virgin, as it were the arrow of the Lord, destroys pride by the example of her humility. Hence it is said of her, 4 Kings 13:17: *The arrow of the Lord's deliverance against Syria.* For unless she were an arrow, the spouse would not say to her: *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse* (Cant. 4:9).

Again, the Tigris nourishes fish that devour men, as is read in Tob. 6:2. And Mary by her ecclesiastical benefits literally nourishes devourers of men, to whom Christ says, Isa. 3:14: *You have devoured my vineyard*, etc. And Ps. 78:7: *Because they have devoured Jacob*, that is, the lesser people.

Again, the Tigris, it is said, flows with the greatest force into the Dead Sea; and it well signifies Mary, who daily pours grace into despairing sinners, who before were a sea through the bitterness of vices, and dead in sins. It signifies also Christ, who for this suddenly descended into the sea of the world, that those dead in sins might be given life through the benefits of his incarnation. Likewise Mary also pours the grace of repentance into despairing sinners.

Again, the Tigris is so called on account of the swiftness of its running, like the beast the tiger, which runs most swiftly. And she, having conceived the Saviour, visited Elizabeth *with haste* (Luke 1:39–40).

The Euphrates follows: *Who maketh understanding to abound as the Euphrates* (Ecclus. 24:36): namely the understanding of the blessed Virgin, with spiritual objects of sense, namely with spiritual colors, odors, and savors. The red color is charity, the white chastity, the violet humility, the green holiness, and the like. The spiritual odor is discernment. The spiritual savor is wisdom. For *she hath tasted, and seen that her traffic is good*, etc. (Prov. 31:18). With all these Mary was filled abundantly, as the Euphrates: because from the fullness of knowledge there overflowed in *(p. 432)* her a richness of working, as a great abundance arises where the Euphrates flows.

Or, Euphrates is interpreted *fruitful*: because before the birth of Mary we were needy, empty, and beggars. But, as is said, Wis. 7:11: *All good things came to me together with her*: therefore we say to Christ concerning her: *We shall be filled with the good things of thy house*, etc. (Ps. 64:5).

Again, Euphrates is interpreted *growing*, or *mould*, or *dusty*.

There follows: *Who multiplieth it as the Jordan in the time of harvest* (Ecclus. 24:36). For in the time of harvest the Jordan multiplies its waters, as is said in Jos. 3:15. So Christ in the time of grace multiplied the waters of graces in the Virgin: and in those who honor and love her he multiplies them daily. (Of the Jordan you will find a little below, under the title on the stream.)

There follows: *Who sendeth knowledge* [*disciplinam*] *as the light* (ibid., v. 37). Because Mary brought forth the true light, of which it is said, Ecclus. 50:31: *The light of God is his footstep.* Which light, namely Christ the Lord, taught discipline in his preaching, that is, the ordered correction of morals. Or, discipline, that is, penance, saying: *Do penance* (Matt. 4:17).

The Gehon follows: *And standeth by like the Gehon in the time of the vintage.* Gehon is so called from *g*■, which is earth: because by the increase of its overflowing it waters the land of Egypt. And it is called the Nile. It is so called from the mud (*limus*) which it draws, by which the earth is made fruitful. Nor ought it to be written *Gion*, but *Gehon.* For Mary stood by her suffering Son (John 19:25): namely when his body was pressed like a grape in the winepress of the cross: and from it was pressed out the new wine, by reason of the redemption, with which we are given drink at the altar. Literally, when the sun passes through the sign of the Virgin, then the Gehon, which is called the Nile, recalls all its outflowings. And when the sun has entered Libra, then the Nile is wholly gathered within its banks, and does not flood the land, which is in the time of the vintage. And therefore it is said *standing by*, that is, not flowing out. So the blessed Virgin in the time of the vintage, that is, on the day of judgment, will stand by her Son: nor will she then overflow or flood with the waters of her graces the dry hearts of sinners, as she does now.

Again, Gehon is interpreted *the opening of the earth.* This is the mercy of Mary, who is called earth; which mercy, namely, always lies open to the wretched. Gehon is also interpreted *wrestling*, or *sand*: because she wrestled against the world through poverty, against the flesh through virginity, against the proud and rebellious devil through obedience and humility. And by her example she teaches us to wrestle against those three enemies.

Again, the Gehon, that is, Mary, compasses the whole of Ethiopia, namely to overcome sinners.

Again, Ecclus. 24:40, Mary says: *I, wisdom, have poured out rivers*: as when one river can arise from another. She says, then: I, filled with wisdom by that king born of David—who ought to be called wisdom, because I am the mother of the eternal wisdom of God, and the generation ought to be univocal—*have poured out rivers*: because I am the paradise of pleasure, from which *a river going out is divided into four heads. The name of the one is Phison* (Gen. 2:10–11), which is interpreted *change of mouth.* Expound as above. For she teaches us to speak the Hebrew tongue in confession, by which one passes from the old life into the new: for Mary is *a Hebrew woman* (Judith 12:10).

Gehon is *wrestling*, which she teaches us by example, as was said above. Exod. 25:40: *Look, and make it according to the pattern*, etc.

Again, Gehon is *sand*, which is barren: and she teaches us that, when we have done all good things, *(p. 433)* we say that of Luke 17:10: *We are unprofitable servants.* Amos 9:13: *The ploughman shall overtake the reaper*: which happens when, though already perfect, they reckon that they are beginning. Hence: *And I said, Now have I begun* (Ps. 76:11). Third is the Tigris, in which is the swiftness of good working, which is very necessary for those making progress; as Mary, having conceived Jesus, *went into the hill country with haste* (Luke 1:39). Fourth is the Euphrates, *fruitful*, which is derived from her to us, *who hath chosen the best part.* So also those who live in mind in heaven receive already in the present the hundredfold. On account of these four she says: *I have poured out rivers.*

Chapter 4: Mary, Stream

Stream (*fluvius*), according to all the properties assigned above to the river. And a stream is a perennial running of waters, so called from flowing (*fluendo*) continually. Mary is a stream: because it is small at its source, and afterward sometimes is greatly increased. So also Mary, small at first through humility, at length surpassed the angelic dignity.

It goes around islands, namely those who are beaten by the waves of tribulations. It exposes itself to the use of all: for her will is to harm none, to profit all. He is not washed in it who does not draw near to her by faith, love, and service. Never changing its own bed, which is mercy, it flows down continually: because, persevering in the grace of the Holy Spirit, she waters us continually, unless it is our own fault.

This stream is the Jordan, in which, at the command of Eliseus, the flesh of Naaman the leper is restored like the flesh of a little child, if he is washed in it seven times (cf. 4 Kings 5:14). The first washing is to render her diligent service. The second, to magnify her name and praises. The third, to place all one's hope after God in her. Hence the Church says: "Our life, our sweetness, and our hope." The fourth, to supply the defects of her friends. Hence, 2 Cor. 8:14: *Let your abundance supply their want*, etc. The fifth, to show oneself humbly to her through prayer, as Theophilus is read to have done. The sixth, to commit one's affairs to her. The seventh, to imitate her virtues, at least from afar. Seven virtues of Mary can also be fitted against the seven kinds of leprosy, which signifies sin, which disfigures the inner man as leprosy the outer. Show how.

Again, through this Jordan the true Hebrews and Jews cross into the land of promise: so we also, if we are true Hebrews, that is, passing over from evil to good through penance, and devoutly praising together the mother and the Son—because *Jew* means *praising* or *glorifying*—shall be brought through her into the true land of promise.

Again, the Jordan is composed of two *(p. 434)* springs, which are the Jor and the Dan; which, being far apart from each other and then joined into one, is thereafter called the Jordan. And it rises under Mount Libanus, and divides Judea and Arabia, and through many windings flows into the Dead Sea near Jericho. And in Mary there is a twofold spring, namely of compassion and of generosity. For she has compassion on the wretched, and gives generously to everyone who asks her as he ought.

Again, Jordan is interpreted *their descent*: because we ought to come down from the camel of pride with Rebecca (Gen. 24:64), considering the queen of heaven humbling herself so much. Or, Jordan is *humble descent*: because by the merit of her humility the Son of God descended into her. Or, by its being called *humble descent* is signified her twofold humility, by which she was made worthy to conceive him who by his passion opened to us the door of paradise, which is signified by the land of promise.

This is the stream Dioryx. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:41: *I, like the stream Dioryx*, which is interpreted *medicine of generation*: because she healed the human generation, which the first mother had so mortally

wounded that *from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there was no soundness* in it. For the Dioryx is a river in Armenia of wonderful swiftness. And she is the river of grace, swift and overflowing, flowing into us through charity, which *is strong as death*, and which *many waters* of our sins *cannot quench* (Cant. 8:7). And it flows back to its source, by attributing all things to him through humility. Hence she says: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49). Armenia is interpreted *plucked mountain.* (Look under the title in which Mary is called the ark of sanctification.)

This is that river of which John speaks, Apoc. 22:1–2, saying: *The Angel shewed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof,* etc. Well is Mary a river: because, watering each generation, she flows on after one into another. And although not all are watered through her, which is the narrowing of the river, yet she never ceases to flow through some. For this reason that of Wis. 7:27 befits her: *Through nations she conveyeth herself into holy souls*; whom she does not find holy, but makes holy.

This river is called *of water of life.* Of water, because it refreshes; living, because it never fails. Of water, because it washes; living, because it always flows. And this water is called *clear as crystal*, because in those whom it waters it makes sins legible through confession, as crystal makes legible the letters set under it. This river proceeds *from the throne of God and of the Lamb*, that is, from the holy Patriarchs, in whom the Father and the Son reigned, residing. *In the midst of the street thereof,* that is, of the city, namely the Church.

Christ is a river: because when it rises it is small, but afterward it grows and widens immensely: so also Christ. Hence, Isa. 9:6: *A child is born to us.* And a little after: *And the government is upon his shoulder*: behold the widening. For through his wonderful life and teaching his name was spread through the whole world. Similarly, Isa. 16:1: *Send forth the lamb, O Lord.* And at once he adds: *the ruler of the earth.* It grows when many waters fall into it. The many waters are *many peoples* (Apoc. 17:15), by whom he as it were grew, when they believed and came to him through faith. Isa. 2:2: *All nations shall flow unto it.* When one water falls into another, it loses its name: so as many as come to Christ lose the name of their oldness, and are no longer called Jews or Gentiles, but from Christ are called *(p. 435)* Christians. Therefore it is said to him: *Thy name is as oil poured out* (Cant. 1:2).

Again, the waters are the tribulations which flowed abundantly into him. Hence he says to the Father: *All thy waves thou hast brought in upon me* (Ps. 87:8). But at once they lost their former name. Hence poverty is no longer called poverty, but riches. Matt. 5:3: *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Behold the riches. Mourning is no longer mourning: because *blessed are they that mourn* (Matt. 5:5); and so of the others. Attending to which, those who have true wisdom, despising the riches of the world, run to the riches of Christ.

It flows between two banks, which are the entrance into the world through a wretched birth, and the departure from the world through a bitter death. Between these this river ran down through a laborious life. Sometimes, overflowing its banks, it makes the land fruitful. Hence, Isa. 23:3, it is said of the Nile: *The harvest of the river is her revenue.* Sometimes it brings about barrenness, and destroys vineyards. So Christ, coming, brought about by occasion the barrenness of the synagogue, and made the Church and the Apostles fruitful by his preaching. On the day of judgment he will overflow his banks, and will trample on death and all misery.

Chapter 5: Mary, Torrent

A torrent is properly water coming with a rush: and it is called *torrens* because it grows with rain, and with drought it is parched (*torrescit*), that is, dries up. And Mary is that torrent of which it is said, Prov. 18:4: *The fountain of wisdom is an overflowing torrent.* Again, Gen. 26:19, it is said of the servants of Isaac: *They digged in the torrent, and found living water.* Ezek. 47:9: *All things shall live*, namely with the life of grace,

to which the torrent shall come, namely through the infusion of grace; that is, Mary, who on account of her overflowing is compared to a torrent. For when she had been called by the Angel *full of grace*, a little after it was said to her: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:35). And for what was this, but to make her overflow?

In the same chapter of Ezekiel, v. 5, it is said: *He measured a thousand*, namely cubits, *a torrent, which I could not pass over.* And below, vv. 6–7: *He brought me to the bank of the torrent. And when I had turned myself, behold on the bank of the torrent were very many trees on both sides.* All of which can be expounded of the Virgin.

Mary is a torrent. Because by the multitude of her benefits, as by a certain flood of waters, she hollows out stones and the hardness of the stony heart, that it may be humbled and have mercy. Job 14:19: *Waters wear away the stones.*

Because it consumes the earth, that is, the earthliness in the hearts of her own. Hence there follows in the authority of Job: *And with washing away the earth by little and little is consumed.*

Because it does not draw with it things very firm or heavy, that is, those not much rooted *(p. 436)* in the love of the world. Hence it is said, Judg. 5:21: *The torrent of Cison dragged their carcasses* [here, *the torrent Cadumim*]. Cadumim is interpreted *red sea.* This is Mary, who is called the bitter sea, but she was reddened through compassion for her suffering Son. *Dragged*, that is, drew to her Son, *the carcasses*, that is, carrion-like sinners. Cadumim is also interpreted *sea of the ancients*, on account of the ancient miracles which were done in it: and in Mary the Lord wrought those most excellent miracles which had been prefigured of old.

Because it comes from snows melted by heat, and from the flood of rains. For when the rains of blessing flooded, as is said, Ezek. 34:27, *the earth*, that is, blessed Anne, *yielded her increase*, when the Virgin was born, white and cool as snow through the extinguishing of the tinder of sin; of whom it is said, Ecclus. 43:20: *The eye admireth at the beauty of the whiteness thereof.* Which Virgin, namely, in a certain way melted through love of those whom Christ redeemed with his own blood. Hence she says, Cant. 5:6: *My soul melted*, etc.

Because it runs with a rush; and Mary by her prayers obtains from Christ for her lovers the waters of grace, which flow to her from Libanus, and from her to them without delay.

Because, finding an obstacle, it runs more strongly. For she *makes with temptation issue* (1 Cor. 10:13), when the devil tempts us above our strength: because she is more inclined to save than the devil to destroy. Hence it must often be said to her: “From them that resist thy right hand, O Mary,” that is, from the demons, who as much as they can resist thy gifts, “keep me as the apple of the eye.” Which is to say: Keep me so, that I may rather expose hands and body and whatever I have, than be hurt in soul; as a man exposes whatever he can hold at hand to protect the pupil. Job 2:4: *Skin*, namely mortal, *for skin*, namely immortal, *and all that a man hath he will give for his life.* Matt. 16:26: *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world*, and so on.

Because it is turbid. So also she, not in herself, but in effect: because she troubles the soul of the sinner, pouring in the grace of contrition.

Because it comes by chance, that is, from mere grace, not from our merits.

Because it throws itself headlong into the sea, that is, into hearts made bitter through contrition and the recalling of their sins in the bitterness of soul. For her grace knows no slow efforts.

Chapter 6: Mary, Water

Water: for she is designated by Michol (1 Kings 18:20), who is interpreted *all water*, or *water from all*, who pleased David. This is Mary, through whom refreshment is had against every incitement of sin; and she is *all water*, because she has all grace. Hence she was called *full of grace.* He who wishes to join this Michol to himself in spiritual *(p. 437)* marriage ought to give as dowry for her the two hundred foreskins, as David did for Michol, that he may take away from himself all uncleanness of flesh and of spirit: because one without the other would not suffice.

Chapter 7: Mary, Pool

Pool (*stagnum*) of graces and gifts. For the Father is the fountain. Hence he says, Jer. 2:13: *They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water*. The Son is the stream proceeding from this fountain. Hence he says: *I, like the stream Dioryx* (Ecclus. 24:41). The Holy Spirit, proceeding from both, can be called the upper pool: because he contains the fullness of graces. Mary is as it were the lower pool through humility, who received all the charisms and gifts of graces which proceed from the Father and the Son, when the Holy Spirit descended into her. For this can be seen: that sometimes from a higher pool another pool arises and proceeds. And she distributes to us the graces which the Holy Spirit supplies to her, to each according to his own power, in the capacity of humility: for *of her fullness we all have received* (John 1:16).

Chapter 8: Mary, Channel

Channel (*alveus*), adjoining the very fountain of life, which is Christ: because the place of the mother is at the right hand of the Son; and from that fountain the streams of graces run down to humble hearts, by means of this channel. This is the channel of the torrent of which we read, 4 Kings 3:16–17, surrounded with trenches, that is, with twofold humility. The torrent is the Holy Spirit, running with a rush, from whom by the prayers of Mary the streams mentioned above flow swiftly to us. She can also be called the channel of the torrent of wisdom.

Chapter 9: Mary, Bucket

(p. 438) And bucket, from which continually descend drops of graces, consolations, inspirations, illuminations, and the like, also to hollow out the hardness of the human heart. Job 14:19: *Waters wear away the stones.* Again, the drop hollows the stone, not by force, but by falling often. But what the soft drop can do in the stone, all the benefits of God cannot do in us; since the Philosopher says: “He who presses on and loads earlier favors with later ones wrests gratitude even from a hard and forgetful breast.” Num. 24:7: *Water shall flow out of his bucket*, etc. Mary is the bucket of the Lord, who thirsted more than others for his incarnation, for the redemption of the world, and after his ascension thirsted the more for God, the living fountain. (Look for this thirst in section 6 of the enclosed garden.)

Chapter 10: Mary, Lake

Lake (*lacus*). For she was the receptacle, through compassion, of all the waters, that is, the sufferings, which passed over her Son. In whose person Jonas says, 2:6: *The waters compassed me about even to the soul*, etc. And for this she was made with her Son a lake of miseries, that we might be rescued from *the lake of misery and the mire of dregs*, and be saved from *them that go down into the pit* [*lacus*]. Isa. 51:1–2: *Look unto the hole of the pit*, that is, to the wound of the side, or to the misery of Mary’s heart for her suffering Son, *and to Sara that bore you.* Sara, who is called *princess*, is Mary, who everywhere rules with the Son of God; who bore us in a certain way when she bore our Redeemer, from whose side we are born in baptism.

The lake is also the cross. Hence Christ says: *They have laid me in the lower pit* (Ps. 87:7), that is, in the cross: because hanging on the cross was the vilest punishment.

Chapter 11: Mary, Water Jar

(p. 439) Water jar (*hydria*), which is so called from *hyd■r*, which is water: because she gives us to drink the water of saving wisdom. She gives us to drink also the liquors which flowed forth from Christ, who in the passion was *poured out like water*.

For she is the water jar of Rebecca, that is, of the Church, from which the true Eliezer was given drink, that is, Christ (Gen. 24:18 ff.); and from which his camels are given drink, that is, all the faithful of the Church. Which water jar, namely, continually pours water into the troughs, that is, pours grace into the humble.

She is also the unfailing pot of meal of which we read, 3 Kings 17:14–15, by which the true Elias was fed, that is, Christ; and by which the widow of Sarephta is fed, that is, the Church, in the sacrament, with all her house, that is, all the faithful.

Chapter 12: Mary, Basin

Basin (*concha*), designated, 2 Paral. 4:6, by the ten basins which Solomon made in the temple, that all the holocausts which were to be offered might be washed in them. She is also the basin which Gedeon filled with dew by wringing out the fleece (Judg. 6:38): because Christ filled Mary with grace, which he withdrew from the synagogue.

Chapter 13: Mary, Conduit

Conduit (*canalis*), which is so called because it is hollow (*cana*) in the manner of a reed (*canna*), which is sometimes made of wood, sometimes of stone. Mary can well be called a conduit: because she *(p. 440)* was wooden through fruitfulness, for it belongs to wood to bear fruit; stony through firmness of purpose; hollow through humility; closed below by contempt of temporal things; open above by desire of heavenly things; placed in the upper parts of the house, that is, of the Church, to receive the waters of the *best gifts*, which *come down from the Father of lights* (James 1:17), to pour them back onto the earth, that is, to the humble.

Chapter 14: Mary, Path

Path (*trames*). Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:41: *I, like a path of immense water out of the river.* For she is the way of grace: hence she calls herself a path, that is, a way. *Of immense water*, that is, of abundant grace, which is derived through her to men.

For she is the way in the pathlessness of sins; she is the right direction at the crossroads of those who go astray; she is the way for those returning to the fatherland, in that she is the path of immense water which proceeds *out of the river*, that is, from the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit.

The immense water is the grace of redemption, which suffices for the washing of all. Joel 3:18: *A fountain shall come forth*, etc. This fountain is the grace of redemption, watering *the torrent of thorns*, that is, the human race, which, before Mary was born, was the fuel of eternal burning. Zach. 13:1: *There shall be a fountain open*, that is, the grace of redemption, from which no one is excluded, *for the washing of the sinner, and of the unclean woman*, that is, of original and actual sin. The path of this water is Mary, who bore our Redeemer.

Chapter 15: Mary, Aqueduct

Aqueduct. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:41: *As an aqueduct I came out of paradise.* For this aqueduct came out of a twofold paradise: from the Father, namely, who is the heavenly paradise, she came out through creation and re-creation, from whom she brought us the living water, that is, Christ, God and man. From the earthly paradise, that is, from the Church militant, she came out through the death of the body, directed into heaven

like a certain aqueduct, *(p. 441)* leading thither the waters of the miseries and tribulations of the whole human race, setting them before her Son, and interceding for them.

Mary is an aqueduct, very long through the excellence of her merits: for by the vehemence of desire, the fervor of devotion, the purity of prayer, she reached a fountain so sublime, whose fullness she, like an aqueduct, received from the heart of the Father and gave him forth to us, not as he is, but as we were able to receive him. Truly very long, she was able to reach the fountain of *the waters that are above the heavens*, that she might draw above the Angels what she might pour back to men as living water. Blessed Bernard: "Therefore for so long a time the streams of graces were wanting to men, because the aqueduct had not yet intervened."

For this she was given to the world as it were an aqueduct, that through her the heavenly gifts might continually descend from God to men. Most whole, through inviolate faith. Most clean, through virginity and chastity of every kind. Hidden, through love of solitude. Hollow, through true humility. Cast, through piety. Fruitful, that is, abounding in waters, through the fullness of graces. Round. Not of lead, but rather of gold, through royal nobility and exceeding charity. Through this aqueduct Christ came to us, hidden in the virginal womb, that the mystery might be concealed from the devil. Hence it is said to him, Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God.* For he came for this, to cleanse us, refresh us, and give us to drink the water of saving wisdom, as through a hidden aqueduct water is led to the necessities of a city. Through this aqueduct also, which draws from the fountain mentioned above, there flows assiduously the wine of compunction, of gladness, and of devotion into the cellar of our mind.

And note that she says: *As an aqueduct I came out of paradise*, that is, from the holy Trinity, which is the place of all delight: I came out, I say, through creation. Hence: *From the beginning, and before the world, was I created* (Ecclus. 24:14). And she came out as an aqueduct, that is, through underground passages, namely through the fathers of the Old Testament, who were given to earthly things. Isa. 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse.* For this reason it is said of her: *As the lily among thorns* (Cant. 2:2): because she, heavenly, came out of the earth. But for what? To water the garden of the Lord, that is, the Church and the faithful soul. Hence at once she adds: *I said: I will water my garden of plants* (Ecclus. 24:42). For she has a twofold watering, upper and lower. (Look in section 7 on the garden.) Not *a garden of herbs* (3 Kings 21:2), but a garden of delights, which is the Church and the holy soul; a garden, namely, enclosed by the guard of the Angels, which is made fruitful and bears fruit when the south wind blows. And the Church is not called a garden of gathering fruits, but *of plants*: because in it trees, that is, holy souls, are now planted through laborious works; but at death the fruits will be gathered, when the laborious works shall be plucked up. Eccles. 3:2: *A time to plant, and a time to pluck up.* It is also called a garden *of plants* in the plural: because there both good and bad are planted. Hence in the net of Peter two kinds of fish are gathered. But since the Lord planted it a garden of pleasure and sowed good seed in his field, whence then has it cockle? The answer, Matt. 13:27–28: *An enemy hath done this.* Therefore Peter's net is torn.

For this reason the blessed Virgin waters this garden with a threefold water. Of teaching, that it may be purged of errors. Hence she says: *They that drink me shall yet thirst* (Ecclus. 24:29), namely for the truth. Of grace, that it may be adorned with the flowers and fruits of the virtues. Hence she says in the same place, v. 26: *Come over to me, and be filled with my fruits* [literally, *from my generations*]. Of tribulations, that *every plant which the Father hath not planted* may be *rooted up* (Matt. 15:13): and that every branch that beareth fruit *(p. 442)* may be purged, that it may bring forth more fruit (John 15:2). And she waters it with the waters of tribulations when *she sendeth knowledge* [*disciplinam*] *as the light* (Ecclus. 24:37), that *vexation* may *give understanding* (Isa. 28:19). Of which discipline she herself is thus the exemplar. And because the watering of a garden avails nothing unless it is tempered by the heat of the sun, she promises that she will temper it with the heat of the sun of justice, adding: *And I will water abundantly the fruits of my meadow* [literally, *I will inebriate*] (Ecclus. 24:42). (Look in section 12 of the enclosed garden.)

This is the aqueduct of which we read, Judith 7:6, which Holofernes commanded to be cut: because through it a certain spring flowed into the city of Bethulia on the south side. Bethulia is interpreted *house grieving to the Lord*, which the Church does in penitents; or, *house bringing forth the Lord*, which it does in those who confess. Isa. 26:17–18: *So are we become in thy presence*, and the rest. And Mary is the aqueduct through which the gifts of graces flow into the Church and the faithful soul; which the devil tries to cut, when he strives to take her help away from us. And he cuts it, not as regards her, but as regards us, when he draws us back from her service; and for this he labors most: because she is *the conduit of the upper pool* (Isa. 7:3), through which is derived to us the grace of the good things that enlighten, which *cometh down from the Father of lights.* And therefore this aqueduct was given to us, because for all necessary uses the waters of graces were wanting to us.

Chapter 16: Mary, Laver

Laver (*labium*), which is designated in Exod. 30:18, where the Lord said to Moses: *Thou shalt make also a brazen laver with its foot, to wash in: and thou shalt set it between the tabernacle of the testimony and the altar of holocausts*, namely in the open air. This laver is called a vessel [the edition notes that the Vulgate has *labrum*; cf. 3 Kings 7:38]: and the Gloss says there that this laver was made of the mirrors of the women who watched at the entrance of the tabernacle, that is, of the seats of the mirrors. Josephus says that on every side it had many mirrors, so that the priests, washed in it, might see there whether any stain still remained.

Well is Mary the laver of the Church: because in her lips (*labiis*) was poured that grace of the answer by which the world was cleansed. This laver speaks to us the words of life, and speaks good for us in the sight of God. And she is the chosen lip promised to us, Soph. 3:9, where the Lord says: *I will restore to the people a chosen lip, that all may call upon the name of the Lord, and may serve him with one shoulder.* This lip is Mary, for whom, given to us by God, we ought to call upon the name of the Lord, and to serve him with one mind and in concord.

This laver was of brass: because brass is incorruptible and sonorous: and she is without the corruption of vices and sonorous in prayers; to whom the Son says, Cant. 2:14: *Let thy voice sound (p. 443) in my ears: for thy voice is sweet*, when thou intercedest for sinners.

And this laver was placed between the tabernacle of the testimony, by which the Church is signified, and the altar, that is, Christ: because as mediatrix between Christ and Christians she reconciles by her prayers the lowest with the highest.

The water of this laver is grace, with which are to be washed the hands, the feet, and the garments, that is, the affections, the works, and the virtues; and this water is to be asked of her continually: and this that we may be of the Church in number and merit, and may have access to the altar of holocaust, that is, to Christ sacrificed for us. With this laver also we are given to drink the water of saving wisdom, and are cleansed from all defilement of spirit and flesh.

Chapter 17: Mary, Fishpond

Fishpond (*piscina*) is a gathering of waters without fish, and it is called *piscina* as it were by contrary. And in Mary there was a gathering of all waters, that is, graces, without the fish of worldly curiosities. This is the *probatic pond* (John 5:4), into which *an Angel of the Lord descended at certain times, and the water was moved*, and one was healed. For at the time of the incarnation the Angel of great counsel descended into Mary, and the water was moved when Mary was troubled at the new greeting; and one was healed, that is, as many as believed in God three and one, and adhered to this one, that is, Christ, through faith in his incarnation. And here someone elegantly says to Mary:

Thou pool of purity, full of the dew of piety, into which the God of majesty willed to descend; into which whoever, guilty and perverse, if contrite and converted, lays himself down, comes out wiped clean of the wound of sin.

Mary is the *probatic* pond, from *probaton* in Greek, which is *sheep* in Latin: because in it the Nathinites washed the victims to be offered in the temple; whose office the subdeacons now have, who serve water to the priest. And those who wish to offer to Christ a sacrifice of themselves must be cleansed by the examples and prayers of Mary.

Which is called in Hebrew Bethsaida, which is interpreted *house*. Of fruits: hence it is said to her, Cant. 7:2: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat.* Of cattle: that is, the receptacle of the simple and humble, whom she feeds with the hay of her Son's flesh. Of hunters: that is, of sinners, who before hunted the pleasures of the world, if they take refuge with her.

Having five porches, that is, five principal kinds of mercy. The first, that she converts the erring, since she is the way. The second, that she enlightens those walking in darkness, since she is the star and the moon. The third, that she gives life to the dead, since she is the vein of life, that is, of love. The fourth, that she pours hope into the despairing. Hence she says: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Ecclus. 24:25), as is clear in Theophilus. Hence she also says, Ecclus. 24:45: *(p. 444) I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth*, that is, I will gather again the despairing, *and will behold*, with the eyes of mercy, *all that sleep*, that is, those forgetful of themselves. The fifth, that for many against whom sentence had already been pronounced she obtained from her Son a space for repentance, as Abigail did from David for Nabal the fool (1 Kings 25:24 ff.).

In these five porches *lay a great multitude of sick, of blind*, who are to be enlightened, *of lame*, who are to be set straight, *of withered*, who are to be moistened by grace, *waiting for the moving of the water*, that is, of her mercy, that they might be healed of the sicknesses of sins.

Again, she is *the upper pool in the way of the fuller's field* (Isa. 7:3). And well: because she is full of the waters of graces which come from above. She is also the aqueduct by which graces flow to us from above, the end of which is eternal glory. The lower pool is the Church, into which, through this aqueduct, namely Mary, the heavenly waters flow in Jerusalem, that is, the soul. Again, the fuller's field is the Church. The fuller is Christ (Mark 9:2), who whitens the sinner. The way of the fuller's field is penance, through which the garments of the soul are made white. For Mary, as a pool, receives from heaven the living waters, which, like an aqueduct, she carries to the Church and to holy souls.

Again, she is the old pool of which there is mention in Isa. 22:11.

Again, Cant. 7:4, it is said to Mary: *Thy eyes like the fishpools in Hesebon, which are in the gate of the daughter of the multitude.* Hesebon is interpreted *girdle of grief*, that is, grief girding—to be understood intransitively: because the grief of penance girds a man, and restrains the corruption of sins and the flow of sin, as a band girds the wounded man and stops the flow of blood. And this girdle befits penitents, who in grief of mind recall their sins and the pains of hell, and thereby are humbled. Hence, Prov. 12:25: *Grief in the heart of a man shall bring him low.* Again, in grief of mind the spirit is cast down from the height of pride. And for such the eyes of Mary are like fishpools, that is, the regard of her mercy is a manifold washing place: and her eyes are *in the gate of the daughter of the multitude*, that is, of the Church, of which she is the gate. Mary is the eye, through discernment or the regard of mercy, regarding the just at the right hand, sinners at the left. She is the fishpool, through compassion overflowing with the water of piety. In Hesebon, through the fervor of charity: because Hesebon is interpreted *fire in them. In the gate of the daughter of the multitude*: because she is common to all and ready to help all the wretched.

Chapter 18: Mary, Swimming Pool and Flood

Swimming pool (*natato*), that is, *natatoria*, which is not set in the verse; designated by the pool *(p. 445)* of Siloe, to which the man born blind was sent to wash his eyes that he might be enlightened (cf. John 9:7). For she is called *Enlightener*: and she interprets this name of hers in us, enlightening sinners by her prayers, merits, and examples. Literally, Siloe is a spring formed at the foot of Mount Sion, which bubbles up not with continual waters but at uncertain hours; and to receive its waters a kind of pool had been made not far from the spring, which collection Scripture calls now a pond, now a swimming pool. And Siloe is interpreted *sent*, and this spring signifies Christ sent by the Father into the world to enlighten blinded sinners, as is said in Isa. 42:7. And the waters of this spring are said, Isa. 8:6, to flow *with silence*, namely of humility and meekness, that is, without the murmur of impatience and without the noise of pomp and pride. And of this spring Mary is the swimming pool, who by her prayers and examples restores inner sight. (In the Histories, on the Fourth Book of Kings, under the title on the death of Isaiah, you will find more about this spring and its waters.)

Flood (*amnis*). According to Isidore, an *amnis* is a river wreathed with woods and leaves, and from that very pleasantness (*amoenitate*) it is called *amnis*; which most excellently befits the glorious Virgin.

Chapter 19: Mary, Vein

Vein: because whatever of blessedness has come to the human race from that great sea, that is, from that infinite goodness of God the Trinity, has all flowed down through this vein, as was shown above of the aqueduct. Prov. 10:11: *The mouth of the just is a vein of life*, etc. If the mouth of the just is a vein of life, then much more the mouth of Mary, most just, is a vein of life whenever she intercedes with her Son for us; and for this reason she says: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Ecclus. 24:25).

Mary is a vein: because hidden through a most secret way of life. Hence she is believed to have been found by Gabriel shut in her chamber. Slender, through voluntary poverty. Hollow, through true humility of heart. Subtle, to repel for us the deceitful wiles of the enemy. Most vigorous for the guarding of the Christian people. The way of the blood, *in which is the life of every living thing* (Lev. 17:11): and she is the way of our spiritual life from Christ, who calls himself *the way* (John 14:6): in whose blood, that is, in faith in his passion, is the life of our souls. Very long, through final perseverance. Distributed through the body of the Son, which is the Catholic Church.

Otherwise: Mary is the vein of life: for as the blood, which is the life of the flesh, runs down hidden through the vein, so Christ, who is the life of our souls, came to us hidden through Mary. Hence it is said to him, Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God*, namely in the virginal womb.

Again, she is the vein of life: but Adam and Eve were to us veins of death, of whom it is said in Hos. 13:15. But she laments with her Son concerning sinners. Hence, Jer. 17:13: *They have forsaken the vein of living waters.*

Chapter 20: Mary, Liquid

(p. 446) Liquid (*latex*). Isidore says that *latex* is properly the liquid of a spring, and it is so called because it lies hidden (*lateat*) in the veins of the earth. And Mary always lay hidden and loved secrecy. And she is the liquid of that fountain of eternal life who says, Jer. 2:13: *They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water*, etc. Which liquid, namely, that eternal fountain sent to us to wash us, to water us, to make us fruitful, to give back the image, and to fulfil its effects in the world.

Chapter 21: Mary, Cistern

Cistern, situated at the gate of Bethlehem (cf. 2 Kings 23:15; 1 Paral. 11:17). And well at the gate: because she wishes, as far as in her lies, to satisfy all who pass by. Hence she cries: *Come over to me, all*, etc. (Ecclus.

24:26). David desired to drink of this cistern. (Look under the title *Full of grace*, near the end, where the water of washing is treated.)

This is the old cistern in the wilderness, in which the true Joseph was hidden (cf. Gen. 37:22). For although Mary was a young girl in age, yet she was old in figures. And well in the wilderness: because she always loved solitude. Hence Gabriel is believed to have found her alone, shut in a well-secured chamber. Blessed Bernard: “It is not to be suspected,” etc. (Look in the section on the garden, where the garden is called secret.)

Book X: On the Buildings by Which Mary Is Figured in the Bible

Chapter 1: Mary, Ark

(p. 447) Ark, throne, seat of state, litter also, chair, tribunal, seat, and cathedra, chariot, couch, footstool, little bed, and resting place, dwelling, little cell, nest, cell, and storehouse, treasury, bookcase, treasure house (aerarium), storeroom (geneze), place, granaries, mill, oven, furnace, kiln and forge, hall, tabernacle, bridal chamber, house.

Ark, designated by the ark which Beseleel made, Exod. 37:1 ff., *of setim wood, two cubits and a half in length, and a cubit and a half in breadth: the height also was of one cubit and a half: and he overlaid it with the purest gold within and without: and he made to it a crown of gold round about*, etc.

Beseleel made the ark, etc. The making of this ark indicates the nativity of the blessed Mary from four things. From the maker: hence, *Beseleel made.* From the end: hence, *the ark.* For an ark (*arca*) is so called because something hidden (*arcanum*) ought to be placed in it. Or, according to Isidore, it is so called from keeping off (*arcendo*), because it keeps off the sight of those standing around from the things it contains within. Likewise *arcanum* is so called as that from which we are kept off. Hence Christ says of Mary, Isa. 24:16: *My secret to myself.* For in her was *the hidden God* himself (Isa. 45:15). It takes its name from the material: hence, *of setim wood.* From the form, both from its proportions and from its adornment: hence he says, *two cubits and a half*, etc. From the adornment: hence it is said, *He overlaid it with the purest*, or cleanest, *gold.*

Let us see first of the end, which is first in reason, as the Philosopher says. For that material ark was made that in it might be placed a certain hidden thing of divine working: the rod, in memory of the deliverance from Egypt; the manna, of the refreshment in the desert; the tables, of the giving of the law. So also our spiritual ark, of which it is said: *Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place*, etc. (Ps. 131:8), was made for this end, that in it might be placed the price of our deliverance, *(p. 448)* which indeed is within. For so it pleased God, that as there were three persons in one nature, so there should be three natures in one divine person: divine, spiritual created, and corporeal. Divine, namely the deity, which is uncreated. Spiritual, namely the soul, which is created. Hence Wisdom says: *From the beginning, and before the world, was I created* (Ecclus. 24:14), that is, foreseen to be created in a certain excellent way, and this as regards the soul. Corporeal, which was formed by the whole Trinity, whose works are inseparable, from the substance of the virginal body. Hence the Son says of the Father, Isa. 49:5: *Forming me from the womb to be his servant*, etc.

By the rod the divine nature is designated: for according to it the Son of God himself is *the power of God.* Hence, Ps. 109:2: *The rod of thy power*, etc. By the tables, on which the divine law was written, the created nature, namely the soul, is designated. And well by two tables are designated the two things which are in the soul, namely understanding and affection. For in his understanding, as on one table, was written all truth; in his affection all goodness. And they are called of stone on account of the confirmation of the understanding, which cannot turn aside into error, or of the affection into evil. By the manna, the corporeal nature, which indeed had a covering lying upon it, that is, the frailty and sufferings it had taken on. With this, the manna, that is, the corporeal nature itself, was most pure from every stain of original sin, apart from the sufferings. It was also edible. Therefore it signifies the sweetness of refreshment. Wis. 16:20: *Bread prepared*, etc., which we ask for, saying: *Give us this day our daily bread.* Behold the end of the blessed Virgin, who was to be born for this, that in her might be placed the hidden thing of our redemption.

Let us see the maker. *Beseleel made*, which is interpreted *shadow of God*, or *mercy of God.* And well: for as shade is refreshment against the heat of the sun, so mercy provides refreshment against the rigor of punishment, which indeed would dry us up and confound us unless the mercy of God protected us. Hence

James, speaking of the justice and rigor of God, says: *The sun rose with a burning heat, and parched the grass* (James 1:11). The sun, that is, Christ, rises (*exoritur*), that is, rises outside himself, when he punishes: because to punish is outside him, whose property is to have mercy and to spare. But in the judgment he will come with burning heat, and will parch the grass, that is, the carnal, in the fire of Gehenna. Note: shade comes from the setting of an opaque body against the light. For there was no cloud which set itself between man and the sun of justice itself before the coming of Christ: therefore all were burned. Hence it is said: *Let them be as grass upon the tops of houses*, etc. (Ps. 128:6). For this reason the Angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, bringing in the cloud, that is, announcing the shade of humanity, to make shade. *The power of the most High shall overshadow thee* (Luke 1:35), that is, his mercy, that is, his own power: because his property is to have mercy.

Otherwise: by this ark the blessed Virgin is designated by a threefold reason: by reason of the material; by reason of the shape or form; by reason of the office, or of what it contained. The material of this ark was twofold, namely setim wood and the purest gold. For there were two things in her on the part of the material, namely flesh and spirit, taking material broadly, for we are speaking morally. By the setim wood, which does not rot, is designated her flesh, which never felt the corruption of concupiscence or of decay. By the gold, her spirit, shining with perfect wisdom, and the dwelling of the deity, which is signified by gold. Hence, Cant. 5:11: *The head of my beloved is as the finest gold.* And in that it was gilded within is noted the purity of her heart, or the love of God; in that it was gilded without, virginal modesty, or love of neighbor; whose *grace is above gold* (Ecclus. 7:21).

(p. 449) Or more intelligibly. Setim woods are small, beautiful, light, strong, incorruptible, incombustible, like the white thorn. They were also hewn and smoothed. Setim, as is said, is the name of a mountain and of a region and of a tree, which is like the white thorn in its leaves; and setim is interpreted *thorns*, or *shoots*, or *placings*, or *their resurrections.* And well by these woods is signified Mary, who felt for her Son and with her Son the manifold punishment of tribulation. And through her, that is, through her prayers and merits, we rise from sin; we spring up by beginning well; through her we are placed in the Church by merit; through her at length we are to be placed in the heavenly building.

Mary is called setim. Because it is the noblest tree of the East, as is said. And Mary was noble in lineage, nobler through the fullness of all charisms, but most noble from this, that Christ, the true *Orient*, who *visited us from on high*, deigned to rise from her, inasmuch as he is man.

Beautiful, through the perfect fullness of all honor. Hence, Ecclus. 6:31: *For in her is the beauty of life*, etc.

Small, through the simplicity of humility, or also of poverty: because she was at once rich and poor. Some, however, say that this tree grows to the greatest size.

Light, through contempt of all earthliness. For love of earthly things makes the soul heavy. Hence, Ps. 4:3: *O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?*, that is, temporal things. Or also light through the whole body of the virtues, which are of a fiery nature: and therefore light in effect, because they draw and drive the soul upward, because the place of fire is not below.

Strong, in keeping her purpose of virginity: because *she girded her loins with strength*, and answered the Angel: *How shall this be done, because I know not man?* (Luke 1:34), that is, I have resolved never to know one, and I persevere in my resolve. Isa. 40:20: *The wise workman hath chosen strong wood, and that will not rot.*

Incorruptible. The incorruptibility of setim is proved by the ark of Noe, which still lasts in the mountains of Armenia, according to Isidore. And Mary was incorruptible through the extinguishing of the tinder of sin in the conception of the Son, which afterward the first motions proceeding from the tinder did not trouble. For anyone other than she can say: *My flesh is clothed with rottenness* (Job 7:5), etc. But she says of herself and

of her spouse, Cant. 1:16: *The beams of our houses are of cedar*: because her body was not dissolved into the four elements. For as the Lord did not give his holy one, that is, Christ, to see corruption, so neither his special holy one, that is, Mary. She was also incorruptible, that is, without the leaven of envy and corruption. Prov. 14:30: *Envy is the rottenness of the bones.* Joel 1:17: *The beasts have rotted in their dung.*

Incombustible, namely without the heat of any anger and iniquity.

Like the white thorn in its leaves, that is, in words, through the most gentle correction of another's perversity. Read the conversion of Theophilus. Morally: it is called first white, afterward thorn: because, when one wishes to prick another by correcting him, the correction ought to proceed from zeal for justice, not from the spite of malice: otherwise such a corrector is comparable to the black thorn, etc.

Smoothed, levelled, and as it were hewn by the craft of the Holy Spirit, or also of Christ, who is the supreme architect, when she was sanctified in her mother's womb, and born without the weight of original sin. These woods were also strong through patience, incorruptible through perseverance, white through purity and innocence of every kind. Hence these woods are described as like the white thorn, that is, Mary, whom these woods designate.

(p. 450) Of the gold you will find as much as you wish below, under the title on the throne. And note that this ark is said to have been gilded, that is, overlaid with the purest gold within and without: because she was purged from the tinder and from sin. But the urn which it contained, that is, the body of Christ, which was full of the manna of the divinity, was wholly of gold: because Christ was wholly clean from sin, who entered the world without stain, and the world was cleansed from sin.

Again, why it is said to have been overlaid with the cleanest gold, and what the cleanest gold is, you will find below, under the title on the throne, where it is said that Solomon overlaid it with the finest gold.

Again, by reason of the shape or form Mary is called an ark, which was four-cornered: and she was square through the four virtues, *than which nothing is more profitable in life for men*, as is said, Wis. 8:7: which are justice, prudence, fortitude, temperance. Each of which stood out in her in a threefold way, as you had above, under the title *Full of grace.*

Again, by reason of its office or of what it contained: because it contained four things. These are the golden urn full of manna, as is said, Heb. 9:4. Exod. 16:33: Moses said to Aaron: *Take a vessel, and put manna into it, as much as a gomor can hold; and lay it up before the Lord to keep unto your generations.* Again, the rod of Aaron that had blossomed (Heb. 9:4; cf. Num. 17:8). Again, the tables of the testament (Heb. 9:4). Hence, Deut. 31:26: *Take this book, and put it in the side of the ark.* And this ark was called *the ark of the testament* (Heb. 9:4; Apoc. 11:19), or of the testimony. Exod. 25:21: *Thou shalt put in the ark the testimony which I will give thee*, that is, the tables on which the testament was written; though whatever things were there can be called testimonies. There was placed the golden urn having manna, in testimony that the Lord had given them bread from heaven. Again, the tables, in testimony that he had raised up for them in writing the natural law written in the hearts of men. Again, the rod of Aaron, in testimony that all power is from God. Again, Deuteronomy, in testimony that they had said: *All things that the Lord hath commanded we will do* (Exod. 24:7). For this reason also it was called the tabernacle of the testimony, and also because cases were tried before its doors.

And as that figurative ark contained the things which were in testimony of the benefits conferred by God on the Jews, so Mary contained Christ in herself, who will be to us in testimony of damnation if we are ungrateful for the benefits which he conferred on us by becoming incarnate, dying, rising, and the like. Hence he says, Jer. 29:23: *I am the judge and the witness, saith the Lord.* Again, Mal. 3:5: *I will come to you in judgment, and will be a speedy witness against sorcerers*, etc.

Now let us see distinctly the expositions of the things which were contained in this ark. The Master of the Histories (*Manducator*), who says plainly that these four things were in the ark, seems to wish that by the ark heaven be understood, and by those four things which were contained there, four persons already glorified in body and soul. By the golden urn, the Lord's body, of which no Catholic doubts. By the tables, Moses. By the rod of Aaron, the blessed Virgin. By Deuteronomy, John the Evangelist. But of these three the Church asserts nothing, although of the blessed Virgin many do not doubt.

Again, by these four things, which were placed by divine power in this ark, Christ is signified, when *a woman compassed a man* (Jer. 31:22), that is, Mary conceived Christ. The urn is the body of Christ containing the manna, that is, the sweetness of the deity and the sweetness of eternal enjoyment. The rod: because the right of the kingdom *(p. 451)* belonged to him as to the heir. Again, the tables and Deuteronomy, that is, the knowledge of both laws: because he is the priest, to whom it belongs to know the law (Mal. 2:7). Otherwise: in him are the tables of the testament: because he is for us the instruction and form of living. For his every action is our lesson, etc. Again, the rod as regards the fatherly correction of sinners. Again, the manna as regards the sweet and gentle consolation of children. Wis. 7:26: *She is the brightness of eternal light, and the mirror*. This urn is hollow through the humility of the incarnation; golden on account of the cleanness of the humanity assumed, because gold is the cleanest of metals; and on account of the charity by which he was made man for us; and on account of the obedience which he showed the Father, taking the form of a servant; and on account of wisdom, which is signified both in the gold and in this, that with the urn were Deuteronomy and the tables of the testament. For these four things are chiefly wont to be designated in gold: cleanness, wisdom, charity, and obedience.

Or thus: the body of Christ is the ark by reason of the material, of which above. The soul of Christ is the golden urn. The manna is the sweetness of the divinity. Christ also is here in the sacrament our refreshment on the way, because he will be our enjoyment in the fatherland, and will be the unfailing refreshment of the faithful. Hence, Exod. 24:11, it is said of the Israelites, who signify Christian men: *They saw God, and they did eat and drink.* Christ also is manna, that is, the heavenly bread, *having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste*; namely the bread of Angels, which man did eat. Which bread *the little ones asked, and there was none to break it unto them* (Lam. 4:4), before the coming and the birth of Mary: but Mary made this bread, which was broken on the cross. You had these things above, under the title *Full of grace*, near the end of the whole chapter.

Still we ought also to cry to her assiduously: Our mother, who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread from thy ark, that is, from the ark which thou art. For she, since she is mother, most willingly gives this bread to her children, that is, to her imitators. Hence also it is said to her: *All expect of thee that thou give them food in season* (Ps. 103:27), and what follows. Christ is also the rod: because he rules us, corrects us, and loves us. He is also the tables of the testament and Deuteronomy: because Christ is the book of life *written within and without* (Ezek. 2:9). The book *in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3). Who founded both testaments, and set a wheel within a wheel. For he gave the old law, which he even wrote with his own finger, and he preached the new with his own mouth and fulfilled it in deed, because he *began to do and to teach* (Acts 1:1).

Again, Mary is an ark by reason of what it contains. Manna, or *manhu*, is the wonderful sweetness of consolation which she pours into her lovers and her special friends, and into those whom she deigns to visit; which whoever tastes can say, *Manhu*, that is, *What is this?*, for wonder. Therefore she says: *My spirit is sweet above honey* (Ecclus. 24:27). Or, the white manna is the virginity of Mary, which in fragile flesh acquired angelic glory, having the sweetness of every taste. Or, by this most sweet manna, the charity of Mary, in which she was rooted and founded. Morally: the manna of every taste and delight is charity, which is the form of all the virtues and the seasoning of every good work, without which every work is tasteless to the Lord. Therefore, 1 Cor. 16:14: *Let all your things be done in charity.* Whoever does not have it *is become*

as sounding brass (1 Cor. 13:1), etc. Or morally: manna is the sweetness of a meek spirit, or the sweetness of words.

The tables of the ten commandments, of knowledge *(p. 452)* of the divine law. Jer. 31:33: *I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people, saith the Lord*, and many other things. But some great men of letters are like stone tables written upon, but not feeling their writing, because they are hard and unmerciful.

The third thing which was contained in this ark was the tables of the testament, by which is designated the perfect knowledge of both laws, which was fully in her: because the author of the Scriptures dwelt in her. Hence Jerome says that she knew the Scriptures excellently, as is clear in that verse: *As he spoke to our fathers*, etc. (Luke 1:55). Again, Luke 2:19, it is said that *Mary kept all these words, pondering*, etc. Hence afterward she taught the Apostles, and was the mistress of the New Testament. For since she was the wheel by prefiguration, she can truly be said to have had full knowledge of both laws: which is signified by this, that in the ark Deuteronomy and the tables of the testament were joined. And note that *tables* is said in the plural, according to that of Isa. 33:6: *Riches of salvation, wisdom*, as regards God, *and knowledge*, as regards neighbor. Or, the two tables can be called her capacious understanding and retentive memory, which two things the Holy Spirit conferred on her when he came upon her.

The fourth was Deuteronomy, signifying the new law which Christ gave: because she *kept all the words* of the new law, *pondering them in her heart.* The new law also was in her. For *the law of the spirit of life* had filled her, which *delivers from the law of sin* (Rom. 7:6; 8:2). The law, namely, of love, which she found, whereas the first was of fear. Or, Deuteronomy for this reason: because her whole life and her every action is the lesson and instruction of Christians, as Augustine says of Christ.

Otherwise: in this ark were the tables of truth or of wisdom; the manna of meekness, or of mercy; the rod of power, or of justice. Hence the Prophet to the Virgin: *Set out, proceed prosperously, and reign* (Ps. 44:5). Set out, O wise one, on account of the truth which is in thee, which is signified by the tables; proceed, O merciful one, on account of the meekness which is in thee, which is signified by the manna; reign, O mighty one, on account of the justice which is in thee, which is signified by the rod. There follows: *Because of truth and meekness and justice.* Assign each to each.

Otherwise and more subtly: in Mary, as in an ark, was the manna, that is, the sweetness of divine contemplation; the rod, that is, the rightness of perfect working: for the rod of Aaron blossomed and bore fruit: because the active life multiplies itself, but the contemplative is solitary. There were, therefore, in this ark the manna and the rod: because Mary was contemplative and active. Hence she is signified by Martha and Mary her sister: and therefore the Gospel concerning them is read on the Assumption. In the tables of the testament is understood the spiritual knowledge of the law, which she had most fully. For since barrenness was a reproach in the law, she understood that according to *the letter that killeth* this was said of barrenness of the body, but according to *the spirit that quickeneth* it ought to be understood of barrenness of the mind. And therefore, despising the letter that kills, rejoicing in the spirit that gives life, she, first among the daughters of the synagogue, chose virginity. Again, in the law temporal things were promised and conferred: but she understood that the riches conferred in the time of the law were a figure of the spiritual riches to be conferred in the time of grace: and therefore among the daughters of the synagogue she chose and loved poverty. Hence she calls herself *the mother of fair love* (Ecclus. 24:24).

Mary is called the ark of the testament or of the testimony (Apoc. 11:19), as was said above: because, namely, *(p. 453)* in her was placed the testament, that is, the law of the covenant of the Lord: because she brought us into covenant with the whole Trinity. For to the Father is appropriated majesty, to the Son wisdom, to the Holy Spirit goodness. And we had offended the Father through pride, the Son through folly, the Holy Spirit through malice. For these three concurred in the first sin: pride, by which Adam wished to be

like God; folly, by which he believed he could become like God; malice, by which he went against what God had commanded, or consented to what God had forbidden. But Mary by her humility reconciled us to the Father, when *he regarded the humility of his handmaid* (Luke 1:48). For where love is, there is the eye. And she united us to the Son, whom she conceived by believing, so that she was filled with the Holy Spirit, who filled her so that of her fullness all might receive *grace for grace* (John 1:16). For she is the fountain from which the streams of graces proceed.

Again, in another way she is the ark of the covenant: because through her God's covenant with us was made firm. For before this ark, that is, Mary, was made, we were enemies, and *a great chaos was fixed* between us and God, so that *they who would pass from hence* to God *could not.* And therefore through the Virgin the Son of God came to us, and was made Emmanuel, that is, God with us, so that both the Son and the mother might bring us back to the Father. A covenant also is wont to be contracted chiefly through marriage; and Christ mingled himself with our race, joining our nature to himself in the Virgin, so that, if the Father should afterward think anything against us, seeing us to be the brothers of his Son, he would draw back his hand from his own kin. Hence in the hours of the blessed Virgin Mary we say thus to Christ: "Remember, author of salvation," etc. And we can say to him, who is the true David, that of 2 Kings 5:1: *We are thy bone and thy flesh.* And that of Dan. 9:17–18: *For thy own sake incline, O my God, thy ear, and hear,* etc. Again that of the Apostle, Rom. 8:29: *For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated,* etc., *that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren.* Again that of Jer. 14:9: *Thou, O Lord, art among us, and thy holy name is called upon us*: because from Christ are Christians. In these nuptials was the everlasting covenant, when it was proclaimed, namely: *peace to men of good will* (Luke 2:14): because Christ *is our peace, who hath made both one* (Eph. 2:14), namely the things that are in heaven and the things that are on earth, reconciling in himself the lowest with the highest.

The ark of propitiation: because she is the mother and queen of mercy; the mother and daughter of him who is *the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort,* and who *is the propitiation for our sins* (1 John 2:2). By whose merits and intercession the Lord is propitious to all our iniquities: for since she always sets herself before her Son on behalf of sinners, her Son can deny her nothing: for either she commands the Son or she prays the Father, and she is always *heard for her reverence* (Heb. 5:7).

The ark of sanctification. Ps. 131:8: *Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the ark of thy sanctification,* that is, which thou hast sanctified: because she was sanctified in the womb; and because Christ, descending into her, there sanctified himself as man in himself the Word, as Augustine says; and because she contained the things which were sanctified to the Lord; and because through her we are sanctified in the present and shall be glorified in the future. Therefore the prophet says to Christ: *Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place,* etc. *Thou* first; *the ark,* that is, Mary, afterward. Hence it is inferred that she was assumed together with her body. It is said, then: *Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place,* after the labor of the passion; thou through the ascension, *and the ark of thy sanctification,* through the assumption. For this ark, when it was assumed, rose *(p. 454)* into the rest of the Lord, and that of Gen. 8:4 was fulfilled: *The ark rested upon the mountains of Armenia.* Armenia is interpreted *plucked mountain,* and signifies the empyrean heaven, from which everything superfluous and harmful has been plucked away. Or, the mountains of Armenia are the orders and eminences of the Angels, above which she rests on the throne of majesty; from which orders, namely, everything proud was plucked away in the fall of Lucifer.

The ark of the testament: hence, Apoc. 11:19: *The temple of God was opened in heaven: and the ark of his testament was seen in his temple.* And ark (*arca*) is so called from what is hidden (*arcanum*): and Mary is the secret of God. Hence he says of her through Isaiah, 24:16: *My secret to myself*: because *he that shutteth, and no man openeth* (Apoc. 3:7) shut this ark. For certain things are placed in an ark to be guarded and hidden: and Christ was guarded in this ark, and hidden from the devil and the princes: because *if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory* (1 Cor. 2:8): and so we would not have been redeemed.

Man did not look into it, nor put his hand to it: because not from the seed of man but by a mystical breathing the Word of God was made flesh, as Ambrose says. A rich ark, in which were *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3). Hence someone says to her:

Hail, rich ark of Christ, who hast poured out the treasure by which all things are enriched.

To the treasure which this ark guards we must have recourse in all necessities, by means of the ark itself.

Again, in an ark garments are folded up: so Christ, whom the whole world does not contain, as it were folded and humbled, was shut within the ark of the womb. And because this ark was very small, *he emptied himself, taking the form (p. 455) of a servant* (Phil. 2:7), that he might be able to be contained by her. Hence, Rom. 9:28: *A short word shall the Lord make upon the earth*: because the Father shortened the Son. Hence, Isa. 10:23: *The Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption and a shortening*, etc. Which was when the only-begotten and immeasurable Word of the Father was shut within the narrow bowels of the virginal womb. The garments of Christ are his humanity. Hence he says to his mother, Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh.* For this ark kept the very good garments of Esau, which Rebecca is notably said to have had with her at home (Gen. 27:15). Esau is the sinner: because Christ appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh.* His very good garments are his flesh, taken from the most pure substance of the Virgin, cleansed from original sin in the sanctification; not sinful, but like the sinful. And Rebecca, that is, Mary, is said to have had these garments with her: because not from elsewhere, not from the seed of man, but from her substance only was the flesh of Christ formed and assumed. Hence the Apostle notably says that Christ was *made of a woman* (Gal. 4:4). And Bede strongly rebukes those who think it should be read there "born of a woman." Therefore also Mary is called *the herb yielding seed* (Gen. 1:12), not receiving it. For of her he was made, and from her, through her consent, he made him, of whom it is said, Isa. 1:9: *Except the Lord of hosts had left us seed*, that is, Christ, as one Gloss says.

She is also that mountain from which was cut the stone, that is, Christ born, *who is the cornerstone, who hath made both one, without hands*, that is, without the marriage act, as Augustine glosses: because by the operation of the Holy Spirit alone. And therefore Mary, the *quaestuaria*, made and sewed these garments, who of the cloth of her flesh made him a cloak, with which she clothed him when she consented that it should be, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc. (Luke 1:38). And when she was told of this by the Angel, and, being very small, feared to make garments for one so immense from so very short a cloth, the Angel answered her: *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace* (Luke 1:30): that is, there will be given thee the fullness of grace, by which the small portion of thy cloth, that is, of thy substance, will suffice for his greatness. For there, to speak in French after the fable of the *mantel parti*, it *li fu cort* (was short on him), namely on the giant of twofold substance, *mes bien li sist* (but it became him well): because in it he appeared *beautiful above the sons of men* (Ps. 44:3); and not only above the sons of men, but also above thousands of Angels.

Now we must see of the form, by which holiness is suggested as its form, as it were. First, in the dimensions of the ark the three theological virtues are suggested: faith in the length, hope in the height, charity in the breadth. It says, then: *two cubits and a half in length* (Exod. 37:1). Length is linear extension. In a line we take two terms, from which and to which. So also in faith the term from which is enigmatic knowledge. Hence the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 13:12: *We see now through a glass in a dark manner.* But the term to which is knowledge by sight. Hence, Isa. 7:9, according to another reading: *Unless you believe, you shall not understand* [the edition notes that the Vulgate has *If you will not believe, you shall not continue*], that is, you shall not arrive. This is said to have two cubits and a half, as it were imperfect: because *we see now through a glass*, and *know in part: but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away*, and it will be as it were a full cubit.

Breadth is surface extension, and a surface has two sides. According to this, charity is taken here, according to which the concupiscible power is extended by affection to friends and enemies, as to two sides. Ps. 118:96: *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.* This is said to be extended a cubit and a half. The perfect cubit *(p. 456)* refers to the love of God, who is to be loved absolutely and perfectly and above all things. The half cubit, to the love of neighbor, who is less than God. Or, because we often see in our neighbor what is not to be loved, such as sin, though nature is always to be loved: and therefore the extension of charity to neighbor is a half cubit.

Height is extension from below upward, by which is taken hope, which, raising the irascible power, extends it toward God. Hence it was said to Peter, who was fishing: *Launch out into the deep* [*in altum*] (Luke 5:4), etc. So it is said to preachers, that through hope they should raise the hearts of sinners. And this is said to have a cubit and a half. The cubit is hope of salvation coming from merits and from the mercy of God, as they have hope who glory in the testimony of conscience. The half is hope coming from the mercy of God, not from merits, as they have who are in sins. So then in this spiritual ark there is the length of faith according to the rational power, the breadth of charity according to the concupiscible, the height of hope according to the irascible. So also in any holy soul, but excellently in the glorious Virgin.

There follows: *And he overlaid it with the purest gold within and without*, namely that it might appear bright both to God and to men, *and he made to it a crown of gold round about* (Exod. 37:1–2). Two things are set here which suggest the prerogative of the glorious Virgin: the overlaying with gold within and without, and the crown set round about; by which are given to be understood virginity and fruitfulness in the glorious Virgin. Virginal chastity is understood by gold, by reason of its incorruption and preciousness, and in different respects. Integrity or incorruption makes the Virgin worthy as regards herself; preciousness, as regards God; light or brightness, as regards neighbor and good repute. For fruitfulness brought her to the crown of gold: for since she was made the mother of the supreme king, it was fitting that she be raised in royal honor. Note, however, that this crown was carried round about, which signifies the immensity and eternity of her power. Hence she says: *And in Jerusalem was my power* (Ecclus. 24:15).

After the adornment follow the corners adjoining. By the four corners are taken the four cardinal virtues, namely justice, prudence, fortitude, temperance. And the four corners signify four affections: sorrow, fear, joy, and hope. Two affections, namely sorrow and fear, are as it were two corners of the ark on the left side: and the left side is the irascible, as it were facing against evil; sorrow namely for the past, fear for the future, which makes a man take care for himself. The other two, namely joy and hope, are on the right side, namely the concupiscible, on the side of good: and this is what Augustine says: “From the irascible arise sorrow and fear, from the concupiscible joy and hope.” Next to the four corners, then, four rings, that is, the four cardinal virtues, are set beneath: and they are so called on account of their circular course, that the movement of virtue may be from God to God. They are called golden, to distinguish them from the virtues of custom, which the Philosophers hold are acquired from frequently acting well, and not from grace. Next to the corner of the heart, then, which is the affection of sorrow, is set the ring of prudence, lest sorrow draw one into sloth. Next to the corner of fear is set the ring of fortitude, lest fear cast one down into despair. And these two are on the left side of the heart. Again, next to the corner of joy is placed the ring of temperance, lest a man fall into dissoluteness. Next to the corner of hope, the ring of justice, lest he be lifted up into presumption: because no one can hope but the just. And these two are on the right side of the heart.

Into these rings two bars are put, which are the consideration of punishment and of glory. The consideration of punishment is the bar put in on the left side into the two rings of prudence and fortitude, that prudence may diligently guard against the punishment considered, and fortitude may willingly bear present punishment, that it may escape the eternal. The consideration of the promised glory is the bar put in on the right side, into the rings of temperance and justice, that, having considered the reward of the robe of the soul, one may behave temperately, and, distributing to each what is his, may hasten to it. Therefore it is said: *Thou*

shalt put them in the sides of the ark (cf. Exod. 37:1 ff.).

Chapter 2: Mary, Throne

Throne. Hence, 3 Kings 10:18–20: *King Solomon also made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the finest gold. It had six steps: and the top of the throne was round behind: and two hands on either side holding the seat: and two lions stood by the hands. And twelve little lions (p. 457) stood upon the six steps on the one side and on the other: there was no such work made in any kingdom.*

Mary is called a throne: because it is firmly and openly joined together. And the blessed Virgin was joined together by an indissoluble chaining of the inner virtues, which, connected, strengthened one another. These are virginity, simplicity, solitude, and also all the cardinal or theological virtues; according to that of Job 10:11: *Thou hast put me together with bones and sinews.*

It receives the king from standing to sitting, as it were humbled. And the blessed Virgin received the eternal king, who, *being in the form of God, emptied himself*, humbled in the flesh in the incarnation: for in her Christ took the form of a servant, in which he will exercise judicial power.

It receives only the prince in itself, whatever and however many assessors he may have. So the blessed Virgin received only Christ in her womb, according to that of Ezek. 44:2–3: *This gate shall be shut*, etc.: *the prince himself shall sit in it.* As if he said: he himself, not another.

It is closed below. And the blessed Virgin was closed, above all mere men, to delights, riches, earthly pleasures and superfluities, and above all to uncleanness; as above: *This gate shall be shut*, etc.

It is open above. So Mary, continually sighing toward heavenly things, drew with open heart *the perfect gifts* descending *from the Father of lights* (James 1:17).

It is lower in front, higher behind. So the blessed Virgin was first most humble in poverty and contempt of the world, afterward exalted above men and Angels.

King Solomon made himself, etc. First it must be shown why Christ is designated by Solomon: you will find this below, under the title on the moral throne. And since Solomon had three names, we must see why he is rather designated by this name, which is interpreted *peaceable*, when the making of the throne is ascribed to him. For Christ is truly the peaceable one, who says, Jer. 29:11: *I think thoughts of peace over you*, etc. For then the Lord effectively thought of peace when he prepared for himself as a throne the virginal womb. Hence he says, Zach. 8:14–15: *As I purposed to afflict you*, etc.: *so turning again I have thought in these days to do good to the house of Juda and Jerusalem.* The peaceable one, then, made a throne that he might make peace: because through the Son of man as mediator we have been made at peace with God the Father. Also through the mother of the true peaceable one as mediatrix we can find peace with the Son as often as we wish.

This work is also ascribed to Solomon because it is the work of eternal wisdom, which is Christ. Hence, Prov. 9:1: *Wisdom hath built herself a house.* And well is it said *made*: because the blessed Virgin is the special work of that craftsman who *made the morning light and the sun*, who in this work of this throne chiefly showed his wisdom: for she is *an admirable instrument, the work of the most High* (Ecclus. 43:2). Ps. 117:23: *This is the Lord's doing: and it is wonderful in our eyes.* Well also is it said *made himself*: because as king Solomon alone sat on this throne, so Christ alone sat in the glorious Virgin. Hence, Ezek. 44:3: *The prince himself shall sit in it.* The prince himself, as it were, not another. He made it, then, for himself, not for another, not for the flesh, not for the world, not for the devil, not for Bacchus, not for Venus, not for Mercury, not for Mars, but for himself: yet nonetheless also for us men, and even for the Angels themselves, but in different ways.

A throne of ivory. For until the blessed Virgin Christ had not had a throne of ivory, but as it were a plebeian and common seat: but in her, who first vowed virginity, he had a throne of ivory. And she who was the great throne was made higher according to the height of the throne: which the word *(p. 458)* of Mary suggests: *My soul doth magnify the Lord* (Luke 1:46); who, as if forgetful of virginity, although he loved it above all things, used to bless fruitfulness. Hence, Gen. 9:1: *God blessed them, saying: Increase, and multiply*, etc. But Mary, who first made the vow of virginity, exalted on high the king, the son of the great king, and set him in her heart and virginal womb as on a great throne of ivory, and wonderfully magnified him above all kings, as Solomon was magnified above all the kings of the earth, from the time when he made himself a great throne and sat on it, as is said in 3 Kings 10:18 ff.

A throne of ivory. It is to be noted that, for the material of this throne, namely ivory, to be found, it was necessary that the elephant die, that ivory might be had from its bones.

And it is a property of the elephant that, when it wishes to rest, it leans against the trunks of trees: because, not having flexible joints, it cannot lie down on the ground. Hence it signifies the pride of the Jews, who were a stiff-necked people: but this elephant died spiritually when, with the coming of the time of grace, the ceremonial laws ceased. And well by the bones of the elephant is Mary signified: because the strength and nobility of the elephant consist in its bones. Likewise the nobility and worth of Judea is in Mary: the others are as it were the flesh of the elephant, she the bone of the elephant; the others as it were the thorn, she the rose. Hence: “As the thorn the rose,” etc.

Elephas is so called from a certain Greek word which means *mountain*, because the elephant, on account of the size of its body, presents the form of a mountain. Among the Indians it is called *barro*, from its cry, which is called *barritus.* And Mary, on account of the greatness of her excellence, is compared to Mount Libanus: in her is that mountain *in which it hath pleased God to dwell* (Ps. 67:17). Look under the title on the mountain.

The beast is a sight to behold: and Mary among all creatures is supremely wonderful.

Of wonderful size. Such were the fathers of the blessed Virgin, namely Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, etc., from whose stock she descended, all of whom she surpassed in every grace and virtue.

Of immense strength. So also she, through the charity which *beareth all things* (1 Cor. 13:7), which was in her *strong as death* (Cant. 8:6). This you will find a little below, on ivory.

Of a most cold nature, so that its blood is said to extinguish the burning of the serpent’s poison. So also the glorious Virgin consumed and extinguished the serpent’s poison which the old serpent, through Eve, had poured into human nature, when, according to John Damascene, Christ took humanity from her most pure blood; who also, given gall and vinegar to drink on the cross, fully emptied out the said poison, and for this deigned to be given that most bitter cup to drink. Hence he says: *In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink* (Ps. 68:22).

It is an enemy to the dragon: and the blessed Virgin to the old serpent who seduced Eve. Hence in figure of Mary it was said to the same serpent, Gen. 3:15: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman*, etc. Look for the exposition under the title that Mary is woman.

It greatly hates the wind, as is said. So also Mary, most humble, hated the wind of pride and worldly haughtiness. She is designated by queen Esther, Esther 14:14–16, saying to the Lord in her prayer: *O Lord, who hast the knowledge of all things, thou knowest that I hate the glory of the wicked … and that I abhor the sign of my pride and glory, which is upon my head … and detest it as a menstruous rag*, and many other things.

It hates also the dragon, that is, poisoning lust: which well appeared then, *(p. 459)* when she first made the vow of virginity.

It has a very small tongue, and so hidden in the mouth that it is scarcely ever seen. So also the blessed Virgin is believed to have had very few words. Hence only seven words of hers are recorded in the four Gospels.

It is an animal, as is said, of great wisdom. So also Mary. Look under the title on her wisdom.

It feeds itself with its nostrils, and uses them in all things as an instrument, and with them it even uproots trees. The nostrils with which the glorious Virgin drew in the Holy Spirit are: on the left, contempt of earthly things, as she is described *having the moon under her feet* (cf. Apoc. 12:1); and on the right, fervent desire of eternal things; which two fed her soul with every spiritual food.

Finding a man straying, it leads him back to the way, as is said. And the blessed Virgin very often leads back those straying through the byways of errors to the way of faith, and to the way which leads to life. John 14:6: *I am the way*, etc. Those straying also through the byways of vices she leads back, by her prayers, merits, and examples, as far as in her lies, to the opposite virtues, through which one comes to heaven. Hence she says: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth* (Ecclus. 24:25).

It is a most chaste animal, and signifies a threefold chastity. Conjugal: because it uses its mate temperately. Widowed: because, after the manner of the turtledove, after the death of its mate it is said never to join itself to another. Virginal, as to its white and cold bones, which, if they are burned and powdered, drive away pallor of the eyes, because they help the liver. The whiteness signifies virginity, the burning charity, the powdering humility. And such virginity purges the inner eyes, that they may be able to behold the king of glory in his beauty (Isa. 33:17). Matt. 5:8: *Blessed are the clean of heart*, etc. And Mary, both as wife and as widow, remained always a virgin.

It carries a wooden tower with soldiers and arms, as is read in 1 Mach. 6:37. And the whole building of the Catholic Church is sustained in grace and virtue by the prayers, patronage, and examples of Mary; which most appeared at the time of the Lord's burial, when the whole Church leaned on her faith, when every saint failed from faith and hope, or at least wavered somewhat. Hence Thomas says, John 20:25: *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails*, etc., *I will not believe.* And others, as it were despairing, said, Luke 24:21: *But we hoped*, etc.

When it sees blood it does not fear to die, but is the more sharpened for battle, as is read in 1 Mach. 6:34. And the blessed Virgin, seeing the blood of her Son poured out on the cross, did not fear to die with him, but rather wished it: and if she did not lay down her life for him, yet she did what she could.

It naturally loves its deliverer, and always obeys him. For it is said that, when it is captured by a hunter, it is very heavily beaten; and another coming up, who wishes to have it obedient to himself, frees it from the hands of the one beating it: which the elephant notices, and becomes tame in his hands, and loves him, and always obeys him, and recognizes its deliverer. But man is more unnatural than the elephant, who neither remembers Christ his deliverer, nor loves him, nor obeys him; of which kind of man it is said: *The unmindful will forsake him that delivered him* (Ecclus. 29:22).

Mary is of ivory: because ivory is the bone of the elephant, which among the Indians is called *barro*, from the cry which is called *barritus*: and hence *ebur* from *barro.* As some say, if it is true, it is at first dark, but polished artfully with certain instruments, it is made white and shining. So Mary, when she was conceived, was dark through original sin, but by the subtle craft of the Holy Spirit *(p. 460)* was made white and shining in the sanctification: and then was given her *the glory of Libanus* (Isa. 35:2), which is interpreted *whiteness*, or *whitening.*

Without flesh, that is, without the viciousness of human flesh: for she lived in the flesh beyond the flesh; hence she is called not flesh, but soul. Prov. 25:25: *As cold water to a thirsty soul*, that is, to Mary, *so is good tidings*, namely Gabriel sent to her, *from a far country*, that is, from heaven. Again, without flesh, that is, without carnal affection.

Without skin: because she never gloried in skins, that is, in the outward things of this world: for, perfectly humble, she despised the glory of the world, this as to the skin; and, most chaste, she renounced every carnal affection, this as to the flesh: and so she was wholly a stranger to flesh and to skin, and by this is fittingly compared to ivory.

Without hairs, that is, without superfluities, by which are signified foolish looks, indiscreet laughter, idle words, unlawful touches, wandering about, and the like. Or, superfluities of temporal things, since she was most poor.

Dry: because in the sanctification and the coming upon her of the Holy Spirit, who is fire, nothing of harmful moisture was left in her, nothing of contrary heat; nor did she conceive from the seed of man. For this reason she was fittingly prefigured by the rod of Aaron (Num. 17:8), which, neither rooted in a nursery, nor dug about with a hoe, nor quickened with sap, nor made fruitful with seed, as Augustine says, flowered, put forth leaves, and brought forth nuts.

Hard. Because she was impenetrable to all the darts of the enemy, and set her face as a most hard rock in the passion of her Son: hard to losses, harder to words, hardest to the blows which she suffered in her scourged Son.

Cold. Because without the incitement of concupiscence: for whereas other women all conceive in heat, she conceived in the overshadowing and refreshment of the Holy Spirit, the glory of virginity remaining.

Solid: and she was solid through her purpose of virginity, from which she never changed. This solidity also excellently befits her in childbirth: for although her womb was emptied in bringing forth the Son, she did not lose the seal of chastity. And therefore she is called *the gate shut* three times (Ezek. 44:1–2): because before childbirth, and in childbirth, and after childbirth. For this reason also she is said to have brought forth without pain, that is, without injury to nature: because pain is the division of what is continuous. Not so did Thamar bring forth, nor was Phares so born, Gen. 38:29, of whom the woman said: *Why is the partition divided for thee?* Or, this solidity is constancy of mind in good.

White: so that whiteness may refer to the sanctification, as was said above. Or, white within through innocence and purity of mind, without through most perfect chastity. Under the title on her beauty you will find more on whiteness.

Shining, by the spreading of good examples, strengthening those who behold the command of her Son, Matt. 5:16: *Let your light shine before men*, etc. Or, this shining can be referred literally to the shining of the virginal face, when she carried the Son of God in her womb. Look under the title on her bodily beauty.

Reddish from age. Hence, Lam. 4:7: *More ruddy than old ivory.* By this redness can be figured the charity of Mary, or the martyrdom of her heart which she suffered for charity, whereas the other martyrs suffered for faith. And this martyrdom, by which she was thus made ruddy, she suffered when she was already about forty-seven years old, as is believed; and such an age inclines toward old age.

Strong and robust: and she is *the strong woman* sought by Solomon, but found by Christ and by Gabriel himself. Look under the title on her fortitude, where she is called the strong woman.

(p. 461) Durable, through perseverance in every grace and virtue: because her faith did not fail in the passion of her Son, although then every saint failed. For this reason that had been said of her which is said in Prov. 31:18: *Her lamp*, that is, her faith, *shall not be put out in the night* of the Lord's burial. Truly then night was made, when the Sun of justice set through death.

Suitable for making vessels for keeping holy things. And of this ivory the Holy Spirit, the craftsman, made that *admirable vessel, the work of the most High* (Ecclus. 43:2), in which was placed that holy thing, the Lord's body, of which the Lord says, Lev. 26:2: *Reverence my sanctuary.* And Isa. 37:32: *Out of Jerusalem*,

that is, the blessed Virgin, *shall go a remnant, and salvation from mount Sion*: which was when she brought forth the Saviour. And to signify this the body of Christ is still kept in an ivory pyx, as well as the hosts from which it is to be consecrated.

Smooth and light, when it has been well polished all round with suitable instruments: and those who devoutly approach Mary do not find her rough, whom the Holy Spirit most studiously polished.

A cloth laid on it and bound to it is said to be kept unburned. So Mary keeps those bound to her by love and service from the burning of vices.

It was brought to King Solomon from Tharsis (3 Kings 10:22), which is interpreted *search for joy*: because he who is solicitous about finding eternal joy, and searches for it, takes care about the observance of chastity, which is not easily obtained except through her who found grace.

Burned and powdered, it is said to take away pallor of the eyes, as was said above of the properties of the elephant.

The blessed Virgin, then, is the throne of Solomon: for in her the true peaceable one bodily sat and rested for nine months. Hence, Isa. 11:10, where we have, *His sepulchre shall be glorious*, another translation says: *His rest shall be glorious*, that is, the glorious Lady shall be his rest. And whereas the soul of the just is the seat of wisdom, the blessed Virgin by a singular privilege is called a throne, that is, a royal seat, who conceived and bore a king: which was granted to no other queen. Therefore it was specially said of Christ, Matt. 2:2: *Where is he that is born king?* For others, after they are born of their mother, can be crowned as kings, but they are not born kings: but Christ, on the day on which he was conceived by his mother, was crowned king. Hence, Cant. 3:11, it is said: *Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see king Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him.* This you will find sufficiently expounded in the twelve prerogatives of Mary (cf. above, Book III, on the twelve privileges of Mary).

King Solomon, then, made himself this throne of ivory when he was well pleased with the chastity of the Virgin. And this throne was overlaid with *the finest gold*, that is, adorned with wisdom, modesty, obedience, patience, purity, charity, preciousness, healing power, and the brightness of examples, and with each of the other virtues, a great multitude of which is noted in the properties of gold.

And in this throne three things are chiefly noted. The first, rest: because it was made by Solomon, who is interpreted *peaceable.* The second, cleanness: because it was made of ivory. The third, greatness: because this throne was great. For before, he had found rest in no one: because in no one were the tumults quieted, namely of carnal concupiscence against the spirit, except in Mary, who alone could say: *He that made me rested in my tabernacle* (Ecclus. 24:12); not only in the tabernacle of my soul, but also of my body. In no one did he find cleanness: *(p. 462)* because of her alone can it be said: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee* (Cant. 4:7). In no other did he find a great seat, but a narrow and confined one, and as it were not a full seat; but in her he found a great one through humility, which alone is capable of God, who says, Isa. 66:1: *What is this place of my rest?* And a little below, v. 2: *To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?* For the less she was in her own eyes, the greater she was in the eyes of the Lord. And the less she was valued by the lovers of the world, the dearer she was in the eyes of God. For as *that which is high to men is an abomination before God* (Luke 16:15), so that which is abject to men for God's sake is high before God.

Again, it is to be noted that some, though they are chaste, are yet proud or harsh, having one virtue without another, if this be possible: and such are not great thrones. But the blessed Virgin, having each of the virtues in the superlative degree, alone was found and made by God a great throne. Therefore it is said: *King Solomon made himself a great throne of ivory* (3 Kings 10:18).

Mary is a great throne: by the preciousness of the material, because made of gold and ivory, both of which are very precious.

By craftsmanship: because *there was no such work made in any kingdom*, namely of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (Phil. 2:10).

By the eternity of its durability. Hence: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever* (Heb. 1:8). Again: *His throne as the days of heaven* (Ps. 88:30), which are eternal.

By the majesty of the one sitting on it: because he who was uncircumscribable according to the deity willed to be circumscribed there through the humanity assumed. Hence Mary says, Ecclus. 24:8: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven.* Because she comprehended the incomprehensible, enclosed the immense in the bosom of her womb, and within her chaste bowels contained him who contains all things. For this reason it is sung to Mary herself: "Whom the whole world does not contain, he enclosed himself in thy womb, made man." For this reason also Christ was figured by Gedeon, who is interpreted *going round in the womb.* For in the womb of the Virgin, circumscribed as to his human nature, he nonetheless went round all things through the uncircumscribed nature of divine power.

By the capacity to hold a gigantic size. For Christ is called *the giant of twofold substance*, and he is not a petty king, but *a great king above all gods*, that is, men and Angels. For this reason this throne is compared to the sun, which is eccentric to the earth, and is said to exceed the size of the whole earth eight times.

By the special dignity of the one presiding: because *King Solomon made himself* this throne, as was expounded above.

By the immensity of its brightness: because made of *the finest gold*, which is of the best color and exceeding brilliance. Again, on account of this brightness the Father, speaking of the Son, says: *His throne as the sun in my sight* (Ps. 88:38). For although the Virgin perhaps appeared somewhat obscure among men, yet in the sight of God she appeared bright as the sun, which is the most beautiful creature.

By the authority of the most just judge. Hence it is said to him: *Thou hast sat on the throne, who judgest justice* (Ps. 9:5). Again: *He hath prepared his throne in judgment: and he shall judge the world in equity* (ibid., vv. 8–9), etc. And this pertains to Mary for this reason: because he will appear in the judgment in the humanity which he took from her. Again, his judging he received from his mother. Hence he says, John 5:22, 27: *The Father doth not judge any man, but … hath given him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man.*

By the as it were infinite measure of the three principal virtues: for no virginity *(p. 463)* could be compared to her purity, no littleness to her humility, no love to her charity.

By the ineffability of the highest dignity: because on this splendid throne the supreme emperor confirmed forever the laws of his clemency.

By its healing power. Hence it was made of ivory and gold: both of which are medicinal. Look under their titles.

By the countlessness of its benefits. Therefore it is said, Heb. 4:16: *Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace*, etc. This you will find expounded below.

There follows: *And he overlaid it with the finest gold*, etc. Ivory is chastity, as was said above; gold is humility. The ivory was clothed with gold: because chastity is adorned by humility, etc.

And note that the ivory was covered with gold, which appeared more, as the garment appears more than the body: in which it is noted that God regarded humility in the blessed Virgin more than virginity. Hence she says: *He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid* (Luke 1:48): for on that side he loved her more: and

where love is, there is the eye. So virgins ought to look more at what is weak in them than at what is strong or white. And well is humility compared to gold, and to *the finest gold*, which is the most precious and cleanest metal: for than virginal humility no virtue is cleaner, none more precious, as in Mary. Cleanness pertains to virginity, preciousness to humility.

And he overlaid it with the finest gold. Hence elsewhere it is said of her: *In gilded clothing* (Ps. 44:10), etc. The clothing of Mary is of gold, that is, of the sun (Apoc. 12:1). And well is it said *overlaid* [*clothed*]. For the soul and body of Mary are as it were of ivory through the virtue of most entire virginity; her virtues adorning her body as gold. For as among metals none is more precious than gold, so nothing created is more glorious than the virtues of Mary. And as gold colors the other metals, so the virtues of Mary color and distinguish the virtues of the other saints. Hence Jerome: "There is nothing of beauty, nothing of glory and whiteness, which does not shine forth from her; nothing more precious thus than the virtues of Mary, nothing created more glorious."

Again, gold is the most beautiful of metals: the other metals are the other virgins, or the other saints, from whom the Lord forms vessels of glory, all of whom the beauty of Mary's virtues colors and distinguishes. Otherwise, 2 Paral. 9:17, the seat of state, which is the same as the throne, is said to have been overlaid *with the cleanest gold* [*fecit quoque rex solium eburneum grande, et vestivit illud auro mundissimo*]. And the superlative degree is used, which excellently befits the blessed Virgin. For clean gold is to be without mortal sin. Cleaner is to be without venial sin, if indeed this can be for some time: for although all sins are remitted in baptism, yet no one lives without venial sin: because no one is clean from filth. The cleanest gold is to be without the tinder of sin, which no one had except the blessed Virgin. Hence the superlative degree is fittingly attributed to her.

Or, by *the finest gold* is signified Christ, who is the highest wisdom: for Mary is the land of Hevilath, *where the best gold* is born (Gen. 2:11), that is, Christ, with whom Mary is clothed and adorned. Hence it is said: *clothed with the sun* (Apoc. 12:1), that is, with Christ.

Gold (*aurum*) is so called from *aura*, that is, from splendor: because when the air is struck back it shines more: for it is natural that the splendor of metals shines more when struck by another light.

It is bright, through heavenly wisdom, which *is glorious, and never fadeth away, and (p. 464) is easily seen by them that love her* (Wis. 6:13), etc. In the same, 7:25, it is said of wisdom, and is fittingly understood of Mary: *She is a certain pure emanation of the glory of the almighty God: and therefore no defiled thing cometh into her*. Look for this brightness under the title on her purity.

It is gleaming, through example, by which she irradiates not only men but also Angels. 1 Mach. 6:39: *The sun*, namely of the divinity, *shone upon the shields of gold.* These shields are Christ and Mary, who protect the faithful of the Church; *and the mountains glittered therewith*: the mountains, that is, the Angels and the just. Or, it is gleaming and flashing through the power of miracles: for such gold is called *obryzum*, so called because it shines out with splendor: for it is of the best color, which the Hebrews call *apus*, the Greeks *ciron*: and from these, according to Isidore, *obryzum* is compounded. Others say that *obryzum* in Greek is called εὔριζος, from *eu*, which is *good*, and *rhiza*, which is *root*: for gold is charity: for whatever proceeds from the root of charity has a good root.

It is pure, through freedom from sin; nor does it gather filth from an unclean place if it is put there. So neither did Mary, who was born of the Jews: because

As the thorn the rose, so Judea bore Mary.

Hence also according to this she is compared to the sun, which no uncleanness can in any way defile. Pure gold, then, is gold without dregs and mixture.

It is reddish. And Mary was ruddy through virginal modesty, natural beauty, singular patience, most intense charity. (Look under the title on the rose.) Again, gold, the redder it is, the better. And because Mary in these and all other virtues excelled every saint, therefore she is more precious before God.

It is most heavy, through fearful humility and golden gravity: which appeared in the angelic greeting, when at the Angel's promise she did not move from her purpose and state, saying: *How shall this be done?* (Luke 1:34), and naming herself handmaid. Or, because she outweighs every saint in the abundance of charisms: because *not by measure* was the Holy Spirit given to her: but there was given to her everything that could be given to a mere creature. Hence blessed Bernard: "However great a gift has been given to any saint, we do not believe it was denied to so great a Virgin."

It is solid, through constancy of mind in good, which appeared in the passion of her Son, where she neither provoked anyone nor could be provoked or roused to anger. Likewise at the burial of her Son, when she never despaired nor doubted of his resurrection, as the disciples did.

It is workable and ductile, through obedience, which is noted where she says, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38). As if she said: Whatever pleases him, let him do with his handmaid: behold workableness.

It is precious, its price being Christ. Hence, Prov. 31:10: *Far, and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her*. The uttermost coasts are the heaven of heavens. (Look under the title where she is called woman.)

It does not decay: through lust as regards the flesh, through envy as regards the mind; and because her body was not dissolved into the four elements. Augustine: "We believe that the flesh never decayed on earth, part of which is glorified in heaven."

It does not rust, through malice. Hence it is said to her:

Virgin singular, meek among all, etc.

When struck it does not murmur, as brass does. In this is signified the patience of the Virgin in the passion of her Son, who before those shearing and striking her in her Son was dumb, and *opened not her mouth.* For such as the lamb, that is, the Son, showed *(p. 465)* himself, such the mother of the lamb showed herself.

By blows it is spread out: which appeared in the Son suffering, when he said: *Father, forgive them* (Luke 23:34), etc.: which it is pious to believe the mother also did. For then the Son promised paradise to the thief asking that he be remembered. Therefore truly the Son could say to the Father, and the mother to the Son: *When I was in distress, thou hast enlarged me* (Ps. 4:2).

It befits kings, that is, the Father and the Son, of whom it is said: *Give to the king thy judgment, O God*, that is, to the Son: *and to the king's son thy justice* (Ps. 71:2), that is, to Christ, the son of God the Father.

It strengthens the sight. For she is that sun of which it is said, Eccles. 11:7: *The light is sweet, and it is delightful for the eyes to see the sun.*

It prolongs life, namely the life of grace and of glory, and miraculously, for some, the life of nature. Hence she says: *In me is all hope of life* (Ecclus. 24:25), etc.: and this *all* is hyperbolic.

It is tried in the furnace, that is, in the passion of her Son. Into this furnace she entered pure, she came out purer, as the children in the Babylonian furnace (Dan. 3:94).

In gold and from gold a setting is formed, where a gem is placed. By the gem, Christ; by the setting, the humility of Mary, in which Christ was placed as a most precious gem, and sat there as a stone in gold. Ecclus. 32:7: *A carbuncle set in gold*, etc. Or, by the gems understand the virtues of Mary, whose repository was her humility, which is signified by the setting.

Placed in the sun it flames and glows red, and seems to give off sparks. And Mary, placed in the sun through the union of the flesh which the sun of justice received from her, flamed through the ardor of heavenly desire,

sparkled through the glow of manifold grace, shone, as has been said, through good works and examples.

It is rare, and therefore precious. For she is the only Virgin and mother. Hence she is called *Virgin singular*, and the only unwedded mother: and therefore *far, and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her* (Prov. 31:10). Look under the title that she is the good woman.

It is medicinal: because it avails against leprosy and melancholy. And Mary against the threefold concupiscence, which is noted in leprosy, and worldly folly, which is noted in melancholy. Powdered, also, it is said to avail against the itch.

It is of a hot nature according to Platearius; in which the charity both of the Virgin and of the just is figured.

It is twice as heavy as silver or brass.

It is more precious, more tempered, more workable, more ductile, more durable, more richly colored than every metal. So also Mary than every just person.

A wound made with gold is said not to become corrupt with swelling.

Otherwise of gold. Gold chiefly signifies three virtues: wisdom, charity, obedience. For Mary was all golden through wisdom: for she had wisdom (*sapientia*) from savor (*sapor*), and wisdom from knowing (*sapere*). From knowing: because she *kept all the words* which were said of her Son *in her heart* (Luke 2:51). And this wisdom the Holy Spirit conferred on her, who, coming upon her, took away from her ignorance of heart. Hence she also taught the Apostles. From savor: for wisdom is knowledge seasoned with the savor of the virtues. This she had above all. Hence it is read of her, Prov. 31:18: *She hath tasted, and seen that her traffic is good.* Look for the exposition under the title on the humility of Mary. The humility of Mary, then, is gold, and *the finest gold*, namely *or fin, (p. 466)* in French. For her humility exceeded every degree of humility, which, the more pre-eminent she was in virtues, the more wonderful and precious it was. For the humility of the other saints was pale, and not pure gold, in comparison with hers. Hence: *The hinder parts of her back with the paleness of gold* (Ps. 67:14). For pale gold is of much less value than red. *The finest gold,* in French *or tres esmeré.* Mary was also golden through charity, which gives brilliance to the other virtues, as gold to the other metals. Look under the title on the charity of Mary. She was also golden through obedience. Look under the title on the obedience of Mary.

There follows: *It had six steps,* which are six operations of the Holy Spirit: four on the part of the body, two on the part of the soul. On the part of the body, the first is the purification of the flesh to be assumed; the second, its separation; the third, its formation; the fourth, its union. And though one of these is prior to another by nature, they were simultaneous in time. The two operations on the part of the soul—since the soul consists of understanding and affection—are the fullest illumination of the understanding as regards truth, and the most abundant fruitfulness of the affection as regards goodness. Hence: *Full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). Truth pertains to the understanding, grace to the affection.

This can also be understood otherwise. By the six steps which the throne had, by which Solomon went up to the throne, can be understood six virtues of the blessed Virgin, by which Christ went up into the Virgin: for even if he is said to have descended into her, yet he went up into her: because through her he appeared to men. These six virtues are noted in Luke 1:29 ff., combined in three pairs. The first two are signified in affection and thought, when it is first said: *She was troubled, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.* The other four, in speech. The first two, there, that *she was troubled, and thought what manner of salutation this should be.* That she was troubled pertains to the affection, that she thought, to the understanding. The first, then, is modesty, which is noted in the troubling. Look under the title on the modesty of Mary, etc. The second, prudence. Hence: *And thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.* And well after modesty prudence is added: because sometimes, from the troubling of modesty, some discuss what they have heard less discreetly; others, presuming on their prudence, become hasty in

speaking. The third, modesty of speech, which is noted when she says: *How shall this be done, because I know not man?*, where she both broke slowly into speech and spoke briefly, when the Angel had already addressed her twice. Which is well noted after her prudence, against the fact that prudence is wont to make many hasty in speaking and lengthy in speech. The fourth, the immovable purpose of chastity, which did not waver even at the angelic promise: which is noted when she says: *Because I know not man.* Of these four virtues it is said, Ecclus. 26:18–19: *A wise and silent woman*, etc. Again, in the same place: *A holy and shamefaced woman is grace upon grace.* For Mary was shamefaced in her troubling, silent in the delay of her answer and her brief answer, wise in examining the greeting, holy, that is, firm in her purpose of keeping virginity. The fifth, humility, which is noted where she says, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, etc. The sixth, magnanimity of faith, which is noted where she says, *Be it done to me according to thy word.* Her consent can be noted: for in order to conceive the Saviour she was bound not only to believe that what was promised would come to pass, but also to consent that it should be done. Which two things, namely faith and consent, are required of a child to be baptized, when it is said: "Dost thou believe in God the Father almighty," etc. And after: "Wilt thou be baptized?" Therefore also, Gen. 24:57–58, the consent of Rebecca is required before she is brought to Isaac.

(p. 467) Or, these six steps indicate the perfect humility of Mary, by whose merit Christ went up into her, as was said above. For humility has six distinctions, three of which pertain to neighbor, namely willingly to subject oneself to a greater, an equal, a lesser; three to oneself: to speak humbly of oneself, to think humbly of oneself, to wish to be thought of humbly.

There follows: *And the top of the throne was round behind.* While Mary was great in lineage, because of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Juda, of the stock of David; greater, because distinguished with natural gifts; greatest, because full of grace: the top of the throne is that she is the mother of God. And it was round behind: for what is round is bounded from the same point to the same point, as in a circle: and the circular figure signifies eternity. The front part of the throne is the state of the Virgin before childbirth, the hinder part her state after childbirth. For there was a time when she was not a mother: but whenever she was, she was always a virgin: and so from virginity, through fruitfulness, she returns to virginity. Hence also she is called *the gate shut* (Ezek. 44:2). In the top of the throne, then, is figured the motherhood of Mary; in the roundness, eternal virginity; in the hinder part, the eternity of glory, which namely follows after. Hence, 1 Pet. 1:11: *Foretelling those sufferings that are in Christ, and the glories that should follow.*

Or, the top of the throne is round as regards Christ, whose flesh is called the throne; the top of which throne is the passion, where he said: *It is consummated* (John 19:30). Truly round: because in the same month in which he was conceived, he also suffered, against that precept of Exod. 23:19: *Thou shalt not boil a kid in the milk of his dam.* Or, as regards the sacrament of the Eucharist, which Melchisedech first made in bread and wine, and as it were circularly a return was made to it. Hence it is said to Christ: *Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech* (Ps. 109:4).

Or otherwise: *the top of the throne was round behind.* The round form signifies eternity. By this top of the throne is signified the understanding of Mary, which is the higher part in the soul, capable of eternal things and of the things which are above, seeking nothing but eternal things. And well *the hinder part*: because *it hath not yet appeared what we shall be.* For what is round is equal on every side, without corners, without beginning, without end: for Mary was round, illumined by the divinity whose dwelling she was; and in God, so to speak, deified, made a sharer in the divine eternity, without duplicity and corners. *Behind*, which is the end of the body: because not in this life was she perfectly in happiness, but after death, which follows after. So in the mind or understanding the likeness of the divine image would shine forth in us, as regards will, memory, reason.

There follows: *And two hands on either side holding the seat.* The seat is the tranquillity and peace of the virginal mind, where that wisdom rested which, *seeking rest in all things*, rested nine months in her

tabernacle: because there *his place is in peace* (Ps. 75:3). On this seat the Son of God was received from standing to the sitting of humility, when *his abode was made in Sion*, that is, in the watchtower, that is, Mary.

There were two hands on either side holding this seat: because by the hands is signified the working of heavenly wisdom, and the graces of the Holy Spirit are workings. To these two is attributed the whole construction of this building of wisdom. Hence, Prov. 9:1: *Wisdom hath built herself a house*, namely of grace: because whatever was done in her and from her is attributed to grace, not to merits. Hence she says with the Apostle, 1 Cor. 15:10: *By the grace of God I am what (p. 468) I am.* These two hands held Mary in every virtue.

Otherwise: in this throne, that is, in Mary, there are as it were two hands. One by which she holds the just, lest they fall into the deep. The other by which she raises sinners to grace. Or, according to John Damascene, the two hands are two operations of the Holy Spirit in her: one by which he purged her from the tinder; the other by which he restored her power, at once receptive of the deity of the Word and generative.

Otherwise: the two hands holding the seat on either side are conception without fault and childbirth without pain, by which Mary was taken away from the curse of Eve. Which two are well said to hold the seat: because virginity did not exclude fruitfulness, nor the reverse: and so on no side did the throne fall. And this is that the new Adam was placed in the paradise of the blessed Virgin, when *a woman compassed a man*, that he might work fruitfulness in her and guard her virginity. There were not there hands destroying the throne, namely the working of man. Hence, Dan. 2:34, Christ is called *the stone cut out of the mountain*, that is, Mary, *without hands*, that is, without the marriage act, as Augustine expounds. But those hands of which it is said, Cant. 5:14: *His hands are turned*, namely the twofold operation of the Holy Spirit in conception and in childbirth. *Turned*, on account of the subtle working; *of gold*, on account of wisdom; *full of hyacinths.* The hyacinth drives away evil suspicion: therefore she was espoused, that the mystery might be hidden from the devil. And the hyacinth has the grace of obtaining requests: for Mary is Esther, to whom Assuerus, that is, Christ, said: *Ask of me what thou wilt* (cf. Esther 5:3).

There follows: *And two lions stood by the hands.* These two lions are John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. The lion lives in the desert and roars: the Baptist literally in the desert of Judea, the Evangelist in the spiritual desert which the Angel deserted. Hence he says, Apoc. 1:10: *I was in the spirit on the Lord's day.* The Baptist gave a twofold roar, as regards the twofold coming. First, terrifying foolish inquirers. Hence: *The latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose* (John 1:27), that is, to unfold the union of the Word. With the other, terrifying the presumptuous in deed. Hence: *Ye brood of vipers*, etc. The other John roars at once in two ways. First, of the eternal generation: *In the beginning was the Word*, etc. Second, of the temporal: *The Word was made flesh* (John 1:14). These are not said to touch the hands, but simply to stand. Of the Baptist it is said: *The friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him* (John 3:29). Of the other: *There stood by the cross* (John 19:25), etc. They do not touch the hands: because they do not explain the manner of the working. They do not stand far off: because they do not withdraw from the working of the hands.

Otherwise: these two lions are Gabriel and John the Evangelist, on the right and on the left. John chiefly on the left, to whom was committed the care of the body of the Lord's mother, when it was said to the disciple: *Behold thy mother* (John 19:27): providing for her in temporal things, and the most faithful witness of her virginity. Gabriel the guardian of the right, that is, of the soul; the inner guardian, namely, announcing her most fervent and most holy desires to the Most High, which is the office of the Angels; who is interpreted *strength of God*: putting Satan to flight and laying him low, lest he should be able to search out her virginity; assisting Mary in all spiritual services.

There follows: *And twelve little lions standing upon the six steps on the one side and on the other*. These are the ancient fathers from whom Mary arose; twelve on account of the twelve tribes of Israel, from which all

the saints of the Old *(p. 469)* Testament proceeded. And well are they described on the steps of the throne: because through them one comes to the throne, that is, the Virgin, who was of their stock according to the flesh, and also according to the spirit, in that she expressed and exceeded the merits of each. Hence it is said: *Many daughters have gathered together riches* (Prov. 31:29), etc. And they are called little lions in comparison with Christ, who was the great lion of the tribe of Juda. And these little lions begot the lion, whereas the contrary is wont to happen. They stood on the steps of the throne as little ones leaning on her merits, wondering at her ascents and crying: *Who is this that cometh up*, etc.? (Cant. 8:5).

Otherwise: the twelve little lions, that is, the twelve Apostles. The diminutive denotes humility. That they stood before the throne—since standing is for one who obeys and ministers—signifies that they were obedient to the blessed Virgin in all things. That they stood on the steps and footstools signifies that, although they were most holy, yet they did not reach so great a holiness. Who are well called little lions on account of the strength of patience and the roar of preaching in the desert of the world; sons of that great lion of the tribe of Juda, who begot them in his passion. That they stood on the ascents of the throne signifies that they were clean and humble, and imitated her, though from afar, in the virtues.

There follows: *There was no such work made in any kingdom.* Such, that is, of like preciousness, of like subtlety, of like wonder, of like holiness, of like renown, of like beauty, of like glory and honor, as is blessed Mary, etc. The three kingdoms are of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. By this it is noted that he did not find a like seat in the whole creation: because *she seemed to have none like her before, nor any to follow.* Or, the two kingdoms are the Church militant and triumphant, in which the Son of God reigns, who is *King of kings and Lord of lords* (Apoc. 19:16). Because Mary had no equal in action, nor any equal in contemplation. Or, the three kingdoms pertain to the threefold state of those to be saved, in which God reigns, namely Noe, Daniel, and Job (Ezek. 14:14, 20): Job, the married; Noe, the continent, steering the ark of the body in the flood of sins; Daniel, virgins. Because neither in the state of the married was there such a bride, nor such a widow, nor such a virgin. And therefore *there was no such work made in any kingdom.*

And it is to be noted that a throne is a judicial seat. Hence: *He hath prepared his throne in judgment* (Ps. 9:8). And that: *Thou hast sat on the throne, who judgest justice* (Ps. 9:5). What kind of judge this is, is described in Ps. 7:12: *God is a just judge, strong and patient: is he angry every day?* God, who knows all things, not man, who can be deceived. Hence: *The searcher of hearts and reins is God* (Ps. 7:10). Just, who cannot be corrupted, nor spare unjustly. Prov. 6:34: *Jealousy and rage*, etc. These two often corrupt other judges. Strong, who will strongly carry out what he has justly judged, nor can he be hindered from the execution. Job 9:13: *God, whose wrath no man can resist.* Patient, because he does not punish at once, but waits for repentance until the day of vengeance. Wis. 11:24: *Thou overlookest the sins*, etc. Ecclus. 5:4: *The most High is a patient rewarder*: and those whom he waits for longer he will judge more strictly, because they would not judge themselves. Lam. 1:15: *He hath called against me the time*, etc. And he will torment them more harshly. Rom. 2:4: *Or despisest thou*, etc.

Is he angry every day? As if he said: No. Another reading says more expressly: “Will he bring anger every *(p. 470)* day?” Because the anger by which he punishes is not in him, but in the evil Angels by whom he punishes; but not every day.

And note that in this verse the four cardinal virtues are shown to be in Christ. Prudence: hence he is called *judge*: because to discern and to judge pertains to prudence. *Just*: behold justice. *Strong*: behold fortitude. *Patient*: behold temperance. Which four are required in every judge: prudence, that he be not deceived; justice, that he be not bent; fortitude, that he be not frightened; patience or temperance, that he be not carried away by impulse or moved to anger. Since, then, the Son of God, taking flesh from her, will appear in that flesh in the judgment, and then the reprobate *shall look on him whom they pierced* (cf. Zach. 12:10; John 19:37), she is rightly called a throne: for it will be a great consolation to the just, because they will see him in the flesh in which he redeemed them; a great desolation to the wicked, who will recognize from this how

much they have lost.

On this throne Christ sits *judging the world in equity*. For his judging he received from his mother: because, as is said, John 5:22, 27: *The Father doth not judge any man*, etc., *but hath given him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man.* To the Father is attributed power, to the Son wisdom: and power ought to yield to wisdom in giving judgment. Christ judges in equity when, seeing our sins, though infinite, on the one side, and his flesh, which he took from his mother, on the other, his remission by right exceeds our offenses. Mary, then, is called a throne, that is, a royal seat. She is also called *the throne of grace*: because there grace sits, there grace reigns, which has full dominion in Mary. There also is found the grace which she continually brings forth and sends out into the light. Hence also she is called the mother of grace. There is found mercy, that is, the remission of sins. There grace, which brings forth and brings out every good. Hence, Wis. 16:25, it is said to the Lord: *It served thy grace, the nurse of all.* There is found the best help against temptations. From these three follows glory in the future. *And than these four nothing is more profitable in life for men* (Wis. 8:7). And the Apostle says all this in one authority, Heb. 4:16: *Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.* Construe thus: *Let us go with confidence*, that is, confidently, although we are sinners: because *she is compassionate and merciful, and ready to repent of the evil* (Joel 2:13). I do not say to the tribunal of the judge, but *to the throne of grace*, that is, Mary, full of grace, who is that throne in which the fountain of grace rested; *that we may obtain* grace, that is, the remission of preceding sins, and for the rest *find grace in seasonable aid*, that is, that we, wavering and weak, may find grace, by which she may help, lest being tempted we fall back into sin; *and that we may obtain mercy*, we who have fallen, that is, the remission of sins.

Let us approach, then, to this throne. With love: since she says, Prov. 8:17: *I love them that love me.* And he who is loved by the mother is loved also by the Son, and consequently by the whole heavenly court. With watching. Hence there follows in the authority: *And they that in the morning early watch for me, shall find me.* (Look for the exposition under the seventh cause.) With affection, that we may deserve to hear from her: *Come over to me, all ye that desire me* (Ecclus. 24:26), etc. With worship, bound over to her service: for *they that work by me shall not sin* (ibid., 24:30), that is, those who do works for her worship and glory. With devotion: because *her spirit is sweet above honey* (ibid., 24:27). With praise: because *they that explain her*, by making known her dignity and prerogatives, *shall have life everlasting* (ibid., 24:31). With prayer: because she is powerful to come to the help of those who call upon her in all necessities. Hence she says: *And in Jerusalem was my power* (ibid., 24:15).

(p. 471) Of this throne the Father says, speaking of the Son: *His throne as the sun* (Ps. 88:38): because the mother of mercy is the consolation of the just, who are the day: because *God made the sun to rule the day. In my sight*: because I see her from near at hand; but men, who see her from afar, judge her a star. *And as the moon*, that she may light up the night, that is, sinners fleeing to her. *Perfect.* She is truly the perfect moon: because she shines at the beginning of the night, that is, for those beginning to be tempted; and in the middle, that is, for those who are in sin; and at the end, that is, for those coming out of sin and escaping the temptation of sins: for the moon is called perfect when it shines the whole night. For Mary helps the first lest they succumb, the second that they may rise again, the third lest they fall back. *For ever*: because her mercy and pity will last for ever.

Otherwise: *His throne*, says the Father of the Son, *as the sun*, which shines and burns: in which is noted the twofold robe, both of which it is piously believed she already has in the sight of God; so that she shines and gleams like the sun according to the robe of the body, and burns with perfect love according to the robe of the soul; *and as the moon perfect for ever*, not, as now, running its course in waning. Pope Innocent: “As those who discourse on the natures of things reasonably assert, the moon is cold and moist. Because cold, it designates virginity; because moist, humility. For fire, from which comes dryness, naturally seeks high places. Water, from which proceeds moisture, as heavy naturally seeks low places. The coldness and

moistness of the moon, then, are the virginity and humility of Mary: because she was cold against the heat of lust, moist against the haughtiness of pride. And because she always persevered in virginity and humility, and in glory also her humility and virginity appear, therefore it is well said that she is in the sight of God the moon perfect for ever, which namely never suffers loss."

There follows: *And a faithful witness in heaven.* For she prays there for sinners, and bears witness that the Son of God was made man for them. For she shows her Son her breast and paps, as blessed Bernard [says] [the print has *beatus bene*]. Therefore it is said to Christ, Jer. 14:21: *Remember the throne of thy glory*, etc. The blessed Virgin, then, is throne, sun, moon, and witness. Because she is a throne, she holds the judge. Because she is the sun, she brings forth what springs from the earth. Because she is the moon, she scatters the darkness of the night. Because she is a witness, she wins acquittal in causes. If you are a sinner and fear the Judge, she holds him. If, as a penitent, you desire to go out from earthly cares, she brings forth the heat of the sun. If the night of adversity or of ignorance presses you, she is the moon. And if you are troubled by unclean spirits, or by importunate desires, or are assailed by death, she will be a witness for you if you have called upon her to see your works and life. Hence in the general confession it is said: "I confess to God and to blessed Mary," etc. Hence, Osee 11:12: *But Juda went down as a witness with God, and is faithful with the saints.* And she is not only a witness, but a faithful witness. See, then, that you have a good cause: because she will not lie for you. Prov. 14:5: *A faithful witness will not lie.*

Woods, seat, hands, ivory, gold, arms, footstool, silver, lion, king, purple, round head-rest, steps.

Note that here the throne and the litter are treated together. For throne, seat of state, and litter are literally the same. The woods of Libanus: below, on the litter. These are literally the cedar woods which grow on Libanus, which are strong and incorruptible, and signify fortitude and perseverance. And perhaps woods other than cedar are in the throne which is Mary, morally.

The seat is peace and tranquillity: because *his place*, that is, Christ's, *is in peace.*

The hands holding the seat are charity. Hence, Cant. 3:10: *The midst he covered with charity.* For charity works the things which pertain to the love of God and of neighbor: behold two hands. Or, the two hands are *(p. 472)* the privileged works of humility and pity.

Ivory, gold. These two are the material of the great throne: because this throne was great in ivory, that is, in continence, because in her the tinder was extinguished; great in gold, that is, in wisdom and charity.

The arms are long, for our failing, and for giving to those placed far off, that is, sinners, *from whom salvation is far* (Ps. 118:155). 2 Paral. 9:18: *Two little arms on either side*, with which the child Christ embraced her.

The footstool, that is, *a footstool of gold* (2 Paral. 9:18). Through the riches of the virtues and the gold of wisdom, which two her feet, that is, her affections, used: because she trod earthly riches and wisdom about earthly things under her feet. Apoc. 12:1: *A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet.*

Silver, as regards the litter, is eloquence: because she is our advocate. Cant. 3:10: *The pillars thereof he made of silver*: because she touched the earth, that is, sinners.

Lion. There were fourteen lions on the throne. The lion is a terrible animal, and she is *terrible* to the demons *as an army set in array*, and to men living wickedly, as to Julian the Apostate. The fourteen lions are her seven virtues, that is, faith, hope, charity, justice, prudence, fortitude, temperance, and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, by whose fragrance she terrifies the old serpent and crushes his head. Literally, the little lions were made for leaning on.

The king who alone sits on the throne; and Christ alone in the glorious Virgin. Ezek. 44:3: *The prince himself shall sit in it*: himself, as it were, not another.

Purple, as regards the litter: because she was a martyr in soul. (Look under the tenth privilege.)

The round head-rest (*pigna*), that is, the golden and round reclining place. This is the highest perfection, without corners and scruples. Or because she was most pure as regards the gold, and round, namely aspiring to the glory of eternity. Again, she is the reclining place of the divinity, made at the time of the Lord's incarnation; golden, that is, pure from the foulness of intercourse; and round, because formed by the operation of the Holy Spirit, etc.

The six steps by which one goes up to her are six parts of the veneration which is owed to her, namely reverence and devotion from the heart; greeting and glorifying, that is, thanksgiving, from the mouth; service and the offering, that it be given generously for her honor, from deed. And on each step there ought to sit fear, which is signified by the lion: because *the fear of God hath set itself above all things* (Ecclus. 25:14). *There was no such work made*: because, as is said, Jer. 31:22: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth*: because *she seemed to have none like her before*, etc.

Morally, *King Solomon made himself a great throne of ivory.* Solomon, who is interpreted *peaceable*, as is said in 1 Paral. 22:9, is Christ, who made us at peace on the cross. Hence, Eph. 2:14: *He is our peace, who hath made both one.* Solomon is interpreted *peaceable*, as has been said; or *rewarder.* Hence, Ecclus. 5:4: *The most High is a patient rewarder.* Or *making peace for the mourners.* Hence, Isa. 57:18–19: *To them that mourn for him I created the fruit of the lips, peace*, says Christ. Or *repaying the wicked.* Hence *he will repay abundantly them that act proudly.* Which repayment of his was signified in the three whom Solomon killed: namely Adonias, who wished to have Abisag (3 Kings 2:17, 25). These are those who wish to satisfy their sensuality. Joab, who killed Abner and Amasa while greeting them warmly, and pretended to love them (cf. 2 Kings 3:27; 20:10). Which Joab was killed by Solomon (cf. 3 Kings 2:31–32). These are false friends, harming others fraudulently by flattering, *(p. 473)* as detractors are. Semei, who pursued David as he fled from Absalom with curses, reproaching him with his sins against the house of Saul (2 Kings 16:5 ff.), whom Solomon killed (3 Kings 2:36–46). These are blasphemers, swearing by God limb by limb, going out of Jerusalem against the command. And as no one could help these, so neither can such be helped in the judgment, etc. And note that he who wishes to make peace with the Lord ought to kill in himself the sin of will, which is signified in Adonias; and of speech, which by Semei; and of deed, which by Joab the murderer. And sin is killed when it is ended.

Again, Solomon had three names; Christ, namely: *peaceable*, this on the cross; *Ecclesiastes* or preacher, this in the judgment, demanding an account; *Idida* or *ydidoth*, that is, *beloved of the Lord*, this in the kingdom. For so Nathan the prophet called him. In exile, meek and lovable; in judgment, just and terrible; in the kingdom, glorious and wonderful.

King Solomon, then, that is, Christ, *the power of God and the wisdom of God, made*—Matt. 12:42 and Luke 11:31: *Behold a greater than Solomon here—himself a throne of ivory.* The throne of ivory is the truly continent soul. *Made*, I say: because no one can have continence of himself, but it is the gift of God. Hence, Wis. 8:21: *And as I knew*, etc. *For himself*, not for the devil or an idol, as above. But many commit sacrilege. *He made it for himself*, and well for himself: because he wholly wishes to possess the whole soul, and to be wholly possessed by the soul, which is of such great amplitude that it can comprehend the incomprehensible; and because it is so ample, it cannot be filled by anything other than God. Hence Gregory and blessed Bernard say: "Whatever is less than God does not fill the soul that is capable of God." But in another *(p. 474)* respect it is so narrow that in it it is impossible for God to lodge with the devil, or the devil with God: because *there is no concord between Christ and Belial* (2 Cor. 6:15). Isa. 28:20: *The bed is straitened*, that is, the soul in which I lie and dwell, *so that one must fall out*, namely Christ the bridegroom, or the devil the adulterer. Therefore the faithful bride says of the bridegroom, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me, and I to him.* As if she said in French: *Il me veut avoir tout seul, et je ne veux autre que lui* (he wants to have me all alone, and I want no other but him). Augustine, of Christ and the faithful soul: "Therefore he bought at so great a price, that he alone might possess."

He made himself: because he alone wishes to lodge in the soul, whose *delights were to be with the children of men* (Prov. 8:31). *He made himself*, and this in the fashioning of the body and the infusion of the soul. The king Solomon, without whose grace no one can rule his kingdom, that is, himself; of which kingdom it is said: *The kingdom of God is within you* (Luke 17:21).

A throne of ivory. Ivory is the bone of the elephant, lacking skin and flesh, hard and solid, etc.: that is, the perfect and true continence of the true cloistered religious.

The just man is ivory without skin, that is, without the possession of temporal things. Hence: *The skins of the land of Madian shall be troubled* (Hab. 3:7).

Let him also be without flesh, that is, without carnal affection.

Firm, through the purpose of chastity and of keeping his vow.

Solid, against the temptations of the devil.

Without hide, that is, without outward show and bodily sleekness or superfluous adornment.

Without flesh—his own, of his household, of strangers—so that he be well stripped of flesh, so that in him, as on parchment, the commandments of God can be written (Prov. 7:3).

Without skin, namely, that he glory not in skins, that is, in the outward things of the world, lest he become an imitator of Herod, who is interpreted *glory of skin*, or *glorying in skins.*

Let him also be without hairs, that is, without superfluities, which are foolish looks, unlawful touches, idle words, and the like.

White within, through innocence, which disturbs no one's peace; without, through holiness. Hence, Heb. 12:14: *Follow peace with all men, and holiness.*

Solid, through stability of mind in good: because he who is unstable cannot be chaste. The example of Dina (Gen. 34:1 ff.).

Dry, through penance, by which he dries himself from the humors of gluttony and lust. Gregory: "Wood is not fittingly put into a building unless its harmful greenness is first dried out."

Hard, through patience and constancy, so that it cannot be pierced by the arrows of the devil: and the harder it is, the more suitable for making fine works.

Cold, through abstinence, that in him carnal concupiscences and the incitements of vices may grow cold. Jerome: "The burning arrows of the devil must be checked by the cold of fasts and vigils."

Smooth, when it is well polished; and this through kindness, lest it be said: *Do not touch me* (John 20:17). Or, smooth, lest he murmur against God if he wishes to polish him by sending tribulations. For some, the more the Lord intends to polish them, become the rougher by murmuring through impatience.

Strong, through patience in adversities. Hence the Apostle, Phil. 4:13: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.* And through the carrying out of manly works. Hence: *Do manfully* (Deut. 31:6, and in many other places of Scripture), etc.: and that of the Apostle, Heb. 11:34: *They became valiant in battle.*

It is carved with files and irons. These files are the regular observances, which polish away the roughnesses of the vices: vigils, sleepiness; labor, idleness; and the like. Or, these files are the tongues of detractors. Or, the files are various tribulations.

Suitable for making vessels in which holy things are kept, or the body of Christ: vessels namely of graces, vessels of sanctification.

When old it reddens. Hence, Lam. 4:7: *More ruddy than old ivory*. For long continuance in chastity and penance is equivalent to martyrdom. Also the whiteness of chastity in youth, the redness of charity in old age, when *old age is in plentiful mercy* (Ps. 91:11). Fitting colors are these in a just or religious man. Those have this property who, though in the beginning of their conversion they are less warm, yet always grow and advance into fervor; to whom those are contrary who, though they are fervent in the beginning, become more lukewarm at the end: and because such are not of ivory, Christ the Lord does not sit in them. At first dark, by files and irons it becomes shining. So the just man, at first dark through the rust of sin, if he patiently bears tribulations and does penance, becomes shining through purity of life and the spreading of good example. Hence, Matt. 5:16: *Let your light shine.* And that: *The just shall shine* (Wis. 3:7), etc.

There follows: *Great.* The capacity of the just man is humble charity or charitable humility. Hence: *Thy commandment is exceeding broad* (Ps. 118:96). For charity extends itself even to enmity, and makes the throne great. *Great*: because Christ is not a petty king, but *a great king above all gods*, that is, men and Angels. He does not make a throne who does not judge himself in the present, as you will have below under the title on the seat of state. He does not make it great who does not govern in himself the inward things, that is, memory, reason, understanding, the three powers of the soul, and the outward, that is, the five senses. For some master their reins, but not gluttony; some their eyes, but not their ears; and so of the others. Universal rule, then, makes it great. Gen. 41:44, it was said *(p. 475)* to Joseph: *Without thy commandment no man shall move hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.* Again, joy of spirit makes it great, which is the enlarging of the heart, as sadness is its straitening.

There follows: *And he overlaid it with the finest gold.* The individual thrones of Christ are individual just men, in whom the Lord sits: because the soul of the just is the seat of wisdom. They are overlaid with gold, that is, with charity, which is the wedding garment; and whoever in death is not found clothed with it, will be cast, with hands and feet bound, into the exterior darkness: and if his sins have not been covered with this garment, which *covereth a multitude of sins*, his every sin will lie open to vengeance. The just man is gold, on account of the properties of gold mentioned above. For man, as regards his creation, was as it were the purest gold, namely *the finest gold.* Hence, Gen. 1:31: *God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good*: because as gold is the most precious of metals, so man is the most worthy of creatures: because created to the image and likeness of God, which is the highest dignity. But by sinning the whole became foul, and manifold uncleannesses were mixed with it: hence afterward, unless it had been purged, it was impossible that vessels of glory should be made from it. Nor could it be that it be purged of itself: for gold is purged in this one way, namely with a brick dried by the power of fire and powdered, and with salt burned and very dry. It was necessary, then, that that heavenly smith who *made the morning light and the sun* should take a brick and mix it with salt. Ezek. 4:1: the Father says to the Son: *Thou son of man, take thee a brick*, etc. The brick, for five reasons, signifies the flesh of Christ, which he took from the Virgin and united to himself, who is the wisdom of the Father, which is signified by salt. Hence it is said to the child: “Receive the salt of wisdom,” etc.

The flesh of Christ is a brick: because it is made from clinging earth: and Christ according to his humanity was made from the immaculate Virgin, who was tenacious in keeping her purpose of virginity.

In a certain way it is pierced: and Christ was dug through in the passion with nails and lance. Hence he says: *They have dug my hands and my feet* (Ps. 21:17), etc.

It is baked in the furnace, where it takes on a certain redness. So Christ in the furnace of the passion, reddened with his own blood, was as it were baked.

It is strengthened in the furnace; and the humanity of Christ in the passion. Hence he says after the resurrection: *My strength is dried up like a potsherd* (Ps. 21:16), etc.

It covers the house and those who are in the house, that is, the Church and the sons of the Church; and here, hung up, *ala late* in French, that is, by the power of his hanging on the cross. The vessel in which this mixture was made, namely of the brick dried and powdered, ground and crushed—that is, the human nature of Christ crushed in the heat of the passion, and dried with the salt of wisdom, in which is the divine nature of Christ—signifies one person of two natures.

The just man is gold: because it is the most precious metal: because he has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as is said, 1 Pet. 1:18: *Not with corruptible things*, etc.

As *obryzum*, it is not diminished in the fire of tribulation; it enters pure and comes out purer, as Jerome says in the prologue to Habacuc of the three children sent into the furnace (cf. Dan. 3:19 ff.).

In its own nature it is hot and moist: namely through love, and the moisture of grace.

According to [the print has *scyphum*; the authority's name is lost], it is the king of metals, as the sun is of the stars, and nobler than all metals; nor can it be corrupted by air, nor by water, nor by moisture, nor by fire, nor by sulphur, which burns other bodies and signifies lust; and in it *(p. 476)* the four elemental natures are complete, namely hot, dry, cold, and moist: and this equally; and therefore it cannot be corrupted.

Workable, through patient obedience, which suffers hammering: obedience makes one workable.

Heavy, through fear, which presses the heart down lest it raise itself against God or vanish away through unlawful joy: and fear is akin to humility, which lowers the heart itself, because everything heavy tends to the center.

By beatings it is drawn out and spread. Hence: *When I was in distress, thou hast enlarged me* (Ps. 4:2). Tribulation is the beating, and the drawing out is progress.

The other properties of gold look for above, concerning the blessed Virgin, and adapt them to the just man.

There follows: *Which had six steps.* Note: a man is not made the throne of Solomon, that is, of the true peaceable one, through any virtue whatever, but through peace: because *his place is in peace*; to which one goes up as it were by six steps, which are numbered in Matt. 5 before that word, *Blessed are the peacemakers* (Matt. 5:9): of which the first is poverty, the second meekness, etc.

Or, the six steps are six parts which belong to the life of the just man: namely to think good, to will good, to desire good, to speak good, to do good, to exercise oneself in good—hence: *Exercise thyself unto godliness* (1 Tim. 4:7)—to persevere in good.

Or, the six works of mercy, by which one goes up to the heavenly throne. The material of this throne is ivory, that is, continence, and gold, in which the other virtues are designated, the consummation, peace. Hence, Heb. 12:14, it is said of these two: *Follow peace with all men, and holiness*, etc.

There follows: *And the top of the throne was round behind.* The front part is enigmatic knowledge in the present; in the future, perfect, when *we shall see him as he is.* Or, the lower part is the active life, the higher the contemplative, which contains reading, meditation, prayer. The round top, then, is prayer for eternal things.

There follows: *And two hands on either side holding the seat.* These are knowledge and love, by which the Lord is grasped and held; by knowledge, truth; by love, goodness: the right hand firmer than the left, because we cling to God more firmly by love than by knowledge. Hence charity is called *the bond of perfection* (Col. 3:14). Or, the two hands are twofold good work, bodily and spiritual, which hold the soul in which Christ sits in grace and virtue.

There follows: *And two lions*, etc. The lion is Christ; the lion is the devil. Each is to be feared: the one lest he desert us, the other lest he seize us. Or, the twofold fear of these two lions. The lion on the right is the devil

(cf. Zach. 3:1), who chiefly tempts, through the prosperity of virtues inwardly, to vainglory; through the prosperity of things outwardly, to gluttony and lust: but the lion on the left is Christ, who comforts us in all our tribulation: for by the left hand adversity is figured.

There follows: *And twelve little lions*, etc. That in all things we may follow the teaching of the twelve Apostles and of the twelve patriarchs, sons of the great lion of the tribe of Juda. Or, the twelve little lions are contrition, confession, tears, labors, fasts, vigils, disciplines, meditation, the remembrance of death, plainness of food, roughness of clothing, bareness of feet. All these, after the manner of lions, pursue the wild beasts of the vices, and raise those dead through sin.

Chapter 3: Mary, Seat of State

(p. 477) Seat of state (*solium*). The seat of state is also the royal seat: and it is called *solium* as if *solidum*, solid: because it is wont to be made of solid material, for the protection of the royal body. Or, *solium* is so called as if *sedium*, from sitting (*sedendo*). Hence also *sella* as if *seda*, and *subsellia* as if *subsedia.* Of this seat of state it is read thus, 2 Paral. 9:17 ff.: *The king also made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the purest gold. Six steps also by which he went up to the throne, and a footstool of gold, and two little arms on either side, and two lions standing by the arms, and twelve other little lions standing upon the steps on both sides: there was not such a throne in all the kingdoms.*

Seat of state and throne are the same. It is to be noted that as by the throne, so by the seat of state Mary is designated, and for the same reasons. This seat of state was overlaid with the purest gold, that a moral comparison may be made. Clean gold is love of a friend; cleaner, love of an enemy; cleanest, love of God, because *no defiled thing cometh into* that love.

And well is it said *overlaid* [*clothed*]: because love or charity is the wedding garment, which whoever lacks in the judgment will be cast out into the exterior darkness. With this gold Mary was most excellently clothed. Hence she is said to have stood *on the right hand* of the Lord *in gilded clothing* (Ps. 44:10).

And this seat of state is said to have had a footstool, which is not read of in the throne; by which footstool, namely, is noted the humanity of the Son, which is the footstool of the deity: because as a footstool serves its lord, so Christ, according as he is man, served his Lord, that is, God the Father, and his Lady, his mother; and rendered, and renders, and will render for ever honor, reverence, and obedience, as it is commanded, Exod. 20:12: *Honour thy father and thy mother.* And this footstool was of gold: because as gold prevails over the other metals, so the humanity of Christ over all humanities.

And note that this footstool made as it were one step for reaching the height of this seat of state: for the greater the dignity of the son, the greater the dignity of the mother: and although even according to his humanity the son excels the mother, yet the footstool is said to be before the seat of state, as lower than the seat, that by this may be signified the honor and reverence which he shows his mother, as above. And of this footstool it is said, 2 Paral. 9:18: *And a footstool of gold, and two little arms on either side*: which little arms signify the little arms of the child Christ, with which he embraced his mother.

And the seat of state is a judicial seat, as was said of the throne. Hence, Prov. 20:8: *The king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his look.* For Christ, sitting on the seat of state of paradise, and looking on the sinner with the eye of mercy, scatters away all evil with his look, that *(p. 478)* is, a threefold evil: namely of fault, which he remits; of sin, from which he frees; and the evil of the devil, that he may not harm as much as he desires. Likewise the queen, that is, the blessed Virgin; as above, under the title on the protection of Mary, the twenty-fifth cause. Of this seat of state Jeremias says, 14:21, teaching us how we ought to help ourselves by praying the Father through the Son: *Do not disgrace in us the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.* As if he said: As often, Lord, as our malice provokes thy goodness, remember, author of salvation, etc. And therefore of this seat of state it is said, Isa. 16:5: *And a*

throne shall be prepared in mercy, etc. Again, Job 26:9: *He withholdeth the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud over it.* For the Lord held the face of his seat of state when he illumined the mind of his mother with the prerogative of grace: for he held her mind, who was held in her womb: and he spread his cloud over his seat of state when he surrounded her with the darkness of poverty and of manifold care. Again, of this seat of state it is said, Isa. 6:1: *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: and his train filled the temple.* Note that Isaias did not see the Lord until after Ozias, the proud and leprous king, had died. Nor shall we be able to see God unless the devil has first died in us, who *is king over all the children of pride* (Job 41:25): who, as a leper, was cast out from the fellowship of the Angels.

Again, note that as the Lord's sitting is threefold, so there are three seats of state, according to the number of the sittings. The first sitting of the Lord is the perfecting of creation. Hence, Gen. 2:2: *He rested from all his work which he had done.* The second, God's dwelling in the faithful mind: because the soul of the just is the seat of God. The third, the incarnation of the Word. Hence Christ to the Father: *Thou hast known my sitting down* (Ps. 138:2), etc. The seat of this is the virginal womb. Hence: *The Lord hath prepared his throne in heaven* (Ps. 102:19), that is, in the blessed Virgin. The first seat of state is high, on account of the dignity of its condition. The second, elevated, on account of the prerogative of virtue. The third ought to be called exalted above, on account of the union of the Word and the humanity. Of this third seat of state the Prophet says: *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated* (Isa. 6:1; cf. 3 Kings 22:19). For Mary did not lack the dignity of condition, for which she was a high seat of state; nor the prerogative of virtue, for which she was a seat of state elevated through grace; nor the receiving of the Son of God into herself, for which she was a seat of state exalted above.

There follows: *And his house*, that is, the Church, *was full of his majesty*: because *of his fullness we all have received.* Jer. 23:24: *I fill heaven and earth.*

There follows: *And the things that were under him*, sitting, or under the seat, that is, the hosts of Angels and the souls of the saints, *filled the temple*, that is, completed it: understand this of that temple which suffered ruin, which was first made of the nine orders of Angels. Or, *filled the temple*, that is, the Church: because the Church is made up of these.

Morally: the seat of state is the soul which touches the earth with the foot of necessity alone; and it is called the seat of judgment, as above: for Christ sits and rests in those who are as it were a seat of state and a throne, raised, namely, and suspended from the love of the world; such as was Job, saying, 7:15: *My soul rather chooseth hanging*, etc. And those *whose conversation is in heaven* (Phil. 3:20), and in whom that judgment is often held of which the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 11:31: *If we would judge ourselves*, etc. (under the title on confession). And who are of ivory and great, as above; and golden through wisdom, which is most necessary in such a judgment; and workable *(p. 479)* through obedience, that they may obey the commands of their confessors: and this from charity, which is signified by gold, that all things may be done from charity, and that they may be clothed with this gold: for in confession the soul is clothed with a new robe: for charity, which is signified in this gold, *covereth a multitude of sins* (1 Pet. 4:8).

Chapter 4: Mary, Litter

Litter also (*ferculum*), that is, the litter which is not set down in the verse. Well is the virginal womb signified by the litter: because *ferculum* is sometimes said to be the same as a carriage, from *fero, fers*, to carry; sometimes the same as a chair; sometimes the same as food. Solomon, then, which is interpreted *peaceable*, is said, namely Christ, making peace between earthly and heavenly things. *Made*, that is, prepared, *himself*, that is, for his own honor, *a litter*, that is, the womb of the blessed Virgin, in which he might rest as a bridegroom in the bridal chamber, sit as a judge on the seat of state, take delight as one eating from a dish (*ferculum*). Hence, Ezek. 44:3: *The prince himself shall sit in it, to eat bread before the Lord*, etc.

Mary is called a litter: because it carries the king. And the blessed Virgin carried the king of all kings, namely Christ, who is called *King of kings and Lord of lords* (1 Tim. 6:15; Apoc. 19:16).

It is supported by the king's ministers. And the blessed Virgin by the Angels, who are all ministers of the Saviour (Heb. 1:14).

It is lower than the king and higher than the ministers. And she is higher than the Angels, but lower than Christ. Anselm: "Nothing is equal to Mary, nothing but God is greater than Mary."

He who is carried in it is not moved by his own motion, but by means of the litter. And the Son of God according to the divinity is wholly immovable, but by means of the motion of his litter, that is, in the changeable flesh which he took from the Virgin, he was made changeable.

When it is carefully spread, one rests in it gently. So in the blessed Virgin, most carefully adorned with the furnishing of the virtues, the Son of God rested without the disturbance of sin: because *his place is in peace.*

He who is carried in it is raised by its raising, lowered by its lowering. So whatever of praise or of blasphemy is said or done against the blessed Virgin redounds to the Saviour. Hence, Matt. 25:40: *As long as you did it to one of these my least,* etc. For she was the least among all, that she might be the greatest of all, as Jerome says of Paula.

It is necessary for the sick and the weak. For the whole race of mortals is sick with the diseases both of sins and of punishments, and *from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein* (Isa. 1:6), and all need to be supported by the patronage of the glorious Virgin.

Of this litter it is said, Cant. 3:9–10: *King Solomon hath made him a litter of the wood of Libanus: the pillars thereof he made of silver, the seat of gold, the going up of purple: the midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem.* It is called *ferculum (p. 480)* from *fero, fers*: because it carries the one sitting in it; and it is the same as a carriage, which in common speech is called a *lectica*, or chariot, or throne, or the chair in which the doctor or judge sits and rests and judges: and it signifies the Church, which is called a litter: because it carries Christ, who is the true Solomon, everywhere on earth, by preaching and teaching his faith.

Or literally: the litter is a portable throne, and it well designates Mary, whose example is spread everywhere. This litter the true Solomon made *of the wood of Libanus*, that is, of members dry and dried by the fire of the Holy Spirit from every harmful moisture, which was in her sanctification: because, as Gregory says, "Wood is not fittingly put into a building unless its harmful greenness is first dried out." Which also was like the wood of Libanus, fruitless as regards the purpose of virginity, and lofty through the eminence of the virtues; and this in herself: but in God's predestination they were woods of Libanus strong, lofty, beautiful, fragrant, incorruptible, whitened. Strong in patience, lofty in wisdom, beautiful in temperance, fragrant in repute, incorruptible in perseverance, whitened in innocence and purity of every kind; or also whitened when she was sanctified in the womb.

Otherwise: *King Solomon hath made him a litter of the wood of Libanus.* Through the construction of the litter the privileges of the blessed Virgin are commended. *King Solomon*, then, that is, Christ, *made himself a litter*, or throne, by which he might be carried to the knowledge of men, when he prepared the blessed Virgin for his incarnation, and made her his mother. And he made this litter *of the wood of Libanus*; and Libanus is interpreted *whiteness* or *frankincense*: because the Lord joined together the holiness of the Virgin from the fragrance of good works and the whiteness of the virtues. *The pillars* of this litter *he made of silver.* In the pillars consists the strength of the litter. And these pillars were four, and of silver, designated by the properties of silver. For silver sounds sweetly, gleams, is white, and is of great value. By the four silver pillars, then, are designated in the mother of the Lord the sweet sound of prayer in her petitions to the Lord, the splendor of holiness for the enlightening of men, the whiteness of virginity in the mother, the preciousness of motherhood in the Virgin.

The seat also *of gold* he made for himself in the litter: for he filled the mind of the Virgin with the fullness of wisdom, which is signified in gold: and so illumined it with divine knowledge that it can deservedly be said that he laid the head of his divinity to rest in her.

The going up also *of purple* the Lord made: for purple is the sign of royal dignity. And Christ, through taking flesh, went up and entered into this seat, and showed himself king to the world: for in his passion, with the blood of the flesh he had taken, he wrote on his thigh and on his garment: *King of kings and Lord of lords* (Apoc. 19:16). And his entry into the womb of the Virgin is called a going up, after the likeness of the word of Isaias, who says: *The Lord will ascend upon a swift* [*light*] *cloud* (Isa. 19:1). And he calls the holy flesh of Christ, burdened with no weight of sin, a light cloud. And well is the Lord said to have gone up when descending into the Virgin: for because he descended by bowing down the deity, thereby he went up into the hearts of men through knowledge. Or, the going up of Mary is of purple: because through the martyrdom of the mind she went up to royal dignity; so that as she is called Queen of virgins, so she ought to be called Queen of martyrs.

And what follows: *The midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem*, where another translation says, "He caused the pavement beneath it to take up charity from the daughters of Jerusalem," is to be understood thus: for *Lithostrotos*, or *Gabbatha*, which is read in the Lord's passion (John 19:13), is interpreted *a high place sloping down*; there is designated *(p. 481)* also by *the midst*: or the pavement is the seat itself in the litter, which is as it were a sort of slope in respect of the height of the pillars. Christ, then, making himself a seat in the litter, which was midway between the seat and the woods of the litter itself, *covered it with charity*, that is, levelled it; or *covered* [*strewed*] it, that is, prepared it for sitting, as a horse is saddled when a seat is prepared on it. He strewed the seat of the litter, then, with charity: because he does not remain, reside, or rest except in charity. And the Lord so made and so arranged this litter *for the daughters of Jerusalem*, that is, for the salvation of faithful souls.

Otherwise: *King Solomon*, that is, Christ, made Mary a litter for himself, who carried him in her womb nine months; *of the wood of Libanus*, that is, of members most white with all purity as regards the body, and lofty virtues as regards the soul. *The pillars thereof he made of silver*, which are seven, namely the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, as is said, Prov. 9:1: *Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars.* But besides these I have four formed from those; of which the first is freedom from sin; the second, perfect humility; the third, privileged virginity; the fourth, virginal fruitfulness. The first is silver tried by fire: because through the fire of the Holy Spirit the cleansing of sin was made in her. The second is silver beaten with hammers, which adapts itself to receive the form of any vessel. The third is white silver, which is the proof of entire virginity. The fourth is silver, the price of the redemption of the human race.

The seat [*reclining place*], that is, the womb of the Virgin, in which the Son of God reclined, he made *of gold*, that is, precious: or of gold, because in it the gold of wisdom reclined and dwelt.

The going up of purple: because she was not without a share in martyrdom, as Simeon said, Luke 2:35: *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.* Or, he made her going up of purple: because in her assumption he crowned her with royal glory, which is signified in purple.

The midst of it, that is, the heart, which is in the middle of the breast, or the concupiscible power, which is the middle of the three powers, *he covered with charity*, that is, adorned and decked and filled, *for the daughters of Jerusalem*, that is, for the weaker ones who are in the Church, that by imitating the charity of the blessed Virgin they may be able to go up with her and see king Solomon in his beauty.

Or thus: he made himself a litter *for the daughters of Jerusalem*, that is, to support the burdens of infirm minds.

Otherwise and more subtly: *King Solomon made a litter*, etc. The making of the litter signifies the nativity of Mary. That it is said, *King Solomon made himself of the wood of Libanus, the pillars thereof he made of silver*, pertains to her sanctification. That it is said, *the seat of gold*, to her conception. That it is said, *the going up of purple*, to the magnificence of her exaltation, when she was assumed into heaven. And note that sanctification is twofold: from fault, this is signified by the wood of Libanus; from punishment, this by the silver pillars. Of two sanctified in their mothers' wombs we read, namely Jeremias and John, who signify all Christians freed from the foulness of the fault of original sin, but not from the corruption of the punishment, that is, of the tinder, which is the proneness to evil, namely as a certain remaining infirmity and weakness. But this did not remain in the sanctified Virgin: because as the grace of the conception was full, so the grace of the sanctification was full and perfect. Therefore Augustine does not wish that, when sins are treated, mention be made of the blessed Virgin. This litter, then, is said to be made *of the wood of Libanus*, which is interpreted *whiteness* or *whitening*: because she was sanctified from original fault and from the punishment of the tinder, from which arises venial motion, as a certain infirmity and languor. And therefore the pillars are said to be made of silver, to show grace set beneath *(p. 482)* against the punishments and weaknesses of the original punishment. And by these pillars is signified stability in good, so that she could in no way sin.

Again, the woods of Libanus are of cedar, and have the property of incorruptibility, and the breathing out of a fragrance by which serpents are killed: and such was the glory of the sanctification of Mary, that she had the property of incorruptibility against the corruption of original sin as regards herself, and sweetness of fragrance as regards others: and so her sanctification was singular. And therefore she says, *as a cedar in Libanus was I exalted* (Ecclus. 24:17). (Under the title on the cedar you will find things of this kind.) And for this reason it is said of her, Isa. 35:2: *The glory of Libanus is given to it.*

Again, it is to be noted that the four original punishments, as Bede says, are ignorance, malice, infirmity, concupiscence: and these four dispose the human race to ruin. For Paul sinned through ignorance, Peter through infirmity, Judas the traitor through malice, the children of Israel through concupiscence. Hence also *they coveted their desire in the desert*: because such, having deserted God, take delight in another than him. In some one of these ways all sin who do evil. It must be said, then, that the first pillar of this litter was prudence, to support against ignorance; the second, justice, to support against malice or proneness to evil; the third, fortitude, to support against infirmity, from which comes difficulty in good; the fourth, temperance, to support against concupiscence. And these four pillars were figured in Exod. 26:31–32, where it was said to Moses: *Thou shalt make also a veil of violet and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted linen … which thou shalt hang up before four pillars of setim wood … and they shall have heads of gold, but sockets of silver.* This veil is interpreted as the excellence of the Virgin Mary: for as this veil enclosed the holy of holies, so Mary in the bosom of her womb enclosed him who is *the saint of saints* (Dan. 9:24). The four colors of this veil are, in the Virgin, the perfections of four virtues. Violet, which is a heavenly color, is in her the perfection of contemplation; purple, of the color of blood, the perfection of charity; scarlet twice dyed, the twofold affection of love toward God and neighbor; fine twisted linen, which is Egyptian flax and most white, which comes to its whiteness through many beatings, the perfection of virginal chastity. This veil was hung on four pillars, which are the four supporting virtues, as has been said. Prudence corresponds to the violet color of divine contemplation, fortitude to the purple color, justice to the scarlet of charity, temperance to the linen of virginity. And note that here the pillars are said to be of setim wood, whereas the pillars of the litter are said to be of silver; since silver can be melted by fire, but setim wood is incombustible, and does not yield to the action of fire. And this, lest they be thought meltable, since the virtues of Mary could not be melted by the fire of any temptation or by any fault: and therefore the metaphor about the material of the pillars was changed, so that those which had been called of silver are called of setim wood. The Holy Spirit signifying this, to the praise of Mary, that it was impossible for her virtues in any way to be corrupted, to rot, or to be burned. They are also called of silver: because silver is sweet-sounding, so that the matter of her praise may be signified.

So then *king Solomon,* Christ our peaceable one, *made himself a litter,* the virginal womb: *himself,* I say, that he might afterward sit in it, when he took flesh from her: *of the wood of Libanus,* as has been said, that is, of cedars, which breathe out a sweetness of fragrance, chiefly to extinguish in her lovers the serpentine motions of the flesh: for by her help the ticklings of fleshly vileness are overcome. (This you will find fully under the title that she is the cedar.)

Chapter 5: Mary, Chair

(p. 483) The chair (*sella*) of the true Eliseus, as has been said, in which he sits humbled, obedient to the Father as a disciple to his master, by taking flesh in the Virgin, in which he obeyed the Father unto the death of the cross. Of this chair it is read, 4 Kings 4:10, that the great woman, who signifies heavenly wisdom, prepared it for the true Eliseus; which had as it were four feet, that is, the four cardinal virtues. And the seat was tranquillity of mind, or peace: because there *his place is in peace* (Ps. 75:3).

Chapter 6: Mary, Tribunal

Tribunal, which according to Isidore is so called because from it the precepts of living are distributed (*tribuantur*) by the priest: and it is a place set up on high, from which all can hear. And the examples of the glorious Virgin are set before us as certain precepts by which we ought to be instructed and formed for living according to the good pleasure of the divine will.

Or, tribunal is named from the tribes: because the tribes are called together to it: for a tribunal is the seat of a tribune, or the seat of a judge, as the Gloss says on John: because Christ will judge in that flesh which he took from the Virgin: for *the Father hath given him power to do judgment, because he is the son of man* (John 5:27). Of this tribunal it is said, 3 Kings 7:7–8: *He made also the porch of the throne, wherein is the seat of judgment: and covered it with cedar wood from the floor to the top. And the little house where he sat to judge, was in the middle porch, of the like work.*

Chapter 7: Mary, Seat

(p. 484) Seat (*sedes*). According to Isidore, *sedes* in the singular number properly belongs either to a king or to a kingdom, which in Greek is called *thronos.* And Mary is the seat of the great king: therefore it is said of her in Ps. 102:19: *The Lord in heaven,* that is, in the blessed Virgin (look under the title on heaven), *hath prepared,* by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, *his throne*: because in her, as it were humbled, he sat down at the time of the incarnation. Hence he says to the Father: *Thou hast known,* that is, approved, *my sitting down* (Ps. 138:2), etc. Hence he had foretold, Ezek. 44:3: *The prince himself shall sit in it* (look under the title on the gate). In her also he rested, as a man rests by sitting (look below, where she is called rest). Hence also she says: *He that made me, rested* (Ecclus. 24:12), etc. Therefore he says of his mother, Isa. 66:1 and Acts 7:49: *Heaven is my throne,* etc. Again, in Ps. 44:7: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, etc.

Of this seat can be expounded what John says, Apoc. 4:2–3: *I was in the spirit: and behold there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne one sitting. And he that sat was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne.* Well does he say: *I was in the spirit,* that is, in ecstasy of mind. Or, because he who wishes to see, that is, to understand, the great things of Mary must first from carnal become spiritual: therefore he puts first: *I was in the spirit*: and this on the Lord's day of resurrection, through which we truly hope that we can rise again. Or, that he who wishes to be instructed concerning the dignity of Mary may first rise from fault. And note that he had said before: *I was in the spirit* (Apoc. 1:10); and here he says: *I was in the Spirit*, namely more than before: and in this is noted the usefulness of the vision, because by studying and giving oneself to the knowledge of the Virgin, grace is increased.

And behold a throne: allegorically, the Angels and prelates, in whom the Lord sits and chiefly reigns, and rules and judges others, *was set in heaven*, that is, ordained in the Church by the providence of God. Hence, John 15:16, the Lord says to them: *I have appointed you, that you should go*, etc. Or, Mary, in whom the majesty of the deity sat, *was set in heaven* in the assumption, by the ministry of the Angels, in body and soul, as is piously believed. The throne, then, is Mary; the one sitting is the Son of God, taking flesh from her: for his sitting is the incarnation; hence also he says to the Father: *Thou hast known*, that is, approved, *my sitting down* (Ps. 138:2), that is, my incarnation in the Virgin. And where this throne was set is said in Ezek. 1:26: *And above the firmament that was over their heads*, namely of the living creatures, *was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of the sapphire stone*, that is, the blessed Virgin, who is the throne, that is, the royal seat.

There follows: *And upon the throne one sitting*: namely Christ, holding her by his power and excelling her in majesty, which is noted by the word *upon*: for Christ exceeds all the saints in dignity *(p. 485)* and grace, and is said to sit upon them, because he presides over them in authority according to the divinity, in dignity according to the humanity: for *he that cometh from heaven is above all* (John 3:31).

There follows: *And he that sat*—behold the description of the one sitting—*was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine stone.*

Christ is called a precious stone. On account of firmness, through the nature of unchangeableness. James 1:17: *With whom there is no change*, etc.

On account of the solidity of immortality: hence it is said of him, 1 Tim. 6:16: *Who only hath immortality*, etc. Again, 1 Tim. 1:17: *To the king of ages, immortal.*

On account of the power and might by which he firmly rules all things.

Because he is the foundation of justification. Isa. 28:16: *Behold I will lay a stone in the foundations of Sion, a corner stone.*

Because he breaks the hardness of the human heart. Matt. 21:44: *Whosoever shall fall upon this stone*, etc. He himself is *a hammer that breaketh the rock* (Jer. 23:29).

Because he keeps the truth of his threat to the wicked and of his promise to the good, as a stone keeps the image or writing carved on it. Hence he says: *The things that proceed from my lips*—who are the true expositors and preachers—*I will not make void* (Ps. 88:35). Rom. 3:4: *God is true; and every man a liar.*

Because he rules all things by the power of his own might, as a precious stone works by its virtue. Hence it is said of the just, and above all of Christ, Ecclus. 6:22: *She shall be to them as a mighty stone of trial.*

Because he does not show his power to those who do not know it, nor is he esteemed by them. So Christ hid his power in his humanity, and above all in the passion, where he was not esteemed (Isa. 53:3). Again: *I am a worm, and no man* (Ps. 21:7). Hab. 3:4: *There is his strength hid*, etc.

Because he is dear and precious. Job 28:13: *Man knoweth not the price thereof*—it is said of wisdom. Again, 1 Cor. 6:20: *For you are bought with a great price.*

Because rare, indeed alone. Hence he often says of himself in the Gospels: *A certain man* (Matt. 21:28; Luke 14:16; 15:11, etc.), that is, singular and alone.

Because small, through the highest humility. Hence it is said in the Psalm: *a little hill* (cf. Ps. 41:7).

Because full of power. Hence he says, Luke 8:46: *I know that virtue is gone out from me.*

And note that Christ is here compared not to any stone whatever, but specially to the jasper and the sardine, chiefly on account of their two colors. For the jasper is green, in which is signified the unfading quality of eternal beatitude, which he promises to the just. The sardine is red, in which is signified the fire and burning

of eternal damnation, with which he threatens the wicked. Or, the jasper pertains to the beauty of the divinity: because the sight of no color so strengthens the understanding as the divinity: but the sardine, on account of its redness, pertains to the suffering humanity of the Son.

There follows: *And there was a rainbow round about the throne.* Here is noted the repayment both of the good and of the wicked; therefore he says, *round about the throne*: because men to be judged will appear before him from every part of the world.

In sight like unto an emerald. The emerald is red: behold the fire of the damnation of the wicked: and green: behold the delightful life of the good in green pastures. Ezek. 34:15: *I will feed my sheep: and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.* These are the colors which appear in the bow of the clouds, which is made from the reflection *(p. 486)* of the sun in a watery cloud: namely from the comparison of the way of life of Christ and of the saints, which is the sun giving light to life, with that of the wicked, which is as a watery cloud, namely dark and flowing; from which the wicked will be condemned more strongly and more justly. Wis. 5:22: *Then shafts of lightning shall go directly from the clouds, as from a bow well bent*, and they shall be destroyed.

Again, of this seat it is said to Christ: *Thy throne is prepared from of old* (Ps. 92:2), that is, from eternity by predestination. Or, *from of old*, that is, from the time she was sanctified in her mother's womb. Or, *from of old*, that is, from the beginning of the time of grace. Prepared, I say, by the work of the Holy Spirit, or by the wisdom of the Son. Hence: *The Lord in heaven*, that is, in the blessed Virgin, *hath prepared his throne* (Ps. 102:19), and sat on it at the time of his incarnation.

Again, this is the seat of which the Father promises the Son through the Prophet: *I will build up thy throne*, O Christ, that is, the blessed Virgin, *unto generation*, the present, through grace, *and generation*, the future, through glory (Ps. 88:5). Even now this seat does not cease in a certain way to be built: because for her honor as it were daily new abbeys are constructed, new churches are built, new altars are dedicated; and those that had grown old are renewed and beautified; and to show her glory the sacred Scriptures are expounded of her in many ways by the moderns. And therefore she says: *They that explain me shall have life everlasting* (Ecclus. 24:31).

Again, this seat can be called Cherubim. Hence it is said of Christ: *Thou that sittest upon the cherubims* (Ps. 79:2), etc., on account of the fullness of knowledge which was given to her.

Mary is called Cherubim, which is a picture worked like embroidery. Because she was painted and set off with various gifts and virtues. Hence it is said: *Surrounded with variety* (Ps. 44:15). Ezek. 41, passim: on the gates of the temple, that is, in Mary and holy prelates, through whom one enters the temple of eternal life (for Mary is the gate of paradise), there were pictures on every side.

Multiplied knowledge, of which Augustine says: "May I know myself, may I know thee." This knowledge the Holy Spirit gave her, and the Son multiplied it for her, preaching the gospel to her heart for nine months when she carried him in her womb, and afterward for many years.

Fullness of knowledge. This is charity, which teaches of all things (1 John 2:27). For *love is the fulfilling of the law* (Rom. 13:10). For knowledge without charity, etc.: but with charity it edifies (1 Cor. 8:1).

Various kinds of knowledge and understanding. For she is *the wise woman* who by words and examples *buildeth her house* (Prov. 14:1), that is, the Church of God and her own household.

Otherwise: the Lord is said to sit *upon the Cherubim*, which is interpreted *fullness of knowledge*; as it were not in the Cherubim, but *upon*, that is, beyond, that is, in the Seraphim, which is interpreted *burning* or *fire*, that is, in the ardor of charity, where he sits and rests. Hence one should labor more to have charity than knowledge, whereas almost all do the reverse.

Chapter 8: Mary, Cathedra

(p. 487) And cathedra. And of this cathedra it is said, 2 Kings 23:8: *David sitting in the chair, the wisest chief among the three, he was like the most tender little worm of the wood, who killed eight hundred men at one onset.* David is Christ. David is interpreted *strong of hand*: because Christ is *the power of God and the wisdom of God* (1 Cor. 1:24). It is interpreted also *desirable to look upon*: because *on Christ the angels desire to look* (1 Pet. 1:12).

Mary is the cathedra in which the supreme master sat in the incarnation, when he came to teach in the world the precepts and counsels of eternal life. Hence also he said to the Apostles, John 13:13: *You call me Master, and Lord; and you say well, for so I am.* For the cathedra belongs to doctors. The one sitting in this cathedra, Christ, is *the wisest*: because he is the wisdom of the Father (1 Cor. 1:30). He is said to sit *among three*: because he is one of the three uncreated persons, equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit. But he alone sits in the cathedra: because he alone is incarnate in the glorious Virgin.

Or, this cathedra is the Lord's cross, in which the supreme master is said to have sat: because sitting belongs to the doctor: and he on the cross taught perfect charity, by which he not only forgave his death, but also prayed for his enemies. Luke 23:34: *Father, forgive them.* And he pleaded for them and excused them, saying: *For they know not what they do.*

There follows: *He was like the most tender little worm of the wood,* than which nothing is harder when it touches, because it bores through the hardest wood; nothing softer when it is touched. For that literal David, when he was harmed, nothing was meeker than he; when he wished to harm, nothing was fiercer than he. Likewise nothing is softer than Christ as regards mercy, hence he is called *most tender*; nothing stronger as regards justice: hence, Job 9:19: *If strength be demanded, he is most strong,* etc. And note that he is not called *tender,* but *most tender,* on account of meekness of every kind; of which meekness, namely, there are three degrees. The first, the even-minded bearing of insults: this degree makes one tender. The second, the even-minded bearing of injuries: this makes one more tender. The third, the even-minded bearing of blows: this makes one most tender. All these degrees of meekness Christ had in himself.

Again, Christ is called a little worm, not only a worm, on account of humility of every kind which he had in himself: because he subjected himself to the greater and to the equal, that is, to God the Father, who is equal according to the divinity, but greater according to the humanity. He subjected himself also to his mother, and to Joseph for his mother's sake, as is said, Luke 2:51: *And he was subject to them,* who were far below him. To subject oneself to a greater makes one humble; to subject oneself to an equal makes one more humble; to subject oneself to a lesser makes one most humble. And note that he is called *the little worm of the wood.* The wood *(p. 488)* signifies sin, as in 1 Cor. 3:12: *Wood, hay, stubble,* etc. The soft little worm bored through the hard wood: and Christ in his humble passion, as far as in him lay, bored through and consumed the sins of the whole world.

There follows: *Who killed eight hundred men at one onset.* Look for the exposition.

Mary is called a cathedra, put together as it were by turned work, that is, by the subtle craft of the Holy Spirit, who is called *the worker of all things* (Wis. 7:21). Rounded in each member, through desire of the heavenly reward. Level, smooth, and polished all round, and without the roughness of any sin. As it were pierced [the print has *peccato,* perhaps for *pectore,* "in the breast"] or bored through by compassion for the sorrows of her Son, according to that of Luke 2:35: *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.* Colored and as it were painted with the color of all the virtues, manifold: namely with the vermilion of charity, the green of unfading faith, the red ochre of singular patience, the hyacinth or azure of contemplation, or also of poverty, *whose is the kingdom of heaven.* Or it can also be said that she is as it were painted and reddened in the blood of the Lord's passion, compassion for which is reckoned to her as martyrdom. As it were having four feet, that is, the four cardinal virtues sustaining her in every grace and virtue. Having also a seat and as it were a cushion,

that is, tranquillity of flesh and spirit: because her flesh did not lust against the spirit, nor the reverse: and therefore the wisdom of God rested in quiet both in her flesh and in her spirit. Of the material of this cathedra things can be assigned as was said above of the ark, and the throne, the litter, and the seat of state, etc.

Chapter 9: Mary, Footstool

Footstool, of which it is said in Ps. 98:5: *Adore his footstool, for it is holy*. It is called *scabellum* from climbing (*ascendendo*), properly, which is set for climbing up into bed: by others it is called *suppedaneum*, because it is under the feet (*sub pedibus*). The footstool is Christ, who made as it were a certain step for showing the dignity of Mary, as was said above of the seat of state.

Or, the footstool is the cross, on which the feet of the Lord literally stood fastened. Both he as it were adores and venerates this who glorifies the Lord's cross, and he who after the example of Christ reverently carries out his penance, that he may be made a sharer in the penance of Christ.

Or, this footstool on which the feet of the Lord stood is the glorious Virgin, most worthy of all praise, reverence, and honor, which three things are signified in the word *adore.* For as the divinity of Christ is designated by the head—hence, 1 Cor. 11:3: *The head of Christ is God*—so also his humanity, in which he came to us, as one walks with the feet, is designated by the feet. Hence the Father promises the Son: *I make thy enemies thy footstool* (Ps. 109:1). This footstool the three magi literally adored *(p. 489)* (Matt. 2:11), adoring the Son sitting in the lap of his mother.

Again, on a footstool the feet rest. And Christ, God and man, rested in the virginal womb without contrary motion and disturbance. Of this footstool can be expounded that of Exod. 24:10: *Under his feet as it were a work of sapphire stone, and as the heaven when clear.* (Of the golden footstool you had above under the title on the seat of state, which can fittingly be adapted here.)

Chapter 10: Mary, Little Bed

Little bed. Hence, Cant. 3:7–8: *Behold threescore valiant ones of the most valiant of Israel surrounded the bed of Solomon; all holding swords, and most expert in war: every man's sword upon his thigh, because of fears in the night.* These can be the words of the Angels, describing with what zeal the Angels served the glorious Virgin on earth. The little bed of Solomon, that is, of the true peaceable one, is called the blessed Virgin, in whom the Son of God, with the head of the deity bowed, rested as in a little bed. Hence she says: *And he that made me, rested in my tabernacle* (Ecclus. 24:12). And since, as the Apostle says (Heb. 1:14), all the heavenly spirits *are ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation*; and not only are the lesser spirits sent to the ministry of men, but also the higher ones, and of the order of the Seraphim, who on account of the ardor of charity are called *a flame of fire* or *burning fire*—hence, Ps. 103:4: *Who makest thy angels spirits, and thy ministers a burning fire*—it is shown in this place that for the guarding and service of the blessed Virgin not Angels of lower but of higher dignity were appointed, when it is said that *threescore valiant ones of the most valiant of Israel* surround this little bed: for the angelic spirits surrounded the blessed Virgin with diligent guarding and obedient reverence, valiant among the most valiant of spirits, who, because they behold God in constant contemplation, are designated by the name *Israel.* And these are said to be sixty valiant ones, not on account of the number, but on account of the mystery of the number: for that number consists of six and ten: and six signifies perfection. And ten, which has the image of the king and contains in itself the price of ten coins, designates the angelic nature, which was created more expressly to the image of God, and, as a kind of denarius, has three natural powers, understanding, will, and memory, marked with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. With this view agrees the fact that by the ten groats in the Gospel the nine orders of Angels and human nature are signified. By the sixty valiant ones, then, are signified those spirits who in subtlety of natural gifts and abundance of spiritual graces, and in a more express *(p. 490)* likeness to the Creator, are known to excel the others by a certain

perfection. And their strength, prudence, and readiness of service are shown when it is said: *All holding swords*, and the rest that follows. In the swords is signified the power of vanquishing the evil spirits. When they are called *most expert in war*, their prudence is shown in meeting all the assaults of the demons. When it is said, *every man's sword upon his thigh*, it is shown how ready, how prepared they are for battle: for men about to fight, while they await the adversary, are wont to hold the drawn sword upon their thigh.

And why these valiant ones surround this bed is shown when it is added: *because of fears in the night*: namely to drive back not only the graver temptations, but also that brief and small one which is designated by the fear of the night in Ps. 90:5, where it is read: *Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night*: for through the ministry of the Angels every temptation was so driven back from the blessed Virgin that after the conception of the Son she is believed not to have sinned even venially.

Again, of this little bed, that is, the virginal womb, is expounded that of Cant. 1:15: *Our bed is flourishing.* This little bed is the virginal womb, in which the bridegroom celebrated the most blessed union by which he deigned to be united to human nature. And it is called a little bed and not a bed on account of humility: and the humbler the little bed was, the more delightful the embrace and the more inseparable the fellowship: and the union itself was, so to speak, more one. This little bed was flourishing with the variety of all the virtues as of flowers: there the rose of most excellent charity, there the lily of most singular chastity, there the violet of humility of every kind; and what shall I say? There is a garden (*hortus*), and thence arose (*ortus est*) he who says: *I am the flower of the field* (Cant. 2:1), etc.

Again, the diminutive *little bed* signifies the humility of Mary, in whom Christ rested without the disturbance of evil motions and the swellings of pride.

According to blessed Bernard, by the litter of Solomon is properly signified the body of Mary, as will be noted below; by the little bed, her soul, in which the blessed Trinity rested. And it is not said of what the little bed was made: because the dignity of the soul of the Virgin herself is ineffable. But of the material of the litter, that is, of her body, which she carried about and exercised in good working, something more is evident. And a little bed is wont to be spread in a bridal chamber; and it was most just that, because the blessed Virgin was here made the bridal chamber, bed, and dining room of the whole Trinity, she should be lodged there in the lodging of the Trinity: therefore we boldly say that that bed has been placed in the bridal chamber of the Trinity, so that after the labors which she bore in the present with her Son, she may rest there for ever.

And it is to be noted that in the heavenly Jerusalem a threefold building, as it were, can be assigned, namely the court, the palace, the bridal chamber. The court befits those Angels who run to and fro to us in ministry; the palace, those who always stand before the Creator; the bridal chamber, the supreme Trinity; in which bridal chamber we believe Mary to be placed at the right hand of her Son. She is also a little bed as regards us: because as we rest in a little bed, so through her we attain to the virtues, in which the soul rests which before labored in vices.

Chapter 11: Mary, Resting Place

(p. 491) And resting place. Hence, Isa. 11:10, where we have, *His sepulchre shall be glorious*, another reading says: *His rest shall be glorious*, that is, the glorious Lady shall be his rest. Hence he himself says in Ps. 131:14: *This is my rest for ever and ever*, etc. She is also the rest which the Son of God, who is wisdom, sought in all things (Ecclus. 24:11), which he found in her, as she says in the same place: *He that made me*, namely God, my son namely, through whom all things were made, *rested*, according as he is man, *in my tabernacle*, that is, in my body, nine months and six days. And well does she say *rested*: because he found nothing there that troubled him: for the little ones of Babylon, that is, evil motions, were not wailing there. There were not there smoke, or a dripping roof, or a bad wife, which three drive a man out of his house. The smoke is the vanity of pride. The dripping roof, the constant importunity of diabolical temptations. The bad

wife, the sting of conscience.

Rested: because he did not find my flesh lusting against the spirit (Gal. 5:17), or the reverse, since on entering he said: *Peace be to this house* (cf. Matt. 10:12).

In my tabernacle, both of my flesh and of my spirit: for although the heart of the Virgin can fittingly be called the tabernacle and dining room of the whole Trinity, yet her womb is more fittingly called a tabernacle, which properly belongs to those on pilgrimage and those on campaign. He, then, who now rests in my tabernacle, that is, in me his temple, is he who came to be a pilgrim in the world, made a stranger even to the sons of his mother the synagogue, *to be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man turning in to tarry* (Jer. 14:8), so that *the life of man upon earth* should be *a warfare* (Job 7:1); that he might bind *the strong man armed*, and plunder his goods, and *take away his armour wherein he trusted* (Luke 11:21–22): *triumphing openly over principalities and powers in himself* (cf. Col. 2:15). When, I say, he came thus as a pilgrim, a wayfarer about to wage war, *the stranger did not stay without, but my door was open to the traveller* (Job 31:32). And entering he rested in my tabernacle, where *his place is in peace* (Ps. 75:3): for Christ, about to engage in battle against the world and the devil, in the womb of the Virgin armed himself with poverty against pride, putting on the virginal flesh as a breastplate against lust.

Again, Mary is that *wealthy rest* which is promised to the faithful people, Isa. 32:18: *My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest.*

Chapter 12: Mary, Dwelling

(p. 492) Dwelling, namely of Christ, who says of her: *This is my rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have chosen it* (Ps. 131:14). Hence the Church sings: “God chose her,” etc.

And *habitatio*, dwelling, is so called from *habendo*, having: because Christ alone had the virginal womb to dwell in. Hence he says to Mary, Zach. 2:10: *Sing praise, and rejoice, O daughter of Sion: for behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.*

Again, *his place is in peace*, that is, in peaceful Mary, *and his abode in Sion* (Ps. 75:3), that is, in the watchtower, which is Mary.

Again, Mary is the dwelling of the divinity: because Christ dwelt in her, in whom, as is said in Col. 2:9, *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally.*

Again, Mary is the dwelling of the Son, whom she received in the lodging of her womb; to whom it is said, Isa. 62:4: *Thou shalt be called My pleasure in her … and thy land shall be inhabited*, that is, thy flesh shall be made fruitful, Christ dwelling in it.

Again, Isa. 62:5: *The young man shall dwell with the virgin*, that is, the son with the mother. For Christ for us was made a young man according to the humanity, *the Ancient of days* according to the divinity; namely, that through him the youth of our souls might be renewed like the eagle’s. The son, I say, shall dwell with the mother, who *compassed him* in the bosom of her womb (Jer. 31:22), namely in the bridal chamber of the virginal womb. Hence the Church sings:

He who holds the world in his fist was shut within the ark of the womb.

And this is what she says, Ecclus. 24:8: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven*, etc. For whereas the Son of God was before a circle whose center is everywhere, its circumference nowhere, the blessed Virgin gave him the circumference of flesh, in which the fullness of the divinity might dwell corporeally. For Christ is the circuit that cannot be encircled, containing all things.

And deservedly the bread which came down from heaven was shut in the ark of his mother, that she might give us bread from her ark: because *a son is given to us* (Isa. 9:6). But this ark has been carried over to

heaven, that thereafter we may say: Our mother, who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread from thy ark, that is, from the ark which thou art.

Again, literally: Christ as a young man, that is, of twelve years and thereafter, dwelt with the blessed Virgin through filial reverence and the subjection of obedience (Luke 2:51). And Christ is called *juvenis*, young man, as if *juvans nos*, helping us: since he came for this, human nature crying to him: *Rise up to help me* (Ps. 34:2). It hints also at his mother. Hence, Ps. 45:6: *God will help it in the morning early.* (Look under the title on her sanctification.)

Again, *This is my rest*, as above; *here will I dwell*, namely nine months in her, many years with her and under her. Dwelling *(p. 493)* in her, Christ filled her with a singular grace of charisms; dwelling with her, he fed her with the incomparable sweetness of his ways and the desirable wisdom of divine words: but now in her and with her, as in endless eternity, so in an incomprehensible manner, he satisfies her with the glory of beatifying visions; outwardly showing the form of the glorified flesh, but inwardly imprinting the form of the glorifying Word.

Again, Mary is the dwelling of all the just and blessed. Hence the Prophet says to her: *The dwelling in thee is as it were of all rejoicing* (Ps. 86:7), O Mary. Isidore: "For she is the dwelling of those rejoicing, namely of those persevering in her, which the name of dwelling denotes." And well does he say *of those rejoicing*: because whoever in sorrow brings himself from the heart to that most loving one is not without a share in joyful hope. Again, of this dwelling it is said, Hab. 3:11: *The sun*, that is, the divinity, *and the moon*, that is, the humanity, *stood still in their habitation*, that is, in the womb of the Virgin. And well does he say *stood*: because standing is for one who obeys.

Chapter 13: Mary, Little Cell

Little cell, containing in itself the hidden heavenly honey, namely Christ, who is the sweet refreshment of the Angels; which honey, namely, she gave to drink to the hungry world when she bore the Saviour. Therefore it is said to her, Cant. 4:11: *Honey and milk are under thy tongue.* (Look under the title on the sweetness of Mary.) Which is to say: the Son of God in two natures under thy flesh. Or, *under thy tongue*: because he is the word of the Father. Or, *under thy tongue*: because hidden in his mother's womb. Or, *under thy tongue*: because as soon as she answered, *Be it done to me*, the Son of God descended into her. The honey, which comes from the dew of heaven, is the divinity, which is above all things. The milk, which is pressed out from the flesh, is the humanity, which was taken from below. Hence the Son to the Father, Job 10:10: *Hast thou not milked me as milk*, etc.?

Chapter 14: Mary, Nest

Nest: which nest, namely, Christ, signified by the eagle, raised up to heaven *at the command* of the Father (Job 39:27), *set on high*, when his mother also in the assumption *(p. 494)* he placed above the Angels. In Ps. 83:4: *The sparrow*, that is, Christ, who says: *I have watched, and am become as a sparrow* (Ps. 101:8), *hath found herself a house*, that is, the virginal womb: *and the turtle*, that is, the same Christ, of whom it is said, Cant. 2:12: *The voice of the turtle*, that is, the preaching of Christ, *is heard in our land, a nest for herself*, that is, the same womb.

Mary is called a nest, which is built of many little twigs: and the body of Mary of many virginal members. Hence he says to the Father, Job 10:11: *Thou hast put me together with bones and sinews*, etc. Rough on the outside, namely in the flesh, through abstinence and its mortification: soft and pleasant within, through kindness of mind. Hollow, through inward humility. Round, through seeking after eternal things. Col. 3:1: *Seek the things that are above*, etc. Hidden: because Mary was dead to the world, and her whole life was *hid with Christ in God* (Col. 3:3). Hung up, through contemplation. Job 7:15: *My soul rather chooseth hanging.*

For she continually *lifted herself up above herself* (Lam. 3:28). Closed below, through love of poverty, this as to earthly things, all of which for Christ's sake she counted as loss: and that she might gain him, she counted them as dung (Phil. 3:8). Open above, through desire of heavenly beatitude. As if she said with David: *Lord, all my desire is before thee* (Ps. 37:10), etc. In it the bird rests, that is, Christ. Hence she says: *He that made me, rested in my tabernacle* (Ecclus. 24:12). Likewise the just man finds distress in the world, in Mary peace and quiet. In the nest the bird lays and warms its eggs and young, that is, its works and good motions: so also the just man in Mary.

Again, Mary is the nest of the dove, that is, the receptacle of the Holy Spirit, who descended *as a dove* upon Christ (cf. Luke 3:22; John 1:32). Hence it was said to her: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:35). Or, of the dove, that is, of Christ, who is called *the dove.* Jer. 25:38: *Their land is laid waste because of the face*, that is, the urgency, *of the wrath of the dove*, that is, of Christ, who even when he punishes is tranquil in himself; who *will not shut up his mercies in his anger.* And note that no bird makes a poorer nest than the dove: because Christ chose and chose beforehand this poor and humble little one, in whose womb he would dwell bodily for nine months, and in whose soul spiritually for ever.

Chapter 15: Mary, Cell

Cell (*cella*), which is so called from concealing (*celando*): because she concealed and hid the Son of God nine months. Hence it is said to her, Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God.* Note that this name *cella* is equivocal. For in cells the ancient religious were wont to dwell *(p. 495)* singly, as is still clear in the Carthusians, who dwell singly in single cells. And Mary is a singular cell: because, singularly virgin and mother, she was the singular dwelling for nine months of Christ, who is the form and exemplar of all perfect refreshment. *Cella* is also the same as a cellar: and Mary is the wine cellar, and grace is fittingly compared to wine: because those whom it fills it makes bold, strong, forgetful, and insensible, and the like. A wine cellar also on account of the abundance of spiritual goods, which are therefore called wines: because they refresh, gladden, and inebriate, as is clear in Joseph leaving his cloak to the Egyptian woman (Gen. 39:12). And it contains as many kinds of wines as of virtues, with which she refreshes her servants abundantly, saying to them, Cant. 5:1: *Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.* (Of these you will find in § 12, on the garden, where Mary is called the vine.)

She is also that wine cellar which gladdens all the mansions of the heavenly Jerusalem, and fills all the cellars of heaven: and of her fullness the dwellers in heaven all receive: and the more abundantly they drink, the more they thirst. Hence also she seems to say: *They that drink me shall yet thirst* (Ecclus. 24:29). In this also that she says, *They that drink me*, she hints that she is not only the cellar, but also the wine. And see how she fills all the cellars of heaven. *My abode*, she says, *is in the full assembly of saints* (Ecclus. 24:16), that is, the fullness of all the saints holds me back, as it were wishing to claim me for itself as its own; not, however, that they envy others what they are jealous for themselves.

And Mary is not only the cellar containing wines or drinks of every kind, but also the channel through which these wines flow into the cellar of our mind, and into the Catholic Church, which is the cellar of the Lord. She is the cell of all spices, which are chastity, piety, and the like; all delights, the place of all pleasure. For this spice cell gained for itself much of delights from the fact that Christ dwelt in her bodily and according to the deity the whole time: for if something aromatic is kept for a little while in a vessel, the vessel itself at once becomes aromatic. For the blessed Virgin breathes forth all patience, she who is filled with all ointments, with all aromatic spices, by which the infirmity of the human race has been healed. Hence it is said to her: *Myrrh and stacte and cassia,* etc., *from the ivory houses* (Ps. 44:9). The ivory houses are virgins through cleanness; but she, the Virgin of virgins, was full also of ointments, through the presence of Christ, which is interpreted *anointed.* She is also the cell of spices designated by the house of the forest (3 Kings 7:2). (Under the title that Mary is a house.)

Chapter 16: Mary, Storehouse

And storehouse (*apotheca*) of Christ the physician, who through Mary and the wood of the cross came to heal the languishing world, which through Eve and the forbidden tree was sick. Or rather, *(p. 496)* she is the storehouse of the Holy Spirit, into which the apothecary, the Holy Spirit, descended, coming upon her in the conception of the Son; who from her most pure substance made an ointment, when the Son of God took up all that is man's, and poured into the nature assumed *the fulness of the Godhead corporeally*; without which it was impossible for the wounds of the human race to be healed.

Otherwise: *the apothecary* (Ecclus. 38:7) is the Holy Spirit, whose storehouse is Mary. The material of the ointment is the flower of the nature assumed and the fat of the divinity. In this ointment are earth, fragrance, sweetness, and liquid. By the fragrance of this ointment the men of the natural law were refreshed by the devotion of faith alone, and, placed still far off, they awaited as it were a certain fragrance coming from afar. Hence Isaac said prophetically of Christ, Gen. 27:27: *Behold the smell of my son*, etc. By its sweetness the men of the written law were delighted, who, placed as it were in the light of Christ about to be born, had received the sweetness of the promise in the law and the Prophets. Hence it was said, Agg. 2:8: *And the desired of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory*: and he speaks of the Church, or rather of Mary. By its liquid the men of grace were healed, who were wholesomely bathed in the sacraments which flowed from the side of Christ. The ointment laid up in the alabaster box is the Word united to flesh; which being broken in the passion, the house, that is, the Church, *was filled with the odour of the ointment* (John 12:3). According to Isidore, storehouses, or granaries, are properly places for storing or laying up crops that have been worked.

Chapter 17: Mary, Treasury

Gazophyl, that is, *gazophylacium*, which is the chest where the things are collected in the temple which are sent for the need of the poor or the building of the temple. And this name is compounded of the Persian and Greek languages. For in the language of the Persians a treasure is called *gaza*; and the Greek *phylasso* is interpreted *I guard.* Well is Mary the treasury of both Churches: because whatever good the divine munificence has disposed to give us for our works, it gathered in her as in a treasury. Hence she was called *full of grace*: level full for herself, heaped up for us. Hence afterward the Angel added: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:35).

Chapter 18: Mary, Bookcase

(p. 497) Bookcase (*bibliotheca*), that is, the place where books are laid up: for in Greek *biblos* is a book, *theke* a repository. For in her as it were were laid up all the books of the Old Testament and of the Gospels, of all of which she had full knowledge, as is shown in that verse of her canticle: *As he spoke to our fathers* (Luke 1:55), etc. Of the Gospels, that is, of evangelical knowledge, in Luke 2:19: *Mary kept all these words*, etc.

Chapter 19: Mary, Treasure House

Aerari, that is, *aerarium*, treasure house, which is so called from *aes*, money: because in it was gathered and amassed the price of our redemption: for in her womb were *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden* (Col. 2:3). For this reason also her womb is called *a bag of money* (Prov. 7:20). (Look under the title *Full of grace*, near the end of the chapter.)

Chapter 20: Mary, Women's Workroom

Geneze, that is, *genezeum*, which is so called from *gyne*, Greek for *woman*: namely the place where a gathering of women is made, to carry on the work of wool-making. These women *(p. 498)* are the graces, which came together in her to spread out the seamless tunic of Christ from a certain portion of Gedeon's fleece, that is, of the virginal substance. And these are the women of whom it is said, Isa. 4:1: *Seven women shall take hold*, that is, the seven graces of the Holy Spirit, or sevenfold grace, *of one man*, that is, Christ, *in that day*, namely in the day of his conception, namely when *a woman compassed a man* (Jer. 31:22).

Chapter 21: Mary, Place

Place. For she is *a paradise of pleasure* [*a place of pleasure*] (Gen. 2:8). (Look under § 1 of the enclosed garden, where the garden is called watered.) Again, of the things which make a place delightful, look under § 9, where the garden is called dense and shady. Again, that such a place is suited for finding a hiding place, look next in the same place. She is the place chosen by the Lord, of which he himself says, 2 Paral. 7:16: *I have chosen, and have sanctified this place*, etc. *I have chosen*, by predestining; *I have sanctified*, by purging from original sin, by extinguishing the tinder, or by repressing it everywhere; *this place*, that is, Mary, *that my name may be there*, etc. A similar exposition you will find under the title that Mary is the house of wisdom; and what is said here of the place is had there of the house (cf. 3 Kings 9:3).

Again, of this place, Jer. 17:12–13: *A high throne of glory from the beginning is the place of our sanctification. O Lord, the hope of Israel*, etc. (Look for the first clause under the title on the seat of state.) For she is the place of our sanctification: because she is the temple of God in which the divine mysteries are celebrated, by which those are sanctified who from sinners become just: and in her was celebrated that sacrament from which our sanctification proceeded; of which sacrament, 1 Tim. 3:16: *Evidently great is the mystery of godliness.* And here the incarnation of the Saviour is called the sacrament of godliness; which sacrament of godliness, namely, was celebrated in the temple of the virginal womb: therefore the womb of Mary is rightly called the place of sanctification of the whole human race: and she is *the expectation of Israel*, that is, the glory of the blessed. Or, she is called the place of sanctification for this reason: because Christ cleansed and sanctified her for this, that she might be able to cleanse and sanctify us. Run back to her, then, as often as by sinning you have lost your sanctification. Again, Num. 9:17, it is said of this place: *And when the cloud that protected the tabernacle was taken up, then the children of Israel marched forward: and in the place where the cloud stood still, there they camped.* The place of this cloud, that is, of Mary, is the exercise of each virtue with which she was occupied in the service of God, namely modesty, humility, patience, and the like. Again, Ezek. 3:12: *Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place.* Prov. 10:1: *A wise son maketh the father glad.*

(p. 499) Again, *in peace*, that is, in peaceful Mary, who, because she is the friend of peace, is signified by the olive and the dove, *his place is made* (Ps. 75:3), that is, Christ's, or the whole Trinity's, whose noble dining room she is. Again, in Agg. 2:10, it is said of Mary: *In this place I will give peace.* For in her womb peace was made between God and man through the marriage of the humanity assumed. Again, Job 28:1: *Gold hath a place wherein it is melted.* (Look below under the title that Mary is a furnace.) Again, Isa. 60:13, Christ says: *I will glorify the place of my feet.* (Look with the first.)

Again, of this place all who honor Mary say in fact: *We will adore in the place where his feet stood* (Ps. 131:7), that is, Christ's. Again, Isa. 60:13, Christ says to the Church: *The glory of Libanus shall come to thee, the fir tree, and the box tree, and the pine tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary*, and so on.

The blessed Virgin was the place of God's sanctification not only because the Lord sanctified that place—hence: *The most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle* (Ps. 45:5)—but again because the Lord himself willed to be sanctified there: hence, John 17:19: *For them do I sanctify myself*, etc. For he, as Augustine says, sanctified himself as man in himself the Word, when he who from eternity had been holy with uncreated holiness was made holy with created holiness. Hence he said to the Jews, John 10:36: *Whom*

the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, etc. For then the Father sanctified the Son, when he appointed him to be incarnate with holiness for the salvation of the world. And this is what he says: *For them do I sanctify myself.* The box is a low and small tree, the fir and the pine are lofty trees: and these trees come together to beautify this place when, to extol the praises of Mary, the humble and small extend themselves as much as the lofty and great.

Again, she is a terrible place, namely to the demons and the powers of the air. Hence Jacob said, Gen. 28:17: *How terrible is this place! this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven.*

Again, she is the place of prayer. (Under the title on Mary to be entreated.) She is the place of the Lord's throne (Ezek. 43:7).

Chapter 22: Mary, Granary

Granaries (*horrea*), that is, a granary, which is not set down in the verse. A granary is a storehouse of grain. And Mary contained in herself the grain by which, in the sacrament of the altar, men and Angels are refreshed. Hence also she is designated by the granaries of Joseph, which he made in Egypt, in which was kept the grain prepared through seven years for the famine; which, had it not come to the rescue, the whole world would have perished of hunger. And as that Joseph kept the grain not for himself alone but for all the people, so also Joseph, the husband of Mary, *(p. 500)* received the living bread from heaven to be kept, both for himself and for the whole world. Therefore it is said to Mary, Cant. 7:2: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat*, etc. (Look above under the title on the virginal fruitfulness of Mary.) And as that grain was shut up in the granary, so Christ, *the grain of wheat* (John 12:24–25), in the virginal womb.

Again, she was designated by the storerooms of the house of the Lord, in which the tithes and firstfruits were laid up (2 Paral. 31:11–12). She contained also in herself that grain, that is, the Word of God, by which the doves, that is, faithful souls, are fed. Hence it is said, Luke 2:19: *But Mary kept all these words.*

Chapter 23: Mary, Mill

Mill (*pistrinum*), which according to Isidore is so called as if *pistrinum* from *pilum*, pestle: because in ancient times the grain was pounded with a pestle before the use of millstones. Hence in ancient times they were called not millers but *pistores*, as if *fissores*, from splitting the grains of wheat. And the womb of the Virgin can fittingly be called a *pistrinum*, bakehouse, according to the usage of the moderns: because there the bread of life was baked. Hence she was signified by Sara, to whom Abraham said, Gen. 18:6: *Make haste, temper together three measures of flour, and make cakes upon the hearth*, etc. (Look under the title *Full of grace*, near the end of the chapter.)

Chapter 24: Mary, Oven and Kiln

Oven (*furnus*), of the masculine gender, which is derived from *far*, spelt: because bread made from it is baked there. Assign as below of the kiln.

Mary is called a kiln (*clibanus*). *Clibanus* is so called from *clivus*, a slope, namely from this, that in rising up it is drawn together: for *clivum* is the same as winding. In winding humility is signified. By the kiln can be understood the virginal womb. Hence on that of Lev. 2:4: *When thou offerest a sacrifice baked in the oven*, the Gloss says: "The womb of the blessed Virgin is the oven." Again, on that of Lev. 7:9: *Every sacrifice (p. 501) that is baked in the oven*, etc., the Gloss says: "In which he signifies the childbearing of the Virgin." For as the kiln first receives fire, then the loaves, so the womb of the Virgin first received fire, that is, the Holy Spirit, second the bread of life, that is, the Son of God. And this order is designated there: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, this first; *and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee* (Luke 1:35), this second. Or it can also be said that at once and together she received both the fire and the bread, that is, Christ,

who is *a consuming fire* (Deut. 4:24), and who is *the living bread which came down from heaven* (John 6:51). And this bread was baked with the fire of his charity, and this for nine months, and at the nativity it was brought out of the kiln. Hence the Son says to the Father: *Thou art he that hast drawn me out of the womb* (Ps. 21:10), etc. And again it was as it were baked again in the kiln, that is, in the burning heat of the passion, that it might be twice-baked bread, which befits those journeying to the heavenly Jerusalem in the ship of penance. And it is eaten daily in the sacrament, but it befits only true pilgrims.

Chapter 25: Mary, Furnace

Fornaxque, and furnace. *Fornax* is so called from fire: *pyr* in Greek, *ignis* in Latin. For in the virginal womb, as in a furnace, by the work of the Holy Spirit the craftsman, the gold of the deity was ineffably poured and melted, so that it might as it were run down into the figures and moulds of our infirmity, which are hunger, thirst, cold, heat, weariness, sickness, and death. And so Christ deigned to receive in himself the marks of our humanity. And therefore it is said, Phil. 2:7, that he was *in habit found as a man.* Of this pouring it is said, Job 28:1: *Silver hath beginnings of its veins: and gold hath a place wherein it is melted.* The silver, tried in many ways by the fire of the Holy Spirit, is the material of the body of Christ, taken by the Holy Spirit from the most pure substance of the glorious Virgin, and still more fully purged and cleansed. The beginnings of this silver were the ancient fathers, from whom, as by certain veins, he descended successively according to the flesh; from whom arose the Virgin. Hence on her nativity it is sung: "The nativity of the glorious Virgin Mary, of the seed of Abraham," etc.; and from whom Christ according to the flesh.

There follows: *And gold hath a place wherein it is melted.* The gold is the deity of the Word. Hence the bride says, Cant. 5:11: *The head of my beloved is as the finest gold.* The place of this melting is the virginal womb, in which the Holy Spirit ineffably fused the divine nature and the human into one person.

Again, of this fusing someone says elegantly in that conductus, *Veri floris sub figura*, etc.:

As the smith, after his manner, taming gold in the heat of the fire, draws it out with gentler bending, (p. 502) so grace as mediatrix fused a loving fire, by which justice might be bent from its rigor. From this fire of pity the flower of brightness came forth, on the anvil of chastity; which the smith, the Paraclete, formed divinely, pouring in, in human wise, the gold of the deity. So the flower by many tokens admonishes the sense of the devout mind: the worth of the gold signifies the sceptre of the most mighty king; the red, the wounded side; the brightness, the joy of Christ rising again.

Again, the womb of the Virgin is that furnace of which it is said, Ecclus. 43:4: *Keeping a furnace in works of heat*, etc. For the power of the Most High, which is Christ, overshadowing the Virgin in her conception, kept her unharmed in the works of heat, that is, of God the Trinity, who is *a consuming fire* (Deut. 4:24), while from the substance of her flesh he wrought the humanity of the Son by his wisdom and power as by a double hand. (This you will find better under the title on the first delight of the enclosed garden.)

Chapter 26: Mary, Forge

Forge (*caminus*), which is so called from *cauma*, heat, according to Isidore. For the charity of the other saints was as it were a little fire or a fire, but the charity of Mary as a forge. Hence, Isa. 31:9: *The Lord hath said it, whose fire is in Sion*, that is, in the holy soul, *and his furnace in Jerusalem*, namely in Mary. Note that the blessed flesh which Christ united to himself in the virginal womb was in a certain way roasted and cleansed by the Holy Spirit before it was assumed by the Word. Hence, when the Angel had told Mary of the son to be born of her, *He shall be great*, etc., which did not seem to befit a man, and she had answered: *How shall this be done?*—as if she said, how will the flesh be so clean, since no one is clean from filth?—the Angel answered: *The Holy Ghost*, who is a fire wiping away rust, *shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:34–35), that is, that the flesh to be assumed from the substance of thy flesh may be dried from all concupiscence and harmful

moisture.

Chapter 27: Mary, Palace of the Supreme Emperor and Hall

(p. 503) Hall (*aula*). And a hall, according to Isidore, is a royal house, or a spacious dwelling enclosed by four porticoes. *Palatium*, palace, is so called from Pallas, a prince of Arcadia, in whose honor the Arcadians called the royal hall built in his name a *palatium.* And Mary is the hall or palace of the supreme king. Hence on the vigil of her assumption it is said in the collect: "O God, who didst deign to choose the virginal hall of blessed Mary, in which to dwell," etc. And Ambrose in the hymn: "Coming forth from his bridal chamber, the royal hall of chastity," etc.

Of this hall or palace the Poet seems to have thought, where he said:

The palace of the Sun stood high on lofty columns, bright with flashing gold, etc.

Christ is *the sun of justice* (Mal. 4:2), whose palace is the virginal womb. The columns of this palace are the virtues of Mary, which are well called *lofty*, because they surpass all the graces and virtues of Angels and men. (Below, under the title on the house of wisdom, you will find of the columns.) It was also bright: because inwardly illumined by the true light, which is Christ. It was gilded with *the finest gold*, like the ark, the throne, and the seat of state. And this is what is said: "Bright with flashing gold." (Look under the pyrope.)

Chapter 28: Mary, Tabernacle

Tabernacle, of which it is said to Christ by the Psalmist, Ps. 14:1: *Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle*, that is, in the blessed Virgin? As if he said: No one but thou alone. For which reason it is said, Ezek. 44:3: *The prince himself shall sit in it.* The prince himself, as it were, not another.

Again, the tabernacle is the body of Christ. But who will dwell there by a worthy imitation of the passion? As if he said: Few or none. Yet to this dwelling he himself invites his bride, that is, the faithful soul, saying: *Come, my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in (p. 504) the hollow places of the wall* (Cant. 2:13–14). Again, Isa. 2:10: *Enter thou into the rock, and hide thee in the pit in the earth.* Christ has a manifold tabernacle. Hence it is said to him: *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts* (Ps. 83:2), etc. The first and more worthy is the body which he took from the Virgin. The second, the body of the Virgin itself. The third, the Church militant. The fourth, the Church triumphant. The fifth, the body of the just man. The sixth, any ordered religious life. And we shall follow up each of them.

Of the first he says, Ps. 18:6: *He hath set his tabernacle in the sun*, etc. And this is expounded in many ways, according as the properties of the sun are many: for the sun distinguishes the seasons; it figures good working: Job 31:26: *If I beheld the sun when it shined.* It has in itself manifestation: because it is the eye of the world. It has also brightness; it has changeableness, because *the sun riseth, and goeth down* (Eccles. 1:5). Heat and burning. Hence: *The sun shall not burn thee by day* (Ps. 120:6). It has swiftness, shining, and incorruptibility. According to all these ways Christ *set his tabernacle in the sun*, that is, in the Virgin bright as the sun, when he took human nature from her, and granted her the power at once receptive and generative of the Word of God, as Damascene says. That is, in manifestation, when he was *in habit found as a man* (Phil. 2:7). Bar. 3:38: *Afterwards he was seen upon earth*, etc. That is, in time, when the eternal was made temporal, not leaving what he was, but taking what he had not before, namely flesh. That is, in changeableness: because he was hungry (Matt. 4:2), was wearied (John 4:6), thirsted (John 19:28), slept, etc. That is, in exercise: because he exercised himself in many ways in good working, preaching and healing the sick by day, and praying by night. That is, in swiftness, when he walked upon the sea. That is, in shining, when he was transfigured and *his face did shine as the sun* (Matt. 17:2). That is, in the burning and heat of the passion, when *the sun at noon burneth the earth* (Ecclus. 43:4), that is, his own body and the Apostles

themselves. (Look for the exposition of the tenth prerogative of Mary.) That is, in incorruptibility, when, rising from the dead, he dies now no more. That is, in eternal brightness, when in the ascension the sun was raised into heaven. And note that here in three verses many things are noted concerning Christ. The first is the incarnation. Hence: *He hath set his tabernacle in the sun.* The second, the nativity from the womb. Hence: *And he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber.* The third, the humility of the passion. Hence: *Hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.* The fourth, his eternal begetting. Hence: *His going out is from the end of heaven.* The fifth, the ascension. Hence: *And his circuit.* The sixth, the equality of the Father and the Son. Hence: *Even to the end thereof.* The seventh, the sending of the Holy Spirit. Hence: *And there is no one that can hide himself from his heat* (Ps. 18:6 ff.).

The second tabernacle is the virginal womb, which is most properly called a tabernacle, as she herself says: *He that made me, rested in my tabernacle* (Ecclus. 24:12). (Look for the exposition a little above, where she is called rest.) And of this tabernacle it was said, Isa. 33:20: *This is a tabernacle that cannot be removed*, namely to other uses than those of the Son of God himself.

And note that a tabernacle properly belongs to those on campaign and on pilgrimage: for as a soldier about to fight is armed in his tent, namely that he may go out armed to the conflict, so Christ, about to fight with the devil for his disinherited bride, *(p. 505)* namely the Church, in the womb of the blessed Virgin as in a tent fitted to himself the armor of human flesh, as the Psalmist had asked him on behalf of the human race, saying, Ps. 34:2: *Take hold of arms and shield: and rise up to help me*; and, entering armed, he fought with the devil in the passion, and struck him with the hand fixed to the cross, because *there was his strength hid* (Hab. 3:4). Hence, Job 26:12: *His wisdom hath struck the proud one*; and he shook out the prey which the devil had devoured, as is sung in Paschal time. And this is what Job says in the person of Christ, Job 29:17: *I broke the jaws of the wicked man, and out of his teeth I took away the prey.*

Again, tabernacles belong to pilgrims. For when the Son of God, who says in Ps. 38:13: *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were*, journeyed from heaven to earth in the incarnation, she received him in her tabernacle. Hence she can say with Job 31:32: *The stranger did not stay without, my door was open to the traveller.* Of this tabernacle it is said, Isa. 4:6: *And there shall be a tabernacle for a shade in the daytime from the heat, and for a security and covert from the whirlwind, and from rain.* For the glorious Virgin will be to her servants and lovers in the day of judgment *a shade from the heat*, that is, against that heat of which it is said, 2 Pet. 3:10: *The elements shall be melted with heat.* And of which, Soph. 1:18: *All the land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy.* She will be *a security from the whirlwind*, that is, against that whirlwind of which, Jer. 30:23–24: *Behold the whirlwind of the Lord, his fury going forth, a violent storm: it shall rest upon the head of the wicked. The Lord will not turn away the wrath*, etc. For as the whirlwind snatches up the dust and the chaff, unable to resist, so the wicked man will be snatched away to torments. Hence, Job 27:21: *A burning wind shall take him up, and carry him away, and as a whirlwind shall snatch him from his place.* She will be *a covert from the rain*, that is, against that rain of which, Job 20:23, it is said of Christ and of the wicked: *He shall rain down his war upon him.*

Again, of this tabernacle it is said, Lev. 26:11: *I will set my tabernacle*, that is, Mary, *in the midst of you: and my soul shall not cast you off*: because through her we are kept from sin, for which alone God casts off sinners.

Again, this is the tabernacle of the true Moses, which was adorned, built, and covered with skins dyed red and violet and with curtains of goats' hair, and was beautified with curtains woven with embroidered, that is, active, work: because the glorious Virgin was adorned and set off with every kind of beauty of the virtues. Hence also she is called *surrounded with variety* (Ps. 44:15).

Again, this is the tabernacle of the covenant, of which it is read, Num. 10:11–12: *The second year, the second month, the twentieth day of the month, the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle of the covenant: and the*

children of Israel marched by their troops from the desert of Sinai, and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Pharan. Mary is the cloud (look under its title), which was taken up in the assumption from the tabernacle of the body, which is here called *the tabernacle of the covenant*: because in it the covenant between God and man was drawn up through the marriage of the flesh, or human nature, assumed: for there in his incarnation Christ joined human nature in covenant with the divine. He joined also soul and body in covenant in his preaching. And he joined Jews and Gentiles in covenant in his passion: for he was made the cornerstone, making both one. And to designate this he poured out on the cross blood and water from his side (John 19:34), that he might join Jews and Gentiles in covenant with the Father. For in ancient times, in the renewal of mutual peace among the Gentiles, the blood of a pig was poured out, as if by this very act it were said: So let the blood of him be poured out who violates this peace. To *(p. 506)* the same end, the Jews, wishing to be reconciled with the Lord, poured out a cup of water on the ground: and in this pouring out it was signified that, as the water poured out could not return to its vessel, so neither would they thereafter return to their sin. And of this pouring out of water it is read, 1 Kings 7:6: *The children of Israel came together to Masphath*, etc. He joined also human nature in covenant with the divine, with which God had been offended on account of the sin of Adam. And note that after discords between two parties, by the counsel of wise men covenants are wont to be confirmed between the parties. These wise men are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. But this business was enjoined on the Son, who is the wisdom of the Father. The embraces and kisses of this covenant the mother gave the son, as it were on the part of human nature, and the son received them as it were on the part of the divine. Augustine: “O happy kisses pressed upon the lips of the suckling,” etc. (Look under the title on the sweetness of the lips of Mary.) The mother also bound the son’s hands in the cradle, so that thereafter he could not stretch them out to strike, nor have hands except at the good pleasure of his nurse, as is clear in children who are bound in the cradle: and so great a power over the Son of God and her own was then given to so great a mother. (Of this covenant you had much above under the title on the ark, where she is called the ark of the covenant.)

Again, of this tabernacle it is said in Ps. 45:5: *The most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle.* (Look under the title on the sanctification of Mary.)

Again, this tabernacle, namely the body and soul of his mother, Christ set first in the sun, that is, in the beauty of grace; second, in the assumption he set it in the sun, that is, at his right hand, as is truly believed, in eternal brightness: for the sun is most beautiful and most bright.

The third tabernacle is the Church militant, which is figured in many ways by that tabernacle, and its vessels, which Moses put together in the desert.

The fourth, the Church triumphant. Hence, Apoc. 21:3: *Behold the tabernacle of God with men.* Which can be understood of the evident and manifest dwelling together of the divinity with the saved: which will be when the divinity will join itself to us and us to itself in the heavenly fatherland; which fellowship or dwelling together will not be transitory but eternal: hence the word *dwelling* is used. And this is *the tabernacle that cannot be removed* (Isa. 33:20), because in eternal happiness there is never any changeableness. Hence, James 1:17: *With whom there is no change*, etc.

The fifth tabernacle is the body of the just man. Hence, 2 Pet. 1:13–14: *I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle*, that is, as long as I live in the body, *to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, being assured that the laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand.* In this tabernacle the just must fight against a threefold enemy.

And note that a tabernacle, namely a *pavillon* in French, when spread out is rounded: because the flesh, spread out through mortification and presence, is prepared for eternal life. Again, a tabernacle folded up is a burden, but when it is spread out, then one stays and rests in it: so also the flesh is to be spread out, that the spirit may rest in it. And when the tabernacle is to be carried away, then it is folded up: because if the flesh

has been folded up with vices and concupiscences, and not spread out in spiritual exercises, the devil, its pack-carrier, will carry it into hell.

The sixth tabernacle is any ordered religious life. In the tabernacle of the Virgin dwelt Christ, the most valiant soldier; in cloisters, as in tents, dwell spiritual soldiers, strong and ready, who are more strongly attacked by the devil. Num. 24:5–6, it is said of religious communities: *How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel! As woody valleys (p. 507) as watered gardens near the rivers, as tabernacles which the Lord hath pitched, as cedars by the waterside.* Note that first in this authority Jacob is set, by which are noted beginners, for whom wrestling is needed; and afterward Israel is set, which name signifies contemplation. Assign this well. And he compares such to four things: namely to woody valleys first, to watered gardens second, third to tabernacles pitched by the Lord, fourth to cedars by the waters. And two dwellings are touched on here. First, the tabernacles, in which one fights. Second, the tents, in which one rests in peace: because one comes to peace only through war. And this is that the warlike David begot Solomon, who is interpreted *peaceable.* For one enters the bridal chamber through the palace. And these two are supremely necessary in cloisters, namely fighting and rest. But because one must fight in order, a threefold fight is to be carried on. The first fight is against carnal will: this is done by chastity of the flesh and mortification of the flesh. The second, against one's own judgment, that one *lean not upon his own prudence* (Prov. 3:5). The third, against one's own will, through obedience. For Jacob, until he had wrestled, did not have the name Israel. Of such fights things can be assigned in many ways.

It is said, then: *As woody valleys.* The valley is low, the wood is high. This is lowliness in humility and height in way of life. Again, the wood grows up above itself and straight. Above itself, that is, by going above his own judgment and his own will the just man grows, and draws near to heaven: and this is spiritual growth. Again, the wood grows straight upward, not turning back on itself, forward or backward, to the right or to the left, but above itself. Hence, Lam. 3:28: *He shall lift himself up above himself.* Again, Cant. 1:3: *The righteous love thee.* Adapt the properties to the just man, namely that the wood is barren here in his own reckoning, green, upright, and the like.

There follows: *As watered gardens near the rivers.* The just are compared to gardens on account of their manifold enclosure, namely the hope [*spem*, perhaps for *sepem*, "hedge"] of presence, the walls of good working, the ditches of poverty and of regular observance, the planting of virtue of many kinds. (Look under the enclosed garden.) But these gardens are said to be *watered near the rivers*: for young little plants very often need to be watered. The rivers are tears, sermons, devotions, prayers, celebrations of Masses, and the like. And the twofold watered ground which Axa had. (Look in its treatise on the garden, § 7, where the garden is called watered.)

There follows: *As tabernacles which the Lord hath pitched.* In the pitching is constancy of mind and perseverance in good: and these two are had only from God: and therefore they are to be attributed to his grace: and this is what is said: *Which the Lord hath pitched.*

There follows: *As cedars by the waterside.* In the cedars, which are tall and fragrant trees, is the height of an irreproachable life, and the fragrance of good repute. And such tabernacles are beautiful to behold and to imitate and to dwell in: and they are loved by God, Angels, and men. Hence: *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord* (Ps. 83:2), etc.

Chapter 29: Mary, Bridal Chamber

(p. 508) Bridal chamber (*thalamus*), of which in Ps. 18:6: *He*, that is, Christ, *as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber*, namely the virginal womb, which was at the nativity: for, as blessed Cyril, bishop of the city of Alexandria, testifies, the flesh or body of Christ ought not to be understood as the bridal chamber, but the womb of the Virgin: because the creature was not so assumed into the fellowship of its creator that he

holds the place of the dweller and it of the dwelling, but so that the two natures were united one to the other, and come together into so great a unity that the diversity of both is one and the same son. And with this view Gregory fully agrees.

Note that *thalamus* is so called from this, that when the Romans had carried off the Sabine women, one of them, of wonderful beauty, at the bidding of an oracle was given to the leader Thalamon: and since this marriage turned out happily, it was therefore established that the places of those marrying should be called *thalami.* The Egyptians also call *thalamoi* the places where the couches of those marrying are placed. Well, then, is Mary called a bridal chamber: because in her womb the Son of God was joined to human nature as bridegroom to bride, without foulness and uncleanness. John 3:29, John the Baptist says: *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom.* And Christ is called *sponsus*, bridegroom, from *spondendo*, promising: because he was very often promised in the law and the prophets. And this is a great and fitting likeness of the sacrament, that is, of the sign and the thing signified: because he was born of a Virgin for this, to signify that he would join to himself a virgin Church. Hence the Apostle, 2 Cor. 11:2: *For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*, etc.

Again, of Christ and the virginal womb it is said, Deut. 33:12: *Benjamin, the best beloved of the Lord, shall dwell all the day long as in a bridechamber.* Benjamin is interpreted *son of days*, or *son of power*, or *son of bitterness.* Because Christ is the son of God the Father in the day of eternity. Again, *son of power*: because he is *the power of God and the wisdom.* And in the day of time he is the son of bitterness, that is, of Mary, which is interpreted *bitter sea. All the day long*, that is, the whole time due for bringing forth. Luke 2:6, it is said of Mary: *Her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. Shall dwell*: for Christ willingly lodged in the sanctuary of this bridal chamber: because there *his place is in peace.* To designate which, the author of the book of Wisdom says in his person, 7:1–2: *In the womb of a mother … in the time of ten months I was fashioned*, reckoning March with December, so that the part is understood in the whole or the whole in the part. Mary, then, is called a bridal chamber.

Therefore it is to be noted that when kings and great men build themselves houses and mansions, they build their own bridal chambers with greater care and a more elegant design, and on the side of the better and purer air, and on the side of the pleasure gardens, where the birds sing together, spices breathe, flowers give sweet fragrance, grasses are green, trees bear fruit, the south wind blows through, the sun appears earlier than through the other parts of the house. So also did Christ. Hence also of the throne, which is the same as that bridal chamber, it is said, 3 Kings 10:20: *There was no (p. 509) such work made in any kingdom.* Nor did he employ any architect other than himself, as the other great men do. Hence, Prov. 9:1: *Wisdom hath built herself a house*, in which this bridal chamber was constructed, by the work of the Holy Spirit, who is *the worker of all things* (Wis. 7:21). Nor are Christ and the Holy Spirit different workmen: because the works of the Trinity are inseparable. And in this bridal chamber was set *the flourishing little bed* (Cant. 1:15), on which Christ laid the head of his divinity—of which the bride says, Cant. 5:11: *The head of my beloved is as the finest gold*—when he *emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil. 2:7), because there *his place is in peace* (Ps. 75:3). Again, it is to be noted that the bridal chamber is threefold: inner, outer, upper. The inner bridal chamber is the mind of the Virgin, which the whole Trinity inhabited: because there is the flourishing little bed, as has been said. Hence a certain Gloss says on this Psalm: “The heavens have above them him whom the humble have with them in their breast.” The outer bridal chamber, from which one goes out into the house, is the virginal womb, through which God came into the world. The upper bridal chamber is the blessed life, in which Mary, already embraced by the bridegroom, says that of Cant. 2:6: *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me.* And so in the assumption bridal chamber went up into bridal chamber, namely the inner and the outer into the upper: for all believe her to have been assumed together with her body, although this is not asserted.

Mary is called a bridal chamber beautifully arranged: because she had as it were two walls facing one another, namely virginity and motherhood; of which it is said, Ecclus. 14:25, of the servant of Mary: *Fastening a pin in her walls*, that is, his affection. She had the depth of humility, the length of faith, the height of hope, and the breadth of charity. She had a door from the east, through which entered the true Orient, *who hath visited us from on high*; of which door she says, Cant. 5:6: *I opened the bolt of my door to my beloved.* (Look for the exposition in the fifth section of the enclosed garden, 14, where Christ is called dew.) Again, of this door it is said, Gen. 6:16: *The door of the ark thou shalt set in the side below.* Through this door the Son of God entered, coming to visit us. And it signifies her virginity both of mind and of flesh, which is why it is said to have been in the side below. Again, she had a crystal window, which Noe made in the ark, according to what the Hebrews hand down. And likewise it signifies her virginity, by which she shut out the water of carnal pleasures inasmuch as it is a window, and received the true light inasmuch as it is of crystal. And she had this window as it were toward the south, which signifies charity, since pure charity made him take our flesh. Hab. 3:3: *God will come from the south*, etc. (Look under the title on the buildings, that Mary is a window.) She was also closed on the west: because the Sun of justice never set for her through sin. Closed also on the north, *from which all evil shall break forth* (Jer. 1:14), because nothing defiled or harmful could enter into her.

Subtly devised: because by the Holy Spirit, who is described as *subtle*, and *containing all intelligible spirits* (Wis. 7:22–23).

Skilfully put together, that is, artfully: because her *builder and maker is God* (Heb. 11:10). Her also the wisdom of God wrought, who is *the worker of all things* (Wis. 7:21).

Venerably vaulted, in French *chamberillie.* For vaults (*camerae*), according to Isidore, are curves facing inward, named from *curved*: for *kamara*, curved, in Greek, *curvum* in Latin. And such a vault is called *testudo*, tortoise, on account of its slant: for as the ancients made the roofs of temples *(p. 510)* so as to render the image of heaven, which, it is agreed, is convex. And in this manner the ciboria of churches are wont to be made. And such a vault is wont to have certain wooden arches, thin, slender, long, and painted, and curved with a close joining.

Beautifully painted. For the paintings of this bridal chamber were figured in 3 Kings 6:29, where it is read that king Solomon *carved all the walls of the temple round about with divers figures and carvings: and he made in them cherubims, and palm trees, and divers representations, as it were standing out and coming forth from the wall.* And the painter of this bridal chamber is the Holy Spirit, of whom it is said, Ecclus. 38:28, that *his continual diligence varieth the figure: he shall give his mind to the resemblance of the picture, and by his watching shall finish the work.*

And fittingly set off with various colors: namely with the white of virginity, the green of perpetual holiness, the gold of most precious charity, the azure of voluntary poverty, the sapphire of heavenly conversation, the hyacinth of contemplation, the lily-white of most innocent purity, the rose of virginal modesty, the livid of compassion, the vermilion of spiritual martyrdom, the red ochre of singular patience, the saffron of likeness to the Angels, the black of humility, the pale of mortification, the beryl of heavenly wisdom, the purple of royal dignity, the marble of the variety of all virtues, graces, and gifts.

Adorned with forms and images. For she had as it were the images of the Angels, through concord and purity of every kind; of the Patriarchs, through faith and hope; of the Prophets, through knowledge of things to come; of the Apostles, through zeal; of the Martyrs, through patience; of the Confessors, through temperance; of the Virgins, through humility and innocence; of all the saints, through justice and virtue of every kind.

Great, to receive him who *filleth heaven and earth* (Jer. 23:24), and who is *a great king over all the earth* (Ps. 46:3). Therefore she was signified by the great throne which king Solomon made himself of ivory and gold.

(Look under the title on the throne.)

And lofty. Because most remote from all earthliness, and nearest to heaven. (Look under § 5 of the enclosed garden, where it is called high.) For this reason Mary was figured by that queen who came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon (3 Kings 10:1 ff.).

And graced with much beauty. For *there was no such work made in any kingdom* (ibid., v. 20), namely of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

Closed. For the Lord closed this bridal chamber so carefully that it was wholly hidden from the ever-watchful dragon, and shut out the roaring lion far from itself: and not one little chink lay open through which the subtle cunning of the enemy could look in. It was also closed to human understanding: because, as is said, Ecclus. 24:38: *Nor shall a weaker one*, than that king, namely the one born of David, *search her out.* (Look under § 1 of the enclosed garden.) For this bridal chamber was closed by him who *hath the key of David … who shutteth, and no man openeth* (Apoc. 3:7).

Sealed with the seal or signet of virginity: because it was the secret of the Lord, of which he himself had foretold, Isa. 24:16: *My secret to myself*, etc. And he says twice, *My secret to myself*: because from the thoughts and works of the Virgin, and from the inner beauty of her virtues, graces, and gifts, by means of the seal of virginity, the devil was wholly shut out, as by a seal those who are not friends are shut out from secrets. (Look under § 2 of the enclosed garden.)

Firmly fastened with key, nail, and bolt. (Of the key and nail look under § 1 of the enclosed garden.) (Of the bolt look in the fifth section of the enclosed garden, where dew is treated.) For the whole *(p. 511)* blessed Trinity fastened the bridal chamber: because the power of the Father fortified it against the violence of the devil, the wisdom of the Son against the fraudulence of the devil, the goodness of the Holy Spirit against the wickedness of the same devil. (Look under the title on the enclosures of the garden.)

Hedged and armed with arms. For in it was contained the flourishing little bed of the true Solomon, of which it is read in Cant. 3:7. (Look under the title on the little bed. There also you will find of the armor of the Angels. Below, under the title on the house of the forest of Libanus, whose upper part was called the armory, you will find of the same.)

Most bright. For it could not but be most bright, since it contained within itself the whole fountain of light, the whole sun of justice. Jos. 10:13: *The sun stood still*, that is, Christ, *in the midst of heaven*, that is, of the virginal womb: for God, who had filled it with himself through and through, *is light, and in him there is no darkness* (1 John 1:5).

Immaculate. Hence it is said to Mary, Cant. 4:7: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.* Wis. 7:25: *No defiled thing cometh into her.* Apoc. 21:27: *There shall not enter into it any thing defiled* in thought, *or that worketh abomination* in deed, *or maketh a lie* in speech.

Peaceful: because at his entry the Lord had said: *Peace be to this house* (Matt. 10:12). And Agg. 2:10: *In this place I will give peace.* And therefore there *his place*, namely Christ's, *is in peace* (Ps. 75:3): for there was nothing there of contradiction or rebellion between flesh and spirit, reason and sensuality: which had been foreshown in the ark of Noe, where all the animals were peaceful. And of this bridal chamber the Psalmist seems to have foretold of Christ: *Who hath placed peace in thy borders* (Ps. 147:14), etc. For this reason it was said, Deut. 33:12, of Benjamin in figure of Christ: *Benjamin, the best beloved of the Lord … shall dwell all the day long as in a bridechamber*, as above.

Fragrant. Because it contained all aromatic spices, and all the chief ointments, and every powder of the perfumer, as the most special storehouse of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise: the fragrance of this bridal chamber is virginal humility as regards the mind, most humble virginity as regards the flesh; and by these two she drew to herself the Only-begotten of God, who, finding both in her womb the fragrance of virginity and in her

mind the fragrance of humility, and mixing with these fragrances the fragrance of his divinity, ineffably perfumed this bridal chamber.

Sweet-smelling. For the individual virtues gave forth individual fragrances. For this reason the Angels ask of her, Cant. 3:6: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?* (Look in the third section of the enclosed garden, first chapter, and you will find it well expounded.) Again, by reason of such great fragrance she compares herself to aromatic trees: cedar, cypress, cinnamon, balsam, choice myrrh, storax, galbanum, and the like (cf. Ecclus. 24:17 ff.). Again, for this same reason she is compared to the house of the forest of Libanus, whose lower part was called the perfumery (3 Kings 7:2): because it contained royal perfumes.

And delightful. Hence she is said to be *flowing with delights* (Cant. 8:5). (Look for this property in § 11 of the enclosed garden.) For this reason also the Church sings of blessed Mary: "Thou art become beautiful and sweet in thy delights," etc.

Noble: for this bridal chamber was supremely ennobled from this, that it was prepared for this, that the son of the supreme king might rest there, who says of it: *This is my rest* (Ps. 131:14), etc.

And rich: because in it were all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden *(p. 512)* (Col. 2:3). (Look under the title on the riches of Mary.) For this reason her womb is called *a bag of money* (Prov. 7:20): which bag, namely, the Lord took with him into heaven in the assumption of his mother.

Wonderful, by reason of the things which were done in it. For there, in that most blessed union of the divine nature and the human, the lion was made a lamb, God man, the eternal temporal, the Ancient of days a child, the Word an infant, the immortal mortal, the immense a little one, the creator a creature, he who made this which was made. John 1:14: *The Word was made flesh.* Or it can be called supremely wonderful from this: because he who had first made this bridal chamber was afterward made in the same bridal chamber. Hence: *A man is born in her, and the Highest himself hath founded her* (Ps. 86:5). Therefore Isaias exclaims, 66:8: *Who hath ever heard such a thing?* (Look for the exposition under the title on the city, near the beginning of the second leaf.)

Appropriated to the heavenly bridegroom. Hence the Psalmist of Christ being born: *He, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber* (Ps. 18:6), that is, his own, because no other dwelt in it.

And heaped with all good things. For in a bridal chamber things to be guarded are wont to be laid up. For whatever was said above of the ark of the testament, and of the things which were laid up in it, can fittingly be attributed to this bridal chamber.

By whom founded, by the same sanctified. Of the first: *The Highest himself hath founded her* (Ps. 86:5). Of the second: *The most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle* (Ps. 45:5).

Again, the wardrobe of this bridal chamber, in French *la garderobe*, is properly the virginal womb, in which the high priest put on the most clean garments of the flesh. Therefore Mary was figured by Rebecca (Gen. 27:15), who is notably said to have had with her the very good garments of Esau, with which she clothed Jacob, that is, Christ, our wrestler. (This you had expounded above concerning the ark, after the middle of the chapter, where it is said that in an ark garments are folded up.)

Blessed be he by the whole Trinity, who adds yet further some subtle points on the dignity of this bridal chamber.

Chapter 30: Mary, House

House of wisdom, of which, Prov. 9:1: *Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars*, etc. Today this building was raised, which is commended first from the craftsman, where it is said

wisdom, which is *the worker of all things*, as is said in Wis. 7:21. Second, from the end, where it is said *hath built*, namely that she might dwell there. Third, from the form, or appearance, or architecture, where it is said *a house.* Fourth, from the most careful *(p. 513)* care or diligence, where it is said *hath hewn out.* Fifth, from the strength of the building or its arrangement: hence, *seven pillars.* The craftsman, then, is wisdom, which is commended for three things: namely that it made all things. Hence, Wis. 7:21–23: *For wisdom, which is the worker of all things.* It bears all things. Hence there follows: *Having all power.* It sees all things. Hence there follows: *Overseeing all things.* Among all the works of this craftsman Mary is a special work, of which it is said, Ecclus. 42:16: *Full of the glory of the Lord is his work.* Whom he made for this, that what had been deformed in the earlier workmanship might be reformed through her. For this craftsman had first made the angelic nature, which had fallen in part; and the human, which had been corrupted; and the lower corporeal nature, which had been made worse by the sin of man. But for all these God made Mary, by whose fruit the angelic nature might be repaired, according to that of Ps. 109:6: *He shall fill ruins.* The human might be renewed: hence, Apoc. 21:5: *Behold, I make all things new.* The lower might be freed from servitude: hence, Rom. 8:21: *The creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.*

She hath built, then, but *herself*: for he alone had her who constructed and built her. Hence she says, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me, and I to him.* And Cant. 7:10: *I to my beloved, and his turning is towards me.* But was it only for himself? On this it is to be noted that he had first built heaven for the Angels, and this is the house of glory. Luke 2:14: *Glory to God in the highest.* For the demons and damned men, hell, and this is the house of justice. For fallen men, the world, which is the prison of misery. Gen. 3:23: *And the Lord God sent Adam out of the paradise of pleasure, to till the earth from which he was taken.* Yet the same prison is the homeland of the beasts. He had also placed the fishes in the waters, the birds in the air, the stars in the firmament: because, having first lodged the other things, now he attends to a lodging of his own. Therefore it is said: *Wisdom hath built herself a house* (Prov. 9:1). And was it only for himself? Truly a house for himself alone, in which he alone would dwell; but yet she was given to the Angels for restoration, to men and to our nature for repair, to the lower creation for liberation, to himself as a mother, to the demons as an enemy, to those held in limbo for rescue. For when from the beginning the Angels had fallen, nature was corrupted, God offended, the devil victor. But through her innocence is repaired, the angelic life is brought in, God is reconciled and united to man, the devil is conquered and crushed. Gen. 3:15: *She shall crush thy head*, etc.

Wisdom, then, *hath built herself a house.* For souls had been lost, which had been made for nothing else than to be the dwelling of wisdom: and this if they remained holy. Hence it is said of wisdom, Wis. 7:27: *Through nations she conveyeth herself into holy souls.* But because they had been torn down, and all had tottered by sinning—hence, Rom. 3:23: *For all have sinned*, etc.—therefore he built this house so solid and strong that it could in no way totter.

Therefore there follows: *She hath hewn her out seven pillars*, namely to sustain her. Hence he says elsewhere: *I have established the pillars thereof* (Ps. 74:4). *Hath hewn out*, that is, drew out and separated from the quarry or mass of the whole of human nature. Or, *hath hewn out*, that is, fitly prepared and as it were hewed. Or, *hath hewn out* through virginity, poverty, and humility: from the concupiscence of the flesh through the first, which is virginity; from the concupiscence of the eyes through the second, which is poverty; from the pride of life through the third, which is humility. *For all that is in the world* (1 John 2:16), etc. Or, *hath hewn out*, that is, separated from the love of the world: because her virtues were most pure with purity of every kind.

Chapter 30 (continued): Mary, House

(p. 514) Seven pillars. This can be expounded of the seven kinds of pillars, set in a good sense, of which we read in Scripture. There is found the iron pillar (Jer. 1:18). Again, pillars of marble (Cant. 5:15). Again, the

brazen pillars which Hiram cast (3 Kings 7:15). Again, golden pillars upon bases of silver (Ecclus. 26:23). Again, the silver pillars of the litter of Solomon (Cant. 3:10). Again, the pillar of the cloud (Exod. 13:21; Ecclus. 24:7). Again, the pillar of fire (Exod. 13:21). (Look for the full authorities in the said chapters.) In these seven kinds of pillars are shown the seven kinds of virtues with which Christ, the wisest architect, propped up this house.

The iron pillars are fortitude. Hence it is said of Mary: *She hath girded her loins with strength* (Prov. 31:17). Iron tames all metals, as is said, Dan. 2:40. Solomon saw that the first woman had been too weak, who at the first breath of the serpent had fallen, and he complained, saying: *Who shall find a valiant woman?* (Prov. 31:10). And looking to Mary he said: *She hath girded her loins with strength* (ibid., v. 17). Again: *Strength and beauty are her clothing* (ibid., v. 25).

The marble pillars are chastity, which is alabaster cold and white: cold from concupiscence, white from virginity. And these pillars are said to be two, on account of twofold chastity. But the iron pillar is set in the singular, that the spiritual fortitude of the Lord may be understood, and carnal fortitude, unlike the former, excluded. Jer. 23:10: *Their course is become evil, and their strength unlike.* But Mary was chaste in mind and body, and strong in spirit.

The brazen ones are humility: because brass is a rather cheap metal, and the truly humble man loves to be held cheap, not to be proclaimed humble. And brass is a durable metal, and is scarcely ever corrupted. If the first Angel had had humility, he would never have been corrupted. These were two, on account of twofold humility; and they were before the temple, so that one entered the temple in front of them. So by humility one is brought into heaven, and by pride one is cast down from heaven. Hence it is said to Lucifer, Isa. 14:12: *Thou art fallen to the earth*, etc. Hence, when the disciples gloried in the subjection of the demons, Christ answered: *I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven* (Luke 10:18).

The silver ones are faith: these were several, not only two, on account of the many articles of faith. Of silver: because faith is taken from sacred Scripture, which is *silver tried by the fire.* And it is said to Mary: *Blessed art thou that hast believed* (Luke 1:45), etc.

The golden ones are the wisdom of the Virgin, by which she delighted in God. And these are two: hence they are called *firm feet*, because wisdom contemplates and delights: therefore she is called *flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved* (Cant. 8:5).

Of the cloud and of fire. The first is poverty, raised from the earth and dark, yet full of the dew of grace. Isa. 66:2: *To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor?* Therefore it was raised, that it might be united to the Son of God. And this protected from the sun: because humble Mary defends from pride by prayer and example; of which pride it is said, Job 31:26: *If I beheld the sun.* But riches beget pride; hence they are called proud from their effect. The fire is charity. *I am come to cast fire on the earth* (Luke 12:49), etc. This protected in the night: because charity defends in adversity, since it is patient and kind. Cant. 8:7: *Many waters cannot quench charity*, etc. And the pillar of fire and of the cloud are joined: because poverty is rightly *(p. 515)* joined to charity, and the reverse: because the more eternal things are loved, the less earthly things, and the reverse. Likewise faith and wisdom, which are the silver and golden pillars, follow the same rule, namely Scripture. Hence they are called silver and founded upon golden bases. Likewise the marble and the brazen, chastity and humility. Most beautiful is the joining of these two, as blessed Bernard says. Fortitude stands alone, as the prop of all. Isa. 52:1: *Arise, arise, put on thy strength, O Sion.*

Otherwise, the whole: *Wisdom hath built herself a house*, etc. The Son of God is called wisdom (*sapientia*) as if savory knowledge (*sapida scientia*): because he alone is known with savor, and he is never truly known without savor: for he does not know God to whom God has no savor. Therefore it is said: *O taste, and see* (Ps. 33:9), etc. As if it were said: Come to the taste, and you will be enlightened to sight. In his taste is the savor of eternal sweetness, in his sight the splendor of knowledge; and in these two consists wisdom, that is,

savory knowledge, which cannot be savory except concerning him, nor unsavory concerning him. Of this wisdom it is said to the Father: *Thou hast made all things in wisdom* (Ps. 103:24), because *all things were made by him* (John 1:3).

There follows: *Hath built herself a house*: a house for himself, where he alone would dwell, but for us a storehouse or cellar full of good works, which look to grace in the present, and overflowing from this vessel into that vessel. Hence we say to Christ: *We shall be filled with the good things of thy house* (Ps. 64:5), etc. As the Philosopher says, a house is a defense against heats and rains. By the heats are meant the invisible and spiritual temptations of the devil; by the rains, the temptations of the flesh continually attacking the spirit. From these we are defended as it were under the roof of this house. Hence it is said of the lover of Mary, Ecclus. 14:27: *He shall be protected under her covering from the heat*, as from the heat, *and shall rest in her glory*, as from rain. The glory of Mary is her virginity. Isa. 4:6: *And there shall be a tabernacle for a shade*, etc., as above, on the tabernacle. Concerning this building three things are chiefly to be attended to, namely the material, the form, and the adornment. The material is gold and ivory, cedar woods of Libanus, and stones from Libanus: gold and cedar woods and stones brought from Libanus were the material of the temple. In 3 Kings 22:39 it is read of the ivory house of Achab.

In the house which is Mary there are foundations in a square, namely the four cardinal virtues. Or, adapt concerning the foundations of this house as above concerning the foundations of the city.

The walls likewise in a square. Hence, Ezek. 40:5: *And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about on every side.* (Look for the walls under the title that she is a city and a tower.) Or, the walls are the angelic guard. The walls of the house (*parietes*) are virginity and motherhood. Ecclus. 14:25, of the servant of Mary: *He that lodgeth near her house, and fastening a pin in her walls*, that is, his affection.

The squareness is fear and desire, sorrow and joy. Of the first, Luke 1:30: *Fear not, Mary.* Of the second, v. 38: *Be it done to me*, etc. Sorrow in the passion. Hence, Luke 2:35: *And thy own soul*, etc. Joy at the resurrection of the Son.

The dimensions: the depth is humility; the length faith or persevering holiness; the breadth charity; the height the loftiness of hope, or the ecstasy of contemplation.

The beams and the rafters. Cant. 1:16: *The beams of our houses are of cedar*. These beams are the bodily members of the blessed Virgin, of which the house of wisdom was joined together, which like cedar were incombustible by sins. There follows: *Our rafters of cypress.* The rafters *(p. 516)* are the ornaments of the bridal chamber, and designate the inner spiritual goods, which after the manner of the cypress have laid aside the foliage of the virtues through no oldness of sin. For the beams are for the strength of the house, the rafters for its beauty. The beams of the houses, then, in the plural, namely of the body of Christ and of the body of the blessed Virgin, are of cedar: because their bodies, or the members of their bodies, did not breed worms, either through any sin or any evil motion. The rafters are of cypress: because, though they spread out and grew thick below for the example of others, yet they tended to a point like the cypress, that is, to that one thing which is necessary.

The roof is patience against the inclemency of the air. The many little mansions and lodgings are the manifold refuges of those who flee to her. For she says with her Son, John 6:37: *And him that cometh to me, I will not cast out.* Therefore the Son says of her, John 14:2: *In my Father's house there are many mansions.* These are the little mansions which, by the command of the Father, the true Noe made in the ark, which figured Mary.

The pavement, of which it is said, 2 Paral. 3:6: *Solomon paved the floor of the temple with most precious marble, with great beauty.* By this pavement is signified the humility of the Virgin, always bowing downward like a pavement, which was receptive of virtue and of every special beauty. And in this, that the

pavement was made of marble, is signified the stability of humility in the virginal mind; and the joining of these two virtues is most precious and most beautiful before God: and therefore it is said *with most precious marble, with great beauty*. The carvings or paintings of this pavement are the examples of the Patriarchs and Prophets, all of which she transformed into herself, which were: the justice of Noe, the faith of Abraham, the obedience of Isaac, the wrestling of Jacob, the chastity of Joseph, the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job, the humility of David, the wisdom of Solomon, the zeal of Elias, and the like; all of whom were as it were the pavement in respect of this most excellent building.

The gate is faith, by which Christ entered, which was always shut to the prince, that is, the devil, who is called *the prince of this world* (John 14:30). Of this gate it is said, Ezek. 46:1: *The gate shall be shut the six days on which work is done: but on the sabbath day it shall be opened*: because it was shut to the human habit of sin, but opened to bring us into rest.

There follows: *She hath hewn her out seven pillars.* She hewed out, as was expounded above, seven pillars, by which this house always stood firm. These seven pillars are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which rested on Christ resting in Mary, and which never deserted her; through which she stood firmly and perseveringly in every grace and virtue. Or, the seven virtues, three theological and four cardinal. Or, seven virtues which can be drawn out of her seven words, of which we read in the Gospel. The first, prudence, in: *How shall this be done?* etc. The second, firmness of vow, in: *Because I know not man.* The third, humility, in: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.* The fourth, prayer or obedience, in: *Be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:34 ff.). Or, the seven pillars are those seven virtues which James attributes to *the wisdom that is from above* (James 3:17): which can most fittingly be adapted to Mary and to any perfect soul, and prop up the house of wisdom against the seven deadly sins.

Wisdom is *chaste*, against lust, or against the prudence of the flesh, which is unclean and soils the soul. *Peaceable*, against anger. James 3:18: *The fruit of justice is sown in peace.* Or, against the prudence of the world, which is tumultuous. *Modest*, against gluttony, which seeks *(p. 517)* superfluities, and does not know how to stop at measure. Or, *modest*, against pride. The modesty of Mary appeared in this, that she was willing to be espoused to a carpenter, though she was of royal stock. Again, it appears in her answer to the Angel: for she was a most prudent virgin, and knew that the wise man had said, Prov. 17:27: *He that setteth bounds to his words is knowing and wise*, etc. Again, it appears in this, that, wishing one day to speak with her Son, she did not presume to enter the house in which her Son was preaching or to interrupt his discourse, but, standing outside, reverently waited, as is read in Mark 3:31. Again, it appeared in this, that when she saw her Son crucified, heard him blasphemed, saw him spat upon, buffeted, nailed, and pierced with the lance, she did not murmur, did not contradict, did not curse, though the sword of her Son pierced her soul. And so she left us an example of all modesty; according to which the Apostle was to command, Phil. 4:5: *Let your modesty be known to all men*, etc. *Easy to be persuaded*, against sloth and acedia, which does not acquiesce in the counsel of the Apostle, who says, Gal. 6:10: *Whilst we have time, let us work good to all men.* Ease of persuasion is readily to receive corrections and counsels, as she also did, not answering the Angel at once, but first thinking what manner of salutation this should be (Luke 1:29). *Consenting to the good*, against uncleanness, which *turning good into evil lieth in wait* (Ecclus. 11:33). And she, hearing the good promise of the Angel, at once answered: *Be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38). *Full of mercy and good fruits*: mercy in affection, against hardness of heart; good fruits in effect, against avarice. And she, having conceived the Saviour, at once mercifully visited Elizabeth, who was with child. *Judging without dissimulation*, against pride, which excuses itself, as is clear in our first parents. And she humbly answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (ibid.), etc.

Of this house, which is the storehouse of the Lord, the Psalmist says to Christ, Ps. 64:5: *We shall be filled with the good things of thy house.* Note that the Lord has a threefold house: heaven, the blessed Virgin, eternal beatitude. From the first we receive the goods of nature, from the second the goods of grace, from the

third the goods of glory. For heaven is as it were a certain house or workshop or cellar from which natural good things are poured out on us, namely the vital heat by which the various species of things are propagated; and it can be called the house of nature; but as regards this pouring out there is no distinction. Matt. 5:45: *Who maketh his sun to rise*, etc., *and raineth*, etc. For heaven is that generous hand of which it is said: *Thou openest thy hand* (Ps. 144:16), etc. But since this did not suffice for our poverty, the Lord devised to make another.

Hence wisdom built not only for herself but also for us a house, from which she might pour out on us spiritual good things, namely gifts of graces, ointments of virtues, medicines for diseases, and the like; which would be the nearer to us and the more at hand than heaven itself, from which the goods of nature flow to us, as we need the goods of grace more than the goods of nature. This house is the virginal womb, which is for us a granary of grain, a cellar of wine and oil, a storehouse of every medicinal ointment and of every aromatic spice, and the like. Therefore it is said to Christ in the person of all the faithful: *We shall be filled with the good things of thy house* (Ps. 64:5). This *we shall be filled* the empty and hungry seem to say. For before the coming of the Saviour in the flesh there was want and hunger and dearth in Egypt, that is, in the world, until the true Joseph, in the blessed Virgin as in his *(p. 518)* granary, gathered grain to satisfy the hunger of Egypt (Gen. 41:48–49). And well is it said: *We shall be filled* [*refilled*]: because so great is the abundance of the house that it can sufficiently fill our want. Therefore it is said in the plural: *with the good things of thy house.* And our want or misery consists chiefly in three things, which are: the corruption of nature, the lack of virtues, and the abundance of vices. Of this threefold lack, Jer. 4:23: *I beheld the earth, and lo it was void, and nothing.* He did not say, I beheld man, the seal of God, of which, Job 38:14: *The seal shall be restored as clay.* Nor did he say, I beheld the earth full, but he said: *I beheld the earth, and lo it was void.* And he adds: *And nothing*: because earth full of brambles and overgrown with thorns is as it were nothing in value. So the sinner is empty of virtues and full of vices and sins. And well does he say *as it were nothing* (the Vulgate lacks *as it were*), and not altogether nothing: because as long as the sinner lives, there remains a spark of reason, by means of which something can be done through grace. But the blessed Virgin supplies our lacks: because she obtains pardon for sins, that we may not be as it were nothing; she gains grace for us, that we may not be empty; she repairs nature, that we may not remain as clay. And she does this not only once, but as often as, truly penitent, we flee to her.

And therefore perhaps the Psalmist did not say *implebimur*, we shall be filled, but more significantly said *replebimur*: because she does not fill us only once, but many times repairs us when we have been emptied by sinning. Therefore he said *replebimur*, that is, we shall be filled again and again. Because first through her we shall be filled with the glorification of the soul. Second, we shall be filled with the immortality of the body. Again, our first lack and our first poverty, which is to lack God, was filled and enriched when, through her, *a child is born to us, and a son is given to us* (Isa. 9:6): that we might have the price of our redemption, for which no one's wealth sufficed. The second poverty or second lack was filled when *they were all filled with the Holy Ghost* (Acts 2:4). For even if the gate of paradise was opened in the passion, yet we lacked a leader to rule us and lead us to heaven: and the Holy Spirit was given as leader. But because we often do insult to the Holy Spirit by sinning, and so he often deserts us, and, deserted by him, we slip from the way, lest the fallen should lack the help by means of which they might rise again, Mary was assumed into heaven, that she might raise the fallen, enlighten the blind, and loose the fettered. We say, then, to the Son of Mary: *We shall be filled with the good things of thy house.* With good things, in the plural: for so great is the abundance there of all true good that it exceeds the want of the whole creation. Therefore it is said of Christ: *Glory and wealth*, that is, glorious riches, *shall be in his house* (Ps. 111:3), which is Mary. This filling he desired who said to the Son, or also to the mother: *For thee my soul hath thirsted* (Ps. 62:2), O Mary, who art the wine cellar.

This filling also our flesh itself desires, which thirsts in many ways, because, hungering, thirsting, growing weary, it finds no remedy in this world. The soul, then, thirsts for glorification, and the flesh for immortality, both of which we hope to have through her. Therefore we say: *We shall be filled*, etc.

And if it be asked when, or how, or from whom, or through whom so great a fullness of all true good was poured into this house, it must be answered that it was in the conception of the Son, by the command of God the Father: and this was designated in Gen. 6:21, where God the Father is read to have said to the true Noe, that is, to the Son about to take flesh from Mary, who is figured by the ark: *Thou shalt take unto thee of all food that may be eaten, and thou shalt lay it up with thee: and it shall be food for thee and them.* (This you will find fully expounded in § 12 on the garden, where *(p. 519)* it is assigned how Mary feeds and gives drink to her guests.)

Of the third house, which is eternal beatitude, the Lord says, John 14:2: *In my Father's house there are many mansions.* Again, in Ps. 121:1: *I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord.* Again, Bar. 3:24: *O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast*, and much else. Again, of the house above the heavens is expounded this: *We shall be filled with the good things of thy house* (Ps. 64:5). Again: *Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord* (Ps. 92:5), etc., because *there shall not enter into it any thing defiled* (Apoc. 21:27). Again, of the house above the heavens the Psalmist says, Ps. 83:5: *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord*, etc. *Wisdom*, then, *hath built herself a house* (Prov. 9:1). And this is what is read in 3 Kings 6:9: *Solomon built the house, and finished it.* And note that Solomon did not celebrate the founding of the house, but its dedication. The founding of the house of the Virgin, which is not to be celebrated: because she was conceived with original sin. The dedication of the house is the sanctification of the Virgin in her mother's womb soon, as is believed, after the conception: this is to be celebrated. [The edition notes: not soon, but Mary was sanctified together with her conception, as is clear from the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.] Which sanctification was as it were a certain spiritual dedication: because then and from then she was wholly dedicated to God, that is, given and appropriated: for to dedicate a house is to dedicate it to God, that is, to give and appropriate it.

Again, 3 Kings 9:3, the words of the Father to the Son: *I have sanctified*, says the Father to the true Solomon, that is, to the Son, *this house which thou hast built*—because *wisdom hath built herself a house*, as above—*to put my name there for ever: and my eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually.* The name of the Father and the word of the Father is the Son of God. And God the Father sanctified this house as it were three times: with a great sanctification, when he sanctified her in the womb; with a greater, in the filling of grace, when she was called *full of grace*; with the greatest, in the coming upon her of the Holy Spirit and the conception of the Son of God: because then most of all the Holy Spirit so wholly extinguished the tinder in her that afterward she could not sin even venially, as Augustine says.

There follows: *And my eyes shall be* (3 Kings 9:3): because where love is, there is the eye. *And my heart there*: because *where a man's treasure is, there is his heart also* (Matt. 6:21). And Mary is the treasure of the Lord. For treasure is said both of what is laid up, namely the virtues and gifts of graces, and of the repository itself. On account of this sanctification or dedication David had foretold of Mary: *Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, unto length of days* (Ps. 92:5). And note that first the house was built of squared stones. Second, Solomon covered it all on the inside with cedar wood: and so he built as it were wooden walls within the stone walls, and as it were a wooden house within the stone one. Third, from the innermost part he covered everything with the purest gold, everywhere fixing plates of gold to the cedar wood with golden nails: and so he made golden walls within the cedar ones, and as it were a golden house within the cedar one: and so as it were one house in three, and as it were three in one. And such it befitted the dining room of the Trinity to be. The outer house was of stone, the inner of cedar, the innermost of gold. This is *the house of the forest of Libanus* (3 Kings 7:2), which was divided into two parts, as the Master says in the History. The lower part was called *nechota*, that is, the perfumery, which contained the perfumes and spices of Solomon

for the use of the temple and of the royal *(p. 520)* house; by which perfumes and spices the virginal fragrance of Mary is designated. The upper part was called the armory, which contained arms for the protection of the king and the adornment of the house; by which arms are designated the virtues with which Mary protects the Church and those who rule themselves well. From the outside it was called the house of the forest: because it was surrounded by pleasure gardens planted with trees, in which birds sang as in a forest. Behold the prayers of the blessed Virgin, secret and clean, directed without obstacle to the Lord. Libanus is *whiteness* or *whitening*, that is, the Virgin all white within and without. This house *king Solomon*, that is, Christ, *made himself.* And this house contained the medicine, namely Christ, against the diseases of sins, and the arms of the virtues against the flesh and the devil. These arms are virginity, poverty, humility: each to each. (Of this house you had more under the title *Full of grace*, near the end of the chapter.)

Again, the material of stone was taken from Libanus, that is, from whiteness, namely from the most pure flesh of the Virgin; this as regards the temple of the body of Christ. Or, the material of the body of Christ is compared to the stones of Libanus for this reason: because the Virgin was as it were of stone, that is, hard and insensible and impenetrable to all the darts, that is, the snares, of the enemy, like a stone.

Again, of this house the Psalmist says, Ps. 25:8: *I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house*, etc. The beauty of this house consists chiefly in two things: in the absence of all evil, and the adornment of all good. Or, in the adornment of every inner virtue, and of all good outward working.

There follows: *And the place where thy glory dwelleth*, that is, the Son: because *the glory of the father is a wise son* (Prov. 10:1), according to another translation.

Morally: the beauty of the house of the Lord is the beauty of the faithful soul, which God delights to dwell in. Hence he says, Prov. 8:31: *My delights were to be with the children of men.* And this beauty consists in the two things said above, as has been said.

There follows: *And the place where thy glory dwelleth.* As if he said: I love my soul for this, that glory may dwell there. This is the house to which the Lord, wishing to dwell in it peacefully for a long time, said at his entry, Matt. 10:12: *Peace be to this house*; and *to all that dwell in it* can be supplied, so that this be understood of the motions of sensuality.

This is the house of prayer, actively and passively, of which the Lord says, Isa. 56:7: *My house*, that is, Mary, whom I dwelt in bodily for nine months, *shall be called the house of prayer for all people*; to whom the Church says: “Every man, every hour, pray to her,” etc. Actively: because she prays assiduously for the Christian people, and above all for her friends, after the example of Jeremias, of whom it is said, 2 Mach. 15:14: *This is he that prayeth much for the people, and for all the holy city.* Therefore, Ecclus. 50:20: *In the great house*, that is, in Mary, *the sound of sweetness was increased*: because her prayers are fragrant to her Son and to the whole Trinity. Passively: because she is to be continually entreated by us. This is she of whom, Isa. 6:4: *The house was filled with smoke*, that is, Mary with the grace of contemplation. This is she of whom the Lord says, Isa. 60:7: *I will glorify the house of my majesty.* He, then, who does not glorify Mary with the Lord as far as he can, will be ignoble. Hence she says with her Son, 1 Kings 2:30: *They that despise me shall be despised.*

Of this house it is said, Agg. 2:8: *And the desired*, Christ, *of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory*: because *the glory of the father is a wise son* (Prov. 10:1). Again, in the same place, v. 10: *Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first: and in this place I will give peace.* The first house is Eve, the second Mary. The glory of Eve *(p. 521)* is that she was formed in paradise by the hand of the Lord from the substance of Adam. The glory of Mary is infinitely greater: because from her most pure substance was formed the flesh of Christ, by whose price the world was redeemed; and because through her childbearing the paradise lost to us through Eve was restored. Again, Ps. 5:8: *In the multitude of thy mercy I will come into thy house*, O Christ, namely through faith and love. For the greatest mercy of God is to pour

into someone the grace of loving his mother.

Again, of this house it is said, Luke 10:38: *A certain woman*: *woman*, that is, Mary, soft with mercy and kindness; *certain*, that is, singular; *named Martha*, which in Syriac is interpreted *ruling*, and signifies Mary, which is interpreted *lady*; *received him*, namely Jesus, who is true salvation, *into her house*, that is, into the virginal womb, etc. Morally: Martha is the body, whose part is to serve; Mary is the spirit, whose part is to keep sabbath. Jesus speaks and is willingly heard, whose part is to preach the gospel. In such a house Jesus, that is, true salvation, willingly lodges, and spiritually provides for the whole spiritual household.

Otherwise: *a woman*, that is, a soul soft and workable through piety and obedience; if she be *certain*, that is, singular, loving the secret of contemplation and removing from herself the din of vices; if she be also *Martha*, that is, ruling, so as to rule her sensuality; she will receive, by hospitality, Jesus, that is, true salvation, into her material house, or into the house of her heart and body, etc.

Again, of this house, Joel 3:18: *A fountain*, that is, Christ, *shall come forth*, through the fleshly nativity, *of the house of the Lord*, that is, Mary, *and shall water*, by his preaching, or in his passion, where he poured out from his body blood and water for our washing—hence, Apoc. 1:5: *Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*, with which water came out—*the torrent of thorns*, that is, the consciences of sinners, who like a torrent flow into the dead sea.

The Church is the house of wisdom, of which this is expounded: *Wisdom hath built herself a house* (Prov. 9:1). The seven pillars of this house are the seven sacraments of the Church, by which the Church is propped up and sustained in grace and virtue. The gate of this house is baptism for those who have never entered, penance for those who, having once entered, afterward foolishly went out. Or, the seven pillars are the seven virtues, three theological and four cardinal. The foundation is the Catholic faith, which supports the whole building of the virtues, and without which they do not rise: because *without faith it is impossible to please God* (Heb. 11:6).

The gate is baptism, without which the Church is not entered: namely without baptism of water, or of the Spirit, or of blood.

Religious life is the house of wisdom, of which house it is said: *God who maketh men of one manner to dwell in a house* (Ps. 67:7). Again: *Holiness becometh thy house* (Ps. 92:5), etc. Again: *I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God* (Ps. 83:11), etc. The foundation of this house is poverty: for as long as this foundation stood immovable, so long religious life stood firm: but as a house must fall when its foundation totters, so religious life falls in the eyes of God, whatever may appear outwardly, when poverty has been put to flight. Therefore a certain saint said that religious life smothered its mother, that is, poverty. Or otherwise, namely that riches smothered their mother, that is, religious life. But many who appear religious now study nothing else than to destroy this foundation, wishing to build without a foundation, which is impossible.

The squareness of this house: thus the religious house ought to be as it were square: *(p. 522)* the four things that must be renounced by those who enter religious life, that so they may become square, or four-sided, or four-cornered. The first, carnal desires. The second, the desirable things of the world. The third, one’s own will. And the fourth, the carnal friendship of carnal parents: because they ought to love them spiritually, but not carnally. Or, that squareness which wisdom herself teaches, Wis. 8:7: *For she teacheth temperance, and prudence, and justice, and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life.* (The Latin calls temperance *sobrietas* and fortitude *virtus*, and names prudence and justice by their own names.) A good squareness indeed, than which nothing is more profitable to men in life: because it is itself the life in men, the life namely not of the flesh but of the spirit, a profitable life and much more profitable than the life of the flesh.

The door by which one truly enters can be called obedience: whoever has not entered through it, whatever it may seem to him, is nevertheless always outside in merit, even if he is inside in number. The boards of this door are the properties of obedience. The two little doors: to obey in adversity and in prosperity. The lintel, and the threshold which is below: to obey for the honor of God and for one's own profit. The ironwork: the firm purpose of keeping the vow of obedience. In the joining of the boards: fraternal charity. The doorkeeper, solicitous, fearful, and taking care for himself: the fear of death, the fear of judgment and of hell. His club: the constant pondering of the things of hell, where *hammers are prepared for striking the bodies of fools* (Prov. 19:29). The eastern wall is the hope of eternal beatitude; the western, the fear of eternal damnation; the southern, temperance in prosperity; and the northern, patience in adversity. These four, like walls, shut out harmful things, and do not let in their contraries, which are despair, presumption, superfluity, and impatience. This house is propped up by seven pillars. The first two: obedience and reverence to superiors. The third and fourth: counsel and help to equals. The fifth and sixth: correction and discipline to subjects. The seventh: the judgment of true confession toward oneself. The door of this house is discretion, as to what is to be admitted and what repelled. The windows are piety and mercy, which carry us outward to our neighbors. The roof is patience, or contemplation, which climbs upward. Lam. 3:28: *He shall lift himself up above himself.* The depth is fear, the height hope, the breadth love, that is, charity, the length perseverance in good, without which no one is saved.

The fourth house of wisdom is any faithful soul, which Christ builds for himself in the forming of the body and the infusion of the soul; but he does not yet dwell in it, because of the filth of original sin, until it is dedicated in baptism. This is the dignity of man above the other creatures, that he is built and made for this, that he may be the dining room of the whole Trinity. Hence the Lord says, Prov. 8:31: *My delights were to be with the children of men.* But woe to that man who has cast out so great an indweller from himself! Woe to him who, having cast him out by sinning, has not called him back again into his house by repenting! Surely it were better for that man if he had not been born.

The material of this house, then, is body and soul. Or, as it were a certain spiritual material: the woods of Libanus, and setim, gold and ivory, and stones, and the other things of which above. The seven pillars are the seven graces of the Holy Spirit, which the baptized receives. Or, the seven virtues, theological and cardinal. Or, those seven which James enumerates, of which it was said above. Or, another seven which befit the penitent and are founded upon good sorrow, of which we read in 2 Cor. 7:11. The first, solicitude to amend the offence. The second, fear of relapsing. The third, to be indignant with oneself because one has offended God. The fourth, to defend oneself from the adversary. James 4:7: *Resist the devil.* The fifth, the desire of making progress. The sixth, emulation of a better life. And the seventh, revenge: namely that a man take revenge on the flesh, through which he sinned, and say with Jephte to his daughter, Judg. 11:35, that is, *(p. 523)* to the flesh: *Alas, my daughter, thou hast deceived me, and thou thyself art deceived.*

Again, the Lord, knowing that our house is weak and prone to fall, sends to us again to prop it up. Or, the other seven pillars which prop it up and as it were raise it again are: contrition, which raises it on the side of the heart; confession, prayer, and fasting, which on the side of the mouth; satisfaction and almsgiving, on the side of the hands; the shedding of tears, on the side of the eyes; the hearing of the word of God and of the cry of the poor, on the side of the ears; discipline, on the side of the loins; and going to church and visiting the wretched, on the side of the feet.

Tectum, roof, which is so called from *tegere*, to cover: because the Son of God was covered there with the garment of flesh, when before he was as it were naked, that is, pure God. Of the third the Psalmist says, Ps. 101:8, in the figure of Christ: *I am become as a sparrow all alone on the housetop*, that is, in the virginal womb, which I alone dwelt in. (Look under the title on the birds, why Christ is compared to the sparrow.)

Aedes, dwelling, which is so called from *edere*, to eat. Hence Plautus: "If I had invited you also to eat at dinner." For there Christ *ate his honeycomb with his honey* (Cant. 5:1). Hence, Ezek. 44:3: *The prince*

himself shall sit in it, to eat bread before the Lord.

Triclinii, that is, the dining room (*triclinium*), which is not set in the verse. Isidore says that a *triclinium* is a supper room named from three couches of those reclining: for in houses where the furnishing of a banquet was set out, three couches were spread, on which those reclining feasted. For *klin*■ in Greek is *bed* or *reclining place* in Latin, and from *three* and *clinium* is compounded *triclinium*.

Chapter 31: Mary, Temple

Templum, temple. Hence in Ps. 64:5–6: *We shall be filled with the good things of thy house*; and: *Holy is thy temple, wonderful in justice.* A house is properly man's; a temple is God's. Therefore the blessed Virgin is called house and temple: because she was the dwelling of God and of man. This temple was dedicated and sanctified in the sanctification of the blessed Virgin. Hence it is said: *The most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle* (Ps. 45:5). And *templum* is said as if *tectum amplum*, an ample roof: and she is ample in charity, in protection, in piety. Of this temple the Psalmist says, Ps. 64:5–6, to Christ: *Holy is thy temple, wonderful in justice.*

Mary is a temple: because through her we offer prayers to Christ. *Holy*, as you have under the title on her holiness. *Wonderful in justice*, that is, in the incarnation. Which is called justice: because it was just that he who had made should remake. Again, that he who had given the occasion of the ruin should pay the damage. Therefore Jonas says, Jon. 1:12: *Take (p. 524) me, and cast me into the sea … for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you*, as if speaking in the person of Christ to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Again, that as by one man came death, so by one man life. Again, that as the Son was the middle one among the Persons, so he should be the middle one between the natures. (How this temple is wonderful, look under the title that we owe blessing to Mary.)

In this temple offering is made to the Lord. And in the womb of the blessed Virgin the Son offered to the Father the humility by which he expiated the pride of man. And therefore this temple is called *wonderful in justice.* A wonderful justice: because the lowest proudly aspired to the highest, therefore the Highest humbled himself to the lowest.

The Lord is adored. And the Son is adored by the mother. Hence: *I will worship towards thy holy temple* (Ps. 5:8). And again, Ps. 28:2: *Adore ye the Lord in his holy court.* So the three magi came up, adoring the mother with the Son whom she held in her lap (Matt. 2:11), as is believed at that hour.

The house is entreated. Which is done when we say to her: "Remember, author of salvation," etc. Again, when we say to her that word of Jeremias, 14:21: *Remember the throne of thy glory*, etc. (Look above, under the title on the throne and the seat.) Morally: Matt. 6:6: *When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber.*

Sacrifice is offered to the Lord. Which was most of all when the mother was martyred in the Son. Nay, also as often as she entreated the Lord for the salvation of the world *in the spirit of humility and with a contrite heart* (Dan. 3:39). *A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit* (Ps. 50:19), etc., which repels the temptations of the devil. Job 2:13: the friends of Job, that is, the demons, who feign themselves friends in order to deceive, do not dare to tempt those whom they see grieving and saddened for their sins. Hence it is said there: *No man spoke to him a word: for they saw that his grief was very great.*

It is marked with crosses within and without: within, by the memory of the passion; without, by its imitation. Hence the Son says to her, Cant. 8:6: *Put me as a seal*, etc. Exod. 12:22: *Dip a bunch of hyssop in the blood that is at the door, and sprinkle the transom of the door therewith, and both the door cheeks.* The transom is reason, which is to be anointed with this blood by the memory of the passion. By the two door cheeks, the irascible and the concupiscible: the irascible, that it may be formed to the imitation of the passion through penance; the concupiscible, through love.

In this temple relics are laid up, that is, the examples of the saints for imitation. Hence Joseph, that is, Christ, commanded his brothers, Gen. 50:24, to take up his bones, that is, strong examples for imitation: which it is certain the blessed Virgin did before all. Or, the precious relics which were laid up in this temple: the Son of God enclosed in the virginal womb. Or also the gifts of all graces. On this account also it was commanded, Exod. 28:9–12, that the high priests should bear the names of the twelve sons of Israel in the rational, which was upon the breast, by memory, and on the ephod, by imitation of the work.

It is sprinkled with holy water. The water is grace: hence, *full of grace.* Or, the water is Scripture, *the water of wholesome wisdom* (Ecclus. 15:3), which Mary had above all. She had also the water of tears, above all at the time of the Lord's passion, and the water of devotion all the time of her life. Morally: by the water of tears, which is blessed, because *blessed are they that mourn* (Matt. 5:5), the devil is put to flight. Which was signified in 3 Kings 18:44, where Elias commanded Achab: *Prepare thy chariot, and go down, lest the rain prevent thee*, namely the rain of tears. And at once Achab, that is, the devil, fled. And note that salt is to be put in holy water, that one may weep with discretion and for a due cause. Apply this as is had there: *Blessed are they (p. 525) that mourn.* And this putting of salt was signified in 4 Kings 2:20–21, in the deed of Eliseus, who salted the waters of Jericho.

There was the table of proposition, the altar of incense, and the candlestick with seven lamps: that in the soul there may be the refreshment of Scripture, which is signified by the table. Jer. 31:33: *I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart.*

The altar of incense is faith, which was of setim wood (Exod. 30:1): because the articles of faith are incorruptible, like setim wood.

The candlestick of light, beaten work: namely the heart, which is as it were the sun in the microcosm, beaten out through obedience and patience. The seven lamps are the seven gifts enlightening this temple. All these were in surpassing manner in the temple of the Lord, that is, in the glorious Virgin.

There is singing and psalmody. Hence: *In his temple all shall speak his glory* (Ps. 28:9), to the honor of the Son, by glorifying Mary. She too, since she is queen and leader of the virginal choir, does not cease to sing to the Lord that new song of which it is said, Apoc. 14:3: *No man could say the canticle*, etc. The priest of this temple is Christ the Lord. Hence: *The Lord is in his holy temple* (Ps. 10:5), as priest. In the midst of this temple we have received the mercy of God, that is, the Son, given to us by the Father out of pure mercy. Hence we say to the Father: *We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple* (Ps. 47:10), which was the virginal womb. Or, *mercy*, that is, the remission of our sins: because the Son of God came into this temple for this, *to save his people from their sins*, as is said, Matt. 1:21.

The temple of the Lord is recognized by many a sign. The first, from this, that it has its head, that is, *le chevet*, toward the East. The head is the heart. He who has his heart toward God looks to the East with a twofold eye, intellect and affection, or thought and love. He who has his heart toward the West, that is, toward the world, and has turned his back on this East, namely Christ, is a temple of the devil. The second, if it has the cross of faith, or of discipline, or of ordered correction of morals: otherwise it is rather a house of the devil than of God. The third, the image of the Crucified. Your soul is the image of God: but it must be fixed to the spiritual cross through obedience, and the flesh itself through mortification to the cross of penance. This is a twin cross, like the cross of Christ. After these things one should write about the temple of Solomon, how it can signify Mary; and about the tabernacle and all its vessels, the table, the altar, and the like.

Basilica. Isidore says that in ancient times royal dwellings were called *basilicae*, from *basileus*, which is *king*. But now a temple is named basilica for this reason, that there worship and sacrifices are offered to the King of all ages. And Mary is the dwelling of the heavenly King, who says of her in Ps. 131:14: *This is my rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell*, etc. For she was signified by the basilica of king Assuerus, of which

we read in Esther 5:1.

Sancta sanctorum, the holy of holies. The *holy*, according to the ancients, are the outer parts of the temple; but the *holy of holies* is the more secret place of the temple, to which there was no access for anyone but the priest only. And it is called the holy of holies because it is holier than the outer oracle, as the Canticle of canticles is so called because it surpasses all canticles. And Mary is rightly called the holy of holies, because she received in herself the Holy One of holies (Dan. 9:24). Or, the body of the Virgin can be signified by the holy, her soul by the holy of holies. On that word of Luke 1:35, *The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*, Augustine says: "Truly holy, and the holy of holies." Hence also those places are called the holy of holies which kept those things *(p. 526)* by which he was figured who alone is truly called the Holy of holies.

Sacrarii, that is, the sacristy (*sacrarium*), which is not set in the verse. And properly a sacristy is the place of the temple in which sacred things are laid up, just as those places of the temple in which the things offered in the temple are laid up are called *donaria*. The sacristy, then, is named from bringing in and carrying away sacred things. For in this sacristy, that is, the blessed Virgin, were laid up the sacred books, through the knowledge of both Testaments. There are the sacred vestments: because she was clothed and adorned with all the virtues. Hence it is said: *surrounded with variety* (Ps. 44:10). Or, because with most holy and most pure humility she clothed the only-begotten of God. There are the relics, namely the most blessed members of Christ. There are the sacred vessels of the divine ministry.

Propitiatorii, that is, the propitiatory, so called as if the oratory of propitiation: for propitiation is appeasement. And the oracle is so called from the mouth (*os*), because from there answers and oracles are given. The *penetralia* are the secret parts of the oracles, so called from *penitus*, that is, *paene intus*, almost within. Exod. 37:6–9: *Beseleel made the propitiatory*, that is, the oracle, *of the purest gold, two cubits and a half in length, and a cubit and a half in breadth. Two cherubims also of beaten gold, which he set on the two sides of the propitiatory: one cherub in the top of one side, and the other cherub in the top of the other side: two cherubims at the two ends of the propitiatory, spreading their wings, and covering the propitiatory, and looking one towards the other, and towards it.* Expound this carefully of the blessed Virgin. On the words of the Apostle, Heb. 9:5, the Gloss says that in the tabernacle there was upon the ark the propitiatory, namely a board of the same length and breadth as the ark, and it was of the purest gold: and it was called the propitiatory or oracle because the Angel of the Lord appeared there to Moses, telling that God would be propitious to the children of Israel. And upon the propitiatory were those Cherubim, that is, most gloriously adorned images, looking at one another with their faces turned toward the propitiatory. By this propitiatory Mary is signified, to whom it has been given by the whole Trinity to be our propitiatrix with the Son [text unclear] for our sins, praying to him for us, and showing him the womb in which she carried him and the breasts which he sucked.

Porticus, the porch, that is, the vestibule. According to Isidore it is called *porticus* because it is a passage rather than a place for standing, like a gate (*porta*): but a porch is always open, a gate is sometimes shut. The vestibule is so called from this, that there the doors are clothed (*vestiuntur*), or because it clothes the entrance with a roof, or with standing. Mary is figured by the porch of the temple of Solomon, 3 Kings 6:3, where it is read thus: *And there was a porch before the temple of twenty cubits in length, according to the breadth of the temple, and it was ten cubits in breadth before the face of the temple.* For as this porch lay always open to those entering the temple, and through it one entered the temple, and it met them first: so the mercy of Mary always lies open to those who are in this life, and through it one enters the Church militant by merit and the Church triumphant by reward; and first of all the saints she runs to our help, and to receive in the embrace of piety those returning to her Son through penance, as appears in Theophilus.

Porta, gate. According to Isidore, *porta* is so called from *deportare*, to carry: for the ancients, wishing to make a city, marked out the walls with a plough; and where they wished to make a gate, they lifted up the

plough and carried it, and called it *porta*. He also says that a gate is that through which something can be carried in or carried out; and properly it is the gate of a city or *(p. 527)* of a camp. And Mary is the gate of the city of the Jerusalem above, of which Ezekiel says, Ezek. 44:1–3: *He brought me back to the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary, which looked towards the east: and it was shut. And the Lord said to me: This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it … and it shall be shut for the prince. The prince himself shall sit in it, to eat bread before the Lord: he shall enter in by the way of the porch of the gate, and shall go out by the same way.* The Prophet shows at the beginning that he who has not turned to the way of the gate does not deserve to have the gate shown him: for it was not said to Ezekiel, *This gate*, before he had turned himself to the way of the gate. This gate is the blessed Virgin, who is well called the gate of the outward sanctuary, that is, of the Church militant: for the inner sanctuary is the Holy One, whose gate is the Father, from whom Christ went forth; and through the gate of the outward sanctuary, namely Mary, he entered into the world.

Well also is she a gate, through which both God has access to us and we to God: for before she was made a gate, there was as it were a continuous wall dividing between us and God; and therefore few or no exchanges of Angels and men were celebrated. But the gate was made, and the wonderful exchange was made, and thenceforth earthly things were joined to heavenly. The way of this gate is humility, by which Christ came to her, when, *while the king was at his repose, the spikenard* of Mary *sent forth the odor thereof* (Cant. 1:11). (Under the title on humility.) By this way alone, too, there lies open for us ourselves access to the Virgin.

And this way is properly called hers: because she walked singularly by it, who in humility neither had any like her before nor will have any after. And well is not only the gate but also the way said to look toward the East: because that way alone, that is, humility, is commendable and leads to the Virgin which is for God's sake. For *the Orient* is Christ (Zach. 6:12), to whom that humility looks which is for God's sake, having him both as its exemplar and as the reward it awaits: for that humility which is not for God's sake ought rather to be called baseness. *There is one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit* (Ecclus. 19:23). Ambitious humility, which first serves that it may rule over others, does not look toward the East. Hence the devil, tempting Christ to vainglory, Matt. 4:6, says to him: *Cast thyself down.* For some make themselves lower and cast themselves down, that they may glory inwardly in their very humility.

There follows: *And it was shut.* And note that this gate is said to be shut three times: because the Virgin Mary was shut before childbirth, and in childbirth, and after childbirth.

There follows: *And the Lord said to me: This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened*, etc. Behold the testimony of the whole Trinity to the eternal virginity of blessed Mary. For there is one Lord, one faith. In this too that is said, *No man shall pass through it*, the perfect integrity of her flesh is commended, which her husband Joseph did not touch.

In what follows, *And it shall be shut for the prince*, it is shown that her mind lay open to no temptation of the devil, who is called *the prince of this world* (John 14:30), just as her flesh knew no touch of man. In this, then, that is said, *No man shall pass through it*, the integrity of the flesh; in what follows, *And it shall be shut for the prince*, perfect purity of mind is commended. From which twofold integrity the Virgin is properly and singularly called *undefiled.* Or, she is said to be shut *for the prince*, that is, for the honor of the prince, that is, of Christ, for whom she is said to be shut: because, so that he alone might sit in her, as is said in the same place, she was shut to all others. Or, *for the prince*, that is, for the Archangel Gabriel himself. Hence it is not *(p. 528)* said, *having entered into her*, but *to her* (Luke 1:28), although the good Angels are said to have entered into certain others. Hence, Ezek. 2:2: *The spirit entered into me.* And Zach. 1:9: *The angel that spoke in me.* But into this gate entrance was due to the Lord alone. Or, *for the prince*, that is, for sin, which rules as prince over some; against which the Apostle, Rom. 6:12: *Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof.*

There follows: *The prince himself shall sit in it.* The prince himself, as if to say no other, *shall sit in it*, through the humility of the flesh he assumed. Note: he who sits is partly lowered and partly upright. So the Son of God was lowered in the human nature and upright in the divine. Hence in Ps. 105:23: *Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach.* For Christ, signified by Moses, stood in the passion as God, and was broken as man. *To eat bread before the Lord.* His bread is to do the will of the Father. John 4:34: *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me,* namely of my Father. Which bread or meat he would not have eaten unless he had assumed flesh: for he could not labor or suffer unless flesh had been assumed. Or thus: *To eat bread before the Lord*: because from the instant of his conception that blessed soul enjoyed the vision of God. Hence he says: *I set the Lord always in my sight* (Ps. 15:8). And this is what he says, *before the Lord.*

There follows: *By the way of the porch of the gate.* Well, then, is Mary the eastern gate: because through her the true Orient, that is, Christ, entered the world; and through her grace rises in us, and access lies open to the true Orient, who rose from her. She is also the beginning of our rising to life; but the western gate for us was Eve, who was the beginning of our going down to setting and death. Hence it is said, Ecclus. 25:33: *From the woman came the beginning of sin, and by her we all die.*

Again, this is that gate of which it is said, Ezek. 46:1–3: *The gate of the inner court that looketh towards the east, shall be shut the six days on which work is done: but on the sabbath day it shall be opened,* etc. Because Mary was shut to the human habit of sinning, but open to bring us into rest and peace of heart in the present, and in the future into eternal rest, and into that peace which shall last for ever. And a little after it is said of that gate: *But the gate shall not be shut till the evening*: because up to the end of our life we can always find mercy with the mother of mercy, and up to the end of the world. Hence she says: *Unto the world to come I shall not cease to be* (Ecclus. 24:14), namely to have mercy on the wretched and to plead for sinners. There follows: *And the people of the land shall adore at the door of that gate on the sabbaths, and on the new moons before the Lord*: for the sabbath is her special day.

Again, Mary is the gate of heaven. Hence, Gen. 28:17: *How terrible is this place! this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven.* Therefore also it is sung of her: “Happy gate of heaven.” She is the gate through which the King of heaven came into the world. Hence it is sung to her: “Thou gate of the high King.” She is the gate of light: because through her the true sun of justice has illumined and illumines the whole Church and the faithful soul with the rays of graces. Hence it is said: “And shining gate of light.” For Eve was the gate of darkness: because through her there entered into the world the darkness of guilt, of punishment, and of all misery. To us also she is the gate of light: because through her we go out from that threefold darkness, and enter into the light which is Christ, and into the light of grace, of virtues and merits, and of beatitude *(p. 529)* eternal. And this is what is said to Mary in the hymn to her: “Hail, door of light, / chief of gates, / lying open to the King of glory; / who, coming, kept, / and going out did not break, / the bolts of chastity.” Hence: *Because he hath strengthened the bolts of thy gates,* etc. (Ps. 147:13).

Again, she is designated by the gate of the temple which was called Beautiful (Acts 3:2–6): at which we ought to sit and beg, after the example of that lame man whom Peter healed there, saying to him: *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise, and walk.* For these two things are supremely necessary to us, namely to rise from sin, and to walk from virtue to virtue with the steps of faith and good works, we who have limped from our paths.

Again, in that literal Jerusalem there were anciently nine gates. And each of them figured the Virgin, who is the gate of heaven, as has been said, on account of some special virtue.

The gate of the flock figured the innocence of the Virgin. Or, it is called the gate of the flock because it lies open chiefly to the innocent.

The gate of the valley, her humility. Or, the gate of the valley, because she brings the humble into paradise.

The gate of the fountain, her virginity: because she is *a fountain sealed*; or because it lies open most of all to the faithful and the pure.

The dung gate, her poverty: because the Virgin cast from herself whatever seemed precious in the world, and counted all things as dung that she might gain Christ. Or, because she admits even stinking sinners, if she finds them penitent.

The fish gate: those suffering persecution, who are beaten by the waves and attacked there. And because she receives such.

The gate of the waters, in the plural: the abundance of graces and gifts. Hence, *full of grace* (Luke 1:28). Or, the multitude of tears while her Son suffered.

The old gate: charity, which is *the old commandment* (1 John 2:7).

The gate of judgment: discretion.

The horse gate: the preaching and doctrine which she taught the Apostles, who were the horses of the Lord. Hence, Hab. 3:15: *Thou madest a way in the sea for thy horses*, that is, in the world, etc.

Fenestra, window, which according to Isidore is so called because it *fenerat*, lends, light, which in Greek is called *ph■s*. Or because one placed within the house is seen outside. Or because it furnishes light to the house. Or, as others say, *fenestra* as if *ferens nos extra*, carrying us outside. For Mary by her prayers, merits, and examples leads out from the straits and darkness of sins into the breadth and light of the virtues those who serve her and her lovers. And as, by the opening of the window, the inner house is illumined with the sun's radiance: so, when Mary opens her mouth to pray for us, our consciences are illumined with the gracious light of the Saviour. Hence she is also called *Illuminatrix.*

For she was figured by the crystal window which, according to what the Hebrews hand down, Noe made in the ark, which signified the Church: which window, namely, shut out the water insofar as it was a window, and by being of crystal lighted the ark. And well is Mary a crystal window: because as crystal, moistened with heavenly dew and set under the sun, gives birth uncorrupted to a little spark of fire, so Mary, wet with heavenly dew, her flower preserved, gave birth to Christ, the light of the Church. Hence someone elegantly says in a sequence: "If the crystal is moistened / and set beneath the sun, / it sparks a little fire: / the crystal *(p. 530)* is not broken, / nor in the birth is loosed / the seal of modesty."

Through this window the dove had passage, which showed the ceasing of the flood and brought salvation.

Again, she is the glass window, illumining the whole Church by the example of her purity, which is marked in the glass. Who also, like a glass window, without hurt to her integrity received in conception and sent out in childbirth the sun of justice. Hence someone, from the words of Augustine: "As the ray of the sun / enters harmless / the window of glass: / so the Son of God, / nay, more subtly, / the virginal hall."

Again, she was figured, 3 Kings 6:4, by the slanting windows of the temple, that is, arched above, whose outer part was narrower, for keeping out storms, and the inner part wider, for furnishing light. Again, she is the window of which the Church sings: "That the weeping may enter as stars, thou art made the window of heaven." (Look under the twenty-fifth cause.)

The ladder of Jacob, of which we read, Gen. 28:12–13: *Jacob saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching heaven: the angels also of God ascending and descending by it, and the Lord leaning upon the ladder.* Note that the dignity of Mary, who is signified by this ladder, is not shown except in sleep: because the soul which longs to see, that is, to understand, her dignity and height must be lulled to sleep from worldly cares and outward occupations. Hence, Num. 12:6: *If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision*, namely that the outward senses may be lulled asleep from unlawful things. Nor is her excellence shown except to those wrestling against vices and sins, who are

designated by Jacob. (All these you have under the title on the ladder of religious life.)

Mary is a ladder, whose sides set against each other are virginity and motherhood, which would not make a ladder unless they were joined. The rungs are the steps of the temple of Solomon, or those which are noted there: *The angel Gabriel was sent* (Luke 1:26). The foot of this ladder is poverty, by which she despised all carnal and worldly things. Hence she is described, Apoc. 12:1, as having *the moon under her feet.* (Look in that sermon: *A great sign appeared*, etc.) The top is humility, by which she reached up to heaven, not only the airy or the starry, but the empyrean, namely up to the Lord of majesty sitting on the throne. Or, the foot of this ladder is the virginity of the flesh, which is lower; the top, humility of mind. Also the upper part of this ladder is the contemplation of Mary toward God; the lower part, her compassion and piety toward man. For she, like a certain aqueduct or channel, draws up above through prayer living water from the living fountain which is with God, which she pours out below, as is shown under the title that she is called an aqueduct.

Again, by means of a ladder one descends from on high to the lowest, and from the lowest climbs to the highest: and by her means the Son of God descended to us, drawn by her humility. Hence Augustine says: "The humility of Mary was surely made the heavenly ladder by which God descended to earth: by her nonetheless we climb into heaven, who through Eve fell into the misery of this world." This ladder, then, is said to stand upon the earth, and its top to touch heaven: because by Mary's means earthly things are united to heavenly, just as that ladder seemed in some way to join heaven to earth.

There follows: *The angels also of God ascending and descending by it*, that is, *(p. 531)* on account of the ladder. For the Angels came down to visit her—hence, *the Angel Gabriel was sent* to her—and they went up announcing to the Lord her holy desires, holy prayers, and loving tears, which is the office of the Angels. And this is what she earnestly asked of the Angels, Cant. 5:8, saying: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love.*

Otherwise: *The angels also of God ascending and descending by it*, namely the ladder. For angels are men who imitate the Angels in those virtues which are attributed to the Angels. (Look under the title on the salutation of Mary, chapter 8.) By this ladder, that is, by the prayers, merits, and examples of Mary, they go up by contemplating, and come down by working vigorously. And those who imitate her in the present run at death into the embraces of the Lord, who was seen leaning on the ladder, as if holding the ladder for them by grace, lest by some temptation or impulse they should fall from the service or love of Mary.

And this is what follows: *And the Lord leaning upon the ladder*: namely that he who finally ascended by the ladder might at death run into the Lord's embrace.

Otherwise: *The angels also of God ascending and descending*, etc., as if ready to draw by the hands those who wished to ascend by this ladder, and to help their weakness.

Otherwise: *And the Lord leaning upon the ladder.* Jerome, in the life of Paula: "To those ascending thou wilt stretch out thy hand, but the negligent thou wilt cast down from on high. For the Son of God helps those who serve his mother and her lovers; but those who despise her and make little of her service he lets fall first into sin, then into hell."

Again, in this, that the Lord leaned on the ladder, several things can be noted. The first, that as she at the annunciation leaned upon her beloved by faith—because to believe is nothing else than firmly to lean on the truth: hence it is said, Cant. 8:5, *leaning upon her beloved*—so he too in the incarnation leaned on her. Hence, Prov. 31:11: *The heart of her husband trusteth in her.* (Look under the title on the spices of the enclosed garden.) The second, that the Lord holds the lovers of his mother firm in good.

Again, it is to be noted that he who wishes to climb by a ladder hangs on it with hands, feet, and knees. With the feet, that is, the affections, that he may love her, so that from the overflow of that love thanksgiving and the voice of praise may resound in his mouth. With the hands, that as long as he lives he may work with all

earnestness, to the honor of the Virgin herself, whatever he believes will please the blessed Virgin. With the knees, that he may humbly bend them before her images or altars, and when her name is recited. (All these you had much better in that chapter where we taught how she is to be served with each of the members.)

The winding stair of the temple. For she was figured by the winding stair of the temple, by which one went up into the middle chamber, and from the middle into the third, as is read in 3 Kings 6:8. And according to Isidore a *cochlea* is a high round tower, called *cochlea* as if *cyclea*, because one climbs in it as through a circle and round; such is one at Rome of one hundred and seventy-five feet. But among us a *cochlea* is the name for a round little turret attached to some corner of a great tower, or of the wall of a church or of some great house: and such a winding stair is narrow and full of steps, and rests as it were on an upright column, on which column those climbing by the stair also lean. This winding stair is the blessed Virgin, round as it were at least within, through the desire of heavenly things; having many steps of the various virtues, because she continually went forward from virtue to virtue; having as it were a column on which she leaned, that is, Christ, on whom those ought to lean who wish to go forward from good to better through the examples of Mary.

Having also as it were a certain arched canopy (*ciborium*).

(p. 532) The special vessel of God, of which it is said, Ecclus. 43:2: *An admirable vessel, the work of the most High.* And of which the true Eliseus says, 4 Kings 2:20: *Bring me a new vessel, and put salt into it.* Mary, then, is called an admirable vessel and a new vessel: because such a new one was found, in which namely are found many wonders and many novelties.

Mary is an admirable vessel on account of what she contained: for she contained her container. For no other vessel could contain what is greater than itself; but Mary contained him whom the whole world does not hold, and by whom she herself was contained.

On account of the manner of containing: because, while God is in every creature by essence, and in the just alone by grace, he was in her in these two ways, and also in a new and wonderful way, through the union.

On account of the harmonious contrariety of contraries, namely of mortality and immortality, of virginity and fruitfulness, and, what was wonderful, of reason and faith, which are much opposed. Hence Mary could say after childbirth: I am what I was, that is, a virgin; and I was not what I am, that is, a mother: now I am called both, that is, mother and virgin.

On account of conformity: for what is contained in a vessel takes the form of the vessel, not the reverse, as may be seen in water or milk frozen in a vessel, or in a bell, which takes the form of its mould. Here it was in the contrary way: because the container was changed according to the demand of the contained: for the human nature was likened to the deity.

On account of the workmanship, which surpassed the material: for in this vessel were all the varieties both of virtues and of gifts, all the carvings of holy desires, all the paintings of holy thoughts. Therefore it is called *an admirable vessel, the work of the most High.*

On account of its sufficiency in every way: because the more is drawn from it, the more is found in it. Hence it is said to Mary, Cant. 7:2: *Thy navel is like a round bowl, never wanting cups.*

On account of the ineffable and singular manner of receiving and sending out: because, contrary to the custom of other vessels, it was neither broken nor opened in receiving or sending out: for she received with integrity, as the eye and glass receive the sun; she sent out with integrity, as the star its ray and the flower its fragrance.

On account of the price and usefulness, which are unspeakable. Prov. 31:10: *Far, and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her.*

Mary, then, is called *an admirable vessel, the work of the most High*: the work of that craftsman *who hath made the morning light and the sun* (Ps. 73:16). Hence, Ecclus. 9:24: *Works shall be praised for the hand of the artificers.* Again, of this work it is said, Ecclus. 42:16: *Full of the glory of the Lord is his work.* A work devised before the ages, completed at the end of the ages. A vessel most deep through humility, most solid through patience, most entire through virginity, most ample through charity, most clean through purity of every kind, and most capacious through desire; and therefore worthy and fitting to contain the balsam of divine grace. A vessel so capacious of grace, and above all through humility, which alone deserves to be filled, that it would suffice abundantly for itself and for the whole world. A vessel which the Wisdom of God, made body, filled with itself, and on account of the vessel's inestimable beauty dwelt bodily in it for nine months. An admirable vessel, of which in Ps. 117:23: *This vessel is made by the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes.* For in Mary there came together three wonderful joinings, as it were of contraries, which were made not according to nature but above nature. Which are: God and man, mother and virgin, faith and the human heart. An admirable vessel, which the heavenly goldsmith, who by his wisdom makes gold out of clay, formed from the clay of human nature, yet not of clay, but truly golden: from which vessel too, remaining ineffably whole, he afterward formed the vessel of his own body: and in this work the wisdom of God overcame the malice of the devil, who in our first parents had reduced the gold *(p. 533)* of human nature to clay. Hence, Job 41:21, it is said of Behemoth: *He shall strew gold under him like mire.* Again, Lam. 4:2, it is said of our first parents: *The noble sons of Sion, and they that were clothed with the best gold: how are they esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the potter's hands?* An admirable vessel, in which are to be found twelve principal wonders, namely the twelve privileges of which it was said above.

Again, the admirable vessel is Christ as man, or the body of Christ, the work of the most High, that is, of God the Trinity: wonderful, for the contained is greater than the container. For what is more wonderful than the light of the divinity in the earthenware of the humanity? For *a woman shall compass a man* (Jer. 31:22). Or, the admirable vessel is Christ as man: a vessel, I say, *full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). *The work of the most High*: Isa. 45:12: *I made the earth: and I created man upon it.*

Again, the admirable vessel is blessed Paul: because he was converted immediately by the Lord God without the ministry of man, and therefore he is the work of the most High: of which vessel, Acts 9:15: *This man is to me a vessel of election.*

Again, Mary is the new vessel of which Eliseus said, 4 Kings 2:20: *Bring me a new vessel, and put salt into it.* For Mary is a vessel new through grace, without the oldness of any sin; in which vessel the Lord made all things new: hence he says, Apoc. 21:5: *Behold, I make all things new.* Into this vessel salt was put by the whole Trinity in the incarnation, that is, Christ, who is the wisdom of the Father: and so the waters of Jericho were healed, that is, the worldly peoples—because *the waters are peoples* (Apoc. 17:15)—so that there should be no more death or barrenness in them. The salt, then, in the new vessel, is the wisdom of God in the virginal womb: for death and barrenness were before in these waters, because all were dying in the sin of Adam, and were barren of good working. Or, by these waters understand the worldly sciences, which without the salt of true wisdom are deadly and barren for souls.

Again, she is also the one vessel, that is, the singular one, in which the manna was laid up (Exod. 16:33), that is, the sweetness of the divinity, which is called and is the bread of Angels; and this in the Lord's incarnation. And this vessel was singular as to the soul through faith—hence, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*—and as to the flesh, a certain portion of which the Wisdom of God assumed: for by the manna is understood the Word of the Father, who from the flesh of Mary was made flesh: hence: *The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God* (Luke 1:35). Moses, then, says to Aaron, that is, the Father to the Holy Spirit, by whose work the Son was incarnate: *Take one vessel*, that is, the virginal womb, which was a singularly glorious vessel, *and put manna into it*, that is, the Son. *Man* is interpreted *what?* or *how?* Manna: what is this, or how is this, that is, how deep, how inscrutable, how wonderful: and by this the mystery of the

Lord's incarnation in the Virgin, at which all can wonder. Hence, Isa. 66:8: *Who hath ever heard such a thing? and who hath seen the like to this?* Or, the sweetness of the manna is the joy of the virginal heart which she had from her conception. Hence she said, Luke 1:47: *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

Again, she is also *a massy vessel of gold, adorned with every precious stone* (Ecclus. 50:10). A golden vessel befitting the King of kings: because gold befits kings. She is designated by all the vessels of the house of the Lord, that is, of the Church, which the true Solomon made of the purest gold, as is read in 2 Paral. 4:18–19 and 3 Kings 7:47–48. Designated also by all the vessels out of which king Solomon drank, and by all *(p. 534)* the furnishings of the house of the forest of Libanus, which were all of the purest gold.

She is also a massy vessel through constancy and patience of every kind: in that by all the promises of the Angel she could not be inclined or bent from the purpose of virginity; in that by no tribulation, by no fear of death, could she be shattered, as appeared plainly when, the disciples fleeing, she stood undaunted beside the cross of her Son.

She is moreover a vessel *adorned with every precious stone*, that is, with virtue of every kind; so that that word of Ezekiel, 28:13, *Every precious stone was thy covering*, ought to be attributed to her much better than to Lucifer before his fall.

There follows: *Adorned with every precious stone.* The precious stones which adorned this vessel, namely the virtues with which Mary was beautified, are described in the same place (Ecclus. 50:6 ff.) under the names of various things.

The first stone is humility. Hence *as the morning star*, which appears small though it is great, *in the midst of a cloud*, that is, in this murky life.

The second, compassion for sinners. Hence *as the moon at the full*, with the dew of grace and mercy: for the moon flows with dew and is nearest the earth, that is, to earthly sinners, by piety and compassion; *in her days* she shines to light up the night in which sinners are, to whom it is said: *You were heretofore darkness*, that is, darkened, *but now light* (Eph. 5:8), that is, enlightened through the grace of Mary.

The third, virginal modesty. Hence also *as the sun*, which is ruddy. Or, in the heat of the sun, the charity of Mary; in its ruddiness, literally, the warmth of her virginal face, shining before the Lord, who desired her beauty. Or, shining to men by the examples of her virtues.

The fourth, obedience. Hence *as the rainbow giving light*: the bow is pliable; *in the bright clouds.*

The fifth, the fragrance of her holy repute and fame. Hence *as the flower of roses in the days of the spring*: for the rose flower is aromatic and strengthening to the head. (Under the title on the rose.)

The sixth, twofold virginity, of the flesh and of the spirit. Hence *as the lilies that are on the brink of the water*, that is, of carnal and worldly pleasures, which quickly pass away like running water.

The seventh, fragrant prayer. Hence *as the frankincense sending forth its odor in the time of summer*, that is, in the heat of charity.

The eighth, charity, with which she burned within herself and enlightened her neighbors. Hence *as a bright fire*: for she was the bush burning with charity, remaining unburnt by every fleshly pleasure.

The ninth, prayer for those who are burned in the furnace of purgatory. Hence also *frankincense burning in the fire.*

The tenth, piety and mercy unfailing and ever growing. Hence *as an olive tree budding forth*; hence *as a fair olive tree in the plains.*

The eleventh, medicinal power, right intention, the contemplation of heavenly things. Hence also *a cypress tree rearing itself on high.*

It can also be said that she was a crystal vessel, a sapphire vessel, an emerald vessel, an ivory vessel, a golden vessel, a silver vessel, for laying up the sacrament of the Lord's body and of all relics, that is, the priceless treasure of the virtues; a vessel of electrum, namely of the gold of wisdom and the silver of eloquence. Christ also is electrum (Ezek. 1:4), on account of the gold of the divinity and the silver of the humanity. For she is that ineffable vessel in which the Son of God *ate his honeycomb with his honey, drank his wine with his milk* (Cant. 5:1). She is the vessel of election, which God chose and chose beforehand; nay, of pre-election, as is said of Paul, Acts 9:15. She is a vessel full of grace, and this first; and of truth, *(p. 535)* that is, of Christ, who is *the way, and the truth, and the life* (John 14:6), this second. She is *every little vessel* through humility, *the vessels of cups*, and *all the instruments of music* (Isa. 22:24). She is the vessel of the camps. Ecclus. 43:9: *A vessel of the camps on high, shining gloriously in the firmament of heaven.* This is said of the moon, which is a universal vessel, receiving influence from all the planets, which are called camps: and therefore *vessel of the camps.* Likewise Mary, who is called *fair as the moon*, is a universal vessel, having perfectly and universally whatever good the other saints have in part. Hence also it is said: *Many daughters have gathered together riches* (Prov. 31:29), etc.

She is the vessel of election and of perfect goodness, which consists chiefly in three things: namely that the vessel be of good material, of good odor, and of good sound. In the sound is perceived the truth of its soundness, as is clear in bells; in the odor, the savor of its goodness, as is clear in casks; in the material, the effect of its power. The sound of our vessel is humility, when she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.* The odor is virginity: hence, *Because I know not man* (Luke 1:38, 34). Cant. 1:11: *While the king was*, and so on, *my spikenard*, etc. The odor of Mary is threefold: of the flesh, through virginity; of the mind, through humility and devotion; of the soul, through the indwelling of the deity. The material is gold, that is, charity, which works great things if it exists. Or, electrum, composed of the silver of white virginity and the gold of splendid and precious motherhood, which brought forth the Son, who is *the figure and the brightness of the glory* of the Father.

Again, virginity kept this vessel clean, humility deep, charity solid; and such a vessel, namely clean, deep, and solid, was needed for containing so subtle an electuary.

Crater, the bowl, namely a drinking vessel. Cant. 7:2: *Thy navel is like a round bowl*, etc. (Under the title on the navel of Mary.) But there it is a matter of a wooden bowl, here of a silver or golden one. For all the vessels out of which Solomon drank were of gold, 3 Kings 10:21 and 2 Paral. 9:20, and of the purest gold.

That bowl was whole, through virginity. And virginity is the integrity of the gate of birth.

And solid, through fortitude and constancy of mind in good. Ecclus. 50:10: *As a massy vessel of gold.*

Thin, through poverty.

Hollow, that is, concave, through humility. (Note the nine verses on the properties of a bowl.)

Round, through perfection of every kind: for a cup has a spherical shape; and whatever is formed round is called by the Greeks *sphaira.*

Skillfully put together, that is, subtly and with art: because it is the work of the wisdom of God, or of the Holy Spirit, who is *the artificer of all things* (Wis. 7:21).

And precious in many ways: because of precious material, namely gold, silver, and precious stones. On this account it is called *a vessel adorned with every precious stone*, that is, with virtue of every kind, as above. For *she is more precious than all riches* (Prov. 8:11), because *far, and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her* (Prov. 31:10). Again, precious in form, precious in value. Job 28:13: *Man knoweth not the price thereof*, etc.

Adorned with gems. Ecclus. 32:7: *A carbuncle set in gold.*

Delightful to look on. Ecclus. 42:16: *Full of the glory of the Lord is his work.*

Open at the top, for receiving and pouring out the liquors of graces and gifts, that is, for receiving and pouring back.

And honorably covered, namely lest any uncleanness fall into it. Num. 19:15: *The vessel that hath no cover, (p. 536) nor binding over it, shall be unclean.* This cover in the Virgin was the guard of the five senses, which are in the head: because she never looked foolishly, or heard evil with delight, or uttered an evil word, or ate anything unlawful, and the like.

Narrow in the middle, that is, in the heart, through poverty and humility.

Closed below, through desiring nothing earthly.

Broad in the foot, that is, in charitable affection, saying with David: *I walked at large* (Ps. 118:45), namely of charity.

Clear: hence, when well gilded, it gives back the face. (Look under the title on the fountain, where it is said that it gives back an image to the one looking.)

Fragrant, by reason of the drink put in it.

Shining, above all if it be golden or well gilded and lit by the sun. For the greatest splendor of Mary comes from this, that she is *clothed with the sun* (Apoc. 12:1) of justice.

Heavy, with a golden heaviness, not a leaden one: for this vessel had a just weight, namely charity and constancy of mind, through which she never leapt apart by any light motion, but always bore herself with maturity.

Sonorous, through the ringing of divine praise and thanksgiving for the benefits bestowed on her.

An *anaglyph* vessel, that is, carved above: *ana* in Greek is *upward* in Latin, *glyph*■, carving.

It receives any liquor whatever: namely the wine of devotion, the milk of kindness, the oil of mercy, the honey of the divinity in the incarnation, the water of tears in the passion of her Son, and the like; and on this account it is called *never wanting cups* (Cant. 7:2). And all the liquors which she received from God she generously pledges to men.

It delights the senses, namely sight, smell, and taste, with music added *in the banquet of wine*, which delights the hearing (Ecclus. 32:7 ff.).

It is carried in the right hand.

It is formed in the fire: for *for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us*, God the Father fashioned *the morning light and the sun*, that is, Mary and Christ as man.

It is the praise and honor and glory of the smith. Of the praise it is said, Ecclus. 9:24: *Works shall be praised for the hand of the artificers.* Of the glory, Ecclus. 42:16: *Full of the glory of the Lord is his work.*

Cratera. And a *cratera* is a cup having two handles. The name is Greek; but in Greek it is declined *hic crater*, in Latin *haec cratera.* And Mary is compared to *the vessels of cups* and *the instruments of music* hung on *the peg*, that is, Christ. Isa. 22:24: *Vessels of cups*: because she inebriates her lovers with the abundance of heavenly drink and with devotion, to whom she says, Cant. 5:1: *Drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.* And *instruments of music*, she who pours holy delight into the same; and she was hung up: because she was raised from all earthliness, *on the peg*, that is, Christ, whose love held her up. Hence she said with Job, 7:15: *My soul rather chooseth hanging*, etc.

Lecythus, namely a vessel of oil. For she is the vessel of unfailing and ever abundant mercy, signified by *the cruse of oil* which *was not diminished* (3 Kings 17:16), from which Elias was fed, that is, Christ sucking her breasts; and from which the widow of Sarephta with all her house, that is, the Church with all the faithful, is fed in the sacrament of the Son and in his words and examples.

Pyxis, which is an ointment vessel made of boxwood, which box the Greeks call *pyxos*. But now pyxes are made of ivory, gold, and silver, and brass. Hence it is said of the bridegroom, Cant. 5:14, according to another reading: "His belly as an ivory pyx upon the sapphire stone." And it can be expounded of the womb of the Virgin, whose virginal purity, which is *(p. 537)* signified in the ivory, was purer than angelic purity, which is marked in the sapphire. And this is what is said: *upon the sapphire stone*. And in this pyx the Father sends us that medicinal ointment by which the world was healed, which before labored under infirmity of every kind, namely his Son.

Mary is called *lenticula*, which according to Isidore is an oil vessel made of brass or silver, and is so called from anointing (*linire*): because from it kings and priests were anointed. And the virginal womb is fittingly designated by such a vessel, in which God the Father anointed the Son made man *with the oil of gladness above his fellows* (Ps. 44:8), that is, above the other saints. To designate this it is said of Samuel, who was then the best of men, 1 Kings 10:1: *Samuel took a little vial of oil, and poured it upon his head*, etc.

Cyathus, a carrying vessel, which by another name is called *cymbia*, which is a boat, in whose likeness are made certain little silver vessels for carrying incense. She indeed gives us drink of manifold wine, as you have in § 12 on the enclosed garden. She is the boat which brings her servants into the haven of their desire. She is the little vessel which presents our prayers before the Lord, as you will find below about the phial.

Sipho, a vessel so called because it pours out waters by blowing, which vessel the Easterners use: for when they perceive a house burning, they run with siphons full of water and put out the fires. And they also clean ceilings with waters forced upward. Likewise Mary, by ministering to us the waters of graces, puts out the fires of vices in us; and through her we are cleansed from the defilements of our spirit and flesh.

Alabastrum, an ointment vessel named from a certain kind of marble which is called alabaster: and it is a white stone girded with various colors. For that stone is hollowed out for making ointment vessels, since it is said to keep ointments uncorrupted; and it is found about Thebes of Egypt and Damascus of Syria, and is whiter than the other marbles, but the most approved is found in India. Of such marble is said to have been the vessel of that ointment of which we read in John 12:3.

Oenophorum, namely a vessel carrying wine. For *oinos* in Greek is wine: and she brought us grace, which is signified in wine. Hence she also procured wine for those at the wedding (John 2:3 ff.). *Situla*, the bucket, which is so called from *sitire*, to thirst. (Look under the title on the receptacles of waters.)

Discus, the dish, as if *dans escas*, giving food. And what kind of food she gives to her guests you have noted in § 12 on the enclosed garden. And from *discus* those at table are called *discumbentes.*

Mary is called *scutella*, a bowl: because in ancient times it had in some way the form of a shield. Hence *scutella* comes from *scutum*, shield, by diminution. For she both feeds and defends us: she feeds as a bowl, she defends as a shield.

Salinum, which is a vessel suited to receive salt, that is, the wisdom of God. (Look above under the title on the vessel, where she is called a new vessel.)

Urna, urn.

Calix, the cup, a vessel from which one drinks, which in ancient times was made of wood, and from this took its name, because the Greeks called all wood *kalon*, as Isidore says.

Phiala, the phial, so called because it is usually made of glass, which in Greek is called *hyalos.* But now phials are made both of glass and of gold or silver. Hence, Apoc. 5:8, the twenty-four elders are described *having golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.* And Mary *(p. 538)* is rightly compared to a phial on account of the breadth of the charity with which she loves us, because a phial is broad below; narrow above, on account of the virtue of silence. Of glass, on account of the purity of virginity: for glass is made from the ash of hay, and *all flesh is grass.* It is transparent, on account of the confession of divine praise: for glass does not hide the color of the liquor contained in it. And bright, on account of the honesty of her manner of life. Matt. 5:16: *So let your light shine,* etc. It is also golden, on account of the fullness of heavenly wisdom and the other properties of gold. Fragrant also, because full of odors, that is, of holy prayers, with which she delights the holy Trinity and the whole heavenly court: so do odors spread their sweetness all around. Which odors, that is, prayers, her Son desires to perceive, saying to her, Cant. 2:14: *Let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet,* to hear and to smell. This is *the princely bowl* filled with butter, of which we read, Judg. 5:25, in the canticle of Debbora: the princes are the Apostles and Evangelists, to whom she pledged butter, teaching them the venerable Sacrament of the Lord's incarnation.

And note that from the churning of milk comes the fatness of butter, which heals and anoints; and from the beating of the flesh of Christ, which was curdled from the virginal milk, there came forth both the anointing of the charisms and the medicine of our sins, etc.

Mulctrum, the milking pail, namely the vessel in which milk is milked. For in her and through her we milk the milk of consolation and of divine sweetness. The Son of God too was milked from her as man. Hence he says to the Father, Job 10:10: *Hast thou not milked me as milk?* etc.

Scyphus, according to Isidore, is a vessel in which we wash our hands: because by her mediation we purge our evil works by repenting.

Urceus, whose diminutive is *urceolus*, the pitcher: namely vessels in which holy water is carried. For in this vessel the Father sends us that water of grace which he had promised us, Ezek. 36:25: *I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed,* etc. For otherwise we could not have the blessing of God.

Uter, the wineskin, a vessel so called from the womb (*uterus*): because it is all as it were belly; and in the womb of Mary the Lord set the waters of graces *as in a vessel*, as the Psalmist says (Ps. 32:7). And from that fullness we continually receive *grace for grace*, unless the fault be ours.

Pelvis, the basin, so called because feet (*pedes*) are washed there. John 13:5, it is said of the Lord: *He putteth water into a basin*, that is, he filled Mary with grace, *and began to wash the feet of the disciples*: for the humble Virgin fulfills this office in us after the example of her Son, she who always shows herself a handmaid, whose office this is. Hence she is signified by Abigail, 1 Kings 25:41, who answered the messengers of David, who wished to take her as wife: *Behold, let thy servant be a handmaid, to wash the feet of the servants of my lord,* etc.

Ampulla, the cruet, which is so called as if *ampla bulla*, an ample bubble: for it is like in roundness to the bubbles which are made from the foam of waters and are blown up by the wind. And among us certain little vessels of silver or tin are called *ampullae*, in which are laid up the chrism, the holy oil, and the oil of the sick. And in the blessed Virgin Christ, the *high priest of the good things to come*, laid up the oil of the sick, that is, the mercy which [the print has *significat*, perhaps for *sanat*, "heals"] sinners, and the sacred chrism, that is, the spiritual anointing of spiritual kings, priests, and champions, without which they are not sanctified, nor can they be made Christians in the true sense of the name.

A short note: after this, one should write about all the vessels of the tabernacle and of the temple of Solomon which could signify Mary, and how she is the stone and the sling of David.

Book XI: On the Fortifications and Ships Which Can Signify Mary

Chapter 1: Mary, City of God

(p. 539) Urbs, that is, city (*civitas*). Isidore: "A city is a harmonious multitude of men, united by the bond of fellowship; it is named from the citizens (*cives*), that is, from the very inhabitants of the town, because it brings together and contains the lives (*vitas*) of many. For the town (*urbs*) is the walls themselves; but the city (*civitas*) is called not the stones, but the inhabitants." And *urbs* is named from *orbis*, a circle: because ancient cities were made in a circle. All these things can be adapted to the blessed Virgin, who is that city of which in Ps. 86:3: *Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God.* These are the glorious things: that *all generations shall call her blessed* (Luke 1:48). (Under the title on the humility of Mary.)

Mary is a city (*civitas*), which is so called as if *civium unitas*, the unity of the citizens, that is, the full concord of sensuality and reason. The citizens of this city are holy thoughts, devout affections, fervent desires, and the like, all of which tended to that *one thing* which *is necessary* (Luke 10:42). These citizens were also ruled by the counsel of the Holy Spirit: because citizens are to be ruled by counsel, and adversaries are to be put to flight and fled from. Hence also the unity of the citizens: because there neither did the flesh lust against the spirit nor the spirit against the flesh, nor was there anything of rebellion or contradiction in her body or soul, since she was also the ark of Noe, in which all the animals, that is, the motions of sensuality, were peaceable: and therefore the supreme indweller lodged there peacefully, and *his place was made* there *in peace* (Ps. 75:3).

City of God. This is said to distinguish it from the Babylonian city, which is the devil's, into which *the Lord will not enter* (Osee 11:9). Well is she the city of God, who was wholly God's and no one's but God's: because the adverse party had nothing in her. Therefore she says, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me, and I to him.* Therefore also the beloved so often calls her his own in the Canticles, saying: *My love, my dove, my sister, my spouse*, and the like. *(p. 540)* Again, *city of God*: because she alone was worthy of so great a king, so great a pontiff, so great a founder, so great an indweller, and the like. Therefore it is said in Ps. 47:2: *Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God*, etc. (Look under the fourth cause.)

And this city is commended for many things, and before all for its foundations. Hence: *The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains* (Ps. 86:1). And note that the Prophet, foreseeing in spirit the dignity and excellence of this city, namely of the glorious Virgin, as if vehemently marveling at her glory, leaps out unexpectedly into these words: *The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains.* And since nothing has gone before to which this relative *thereof* refers, it is referred to the mind of the Prophet. He says, then: her foundations are in the holy mountains, that is, in the Patriarchs, Kings, and Prophets, from whom she drew her origin, as is clear in the genealogy of Christ, Matt. 1:1 ff. Or intransitively: her foundations are the holy mountains, namely Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the rest, from whom came Mary, and from her Christ. Or, the foundation is Christ himself. Hence, Isa. 28:16: *Behold I will lay*, says the Father, the founder, *in the foundations of Sion*, that is, of Mary, who a little later is called Sion, *a stone, a tried stone, a corner stone, a precious stone, founded in the foundation*, that is, Christ. For this city was founded upon a firm rock, which is Christ (Matt. 7:24). Again, 1 Cor. 3:11: *Other foundation*, etc. And Christ is called the foundation for many reasons, which are noted in these verses: "Sustaining; of rough stones; without wind; without light; without ruin; / it hates waters; it feels no weight; it is strong, hidden, standing."

For the foundation sustains the whole building. So also Christ the Church. Matt. 16:18: *Upon this rock I will build my Church.* He also sustained the glorious Virgin in all grace and virtue. Hence it is said, Cant. 8:5: *Leaning upon her beloved.* It is made of rough stones, that is, of unpolished teachings. 1 Cor. 2:4: *My speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom.* Therefore it was commanded, Deut.

27:5: *Thou shalt build there an altar*, etc. Without the wind of vainglory. John 5:41: *I receive not glory from men*, etc. Without the light of open vision. 1 Tim. 6:16: *He inhabiteth light inaccessible.* John 1:18: *No man hath seen God at any time.* Without ruin: because the most abject of men, Isa. 53:3, through humility has nothing from which to fall. It hates the waters of delights and riches. Hence he says, Ps. 68:30: *I am poor*, against riches, *and sorrowful*, against delights: *and therefore thy salvation, O God, hath set me up.* So ought the just man to say. It feels no weight: because he does not count his labors on our account when we wish to be converted to him. Hence he calls us a finding, there, Ps. 88:21: *I have found David*, etc. Matt. 13:46: he says that he found a precious pearl, although it is said there that he gave all that he had and bought it. Strong. Hence, Job 9:19: *If strength be demanded, he is most strong.* Hidden. Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God*, namely in the humanity. Standing, that is, stable. Boethius: "And, remaining stable, thou givest all things to be moved."

Again, of the foundations of the temple, by which Mary is likewise figured, it is read thus, 3 Kings 5:17–18: *And the king commanded that they should bring great stones, costly stones, for the foundation of the temple, and should square them: which the masons of Solomon, and the masons of Hiram, hewed*, etc. And this was necessary: because a dwelling was being prepared not for man but for God, as is said in 1 Paral. 29:1. The great stones are the most eminent virtues, namely humility, faith, charity, virginity, patience, poverty, and the like, which as the foundation of all good sustain *(p. 541)* and support the building. And these stones are called costly from their effect: because the whole company of the virtues made Mary precious. They are also called squared on account of the four cardinal virtues, which made the glorious Virgin as it were square and stable against all adversity and the onset of the enemy. And by these and all the other virtues this building rose up, that she might become *the city of the great king.* By the masons of Solomon and Hiram can be designated the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which spiritually hewed Mary, and separated from her every speck of sin in her sanctification. Or, the masons of Solomon are the fathers of the Old Testament, who in figures and riddles foresaw and foreshadowed that she would be such. By the masons of Hiram, the Apostles and the other saints, who preached that she had been such as the Prophets foresaw.

Again, to this foundation can be adapted those twelve stones of which, Apoc. 21:19: *The first foundation was jasper*, etc. Again, that word of Isa. 54:11: *I will lay thy foundations with sapphires*, etc.

From the gates. Hence there follows: *The Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob* (Ps. 86:2). The blessed Virgin is called Sion: because as Sion was the most eminent place in Jerusalem, so is the blessed Virgin in both Churches. The gates of this Sion were the five senses of the blessed Virgin, which were always shut against everything harmful and unseemly. Hence there can be said of each of her senses that word of Ezek. 44:2–3: *This gate shall be shut … for the prince*, that is, for the devil, who *had not anything* in her (John 14:30). Or, *for the prince*, that is, for sin, which reigns in some; against which the Apostle, Rom. 6:12: *Let not sin reign in your mortal body.* Or, *for the prince*, that is, for the honor of the prince, namely Christ. But these gates were open to every good. Hence her ears, which were shut against the din of the world, when the Angel came in to her were opened to his salutation. The gate of the heart, which was shut against consent to a man, was opened to the divine will when she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me* (Luke 1:38), etc. Therefore it is said, Ezek. 44:2: *The Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it.* And so it can be applied to the other senses. *The Lord*, then, *loveth the gates of Sion*, that is, the senses of the blessed Virgin, *above all the tabernacles of Jacob*, that is, more than all the bodies of other virgins. Which body is called a tabernacle, 2 Pet. 1:14: *The laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand.* Again, the blessed Virgin: *He that made me rested in my tabernacle* (Ecclus. 24:12), that is, in my body. And virgins are called Jacob because they have wrestled against their flesh and have supplanted the tinder of sin, which in the blessed Virgin was altogether extinguished.

It can also be said otherwise of the gates, that is, of the senses of the Virgin, according to that word of Isa. 60:11: *Thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night.* Apoc. 21:25: *And the gates*

thereof shall not be shut by day: for there shall be no night there. For the regard of her mercy is never shut to those who cry devoutly to the blessed Virgin: for as *the eyes of the Lord are upon the just*, so the eyes of Mary are upon sinners. Likewise neither is her hearing: because *thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart*, that is, of those crying to her faithfully, fervently, and devoutly, O Christ, that is, Mary, through whom thou hearest sinners, as a man hears through his ear. Never is her tongue or speech shut, but she wills to pray for the wretched that they may rise, and for the tempted that they may not succumb. Hence, Apoc. 12:16: *The earth*, that is, Mary, *opened her mouth*, to pray for *the woman*, that is, the soul which *the serpent*, that is, the devil, was attacking. Her *(p. 542)* hand she always opens to the needy, and stretches out her palms to the poor (Prov. 31:20); and so of the others. For these and many other reasons *the Lord loveth the gates of Sion*, etc.

But note that these gates do not lie open except to the just and the justified and those willing to be justified. Therefore, Isa. 26:2, the Lord says: *Open ye the gates, and let the just nation, that keepeth the truth, enter in.*

Otherwise: the gates through which the king of glory entered into this city are four: eternal virginity; humility, incomparable in so great sublimity; obedience, by which she answered, *Behold the handmaid*; faith, by which she conceived, saying, *Be it done to me* (Luke 1:38), etc. Isidore: "If any one of these gates had been lacking, the king of glory would not have entered into this city."

These gates *the Lord loveth above all the tabernacles of Jacob.* Tabernacles are for soldiers; Jacob is the supplanter. As if he said: although the Lord loves those who fight in the active life, and the supplanters of vices, yet more than all these he loves in his mother the aforesaid virtues, by which one enters into the contemplative life. Of these gates can be said that word of Apoc. 21:21, that *every several gate was of one several pearl.* For each of her virtues was a pearl: because each sense of the Virgin shone with the virtues fittingly belonging to it: the eyes with dovelike simplicity, the ears with prompt and perfect obedience, the smell with discretion, the taste with sobriety, the touch with chastity, the gait with maturity, and so of the others.

This city is commended for its fame. Hence: *Glorious things are said of thee* (Ps. 86:3): by the Patriarchs, under the obscurities of figures; by the Prophets, under the riddles of words, as is that word of Isa. 7:14: *Behold a virgin shall conceive.* Again, 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod*, etc. Again, Jer. 31:38: *The city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel*, etc. Num. 24:17: *A star shall rise out of Jacob*, etc. Again, Cant. 6:8: *The daughters saw her, and declared her most blessed: the queens and concubines, and they praised her.*

For its usefulness, which consists in the conversion of sinners, in the remission of sins, in the bestowal of graces. Hence there follows: *I will be mindful* (Ps. 86:4), to have mercy, not to punish. Neh., or 2 Esdras, 5:19: *Remember me, O my God, for good.*

Of Rahab and of Babylon, that is, of sinners. For by Rahab the harlot is understood the soul which, in the manner of a harlot, serves the pleasures of the flesh and is prostituted to vices, which goes by *the broad way that leadeth to destruction* (Matt. 7:13): because Rahab is interpreted *breadth*: whom he counsels, Isa. 23:16: *Take a harp, go about the city, harlot that hast been forgotten.*

And of Babylon, that is, of those who, placed before in the confusion of evils, proved themselves by their works citizens of eternal confusion, and of the city of the devil, which is Babylon. I will be mindful of them, I say, if they are confounded with the good confusion *that bringeth glory* (Ecclus. 4:25), and flee with their whole heart to the bosom of the mother of mercy, who is the city of refuge (Num. 35:6), so that by her mediation they may strive to be reconciled to her Son. But to whom will I be mindful? *To them that know me*: namely, that by those who have known me I may thereby be glorified and praised together: because *I will not give my glory to another* (Isa. 42:8). Some books have *of them that know me*; but the reading is false and corrupt. Augustine says: *To them that know me.*

For the multitude of its citizens, who, though they were before citizens of Babylon, through her become citizens of Jerusalem. Hence there follows: *(p. 543) Behold the foreigners, and Tyre, and the people of the Ethiopians, these were there* (Ps. 86:4). That *behold* is said, namely an adverb of pointing out, is as if it were said: it is in open view how the charity of Mary gathers together into the bosom of motherly piety all who take refuge with her, and makes them citizens of both Churches: because *the foreigners*, as Remigius says, that is, those formerly estranged from God, but afterward doing violence to themselves, with this helper receive the kingdom of heaven, which *suffereth violence* (Matt. 11:12).

And Tyre, which is interpreted *straitness*, that is, those who are straitened by the sorrow of contrition and penance, who before were in the straitness of vices.

And the people of the Ethiopians, that is, those who before were blackened with the soot of sins, and were deformed through the loss of God's likeness, of whom it is said, Lam. 4:8: *Their face is now made blacker than coals*, etc. But, converted, they are now blackened by the burning of tribulations and of penance, after the example of Job, who says, 30:30: *My skin is become black upon me, and my bones are dried up with heat*, that is, with tribulation.

These were there: from the time, namely, when through faith in the incarnation, of which she was the minister, they fled to her by repenting; and such inhabit this city by faith and love. Another reading says: "Palestine, Tyre, with Ethiopia." Palestine is interpreted *the mouth of the hammerer*, and signifies detractors, who continually hammer upon the good: hence, *The wicked have wrought upon my back* (Ps. 128:3), etc.; whom she chastises, as far as in her lies, by the example of her silence. Tyre, *straitness*: these are the covetous, to whom every place is strait; whom she enlarges by the example of her poverty and charity, so that such a one may say: *And Mary brought me forth into a large place* (Ps. 17:20). Ethiopia, *darkness*: behold pride, which blinds. Isa. 13:2: *Upon the dark mountain lift ye up a banner.* For mountain and darkness go well together: because from loftiness follows darkness, as from lowliness enlightenment. Num. 24:4: *Who falleth, and so his eyes are opened.* And such she enlightens by the example of her humility. And so through her the Lord becomes mindful of sinners, and the sinners themselves citizens of this city. Therefore it is said both to the mother and to the Son, Wis. 11:24: *Thou hast mercy upon all, because thou canst do all things.*

For the novelty of the miracle. Hence there follows: *Shall not Sion say: This man and that man is born in her? and the Highest himself hath founded her* (Ps. 86:5). For in this consists the novelty of the unspeakable miracle.

And these are the glorious things which are said of this city of God: namely, that the Highest, inasmuch as he is God, first founded her, and after her founding was born in her inasmuch as he is man. Therefore, when the Prophet speaks of the founding, he puts the past tense, namely *hath founded*: when he adds of the birth in the womb, he puts the present tense, namely *is*, to show that after he had founded her as God, he was born of her as man: which would be impossible in a mere man: for it was never heard that an architect first built a house so that afterward he might be born in the same house: but Christ did this to intimate that his nativity surpassed all others. Hence, Prov. 9:1: *Wisdom hath built herself a house.* On this account Solomon said, Prov. 30:19, that he did not know *the way of a man*, that is, of Christ, *in youth*, that is, in the blessed Virgin.

Otherwise: three privileges of the Virgin are noted here, which her Son conferred on her. The first, that the Highest sanctified the Virgin: for it is God's alone to justify. Hence Christ seems to say to his mother that word of Isa. 43:25: *I am, I am he that blot out thy iniquities*, that is, *(p. 544)* original sin and the tinder of sin, *for my own sake*, etc. As if he said: for my sake, namely that you may be made worthy of my indwelling. The second: because grace filled her and adorned her with virtues. The third, that the grace of the Spirit, overshadowing her, made her fruitful. In the first two is designated the founding of the city; in the third, that a man was born in her. Again, of the first it is said elsewhere, in Ps. 64:10: *Thou hast visited the earth*, that is, Mary, by sanctifying her, *and hast plentifully watered it*, by pouring into her virtues and graces: *thou hast*

many ways enriched it, that is, thou hast in many ways enriched her, by making her fruitful with the birth of the Son of God. For this is above every grace. But *shall a man say*, that is, will he be able to persuade, *Sion*, that is, the synagogue, of this, namely that the Highest, who first founded her, was afterward born as a man in her? As if he said: the unbelieving synagogue rejects this.

From the authority of the Scriptures. Hence there follows: *The Lord shall tell in his writings of peoples and of princes, of them that have been in her* (Ps. 86:6). As if one said to the Prophet: whence do you know all these things? and he answers: *The Lord*, he says, *shall tell in his writings of peoples*, etc. As if he said: in many places the dignity of blessed Mary and of both Churches is foretold and told, namely in the writings of peoples and of princes. He calls peoples the poor Prophets, such as Amos was; princes, the richer and noble, such as David and Isaias were. Or, he calls peoples the Gentiles: hence these things were foretold in the Sibylline verses. Job too was a Gentile. Princes he calls the Jews. Or, the princes are the authors of the Scriptures, namely the Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists; the peoples, the sacred expositors. Or, the peoples are the other saints, after the Apostles; the princes, the Apostles themselves: hence, *Thou shalt make them princes* (Ps. 44:17). *In the writings of peoples*, that is, sent to the peoples, and *in the writings of princes*—not of Plato, Aristotle, or Socrates, but *of them that have been in her*, the city, namely in the Church: because those were strangers to the faith; but the Prophets who foretold and the Apostles who preached were in her through faith: for all the Prophets and Apostles were of one accord in the praise of the blessed Virgin. *In her*, not against her, as the heretics, nor outside her, as the Philosophers.

From the continual exultation of those who dwell in her. Hence there follows: *The dwelling in thee is as it were of all rejoicing* (Ps. 86:7), O Jerusalem above. As if he said: all who dwell in thee are joyful and glad. Isa. 51:11: *They shall come into Sion singing praises, and joy everlasting shall be upon their heads.*

Otherwise: this verse is sung of the blessed Virgin: “As it were of all rejoicing is the dwelling in thee, holy Mother of God.” In a very strong fortress men dwell secure and glad; in a weak one, sad and fearful. Again, in a great and wealthy one, many; in a weak one, very few. For Mary is the refuge and hope of all the faithful: because she is most strong and impregnable, and *terrible as an army set in array* (Cant. 6:3) to the demons, her enemies. She is also wealthy with abundance of graces and virtues: because full of grace and glory. She is great too in the breadth of charity, with which she embraces all. Hence the Church sings to her: “Under thy protection we take refuge, holy Mother of God,” etc. For she is *a fortified city*, as is said elsewhere in Ps. 30:22; and to her applies what is said of the Son, Deut. 33:3: *He hath loved the people, all the saints are in his hand.* Therefore he says well: *As it were of all rejoicing*, etc.: because from all these things there is great joy for those who flee to her. Isa. 66:10: *Rejoice with Jerusalem*, etc. And to her must be said that word of Judith 15:10: *Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel*, etc. Most wretched of all men are those who do not know how to flee to this city in *(p. 545)* every necessity. Hence, Eccles. 10:15: *The labor of fools shall afflict them that know not how to go to the city*, that is, to flee to Mary on the feet, namely, of faith and love. And because wretched sinners will not go up into this city of God to adore the Lord, therefore they suffer so great a lack of grace. Hence, Zach. 14:17: *And it shall come to pass, that he that shall not go up of the families of the land to Jerusalem, to adore the King, the Lord of hosts, there shall be no rain upon them*, that is, the dropping of grace.

Again, on account of all these things David says, as if describing a great benefit of God, Ps. 106:7: *He led them into the right way: that they might go to a city of habitation.* Again, of those who do not serve Mary or who think ill of her, it is said in Ps. 106:4: *They wandered in a wilderness*, that is, in the world, *in a place without water*, because they have not the water of grace, since they do not care for her who is full of grace, that is, Mary; *they found not the way of a city for their habitation*, namely the threefold way of humility, poverty, and charity. This threefold way leads to *the city of habitation*, that is, to Mary, to whom it is said: *As it were of all rejoicing*, etc. And there is taken the way leading to the city and dwelling of the heavenly kingdom. And therefore there befalls them what follows, namely that they are *hungry and thirsty*: because

they have neither the solid food of good working, nor the milk of simple doctrine by which their infancy may be nourished. Again, neither do they worthily eat the bread of life, nor worthily drink the blood of Christ, which is *drink indeed.* Again, they have neither the food of good working nor the drink of saving grace. Therefore there follows, v. 5, that *their soul fainted in them*: because they were neither fed nor given drink with this threefold food and drink.

Having seen how this city is commended for many things in Ps. 86:1 ff., we must see its other commendations, which the sacred Scriptures make manifest in many ways.

This city is commended by its founder, who was God the Trinity. Hence in Ps. 47:9: *God hath founded it for ever.* Again: *The Highest himself hath founded her* (Ps. 86:5). Hence also he himself says to the Church and to this city: *Behold I will lay thy stones in order, and will lay thy foundations with sapphires* (Isa. 54:11). Or, the founder is Wisdom, that is, the Son of God. Hence, Prov. 9:1: *Wisdom hath built herself a house.* Nor will this city have an end: because *God hath founded it for ever.*

By its maker and builder. Hence it is said of the ancient saints, Heb. 11:10, that *they looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* This city is the blessed Virgin, through whose childbearing they hoped to be redeemed and drawn out of hell. Hence Jacob, now near to death, said, Gen. 49:18: *I will look for thy salvation, O Lord.* And a little after, v. 26: *Until the desire of the everlasting hills should come.*

There follows: *Whose*—namely the city's—*builder and maker is God.* Hence, Isa. 45:13, the Father says of the Son: *He shall build my city, and let go my captives.*

By its ruler and king of justice. For the voice of this city is: *The Lord ruleth me* (Ps. 22:1). There follows: *And I shall want nothing,* etc.: because she is full of grace and filled with every good. And on this account all the inhabitants of this city, that is, all the motions and affections of the Virgin, were just: because, as is said, Ecclus. 10:2: *What manner of man the ruler of a city is, such also are they that dwell therein.* For she is Salem, whose king was Melchisedech (Gen. 14:18), who is interpreted *king of justice,* or *just king,* or *king of peace.* This is *the King of kings and Lord of lords* (cf. 1 Tim. 6:15; Apoc. 19:16). This is the just king. Hence it is said to Mary, *(p. 546)* Isa. 1:26: *Thou shalt be called the city of the just,* etc.

By the site of the place: because she is founded upon a firm rock, which is Christ (Matt. 7:24), as upon native rock: because Christ is a firm rock and the hardest stone (Deut. 32:13). And, 1 Cor. 10:4: *And the rock was Christ.* She is founded also upon a mountain, that is, Christ, who is *the mountain on the top of the mountains* (Isa. 2:2; Mich. 4:1). And upon that stone which *became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth* (Dan. 2:35): and therefore her voice is, Ecclus. 24:7: *I dwelt in the highest places,* etc.

Again: *The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains* (Ps. 86:1), that is, in the eminence of all the virtues. Or, she was situated upon a firm rock, that is, upon the firmness of faith, from which she did not waver even at the burial of her Son, when every saint failed in faith.

Otherwise, from the site of the place: because she is founded upon humility, which is the stability of the faithful soul, which the devil cannot move. And this is what is said in Ps. 103:5: *Who hast founded the earth,* that is, Mary, *upon its own bases,* which was humility: *it shall not be moved for ever and ever,* to sin. Again, of the site of this city can be expounded what is said of the heavenly Jerusalem, Apoc. 21:10–11, where it is read thus: *And the Angel took me up in spirit to a great and high mountain: and he shewed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God,* etc. And these are the words of blessed John. *He took me up,* that is, carried me upward, *in spirit,* that is, in ecstasy of mind, *to a great and high mountain.* This mountain is Christ, who is great in the humanity and high in the divinity: because of insuperable power, as the Gloss says. *And he shewed me,* upon that mountain, the founded *city,* that is, Mary, or the Church; *holy,* that is, firm in the purpose of virginity; *Jerusalem,* intent fully on the vision of eternal

peace; *coming down out of heaven*, that is, receiving in her sanctification the infusion of grace sent to her from heaven; prepared *from God*, who adorned her with every grace. Or, *coming down out of heaven*, that is, ascribing to the divine goodness whatever good she had: hence she said: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49), etc. *Having the glory of God.* (Look a little below.)

And note that a city, town, or dwelling situated on a mountain has three things: namely that it is most bright, most healthful, and most clean.

Most bright: because it receives the light of the sun earlier and more abundantly. So Mary received earlier and more abundantly the brightness of her Son, the sun of justice, so that she clearly knew the world, herself, and God. In the knowledge of the world, which she despised, she was bright; in the knowledge of herself, brighter; but in the knowledge of God, brightest: and therefore she humbled herself so greatly before him. And this Isaias had foretold to her, Isa. 60:19: *The Lord shall be unto thee for an everlasting light, and thy God for thy glory.* For she is the Jerusalem to whom he had promised long before, Tob. 13:13: *Thou shalt shine with a glorious light: and all the ends of the earth shall worship thee.*

Again, to this city applies what is said of the Jerusalem above, Apoc. 21:11, namely that it had *the glory of God, and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper stone, even as crystal.* The glory of God is the true knowledge of God, which the blessed Virgin had above all. Hence she could truly say that word of Bar. 4:4: *We are happy, O Israel: because the things that are pleasing to God are made known to us.*

There follows: *And the light thereof*, that is, her luminous works, shining before men *(p. 547)* for example, *like to a precious stone*, that is, to Christ, whom she imitated in her works, who was a precious stone, firm in purpose and shining in virtues; *as to the jasper stone*, in which is signified the firmness and greenness of faith as regards the Virgin, or perseverance in holiness as regards both; *even as crystal*, which is transparent and shining, and signifies the pure confession of divine praise as regards the Virgin, but of sins as regards us.

Again, of the brightness of this city there is added a little after in the same place, Apoc. 21:23: *And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it*: because Mary had no need of the greater or lesser teaching of others: for *the glory of God*, that is, of the whole Trinity, *hath enlightened it*, giving her understanding the fullest knowledge, removed from every cloud of phantasms: *and the lamb is the lamp thereof*, that is, Christ, whom she carried in her womb and in her mind as God and man, who for nine months, before he did so to other cities, preached the gospel to her heart. Then, born of her, he preached the kingdom of God to the other cities also (Luke 4:43): on account of which he also called himself *the light of the world* (John 8:12).

There follows, Apoc. 21:24: *And the nations shall walk in the light of it.* They shall walk from virtue to virtue, namely with the steps of faith and good works, *in the light of it*, that is, by the enlightenment of her examples. Or, by the light of knowledge, which is poured into them by her from above; as sometimes happens that certain lamps are set on high towers, by whose light sailors and travelers direct their course and way.

This city was also most healthful, as a town situated on a mountain: because Mary was healthy when in her sanctification the kindling of the tinder of sin was taken from her; healthier, because in her good keeping of herself it was further diminished; but most healthy, because in the conception of the Son of God it was altogether extinguished. (Look for these things under the title on her sanctification.)

This city was also most clean: because Mary was clean in thought, cleaner in affection, but cleanest in intention: and on this account there befits her what is said of the heavenly Jerusalem, Apoc. 21:18: *The city itself pure gold, like to clear glass.* Gold, on account of the radiance of charity; pure, through the grace of virginity. Or, *pure gold*, on account of the solidity of faith: for gold is a solid metal. And faith is called pure from its effect, because it purifies the soul: hence, Acts 15:9: *Purifying their hearts by faith.* Or, it is called

pure gold on account of the wisdom of which she was full. But because faith of the heart is not enough unless there is also confession of faith, according to that word of the Apostle, Rom. 10:10: *With the heart, we believe unto justice; but, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation*, there follows: *Like to clear glass*: for by glass is signified confession, because glass does not hide the color of what it contains, especially if it be clean and pure. Or, by clear glass the virginal flesh can be designated.

Again, of the cleanness of the city there follows a little after, Apoc. 21:27: *There shall not enter into it any thing defiled*, through consent in thought, *or that worketh abomination*, in action, *or maketh a lie*, in speech: and by this it is shown that she sinned neither by thinking, nor by speaking, nor by working; neither by corruption of herself, which is defilement, nor by contempt of God, which is abomination, nor by deceiving her neighbor, namely by lying.

Behold, our city had in herself these three things which a city situated on a mountain is wont to have: namely brightness, cleanness, and healthfulness.

This city is commended by its material. Hence, Apoc. 21:18: *The city itself pure gold, like to clear glass. (p. 548)* Because it was built of pure gold; so that the gold may be referred as it were to the material of the soul, and the glass as it were to the material of the flesh, which, since it was hay—because, Isa. 40:6, *All flesh is grass*—was in many ways refined, and as it were strained, by the fire of the Holy Spirit, and so was turned into the splendor of glass. And glass, according to Isidore, is named from the transparency of sight (*visus*), because it shines: for in other metals whatever is contained is hidden, but in glass the liquor or appearance, such as it is within, is shown without, and in a manner, though enclosed, it lies open. So also Mary, closed to every man, lay open to God alone. Hence, Ezek. 44:2: *No man shall pass through it: because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it, and it shall be shut*, etc.

By its size, which is described in Zach. 14:10 and Jer. 31:38, where it is read thus: *The city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel even to the king's winepresses.* Hananeel is interpreted *grace of God.* The tower of Hananeel is the height of grace from above, of which there was in Mary a singular fullness. The tower of Hananeel, then, is the high strength, or the strong height, of the grace of God, from which this city began to be built; and it was extended *even to the winepresses of the king*, that is, of Christ, whose passion was a winepress: but the Prophet put *winepresses* in the plural, because he suffered in many ways, and suffered in each of his members, and there were many circumstances of the passion. The beginning, then, of this city was the height of infused grace, from which it began in her sanctification; but its completion, that she suffered in mind with her suffering Son: whence she merited and had in excellent manner the fruit of martyrdom.

Again, of the size of this city it is said, Jer. 31:38 ff.: *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord, from the tower of Hananeel even to the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall go out farther in his sight upon the hill Gareb: and it shall compass Goatha, and the whole valley of dead bodies, and of ashes, and all the country of death, even to the torrent Cedron, and to the corner of the horse gate towards the east.* Behold the immense size of the city. Expound thus: Hananeel, the grace of God, as was expounded above. The gate, the offering of faith, by which she received the Son of God into herself; of which gate we read, Ezek. 44:2. The corner, her most secret manner of life. Two walls running together from different directions make a corner. These are virginity and motherhood, which like walls or ramparts kept in her the possession of the virtues.

Otherwise: the tower of Hananeel, that is, the tower of the grace of God, is the blessed Virgin herself, who, squared as it were with all the virtues by the buildings of the Holy Spirit, excels in the prerogative of graces, as a tower stands out above the whole castle; and rising on high with the structures of many good works as of stones, she furnishes refuge and defense to all fugitives: and she from her beginning, like a tower fortified by the grace of God, was impregnable to all the assaults of the enemy. And this city went forward *even to the*

gate of the corner, that is, so far that she herself became the gate of the corner: for two walls coming from different directions make a corner: and virginity and motherhood came from very different directions, if one attends to nature; but through the grace of God, which is signified in the tower of Hananeel, they ran together in her and were united; and in the meeting of virginity and motherhood she was made the gate of the corner and the door of paradise, as the Church sings to her: "Thou door of the high King," etc. Through which gate he entered into our region who is *the corner* of the two peoples. And note that where a gate is in a corner, the walls do not meet whole, but parts of the walls. So in her virginity and motherhood do not meet whole: because what belongs to virginity is barrenness, as part of it, and what belongs to motherhood is corruption, which did not meet in our Virgin; but from virginity, integrity, from motherhood, fruitfulness, *(p. 549)* because she chose *the best part* (Luke 10:42). This is the description of this city, which the Holy Spirit so built that from the beginning it was the tower of Hananeel, and in the childbirth of the Son it was the gate of the corner.

There follows: *And the measuring line shall go out farther in his sight.* By which is signified that she seems to have had none like her before nor to have one after, and that she surpassed all creatures. *In his sight*, that is, of the Lord, who alone suffices to comprehend the dignity of his mother, as he was comprehended by her alone when *a woman compassed a man* (Jer. 31:22). And a size as it were infinite was necessary for this city, since it was the city of the great king, who is not a petty king, but *a great king above all gods* (Ps. 94:3). Of this size too it is said, Bar. 3:24–25: *O Israel, how great is the house of God*, that is, house and city, *and how vast is the place of his possession! It is great, and hath no end: it is high and immense.*

From the broad extension of its walls. Hence there follows in the authority of Jeremias, 31:39: *And the measuring line shall go out farther*, namely extending her patronage and benefits to those who are outside the line of measure, that is, who have transgressed the rule of the Gospel teaching; *in his sight*, that is, according to the good pleasure of God, who founded this city for this, that it might be the refuge and protection of sinners; namely *upon the hill Gareb*, which is interpreted *scab*, that is, upon the scabby hill, by which the proud are signified. Job 18:13: *Let it devour the beauty of his skin*, that is, of the proud, *let the firstborn death*, that is, pride, which was the first sin: and it slew the devil, as death consumes whatever there may be in a man: and as the scab devours the beauty of the skin, so it too devours whatever shines in the outward manner of life.

And it shall compass Goatha. Goatha is interpreted *the eye of sins.* This is that avarice which is that vessel of which, Zach. 5:6: *This is their eye in all the earth.* It is interpreted also *circuit*, and signifies cupidity, which is *a flaming fire devouring round about* (Lam. 2:3), in whose circuit the wicked walk.

And the whole valley of dead bodies. Dead bodies stink and are consumed by the worms which they breed. So also the lustful. Isa. 34:3: *Out of their carcasses shall rise a stench*, namely before God and the Angels. Jer. 16:4: *They shall be as dung upon the face of the earth, and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of the air*, etc. Behold, they are consumed by the worms they breed, and by desires and delights. And note that he says *the whole valley of dead bodies*: because there is one valley of fornicators, another of adulterers, another of sodomites, and so of the others. But the wall of this city extends to all: for to the proud she sets forth the example of her humility, to the avaricious and covetous that of her poverty, to the lustful that of her virginity.

There follows: *And of ashes*, etc., as above in the text. The wicked are ashes, dry, barren, and the food of the devil. Isa. 65:25: *Dust shall be the serpent's food.* But she takes these ashes away from the jaws of the devil, *breaking his grinders* (Job 29:17) before he swallows them altogether, as is clear in Theophilus; and she mixes with them the warm waters of graces—warm in effect, because they warm the heart through devotion—or also the warm waters of tears; and so from these ashes she makes a lye with which she washes them, and also others by their example. For these dusts too, which before were the serpent's bread, she obtains the dew of grace, and makes them fruitful for good, and binds them together so that they may be able

to hold grace.

It reaches also to *all the country of death.* The country of death is the sojourn of the present life, in which, as the star of the sea, *(p. 550)* she consoles and directs us. The country of death is the malice of a wicked manner of life, which she powerfully changes in whom she will. Again, the country of death is the certainty of damnation: because she takes away from the devil many who were already certain of their damnation, as is often read in her miracles.

It reaches also *even to the torrent Cedron,* which is interpreted *darkness,* which like a torrent sweeps the sinful man along, so that from inner darkness he flows down to the outer darkness: since the Illuminatrix meets them and restores them to the light.

It reaches also *even to the corner of the horse gate towards the east.* The horses are sinners carrying the devil as rider, to whom it is said: *Do not become like the horse and the mule,* etc. (Ps. 31:9), who do not distinguish God and the devil as rider. The eastern gate is penance, through which the sun of justice rises for us. In this gate is a corner and a narrow entrance; and that sinners may be able to enter through it, the benefits of the blessed Virgin are at hand for them, who in the hour of her Son's passion set herself toward the North, so that the devil could not hinder the penitent coming to the outstretched arms of the Crucified.

This city is commended by the defense of the homeland. Isa. 26:1: *The city of our strength.* (Look a little below.) And whatever was said above of the extension of the walls all applies to this commendation. The homeland in which this city is situated is the land of promise, as you will find below concerning the earthly Jerusalem, by which is signified the Church militant, which she defends from the incursions of demons and vices, above all as regards those who trust in her and flee to her. Hence to the faithful of the Church, who dwell spiritually in her company, the Lord promises, Isa. 66:13, according to another reading: "From Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen, help shall come to you." For she is one and the chief of the cities of refuge, of which we read, Num. 35:6 and Jos. 20:2: *Appoint cities for fugitives,* which are Mary and the saints; but she is the metropolis of these cities. On this account it is said, Job 5:1, from the words of Eliphaz: *Call,* that is, call upon help against the pressure of demons and temptations, *if there be any that will answer thee,* by helping with his prayers, *and turn to some of the saints.* So the faithful are wont to call upon Saint Nicholas, Saint James, Saint Giles, and others whom they have served in some way. But in none will be found help so swift or so powerful as in Mary. (Of the cities of refuge you will find under the twenty-fifth cause.)

From its squareness, or arrangement. Hence, Apoc. 21:16: *The city lieth in a four-square.* Its squareness was faith, hope, charity, and good working: because, as the Gloss says, this city is robust in faith, long-suffering in hope, ample in charity, effective in working. There follows: *And the length thereof,* that is, faith, *is as great as the breadth,* that is, charity: because as much as she believed, so much she loved. The Gloss: "As much as one believes, so much he hopes; as much as he hopes, so much he loves; as much as he loves, so much he works." Or, this squareness is made by the four cardinal virtues, of which one is not said to exceed another. Prudence, in seeking good and avoiding evil, goes first. Temperance follows it, which draws back from pleasures. Fortitude follows this, so that what is understood may be done. Then justice, that one may so temper one's acts as not to seem to oneself too just or too wise. Eccles. 7:17: *Be not over just,* etc.

From the height of its towers. For Mary is the city of Ecbatana, whose gates Arphaxad set in the height of towers, as is said, Judith 1:1–3. Arphaxad is interpreted *healing,* or *sounding devastation.* This is Christ, who built this city, *(p. 551)* who healed the human race, and sounded, that is, preached, the devastation of sins. Ecbatana is interpreted *the solemn commandment of a humble man.* This is Mary, who solemnly fulfilled the precepts of Christ.

The first tower of this city is the loftiness of humility, which reaches up to the Lord of majesty sitting on the throne. As blessed Bernard says, this tower defends the simple, the God-fearing, the meek, and the like.

The second tower is the name of the Virgin. Prov. 18:10: *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the just runneth to it, and shall be exalted.* This name is called upon in this city. Hence, Tob. 13:14–15: *They shall adore the Lord in thee … for they shall call upon the great name in thee.* Blessed Bernard says thus: "The name of the Lady is a most strong tower: the sinner shall flee to it and shall be delivered." This tower defends any sinners whatever, and sinners however great.

The third tower is virginity, by which all who love chastity are defended from the concupiscence of the flesh.

The fourth tower is the martyrdom of the virginal heart, which especially receives and protects the afflicted.

And these towers are arranged spiritually as it were at the corners of the square: and from each of them many little turrets of the other virtues are set out in order, as it were along the sides of the city; and they can be called the daughter turrets, or the collateral turrets, of the aforesaid virtues. Again, in Ps. 47:13–14: *Surround Sion*, that is, Mary, by continual prayer; as, when someone wishes to obtain something from someone, it is said of him, "he goes round him," in French *il y va entor*. *And encompass her*, as it were with the two arms of faith and love. *Tell*: what is to be told is said elsewhere (the edition cites Job 12:20): *Tell all his wondrous works* (cf. Ps. 104:2). Again: *Telling the praises of the Lord, and his powers*, etc. (Ps. 77:4). You, I say, being *in her towers*, that is, firm in the four virtues which we have called towers: humility, calling upon the name, chastity, compassion. And this that he says, *Tell in her towers*: you, I say, being in these towers spoken of above. And this is what is said, or added: *Set your hearts on her strength*, not on your own strength. Because *cursed be the man that trusteth in man* (Jer. 17:5), namely himself or another. And note that by towers cities are fortified and enemies are seen beforehand; and from the towers we speak to those who are outside.

This city is commended by the indissoluble firmness and robust defense of its walls. Apoc. 21:12: *The city had a wall great and high*, etc., namely Christ, the defender of his mother: great among men according to the humanity, high with the Father according to the divinity. Or thus: Christ is great in incomprehensibility and eternity; high in wisdom and power, in the sublimity of majesty and the exaltation of the humanity. Of this wall it is said, Isa. 26:1: *Sion the city of our strength, a saviour, a wall and a bulwark shall be set therein.* Expound thus: O Sion, O thou Church, I announce to thee that she will be the city of our strength; and what that city is he declares by what follows: *A saviour … shall be set therein* as *a wall.* And note that if the Saviour is set in her, he is enclosed within her; and if he is set as a wall, he encloses her. This description of the city, then, fits Mary specially, nor can it fit another: for in her the Saviour was enclosed by the mystery of the incarnation, and he enclosed her as a wall by the mystery of defense: for he is Gedeon, that is, *going round in the womb*: for in the womb of the Virgin, though circumscribed as to human nature, nonetheless by the uncircumscribed nature of divine power he went round his mother too. And the bulwark of this city, which is for us the strength of defense, was *(p. 552)* that continual and watchful guard of the Angels of which it is said, Cant. 3:7: *Threescore valiant ones surround the bed of Solomon*, etc. (Look there.) And so this is to be understood: *A saviour, a wall and a bulwark shall be set therein*: supply, *shall be set in her.* On this account it is said to her, Isa. 60:18: *Salvation shall possess thy walls*, etc.

Otherwise: the wall of this city was the faith of the Virgin. Hence, Apoc. 21:18: *And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper stone*, which on account of its greenness signifies faith, as the Gloss says there: he who has not faith is dry and fit only for eternal fire. The several battlements of this wall are the several articles of faith. Therefore it is said of the Virgin, Cant. 8:9: *If she be a wall, let us build upon it bulwarks of silver.* And well is it called *the building of the wall*: because faith has it from the gathering together, as it were, of the several articles that it is the wall of the Church and of the faithful soul. There follows a little after, v. 19: *And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones*, that is, with every kind of virtues and good works, in which this wall is founded: because faith without good works and without the other virtues is like a wall without foundations, which will fall at any onset of temptation. How the faith of the Virgin had this foundation is manifest.

Again, because a wall (*murus*) is so called from fortifying (*muniendo*), Mary is called a fortified city by reason of her walls. Hence it can be said that she had as it were a sevenfold wall, namely the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, against the seven deadly sins: namely the wall of sobriety against gluttony, the wall of modesty against lust, the wall of poverty against avarice, the wall of fortitude against sloth, the wall of kindness against anger, the wall of charity against envy, and the wall of humility against pride. Set to each its proper authorities; and all this is moral, etc.

This city had the wall of divine protection: for if *the Lord is round about his people* (Ps. 124:2), much more round about his mother. Hence, Isa. 26:1: *A saviour … shall be set therein*, etc., as above. The wall of angelic guarding. Hence the Psalmist says to her, Ps. 90:11: *He hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee*, etc. Of every kind of virtue: for the virtues are walls, because they fortify the soul. Hence, Prov. 25:28: *As a city that lieth open and is not compassed with walls*: walls, that is, virtues. Of fiery charity: for Christ *is a fire* (Deut. 4:24), who set her on fire. Hence he says, Zach. 2:5: *I will be to it a wall of fire round about.* Of waters, that is, of the multitude of graces: for she is Alexandria, dwelling among the rivers of graces, of which Nahum 3:8 says: *Waters round about it … the waters are its walls.* Alexandria is interpreted *lightening the darkness*, or *taking away the straits of darkness*: which fits blessed Mary excellently. And it can be said that the virtue of humility, kindness, meekness, and the like, as it were river waters, and patience, the martyrdom of the heart, and the like, as it were sea waters, fortified Mary.

In this city there were the strengthening of right custom, the fortification of justice, and the firmness of holy purpose. Hence: *Because I know not man* (Luke 1:34). The custom of holy working: for from her own substance she supplied the necessities of her Son, who was at once rich and poor. The moat of true poverty: deep with fear and humility, empty through contempt of worldly prosperity, widened by charity, most clean by virginity, watery with piety and compassion, paved with stone by the solidity of patience, gaping upward with the intention of desire—because it belongs to the truly poor to gape after heavenly things—going round the city with strong defense: for such a moat does not fear the threats of the devil.

(p. 553) This city is commended by the watchmen of its walls, that is, the Angels. Hence the whole Trinity says to her, Isa. 62:6: *Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen*, that is, Angels. Or, these watchmen are Gabriel and John. (Under the title on the throne, concerning the two thrones.) But because the watchmen of the walls and the guards of the city ought not to be silent, there follows in the authority of Isaias concerning these watchmen: *All the day and all the night for ever they shall not hold their peace*, namely in praising the name of the Lord and of the Lady herself, according to what the Church sings: “The Angels praise thee, holy Mother of God,” etc. Isa. 24:14: *These shall lift up their voice, and shall give praise.* In the same, 52:8: *The voice of thy watchmen*, that is, thy watchmen crying aloud: *they have lifted up their voice, they shall praise together*, etc. Again, Ezek. 33:7: *O son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth, and declare it to them from me.*

Otherwise: by these watchmen are signified the virtues of the Virgin. The first watchman is sobriety, whose contrary corrupts virginity: for Eve, as long as she abstained in paradise, remained a virgin; as soon as she ate, she felt the goads of the flesh. Hence, Gen. 3:6–7: *The woman took of the fruit of the tree, and did eat, and gave to her husband, who did eat: and the eyes of them both were opened*, that is, the streams of concupiscences. The second, abstinence. The third, holy occupation. The fourth, roughness of dress. The fifth, the guard of the senses. The sixth, modesty of speech. The seventh, to flee the opportunity of sinning, that is, the place, the time, and the person. (All this you will find brought into agreement under the title on the moral lily.)

This city is commended by the dignity of its name: for she is called Salem, Jerusalem, Sion, Bethlehem, Bethulia, Ecbatana, Nazareth, Jericho, Capharnaum, Abela, *a mother city in Israel* (cf. 2 Kings 20:19) (look a little below), Damascus, Tanis, Heliopolis, Lachis, Alexandria, as above.

Mary is called the city of Salem. For Salem was the city of Melchisedech, who is interpreted *king of justice*, or *king of peace*, or *peaceable king*: and he signifies Christ. And Salem is interpreted *peace* or *justice*, or *he sent*, or *of the perfect*, or *rendering*, or *rendered*, or *perfectly completed*, or *the completion of perfection*; and it designates Mary. Of this Salem and of Melchisedech its king we read in Gen. 14:18 ff., and Heb. 5:10 and 7:17, and in Ps. 109:4: *Thou art a priest*, etc.

Mary is called the city of Jerusalem: for Jerusalem is interpreted *peaceable, vision of peace, perfect fear*, or *she will fear perfectly*: and all this befits Mary. For she was peaceable: because she bore our peace, which is Christ: for she *hath made both one* (Eph. 2:14), because she united God to man and man to God in the unity of the person, uniting heaven to earth, the lowest to the highest, against the threefold war which Eve had made. (Look at the beginning of this book.)

Again, she is also our peacemaker, reconciling sinners to her Son, designated by the dove of Noe, which brought him an olive branch in its mouth while he was in the ark, showing that God was reconciled to the human race. And well *in its mouth*: because she does this by the power of her prayers. Hence we pray to her thus: "Remember, virgin mother, in the sight of God, to speak good for us."

Again, *vision of peace*: because she saw that peace in human flesh of which Simeon says, Luke 2:30: *My eyes have seen thy salvation.* And through her one comes to the vision of eternal peace: for without her man has not seen, nor will see, that peace.

Again, *perfect fear*, or *fearing perfectly*: because with the fear of reverence, which is holy and endures for ever and ever, she always feared God. Hence she is also praised in both Churches: because *the woman that feareth (p. 554) the Lord, she shall be praised* (Prov. 31:30). The blessed Virgin is designated by Jerusalem by reason of the name, and nonetheless she is signified by it from the condition of the city: because as Jerusalem was, and perhaps still is, the metropolis of the other cities of Judea, so she too is the Lady of all faithful souls, nay, of those in heaven, on earth, and in hell, which are three cities. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:9–10: *I have stood in all the earth*—because everywhere on earth she has churches—*and in every people, and in every nation I have had the chief rule.*

Behold, the metropolis is designated by Abela, *a mother city in Israel* (2 Kings 20:19). And Abela is interpreted *pitiable to him*, or *forgiving him*: because Mary has pity on sinners, and obtains for them from her Son the forgiveness of debts, that is, the remission of their sins. And she has the primacy in every nation according to the three states. (Look under the title that she is called primate.)

Again, as Jerusalem was the throne of the kingdom to which David was anointed, so she too is the throne of Christ. (Look under the title on the throne.) On this account it is said, 2 Kings 5:9: *David dwelt in the castle of Jerusalem, and called it the city of David.* By the castle of Jerusalem understand the humility of Mary, in which above all God the Trinity rested, saying: *In all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord* (Ecclus. 24:11).

Again, because, as Jerusalem is situated in the middle of the world—hence it is called *the navel of the earth* (Ezek. 38:12). Again, Ezek. 5:5: *This is Jerusalem, I have set her in the midst of the nations, and the countries round about her.* Again, in Ps. 73:12 it is said of Christ: *He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.* And so Mary, or her womb, is called the middle of the earth. (Look under the title on the earth.) And note that, as some say, Jerusalem is not in the middle or at the center of the whole earth, but in the middle and as it were at the center of our habitable world. Isidore says that Jerusalem is set in the middle of Judea, as it were the navel of the whole region.

Again, because, as Jerusalem is by antonomasia called the holy city, as is read in 2 Mach. 3:1, so also is Mary. (Look under the title on the holiness of Mary.)

Again, because, as the Lord promised Jerusalem that he would *make it a praise in the earth* (Isa. 62:7), so he has rendered it to Mary, whom in the land of the living the Angels and just souls, nay, God himself, continually praise, and in the land of the dying the just and sinners.

Again, of this Jerusalem John says, Apoc. 21:2: *And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* Note that John, which is interpreted *in whom is the grace of God,* sets his own name to this vision, which he did not do when he saw other things, to note that it is a special grace to see, that is, to understand, the dignity of Mary, and that this ought to be ascribed to the grace of God, not to one's own industry. He says, then: *I saw*, by the understanding. In this too that he says *I saw*, he rejoices in the vision. Nor did anyone after Christ know so much of the secrets of the Virgin as John, to whom her care was specially committed by her Son, as Augustine says. *The city*: Mary, as has been said. *Holy*: under the title on her holiness. *New*: because she seems to have had none like her before, nor to have one after; as an unwonted thing is called a novelty. (Look there: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth* (Jer. 31:22); under the title on the conception of the Virgin.) Or *new* for this reason: because all oldness of sin and guilt was taken away from her in her sanctification, in the filling of grace, in the coming upon her of the Holy Spirit, in the conception of the Son of God; but not of punishment, until she was assumed into heaven.

Chapter 1 (continued): Mary, City of God

(p. 555) Coming down out of heaven: because Christ, her foundation, was there, as was said above. Or, *coming down out of heaven* through the infusion of grace. Or, *coming down out of heaven*, after the glory of her motherhood, and after receiving so many graces, humbling herself so greatly under the hand of the Lord, according to that word of Apoc. 4:10: *The four and twenty ancients fell down before him that sitteth on the throne, and adored him that liveth for ever and ever.* Or, *coming down*, that is, humbling herself so greatly that God might be exalted through her. Or, this coming down is the fear of reverence, which will last for ever. Or thus: she lived in mind in heaven, according to that word, *Our conversation* (Phil. 3:20), etc. Hence she as it were came down when she humbled herself so greatly. There follows: *Prepared from God* with every kind of virtue and good working, who did great things for her. Hence she too says: *By the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Cor. 15:10).

There follows: *As a bride.* (Under the title that she is called bride.) *Adorned for her husband*, that is, for the honor of her husband, namely Christ, or of the Father himself, whose bride she is, and mother of the Son. Or, *adorned for her husband,* that is, as befits her husband: *adorned* in the passive, as if not by herself but by God. Of whose adornment, Apoc. 12:1: *A woman clothed with the sun, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.*

Again, Mary is called Sion. Hence the Father says, Isa. 46:13: *I will give salvation in Sion*, that is, in Mary—that is, Jesus, who is interpreted *salvation*, who was given to her in the incarnation when he was made her Son, and through her was given to us (Isa. 9:6)—*and my glory in Jerusalem*, that is, in Mary herself—that is, my Son: because *the glory of the father is a wise son.*

Again, it is said to this Sion, Isa. 52:7: *Sion,* that is, O thou Mary, taking it as the vocative case, *thy God shall reign*: thy Son through the incarnation, but thy God through creation and special worship. Again, Isa. 60:14, it is said to this city: *They shall call thee the City of the Lord, the Sion of the Holy One of Israel.* Again, Ps. 101:17: *The Lord hath built up Sion, and he shall be seen in his glory.* For this Sion he prayed, Ecclus. 36:16: *Fill Sion with thy unspeakable virtues* (the Vulgate has *words*): the Father says this to the Holy Spirit of Mary, and it fits the sanctification of the Virgin. For Sion is interpreted in Hebrew *watchtower,* because it is built on high and looks out on things coming from afar.

Again, she is the city of Nazareth, in which she conceived and nourished her Son, which is a city of Galilee, which is interpreted *a migration made*, or *revelation*, or *wheel*: because through her we migrate from vices to virtues, from evil to good, from good to better, from better to best. Again, she who is the Illuminatrix unveils our inner eyes, so that we may be able to see, that is, to know, the vanity of the world, our own vileness, and the goodness of God. She also reveals to us the mysteries of the Scriptures; and by the example of her poverty she also sets right certain ones who were turning round as on a wheel, walking in a circle after temporal things. And Nazareth is interpreted *flower*, *shoot*, *holiness*, *consecration*, *anointing*, *cleanness*, *guarding*, *separation*; all of which can most beautifully be adapted to her.

She is also the city of Bethlehem, which is interpreted *house of bread*, or *house of refreshment*, where she brought forth the living bread *which came down from heaven*, with which we are refreshed at the altar, and who is our refreshment in eternity. For in this city was found the bread of life which she brought us from heaven. Prov. 31:14: *She bringeth her bread from afar.* Whom the shepherds sought and found, saying, Luke 2:15: *Let us go over to Bethlehem*, that is, to the blessed Virgin. And they speak after the manner of pilgrims, who, not wishing to lodge *(p. 556)* in a poor or needy village, say: let us go on to the good town, where we shall find all things necessary and at a good market, and we shall sleep safely there. And this is what she too counsels to all, Ecclus. 24:26, saying: *Come over to me, all ye … and be filled with my fruits.* As if she said: like other hostesses—you will nowhere else find so good or so safe a lodging, nowhere so good a market for all necessary things: but the others may well lie, while she does not: because she is truthful and the mother of truth. Again, Isa. 55:1, she says with her Son: *All you that thirst*, by desire, *come to the waters* of graces: *and you that have no money, make haste, buy, and eat: come ye, buy … without money*, etc., up to *wine and milk.* Blessed Bernard: "Wonderful is this buying: with the lovers of the world it cannot be such; with the author of the world it cannot be otherwise"—supply, nor with his mother.

She lodges courteously those whom she receives, grieving that not all come over to her; and she urges them on, saying, Cant. 5:1: *Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.* With what dishes she feeds her guests, with what spiced drinks and wines she inebriates them and makes them glad, you have in § 12 on the garden.

Again, in this Bethlehem the three Magi, who were pilgrims, sought and found the true bread (Matt. 2:11): and, as is read in a certain apocryphal writing, the table still remains at which they are said literally to have eaten with blessed Mary; which we do not assert.

Again, she is the city of Jericho, which is interpreted *moon*, or *its fragrance*: for she is *fair as the moon*, and wholly fragrant with the spices of the several virtues: of which Jericho the men of that city, namely the familiars of blessed Mary, said, and continually say, giving thanks to Eliseus, that is, to Christ, 4 Kings 2:19: *Behold the situation of this city is very good, as thou, my lord, seest*, etc. And well *very good*: for *God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good* (Gen. 1:31); but above all the things which he made in the Virgin were very good indeed.

Again, she is the city of Capharnaum, which is interpreted *field of fatness*, or *town of consolation.* (Of this Capharnaum you will find below, under the title that Mary is a town.)

Again, she is the city of Bethulia (Judith 6), which is interpreted *virgin of the Lord*, or *chaste to the Lord*, or *house bringing forth the Lord.* (Of this you will find under the title that Mary is called an aqueduct.)

She is the city of Tanis, having a field adjacent, where God set his wonders, as is said in Ps. 77:43. Tanis is interpreted *humble commandment*: and she humbly obeyed the things which God had commanded her through the Angel, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38), whose part it is to obey. By the field of this Tanis, the breadth of Mary's charity; in which field, namely, wonders were done when there God was made man, the Word flesh, the mother a virgin, the great one little, the lion a lamb, the Ancient of days a child, and the like. *In the field of Tanis*: literally, in the plain of that city. And Tanis is the metropolitan city

of Egypt, namely that in which Pharao dwelt and Moses worked signs. Tanis is interpreted *humble commandment*, or *commandment of humility*: because by her example she plainly commands humility to all, saying with her Son, Matt. 11:29: *Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart.*

Again, she is the city of Lais, of which we read, Judg. 18:7, in which there was a people dwelling without any fear, secure and quiet, with no one at all resisting them, of great wealth, and far from Sidon and separated from all men. A city, I say, situated *in a land that is rich and fruitful*, and *in a very large country, where there is no want of any thing that groweth on the earth. (p. 557)* With the description of this city agrees what blessed Bernard says of the heavenly Jerusalem, and it can fittingly be understood of Mary: "O heavenly city, secure dwelling, homeland containing all that delights, people without murmuring, quiet inhabitants, men having no want! O how glorious are the things said of thee, city of God!"

This city is commended by the newness of its name. Hence it is said to Mary, Isa. 60:14: *They shall call thee the City of the Lord, the Sion of the Holy One of Israel.* Isa. 62:2: *Thou shalt be called by a new name*, namely *full of grace*; or, the new name, namely *mother of mercy.* (Look under the title on the salutation, chapter 2.) Likewise to her servants and lovers, namely the citizens of this city, a new name will be given in the future: because as now they are called Christians from Christ, so in the future they will be called Jesuans from Jesus, that is, the saved from the Saviour and the redeemed from the Redeemer. Hence, Isa. 62:12: *And they shall call them, The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord.* Again, Isa. 65:15: *He shall call his servants by another name.* And this is the Christian name, honorable before the Lord, though sometimes despised among some. Hence Almachius called Urban a worshipper of the cross, and Julian called Christ the ragged Galilean. Or, this honorable name is the name of the poor, of whom this is said literally, whose name is honorable in heaven before God. Or, this is the name of those who love peace, who *shall be called the children of God* (Matt. 5:9).

By the breadth of its streets. Of which streets it is said, Apoc. 21:21: *And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass* (the edition has *streets*; the Vulgate has *street*). *Platea*, street, is named from *platys*, which is breadth, and designates the breadth of Mary's charity, by which she is ready to receive cheerfully all those who before walked by *the broad way that leadeth to destruction* (Matt. 7:13), and who were unknown to God because *they were in the streets*, as is said, Lam. 4:8, if they flee to her; as a street is common to all who enter the city. And *streets* are put in the plural on account of the love of God and of neighbor. Let him, then, who is of this kind in desire and in deed say that word of Cant. 3:2: *I will rise, and will go about the city*, that is, Mary: *in the streets and the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth*, who is found in Mary and through Mary.

And these streets are compared to pure gold: because gold signifies wisdom on account of its preciousness; obedience on account of its workability; constancy of mind on account of its weight; cleanness, because it does not contract rust; charity, which gives form to the virtues as gold does to the other metals. But it is called pure gold, that the virtues may be guarded from the filth of vainglory, as they were in the blessed Virgin: therefore her streets are compared to gold and glass on account of her most pure purity; or also to gold and glass for this reason, because each in its way gives back an image to the one who looks into it, so that in her life, as in a mirror, sinners may detect the stains of their crimes: because, as Jerome says, in Mary, as in a mirror, the form of all virtue shines out.

By its security and peace. Hence it is said to her, Ps. 147:14: *Who hath placed peace in thy borders.* For the tinder of sin having been wholly extinguished in her at the conception of the Saviour, there was in her no war between flesh and spirit; and so she had no civil war, nor discord among the citizens, that is, the inner motions. For she was the ark of Noe, where all the animals were at peace. Nor did she fear outward enemies, because the Saviour was her wall, and the angelic guard was the bulwark, as was said above.

(p. 558) She is also peace and security for us. Hence her Son promises her, Isa. 54:13: *I will give great peace to thy children*, etc. Again, Isa. 60:18: *Iniquity shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction in thy borders.* For she defends her inhabitants from evil. Hence she says, Cant. 8:10: *I am a wall: and my breasts are as a tower.* Again, on this account it is said, Apoc. 21:25: *The gates thereof shall not be shut by night* (the Vulgate has *by day*). This, says the author, is the true reading. As if it were said: so great will be the security there that by night, when thieves and evil beasts are wont to go about, the gates will not be shut: because no enemy will be feared there: and this pertains to the person of Mary. Or this fits better the city above, in which nothing harmful will be felt. Some books have: *The gates thereof shall not be shut by day*: because if they had to be shut by night, they could not be. Hence there follows: *For there shall be no night there.* Or thus: the gates are the understanding and the affection, through which one enters into the love of the good and the knowledge of the true, which will not be shut in the blessed by the night of ignorance or of sin. Gregory: "What is there that they do not see, who see him who sees all things?" Nor were these gates shut in the Virgin by the night of ignorance: because it is not believed that after the conception of her Son she was ignorant of anything pertaining to salvation. That which is said, Matt. 25:10, *The door was shut*, means that the wicked will have no access there, nor will entrance then lie open to the way of penance, but they will be shut up in the prison of hell.

By the passage of those who wish to come to the Son: for the way of coming to God does not lie open unless one passes through this city. Hence, Isa. 48:2: *They are called of the holy city, and are established upon the God of Israel.* Hence the Lord promises her, Isa. 54:15: *Behold, the inhabitant shall come, who was not with me, he that was a stranger to thee before, shall be joined to thee.* Again, Isa. 55:5: *Behold, thou shalt call a nation which thou knewest not: and the nations that knew not thee shall run to thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee.* Which is as it were expounded in the following chapter, where the Lord says: *Every one that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and that holdeth fast my covenant: I will bring them into my holy mount, and will make them joyful in my house of prayer* (Isa. 56:6–7). Behold, concerning the keeping of the sabbath to the honor of the glorious Virgin.

From this, that whoever desires to be saved must needs seek her as his helper. Hence her Son says to her, Isa. 62:12: *But thou shalt be called, A city sought after, and not forsaken.* Therefore the Prophet seemed to seek with anxiety and desire: *Who will bring me into the strong city?* (Ps. 59:11), etc.

From this, that through her was rebuilt what had been scattered through Eve. Hence, Isa. 58:12: *The places that have been desolate for ages shall be built in thee: thou shalt raise up the foundations of generation and generation.* And this is one of the chief reasons why God is to be blessed most highly: because he founded this city, through which we are brought back from the exile of the world to the first (homeland). Hence it is said to her, Tob. 13:16: *Blessed shall they be that built thee*, namely the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Otherwise: they in some way build this city who, by the teaching of word and example, make Mary loved by those who before did not know her.

By freedom from sin. Isa. 60:18: *Iniquity shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction in thy borders.* Ps. 147:14: *Who hath placed peace in thy borders.* Again, Isa. 52:1: *For henceforth the uncircumcised, and unclean, shall no more pass through thee.*

(p. 559) From this, that in her and through her the Lord is magnified and praised. Hence: *Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, in his holy mountain* (Ps. 47:2). And therefore she is so great that she *cannot be hid* (Matt. 5:14). This mountain is Christ the Lord (Isa. 2:2; Mich. 4:1).

From this, that she is founded *with the joy of the whole earth* (Ps. 47:3), that is, through her the whole earth rejoices; that is, the threefold earth: namely the land of the living, which rejoices because the number of the Angels, diminished by the fall of Lucifer, is restored through her; the land of the dying, that is, the world,

which through her has been saved and enlightened with grace; the land of the dead, namely hell, as regards those held in limbo, who through her were drawn out of it and brought into paradise: and this is what the Lord says, Isa. 65:18: *Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and the people thereof joy.*

From this, that the rulers of souls attribute to her and to her grace both the conversion of souls and the glory of their own conscience. Hence it is said, Apoc. 21:24: *The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it.* The kings of the earth are good prelates, solicitous for the salvation of souls, whence they merit the crown of everlasting glory; and those who rule and justly order their own earth, that is, the motions of the flesh, its inhabitants, and *scatter away all evil with their look* (Prov. 20:8), the vices of the tempter. These kings, I say, bring their glory, namely those whom they convert and nourish in good—1 Thess. 2:20: *You are our glory*, etc.—attributing the whole to the grace of the mother and of the Son: but because it is not enough to profit others unless one keeps oneself unspotted, therefore he adds: *and honor*, that is, the purity of their own conscience.

From the *xenodochia* and *nosocomia*, which we call hospices and infirmaries. *Xenodochium* in Greek is the receiving of pilgrims in Latin. And where the sick are gathered from the streets it is called in Greek *nosocomium*: because in it the limbs of the wretched, consumed by sicknesses, are cared for.

From the temples, churches, and oratories. An oratory is named from the prayer to which it is consecrated, in which nothing ought to be done except that for which it was made and instituted.

From the cenobia and monasteries. *Coenobium* is named from *koinos*, which is *common*, and is the dwelling of many living in common. *Monos* in Greek is *alone*, *-sterion* a station: hence *monasterium*, as if the dwelling of a solitary.

Again, this city is commended from this, that all things are found in her excellently which are wont to be found in the noblest cities, part of which are noted in these words: “King, prelate, people, defense, temples, houses, law, fountain, robe, sport, wealth, trade, peace, food, arms.”

In this city is the king of justice, as above of Melchisedech. For she is *the city of the great king* (Ps. 47:3), namely Christ, who is *the King of kings and Lord of lords* (Apoc. 19:16). The prelate is Christ himself, *the high priest of the good things to come* (Heb. 9:11), the giver, namely, of the heavenly prebends: many of which prebends he is believed to have given to many at the prayers and counsel of his mother. The blessed Virgin is also believed to have procured prebends and dignities of the Church militant for many who had served her a little in the present, since she knew them unworthy of the heavenly prebends. To many also, of her grace and good pleasure, in order to help them, she is believed to have procured benefits and honors both here and in the future. Christ also *(p. 560)* is the priest of this city, having in his care all the citizens and inhabitants of this city.

People. Hence: *Behold the foreigners, and Tyre, and the people of the Ethiopians* (Ps. 86:4), etc., as above. And because the people of a city ought to confess to their own priest, the Psalmist says, Ps. 66:4: *Let people confess to thee, O God*, etc. And the people of this city are all the truly faithful. Hence it is said to this city, Isa. 60:21: *And thy people shall be all just, they shall inherit the land for ever.* Again, Tob. 13:17: *Thou shalt rejoice in thy children, because they shall all be blessed, and shall be gathered together to the Lord.* For she holds her people in the bowels of charity as in the compass of walls; hence she is also called mother of mercy; as Paul held his people within himself, saying, Phil. 1:7: *As it is meet for me to think this for you all, for that I have you in my heart*, etc.; and Gal. 4:19: *My little children, of whom I am in labor again.* Therefore he had in his womb those whom he said he was in labor with.

Defense, as above.

Temples: Christ. Apoc. 21:22: *For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb.* For she had him within, whom she continually entreated in mind and spirit, to whom in mind and spirit she continually

sang psalms, to whom she continually offered the sacrifice of a contrite and humbled spirit, to whom she assiduously sang thanksgivings and voices of praise. She also has temples everywhere on earth. What is it, then, that John says in the same place, Apoc. 21:22: *And I saw no temple therein*, etc.? Which can be understood thus of the Virgin: a temple is a place of prayer, and prayer is made chiefly for two things, for removing evils and obtaining goods: but because she had no need to pray for these two things, since there was no evil in her that could be removed, and no good was lacking to her, since she was full of grace, therefore perhaps it can be said: *I saw no temple therein.* But this fits more properly the heavenly Jerusalem: for we believe that the blessed Virgin prayed and prays to the Son and the Father without ceasing, if not for herself, yet for all the faithful, whom she loves much more than any other mother loves the children of her womb. Hence Isaias says, 49:15: *Can a woman forget*, etc.?

Houses: the virginal hall in which Christ dwelt, nay, the palace of the king of glory. Prov. 9:1: *Wisdom hath built herself a house.* Or, the houses of this city are the just, whom she inhabits: for *her delights are to be*, through grace, *with the children of men* (Prov. 8:31). Therefore it is said, Ps. 47:4: *In her houses shall God be known.* For to this city belong the houses of religious and the houses of hospitals, in which, if there is true religion and charity there, God is truly known, and that word of Gen. 28:16 is said: *Indeed the Lord is in this place.* Again, *this is the house of God, and the gate of heaven* (Gen. 28:17).

The law of clemency and kindness. Prov. 31:26: *The law of clemency is on her tongue.* Again, Ps. 36:31: *The law of his God is in his heart.* The law of this city: *Do not to another what thou wouldst not have done to thee* (Tob. 4:16). Again: *All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them* (Matt. 7:12).

In this city is the fountain of mercy. Zach. 13:1: *In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David*, etc. Cant. 4:15: *The fountain of gardens*, etc. Joel 3:18: *A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord.* Again, *Jacob's well* (John 4:6). For she is that *spring* which *rose out of the earth* (Gen. 2:6). (Look under the title where she is called fountain, well, river, and the like.) And the aqueduct. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:41: *As an aqueduct I came out (p. 561) of paradise*, etc. For such works are very necessary to cities: because by aqueducts springs are brought to cities and good towns from higher places. So also to this city springs of graces came from the heavenly places by the merit of her humility, which is signified by the hollowness of the aqueduct hidden in the earth: for humility (*humilitas*) is so called as if *humi latens*, lying hidden in the ground. (Look under the title that Mary is called an aqueduct.)

The well of him that liveth and seeth (Gen. 16:14). *The well which the princes dug* (Num. 21:18). *The well of living waters* (Cant. 4:15). The well that is deep (John 4:11), full of deep mercy, against the depth of the sinner's heart (Jer. 17:9).

Many a cistern for receiving rain waters, as is necessary for a city situated on a high mountain. For she, if we are her citizens, receives for us like a cistern the droppings of graces which come down *from the Father of lights*, and distributes them to us, to each according to his own power, that is, the capacity of his humility. For she is *the old cistern in the wilderness* (Gen. 37:22). She is the cistern situated at the gate of Bethlehem (2 Kings 23:15). (Look under the title on the receptacles of waters.)

Many a channel and pipe, in French *goutiere*, gutter. 2 Kings 5:8 we read of the gutters of the housetops in Jerusalem. *Doma*, *domatis*: the upper part of a house.

Rivers, that is, the multitude of gifts and graces, which furnished all things necessary to this city, as may be seen in certain most noble cities, such as Paris, Rome, Rouen. For the Holy Spirit, in place of a river, carried away from this city everything superfluous in her sanctification; brought to her and her citizens everything necessary in the filling of grace, when it was said to her: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee* (Luke 1:28), who is the fullness of all true good; and wholly extinguished the tinder of sin in her at the conception of the Son of God. Therefore it is said in Ps. 45:5: *The stream of the river*—in French (as printed) *laxade*

cretiue—namely the overflowing abundance of grace, *maketh the city of God joyful*, that is, Mary. (Look under the title that Mary is called a river.)

Pools. Cant. 7:4: *Thy eyes like the fishpools in Hesebon*, etc. (Look under the title that Mary is a pool.) For there is the sheep pool, which heals the sick (John 5:2 ff.).

Springs, that is, the gushings forth of streams and brooks: because about the foot of a mountain cold, savory, and clear springs are wont to gush out, by which the poor, the animals, and passers-by are refreshed; which springs also make streams, pools, and ponds, and spread out in many ways through the valleys. And well are springs said to gush out about the foot of the mountain on which this city is situated: because from the effect of her mercy and piety there proceeds continually the watering of graces upon her lovers. Hence, Deut. 8:7, she is called *a land of brooks and of waters, and of fountains: in the plains and the hills of which the deeps of rivers break out.* She is also mount Libanus, from which such springs arise literally, by which the land of promise is watered. Hence also it is said, Cant. 4:15: *The fountain of gardens: the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Libanus*; and which spread out spiritually through the whole world. Again, of these springs it is said to Christ, the founder of this city, Ps. 73:15: *Thou hast broken up the fountains and the torrents*, etc. And by the waters, that is, the graces, of these springs the Lord dries up *the Ethan rivers*, that is, those who flow away through lust, whence they also ought to be called rivers: but such are the rivers of Ethan, which is interpreted *strong*: because through the lustful the power of the devil grows greatly on earth. Hence, Job 40:11: *His strength is in his loins, and his force in the navel of his belly.*

(p. 562) In this city are fishponds (*vivaria*), which are so called from living (*vivendo*), because there fish live and multiply, that is, the just, nourished by the multitude of graces as by abundance of waters.

Ponds, with many kinds of fish, that is, of the sea and of the rivers: namely the just, of whom some are fattened by tribulations as by sea waters, to whom she furnishes patience; others are nourished by devotion and by the taste of her graces as by every kind of sweetness.

The flow and the ebb of the sea. Soph. 2:6: *And the sea coast shall be the rest of shepherds, and folds for cattle*, etc.

Harbor: for there is the harbor of salvation, where the anchor of our hope is to be fixed, that the ship of our mind may be held firm against the perils of the sea, that is, of the world. For the Lord through her held back those who, before she was born, were going down into eternal bitternesses as into the bottom of the sea. Again, those sailing the sea rejoice greatly when they see the harbor: and of her it is sung: “Thy nativity, O Virgin Mother of God, announced joy to the whole world.” Again, every voyage of those who sail begins from a harbor: because through faith in the Lord’s incarnation, of which she was the minister, the Christian’s journey toward the heavenly Jerusalem is begun: for thence is the movement of coming to God. Again, a harbor is eaten away by the sea: and Jews, pagans, heretics, and blasphemers, who are full of the bitternesses of vices, detract from Mary. Again, a harbor (*portus*) is so called from bringing in (*deportandis*) goods for trade: for the Son of God, coming to save the world, brought with him to this harbor whatever was necessary for us. Hence, Gen. 6:21, the Father says to the Son, who was about to take flesh: *Thou shalt take unto thee of all food that may be eaten*, etc.

Ships. Hence, Isa. 60:9, her Son promises her: *For the islands wait for me, and the ships of the sea in the beginning, that I may bring thy sons from afar: their silver, and their gold*, that is, eloquence and wisdom, *with them, to the name of the Lord thy God.* And a little after, v. 11: *That the strength of the Gentiles may be brought to thee, and their kings may be brought.*

Hay. Hence it is said of her, Ps. 103:14: *Bringing forth grass for cattle*, etc.: grass, that is, the flesh of her Son. Isa. 40:6: *All flesh is grass.* This grass was as it were green herb as long as it sprouted and grew green in the earth of the virginal womb, which that earth brought forth in the nativity, according to that word of Gen.

1:12: *The earth brought forth the green herb*, etc. This herb grew in the advance of life, was cut from the earth by the sickle of the passion, was dried and turned into hay in the heat of the passion itself. But it is eaten by faithful souls in the receiving of the Lord's sacrament. Therefore this hay was laid in the manger, by which the altar is signified. And well he says *for cattle*, that is, for those, and those only, who carry the burdens of her commandments and of her Son's.

In this city are meadows. Prov. 27:25: *The meadows are open, and the green herbs have appeared, and the hay is gathered out of the mountains.* And a meadow (*pratum*) is so called as if *protinus paratum*, ready at once, because it does not require great labor of cultivation.

Green herbs. Hence of the just, who are the sheep of the Lord's pasture, Ezek. 34:14: *There shall they rest on the green grass.* The green herb is simple doctrine; or, the green herbs are the infinite multitude of good works: hence it is promised to Job, 5:25: *Thy offspring*, that is, thy spiritual children, *shall be like the grass of the earth*, that is, many in number and green in virtue.

Fat pasture: and this the Lord had promised, saying of his sheep: *I will feed them in the mountains of Israel* (cf. Ezek. 34:13 ff.), and much else. Again, Isa. 49:9: *They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in every plain.* For this is promised to those who serve the glorious Virgin Mary simply: because in *every plain* simplicity is figured. On this account the dweller in this city says: *He hath set me in a place of pasture* (Ps. 22:2).

(p. 563) Trees bearing every kind of fruit.

Olives. Hence, Deut. 8:8, he says that there is *a land wherein fig trees and pomegranates and oliveyards grow.*

Vines. For there is found every kind of good vine; there is *the vine that cheereth God and men* with its wine (Judg. 9:13). The vineyards of Engaddi (Cant. 1:13). The vines pruned (Cant. 2:12). The vine in flower and fragrant (ibid., v. 13). The vineyard of the peaceable one (Cant. 8:11). The vineyard of the beloved (Isa. 5:1). The chosen vineyard, or the vineyard of Soreth (Jer. 2:21). The vine under which one rests securely (3 Kings 4:25; Mich. 4:4). The vine growing from many waters (Ezek. 19:10). The vineyard planted in the mountains of Samaria, that is, in the eminence of the Church (Jer. 31:5). The vineyard planted by the right hand of God the Father (Ps. 79:16). The vineyard dug about (Mark 12:1). The vineyard having a hedge, a winepress, and a tower (Matt. 21:33).

Palms. These are the seventy palm trees found in Elim (Exod. 15:27). The palm exalted in Cades (Ecclus. 24:18). The palm under which judgment is truly given (Judg. 4:5).

The fig tree: not that cursed one having leaves without fruit, which withered (Matt. 21:19; Mark 11:13), and which was ordered to be cut down as cumbering the ground in vain (Luke 13:7); but that one which would not forsake its sweetness and its most delightful fruits to be promoted among the trees. Again, that which bore *exceeding good figs* (Jer. 24:3). Again, Joel 2:22: *The fig tree and the vine have yielded their strength.*

Pomegranates, that is, pomegranate trees, most precious and fruitful trees, whose red flowers signify the desire of imitating the Lord's passion.

Fertile land. Hence this city says, Ps. 49:11: *With me is the beauty of the field*, that is, it serves me. The beauty of the field is the richness of things growing and brought forth. This is the land of which it is said, Deut. 8:7–10, and which is promised to the lover of Mary: *The Lord thy God will bring thee into a good land, of brooks and of waters, and of fountains: in the plains and the hills of which the deeps of rivers break out: a land of wheat, and barley, and vineyards, wherein fig trees and pomegranates and oliveyards grow: a land of oil and honey: where without any want thou shalt eat thy bread, and enjoy abundance of all things: whose stones are iron, and out of its hills are dug mines of brass: that when thou hast eaten, and art full, thou mayst bless the Lord thy God for the excellent land which he hath given thee*, etc.

Watered gardens. For the true Solomon *made* there *gardens and orchards* for himself, that is, for his honor, *and set them with trees of all kinds, and made* there *ponds of water, to water therewith the wood of the young trees* (Eccles. 2:5–6). Of which, namely the gardens, Balaam says, Num. 24:5–6, as if speaking chiefly to those religious who devoutly serve Mary: *How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel! As woody valleys, as watered gardens near the rivers, as tabernacles which the Lord hath pitched, as cedars by the waterside*, etc. (Look for the exposition under the title that Mary is a tabernacle.)

Again, of the citizens of this city it is said, Jer. 31:12: *And they shall come, and shall give praise in mount Sion: and they shall flow together to the good things of the Lord, for the corn, and wine, and oil, and the increase of cattle and herds, and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall be hungry no more.*

Wooded valleys. Gen. 21:33: *Abraham planted a grove in Bersabee, and there called upon the name of the Lord God (p. 564) eternal.* And groves (*nemora*) are so called from the deities (*numina*): because there the pagans consecrated their idols: for groves are the larger trees, shady with leaves.

Wooded mountains, on which grow timbers suited to buildings. Hence, Isa. 35:2: *The glory of Libanus is given to it: the beauty of Carmel, and Saron.* Again, those in which hunting abounds, of stags, roes, wild oxen, and the like.

Forests fit for hunting. Hence she says with her Son, Ps. 49:10: *For all the beasts of the woods are mine.*

Thick woodlands, where bees make honey. Hence, 1 Kings 14:26: *And the people came into the forest, and behold the honey dropped*, etc.

Every kind of bird. Hence this city says with her Son, Ps. 49:11: *I know all the fowls of the air*, etc.

Pools with full depths. Ezek. 47:10: *There shall be very many kinds of the fishes thereof, as the fishes of the great sea, a multitude exceeding great.*

All fat animals. Look in 3 Kings 4:22 ff., where the food of Solomon and of the people of Israel is treated.

A land of metals, of which, Deut. 8:9: *Whose stones are iron, and out of its hills are dug mines of brass.* Isa. 60:17: *For brass I will bring gold*, etc. 2 Paral. 1:15: *And the king made silver and gold to be in Jerusalem as stones*, etc. By gold, wisdom; by silver, eloquence; by electrum, the joining of deity and humanity; by brass, perseverance, on account of the durability of brass, or thanksgiving, on account of its sonorousness; by iron, abstinence, which, as iron tames the metals, so tames the desires of the flesh. Orichalc and tin are the imitators of the good, who are gold and silver. Lead, those who attend to their own foulnesses and heaviness, so that they may thereby melt in the shedding of tears. Isa. 41:7: *The coppersmith striking with the hammer encouraged*, etc.

In this city is every kind of precious coin. The coin of this city is the likeness of God, namely the king's drachma, having his image and inscription: because the Christian is named from Christ. For of Mary can be expounded that word of Luke 15:8: *What woman having ten groats*, etc. Gen. 23:16: *Abraham weighed out to Ephron four hundred sicles of silver of common current money.*

Choice stones. Hence it is promised to the servant of Mary, or the inhabitant of this city, Job 5:23: *Thy covenant shall be with the stones of the lands.* These stones the Gloss calls the chosen of the lands, that is, those who are chosen and gathered from every land, of whom, Ps. 106:3: *From the lands he gathered them.* Hence the Lord, Matt. 8:11: *Many shall come from the east and the west*, etc. He also promises her, Isa. 43:5: *I will bring thy seed from the east*, etc. These are the stones polished by blows and pressures, of which it is said, Zach. 9:16: *Holy stones shall be lifted up over the land.* 1 Pet. 2:5: *Be you also as living stones*, etc. That covenant will be firm and eternal. With such is the covenant of the saints, because they love one another and pray for one another, that they may be saved.

Precious quarries, from which, namely, for the work of every spiritual building are taken marbles and stones of gypsum and porphyry.

Farmers, vinedressers, and masters of flocks, that is, shepherds. Therefore the Lord promises the inhabitants and the sheep of that city, Isa. 61:5: *And strangers shall stand and shall feed your flocks: and the sons of strangers shall be your husbandmen, and the dressers of your vines.* Jer. 6:2–3: *I have likened the daughter of Sion,* that is, Mary, *to a beautiful and delicate woman. The shepherds shall come to her with their flocks: they have pitched their tents against her round about,* etc.

Architects. Isa. 61:4: *They shall build the places that have been waste from of old, and shall raise up ancient ruins,* etc., which namely came about from the sin of the first woman. These architects are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or the holy preachers.

Merchants. Ezek. 27 throughout: look for much of this kind. Luke 19:13:

Chapter 1 (end): Mary, City of God

(p. 565) Trade till I come, that is, give temporal things for eternal.

These are those dealers of whom, Ezek. 27:17: *Juda and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants with the best corn.* These dealers are the Prophets, whose sons are the Apostles. The best corn is the prophetic teaching, first as it were by reason of time, or of apostolic dignity. Or, the dealers are the Apostles, whose sons are the Preachers who followed, to whom it is said: *Trade till I come* (Luke 19:13), that is, give temporal things for eternal. Or, the dealer of this city is Christ himself, whose ship is Mary. Hence *she is like the merchant's ship* (Prov. 31:14), etc.

And physicians. Hence, Jer. 8:22: *Is there no balm in Galaad? or is there no physician there?* There are physicians charming wisely.

Spices of every kind. Hence it is said, Ecclus. 24:21: *I am as storax, and galbanum, and onyx, and aloes,* etc.

Aromatics. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:20: *I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm,* etc. Again, Cant. 6:1, she says: *My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the bed of aromatical spices.*

Medicines. Hence, Ecclus. 38:4: *The most High hath created medicines out of the earth, and a wise man will not abhor them. The most High,* that is, God the Father, *out of the earth,* the virginal earth, *hath created medicines,* that is, Christ as man, or the flesh of Christ, in which he bore our sins, as Peter says, 1 Pet. 2:24: *Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree.* And this was necessary: because *from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head* (Isa. 1:6) there was no soundness in the things of the world. Let him, then, who is sick run to this city, and *in his sickness neglect not himself* (Ecclus. 38:9), but pray to the Lady, and he will be healed. Hence she too says, Ecclus. 24:41: *I, like a brook out of a river of a mighty water* (*dioryx*), which is interpreted *the medicine of generation.* And she is the medicine of the human generation. And since this medicine is so effective, Jeremias wonders, 8:22, saying: *Is there no balm in Galaad? or is there no physician there?* Galaad is *the heap of testimony*: Mary, to whom the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Angels bear witness.

The balm is the Son of God, whom she as it were offers to all, as her image figures. But many are not healed on this account, because they will not approach Mary, nor meditate on her examples, words, and works. And whom she heals is shown in Isa. 61:1, where it is said of the mother and the Son: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me,* etc., *to heal the contrite of heart,* etc. Similar in Ps. 146:3: *Who healeth the broken of heart, and bindeth up their bruises.* It can be said, *Who healeth,* etc., as she did Theophilus when he repented, etc.

Every kind of garment, that is, garments of every kind and all clothing necessary for herself and her household. Hence also it is said to her, Isa. 52:1: *Put on the garments of thy glory, O Jerusalem, the city of*

the Holy One, etc. Prov. 31:24: *She made fine linen.* In the same, v. 22: *Fine linen and purple is her covering.* In the same, v. 22: *She hath made for herself clothing of tapestry*, etc. (Look under the fourteenth cause.) Therefore she says to the one coming into her service, Zach. 3:4: *Behold I have taken away thy iniquity, and have clothed thee with change of garments.*

Weaving all fine things, that is, every weaver of fine things. Isa. 19:9, of the inhabitants of this city: *They … that wrought in flax, combing and weaving fine linen*, etc. Again, 1 Paral. 4:21: *These are the kindreds of the house of them that wrought fine linen in the house of the oath.* Again, Exod. 35:25–26: *The skilful women that had spun, gave violet, purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair*, etc.

Chapter 2: Mary, Castle

(p. 566) Castrum, or *castellum*, castle, of which, Luke 10:38: *Jesus entered into a certain castle*, etc.

Mary is called a castle for a threefold reason: because a castle chiefly signifies three things. The first is humility, by reason of the diminutive: because as from *flagrum*, *flagellum*, so by diminution *castellum* comes from *castrum.* A certain castle indeed, that is, singular and privileged, was and is the virginal womb, or the blessed Virgin herself: but yet it is called *castellum* rather than *castrum*, because the virtue of humility was the most special, most powerful, and firmest defense of this castle. The second is charity: because in common usage a castle signifies strength, and *love is strong as death* (Cant. 8:6). The third is chastity: for *castrum* is so called because the castrated, that is, the chaste, are wont to be kept in them, namely in camps. For women are wont to be kept away from camps, lest by their company the spirit of the warriors should grow soft. Well, then, is Mary a castle, because chaste and humble and founded and made firm in charity.

Again, Mary is a castle on account of the most narrow lodging of the virginal womb, most strongly fortified against the onsets of enmity and tyranny, founded upon a firm rock, which is Christ. Hence it is said, Cant. 8:5: *Leaning upon her beloved.* And so she is a castle as regards herself. A castle also as regards us: because to all who are attacked by the threefold concupiscence, or by the manifold enemy, she is a faithful and impregnable refuge, if they flee to her wisely. She was a castle also for Christ himself, into which he received himself, the champion *coming to save* (Isa. 63:1), to drive out *the strong man* who *kept his court* (Luke 11:21). For it is the custom of warriors that when someone wishes to invade a foreign kingdom, or to recover a kingdom taken from him, he first seeks or prepares for himself a suitable refuge. So also Christ the glorious Virgin, of whose security Solomon says, Prov. 31:11: *The heart of her husband trusteth in her*, etc. And this is what the Psalmist says to Christ, Ps. 90:9–10: *Thou hast made the most High thy refuge. There shall no evil come to thee*, etc. She too says: *I dwelt in the highest places* (Ecclus. 24:7), etc. For the Prophet, as if in the person of the Church of the ancients, had asked for the heavenly champion. Ps. 34:2: *Take hold of arms and shield: and rise up to help me.* And it was heard by him at his entrance into this castle: for then he took hold of arms and shield, that is, soul and flesh, that he might rise up against the devil to help us. And this is what is said, Isa. 59:17: *He put on justice as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head.* For he put on, as a breastplate, the justice of a holy manner of life: and as the head is armed above with a helmet, *(p. 567)* so he armed his mind, which is figured by the head, from above with the saving defense of the spiritual gifts: because the spirit of wisdom and the rest rested upon him (Isa. 11:2–3).

And of his armor it is at once added: *He was clothed with garments of vengeance, and was covered as with a cloak of zeal.* Zeal is love; zeal is indignation: and in both senses the Lord, with the zeal of love, was zealous for the souls seduced and taken from him by the devil. With the zeal of indignation also he was zealous and indignant against the devil, because he had fraudulently seduced man, God's creature, and was unjustly holding what belonged to another. Fired, then, with zeal in both ways, the Lord took the cloak of flesh, which for the reason given is called the cloak of zeal. For another reason too his flesh is called the cloak of zeal: because as a jealous man under another's cloak tests the faithfulness, or the adulteries, of his wife, so Christ tests the faithfulness or the adulteries of souls. And for this too he veils himself in the sacrament under the

species of bread and wine. And he was covered with this cloak that he might overcome the cunning of the serpent by prudence: because he prudently hid his incarnation from the devil: and by this *his wisdom hath struck the proud one* (Job 26:12). *He was clothed with garments of vengeance*: because he took flesh and soul for this, that he might avenge himself on the devil.

Hence there follows in the text of Isaias, 59:18: *As unto revenge, as it were to repay wrath to his adversaries, and a reward to his enemies.* For the Lord armed himself as if to take vengeance, and he took vengeance in this manner. For he repaid indignation for indignation, and returned like for like: for as the devil, indignant that man should have the place from which he had fallen, led him into perdition, so the Lord, indignant that man should have the place from which the devil had fallen, led him back from perdition to salvation; and he returned like for like, because he despoiled the devil by snatching man from his power, as the devil had despoiled man. Hence, Isa. 33:1: *Woe to thee that spoilest, shalt not thou thyself also be spoiled?* etc. So, then, Christ set his tabernacle in the glorious Virgin as in a castle, about to fight against the devil, when he took from her substance the glorious flesh in which he overcame the devil.

And well is she called *a certain castle*, that is, a singular one: because she is singularly mother and virgin. Hence it is sung to her: "Singular Virgin." A castle, on account of the defense of all the virtues. And some say that the castle was called Magdalum, from which comes Magdalene; which fits well: since Magdalum is interpreted *tower*, and signifies humility.

Blessed Anselm of Canterbury, in his explanation of this Gospel: "A castle is the name for any tower with a wall round about it: which two defend each other, so that enemies are kept off from the keep by the wall, and from the wall by the keep. Such a castle is the blessed Virgin, whom virginity of body and mind so walled in on every side like a wall that there was never any access for lust, nor was her sense corrupted by any allurement. And because, when lust cannot attack virginity, pride is wont to attack it, there was in the same Virgin the tower of humility, which drove off all pride from the wall of virginity. And because, when pride cannot attack humility, lust is wont to attack it, the wall of virginity drove off all lust from the tower of humility. And so these two, namely the wall of virginity and the tower of humility, are fortified by each other, so that in the humble Virgin there was never either proud virginity or defiled humility, but there always remained in her both humble virginity and virginal humility." Into this castle, then, Jesus, that is, the Saviour, entered in his *(p. 568)* incarnation. And well, when this is told, is this name set down, Jesus, which is interpreted *saviour*, or *salvation*, or *saving*, that is, physician, or *salutary*, that is, medicine: because he came into the holy Virgin in his incarnation for this, *to save his people from their sins*, as is said, Matt. 1:21, and to be the salvation of the people, as he says: "I am the salvation of the people," etc. And that, as a physician, he might heal the sick world, in which *from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there was no soundness* (Isa. 1:6). And that from each of his members, as from medicinal herbs, mixed with the liquor of his blood, in the little mortar of every kind of tribulation patiently endured, he might make the several plasters for each of our diseases.

Of the manner of entering you will find under the title that Mary is called the shut gate, Ezek. 44:2–3, which manner namely is ineffable. Hence it is read there thus: *This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it: because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it, and it shall be shut for the prince. The prince himself shall sit in it*, etc. Behold the ineffable manner of entering.

Otherwise: *Jesus entered*, etc.; but no one explains the manner of entering: because Solomon says he is wholly ignorant of it. Hence he says, Prov. 30:18–19: *Three things are hard to me, and the fourth I am utterly ignorant of*, etc.: and of that fourth he says: *The way of a man*, that is, of Christ, *in youth*, that is, in the blessed Virgin, who was then, as is believed, about fourteen years old, and was wholly his.

Again, of this way the Psalmist says, Ps. 76:20: *Thy way is in the sea*, O Christ, *and thy paths in many waters.* But he adds: *And thy footsteps shall not be known.* The sea is Mary, which is interpreted *bitter sea*; to

whom Gabriel came as the forerunner of his Lord, bringing him to the best lodging that could be found in the world, and the most honorable for so great a prince; and he first greeted the lady of the lodging peaceably, saying: *Hail, full of grace.* And he added: *The Lord is with thee* (Luke 1:28), namely he will lodge with thee. She, conscious of the poverty of her house in respect of the excellence of so great a guest, answered: *How shall this be done* (ibid., v. 34), etc.? But at length, hearing of the manifold benefit of this guest, she answered, strengthened: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me* (ibid., v. 38), etc. As if she said: I do not wish to be as a lady, but I wish to serve him as a handmaid. This being granted, the king of glory, as if following close behind his chamberlain, came down from the height of his majesty into the house of the virginal womb, not leaving what he was, but about to take what he did not have, namely flesh. Therefore there follows: *And a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.*

Again: *Jesus entered*, etc. But how did he enter? As the sun's ray enters a glass window, as Augustine says; as the light of the sun enters the healthy eye, which it does not blind but rather enlightens; as a word enters the ear; as a voice enters a closed place; as a face enters a mirror.

There follows: *And a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.* And each word has its own weight. Mary is *woman* (*mulier*): because she softened (*mollivit*) God, nor does she cease even now to soften him. And well, when the Evangelist treats of the Lord's incarnation, he calls Mary *woman*: because then the Lord, formerly hard, was softened through her. (Look under the title that Mary is a woman.)

Certain, that is, singular, lacking an equal and a like: because she seems to have had none like her before, nor to have one after.

Named Martha. Martha according to Isidore is interpreted *provoking* or *calling forth.* But in the Syrian tongue it is interpreted *ruling*, and signifies Mary, which in Syriac is interpreted *Lady*, who with her Son *(p. 569)* rules in heaven and on earth, in the sea and in all the deeps. It is interpreted also *provoking*: because by the merit of humility and the vow of virginity she provoked, that is, *porro vocavit*, called forth, indeed surely called, by her comeliness and beauty, the divine regard, when namely the most high Lord *regarded the humility of his handmaid.* Hence he says to her, Isa. 62:4: *The Lord hath been well pleased with thee.* Or *provoking* for this reason: because by the merit of her humility she provoked God to take flesh, when he seemed to have said to her: "Thou alone pleasest me." She provoked also the Angels to wonder. Hence, seeing her ascend, they said, Cant. 8:5: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert*, etc.? She provokes also men to the imitation of virginity, humility, poverty, and the other virtues. It is interpreted also *irritating*, and *irritare* is the same as to make void: for by her prayers and merits she makes void and turns away the anger of God from his creatures. *Irritare* is also the same as to provoke to anger, under another meaning of the word: because by the benefits which she bestows on us she provokes the demons to bark and snarl like dogs: for she is that spring which flowed through the aqueduct into the city of Bethulia, that is, the Church and the faithful soul, which Holofernes ordered to be cut (cf. Judith 7:1 ff.). (You will find this better under the title that Mary is an aqueduct.) For by the merit of these virtues God chose her and chose her beforehand, and set his tabernacle in her.

Received him, in the way that the ear receives a word, glass or the air the sun, a closed place a voice, and the healthy eye the ray and brightness of the sun. She received him, I say, coming from on high *into her house*, that is, into the virginal womb, which is that house *which wisdom built herself* (Prov. 9:1): and this when *a woman compassed a man* (Jer. 31:22), and when Mary *alone compassed the circuit of heaven* (Ecclus. 24:8).

And note that literally the house is said to have been Martha's: because Martha was more active, and more useful to the neighbors, and better known. *And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word* (Luke 10:39 ff.), and by hearing the word of eternal life received Christ in her heart, whom Martha had received in her house. *But Martha was busy*, that is, applied all her care; she, I say, *about much serving*, that is, assiduous about service, namely that she might serve and prepare things necessary for

her guests, that is, Christ and his companions. Otherwise: *But Martha was busy about much serving*, that is, about the assiduous and customary office of the house.

Who stood. Notice that Mary is said to sit, Martha to stand. He who sits rests from the loins downward, and is upright above, and labors: because the contemplative rests from the care of worldly things and from vices in holy leisure, but labors in mind, which he raises to the contemplation of heavenly things. He who stands is wholly upright for battle and labor. Martha, then, stands: because the active life sweats in labors and in struggle.

And said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her therefore, that she help me. These sisters rebuke us for a superfluous household, who had neither man servant nor maid servant, but Martha alone served. The Lord too had brought with him neither cook nor other servant. In these Martha figures those who, not having experienced the sweetness of divine contemplation, think that the offices of brotherly love please God more.

And the Lord answering, said to her. The Lord answers for Mary: and he who had been judge, appealed to by Martha, became advocate for Mary. *Martha, Martha*: the repetition of the name is a sign of love. *Thou art careful, and art troubled about many things.* For there is no solicitude without trouble *(p. 570)* which is busied about many things. And he who is careful about many things is divided. *But one thing*, namely to cleave continually to God, *is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part.* Behold the sentence of the judge. Nor is the part of Martha blamed, but the part of Mary is praised. And why the part of Mary is called best is declared when it is added: *Which shall not be taken away from her.* For here the contemplative life begins, and it will be perfected in the heavenly homeland: for what the contemplative now beholds by faith, it will then see by sight: for the works of the active life will not be necessary in the homeland. The active life, then, which Martha chose, will be taken away from her in the future, when the works of the active life will cease: but the contemplative will never be taken away from Mary.

Jesus entered into a certain castle (Luke 10:38). Because the blessed Virgin was perfect in the active and the contemplative life, which are signified by these two sisters, therefore this Gospel is read on her Assumption, when the Son of God received into his castle her—of which the Psalmist says to her, Ps. 90:9–10: *Thou hast made the most High thy refuge. There shall no evil come to thee*, etc.—who in the incarnation had received him, as has been said, into her castle.

Another reason: because in this Gospel the blessed Virgin is commended in many ways and by many, and all praise is sung at the end: therefore this Gospel is read at her end, when her glory was perfectly completed.

Another reason: because Mary most truly *chose the best part*: namely, from the state of virgins, purity, leaving barrenness; from the state of brides, fruitfulness, leaving corruption. For the sake of this clause—*Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her*—this Gospel is read of her. (You will find the exposition under the title *Blessed art thou*, etc., before the middle of the chapter.)

Chapter 3: Again, Mary, Castle

Again, the castle of the Lord is the Church, or religious life, which ought to be a fortified place. Hence, Ps. 70:3: *Be thou unto me a God, a protector, and a place of strength: that thou mayst make me safe.* Whose fortification consists chiefly in thirteen things, which are noted in these verses: “Tower, crenels, walls, watchmen, trumpet, shields, / mountain, water, moat, food, engine, stones, men.”

The fortifications of this castle are the tower: humility; or a twofold tower, doctrine and foresight. Of doctrine, Cant. 8:10: *My breasts are as a tower.* Of discreet providers, Cant. 7:4: *Thy nose is as the tower of Libanus*, etc.

Crenels, or battlements: the authorities of Scripture. Cant. 8:9: *If she be a wall, let us build upon it bulwarks of silver*, that is, of the sacred word. Cant. 4:4: *The tower of David, which is built with bulwarks.*

(p. 571) Walls. Apply what concerns walls as you had above under the title on the city.

Watchmen: prelates. Heb. 13:17: *Obey your prelates*, etc. *For they watch*, etc.

Trumpet: preaching against spiritual enemies. Num. 10:2: *Make thee two trumpets of silver*: two, on account of promise and threat.

The shields of prayers, which are to be set against the darts of the enemies, that is, the temptations of the demons. Wis. 18:21: *Bringing forth the shield of his ministry, prayer, and by incense making supplication, withstood the wrath.*

Mountain: Christ, upon whom it was founded; or the eminence and arduousness of the life.

The water of tears, with which the little plants of the virtues are often watered: namely the twofold watered ground. Or, the water of saving wisdom. But now worldly wisdom is sought rather, namely of selling and buying, not to say of usury, as in the selling of wool, and the like.

Moat: that is, a twofold moat, namely confession and poverty. Confession uncovers and casts out the earthiness of sin; poverty distributes and casts out temporal things. 4 Kings 3:16: *Make the channel of this torrent full of ditches.* The torrent is grace, the channel humility of heart.

Manifold food: reading, meditation, devotion, contemplation, with which the soul is fed as with foods. Prov. 13:23: *Much food is in the tillage of fathers.*

Manifold engines: of fasting against the flesh; of obedience against one's own will and one's own sense; of prayer against pride and chatter. Hence, 1 Mach. 6:52: *They made engines against their engines*, that is, the king's, that is, the devil's.

Stones: the authorities to be hurled against the assaults of vices, demons, and temptations, after the example of the Lord (Matt. 4:1 ff.). Isa. 33:16: *The fortifications of rocks shall be his highness.* Or, the stones are the manifold hardness of life: roughness of clothing, dryness of food, the receiving of disciplines, the length of vigils, and the like.

Men: that is, those working manfully and vigorously; not women, that is, the soft. 2 Tim. 2:3: *Labor as a good soldier of Christ.* Again, 1 Cor. 16:13: *Do manfully*.

Of this castle, or of this fortification, can be expounded what Balaam says, Num. 24:21–22, speaking to the Cinite: *Thy habitation indeed is strong: but if thou build thy nest in a rock*, that is, in Christ—thy nest, that is, faith, or thy heart—but because many do not build it, *Assur*, that is, pride, *shall take thee.* Hence, Ecclus. 21:5: *The house that is very rich shall be brought to nothing by pride.* The Cinite is interpreted *mourning*, or *possessing*, and signifies religious, who had come to mourn their own sins and those of others, for which lands and woods were given them as alms; but having become rich in many possessions they cease to mourn: and Cain, that is, possession, in them kills Abel, that is, mourning. But the blood of Abel, that is, of those whose sins they ought to have washed away, *crieth to God from the earth* (Gen. 4:10). Blessed Bernard: "They will come, they will come before the judge's tribunal; there will be heard the grievous accusation of the orphans, the hard charge of those on whose stipends they lived and whose sins they did not wash away." This he said of secular clerics, but now it fits well many religious and even certain preachers, of whom Gregory says: "Perhaps they preach contempt of temporal things so that they alone may have them: for they preach poverty as a medicine, but flee it as a poison."

Chapter 4: Mary, Town

(p. 572) Town, designated by Capharnaum, which is interpreted *town of consolation.* For as *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*, so also she, though not in the very same way, is the mother of mercies and of all consolation, *who comforteth us in all our tribulation* (2 Cor. 1:3–4), etc.

Capharnaum is interpreted also *town of beauty*, or *town of fatness.* Expound how this town is situated on the mountain of the virtues: because her virtues surpass the virtues of all the saints. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:7: *I dwelt in the highest places*, namely the virtues: for the virtues of others are high, but her virtues are highest. And this town has in itself the three things which towns situated on mountains have, namely that it is most clean, most bright, and most healthful, as was said above of the city: and almost whatever was said of the city can fittingly be attributed to this town. And in this town the Lord had as it were a twofold steward, namely Joseph and Jesus: but both were unjustly defamed, as if for wasting the goods of this town. Joseph is one steward, to whom she was espoused that he might guard her, which he lawfully did. Nor ought that word of Matt. 1:24–25 to trouble anyone: *Joseph took unto him Mary his wife, and he knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn son*: and Jerome says that this *till* is taken exclusively, as that of 1 Kings 3:2–3: *Heli could not see the lamp until it was put out*—surely he did not see it afterward either. (The Vulgate has: *Heli … could not see: before the lamp of God went out.*) This steward, then, was defamed by the Jew, who says that he had known her. But let the unhappy Jew blush who says that Christ was born of the seed of Joseph.

The other steward is Jesus, her Son, who guarded her excellently as a son his dearest mother: hence he says, Isa. 27:3: *Night and day do I keep it*: in the night of adversity, lest it be broken; in the day of prosperity, lest it be burned; saying to her: *The sun* of prosperity *shall not burn thee by day: nor the moon*, that is, adversity, *by night* (Ps. 120:6): for they are wont to wish to break in by night, for plundering, and by day to burn, for destruction, which is worse. Him the heretic defamed, saying that in being born he had corrupted her: against which Anselm says: “For Jesus saves, he does not violate; he makes the disjoined solid, he does not break the solid: as his name is holy, so also is his work.” (Look back on the castle.) The goods of this town, then, were the conception of the Virgin with her modesty preserved, and the childbirth without pain, that is, without injury to the natural parts.

Chapter 5: Mary, Tower

(p. 573) Turris, tower. A tower, according to Isidore, is so called as if *teres*, that is, round with height: for though it is sometimes square, yet to those who see it from afar it is thought round: because the appearance of each corner vanishes and is consumed through the long space of air, and it seems round. Cant. 4:4, the bridegroom says to the Church: *Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks: a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armor of valiant men.* The neck of the Church is the blessed Virgin, for many reasons. (Look under the title on her beauty, where the neck is treated.) Where we have *thy neck*, another reading says *thy nape.* For the nape, that is, the eminence of the sublimity of Mary, is as the tower of David; which tower, namely, the true David, that is, Christ, built and raised up in Jerusalem, that is, in his Church, that it might be a refuge and defense for sinners.

Mary is a tower on account of its very high, that is, very deep foundation, which is necessary for a tower. The foundation of this tower is the deepest humility, as it were of rough and unpolished stones: because humility lies hidden in the depth of the heart, as a foundation lies hidden in the earth: nor does it seek appearance or worldly adornment; which is signified in this, that the stones of the foundation are neither hewn nor polished, but bound together with much mortar or bitumen, by which the charity of the Virgin is figured. Or, faith, which is the foundation and beginning of all spiritual good, as the foundation is the beginning of the building. Or, the native and firm rock, namely Christ, who is *the firm rock* (Matt. 7:24). (Look above under the title on the city.) Or, the most eminent and principal virtues, like very great stones, which are fit for a foundation.

On account of its height and the eminence of both lives, namely the active and the contemplative. Or, on account of the contemplation of heavenly things. Or also on account of the eminence of her knowledge of eternal things. Or, because in mind she lived in heaven with the Angels, saying with the Apostle, Phil. 3:20: *Our conversation is in heaven.* For *she reached even to heaven*, standing *on the earth* (Wis. 18:16). Or, a tower on account of the excellence of her humility: for in all these and many other things this tower stood out above the whole castle of the Church.

On account of the rightness and uprightness, or direction, of intention, according to that word of the Psalmist praying: *Direct, O Lord, my way in thy sight* (Ps. 5:9). Again, Ps. 24:5: *Direct me in thy truth, O Lord, and teach me,* etc. For he is right before God whose intention is directed to God for God's sake. Or also on account of the rightness of justice: because she never turned aside to the left through adversity, never to the right through prosperity, never bent back behind her to worldly things, *(p. 574)* never forward through any pressure of temptation. Or, upright through poverty: because *naked came man out of his mother's womb, and naked shall he return thither* (Job 1:21; cf. Wis. 7:6; 1 Tim. 6:7). If, then, the mean of poverty is uprightness, the plumb line, therefore, to which a tower ought to be raised and directed, is poverty.

On account of its strength: for she is *the valiant woman* on whom the whole Church militant leans, whose strength appeared most of all when the Lord was buried, when every saint failed or wavered in faith. Hence Christ says to the Father, Ps. 87:19: *Friend and neighbor thou hast put far from me.* And then she by the strength of faith, hope, and charity sustained the whole Church. She it is too who by her prayers *giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not* (Isa. 40:29), as a tower fortifies and strengthens those who are in it.

On account of the squareness of the four cardinal virtues, as was said above of the city *lying in a four-square* (cf. Apoc. 21:16). Or, the squareness is whole faith, firm hope, fervent charity, persevering good working: and these sides are equal, because as much as one believes, so much he hopes; as much as he hopes, so much he loves; as much as he loves, so much he works, as the Gloss says there. Or, on account of its roundness: because some towers are wont to be built square, and some round. Look for the mystery of roundness under the title on heaven, where heaven is described as round.

On account of the protection and defense of those who dwell in the castle or in the city of the Church, who in all their necessities and straits must flee by prayer to this tower: because *her name is a most strong tower*, as blessed Bernard says. Let him, then, who is tempted in any way by the flesh, the world, or the devil say: "Be thou unto me, O Lady, *a tower of strength against the face of the enemy* (cf. Ps. 60:4)."

On account of the showing of the harbor: for Isidore says that *pharos* is a very great tower, which Greeks and Latins alike, from the very use of the thing, called *pharus*, because by the sign of its flames it is seen far off by those sailing, both to foresee the entrances of harbors and to beware the dangers of rocks, lest, deceived by the darkness, they put in badly. And *pharus* is said from *ph*■*s*, which is light or fire, and *hora*■, which is *I see.* Such a tower Ptolemy is said to have built near Alexandria for eight hundred talents. By such a tower Mary the Illuminatrix is fittingly signified: because through her *the people that walked in darkness*, through the sea of the world, *have seen a great light* (Isa. 9:2), that is, Christ. She also, by the brightness of her examples, shows us the right way and the harbor of eternal salvation. She also keeps her servants from the rocks of sins, if they set the Lady always in their sight. Hence, Ecclus. 4:16: *He that looketh upon her shall remain secure.*

On account of its watching: because by watchmen the snares of approaching enemies are wont to be seen beforehand from towers, and when the enemies are seen, the watchmen are wont to cry: "To arms." Isa. 52:8: *The voice of thy watchmen*, that is, thy watchmen crying aloud, *have lifted up their voice.* On this account it is said, Cant. 7:4: *Thy nose*, that is, the blessed Virgin, *is as the tower of Libanus, that looketh toward Damascus.* Damascus, *drinking blood*, signifies the devil, against whose snares is set the nose, that is, the

discretion, of the blessed Virgin, which forefeels and as it were smells the malice of the devil, and foresees his snares from afar as from a watchtower, and mercifully sets herself against him on our behalf. (You will find this better under the title on the beauty of Mary, where the nose is treated.)

On account of the winding ascent: for *cochleae* are high round little turrets at some corner of a great tower, called *cochleae* as if *cycleae*, because in them one climbs as through a circle and round. (Look for the winding stair of the temple of Solomon after *(p. 575)* the title where Mary is called the ladder of Jacob.)

On account of the circuit of the moat: empty, hollow, gaping, broad, deep, stony, or cut in the rock. The circuit is defense; the emptiness, poverty; the hollowness gaping toward the things above, the capacity of desire; the breadth, charity; the depth, holy fearfulness; its being stony, the firmness of patience, which does not fear the imitators of the devil; its being cut in the rock, that is, in a firm heart, designates the impoverishing of one's own sense and one's own will.

On account of the firmness, never wavering, of the purpose she had taken up of keeping virginity, just as a firm tower cannot waver.

On account of the indwelling of the Son of God, who is the true David. Hence, 2 Kings 5:9: *David dwelt in the castle* (*arx*) *of Sion, and called it the city of David*, literally. Citadels (*arces*) are the lofty and fortified parts of a city: for whatever places of cities are safest are called *arces* from *arcere*, that is, from driving back enemies.

There follows: *Which is built with bulwarks* (Cant. 4:4), of which the Lord says to her, Isa. 54:12: *I will make thy bulwarks of jasper.* Jasper is faith, on account of its greenness; or unstained virginity; or holiness of life, never withering. Jasper heals the fever of lust and the dropsy of avarice, and puts to flight the phantasms of worldly glory, which are seen by night, that is, in the darkness of the present life.

Otherwise: *Which is built with bulwarks*, that is, walled about with the other virtues: because the virtues accompany one another, and where one is, there are all. Hence Augustine to Jerome: "By your most clear disputation it has become sufficiently known to us that it did not please our authors, nay, nor the truth itself, that is, Christ, that he who has one sin has all, although this is true of the virtues."

The bulwarks are the battlements (*kernella*), by which enemies are kept off from the wall, and those fighting from the wall are protected *(p. 576)* and hidden from the darts of the enemies; and between the battlements there are certain gaps which open a way for striking the enemies. These bulwarks are the virtues and graces, dignities and prerogatives, purity of intentions and holiness of works, the power of prayers and the merits of works, by which the blessed Virgin protects penitents, above all if they wish to fight for the kingdom of heaven; by which she defeats the enemies or foes.

There follows: *A thousand bucklers hang upon it* (Cant. 4:4). In the thousand of bucklers the perfection of protection is signified. They hang, I say, as it were from the eminence of her life, by example, help, and teaching: because the examples of the Virgin which are made known to us through Scripture, and the help which she shows to her venerators and to those who flee to her, as is clear in Theophilus, and the teachings of her words, rouse and instruct us to fight.

All the armor of valiant men (ibid.). This explains what is said: *A thousand bucklers.* Or he says, *All the armor of valiant men*, hinting at a twofold armor, namely of protection and of attack. The breastplate, helmet, greaves, and buckler are the armor of protection. The bucklers are the virtues which repel the darts of the devil: as prudence against the snares of the devil, temperance against the fiery darts of carnal concupiscence, and the like. Again, *the word of God is a fiery shield* (Prov. 30:5). Again, faith is a buckler. Hence, Eph. 6:16: *In all things taking the shield of faith*, etc. The armor of attack is the lance, sword, dart, club, and the like: namely the virtuous works of justice, mercy, piety, and prayer, which defend the strong and confound the devil. We must, then, cry continually to Mary: "Be thou unto me, O Lady, *a tower of strength from the*

face of the enemy" (Ps. 60:4). Again: *Fight against them that fight against me* (Ps. 34:1).

This is the tower of ivory, of which the bridegroom says, Cant. 7:4: *Thy neck as a tower of ivory.* A tower, on account of the special eminence of her manner of life. Of ivory, on account of the virtue of chastity. And because the elephant, whose bones are ivory, has a natural enmity toward the dragon: so she too has perpetual war with our enemy the devil, that she may give us the help of defense.

This is the tower of Libanus, as if set on mount Libanus, which is interpreted *whiteness*: that by this it may be shown that by the whiteness of virginity, as with her foot, she is able to crush the head of the serpent, which is concupiscence: therefore this tower is said to look toward Damascus. (Look under the title on her beauty, where the nose is treated.)

This tower is also the devout invocation of her name. (You will find this fully expounded in the second chapter on her salutation, after the distinction on oil.)

This is the tower of Hananeel (cf. 2 Esd. 3:1 and 12:38; Jer. 31:38; Zach. 14:10), which is interpreted *the king's gracious favor*, that is, the grace of virginity, which is pleasing to the king. Hence: *The king shall greatly desire thy beauty* (Ps. 44:12), that is, thy virginity.

This is the tower which the Lord built in the midst of his vineyard, for the protection and defense of the whole Catholic Church, lest its clusters be plundered, that is, the faithful, or the fruits of good works. In this tower too the true David dwelt, and continually dwells, to guard the Church.

Chapter 6: Mary, Fortress

(p. 577) Munitio, fortress, signified by the fortress of Datheman (1 Mach. 5:9), which is interpreted *receiving sufficiency of gift*, and signifies Mary, who received from the divine munificence such sufficiency of grace that it sufficed most abundantly for herself and for this whole world. To this fortress we must flee in every tribulation, as the Israelites fled to that fortress in the time of Judas Machabeus. Judas is *confession*, or *confessing*, or *praising.* Machabeus is interpreted *protecting*, or *protection*, or *striking*, or *ingenious.*

Chapter 7: Mary, Wall

Murus, wall. The glorious Virgin calls herself a wall, Cant. 8:10, where she says: *I am a wall, and my breasts are as a tower.* And it is to be noted that a wall is so called actively, because it fortifies and guards the inner parts of the city, lest the possessions of the citizens be plundered by enemies; and passively, because it is fortified in many ways against the engines of the enemies. Well, then, is Mary a wall: because she fortifies the city of God, that is, the Catholic Church, lest its inner goods, namely the good works of grace and the virtues, be plundered by demons and vices; or lest the faithful of the Church be led captive by the devil into sin or into hell; or lest they be stripped of the arms and garments of the virtues.

She is also an impregnable wall: because it cannot be undermined, dug through, or climbed over. It cannot be undermined: because it is founded upon a firm rock, that is, Christ; not upon sand, not in the earth, upon the love of earthly things. It cannot be dug through, on account of the firmness of patience. It cannot be climbed over, on account of the height of humility reaching the heavens: and therefore it is impregnable. And on this account the faithful of the Church ought to pray assiduously: "With thy impregnable wall gird us about, O Lord."

Mary says, then: *I am a wall, and my breasts are as a tower.* And she calls herself a wall on account of the *(p. 578)* firmness of her purpose of keeping virginity, and calls her breasts a tower on account of the surpassing fruitfulness of her divine offspring. (Of this wall you will find much under the title on the breasts of Mary, about the middle of the chapter.)

This is the wall of water, on account of the abundance of graces, of which we read, Exod. 14:22, that for the children of Israel, as they crossed the Red Sea, *the water was as a wall on their right hand and on their left.* By these waters are signified the graces which we have through Mary, which fortify the true Israelites, that is, true Christians seeing the Son and the mother by faith and love as with a twofold eye, against the Egyptians, that is, the demons and sins; and they kill and drown the Egyptians themselves.

This is the wall of fire round about Jerusalem, that is, the Church. Hence she seems to say with her Son that word of Zach. 2:5: *I will be to it a wall of fire round about: and I will be in glory in the midst thereof.* And well is Mary called fire: because she enlightens the blind, warms the cold, cooks the fleshly, purges the filthy, reduces the hard to ashes—because soft ash is released from hard material—makes white, dries the moist, restrains the flowing, dissolves the solid; she is fed with fatness, that is, devotion; she is kept under ash, that is, under humility; she makes high things flow down and solid things melt.

Chapter 8: Mary, Ship

Navis, ship. According to some, a ship is so called because it requires a *gnavus* helmsman, that is, skilled, wise, and vigorous, who knows how to hold it together and steer it amid mishaps and the perils of the sea. Therefore it is said, Prov. 1:5: *He that understandeth shall possess governments.* Mary, then, is rightly called a ship, whose helmsman and ruler is Christ, the wisdom of the Father; and to her fits that word of Ps. 22:1: *The Lord ruleth me,* etc.

And of this ship it is said, Prov. 31:14: *She is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar.* This verse is contained under the letter *He,* which is interpreted *to be,* or *to live,* or *receiving,* or *reception*: all of which well befits this ship. For Mary, through the bread of life which she received from heaven and carried in her womb, had as regards herself true being in the present life, and now has everlasting life, and has been received by him for ever in glory, whom, coming from heaven, she received in a glorious lodging. We too, through her Son, who said, Exod. 3:14: *I am who am,* and, *He who is hath sent me to you,* have true being as long as we are in him like a sound member in the body. And from him we shall have everlasting life, because he is *the life* (John 14:6), if we persevere in his service. Augustine: "He who withdraws from him who says, *I am,* is nothing." Again, Augustine on John: *(p. 579)* "Sin is nothing, and men become nothing when they sin." Boethius: "Evil men are not." On this account, Ezek. 28:19, it is said to the prince of Tyre: *Thou art brought to nothing, and thou shalt never be any more.* And all such are companions of him *who is not* (Job 18:15), that is, the devil, who is said not to be, because he withdrew from true being through pride: for this is the voice of the sinner who does not know his sins: *I am brought to nothing, and I knew not* (Ps. 72:22). Again, an authority: "He who withdraws from him who is life must needs not be: because he tends to nothing."

This letter *He* is also interpreted *she,* or *this, to be,* or *to live,* or *receiving,* or *reception,* as has been said. Let us join them, then, and say: *She,* or *this,* demonstratively, namely a notable person whom all ought to acknowledge and love: because she first received from heaven that bread which is being and living, by whom we are received and whom we receive; through her *she is like the merchant's ship,* etc. For she received, that is, took from above, the Son of God, who alone truly is and lives, and from whom all that is and lives borrows being and living. The blessed Mary herself is also our reception: for in the sea of the world all those are drowned whom this ship has not received and whom it does not lift up from the shipwreck of sins. Hence, Wis. 14:5: *Passing over the sea,* that is, the world, *by a raft,* that is, Mary, *they are delivered.* Therefore the Lord seems to have said to this ship that word of Isa. 43:6–7: *Bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth. And every one that calleth upon my name,* etc. Therefore, as often as we see the waves of this sea rising up against us, we ought to cry to Mary: *Put forth thy hand from on high, take me out, and deliver me from many waters* (Ps. 143:7). Again, that word: *Lady, save us, we perish* (cf. Matt. 8:25). For one tossing in this sea does not reach the longed-for shore without thee. It is said, then: *She is like the ship.*

For Mary compares herself to a ship, Ecclus. 24:8, where she says: *I have walked in the waves of the sea.* And Solomon says he does not know the way of this ship in the sea of this world (Prov. 30:19).

And this ship is commended chiefly for seven things. First, from its craftsman. Hence it is said: *She is made*, supply, by God the Trinity: for *its builder and maker is God* (Heb. 11:10). Ecclus. 9:24: *Works shall be praised for the hand of the artificers.* For *he made us, and not we ourselves* (Ps. 99:3). For she is *an admirable vessel, the work of the most High* (Ecclus. 43:2): of which work, namely, it is said in Ps. 117:23: *This work*, or *this vessel, is made by the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes.* Again, of this work it is said, Ecclus. 42:16: *Full of the glory of the Lord is his work.* Or, the craftsman is the wisdom of God, namely the Son: because *wisdom hath built herself a house* (Prov. 9:1). House and ship are the same. Wis. 8:6: *Who is a more artful worker than she of those things that are?* Or, the craftsman is the Holy Spirit, of whom it is said, Wis. 7:21–23: *For she is the worker of all things … having all power, overseeing all things, and containing all intelligible spirits.* Or, the craftsmen are Beseleel and Ooliab, as above concerning the ark.

Second, from the joining together of all the virtues: because, since she is the most special work of God, she has been joined together by the firmness of all the virtues. Hence there follows: *Like the ship.* For she, like the ark of Noe and like the ark of the covenant, was made at the command of God of setim woods, which are strong and incorruptible. (Look under the title on the ark.) On this account it is said, Isa. 40:20: *A wise workman chooseth strong wood, that will not rot*, namely Christ, the wisdom of the Father, who of *(p. 580)* Mary built for himself a house and a ship.

Third, from the fullness of all graces and of all good works. Hence there follows: *Of the merchant*, who, namely, as merchant, with all the earnestness he can, loads his ship with precious wares, as we shall assign below.

Fourth, from its usefulness. Hence there follows: *Bringing from afar*, that is, carrying from heaven, *her bread*, which was not of earth but *from heaven* (John 6:50), breathing toward the heavenly life, not the earthly. This was fulfilled literally when Christ, who is the living bread, in her womb as in a virginal vessel, came from Nazareth into Bethlehem, the house of bread, as it were by three days' journeys. *She is like the ship*, then, etc.

Fifth, from its material. For it can be said that she was made of setim woods, like the ark of Noe and the ark of the covenant. Or, the members of the Virgin, both of her soul and of her body, can be called the material of this ship, which were dried from every harmful humor by the heat of the Holy Spirit as regards the body; hewn also by the prudence of the supreme craftsman and as it were planed smooth, that they might be without the weight of mortal sin—because setim woods are light—and without the scruple of venial sin. On this account it was said to Noe, Gen. 6:14: *Make thee an ark of timber planks.* These woods, then, can be called: a humble heart, a meek spirit, a tranquil mind, a modest brow, lowered eyebrows, dove's eyes, an obedient hearing, a discreet sense of smell, a silent mouth, hidden teeth, lips without laughter, a truthful tongue, a moderate and abstinent taste, a face veiled with a headdress, a touch ready for good works, a modest gait, loins girded with strength, feet kept back from every evil way, sensuality wholly subject to reason. For in the ark of Noe all the animals were peaceable, by which the motions of her sensuality are fittingly figured. The spiritual members also of the blessed Virgin, that is, the gathering together of all the virtues, were as it were the material of this ship. For she is the litter of the true Solomon, which *is made of the wood of Libanus* (Cant. 3:9), that is, of pure virtues.

Sixth, from its end. The end, which according to the Philosopher is first in reason, belongs to the mind of the architect: namely that through this ship the bread of Angels might be brought to men, that by tasting it they might become Angels: because through Mary *man ate the bread of angels*, and through her God the Father *sent them provisions* of heaven *in abundance* (Ps. 77:25). Fittingly, then, is she compared to a ship: because she leads her lovers *into the haven which they wished for* (Ps. 106:30).

Seventh, from its form, which consists in many things. In a literal ship there are as it were four principal parts, which are noted in these verses: “The prow is the forward part of the ship, the last part the poop; / say the side is the *ratis*, say the belly is the keel.”

And these four parts can be adapted to the four cardinal virtues, which Mary had most perfectly in herself. The prow, the first part of the ship—and it is called *prora* from *proruere*, because it always rushes forward and stretches itself toward what lies ahead—designates prudence, which takes precaution against dangers, because it measures future things and the outcomes of things: hence providence too is a species of this virtue. In this part the ship is guarded from running into rough places by a certain lead tied to a line, which is called the *bolis*, of which we read, Acts 27:28. And as in the prow the way is tested beforehand and looked about, and so the ship is guarded: so circumspection and caution are ascribed to the prudent man in his affairs: for he who has this virtue does not knowingly commit himself to danger. Or, by the prow, which is the forward part of the ship, faith is signified, which first takes the field and is the standard-bearer of the other virtues, by means of which she conceived.

Ratis is said as if *fortis*, strong: because *ratum* is the same as *firmum*, firm. These are the sides of the ship, which ought to be strong, lest they be broken apart by the blows of storms. Therefore by *ratis* fortitude is signified, which most *(p. 581)* appeared in her then, when she alone stood by her suffering Son while all fled. Prov. 31:17: *She hath girded her loins with strength.* In the same place, v. 25: *Strength and beauty are her clothing.*

The keel (*carina*), which is the belly of the ship, signifies sobriety and temperance; and it is called *carina* as if *carima*, that is, *lacking a crack* (*carens rima*), or as if *currina*: for that part always runs (*currit*) in the water. Hence it must be most of all whole and lack any crack, lest the ship be sunk by the waters coming in. For by this virtue the glorious Virgin lacked every crack: because not even a single drop of carnal allurement or worldly pleasure could ever enter into her.

The poop (*puppis*) is the last part of the ship, and is so called from *pus*, which is *guard*; and by this part justice is designated: because from this part the ship is most carefully guarded, as justice is the guard of the commonwealth. There also justice is done for the misdeeds committed in the ship, because there sits the judge of the ship; and that is the higher and better fortified part, where the castle of the ship is built, and the ship itself is defended from pirates. There also the shipmaster, sitting on high, watches out for winds and storms, and there is the steering of the whole ship. Hence Ambrose, in the last book on Virginity: “Justice, placed on a certain high eminence, sees and searches out all things; born rather for others than for itself, it explores not so much its own advantage as all public benefits.”

The blessed Virgin, then, was as it were a ship composed and compacted of these four virtues which are called cardinal, as of four principal parts. These parts or virtues her name also points out most manifestly by its interpretations. For Mary is interpreted *enlightened*, or *Illuminatrix*, or *bitter sea*, or *Lady*, or *star of the sea.* Enlightened by God, she enlightens the soul with prudence, to take precaution against the snares of enemies and with regard to future goods and evils. The bitter sea is temperance, which does not wrongly admit the sweet allurements of pleasures, which, as much as they grow sweet to the body, which has a swinish taste, so much do they grow bitter to the wretched soul. Hence, Apoc. 18:7, of the reprobate soul: *As much as she hath glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her.* Since, then, our Virgin was prudent and continent, and never wished to taste even a single little drop of the stinking and salt waters of such pleasures, she had an excellent prow and a most tightly compacted keel, which lacked every crack. Mary was also that valiant woman sought by Solomon and by the holy Fathers, but at last found by Christ, who subdued all harsh and adverse things through fortitude. Hence she is also well interpreted *Lady*, and is called *ratis*, on account of the constancy of her mind, never loosened by prosperity or adversity. The fourth interpretation is *star of the sea*, which, though it is great, appears very small, and never sets; by which is signified humility, or justice, according as the Lord said to John the Baptist, humbling himself under

his hand for baptism, Matt. 3:15: *Suffer it to be so now: for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice*, that is, perfect humility. For this virtue, as justice serving the commonwealth, shows the way of truth to the kingdom through poverty of spirit. Hence the reprobate say, Wis. 5:6: *We have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice*, which is Mary, *hath not shined unto us*; or *the light of justice*, that is, humility.

High at the ends: as it were the first end of this ship being the holy patriarchs and kings, namely Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon, from whose stock she descended according to the flesh. Hence it is sung at her nativity: "Mary, of royal lineage," etc. Again: "The nativity of the glorious Virgin Mary, of the seed of Abraham." Again, Isa. 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse*, etc. Again, she was made mother of the heavenly King. On this account it is said of this ship, Osee 9:10: *I saw their fathers as the first fruits of the fig tree in the top thereof*, etc. Or, the first end can be called *(p. 582)* her sanctification in her mother's womb, and as it were her last end her assumption, when she was exalted even above the Angels to the right hand of the majesty. And so she was as it were most high at the first end according to the dignity of the world, most high at the last according to the dignity of heaven.

Closed below to the waters of worldly vanities and carnal pleasures, which pass away like water, and sweep their lovers away to perpetual bitterness.

Open above to the rains of graces and the charisms of gifts, which *come from above, from the Father of lights* (James 1:17).

Broad in the middle, namely in the heart, through the capacity of desire, that she might be filled with the wares of all goods; to whom it was given by God according to the capacity of her desire. Hence she is called *full of grace.* Prov. 10:24: *To the just their desire shall be given*, namely the desire of the just, and *all good* (Prov. 11:23): therefore all good shall be given to the just.

Of immense size. Hence, Gen. 6:15: *The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits*, etc. And this was fitting: because she was made by God for this, that she might contain all the elect, according to that word: *The dwelling in thee is as it were of all rejoicing* (Ps. 86:7); and might in some way carry all to the haven of life. Hence it is said to her, Isa. 43:6: *Bring my sons from afar*, etc., as above.

Hollow within, through true humility; therefore she was made capable of the true bread.

Covered above, as it were with a certain covering of strong patience, by which with constant mind she repelled the passions of the air, that is, the tribulations which the powers of the air procure. Exod. 26:7: *Thou shalt make also eleven curtains of goats' hair, to cover the top of the tabernacle*, etc. The tabernacle and the ship figure the same thing, namely blessed Mary.

Smeared with the pitch of chastity of flesh and spirit, like the ark of Noe, to whom it was said, Gen. 6:14: *Thou shalt pitch the ark within and without*, etc. And therefore perhaps she compares herself to *aspalathus*, which some say is Jewish bitumen, which can be dissolved only by menstrual blood: Ecclus. 24:20, where we have *As cinnamon and balm*, another reading says *As cinnamon and aspalathus.* Or, by this pitch her charity is designated. For *many waters*, that is, tribulations, *could not quench* her *charity* (Cant. 8:7), nor enter through desolation even unto her soul. Likewise the basket of Moses is said to have been daubed *with slime and pitch* (cf. Exod. 2:3), perhaps on account of the two precepts of charity: within, toward God; without, toward neighbor.

Divided into various mansions. Hence it was said to Noe, Gen. 6:14: *Thou shalt make little rooms in the ark.* John 14:2: *In my Father's house*, which is paradise and Mary herself, *there are many mansions.*

A most costly vessel: because *far, and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her* (Prov. 31:10). (Look under the title on the valiant woman.)

The mast of most excellent humility, whose fragrance went up even to the highest heaven, and thence drew him from the bosom of God the Father, as if *from the top of heaven*, that is, from the Father, *was his going out* (Ps. 18:7). Hence the Son himself says, John 16:28: *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world*, that is, into the womb of the Virgin. Therefore she says, Cant. 1:11: *While the king was*, etc. (Look under the title *The Lord is with thee*, about the middle of the chapter.) And the mast (*malus*) is the tree of the ship by which the sails are held up; and it is called *malus*, according to Isidore, because like a hammer (*malleus*) it is broad at the top. Or because it is girded as it were with certain little wooden hammers, by whose turning the sails are more easily raised. And the mast is usually made of fir, which is a tall and high tree, straight, smooth, and without moisture, and of such height that it sets its head as it were among the clouds. And the fir (*abies*) is so called from *abire*, going away, because beyond the other trees it goes far away and on high *(p. 583)* stands out; whose nature is free of earthly moisture, and therefore it is light and not knotty. Which properties well befit her humility. By the help of the mast, too, the sea of the world is crossed. (Adapt this.) The mast is also usually made of cedar. Hence, Ezek. 27:5: *They have taken cedars from Libanus, to make masts for thee.* (Adapt the properties.) Or, by the mast can be designated the height of her contemplation, or of her manner of life, which was in heaven, because *standing on the earth she reached even to heaven* (Wis. 18:16).

Otherwise: the mast is the most beautiful and highest timber of the whole ship. It appears also as if it were the tower of the ship itself; and this timber pilgrims, sailors, and those about to sail especially desire, namely if it be whole and sound, and the whole ship is reckoned the more commendable for it. And the Lord, about to come from heaven to earth through this ship, especially considered this mast, *regarding the humility of his handmaid*; and so much did the preciousness, beauty, and loftiness of the mast please him that, as if clinging to this mast, he came down by it from the height of heaven into the ship of the virginal womb. (Adapt the example of the two candles, one smoking and the other lighted.)

The masthead (*galliculum*) above the mast, that is, the discernment of spirits, which appeared well at the entrance of Gabriel, when she did not doubt that he was a true Angel of God. This discernment John commands, 1 John 4:1: *Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God.*

The yard across in front of the mast in the figure of a cross, which designates the memory of the Lord's passion; of which passion it is said, Mich. 5:1: *With a rod they shall strike the cheek of the judge of Israel.*

Otherwise: what we called above the yard is called by some the *antenna*, and signifies charity: for as the antenna is composed of two timbers, and stretches to the right and the left, so charity consists in the love of God and of neighbor, loving friends in God and enemies for God's sake. And because *a chaste generation with glory is beautiful* (Wis. 4:1), therefore the sail of virginity hung from the antenna of charity: for out of the vehemence of surpassing love our most glorious Virgin first uttered the vow of perpetual chastity.

Or, by the sail is fittingly designated her holy desire, which the Holy Spirit inspired and inflamed, according to that word of Cant. 4:16: *Come, O south wind, blow*, etc. Therefore, when out of the vehemence of her desire she answered, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me* (Luke 1:38), the south wind, that is, the Holy Spirit, came and blew, and the sail swelled: because in the moment in which she uttered that word, namely *be it done to me*, she conceived a son of the Holy Spirit, that is, by the operation of the Holy Spirit: and so this ship was continually moved toward the haven of perpetual life. And the sail (*velum*) is so called from flight (*volatus*), according to that poetic word: "We spread the wings of the sails."

And well does the sail signify the desires of the Virgin, which, going forth from her heart, at once flew to heaven. Hence that word of Ps. 37:10 most properly befits her: *Lord, all my desire is before thee.* Or, the sail is the charity of the Virgin, continually blown through by the wind of graces, with the desire of eternal things stretched forward, to the left and right by suffering with the wretched and rejoicing with the devout.

The variety of ropes, that is, of the other virtues hanging from the mast of humility; on which virtue, namely, as the ropes rest on the mast, so all the virtues rested: for her humility was as it were a certain support, that is, a bearing upward, of the other virtues.

(p. 584) The anchor of filial and chaste fear, by which this ship was firmly steadied amid all the storms of the waves. Hence in Ps. 88:41 it is said to Christ: *Thou hast made his strength fear*, that is, dread. Gregory: "The anchor of the heart is the weight of fear." Ecclus. 34:16: *He that feareth the Lord shall tremble at nothing.* Or, according to the Apostle, Heb. 6:18–19, the anchor is hope, where it is said: *We may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us; which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil.* The rope by which this anchor was tied to its ship is the charity of the Virgin herself, which is *the bond of perfection* (Col. 3:14): which bond, namely, could neither be cut nor loosed: and her charity was *a threefold cord, which is not easily broken* (Eccles. 4:12): because it was *from a pure heart* toward neighbor, *and a good conscience* toward herself, *and an unfeigned faith* toward God (1 Tim. 1:5). Or, by the rope is designated the long-suffering of heavenly desires.

The castle: for this ship can be designated by the ship of Alexandria, Acts 28:11, *whose sign was the Castors.* This castle signifies the four cardinal virtues, with which the Virgin fought: namely against the flesh by temperance, against the devil by justice, by prudence against prosperity, by fortitude against adversity.

The armor of the virtues, which the Apostle describes, Eph. 6:11 ff.: *Put you on the armor of God*, etc. This is the girding of chastity, the breastplate of justice, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, namely the word of God, the shoes of holy examples, prayer, supplication, watchings, every good earnestness, and the like. For she is *the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks*, from which *hang a thousand bucklers, all the armor of valiant men* (Cant. 4:4). (Look under the title that she is called a tower.)

The oars, that is, good works: which oars are let down from the ship, because meritorious works go out from the heart and stretch out to the waters, that is, to neighbors. Apoc. 17:15: *The waters are many peoples.*

The rudder, that is, prudence, the mother of discretion. Prov. 2:11: *Prudence shall keep thee.* Or, the rudder is faith.

The helmsman is the providence of God the Father. Wis. 14:3: *But thy providence, O Father, governeth it: for thou hast made a way even in the sea.* Therefore Mary says to him: *For thy name's sake, O Lord, thou wilt lead me* (Ps. 30:4). Again: *The Lord ruleth me*, etc. And the helmsman (*gubernator*) is so called as if *cohibernator*, because by his providence he holds in check (*cohibet*) the wintry things (*hiberna*), that is, the storms of the sea.

The sailors and rowers are the holy Angels attending Christ the shipmaster: because *they are all ministering spirits* (Heb. 1:14). The *nauclerus* is the master of the ship, because the ship is in his lot; the others are in contribution. *Nauta*, sailor, is derived from *navis*. *Remex*, rower, is so called because he rules (*regat*) the oar (*remus*).

She was laden with the wares of human salvation in the fullness of graces. Hence she is *full of grace*, in the coming upon her of the Holy Spirit, in the wonderful conception of the Son of God, who is all good, and *from whom is our sufficiency* (2 Cor. 3:5): for he laded this ship with all precious wares and with the charisms of all gifts, with which he most abundantly enriched human poverty, when he willed to confer on us the riches of all true good through Mary.

She was moved partly by breezes, partly by oars: that is, by grace from above, and by industry from below. She was borne the more safely the farther she was from *(p. 585)* the earth, that is, from the love and desire of earthly things. She battled with pirates and robbers, that is, with the powers of the air, and still fights assiduously for the salvation of those who serve her. Hence also she is called terrible to the demons themselves, *as an army set in array* (Cant. 6:9). By the tribulations and pressures which she suffered in her

Son she was borne on high. Hence, Gen. 7:11 ff.: *The flood came … and the waters increased, and lifted up the ark on high from the earth.* But the more heavily she was then pressed down in the world, the more loftily is she now exalted in heaven. She was violently shaken by the waves and billows in the passion of the Only-begotten. Hence, Matt. 14:23–24: *When it was evening … the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves.* Then it was evening, when the Sun of justice set. The sea is the world; the midst of the sea is Jerusalem, which is in the midst of the world, as the Psalmist says, Ps. 73:12: *He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.* Ezek. 5:5: *This is Jerusalem, I have set her in the midst of the nations, and the countries round about her.* And then truly she could say to the Son, as the Son to the Father: *All thy heights and thy billows, my son, have passed over me* (Ps. 41:8), through compassion. Again, that word of Jon. 2:4: *All thy billows,* etc. But these heights, billows, and whirlpools she broke and pressed down by the power of patience, as a ship running upon the water presses down and breaks the waves.

Otherwise: while the Lord slept in the little boat of the cross, a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the little boat of the Church was covered with waves, as is read, Matt. 8:24. But she, as a valiant woman, alone then held constantly the rudder of faith: because the whole ship of the Church then rested on her faith, namely on the evening of the sixth day and on the paschal Saturday: on account of which all the faithful of the Church venerate her specially on every Saturday, and on this account on that Saturday her canticle is sung at Mass.

She reached the longed-for shore in the resurrection of her Son, the haven of true salvation in her assumption: and she who then in the world suffered pressures with her Son now possesses peace and rest with him.

Mary, then, *is like the merchant's ship* (Prov. 31:14). This merchant is Christ, who through her came from heaven into the world to trade, to sell, and to buy. The merchant crosses from his own country to a foreign one in hope of gain and in desire of acquiring: so too Christ came in his incarnation from heaven to earth to buy and redeem our souls. Hence he says, Jer. 12:7: *I have forsaken my house, I have left my inheritance, I have given my dear soul,* etc. Behold the money with which he traded.

Christ is the merchant: because he goes in haste by day and night to the fairs. Hence in Ps. 18:6: *He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.* Again, the voice of this merchant is: *I ran in thirst* (Ps. 61:5), that is, in the desire which I had for the salvation of the human race. Again, Exod. 11:4: *At midnight I will enter into Egypt.* Again, Wis. 18:14–15: *For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, thy almighty word, O Lord, leapt down from heaven from thy royal throne,* etc. Seeing him coming from afar, the Church, rejoicing and exulting, says, Cant. 2:8: *Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills,* etc. This is that merchant of whom the poet says: "The tireless merchant runs to the farthest Indies, / fleeing poverty through the sea, through rocks, through fires": namely that poverty, that is, that lack which was before in heaven, where poverty and just souls were lacking.

He carries his money with him. Hence *(p. 586)* Prov. 7:19–20: *My husband is not at home, he is gone a very long journey. He took with him a bag of money.* What this money was, blessed Bernard teaches: "The Father sent into the earth a bag full of mercy; and this bag was torn open in the passion by the nails and the lance, and the coin was poured out, that is, the soul and the blood, that the payment might be made." Hence the Son to the Father, Ps. 29:12: *Thou hast cut my sackcloth,* the body in the passion, *and hast compassed me with gladness,* in the resurrection.

He brings with him the wares of his own country, and carries back with him wares from foreign parts. Which blessed Bernard expounds: "In heaven there was an abundance of all goods, but poverty was not found there. On earth, however, this kind abounded, but man did not know its price. This, then, the Son of God came to seek, that by his esteem he might make it precious to us. For before this poverty had never entered heaven; but now heaven is not entered except through it." Matt. 5:3: *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

He sells the wares of his own country, and persuades men to buy. Hence he says to the bishop of Laodicea, Apoc. 3:18: *I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich; and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and anoint thy eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see,* etc. Expound thus: *I counsel thee,* that is, for thy profit, *to buy,* through the consent of free will. Or, *to buy*, that is, to acquire with much labor of body and soul, *of me*, not of the people, *gold*, that is, wisdom more precious than all riches. Or, *gold*, that is, charity: *fire-tried* as regards itself, and shining as regards neighbor, *tried* in the furnace of tribulation: *that thou mayest be made rich*, because without charity every man is poor, and with it every man is rich. *And mayest be clothed in white garments*, that is, clean works, without which every man is naked. Eccles. 9:8: *At all times let thy garments be white.* Or, *white garments*, the flesh made clean through chastity: *that* thy *shame may not appear* in the judgment, that is, the foulness of thy life, from which follows eternal confusion. *And anoint thy eyes with eyesalve.* (Look under the title where charity is called eyesalve.) Behold three things to be bought from Christ: gold against poverty, white garments against nakedness, eyesalve against blindness.

Or, *gold fire-tried*, that is, the word of God, which charity sets on fire, tried by the simplicity of truth, not darkened by the charm of worldly wisdom; tried, not fanciful, such as the wisdom of the world is, but true, which is bought by study and continual meditation on the Scriptures.

Or, *gold*, that is, eternal life, where the saints shine and burn with charity. And he says *to buy* against those who wish to have all good for nothing, since *the sufferings are not worthy* (Rom. 8:18), etc. Or, *to buy* with the price of penance.

Garments, in the plural, are the various virtues: *that thy shame may not appear*, now to the Angels and to some men, but in the judgment to the whole world.

Morally: the gold is faith, on account of its ruddiness, that is, its light: because it points to the divine wisdom. Lam. 4:1: *How is the gold become dim?* For faith is darkened when it is mixed with the love of earthly things. But this gold ought to be fired by charity, tried by tribulation: and this gold is bought from the Lord by desire and the exercise of good works.

He buys the wares of a foreign country. For he buys our souls with the price of his blood. 1 Cor. 6:20: *For you are bought with a great price.* He also redeemed certain wares foolishly pledged, with the same price of which above. 1 Pet. 1:18–19: *You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, from your vain conversation,* etc., *but (p. 587) with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted.* To this merchant Augustine says: “O good merchant, we give thee thanks that thou hast bought us; we drink thy blood, we read thy Gospel, our deed of purchase; we are thy creatures, we are thy servants; thou hast made us, thou hast redeemed us. One can buy a servant; one cannot create him. But the Lord created his servants that they might be, and redeemed them that they might not be captives for ever.”

This is the true merchant (*institor*), who established (*instituit*) his creature that it might be, and with his own blood bought and redeemed it that it might be free and blessed. Man ought, then, to acknowledge that he is not his own master, but belongs to him who redeemed him; which the law of nature requires, and of positive law. 1 Cor. 7:22: *He that is called in the Lord, being a bondman, is the freeman of the Lord: likewise he that is called, being free, is the bondman of Christ.* And therefore he bought him at so great a price, that man might thereafter hold himself the dearer, and not expose himself for a cheap price: and if not for his own sake, at least for the sake of the great price. And he who is tempted ought to say to the devil: Now I am bought; I cannot henceforth put myself up for sale. Augustine: “Therefore he bought at so great a price, that he alone might possess. Man is a dear creature to God, if he does not make himself cheap by neglect. Do not grow cheap to yourself, O man; weigh yourself at your price.” Blessed Bernard: “He bought at so great a price that he would not wish to lose.” But many withdraw themselves from the possession of the Lord and make themselves the possession of the devil. Hence some say, Isa. 26:13: *O Lord our God, other lords*

besides thee have had dominion over us, etc. And this is done most of all through evil company: because *with the holy thou wilt be holy, and with the perverse thou wilt be perverted* (Ps. 17:26–27). Against whom David prays, Ps. 78:12: *Render to our neighbors*, who drew us into sin, *sevenfold*, that is, perfect punishment, namely the punishment of body and soul. Ecclus. 7:3: *Sow not evils in the furrows of justice* (the Vulgate has *injustice*), *and thou shalt not reap them sevenfold.* The furrows of justice are the three powers of the soul and the senses of the body, which is of the four elements. Gen. 4:15: *Whosoever shall kill Cain, shall be punished sevenfold.* And below, v. 24: *Sevenfold vengeance shall be taken for Cain: but for Lamech seventy times sevenfold.* For sin brings in seven punishments. The first, the dulling of the intellect in the rational power. The second, the corruption of the affection in the concupiscible power. The third, hardening in the irascible power. These three are within, in the soul. Without there are four. The first, poverty. The second, trouble. The third, ignominy. The fourth, death, whether temporal or eternal: for both come from sin.

He loves the wares which he buys more than the price which he spends for them, and would rather be cheated in the price which is spent than in the wares which he purchases. So also Christ. Of the first blessed Bernard says: "What shall I, unhappy man, do, whither shall I turn, who have received to keep the precious deposit which Christ showed to be precious by his own blood?" And much else. Of the second Christ himself says in Ps. 68:27, of those who cheat him of the souls which he bought at so great a price: *They have added to the grief of my wounds.*

He trades as long as the fairs stand, and when they are ended he makes his payment. For in the present he sets before us and offers us the price of his passion, and the examples of his life for imitation, that he may make our souls and bodies his own. Hence someone says to him: *I am thine, save thou me* (Ps. 118:94); which will be fulfilled in the judgment.

He also exchanges and gives wares for wares. For he took our nature when the Word was made flesh, and bestowed on us his deity. Again, he was raised into heaven, namely with our flesh, that he might grant us to be partakers of his divinity. Therefore the Church sings: "O wonderful exchange," etc.

Chapter 8 (continued): Mary, Ship

(p. 588) He has under him his merchants, to whom he hands over his money to trade with. Luke 19:13: *He gave them ten pounds, and said to them: Trade till I come*, that is, give temporal things for eternal. His first merchants were the Apostles and Preachers. Ezek. 27:12 ff.: *The Carthaginians were thy merchants*, etc.

He reckons with his servants. Matt. 25:19: *The lord of those servants came, and reckoned with them.*

He rejoices if they have made gain. Matt. 25:21, 23: *Well done, good servant.* And he rewards them well, saying to him who had gained ten pounds, Luke 19:17: *Thou shalt have power over ten cities.*

He grieves if they have not, and punishes them severely. Matt. 25:30: *The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness*, etc. Prov. 14:35: *A wise servant is acceptable to the king: he that is good for nothing shall feel his wrath.*

Institor, merchant, is said from *instare*, to press on, or from *instituere*, to establish, as some will: because he established all things that are. Hence, Ecclus. 18:1: *He that liveth for ever created all things together.* But what was established for man's profit was disestablished by man's sin. And for this Christ came to earth through this ship, that through Mary's mediation everything might be re-established which had been disestablished by the sin of the first woman.

Or, *institor* from *instare*: because he presses on diligently in acquiring dear wares, according to that word of Eccles. 9:10: *Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly*, etc. And well is Christ the Lord a merchant, who pursued his trade in redeeming the human race with such earnestness: for what greater earnestness than that, to buy us, he willed to be sold and slain? Which he showed, saying, Luke 12:50: *I have a baptism*

wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened, namely by desire, *until it be accomplished?* And he calls his passion a baptism, that is, a dyeing: because then he was reddened with his own blood. Again, Luke 22:15: *With desire I have desired*, etc. Again, to hint at this he said to Judas, plotting his betrayal, John 13:27: *That which thou dost, do quickly*. There Hilary says: "He does not command the crime, but foretells it, granting power against himself." And truly he foretold as a merchant: because all his life he pressed on in praying, preaching, casting out demons, curing infirmities, and in acquiring such precious wares, that is, souls.

And Christ was not only a merchant, but a wonderful merchant. He was a merchant because he gave us his wares and took ours. Augustine: "Every merchant gives and receives. But he was wonderful, because he gave his deity and received our humanity. Hence, O wonderful exchange," etc. Again, wonderful: because he gave what was of the greatest price, nay, what was priceless, and received from us what was of no price, while other merchants do the reverse. He took what abounded here, he gave what was lacking. He took to be born, to labor, and to die; he gave to be reborn, to rise again, and to reign.

Again, wonderful in another way: because he sells without price, and asks that he be bought from without price. Hence he cries, Isa. 55:1: *You that have no money make haste, buy, and eat. Buy*, that is, acquire by faith and work wisdom or second grace, namely by believing and working well: and so the price of wisdom is faith and working. Prov. 17:16: *What doth it avail a fool to have riches, seeing he cannot buy wisdom?*

There follows: *Come ye, buy without money*, etc. There blessed Bernard says: "Wonderful is this buying; among the lovers of the world there cannot be such, but with the author of the world there cannot be other. For God, the merciful seller, who has no need of our goods, ought to be suspect to no one, because he is desirous only of our salvation, but not of temporal price." Wonderful also, as we have touched already, in exchanging his wares, which in French is called *buter*: because he gave riches *(p. 589)* for poverty, and this by his grace. 2 Cor. 8:9: *You know the grace*, etc. And not only a wonderful but also a rich merchant, who bought and redeemed the whole world as with one blow of the palm—not one that he struck, but one that he received. Matt. 26:67: *And others struck his face with the palms of their hands.*

There follows: *Bringing her bread from afar* (Prov. 31:14). *From afar*, that is, from heaven, *bringing*, that is, carrying to the whole world perishing of hunger, *bread*, namely *the living bread which came down from heaven* (John 6:50): which bread, namely, she made *her own*, and in a certain way bought it from the Father with the price of virginity and humility and the other virtues, when, namely, *she made fine linen* (Prov. 31:24), that is, vowed virginity, and sold it as it were for the price of the Son of God; and this bread came from heaven through this ship to us, who *sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in want and in iron* (Ps. 106:10), to hint that he was coming to restore us, who were dying of hunger, to the heavenly life, not the earthly: and since he was the bread of Angels, he willed to be given to men, that by tasting him they might become Angels.

Otherwise: if Solomon had said *our bread*, he would have said well; but notably he preferred to say *her own*, and this for many reasons. For he was wholly hers, her own, namely, not shared between her and a husband: because he was made in her and from her alone, namely from the most pure substance of her flesh. Hence, Gal. 4:4, the Apostle says: *God sent his Son, made of a woman*, etc. And Bede greatly reproves those who would read there *born of a woman*: for from her he was made man, and she by her consent made him both bread and man. Hence she is designated by Sara, who at the command of Abraham, that is, of God the Father, *mixed three measures of flour* (Gen. 18:6), namely the divinity, the soul, and the flesh. The leaven of this bread was the faith of the Virgin. And this bread was baked in the oven of the virginal womb, heated by the fire of the Holy Spirit. It was also baked again on the altar of the cross, after thirty-three years, as is believed, had run their course: so that it might be twice-baked bread, which befits those sailing over the sea of this world. This bread also grew hard through the fire of the passion. Hence he says after the passion, Ps. 21:16: *My strength is dried up like a potsherd.* Hence with much violence, by means of the nails and the lance, it

was broken on the cross. And then was heard the prayer of the human race asking, Isa. 58:7: *Deal thy bread to the hungry*, etc., that is, allow thy soul and body to be separated from each other for the refreshment of the famished. (Of this bread you had these and other things under the title *Full of grace*, where Christ is called the bread of refreshment.)

Otherwise: *her own bread*, which, namely, she in the present enjoyed more worthily, more savorily, and more ineffably than every creature. Or thus: *her own bread*, which was wholly hers, of which she says, Prov. 9:5: *Come, eat my bread*, etc.; and because we cannot have it except from her and through her. Hence we must say to her with all devotion and desire of mind, as we say to God the Father: "Our mother, who art in heaven, give us this day our supersubstantial or daily bread." Augustine and Ambrose call this bread *epiousios*, that is, supersubstantial: because the flesh of Christ is worthier and greater than all created substances.

She is like the ship, etc. (Prov. 31:14). This can be expounded of Christ, who is reckoned in the feminine gender because he is the wisdom of the Father: and here is a prophecy that Christ would, like a ship, bear up and carry the whole human race to the heavenly Jerusalem over the sea of this world: for he compares himself to a ship, Job 9:25–26: *My days … have passed by as ships (p. 590) carrying fruits.* And in truth this ship carries all the elect in itself over the sea of the world: and in it were *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden* (Col. 2:3), like wares for sale. Hence he says, Apoc. 3:18: *I counsel thee to buy of me gold*, as above. And he bought us, like a merchant his wares, with the price of his blood.

She is like the merchant's ship. The Church is a ship according to the properties of Mary assigned above. And this verse is contained under the letter *He*, which is interpreted *to be*, or *to live*, or *receiving*, or *reception*: because through the living bread which the Church received in the incarnation of the Son, the faithful of the Church have true being and true living, through grace here, through glory in the future. She is also well called reception: because whatever she does not receive through baptism, through faith and the sacraments, perishes in this sea; and those alone whom she receives she brings to the eternal inheritance.

This ship was narrow in the time of the martyrs, namely at its beginning; it will be narrow in the time of Antichrist; it was broad in the time of the Confessors; now it begins to grow narrow. Hence it is clear that the end is at hand. In the time also of the persecution of the holy martyrs, a flood of tribulations having come, it was raised on high from the earth: and therefore it sent so many martyrs then to heaven. Hence of the ark which signifies the Church of God it is said, Gen. 7:17: *The flood came*, etc., as above. Matt. 14:23–24: *When it was evening … the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves.*

She is like the merchant's ship, laden with the precious wares of good works, temptations, persecutions, miseries, and the like, with which she rejoices to be loaded, by which she merits greater gifts of graces: and these are precious wares. She also crosses in desire the waves of this world, hastening to the homeland: and she carries with her the bread of doctrine, of sorrow, of labor, on which she feeds while she is on the way. Of such breads it is said, Ecclus. 31:28: *The lips of many shall bless him that is liberal of his bread*, etc. But most of all she is refreshed with the bread of doctrine and virtue as long as she is on the journey of her pilgrimage.

Again, she is said to bring her bread *from afar* as a provision for the journey: because in all that she does she awaits only the eternal reward, and desires only the refreshment of the true bread. Construe thus: *Bringing from afar her bread*, that is, which is from afar, that is, from heaven, which is the bread of Angels, which was given to men to eat that they might become Angels, as above.

And note that the wares which this ship carries are called bread; in which wares four things are noted: namely that they are *from afar*, that is, not from visible things but from invisible. 2 Cor. 4:18: *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*, etc. Again, they are had with labor and carried with weight. Hence *bringing* (*portans*); 1 Cor. 6:20: *Bear God in your body.* Again, these wares are

called *bread*: because it is the same as the refreshment of the soul. Hence: *Give us this day our daily bread* (Matt. 6:11). Again, *her own* is added. Note that the curiosities and solaces of the world are adulterous bread, in which reason and intellect commit adultery. *From afar* takes away visible things, *bringing* takes away idleness, *bread* useless things, *her own* adulterous solaces.

Again, this ship is signified by the fleet of Solomon (3 Kings 10:22), which brought from Tharsis the gold of wisdom, the silver of eloquence, the teeth of elephants, that is, the words and examples of the saints; apes, that is, the mockers of the wicked; peacocks, that is, those who put the glory of the world behind them; the bread of Scripture, as here; fruits, that is, the fruits of good works.

Otherwise: the fleet is the Church, which *(p. 591)* gathers gold and silver, that is, the wise and the eloquent. Ecclus. 28:29: *Melt down thy gold and thy silver, and make a balance for thy words.* To melt these two together is to mingle life with doctrine. The teeth of elephants are the chaste expositors of the Scriptures. The apes are properly those who imitate the good as to certain acts in outward appearance, but are nevertheless beasts. Apoc. 3:1, to the Church of Sardis: *Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead.* The peacocks are spiritual men. (Look for the properties under the title on the eagle.)

She is like the ship, etc. Morally: the faithful soul is a ship. And note well each word. *She is made*, as it were not by herself but by God: because *he made us, and not we ourselves* (Ps. 99:3). For he made what we are by nature and grace, and will at last make what we are to be by glory. For *he worketh in us both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will* (Phil. 2:13). *He hath wrought all our works for us* (Isa. 26:12). Exod. 34:7, Moses says to the Lord: *No man of himself is innocent before thee.* He inspires in us the grace of returning to him and of repenting after a fall. Hence on that word of Luke 15:18, where the prodigal says, *I will arise, and will go to my father*, etc., the Gloss says that he would not have had the will to rise unless the Father had first inspired him. Let the faithful soul say, then: *By the grace of God I am what I am* (1 Cor. 15:10).

Like the merchant's ship. Note that the life of man is to be ordered like a ship, as will be said below. The spirit is as it were a merchant, from *instare*, according to the properties assigned above to Christ. Of this merchant, 2 Tim. 4:2: *Be instant in season, out of season.* Eccles. 9:10: *Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly.* Heb. 4:11: *Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest*, that is, to do the things which make for entrance. The spirit of the penitent is a merchant, earnestly seeking good wares wherever they can be found, to carry them where they are sold at a dear price. These wares are fasts, vigils, disciplines, and all such good exercises, which are had here at a price small enough. Hence: *They set for nothing*, that is, for a small price, *the desirable land* (Ps. 105:24). And in paradise they are sold most dearly. And when such a merchant comes to the haven of life, namely in death, then he will exchange and barter them; and for the sorrow of contrition will be given unspeakable joy; for the blush of confession, the eternal praise of God; for the labor of satisfaction, everlasting rest; to hunger will succeed fullness, to thirst sweet inebriation, to sickness health, to dry and tasteless food a banquet of fat things, to ignominy glory, to haircloth purple, to nakedness the fourfold clothing which is noted in the sun; to obedience all things will succeed according to his good pleasure; to vigils, sleep *in peace in the selfsame* (Ps. 4:9); and so of the rest. And though the merits were passing, the rewards will last for ever. Of such traders it is said, Isa. 23:18: *And her merchandise*, namely of such a merchant, *and her hire shall be sanctified to the Lord.* And he speaks of Tyre, which is interpreted *straits*, which designates the true penitent, set in the twofold straits of mind and body.

Gregory: "Our life is like one sailing: for he who sails, whether he stands, sits, or lies, always goes forward, because he is carried by the impulse of the ship. So also we. For whether waking or sleeping, speaking or silent, unwilling or willing, we always tend to the end."

In this ship the prow is narrow: the entrance of the present life, hedged about with every misery. For wretched man is born of his mother, powerless over himself, naked in body, defiled *(p. 592)* with filth, laden

with sins, the devil's possession, and generally heaped with every misery. Job 1:21: *Naked came I out*, etc.; and 1 Tim. 6:7: *We brought nothing into this world.* The poop is most narrow: the departure from the world, not unlike the entrance. Blessed Andrew, speaking to Egeas of sinners: "So long does the devil delude them, until they go out of their bodies guilty and naked, carrying nothing with them but their sins."

The keel is broad: the middle of our life, in which we spread ourselves out in the pleasures of the world, under which lies the bilge of manifold vices.

In this ship the prow, that is, the beginning of penance itself, is very narrow: in the repression of sensuality, in the confusion and sorrow of contrition, in the shame of confessions, in fleeing the occasions which draw one to sin, in cutting off all superfluities, in unlearning what one is used to, in learning and growing accustomed to what seems bitter to the flesh. On account of all these things it is said, Matt. 7:14: *How narrow is the gate*, etc.! Yet to this the Lord invites us, Luke 13:24: *Strive to enter by the narrow gate.*

The keel is broad: the widening of penance in good working, going forward continually from virtue to virtue, always advancing from good to better: for in the way of God to stand still is as it were to go back; and to attribute this widening not to ourselves but to God. Hence: *He brought me forth into a large place* (Ps. 17:20).

The bilge is the constant remembrance of the vileness of one's past life, that he who wishes to be fragrant to God may stink to himself: for, as the Philosopher says, he who is displeasing to himself uses himself well. Ezek. 6:9, of the true penitents: *They shall be displeased with themselves for the evils which they have committed.*

The poop of this ship is the consideration of our end: namely how sudden, how unforeseen, how perilous, when the hellish torturers will be ready, roaring, *prepared for the food*, cruel usurers, who exact more in punishment than was committed in fault. And in order that the penitent may well rule and direct his ship, that is, his life, he ought, like the helmsman, to sit in the poop, which is the end of the ship—that is, to dwell in pondering his end—and to direct his sight to the prow, that he may steer his ship rightly to the haven, so that he may say that word of Job 16:21: *My eye poureth out tears to God*, that is, the intention of my heart. Ecclus. 7:40: *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.*

This ship is a fragile vessel: because it is easily broken up by the temptations which it suffers from the flesh, from the world, from evil men, and from the devil. Job 14:2: *He cometh forth, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow*, etc.

Closed below, open above, hollow within, covered above, laden with the wares spoken of above, it is borne upon the waters, as above concerning Mary.

Sharp at the ends by poverty, as above; it is almost wholly sunk in the water, because *many are the afflictions of the just* (Ps. 33:20).

The safer, the farther it is from the earth, that is, from the desire of earthly things.

Standing on the shore, it always leans to one side.

It is shaken by the waves. John 16:33: *These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world.*

It fights with pirates. Eph. 6:12: *Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood*, namely only, *but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.* Therefore it is said, Ecclus. 4:33: *Strive for thy soul.*

It presses down and breaks the waves, that is, the tribulations of the world and the flesh. Hence the Apostle, 2 Cor. 12:10: *When I am weak, (p. 593) then am I powerful*, etc. Behold the breaking of the waves.

It is drawn by the wind of grace and the hauling of good working: because *we are God's coadjutors* (1 Cor. 3:9).

By the north wind too, that is, of adversity, it is driven toward the heavenly Jerusalem; but by the south wind of prosperity it is often driven back from the land of promise. Isa. 43:6: *I will say to the north: Give up; and to the south: Keep not back.*

Sometimes it is loaded with ballast, that it may have its due weight, that is, the pondering of its own weakness. Hence Ambrose, instructing a virgin: "Take up the contemplation of your body as the ballast of a ship, lest amid such great waves of the world the breeze of some boasting carry you round."

This ship ought to have the mast of hope, that it may be raised up to the desire of heavenly things and may be able to say: *Lord, all my desire is before thee* (Ps. 37:10), etc. Or, the mast of humility, by which it is exalted in the eyes of the Lord. Or, the mast which is made of fir is the examples of the saints, who like firs were without the moisture of carnal pleasure; straight in justice; raised to heavenly things, not bent back to temporal things; tall in the holiness of life; light, without the burden of sins; setting and lifting up their heads, that is, their minds, toward the clouds by the contemplation of heavenly things: and these virtues help most of all those who wish to reach the haven of salvation.

The yard, that is, the memory of the Crucified, from which the sail of desire should hang. Isa. 53:2–3, the saints say of Christ: *We have desired him, despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows*, etc. Or, the sail is charity spread out on every side, as above.

The masthead, that is, the discernment of spirits. 1 John 4:1: *Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God.*

The ropes of the virtues, which rest on the mast of holy hope and hang from it. Or, on the mast of humility.

The anchor of fear, by which it steadies the ship of the mind in the state of justice. Gregory: "The anchor of the heart is the weight of fear." Or, according to the Apostle, *the anchor is hope* (Heb. 6:18–19), as above: which hope, namely, like an anchor, is forged by the many blows of tribulations, as of hammers. For this hope is poured in by grace, but is made firm by tribulations: because *tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope*, that is, the anchor so forged, *confoundeth not* (Rom. 5:3–5). And hope is the certain expectation of future goods, coming from grace and merits, as Augustine says: "The grace of God makes the anchor, hope makes it firm, but merits make it safe."

And not only a single anchor is necessary to the ship of our life, but four, which are the hope of pardon, of grace, of perseverance, and of glory. Acts 27:29: *Fearing lest we should fall upon rough places, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.* The rough places are the places of eternal punishments; the stern, the end of life; the four anchors, as above, namely the hope of the four things aforesaid. The Apostle says, then, that we have hope *as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm*, as has been said, *and which entereth in even within the veil*, that is, making us enter even into the inner beatitude, still veiled to us, which no one in this life has seen as it is. *Where*, that is, into which inner parts, *the forerunner Jesus is entered for us* (Heb. 6:19–20), who are to be brought in. And so it is clear that we can follow: for he ran before for this, that we might follow. And here the Apostle alludes to the custom of sailors. For those who sail in a great ship, if before the harbor they meet a contrary wind, so that they cannot enter the harbor by sailing, send ahead some who in a little boat *(p. 594)* carry the anchor to the shore and fix it firmly there; afterward those who are in the ship seize the rope stretched from the ship to the anchor, and with their own hands, even against contrary winds, bring themselves into the harbor in which the anchor is fixed. This rope is the long-suffering of heavenly desires; and if the hands of good works are joined to it, however much the winds of tribulations oppose, they enter the harbor of the heavenly homeland, where the anchor of hope was firmly fixed. The anchor of hope, then, is to be fixed in the land of eternal stability, that it may hold the ship of the

mind firm against the fury of the waves, that is, of temptations. The rope by which the anchor is to be tied to the ship is the fear of death, of judgment, and of hell: namely *a threefold cord, which is not easily broken* (Eccles. 4:12). For fear is not to be separated from hope. Prov. 14:26: *In the fear of the Lord is confidence of strength.* Gregory: "In the way of the Lord fear works strength; in the way of the world, weakness." Again, Ecclus. 27:4: *Unless thou hold thyself diligently in the fear of the Lord, thy house*, namely the ship of thy mind, *shall quickly be overthrown.*

Of the oars, as above.

The rudder is the word of God, which in the sea of the world, amid prosperity and adversity, directs the ship of our life. But when the sinner has thrust the word of God away from himself, then, with winds and storms rushing in from every side, he is in danger in the tempest of vices as if the rudder were broken.

The castle of this ship is the four cardinal virtues, as above; it is armed against pirates, as above.

The provisions are the bread of the Eucharist and of the sacraments, the bread of the word of God and of good works, the fire of charity, the wine of compunction, the water of confession, the salt of discretion, the oil of piety, etc., as above.

Of the wares, as above.

The helmsmen are counsel and prudence. Prov. 2:11: *Counsel shall keep thee, and prudence shall preserve thee.*

The timbers of this ship: and tribulation hews and shapes this ship; hunger hews off the swelling of gluttony, watching the swelling of drowsiness, disciplines the swelling of lust. Gen. 6:14: *Make thee an ark of timber planks.*

The maceration of the flesh dries it. Gregory: "Timber is not fittingly put into a building unless its faulty greenness has first been dried out."

The imitation of holy men straightens it. The same: "Unless by a rule, you will not correct crooked things."

Meekness planes it smooth; the constant searching of the mind bores it through. Ezek. 8:8: *Son of man, dig in the wall.*

Obedience fits it together; love joins it, binding two; patience makes it firm.

The fear of God and the doctrine of the saints nail it together. Of the first, Ps. 118:120: *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear.* Of the second, Eccles. 12:11: *The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails deeply fastened in.* Nails, which hold back from evil and make firm in good; goads, because they spur on to good.

Charity joins it together. 1 Cor. 16:14: *Let all your things be done in charity.*

The fear of God, *which neglecteth nothing* (Eccles. 7:19), stops up the cracks (in French *naie*); which stops up the little cracks of the senses, lest the waters of evil delights slip stealthily into the soul.

Continence, or the love of God and neighbor, pitches it like the ark of Noe, as above. For continence does not allow a rent in the flesh, nor true love a spiritual rent in the mind.

True penance unloads it of the burden of sins; almsgiving of the burden of riches. Heb. 12:1: *Laying aside every weight*, namely of temporal things, through almsgiving, *and sin which surrounds us*, that is, every circumstance of sin, through confession and penance, etc. For it could not be loaded with the wares of God unless first unloaded of the wares of the devil. And this *(p. 595)* unloading is to be made most of all when the storm of death is imminent. Acts 27:38: *Being filled with meat*, namely the word of God, *they lightened the ship, casting the wheat into the sea*, that is, to those who are in the bitterness of poverty.

Confession and prayer bail it out with the bucket of humility; good working loads it with the wares spoken of above.

Counsel and prudence steer it, as above, which two most of all guard this ship from the perils of this world, which is a sea.

Right intention, which gives its name to the work, directs it to the harbor of salvation, which is Christ.

Otherwise: our flesh is the ship of the soul, in which it crosses the sea of the world. Which ship, if it be split through lust or gluttony, by which it is sunk, continually takes in and lets out, and is not fit, but very ruinous, for spiritual sailing. But the flesh kept whole through abstinence is like a firm ship, fit for sailing.

Otherwise: human life is a ship, which ought to be loaded with good wares, making for the shore of the future judgment, whose rudder, as has been said, is the word of God. This ship is attacked as it were by four principal winds of temptations: from the East, pride; from the West, ignorance; from the South, prosperity; from the North, adversity. And often to one so attacked there lies open only one way of escape: namely that, girt with the tunic of the flesh after the example of Peter (John 21:7), namely through poverty and continence, he cast himself down, and take hold of the land, which is Christ as man; which is mountainous through the eminence of his virtues and miracles, so that, going up there, he may not fear the onset of storms. Hence it was said to Lot, Gen. 19:17: *Save thyself in the mountain.* Again, it has valleys, so that, hiding in it, you may not fear the blast of the winds. The valleys are the humble and weak things of the humanity of Christ. Isa. 4:6: *And there shall be a tabernacle,* that is, the human nature of Christ, *for a shade in the daytime from the heat, and for a security and covert from the whirlwind, and from rain.* Again, it has caves, that you may hide there for fear of enemies. Isa. 2:10: *Enter thou into the rock,* that is, Christ, *and hide thee in the pit in the earth,* that is, in the cavern of the feet, side, and hands, as a dove from the face of the hawk.

There follows: *Bringing her bread from afar.* Because, while still placed on earth, by believing rightly and working well she acquires for herself food and clothing from heaven, from which *every best gift* comes down (James 1:17): namely that refreshment of which, Matt. 11:28: *Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.* Or, from this life she transfers the bread of good works into heaven, where she lays up treasure. Matt. 6:20: *Lay up to yourselves treasures,* etc. She carries, namely, merits for rewards, and acquires thence that whereby she may live for ever. *Her own bread*: of penance, of labor, of sweat, and of sorrow. And *from afar*: for some seek from the good they do nothing but temporal reward; but such *have received their reward* from near at hand (Matt. 6:2), that is, the one they were seeking.

Again, it is notably said, *her own bread*: for Christ is truly our bread. Hence, Matt. 6:11: *Give us this day our supersubstantial bread*: because by this bread the soul lives in the present through grace, and receives it in the faith of the sacrament; and he carries this bread who works from grace in the present. Hence, Heb. 12:15: *Looking diligently, lest any man be wanting to the grace of God.* Again, 2 Cor. 6:1: *We exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain.* But the bread which grows from the earth is the bread of the body.

Having seen in many ways of the manifold ship, it remains to see of the perils of this sea of the world, which are five principal ones. *(p. 596)* Ecclus. 43:26: *Let them that sail on the sea tell the dangers thereof.* "Syrtes, Scylla, Charybdis, Acroceraunia, Sirens."

The Syrtes are a gathering of sands, a peril which is sometimes at the mouths of rivers, where rivers enter the sea; and on such sands the ship is often broken. This is avarice, which does not quench thirst but provokes it. This peril prudence avoids, which desires not present goods but future ones.

Scylla is a certain peril between Sicily and Barbary, namely a certain great rock in that sea having little water over it, namely about two cubits, or a cubit and a half, by which ships that have no deep water are broken. This peril the Greeks name *Skylla*, the Saracens and some sailors *kelb*, both of which sound *dog* in Latin, because there ships are torn by certain sharp rocks as by dogs' teeth: and this peril signifies lust, which shows

a flattering face above, and below tears those who come near. Prov. 5:3–4: *A honeycomb dropping*, etc., down to *but her end is bitter as wormwood*, etc. And as this peril is avoided by fleeing, so also lust. 1 Cor. 6:18: *Fly fornication.* Hence there follows, Prov. 5:8: *Remove thy way far from her*, etc. Sailors are angry, too, if this peril is named in the ship: and this is what is said, Eph. 5:3: *Fornication, and all uncleanness … let it not so much as be named among you*, etc. Against this peril it is necessary to have a keel which lacks every crack. Or, if a little water, that is, of harmful delight, slips in, it must always be bailed out by confession.

The Acroceraunia are horned mountains: for *akron* sounds *highest*, *keras horn*; and it signifies adversity and detraction, against which the ship ought to have fortitude, lest by adversity or detraction it be moved to impatience. Or, by the horned mountains horned pride is figured.

The Sirens, which with deadly song draw sailors and tear them when drawn, are pleasure, prosperity, or flattery. Hence, Ps. 54:22: *His words are smoother than oil*, etc. This peril the poop avoids, namely justice, which is neither seduced by blandishments through prosperity nor wrongly soothed by flatteries in seeking worldly favor.

Charybdis is a whirlpool which whirls ships round and swallows them. Hence *charybdis* as if *carinas abdens*, hiding keels; and this peril is frequent near Sicily, and above all in the arm of the sea which is called the Faro, and divides Sicily and Calabria: and this peril signifies gluttony, which swallows up reason. Hence, Isa. 28:7: *They are swallowed up with wine.*

Chapter 9: Mary, Ark of Noe

And the ark of Noe, concerning which it was commanded to Noe himself, Gen. 6:14 ff.: *Make thee an ark of timber planks: thou shalt make little rooms in the ark, and thou shalt pitch it within and without. And thus shalt thou make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, (p. 597) the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. Thou shalt make a window in the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish the top of it: and the door of the ark thou shalt set in the side: with lower, middle chambers, and third stories shalt thou make it.*

And the blessed Virgin is commended under the type of this ark chiefly as regards five things.

First, as regards the dignity of her nativity. And the dignity of her rising is shown as regards its author. Hence the Father says to the Son: *Make thee*: for Christ made her for himself principally, that is, for his own honor; and not only for himself, but also for men and Angels and the whole Trinity, according to that word of blessed Bernard: “Finally, she has become all things to all,” etc. (Look under the title on her kindness.)

The dignity of her rising is shown also as regards sanctification on the part of the mind, when it is said, *an ark*, in which namely were hidden the desirable treasures of heavenly wisdom and the charisms of the virtues: for her soul, soon, as is believed, after its infusion, was cleansed from original sin and adorned with every beauty of the virtues: for it was fitting, as Anselm says, that she should shine with a purity than which under God no greater can be understood, she whom God the Father was choosing as mother for his Son.

The dignity of her rising is shown also as regards the holiness of her forebears, when it is said, *of timber planks*, that is, polished, or *pitched* according to another reading: for the fathers from whom she arose were polished by the honesty of their manner of life, because there was nothing in them that would offend the eyes of those who found them: for they lived *in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation* (Phil. 2:15) without complaint: for *in sight and hearing they were just* (2 Pet. 2:8); and they were *as the lily among thorns* (Cant. 2:2). They were pitched also through the fervor of charity; and squared through justice: from behind, for correcting errors; from within, through prudence, for foreseeing the future; on the right, through temperance, against prosperity; on the left, through fortitude, against adversity. (Of the timber planks you

will find otherwise above, under the title on the ship.)

Second, she is commended as regards the state of the present life, when it is said: *Thou shalt make little rooms in the ark.* In the Church there are three orders or states: of virgins, of the married, of prelates; and she was a virgin, married, and had in a certain way the office of a prelate over her Son. Luke 2:51: *And he was subject to them.* (Of her threefold state you had much above.)

She is shown also to have been ordered in charity, when it is said: *And thou shalt pitch it within and without*, namely as regards God and neighbor, that is, with most fervent and indissoluble charity: for the diversity and universality of the threefold state aforesaid requires the union and order of charity. Or, the twofold pitching is charity in affection and in effect. Hence she is called *the mother of fair love*, through which she gave her Only-begotten for our wickedness, and *the fruit of* her *womb for the sin of* our *soul* (Mich. 6:7). Therefore it is said, Cant. 6:9 and 7:1: *Thou art beautiful* within, in mind, through charity in affection, *and comely* without, through charity in effect.

Third, she is commended as regards the beauty of the virtues, when it is said: *The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits.* For there was in her faith, which is called length, because length of days succeeds it, that is, the clarity of the divine vision. Prov. 3:16: *Length of days is in her right hand.* Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*, etc. There was in her the breadth of charity, which was extended even to enemies; and the height of hope, which reached even within the veil. But because faith *(p. 598)* is referred chiefly to the mystery of the Trinity on the part of what is believed, while by the hundred the perfection on the part of the believer is understood. And since *charity covereth a multitude of sins* (1 Pet. 4:8), and *charity covereth all sins* (Prov. 10:12), therefore the breadth is said to be fifty cubits, because the number fifty is the number of remission. And since from *faith that worketh by charity* there is had the certainty of hope—because hope is the certain expectation of future beatitude, coming from grace and preceding merits—therefore the height is said to be thirty cubits, that in the three may be understood the perfection of faith, in the ten the fulfilling of the decalogue.

Fourth, she is commended from the perfection of the twofold life, namely the contemplative and the active. The window marks the contemplative: for through the arch of contemplation we direct the keenness of our eyes to the sun of justice, that is, Christ, and the house of our conscience is lighted by him. The active is marked by the cubit, by which works are performed.

Fifth, she is commended from the modesty of virginity, when it is said: *The door of the ark thou shalt set in the side below.* By this door the Son of God entered into her and came to us; and it was in the side of the ark below, because she was a virgin not only in mind but also in flesh. Or, the door in the side of the ark is the Son in the womb, who says, John 10:9: *I am the door.*

Sixth, she is commended from the conception of the Saviour and the merit of intercession, when the Father says to the Son: *Thou shalt enter into the ark*, by taking flesh from the Virgin, *thou and thy wife*, namely heavenly wisdom—Wis. 8:2: *I sought to take her for my spouse—and thy sons*, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, *and the wives of thy sons* (Gen. 6:18), namely those seven virtues of which James 3:17 speaks, of *the wisdom that is from above*, that *first it is chaste, then peaceable.* Noe is Christ, who is interpreted *rest*: because, as in the time of Noe all former works rested through the flood, so through Christ all who before were laboring. Again, Noe gathered into the ark all the foods necessary for men and beasts or animals. Hence it was said to him: *Thou shalt take unto thee of all food that may be eaten, and thou shalt lay it up with thee* (Gen. 6:21).

And Christ says: *Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened* (Matt. 11:28), etc. But he hints to whom he will give rest, namely to those who learn humility and meekness from him. The Father says, then, to the Son: *Thou shalt take unto thee of all food that may be eaten.* For the Son of God, coming down into the womb of the Virgin, gathered with him all things which Angels and men might enjoy: hence the blessed Virgin can say: *All good things came to me* (Wis. 7:11), etc. Hence he himself is the treasure of silver and

gold, and the storeroom of all spices.

These are the fifty properties of the enclosed garden: the garden enclosed, fortified, locked with a key, and guarded, sealed, uncovered, planted, tilled, set out, and husbanded, and dug, trenched, laid out in beds, healthful, fragrant, refreshing, drinking, thirsty, moist, watered, rained upon, bedewed, dripping, dewy, misty or steaming, thick and shady, hiding and full of hiding places, clean and cleansing, wonderful, inviolate, secure, stable, fruitful, delightful, bountiful, inexhaustible, satisfying and giving drink, joyful.

Note, reader, that this garden is divided into seven little parts. In the first are treated the properties of the garden, which are fifty, and they make twelve paragraphs, and each paragraph is taken *(p. 599)* for one chapter. In the second are treated the delightful things, which are many, and the beds. In the third, the spices; and it has two chapters. In the fourth, the flowers and herbs. In the fifth, the things which in the incarnation of the Son of God came down from above into the enclosed garden: because from below nothing could slip in. In the sixth, the trees which are wont to be found in noble gardens, and also the trees which do not belong to gardens but can signify Mary. In the seventh, the birds which can designate Christ and Mary.

Book XII: On the Enclosed Garden

Chapter 1: On the Properties of the Garden

(p. 600) Garden. Hence, Cant. 4:12: *My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed*, etc. In the same, 4:16: *Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow.* In the same, 5:1: *I am come into my garden, O my sister, my spouse*, etc. In the same, 6:1: *My beloved is gone down into his garden*, etc. Likewise, 6:10: *I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valleys*, etc. Isa. 58:11 it is said to Mary: *Thou shalt be like a watered garden*, etc. Joel 2:3: *The land is like a garden of pleasure before him*, that is, Mary, before him, that is, before Christ. Likewise, Ezech. 36:35: *That land that was untilled is become as a garden of pleasure.* This garden is designated by the paradise of pleasure, Gen. 2:8, where we read thus: *And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning: wherein he placed man whom he had formed.* (You will find this expounded below.)

Now many causes can be assigned why the glorious Virgin is designated by the earthly paradise.

Mary is called the earthly paradise because it was planted on the third day of the world. And the blessed Virgin, after the time before the law and the time under the law, in the third time of the world, which is that of grace, is adorned with the fullness of the virtues. Hence, *full of grace.*

There grow the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And in the womb of the blessed Virgin there grew little by little according to the flesh Christ, *the tree which is planted near the running waters* (Ps. 1:3), who is the tree of knowledge, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3); and the tree of life. Hence, John 14:6: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.* And of this tree John speaks much in the Apocalypse toward the end (Apoc. 22:2 ff.).

It is not touched by the waters of the flood. And the sublime conversation of the blessed Virgin, which was truly in heaven, was not reached by that flood of which it is said, Osee 4:2: *Cursing and lying*, etc., *have overflowed.*

(p. 601) It receives Elias and Henoch. The second name is interpreted "dedicating" or "walking with God", and signifies those who naked follow the naked Christ, and dedicate both body and soul through the contemplative life to the divine service, that they may be *careful for the things that belong to God* (1 Cor. 7:32), and *walk solicitous with their God* (Mich. 6:8), and *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth* (Apoc. 14:4). Elias, who is interpreted "strong ruler", signifies the good actives, who, though they possess temporal things, do not serve them, but manfully subject them to themselves and rule over them. These two kinds of men the blessed Virgin keeps and cherishes in the state of virtue, and refreshes by her merits and examples; and she also displayed both lives in herself, and above all mere men, as Anselm shows on the text: *Jesus entered into a certain town* (Luke 10:38).

That earth is higher and lower. And the blessed Virgin is higher than every mere man, who is *of the earth* (John 3:31), and lower than God, who contains all things in the compass of his power. Hence blessed Anselm: "Nothing is equal to Mary; nothing but God is greater than Mary."

A river going out of it waters the whole earth with four rivers. And Christ, the wisdom of God, who compares himself to *the water of wholesome wisdom* (Ecclus. 15:3), says, Ecclus. 24:41: *I, like a brook out of a river of a mighty water*, etc. Going forth by his birth in the flesh from the blessed Virgin, by the four rivers of the Gospels he copiously waters and makes fruitful the whole earth of the Church.

It would have nourished our whole race in joy, had not the sin of the first man hindered it. And the blessed Virgin would refresh all men, without respect of persons, with the glorious fruit of her womb in eternal joy, did not their sins hinder it.

In it was no man begotten after the flesh, but one placed there by divine power, as we read, Gen. 2:15: *The Lord God took man, and put him into the paradise of pleasure,* who *is a figure of him who was to come* (Rom. 5:14), etc. *The second man, from heaven, heavenly* (1 Cor. 15:47), came into the blessed Virgin not by carnal generation, but by the sole work of the Trinity: for in this paradise, that is, in the blessed Virgin, Christ the man was placed, to work in her fruitfulness, to keep in her an untouched virginity. He worked: hence she herself says: *Because he hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49), etc. He kept, when he preserved her intact. He worked, when he made her fruitful; he kept, when he took not away the flower.

It is guarded by an angelic watch, as we read, Gen. 3:24. And the Angels solicitously guarded the blessed Virgin. Hence, Cant. 3:7: *Threescore valiant ones surround the bed of Solomon.* And the Psalmist says to her, Ps. 90:11: *God hath given his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee,* etc.

It is ever green. And the blessed Virgin is believed not to have withered in corruption, but to have been assumed in the flesh into unfading immortality. But note that the virginal womb is infinitely better than that literal paradise. For there woman was made from man, in sign of the corruption to come. Hence, Gen. 2:21: *The Lord took one of Adam's ribs, and built it into a woman, and filled up flesh for it.* But filling up bone with flesh is an insufficient and weak filling. But in the virginal womb a man was made from a woman. Hence, Gal. 4:4: *God sent his Son, made of a woman,* in sign of the restoration and of the virtue to be repaired. And from the most pure blood of the Virgin, according to Damascene, or from her flesh, there was made bone, literally, in the instant of the conception; and mystically, he who is the bone and strength of the Church. And so in the Virgin and from the Virgin full of grace, human nature was supplied and filled up, and made as it were bony and strong, whereas before it was fleshly and fluid toward sinning. *(p. 602) And of that fullness we all have received* (John 1:16).

Again, that paradise was open to the serpent who seduced Eve. But this paradise is a garden enclosed against everything harmful.

Again, from that one the old Adam was cast out in disgrace. In this one the second Adam was honorably placed (cf. Gen. 2:15), because with his mother's modesty kept safe.

Again, the trees of that paradise bore fruit according to their kind; but the blessed Virgin above her kind, when she conceived and bore the only-begotten of God, the glory of virginity remaining.

Again, there grew the fruit by which the human race was poisoned. In this, that fruit of life, of which whoever eats worthily *shall not see death for ever* (John 8:51; cf. 6:59). Of which fruit also the Church sings: "Adam will not be seduced, if he taste of this."

He says, therefore, that *the Lord*, that is, God the Father, whose special work Mary is, and who is her special gardener, *had planted*, that is, had fitted with plants, herbs and trees, by which the virtues of Mary are designated: into whose flesh and soul he grafted every kind of virtue. Hence she herself says: *In me is all grace* (Ecclus. 24:25), as it were all spiritual gladness and delight. *A paradise of pleasure*, that is, the soul or the womb of the Virgin. Another translation says, "a paradise in Eden toward the east." *Eden* in Hebrew is in Latin "delights". Therefore the paradise of pleasure is the same as the paradise in Eden, that is, in delights. *From the beginning* of creation, namely when the dry land appeared and the Lord made the earth bring forth. Or, *from the beginning*, that is, from the first part of the world; so *from the beginning* is the same as "toward the east", which the other translation has. Or, from the beginning of the restoration of mankind, which began with the sanctification of Mary and the infusion of graces: for then properly was the beginning of life; before, there was nothing but the failing of life. Therefore she is called the dawn, which is the beginning of day and the end of night. Because of such plants Mary is called a garden of plants, Ecclus. 24:42: *I said: I will water my garden of plants,* etc. Likewise, Ecclus. 24:41, the Son calls his mother's womb a paradise, saying: *I came out of paradise like a conduit*, that is, out of the virginal womb. Well is the Virgin's womb a paradise, which the Spirit, nay the whole Trinity, whose works are inseparable, flooded with such abundance of created gifts

that it became for the Son of God a paradise of delights and a garden of pleasure. It pleased the ineffable Trinity also to dwell in her. Hence the blessed Trinity says: *In all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord* (Ecclus. 24:11), that is, in Mary.

There went out also from this paradise a river (Gen. 2:10), a *dioryx*, that is, the Son of God, who compares himself to a river, saying, Ecclus. 24:41: *I, like a brook out of a river. Dioryx* is interpreted "medicine of generation": for the virgin birth was the medicine of the human race, mortally wounded in the sin of the first man. Its four heads, as it were, are those four liquids which flowed from the Lord's body: tears and sweat in his life; blood in the circumcision, in the bloody sweat, and in the crucifixion; and after death, blood and water. Likewise, Abbot Eckebert to Mary: "Truly thou art the paradise of God, who hast brought forth to the world the tree of life, of which whoever eats shall live for ever. The fountain of life, which came forth from the mouth of the Most High, leapt forth from the midst of thy womb, and dividing into four heads flowed out to water the face of the parched world, making joyful the city of God. For whoever drinks of it shall not thirst for ever. And more than paradise: for if anyone drink of that one's water, he shall thirst *(p. 603)* again. O how much hast thou bestowed on the world, who didst merit to be the conduit of so wholesome a water!"

Again, of the emissions of this garden it is said, Cant. 4:13 ff.: *Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates with the fruits of the orchard, cypress with spikenard. Spikenard and saffron, sweet cane and cinnamon, with all the trees of Libanus, myrrh and aloes with all the chief perfumes. The fountain of gardens, the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Libanus.* In the trees, herbs, flowers, spices, fountain and well which are here enumerated are the virtues and gifts of the Virgin, with which she is not only full in herself, but with which she also fills the humble. Hence it is said, Ecclus. 24:26: *Be filled with my fruits.* They are called emissions also because they flow from her as from a fountain and are sent forth into others. And note that in this series these twelve which are enumerated are joined as it were by six pairs of beams. Hence, Cant. 1:16: *The beams of our houses are of cedar*, etc.

First, pomegranates are joined as beams with common fruits. By the pomegranates, in which are many grains ordered under one rind, is noted desire ordered within and burning with charity: for charity is a covering. Hence, 1 Pet. 4:8: *Charity covereth*, etc. By fruits which have no such rind are noted good outward works. And with these two Mary is full, namely with mercy in affection and with good fruits in effect (cf. James 3:17).

Secondly, he joins cypress with spikenard. In the cypress, which has a white seed, is noted chastity; in spikenard, which is a hot tree, charity. Of which two, Wis. 4:1: *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory!*

Thirdly, he joins spikenard with saffron, and rightly: because in spikenard, which is a little tree, is noted humility, of which it is said, Cant. 1:11: *While the king was at his repose, my spikenard sent forth the odor thereof.* In saffron, which has golden threads, is noted wisdom. Of these two, Prov. 11:2: *Where humility is, there also is wisdom.*

Fourthly, he joins sweet cane and cinnamon, and rightly. In the sweet cane, which has its whole power in the pith and purges gently within, is noted piety. In cinnamon, whose power is outside in the bark, is noted almsgiving. Of these two, Isa. 58:10: *When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry*, namely by piety and compassion, *and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul*, by the bestowal of bodily benefit, *then shall thy light rise up in darkness.*

Fifthly, he joins myrrh and aloes. In myrrh, which preserves the body, is noted abstinence in food and drink. In aloes, which purges within, patience, by which the soul is possessed. Hence: *In your patience you shall possess your souls* (Luke 21:19). Hence, 2 Pet. 1:5–6: *Minister … in abstinence patience*, etc.

Lastly, he couples the fountain of gardens and the well of living waters, and rightly. In the fountain is noted wisdom concerning divine things; in the well, knowledge concerning human things. Of these two, Isa. 33:6: *Riches of salvation, wisdom and knowledge*, etc. Mary is also called the fountain of gardens, by watering the Angels; the well of living waters, by watering us with her grace. Hence also elsewhere she is called for us a *fountain sealed*. For water is easily had from a fountain, but is drawn from a well with great labor. So too the Angels are easily filled with the grace of the Virgin; we only with great labor.

The authority quoted above, *Thy plants*, etc., is expounded in another way. In these words the fruitfulness of this garden is designated: for the emissions and productions of the Virgin are said to be a paradise with all fruits and trees, aromatic herbs and perfumes. And by the paradise the Church is designated. By the herbs and trees are signified the faithful in the Church and the virtues of souls; all of which are said to be sent forth or *(p. 604)* to proceed from this garden, because the virtues of the faithful bring forth flowers or fruits in no other way. Nor do the ointments of the sacraments avail, unless the root of all be fixed in the mystery of the Incarnation, by which both God was made the son of a woman, and a woman was made the mother of God. Therefore by the fruits of the pomegranates, in which grains are enclosed under one rind, are figured the fruits of colleges or congregations in the Church. By the fruits of the orchard are signified the merits of individual persons. By the cypress, which is a white and fragrant tree, chastity. By spikenard, humility. By saffron, which turns into its own color the things with which it is mixed, as leaven draws the sprinkled flour into its own savor, charity, which is the form of all the virtues. The sweet cane, which is of a purple color and represents the blood of the Lord's passion, compassion, which conforms a man to the likeness of the death of Christ. By cinnamon, of ash color, the recollection of death. By myrrh and aloes, the greater and lesser mortification of the flesh. We have therefore in the herbs either the virtues themselves, or those marked with the virtues; in the herbs, also, the lesser ones; in the trees of Libanus and the other trees, those who by virtues and merits climb to higher things. By the chief perfumes are designated the chief virtues, namely charity, mercy, kindness and the like, which among all the virtues excel both in fruit and in merit, that is, in the efficacy of meriting.

The chief perfumes of Mary: the chief gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit; the chief works of mercy of her soul, above all the medicinal ones, which she showed with chief love to the chief poor man, namely the Son of God, from her own and chief substance, namely from her most pure blood according to Damascene, or a garment from her own flesh, and nourishment from her own milk. Of which poor man the Psalmist says, Ps. 40:2: *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor*, that is, Christ. And these perfumes are called the chief in dignity.

Mary is a garden. As regards herself, those consolations which she sucked from the hard and dry of tribulations, like honey from the rock and oil from the hardest stone (Deut. 32:13); or which she also sometimes presses out for us from the same. As regards us, the spiritual gifts by which inwardly we are consoled and as it were anointed. The things as it were last, which are not named in this series, are either bodily or temporal things, by which she helps us outwardly; and these are not worth naming in respect of spiritual things: for by as much as the spirit excels the body, by so much more do we need spiritual than bodily things; which the lovers of the world would by no means believe.

It contains the tree of life. For this garden is the paradise of pleasure, whose chief tree is the tree of life, namely Christ the Lord, who is well called the tree of life, because he puts to flight the failing of death by the immortality of his fruit, namely of the Eucharist, as regards those who approach worthily, and as regards the good, by the eternal contemplation of himself. Hence he says, John 6:58: *He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.* But this fruit belongs only to the conquerors of vices. Hence, Apoc. 2:7: *To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God.* The paradise is the Catholic Church; or the paradise is Mary, as was said above.

The abundance of delights. Hence, Cant. 8:5, she is said to be *flowing with delights.* Of which delights you will find enough below.

The fragrance of spices and herbs, of flowers and fruits, of spices and trees. Hence it is said, Cant. 4:13: *Thy plants are a paradise*, as was said above.

Or, to play upon the word: because *hortus*, garden, can be named from *exhortando*, exhorting: for by its pleasantness it exhorts us to go in to see its virtue and glory. Hence it says: *Come over to me, all ye*, etc. (Ecclus. 24:26). And not only to see its glory, but also *(p. 605)* to taste that it is sweet and pleasant. Hence it adds: *And be filled with my fruits.*

Or, because in this garden there grew the flowers of the lily by virginity, of violets by humility, of roses by charity, of wheat by motherhood; there grew saffron, which is of golden color, by angelic likeness. And for this she is the queen of virgins, the exemplar of the humble, the martyr of good martyrs and the glory of martyrs, the princess and lady of the Angels, all of whose orders she transcends in all grace, glory and virtue.

Or, because this garden, *hortus*, can be named from *orior, oriris*, to rise: because there flowers and grasses, aromatic spices and fruit-bearing trees arise. For from this garden arose the Son of God, who is every good and the highest good, and who in the future will be *all in all*, that is, the sufficiency of all things. Thence also with the Son of God there arose, and continually arises, every good: because this garden *never ceaseth to yield fruit* (Jer. 17:8). And therefore, Wis. 7:11, human nature says: *Now all good things came to me together with her*, namely with incarnate wisdom, or with the glorious Virgin.

Or, because this garden dwells in gardens. Therefore the bridegroom says to her, Cant. 8:13: *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the friends*, that is, the Angels, *hearken*, etc. For this garden dwells in a manifold garden. The first, her own conscience, which she inhabited by examining herself. The second, the heavenly fatherland, which she inhabited by the contemplation of heavenly things: for *her conversation was in heaven.* The third, the Church militant, which she inhabits by faithful guardianship. The fourth is the paradise of delights, which she inhabits by unfading glory. The fifth, the faithful soul, which she inhabits, if it be clean and adorned, with delight: for her *delights were to be with the children of men* (Prov. 8:31). The sixth, an ordered religious life, to which she ministers spiritual grace: for it is she *who maketh men of one manner to dwell in a house* (Ps. 67:7).

§ 1

A garden enclosed, as it were with the twofold enclosure of bodily and spiritual virginity. Augustine: "Virginity is, in corruptible flesh, the purpose of perpetual incorruption." Therefore Mary is twice called a garden enclosed: enclosed in conceiving, enclosed in bringing forth, and after the birth keeping the seal of integrity. Hence also she is three times called the shut gate (Ezech. 44:1–2). Cant. 4:12, she is twice called a garden enclosed, because this garden, the blessed Virgin, bore the fruit of the active and the contemplative life, or of precepts and counsels; or because there is the spiritual habitation of seculars and contemplatives, or of prelates and subjects, or of Jews and gentiles converted to the faith. Hence it is said to her, Ps. 86:7: *The dwelling in thee is as it were of all rejoicing.*

Again, *a garden enclosed.* The Lord God had indeed planted a garden of pleasure from the beginning, as it is said, Gen. 2:8, namely paradise, in which he had placed the tree of life, whose use we lost because that garden had not been enclosed. Hence, Job 3:10, it is said of Satan: *Because it shut not up the doors of the womb that bore me, nor took away evils from my eyes.* As if he said: Satan opened the doors of paradise, from which, as an offspring from the womb, the human race went out; and if he had not opened those doors, evils would have been taken away from my eyes. But for the remedy of this evil the Lord made another paradise, namely the womb of the Virgin, in which he planted another tree of life, namely Christ, and so enclosed this garden that to no enemy, to no evil one, was entrance open. Nor once only, but again is this

garden called enclosed, and the repetition itself is the confirmation of the truth.

Chapter 1 (continued): On the Properties of the Garden

(p. 606) Otherwise: the womb in which our first life was given us was the earthly paradise, whose entrance the devil did not shut for us, that is, for our profit, but opened by sin, and thence cast us out. And this is what he says of the devil: *Because it shut not up the doors of the womb that bore me* in the state of innocence, *nor took away evils from my eyes*, but rather brought them in, by casting us down into this misery. But the blessed Trinity enclosed this garden: for the power of the Father fortified the Virgin against the violence of the devil, the wisdom of the Son against the fraudulence of the devil, the goodness of the Holy Spirit against his malice. Again, the mighty Father against the elation of pride, the wise Son against the tastelessness of gluttony and lust, the kindly Holy Spirit against the cruelty of avarice. And this garden, which is designated by the earthly paradise, is called not only a garden enclosed but also a fountain sealed; in it was placed the second Adam, namely Christ, as in a fruitful garden, lest he hunger, and in a fountain of grace, lest he thirst. And the Lord enclosed this garden so strongly, and sealed this fountain so firmly, that it lay altogether hidden from the ever-watchful dragon, and shut the roaring lion far off from itself, and not even one little chink lay open through which the subtle cunning of the enemy could look in. This garden is enclosed also to human understanding: because, as it is said, Ecclus. 24:38: *A weaker one shall not search her out*, than that king, namely, who was born of David.

There are five enclosures in Mary.

The first, from without, is the most diligent guard of her five senses. For according to that sentence of Ecclesiasticus 28:28, the Virgin had *hedged in her ears with thorns, that she might not hear a wicked tongue.* And she had *made a covenant with her eyes, that she would not so much as think upon* a man (Job 31:1). She had made doors to her mouth, lest she be caught in an undisciplined word; and so of the other senses. Or this hedge is the angelic guard. Isa. 5:1–2: *My beloved had a vineyard …, and he fenced it in.* This vineyard is the blessed Virgin, to whom it is said: *He hath given his Angels charge over thee* (Ps. 90:11), etc. On the contrary it is said of the reprobate soul a little after: *I will take away the hedge thereof* (Isa. 5:5); the Gloss: that is, the guard of the Angels. Or this hedge is the divine law; whoever breaks it, *a serpent shall bite him* (Eccles. 10:8), that is, the devil.

The second enclosure, from within, is the ditch of voluntary poverty. A ditch emptied of earth by contempt of worldly prosperity and by the large distribution of temporal substance. Hence: *She hath opened her hand to the needy* (Prov. 31:20). Deep, by the lowliness of fearful humility: because she was so deep and wide that she was made capable of the great God. For holy fearfulness makes one's own sense poor, which appeared well in her when she asked: *How shall this be done?* (Luke 1:34), not wishing to lean on her own sense, although she knew well that her virginity would not perish. Widened by the amplitude of surpassing charity: for she showed to the Son of God the seven works of mercy from her own substance, fulfilling that of Prov. 3:9: *Honor the Lord with thy substance.* Of rocks, by the solidity of singular patience. Hence the wisdom of God says to her, Isa. 54:11: *Behold, I will lay thy stones in order.* Most clean, by the love and vow of perpetual virginity, which shut out from her every stench of fleshly uncleanness. Full of water, by the inexhaustible multitude of piety and the abundance of tears, above all at the time of the Lord's passion.

The third enclosure is a manifold wall. The divine protection: for if *the Lord is round about his people* (Ps. 124:2), much more round about his mother. Hence it is said of her, Isa. 26:1: *A Savior, a wall … shall be set therein*, etc. Every kind of virtue. Prov. 25:28: *As a city that lieth open and is not compassed with walls, (p. 607)* that is, with the compass of the virtues. The multitude of graces as of waters. Exod. 14:22: *The water was as a wall*, etc. The waters of the sea, the graces of Mary. Nahum 3:8: *Waters round about it … the waters were its walls.* Another wall as it were twofold, namely innocence of mind and virginal purity. Or the wall is the firmness of holy purpose, or the hardening of right custom, or the bulwark of justice, or the wall of faith

founded on the foundation of charity. Good work, fortifying the soul against every kind of sin; and she showed all the works of mercy to her Son, needy and a beggar.

The fourth enclosure, water running round about, fortifying her on every side: the fullness of all grace. Nahum 3:8: *Waters round about it.*

The fifth, the restraint of discreet silence, which like an enclosure kept the possessions of her virtues. Isa. 32:17: *The guardian*, or the work, *of justice is silence.* And where there is no hedge, the possession of virtues and merits is easily spoiled (Ecclus. 36:27). Therefore also she is compared to the river Phison (Ecclus. 24:35), which is interpreted "mouth of the nipple"; under the heading that Mary is a river; and it is an excellent concordance.

This garden was enclosed, that its most beautiful inward parts might lie hidden. Hence in the Canticles it is so often said of the Virgin: *Besides that which lieth hid within* (Cant. 4:1, 3, etc.).

That *the uncircumcised and unclean* might not learn *to pass through it* (Isa. 52:1). For no cunning of the old serpent could break into this garden, as it had done into the earthly paradise.

That the devil, as an adulterer, might not presume to put out his hand to deflower it.

That its greenness might not be trampled or grazed by beasts. Isa. 35:9: *No lion shall be there, nor shall any mischievous beast go up by it.*

That from the garden of delights might be kept off the concupiscences of the world, the stenches of carnal things, the poisons of malice: none of which she admitted by thought, desire or consent. In this it is also noted that the blessed Virgin was truly solitary, and not a wanderer.

That it might not be emptied of its secret quiet: because it was being prepared for this, that the Son of the highest king might rest there, who says of it: *This is my rest* (Ps. 131:14), etc.

Made fast with a key, namely with that key of David *which shutteth and no man openeth*, and conversely, of which we read, Isa. 22:22 and Apoc. 3:7. For a key has three offices: it shuts, it opens, and it keeps safe. The key of David is the grace of spiritual wisdom, or the power of shutting and opening the Scriptures. Therefore it is called the key of David, who was a prophet and wrote much. For with this key Christ ineffably both reserved to himself in the Virgin the secret of generation, to establish in her the wonderful sacrament, and kept for the Virgin the virginal seal intact, as blessed Bernard says. With this key also he made fast her heart against all concupiscence, when he inspired in her the vow and desire of perpetual virginity. And he opened her understanding to believe, and her affection to love. Of the first it was said to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*, etc. Of the second, Cant. 8:6: *Love is strong as death*, namely hers. He opened her ear, when she diligently heard the angelic words and prudently weighed them, *thinking what manner*, that is, how new, how unheard of, how most profitable, how wonderful, how pleasant and how sweet that *salutation* was. Hence she too says with her Son, Isa. 50:5: *The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I do not resist*, etc. He opened her heart to believe and consent to the angelic words. Hence Elizabeth said to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*, etc. *(p. 608)* He opened her mouth to express her consent and humbly to pray that what was promised her might be done. Hence she said, Luke 1:38: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me*, etc. Again, he opened her mouth to give thanks for the benefits received. Hence she said, Luke 1:46: *My soul doth magnify the Lord.* Again, to attribute the whole to the creator. Hence, ibid., 1:49: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me*, etc. He unlocked also her heart and mind to retain in memory all things that were said of the Son. Hence, Luke 2:19 and 51, it is twice said of her that she *kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.* And not only these, but with this key he opened her sense to the understanding of all the Scriptures and all the mysteries of wisdom. He opened also her mouth in the midst of the primitive Church, when she taught the Apostles as in the grace of the New Testament.

Again, with this key the Lord opens hearts to the understanding of faith, mouths to the preaching of the word, the meanings of the Scriptures and the natures of things, the sense to knowledge, the affection to devotion, the tongues of the Doctors to teach, the hearts of the peoples to believe.

Again, of this key, Apoc. 3:7: *These things saith the Holy One and the True One, he that hath the key of David*, etc. Again, this key is the cross, by which the sacraments of the Church were opened; which was signified in the rending of the veil. That he says *the Holy One* refers to the Father, who says, Lev. 11:44: *Be holy, because I am holy. The True One*, to the Son, who says, John 14:6: *I am the truth*; who is true in fulfilling his promises. 2 Cor. 1:20: *For all the promises of God*, etc. *He that hath the key of David*, as regards the Holy Spirit, by whose kindness the Scriptures are opened and the use of the keys is had.

Bolted, that is, fortified with the bolt of virginity, which was never unbolted by God or man, nor did pollution pass through it (Isa. 35:8). Therefore it is said to Mary in Ps. 147:13: *The Lord hath strengthened the bolts of thy gates.* Hence also someone in a sequence:

Hail, gate of light, Chief of gates, Lying open to the king of glory; Who kept, in coming, Nor broke, in going forth, The bolts of chastity.

This bolt was figured in Judges 4:21, where it is said that Jahel, who designated Mary, slew Sisara with a nail of her tent and a hammer. And the nail of the tent is called the peg by which the tent was made fast, which signifies the virginal womb, whose bolt was virginity. And the hammer, having the shape of *tau*, figured the cross. And with these two was slain Sisara, who is interpreted "exclusion of joy" and designates the devil: slain, namely, by the nail of fruitful virginity and by the hammer of the cross. For the whole intention of the devil watches for this, that he may shut us out from eternal joy, and eternal joy from us.

§ 2

And guarded by the divine protection. Hence the Father says to her: *I am the Lord thy God, who take thee by the hand, and say to thee: Fear not, I have helped thee* (Isa. 41:13). Nay, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit say to her, as it were each person singly, Isa. 42:6: *I have taken thee by the hand, and preserved thee.* (Look for this under the heading on the enclosures of this garden.) Again, under the name of a vineyard, Isa. 27:3: *Night and day do I keep it.* For in this garden Christ was placed as keeper at the time of the incarnation, to work fruitfulness there and to keep unharmed her virginity *(p. 609)* (Gen. 2:15). For he as God *led her about and taught her, and kept her as the apple of his eye* (Deut. 32:10). Again, this garden was guarded by the Angels. Hence it is said to her in Ps. 90:11: *He hath given his Angels charge over thee*, etc. Again, under the name of Jerusalem it is said to Mary and to the faithful soul, Isa. 62:6: *Upon thy walls I have appointed watchmen*, that is, Angels. Blessed Bernard: "Good art thou, O Lord, who art not content with the weakness of our walls, but besides settest over them the guard of the Angels." Again, Cant. 3:7: *Threescore valiant ones surround the bed of Solomon*, that is, Mary. (Look under the heading that Mary is a bed.) Or, the chief keepers of this garden after Christ are Gabriel, that is, the strength of God, and John, that is, the grace of God. (Look under the heading on the throne, of the two lions.) For this garden is the paradise of delights; Christ the new Adam was placed here by divine power when *a woman compassed a man*, namely when *the Word was made flesh.* For what was he placed? Namely *to dress it*: in which is noted the progress of the mother in good through the grace of the Son. *And to keep it*: in which is noted the perseverance of the mother in good.

Sealed with the seal of virginity: because she herself is the secret of the Lord. Twice he says: *My secret to myself* (Isa. 24:16): because by means of the seal of virginity the devil is wholly shut out from her thoughts and works, as by a seal those who are not friends are shut out from secrets: for a thing signed or sealed is shown to friends and hidden from enemies. Therefore also Mary is called a *fountain sealed* (Cant. 4:12). (Look under the heading on the fountain.) Again, by his mother Christ was set *for a sign which shall be contradicted* by Jews, pagans and heretics. Or *for a sign*, that is, for a seal: and on him was impressed the

heart of the mother by meditation, and the arm by imitation of the work. Therefore also the Son, who is the signet of the Father (Agg. 2:24), says to her, says, I say, Cant. 8:6: *Put me as a seal upon thy heart*, that is, upon thy thoughts. For to this end, that her most beautiful inward parts might lie hidden, before the birth and in the birth and after the birth she retained unbroken the seal of integrity. Hence the bridegroom says to her, Cant. 4:1: *How beautiful art thou, my love*, etc., *besides*, that is, apart from, *that which lieth hid within*, known to God alone, manifest to no one. Or, *besides that which lieth hid within*, that is, besides the inward beauty of the virtues, which lay hidden from all men, and even from herself. For it is by inward beauty that other things are beautiful and commendable.

Uncovered from above, to receive dew, sun, rain, air and such things as come from on high: because *every best gift is from above* (James 1:17): with which this garden was made fruitful: because she had no cloud of any sin set between herself and the sun of justice, that is, Christ.

§ 3

Sown at the time of the Lord's incarnation, when that noble shoot, namely the Word made flesh, was grafted on the stock of our lowliness in the garden of the virginal womb. Of the grafting it is said, James 1:21: *With meekness receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls*: namely that Word which *was in the beginning* with the Father, and *by which all things were made* (John 1:1, 3). For as in the shoot consists the whole hope both of flower and of fruit, and not in the stock, so in the Word assuming, and not *(p. 610)* in the man assumed, except by reason of the one assuming. Hence he says, Ecclus. 24:25: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue.* And this is what James says, 1:21, of the ingrafted word, *which is able to save your souls.* And note that it is called grafting when a shoot of a fruitful tree is set into a barren stock. And well did he say *the ingrafted word*: because the grafted branch both keeps its own nature and draws to itself the savor of the stock. Which is plain if a pear is grafted on an olive: it does not change the nature of the fruit, but draws to itself the savor of the olive. So too Christ kept the divine nature in assuming the human, but drew savor from the infirmity of mortal nature, namely hunger, thirst, weariness, and such like.

This garden was also sown with every fruit-bearing tree, that is, with every kind of virtue. Hence the true Solomon says specially of it, Eccles. 2:5: *I made gardens and orchards*, that is, Mary and the saints, *and set them with trees of all kinds.* Again, Cant. 5:13: *His cheeks are as beds of aromatical spices set by the perfumers*, namely by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. For she is designated, Esther 1:5, by that garden and grove which was set by royal care and hand, in whose court the true Assuerus prepared a most magnificent feast.

Cultivated, whose cultivators are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that is, the whole Trinity, whose works are inseparable. Or the special cultivators of this garden are divine inspiration, the wisdom of the Son, the discipline of the Holy Spirit, her own diligence, the teaching of father and mother, angelic admonition, and the like. Thus this garden can be called cultivated spiritually by divine work, and uncultivated by human work. Hence it is said, Ezech. 36:35: *That land that was untilled is become as a garden of pleasure.* Cultivated also by the virtue of silence, which is *the work of justice* (Isa. 32:17).

Planted. The Father planted in it the tree of life, that is, Christ in the incarnation, *near the running waters* of our mortality. For this garden is that paradise of which we read, Gen. 2:8: *And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning. Had planted*, that is, had fitted with plants, herbs and trees, *a paradise of pleasure*, that is, the blessed Virgin. Another translation says "a paradise in Eden", that is, in delights. *The Lord*, whose special work Mary is, into whose flesh and soul he grafted every kind of virtue. *From the beginning* of creation, namely when the dry land appeared and he made the earth bring forth. Or, *from the beginning*, that is, from the first part of the world; so *from the beginning* is the same as "toward the east", which the other translation has. Or, from the beginning of the restoration of mankind, which began

with the sanctification of Mary. (Look for the rest under the heading on paradise.) Because of such plants the Son calls his mother a *garden of plants* (Ecclus. 24:42), etc. She is also *the planting of the Lord, to glorify him* (Isa. 61:3). For the Lord planted this garden for his own glory: because thence he is unceasingly glorified by every faithful soul.

And tilled. For since all the just are God's husbandry—hence 1 Cor. 3:9: *You are God's husbandry*, and John 15:1: *My Father is the husbandman*—Mary by a spiritual prerogative is his husbandry. Hence she says, Luke 1:49: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me.* And more specially than any creature she can say that word of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 15:10: *By the grace of God I am what I am.* Christ also, to whom it is said, Jer. 14:8: *Why wilt thou be as a stranger*, or husbandman, *in the land?*, is the husbandman of this garden; who, taken in a garden and buried in a garden, was not undeservedly thought by Magdalene to be the gardener (John 20:15). For as God he exercised the office of gardener in the Virgin: rooting out the most evil root *(p. 611)* of original sin in the sanctification; plucking up thorns and nettles in the extinction of the tinder of sin; setting in the plants of the virtues in the bestowal of graces; watering with more abundant grace in the coming upon her of the Holy Spirit; supplying increase in the overshadowing of the power of the Most High. Hence, Luke 1:35: *The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

Chapter 1 (continued): On the Properties of the Garden

§ 4

And dug about. *Pastinare* is said from *pastus*, pasture, and is the same as to fatten. Hence, Mark 12:1: *A man dug about a vineyard*, etc. Because Christ fattened his mother with the fatness of graces, of charity and of devotion, and with every kind of charism. Hence she herself says to the Son, attributing to him whatever good she has: *Thou hast anointed my head with oil* of mercy (Ps. 22:5), that is, my mind, or my humility, which is the head of my virtues, and by whose merit I am heaped with every good.

Dug by chaste or filial fear. Or dug by compassion for the suffering Son, when, as she looked on, they dug his hands and feet with the mattocks of the nails, and when with the point of the fierce lance, she being present, a blow was struck into his bowels. It can be said that this garden was dug specially as it were thrice. First, when she grieved that he was taken, beaten and mocked. Secondly, when she groaned that he was hung. Thirdly, when she mourned that he had given up the spirit. For so says blessed Bernard: "She could not see her Son crucified without the affection of a mother's pain, even if she hoped that he would rise again and overcome death."

Sown not of manly seed, but of mystical breath, as Ambrose says. And it was sown with that blessed seed of which it is said, Isa. 1:9 and Rom. 9:29: *Unless the Lord of hosts had left us seed*, etc., that is, Christ, because *the seed is the word of God* (Luke 8:11), that is, the Son of God. Seed, then, not carnal but spiritual, not of fault but of grace, not of a man but of the Word, not of corruption but of belief. The seed by which *the Lord gave sweetness, and our earth*, that is, Mary, *yielded her fruit* (Ps. 84:13). The seed which in the incarnation fell into good ground, I mean the Virgin Mary, and brought forth indeed in some the fruit thirtyfold, in others sixtyfold, and in others a hundredfold, but in her by a singular privilege at once thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold. For this seed brought forth the thirtyfold fruit when Christ by his presence and by the changing of water into wine consecrated the wedding. The sixtyfold, when he preached continence and granted to many the grace of containing. The hundredfold, when he commended the virgin mother to the virgin disciple. But how the blessed Virgin obtained this threefold fruit you have had under the heading *Blessed art thou among women*, etc.

Again, of this seed it is said, Isa. 6:13: *The holy seed shall be that which shall stand in it*, etc. Or sown with the seeds of all the virtues, which seeds are in the present and bear eternal life for their cultivators: for all our

works, both good and evil, are called seed, because as from one grain many grains, so from one good work many retributions; and this seed is temporal, but the retribution eternal.

Laid out in beds, that is, distinguished by beds, that each several thing may hold its place allotted fittingly. Of which beds the Church says, Cant. 6:1: *My beloved*, that is, Christ, *is gone down* in the incarnation *into his garden*, that is, into the blessed Virgin, *to the bed of aromatical spices. (p. 612)* A bed of all aromatical spices, that is, of virtues, graces and gifts. Hence he says *aromatical spices* in the plural: the mind, soul, will and flesh of Mary. And by these she is fragrant to Christ, to the Angels, to all the saints and to every faithful soul. To this end also he went down there *to feed in the gardens*: because *his delights were to be with the children of men* (Prov. 8:31). *And to gather lilies*: because the flowers of clean thoughts, which are designated by lilies, please him above all, and he keeps them for the reward, and in them he rests, delights and feeds; and therefore he is said to gather lilies: for flowers are good thoughts, which make the mind flowering and joyful, and have the hope of fruit and of good works in the present, and of eternal reward in the future. For this reason around the altars, which designate the minds of the faithful, lilies and roses are set. But foul thoughts stink to him, since he is a bee which a stench puts to flight. Hence, Ecclus. 11:3: *The bee is small among flying things.* Therefore it is said, Ecclus. 39:19: *Send forth flowers, as the lily*, that is, clean thoughts. (Of these beds you will find below, after the treatise on the delights of this garden.)

§ 5

Level, that is, even, that it might more easily be poured upon and watered. Level, because without the scruples and obstacles of sins. Or level by gentle humility and simple kindness, by the merit of which virtues it was watered and flooded with the streams of all graces. Ezech. 47:8: *These waters that go down toward the plain of the desert shall go into the sea*, that is, into Mary. Or level by the equity of justice which she kept in all things. Hence she is signified, 1 Kings 1:18, by Anna, whose countenance does not suffer itself to be changed into divers things. Anna is grace, and signifies Mary full of grace. Or also level: because sinners do not find most kindly Mary scrupulous. And note that then flatness is said to be in a thing, when part does not rise above part; which is in the way of God when the abundance of the rich supplies the want of the poor. Therefore we say that this garden was level: because the abundance of Mary supplied the want of the human race: for *of her fullness we all have received*, and continually receive, as much as is in her.

And extended by piety and charity, whose amplitude receives all, as much as is in it, without respect of persons. Wis. 6:8: *He hath equally care of all*, that is, communicatively. As if she said with the Apostle, Phil. 1:8: *God is my witness*, etc. Of this extension it is said, Jer. 31:39–40, where Mary is called a city: *And the measuring line shall go out farther beyond the hill Gareb: and shall compass Goatha, and the whole valley of dead bodies and of ashes, and all the country of death, even to the torrent Cedron.* (Look for the exposition under the heading that Mary is a city.)

Secret: hence she is signified by the earthly paradise, which is a most pleasant place, secret from our habitation by a long stretch of sea and land, so high that it reaches even to the lunar globe: whence also the waters of the flood did not reach there. So says the Master in the Histories, etc. For this garden was secret and solitary from human throng. Hence also the Angel found her shut in her chamber, which is hinted at in that word of Luke 1:28: *And the Angel being come in unto her*, etc. Blessed Bernard: "Whither came he in unto her? I think into the secret place of a chaste chamber, where she perhaps, the door shut upon her, was praying *(p. 613)* to her Father in secret. Angels are wont to stand by those who pray, and to delight in those whom they see lifting pure hands in prayer; they rejoice to offer the holocaust of holy devotion to the divine sight in the odor of sweetness. But how much Mary's prayers pleased in the sight of the Most High, the Angel showed, who being come in unto her saluted her reverently. Nor was it hard for the Angel to pass through the closed door into the hidden places of the Virgin Mary, who assuredly by the loftiness of his substance has this by nature, that not even with iron bolts is his entrance barred." And a little later: "It is not to be suspected

that the Angel found the little door of the Virgin open, whose purpose it was to flee the throngs of men and avoid conversations: lest either the silence of the one praying be disturbed, or the chastity of the continent be tempted. Therefore even at that hour the most prudent Virgin had shut her dwelling upon herself, but to men, not to Angels. Accordingly, although the Angel could go in unto her, yet to no man was easy access open."

Pleasant, that is, delightful, as above of paradise. (Of the delights of this garden you will find much below.)

And high, as above of paradise. For she more truly than all creatures could say: *My conversation is in heaven* (Phil. 3:20). Hence also that flood of which it is said, Osee 4:2: *Cursing, and lying, and killing, and theft, and adultery have overflowed*, etc., did not touch her sublime conversation. Just as also the waters of the material flood did not touch that earthly paradise by which Mary is designated. Therefore when the Lord had said to her, Isa. 58:11: *Thou shalt be like a watered garden*, etc., a little after he added, verse 14: *I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth*, etc. For that paradise was higher than all the earth, but lower than heaven. So Mary is worthier than all earth-born, but lower only than Christ her Son. Hence blessed Anselm: "Nothing is equal to Mary; nothing but God is greater than Mary."

§ 6

Healthy, that is, healing and medicinal by reason of the herbs, spices, species and medicinal trees which grow there, each of which has its several virtues. The violet of humility heals the evil of pride, the lily of virginity the burning of lust, and so of the others, etc.

Again, otherwise: because thence was born Christ, who is the physician and the medicine of every disease. Ecclus. 38:5: *The Most High hath created medicines out of the earth*, that is, Christ out of the Virgin.

Again, otherwise: In the garden of pleasure the human race was mortally infected and wounded. In this garden the remedy of salvation was found. For to Eve and to Mary that dialogue of Deut. 32:39 belongs: *I will kill*, says Eve; *and I will make to live*, says Mary, etc. But whence this healing virtue comes is shown, Ezech. 47:12: *The waters thereof*, by which namely this garden is watered, that is, the gifts of graces, *shall come out of the sanctuary*, that is, from heaven, or from the Father himself, or also from the Son himself: *and the fruits thereof shall be for meat*, namely in the sacrament of the Son, who is the fruit of this garden, *and the leaves thereof*, that is, his words and examples, *for medicine*, namely of sick souls, and for the overshadowing of sinners.

Aromatic. For with the south wind continually blowing through it, its aromatical spices continually flow to us. Hence, Cant. 4:16, the Son says to the Holy Spirit: *Come, O south wind, blow through my garden*, etc. As if he said: O south wind, that is, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, blow through my garden, that is, continually breathe into my mother the abundance of graces, *(p. 614)* that the remedies of benefits may flow abundantly and unfailingly to the sick. The Holy Spirit is designated by the south wind, which is said as it were "strewing austerity", namely of the opposite north wind, lest this north wind disturb the enclosed garden. It is also said as it were "tempering the airs", that if perchance the Virgin were tempted, he might show himself a helper to her. It is also said as it were "increasing the seeds of the earth", that whatever of grace and virtue God the Trinity had sown in this garden, he might bring to perfect increase.

Refreshing: because there the air is purer than in the villages, the breeze clearer, the wind quieter, the light more tempered, the odor more fragrant, the greenness more springlike, the shade more pleasant, the rest sweeter, sleep quieter, food more savory, drink cooler, speech more secret, song more placid, the fountain clearer, the tree more leafy, the abundance more large, the flower more graceful, the fruit more ripe, and the rest of this kind, than in the other saints, who all, so to speak, were as it were of the village, that is, of the world: but Mary's conversation was wholly in the city of paradise, and wholly paradisiacal, because she herself is the paradise and garden of all pleasure. For of her most truly can be said as of her Son, Isa. 40:17: *All nations are before her as if they had no being, and are counted to her as nothing and vanity*, that is, in

comparison with her. Again, ibid., verse 15: *Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance,* etc. Job 25:5: *The moon doth not shine, and the stars are not pure in his sight.*

Drinking. Hence she is compared to the fleece and the sponge, which drink water in great quantity, and by the easiest compression pour back what they have drunk. For she is that earth of which the Apostle speaks, Heb. 6:7, *which drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet* for them by whom it is tilled, namely for the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and *receiveth blessing from God.* Hence it was said to her: *Blessed art thou among women* (Luke 1:28). For to this end, that it might bring forth much fruit, this garden was much given to drink.

Thirsty, with continual desire of graces. Hence she says: *My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God* (Ps. 41:3), etc. For she is *the ground thirsting for rain* (Joel 1:20). And because thirsty, the Father promises her, Isa. 44:3: *I will pour out waters upon the thirsty ground, and streams upon the dry land.* The word *pour out* signifies largeness: and by this that he says in the plural, *waters* and *streams*, the abundance of graces is noted.

Again, only the thirsty are invited to the waters of grace. Isa. 55:1: *All you that thirst, come to the waters.* John 7:37: *If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink.* But Mary, because more than all she thirsted and desired grace and glory, the incarnation of the Son and the redemption of the world, and ampler glory in the future: because, as it is said, Prov. 10:24: *To the just their desire shall be given.* Blessed Bernard: "He that hungers, let him hunger more; and he that desires, let him desire yet more: because as much as he shall have been able to desire, so much shall he receive." Therefore grace and glory were given to Mary according to the intensity of her thirst and desire. Hence, Prov. 11:16: *A gracious woman shall find glory*, etc. For these words are expounded first and singularly of her who is full of graces, who in her assumption found the glory of eternity: because *the Lord will give grace and glory* (Ps. 83:12). For it is clear that none is more gracious than she who *found grace.* Luke 1:30: *Thou hast found grace with God*: and of what she found she took as much as she could, and she could as much as she would. For she was most humble after Christ: and therefore most capable of grace, because humility is the vessel of graces. Hence the deeper the vessel, *(p. 615)* the more capacious. Therefore the fountain of life, which found in her a greater depth than in any other creature, poured there more of the waters of his graces. For as *the covetous man is not filled with money* (Eccles. 5:9), so neither is the humble with grace; for he always cries: *Give, give* (Prov. 30:15). Humility therefore is a gulf of grace never to be satisfied: for humility looks to its own failings, and when the supplying of one failing has been obtained from God, at once transfers itself to obtain another, according to that poetic saying:

And while he desires to quench his thirst, another thirst has grown.

And he is truly humble who, the more he has in the virtues, the more he longs for the virtues.

Again, of this thirst it is said morally, Apoc. 22:17: *He that thirsteth, let him come: and he that will, let him take the water of life, freely. He that thirsteth*, that is, who has the will of conversion: for this thirsting is to desire spiritual goods with the whole of one's inmost heart. *Let him come* by conversion—understand, secure of pardon—let him take the sacraments, and his sins shall be freely remitted. *And he that will, let him take the water of life*, that is, vivifying grace: *freely*, that is, without human merits. For in the grace which is first given, the merit of the receiver does not help; but in the grace which is conferred on one already working well that he may work better, the merit of the worker and receiver is not shut out. For human action, as without grace it is useless, so with grace it always profits. The first grace therefore is given us freely, which thereafter is multiplied to us with our merit somehow cooperating. For if anyone is inspired by grace to conversion, if he has conceived that grace with a perfect heart, although prevented by death he cannot share in the sacraments, as baptism or holy communion, he is saved: because with grace he cannot perish: for in the faith already received the virtue of the sacraments is already contained, and in the good will which inwardly

always inseparably accompanies true faith, the merit of good works is completed. Freely therefore is the water of life bestowed: because even without any merit of work, for good will alone, salvation is conferred on the believer. Whoever therefore will, let him take the water of life freely. O how precious are these oracles of heavenly condescension, to be preferred to every price, worthy of all acceptation, to be received with all devotion, retained with all memory, merited with all virtue! Let each one therefore see with how great and of what kind of hearing he perceives them, and having perceived them, keep and fulfill them.

§ 7

Moist, that is, moistened and wet with the liquors of all the graces. For she was as it were *a tree that is transplanted by the waters, that sendeth out its roots to the moisture, and it shall not fear when the heat cometh* (Jer. 17:8): and as a grain moistened sends forth from itself a shoot from which is the whole fruit without the touch of another grain, so Mary, moistened with the grace of the Holy Spirit, without manly touch germinated Christ, who is the blessed fruit, who is also called a shoot because of humility. Isa. 45:8: *Let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Savior.*

Watered. Hence it is said to her, Isa. 58:11: *Thou shalt be like a watered garden*, etc. Ecclus. 24:42, the Son says of his mother: *I will water my garden of plants, and I will water abundantly the fruits of my meadow.* Eccles. 2:6, the true Solomon says: *I made me ponds of water, to water therewith the wood of the young trees.* Christ is the fountain *(p. 616)* and the river, Mary the paradise. Gen. 2:6: *But a spring rose out of the earth, watering all the face of the earth.* This spring literally is the abyss, that is, the womb of all waters. Or *spring* is put for springs by syllepsis. And *to water* is put for to minister moisture. And the surrounding earth is said to be moistened by the rivers through *tracones*, that is, underground ways, or channels of fourteen or sixteen stades.

Mystically this spring designates Christ, who is well said to rise out of the earth: because being born of the Virgin, he ascended, he did not descend as sinners descend. And Christ is well called a spring: because he ceases not to water the hearts of his faithful with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, but most excellently the conscience of his mother. Hence there follows in the same place: *A river*, that is, Christ, *went out* in his incarnation. Hence it is said, John 16:28: *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. From the place of pleasure*, that is, from the virginal womb, *to water the paradise*, that is, the Church, which he watered by preaching with the streams of the four Gospels, which are designated by the four rivers into which that river was divided. Or he also watered with the blood and water which flowed from his body.

Again, note that this garden, that is, Mary, had in herself both waterings, namely the lower and the upper. The lower watering embraces a threefold weeping: namely for her own sins—but this she had not, because she never sinned. Again, for others' miseries, which are chiefly fault and pain: this she had, sharing by compassion in the transgressions of the human race. As if she said: *My eyes have sent forth springs of water: because they have not kept thy law* (Ps. 118:136), O my Son. Sharing also in the passions of her Only-begotten, for whom she is believed to have wept abundantly. Hence also it is said to her, Cant. 7:4: *Thy eyes as the fishpools in Hesebon*, etc. Again, for the sojourning of this misery, saying that of Ps. 119:5: *Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged!*

She had the upper watering after the ascension of the Son, mourning for desire of the fatherland and the absence of the bridegroom. Hence she says, Cant. 5:8: *Daughters of Jerusalem*, that is, O you angelic powers, *tell my beloved that I languish with love.* For this reason also she seems to have said to the Son ascending that of Cant. 1:3: *Draw me after thee*, as it were pursuing him ascending with her whole desire. For if she is believed to have accompanied him suffering with the spiritual affection of sorrow, and departing from the world with ignominy, with how great desire, think you, did she pursue him ascending from the world with glory? For the quantity of her desire is proved by the joy which she is believed to have obtained in heaven before the rest: according to the measure of the joy it is heaped up. Prov. 10:24: *To the just their*

desire shall be given. When therefore with her whole desire she longed to follow him ascending into heaven, it was delayed for the consolation of the Apostles and of the holy women, with whom persevering in prayer she still ran in the odor of the Son. Hence, patient of delay rather than of refusal, she at once adds, Cant. 1:3: *We will run after thee to the odor of thy ointments*, that is, in the memory of the benefits of God. But because the course of this life is short, and is ended as it were more quickly than it is said, and the everlasting prize succeeds, at once after she said *we will run*, without any other mention made of the course itself, she adds: *The king hath brought me into his storerooms.*

Again, by reason of this twofold watering Mary is designated, Josue 15:18–19 and Judges 1:14–15, by Axa sitting upon an ass: because she ruled her body most excellently and trampled every wicked pleasure of the human body. Which she seems to have said to God the Father, designated by Caleb, who is interpreted "every heart": because to God the Father every heart is open. "Father, thou hast given me a dry land, that is, virginity barren by nature; join," *(p. 617)* I pray, also a watered land, that is, fruitfulness." And the Father gave her the upper watering, that is, the divinity of the Son, by which the Angels and the blessed in the fatherland are watered. And the lower watering, that is, the humanity of the Son, when the Word was made flesh in her, by whose preaching, examples and miracles the Church militant was made fruitful as by a certain watering, that she might be able to bring forth the fruit of life. And well is Mary figured by Axa, who is interpreted "raging": who perhaps was reputed as it were raging by her household and by the priests of the temple, when it was known that against the custom of all women who had gone before she had first uttered the vow of perpetual virginity: and this is touched in the apocryphal book on the Infancy of the Savior. And this garden was not only watered in itself, but also watering us as with a twofold watering. With the upper, which is charity, which has its matter from above: which happens when by the example of her charity we are inflamed to love. With the lower, which is humility, which has its matter from below, when by her example we are humbled.

Rained upon: because Christ came down upon her *as rain upon the fleece* (Ps. 71:6). (You will find this below.) For she was the land of promise *expecting rains from heaven* (Deut. 11:11). (Look under the heading on the earth.)

Again, of this earth it is said, Ezech. 34:26: *I will make the shower to come down in its season, there shall be showers of blessing.* Note that in rain there is a great abundance of waters and an innumerable number of drops, and much greater in many rains. And therefore it is said that *there shall be showers of blessing*, to show that an innumerable and immense fullness of graces came down upon the Virgin, in the sanctification, in the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, in the conception of the Son of God, who *came down as a shower and as snow from heaven* (Isa. 55:10). And he inebriated the mind, and poured into the earth of the virgin flesh. There follows, Ezech. 34:27: *And the tree of the field shall yield its fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase.* By the tree and the earth understand Mary, by the field the world, by the fruit and the increase Christ.

Bedewed, that is, passively moistened with dew: because she received the Son of God in the incarnation as dew. Hence he himself says, Osee 14:6: *I will be as the dew: Israel*, that is, Mary, *shall spring as the lily.* (Look under the heading on those things which came down from above into this garden, where Christ is called dew.)

§ 8

Distilling, below, from the lightest touch of her leaves and herbs, the drops of dew and rain received from above. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 4:11: *Thy lips are as a dropping honeycomb.* Again, in Ps. 64:11: *With the droppings thereof shall the springing thereof rejoice.* For when Christ came down as rain upon the fleece, from the fleece itself large droppings of graces came down upon the earth of the human heart: because *of his fullness we all have received, and grace for grace* (John 1:16). Therefore she is compared to a honeycomb, a

fleece and a sponge. (Under the heading on her mercy.)

Bedewing, actively, that is, flowing with dew. For from that fountain of graces dew of grace continually flows to her, and from her to us, which this garden ministers to the feet, that is, to the affections of those walking in it.

Cloudy, and this especially at the time of the incarnation, when the sun of justice, coming down into her, thence took the mist of human flesh. Hence, 3 Kings 8:12: *The Lord said that he would dwell in a cloud.* And as it were explaining himself, he adds a little after, verse 27: *Is it then to be thought* (p. 618) *that God should indeed dwell upon the earth?* Of this mist it is said, Ecclus. 43:24: *The medicine of all is in the hastening of a cloud: and a dew meeting it from the heat that cometh shall abase it.* And he speaks of the devil. *The medicine of all*, namely of those who can be healed. Note that the heavenly Angels were not sick at the coming of Christ. The devil who had grown proud was wholly dead, and therefore incurable. Hence it is said to him, Jer. 30:12: *Thy bruise is incurable, thy wound is very grievous.* Man, as it were partaking of both, was healable: because the demons had left him half alive (Luke 10:30): for he lived as to the body by nature, but was dead as to the soul by the withdrawal of grace. Therefore it is said, Wis. 1:14: *For he created all things that they might be: and he made the nations of the earth for health.* And therefore it is said: Looking from afar, behold I see a cloud covering the whole earth. He did not say *heaven*: because the benefit of the incarnation did not reach the angelic creature. The incarnation therefore was the medicine of all men, or of all infirmities: because the humility of the incarnation cured pride, charity envy, kindness anger, haste sloth, and so of the others. Or *of all*, that is, of fault and of pain. For the first infirmity into which man fell was fault; from this into another, which is pain. But it often happens that by one he recovers from the other. But our physician Christ could not: because it was not fitting to assume our fault, and he assumed the liability to pain by which he freed us from fault, though not yet from pain, and bound himself that at some time also from pain: and of this he left us a pledge against the custom of other physicians, namely his body and the Holy Spirit. *The medicine of all* therefore, that is, the salvation of the human race, *in the hastening of a cloud*, that is, of the Lord's incarnation. And therefore he says *in the hastening of a cloud*: because the cloud, that is, the flesh which he took from the Virgin, in the moment when the Virgin answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me* (Luke 1:38), etc., by the operation of the Holy Spirit who knows not slow workings of things, was formed into a body. (Look for the rest of this authority below, where Christ is called dew.)

Again, by this mist Mary herself can fittingly be designated, who is well called a mist, because lifted from earthly things, who hastened when from the abundance of a faithful heart she belched forth that good word, Luke 1:38: *Be it done to me*, etc., and by this word conferred on us a medicinal cure, that is, Christ, *who bore our infirmities* (Isa. 53:4). But by example she conferred a preserving medicine: because imitation of her preserves and heaps up grace. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:29: *They that eat me*, that is, incorporate her by imitating, *shall yet hunger* for the heaping up of grace.

The flesh of Christ is a mist. Because a mist covers the sun. Therefore Christ says, Ecclus. 24:6: *As a mist*, that is, with flesh assumed, *I have covered the whole earth*, that is, from every carnal or earthly man the light of the divinity was hidden: for carnal men did not see, that is, did not understand, the light of the divinity under the mist of the flesh: because *he made darkness his covert* (Ps. 17:12).

Because the descent of a mist is a sign of fair weather, and the incarnation of Christ was the cause of our reconciliation with the Father, and of our illumination and of eternal brightness.

Because as a mist tempers the brightness of the sun, which unless a cloud be interposed cannot be looked upon: so Christ put on the mist of human flesh, that he might make accessible to us the inaccessible light of his brightness. Job 22:14: *The clouds are his covert.*

Because as a mist tempers the heat of the sun and affords coolness to things growing on the earth, that it may preserve flowers, herbs and trees from the heat of that sun: so the humanity of Christ tempered the severity of

the Father, and in the fervor of the passion this *(p. 619)* mist was burned, that it might afford us coolness against the incentives of vices, and preserve us from the heats of hell.

Because as a mist covers the uncleannesses of the earth and hides them from the eyes of this sun: so Christ interposed the mist of his flesh between us and God the Father on the cross, and mercifully covered our sins with the mantle of his flesh. Hence he says, Ecclus. 24:6: *As a mist I have covered the whole earth*: because, exalted on the cross, with his shoulders he overshadowed the Church.

Because a mist waters the earth and with its moisture as with a certain dew fattens and impregnates it for the generating of fruits: so Christ appearing in the flesh with the dew of grace fattened unfruitful minds with the fatness of charity, that they might bring forth the fruit of life.

Because a mist dissolves the frost of the north wind, and Christ who is *a vapor of the power of God* (Wis. 7:25), that frost of which it is said, Ecclus. 43:22: *The cold north wind bloweth, and the water is congealed into crystal.* (Look below under the heading on those things which came down into the garden from above.)

Because it burns flowers, as is plain in the flowers of the vine and of the olive, and Christ by word and example the delights of the world. Job 15:33: *He shall be blasted as a vine when its grapes are in the first flower, and as an olive tree casting its flower*; and he speaks of the world or of the lover of the world.

Because near the earth, by compassion for sinners and readiness to hear those who cry to him; he himself says, Matt. 9:13: *I am not come to call the just, but sinners.* And of him it is said, Ps. 144:18: *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him: to all that call upon him in truth.*

Because it is widely extended that it may overshadow and protect. So also the flesh of Christ extended on the cross. Hence he says, Ezech. 16:8: *I spread my garment*, that is, the mist of my flesh, *over thee.* And this is what he says, Ps. 104:39: *He spread a cloud for their protection*, etc.

Because it troubles the day that it may show the sun. For when the weather is cloudy, then we well endure the sun with the sight. So Christ incarnate tempered himself to the bleared eyes of mortals, and in his coming troubled human, that is, worldly prosperity, by despising it himself, *not willing to be made a king* (John 6:15); and by teaching contempt of the world, that afterward he may appear clearer and kinder to his friends, as after a mist has troubled the day, when it is scattered the sun shines more fervently and clearly.

Because when the mist is parted the sun appears, and when the flesh of Christ was parted from the soul the sun of the divinity appeared in the resurrection by knowledge.

And note that not only is the flesh of Christ called a mist, but also a little cloud or a cloud. Hence, 3 Kings 18:44: *Behold a little cloud arose out of the sea like a man's foot.* And he speaks there because it had not rained for three years. Those years spiritually are the time under the law, the time of the Prophets, in which rain of grace did not distill upon the earth: but in the time of grace there appeared a little cloud of grace, that is, Christ. *Like a man's foot*, and he does not say simply a foot, but *like a foot*, because he was conceived and born not by the work of a man but by the work of the Holy Spirit. *Arose out of the sea*, that is, out of the womb of Mary: he ascended because he was in the most excellent state of human life.

Again, Elias is called the father; the boy sent to the sea, Gabriel sent to Mary. The first kind, the salutation. Hence, *Hail, Mary* (Luke 1:28 ff.). The second, a threefold commendation: as to herself, *full of grace*; as to God, *the Lord is with thee*; as to us, *blessed art thou among women.* The third, comforting. Hence: *Fear not, Mary*, etc. The fourth, the announcement of the Son of God. Hence, *Behold thou shalt conceive*, etc. Which conception is commended from five things. From the loftiness of the name. Hence, *(p. 620) Thou shalt call his name Jesus.* From power. Hence, *He shall be great.* From nobility. Hence, *He shall be called the Son of the Most High.* From dignity. Hence, *The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David*, etc. From the eternity of the dignity. Hence, *Of his kingdom there shall be no end.* The fifth, the expression of the manner. Hence, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, etc. The sixth, the addition of an example. Hence, *And behold*

Elizabeth, etc. The seventh, the removing of every hesitation. Hence, *No word shall be impossible*, etc.

In this, however, that the flesh of Christ is called a little cloud, a twofold humility is noted, exterior and interior. Again, this cloud is in the midst between heaven and earth; so Christ the man is *mediator of God and men* (1 Tim. 2:5). This cloud also is watery, coming down as rain upon the fleece; it made the fair weather of reconciliation, ascending into heaven it sent the rain of the Holy Spirit. Hence he says, Ezech. 36:25: *I will pour upon you clean water.* It will make a tempest coming to judgment, when *round about him shall be a mighty tempest* (Ps. 49:3).

And beautifully is the Lord's body called a cloud, which, formed of the most pure bloods of the blessed Virgin, which bloods namely as nutritive humors of his heavenly heat, that is, of charity, the ray of the sun of justice, that is, of the kindness of heavenly piety, drew to himself for his nourishment from the ocean of this world. This was the cloud having in itself *the foot of a man*, and bringing with it the rain of copious salvation, that is, of human redemption. And a cloud has nearly the same properties as a mist.

This cloud in the nativity was white by immunity from sin and all-manner purity. Hence, Apoc. 14:14: *And I saw, and behold a white cloud: and upon the cloud one sitting*, etc. The white cloud, the clean humanity of Christ. (Look under the heading that Mary is a cloud.) For then the little cloud arose out of the sea, that is, Christ the little child out of Mary.

In his conversation, bright by the diffusion of a good example. Hence in the transfiguration *a bright cloud overshadowed them*, that is, the Apostles (Matt. 17:5). Ezech. 1:4: *And I saw, and behold … a great cloud, and a fire enfolding it, and brightness was about it*, etc.

In the passion, red by the reddening of his own blood. Hence it is said to him, Isa. 63:1: *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra?* For in the passion there was a cloud where he gave coolness to the whole human race, where under the shadow of his wings he protected the human race: but in the resurrection it was light, when, every mortality and passibility laid aside, he rose.

In the burial, black and dark, when *there was no beauty in him, nor comeliness* (Isa. 53:2).

In the ascension, perhaps jacinth-colored by the putting on of a heavenly color. Hence then a bright and perhaps jacinth cloud received him from the eyes of those who looked on.

In the judgment it will be burning and fiery, when *a fire shall go before him*, etc. (Ps. 96:3).

Again, of a cloud it is said, Isa. 19:1: *Behold the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud*, etc. Expound that *Behold* as you will find under the heading on the conception of the Virgin. This cloud is the flesh of Christ, which is well called *swift* (or light): because without the weight of sin. Which therefore is called a cloud: because it watered us with the rains of doctrines, terrified with the thunders of threatenings, surveyed as with certain lightnings by the flashings of miracles, and protected us with its overshadowing. Hence Christ the man says, Ecclus. 24:6: *As a mist I have covered the whole earth.* But it seems that the Prophet ought to have said: The Lord will descend to a light cloud, as he says there below, Isa. 64:1: *O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down.* And not *will ascend upon a light cloud*: because he did not exalt himself, but much humbled himself by assuming flesh, as the Apostle says, *(p. 621)* Phil. 2:7. But because, coming down into flesh, he who before was unknown to the world thus ascended into the knowledge and honor of men: therefore he is said to have ascended upon a cloud.

Or otherwise: The incarnation of the Lord is called an ascent: because then he appeared visible to the world, as a cloud appears better to us by ascending than by descending. Or therefore he is said about to ascend upon a cloud: because the flesh in him was wholly subject to the spirit, nor did it desire anything against the spirit. Or therefore because thus he came into knowledge, as was said, whereas before he was *a hidden God* (Isa. 45:15). Or, from the effect: because he made the human nature which he assumed to ascend. Hence, *Who makest the clouds thy chariot* (Ps. 103:3), etc.

For this is the little cloud which, Christ being born, arose out of the sea, that is, out of Mary. And this cloud was as it were of six colors, as was said above. And note that the Prophet, speaking of the incarnation, calls him *Lord*, to note the Son of God, who is *King of kings and Lord of lords* (1 Tim. 6:15; Apoc. 19:16). Or, because then he was coming to plead his servant man against the devil, which was done on the cross.

There follows: *And shall enter into Egypt* (Isa. 19:1), that is, the world, being born of the Virgin. Or, Egypt literally. Matt. 2:13: *An angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child*, etc. Or, Egypt, that is, the human heart, by illuminating it with the light of grace: because before it was dark. (Look under the heading on the dawn.) And this is what Zachary says, Luke 1:78–79: *The Orient from on high hath visited us. To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*, etc. There follows, Isa. 19:1: *And the idols of Egypt shall be moved*: because when he entered Egypt its idols fell. Or, the demons obtained in them. Or, *the idols of Egypt shall be moved*, that is, idolatry shall be destroyed. To which the Magi, taught by the demons, or according to the prophecy of Balaam understanding that the Son of God was born who would destroy magic art, came to adore him in Bethlehem.

At his presence, that is, at his presence. *And the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst thereof*, that is, the wise of the world shall be astonished: because its wisdom shall be destroyed. Isa. 29:14: *The wisdom … shall perish*, etc. Abdias verse 8: *I will destroy the wise*, etc. Ps. 106:27: *All their wisdom is swallowed up.*

Morally: When the Lord enters by grace the Egypt of the human heart, at once the idols of the vices fall. But if such idols still stand in thy heart, it is an argument that the Lord has not yet entered into thy heart. (Look concerning idols, under that heading.) And note that this authority is had, Isa. 19:1, in the burden of Egypt, that is, of the world wrapped in the darkness of sins and the gloom of ignorance, worn out with the sadness of manifold misery. For rightly is the incarnation of Christ called the burden of Egypt: because Egypt is interpreted "darkness", or "sadness".

The Lord's incarnation was the emptying of darkness against the erring: because it is the light of the world. Isa. 9:2: *To them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death*, etc. The consolation of sadness against the slothful: because it is the joy of the world. Luke 2:10: *I bring you good tidings of great joy*, etc. The banishing of straits against the envious and the covetous: because Christ is charity (1 John 4:16). Again, Ps. 118:45: *I walked at large.* The Gloss of Ambrose: "In charity the heart ought to be open to receive him who filleth heaven and earth" (Jer. 23:24).

Or vaporous. Hence the blessed Virgin *(p. 622)* says, Ecclus. 24:21: *I perfumed my dwelling as Libanus not cut*, etc. (Look in the series on trees, where Libanus is treated, and you will find it very well expounded.)

§ 9

Dense, that is, thick, because of the multitude of virtues, which are designated by the innumerable multitude of herbs and trees, roots and spices, of which you will find below concerning herbs and spices. Cant. 4:13: *Cypress with spikenard*, etc. For she is the tree or wood of thick leaves, having branches, which branches are commanded to be taken, Lev. 23:40. For thick leaves keep their greenness more and are corrupted with more difficulty. This is the thickness of good works and merits in the Virgin, with the greenness of faith and perseverance, which ought to be taken by example, and with which Christ must be met. For in her all the virtues grew in the superlative degree as if planted together, and in these thickets we ought to *appoint a solemn day* (Ps. 117:27) by solemnizing her virtues.

Again, this thickness is noted, Ezech. 47:7: *I turned myself to the bank of the torrent*, etc., and a little after, verse 12: *On both sides every fruit tree*, etc. Apoc. 22:2: *On both sides of the river was the tree of life*, etc. Again, Ecclus. 24:17: *I was exalted like a cedar*, etc.

Again, of this thickness it is said, Isa. 41:19, where Mary is called the wilderness and the desert, where we read thus: *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, and the thorn, and the myrtle, and the olive tree: I will set in the desert the fir tree, the elm, and the box tree together.* By the cedar, which is a high and tall tree, the height of her heavenly desires and of her contemplation, by which two, *standing on the earth, she reached unto heaven* (Wis. 18:16). By the thorn, the pricking of manifold tribulation, by which in the Son, with the Son and for the Son she was pricked by compassion with the bitterness of the present life. By the myrtle, all-manner incorruption of flesh and spirit, both from all sin and from hurt of virginity and corruption of the body. By the olive wood, the works of charity and mercy, both of which were so great in her that she gave up her only-begotten Son to death for the salvation of the human race, as it is said, Mich. 6:7. By the fir, which is smooth, gentle and without knots, meekness and gentleness of heart. By the elm, which holds up vines, the devout sincerity of her prayers, by which she sustains and supports those bearing fruit in the Church of God. By the ever-green box, the faith of the Virgin herself, which did not fail even in the passion of the Son: and therefore perhaps the cross is decked with box at the time of the Lord's passion, because through the faith of the blessed Virgin the cross itself is honored.

Again, morally: Seven trees are named here, which designate seven principal virtues, which are opposed to the seven deadly sins. The cedar that does not rot, chastity against lust. The thorn, pricking and arousing, vigilance against sloth. The soothing olive, mercy against avarice. The mitigating myrtle, temperance against anger. The fir, surpassing the other trees in height, and by whose help the sea is crossed and the land of promise is reached, charity against envy. The elm, which holds up the fruitful vine, patience against impatience. The lowly and ever-green box, humility against pride.

Otherwise: By the fir, the height of heavenly desires. The elm is put here in place of the vine: because the reward of the poor man and of him who sustains the poor man will be the same. Hence, Matt. *(p. 623)* 10:41: *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet.* Otherwise and morally: By the wilderness religious life is signified. First is set the cedar, which does not rot and is of good odor, that is, chastity or incorruption: for by this very thing, that one keeps himself from the rottenness of lust, he is made fragrant to God and men: for from rottenness comes stench, from incorruption a good odor. This is the first virtue necessary to every just man. There follows the thorn, that is, compunction for one's own sins: when the thorn of sin has once been fixed in, one ought to be turned in affliction (Ps. 31:4). Or the thorn is correction, which ought to be white, that the correction may proceed from sweetness of mind and from meekness; not black, which is when one accuses his brother out of malice. 1 Thess. 5:14: *Rebuke the unquiet*—behold the thorn; *comfort the feeble-minded*—behold the white. And this comforting is designated by the myrtle, which is set next: because the myrtle strengthens weak limbs. Hence, Isa. 35:3: *Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees.* Ecclus. 7:38: *Be not wanting in comforting them that weep*, etc. But because it is little to console by word if the deed be lacking, there follows also the olive wood, that is, actual mercy.

And shady. For in Mary, as in a thick and shady garden, is found the shade of propitiation. For to this end *the power of the Most High overshadowed* her in the conception of the Son, as is said below, that she too by her prayers, merits and examples might overshadow sinners against the heat of the divine anger and the burning of every wicked concupiscence. For she is the branching and leafy tree whose beauty is delightful to look on, whose shade is desirable to rest in, whose fruit is desirable to eat. For there are three things which chiefly compel travelers to flee to the protection of trees: heat, whirlwind and rain. And these three designate three things which chiefly beset those tending to the fatherland by the way of this exile: concupiscence, which is designated by heat; pride, by the whirlwind; the assiduous importunity of temptations, by rain. And Mary overshadows us against the heat of concupiscence by the example of chastity, against the whirlwind of pride by the example of humility, against the importunity of diabolical temptation by the virtue of assiduous prayer. Nor does her supreme kindness suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able, but with the

temptations themselves she makes issue (1 Cor. 10:13). Therefore it is said of her, Isa. 4:6: *There shall be a tabernacle for a shade in the daytime from the heat*, etc. (Look under the heading that Mary is a tabernacle.) And she overshadows above all over the heads of the warriors who, in imitation of her, fight against the three vices mentioned above, namely against pride by humility, against avarice by largeness, against lust by temperance and chastity, and so of the others: so that he who so fights may be able to say, Ps. 139:8: *Thou hast overshadowed*, O Mary, *my head in the day of battle.* Again, Mary overshadows sinners: because she is designated by the propitiatory (Exod. 25:20), which the two Cherubim overshadowed, looking one at another with their faces turned toward the propitiatory. These two Cherubim are in her virginity and motherhood, which as it were were wont to have their faces turned away from one another: but now they look at one another, because she is both a virgin and fruitful. Of this someone says most elegantly:

Childbirth and integrity, long at odds in time, In the Virgin's bosom hold a covenant of peace.

And well are these two called Cherubim, which is interpreted "fullness of knowledge": because the wisdom of God alone knew and was able to join fruitfulness to virginity in Mary. Hence, Rom. 11:33, the Apostle exclaims: *O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!* etc.

Hiding. For in it Christ lay *(p. 624)* hidden for nine months. Hence it is said to him, Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God.* And thence he took the cloud of our flesh, in which he might be hidden from the devil and from the princes of this world: *for if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory* (1 Cor. 2:8), and so we should not have been redeemed. She also hides sinners, as under the leaves and branches of her piety and mercy, from the face of him who sits on the throne of judgment. Hence she is designated by the garden of pleasure, in which Adam and Eve were hidden after sin (Gen. 3:8).

And full of hiding-places, in a good sense, that is, fit for finding a hiding-place: for the thickness of the trees, the breadth and the multitude of the leaves make shade: and these three, namely many trees, broad and many leaves, and the shadiness arising from these two, afford a hiding-place. And therefore Mary is signified by queen Esther, who is interpreted "hiding": for in this garden Christ *made darkness his covert* (Ps. 17:12). This darkness, as the Gloss says, signifies the mystery of the incarnation, which is deep and obscure to us. He says *his covert*, that is, the secret of his majesty, which was covered by the cloud of flesh. And this was necessary for us, that faith might thus have merit. Hence Augustine: "Lord, hide thyself, that we may believe." And perhaps for this God said: *That he would dwell in a cloud* (3 Kings 8:12). But this hiding-place will then be opened when *we shall see him as he is.* Because of such fulness of hiding-places the Son says to the mother, Isa. 16:3–4: *Make thy shadow as the night in the midday*, that is, in the open persecution of the devil and the heat of temptations: *hide the fugitives, and betray not them that wander about. My fugitives shall dwell with thee: O Moab, be thou their covert from the face of the destroyer.* Mary makes her shadow as the night in the midday: because from the heat of temptation she securely defends the afflicted, she cools the suffering. For she hides those fleeing the world, the flesh and the devil: because she receives and harbors the faint-hearted and those fearing the judgment of God. She does not betray the wanderers: because she does not expose the tempted to sin; nor, as much as in her lies, does she desert, unadvised, those wandering after various errors, but hides them unto salvation, calling back sinners from error by her prayers and examples. She receives the Lord's fugitives: because she mercifully consoles those fleeing from the terror of judgment, giving hope of pardon to the despairing. Therefore of her the Psalmist says, Ps. 103:18: *The rock*, that is, Mary, *is a refuge for the hedgehogs* and the hares. (Under the heading that Mary is a rock.) And Mary is here called Moab: because according to the history she descended from the race of the Moabites through Ruth. Hence also she is called *the rock of the desert* (Isa. 16:1). By reason also of this hiding she was designated by Rahab of Jericho: for as that Rahab received and hid the Jewish spies (Jos. 2:1 ff.), so Mary hides the Jews, that is, those truly confessing themselves and her Son, and the spies of the true land of promise, to possess it. For as a loving mother hides her son under her cloak when the father wishes to beat him, so Mary hides those fleeing to her, fearing the justice of Christ. But note that a thick and large thing cannot so easily be hidden: it

is necessary therefore for you, that you may be able to be hidden under her cloak, that is, under the breadth of her mercy, that you be little in your own eyes by humility, not swollen by elation; that you be clean by chastity, because with the stench of lust you could not draw near to her; that you be merciful, otherwise you would have no refuge with the mother of mercy.

(p. 625) Clean in itself: because *no defiled thing cometh into it* (Wis. 7:25). Apoc. 21:27: *There shall not enter into it anything defiled, or that worketh abomination.*

And cleansing. For with its dew and droppings it cleanses the feet, that is, of those who walk in it by meditation, and the hands, that is, the works, by imitation of its works. For at the dew we are wont to wash away the filth of feet and hands.

Wonderful, above all in three things: in itself, in the flower, in the fruit.

In itself: because this garden, that is, Mary, above nature, above reason, above custom, above the merit of human condition bore her own gardener. Above nature: because a virgin bore God: for human reason does not suffice to understand this. Hence Isaias exclaims, 66:8: *Who hath ever heard such a thing? and who hath seen the like to this?* Above custom, because the flesh of Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit: for that flesh should arise from flesh or spirit from spirit is quite customary. John 3:6: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* But that flesh should be of spirit is altogether new and unheard of and wonderful. Above the merit of human condition: that a virgin should bring forth without pain, human merit did not require, but rather the opposite. Hence it had been said to the first mother after sin: *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children* (Gen. 3:16), etc. Therefore the Prophet exclaims: *Come and behold ye the works of the Lord: what wonders he hath done upon earth* (Ps. 45:9).

Again, in another way wonderful in itself: because in the virginal womb, which is properly designated by this garden, three wonders were done. The first wonder, because there God was made man, the ancient of days a child, the Word an infant, the eternal temporal, the immortal mortal, the immense a little one, the lion a lamb, the creator a creature, he who made that which was made. John 1:14: *The Word was made flesh.* Jer. 31:22: *The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth: A woman shall compass a man* perfect in knowledge and virtue. The second wonder, because he who made the womb was made in the same womb. This is a great wonder, as if one should make a house and afterward be born in the same house. Therefore it is said in Ps. 86:3, 5: *Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God! … A man and a man is born in her: and the Highest himself hath founded her.* Isa. 66:8: *Who hath ever heard such a thing? and who hath seen the like to this?* The third wonder, because that womb contained what is greater than itself, that is, God, whom the whole world does not hold. Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God,* in the virginal womb. For of his greatness it is said, Job 11:8–9: *He is higher than heaven,* by divinity, because true God; *deeper than hell,* by humility, because true man; *the measure of him is longer than the earth,* by long-suffering; *and broader than the sea,* by charity. Augustine: "Above all things, not lifted up; beneath all things, not pressed down; within all things, not shut in; outside all things, not shut out."

Wonderful in the flower: because in each of its herbs and trees it keeps the flower and brings forth fruit, nor loses its flowers because of the fruits. Truly a wonderful garden, in which fruits so come that yet the flowers do not depart; fruits so ripen that yet the flowers do not ripen away. Therefore of her flowers and fruits Mary says, Ecclus. 24:23: *My flowers are the fruit of honor and riches.*

(p. 626) Wonderful in the fruit, whose fruit is Christ Jesus, or especially the flesh of Christ, which alone was conceived of a woman alone without the itching and stench of intercourse, which no other was. Hence it is designated by *the stone cut out of a mountain without hands* (Dan. 2:34), that is, out of Mary, that is, without the nuptial work, as Augustine glosses. Or, out of the mountain, that is, out of the height of human nature in which it was before sin: for Christ assumed human nature such, as regards immunity from sin, as it was before sin. For there are four states of man: the first before sin, the second after sin before grace, the third

under grace, the fourth in glory. From each of these states Christ took something: from the first, immunity from sin; from the second, liability to pain; from the third, fullness of grace; from the fourth, impossibility of sinning and all-manner contemplation of truth.

The flesh of Christ is wonderful. Because in the very conception it was formed into a body, yet so, as the Archbishop of Canterbury says, that its lineaments could not then be distinguished by human sight. Ecclus. 43:24: *The medicine of all is in the hastening of a cloud.* Note *in the hastening*, as above, where the garden is called cloudy.

Because that flesh did not infect the soul infused into it. Hence it is said of Christ: *He that walketh without blemish* (Ps. 14:2). Therefore it is said, Jer. 23:5: *I will raise up to David a just branch*, that is, Christ just in the branch, that is, in the conception: because he was conceived without original sin. Hence it was said to Mary, Luke 1:35: *The Holy which shall be born of thee*: shall be born, in the nativity in the womb and from the womb. Because of these wonders and these dignities the flesh of Christ is called *only one*, in the text: *My only one from the lions* (Ps. 34:17). It is called also glory, in the text: *Arise, O my glory* (Ps. 56:9), etc., because in it he conquered the devil and freed us from his tyranny. The flesh of Christ is only one because of its singular conception, in which at once it had a soul; its singular nativity: because he was born of the Virgin, the shut gate; its immunity from sin: because it is the light cloud, that is, without the weight of sin; its union with the Word: because *the Word was made flesh* (John 1:14); its singular beatitude. Hence the Father says to him: *Sit thou at my right hand* (Ps. 109:1), that is, in my better goods.

In another way also this fruit, or this garden, is wonderful in the fruit: because Christ at once in his conception enjoyed all-manner contemplation of the divinity according to the mind, which was personally united and immediately joined to the deity, and in a certain way absorbed by the glory of God, cleaving to which ineffably it was made one spirit, one person, one God in every way, having the same power, wisdom and goodness by grace which the Word also has or had from eternity by nature: for the divinity offered itself to it wholly and according to fullness to be partaken, and kept back nothing which it did not give to the man assumed. Hence the Prophet: *A mountain in which God is well pleased to dwell: for there the Lord shall dwell unto the end* (Ps. 67:17), that is, without end, without limit, without measure. Nor does he say this as if there were an end or limit or measure in him, but to show that the fullness of the divinity dwells in him. Hence the Apostle manifestly proclaims: *In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporeally* (Col. 2:9): saying *all*, he refutes those who say that the man assumed has all knowledge but not omnipotence. *Fullness* he says against those who say he has neither so great power, nor wisdom, nor goodness as the Word itself has. And lest anyone expound all this of the Word and not of the man assumed, he adds *corporeally*, that is, *(p. 627)* in the man assumed, who is body. As therefore the man partakes of all things that are God's according to fullness, so God of all things that are man's except sin: for such was the union of man and God, that it made God man and man God. Hence: *Blessed is he whom thou hast chosen and taken to thee: he shall dwell in thy courts* (Ps. 64:5), that is, he shall share with thee in properties. For as God gave all his things to the man, so he took into himself all the things of the man. And as the Son says to the Father, John 17:10: *All my things are thine, and thine are mine*: so the man assumed can say to the Word assuming: All thy things by nature are mine by grace; and all my things by nature are thine by condescension. Because of this ineffable union therefore of deity and humanity God is truly said to be and is man, and man is truly said to be and is God. Hence Augustine says: "If you look to the distinction of the natures, God is one thing, man another, or God and man are two. But if to the personal union, not two, but one, not in nature but in person. For the Father and the Son are one, not in person but in nature; the man assumed and the Word assuming are one, not in nature but in person. And any of the saints cleaving to God by faith and love is one with God, not in nature or in person, but in justice or glory. Because of this inestimable cleaving therefore the mind of Christ remained unmoved and unshaken even in death itself. Nor did it then have less of glory or of beatitude as regards what pertains to the principal part of the mind. But in the spirit and in the soul and in the flesh there

was variation and change before the passion itself, in the days of his flesh, that is, of mortality." Of the changeableness of the spirit it is said: *Jesus groaned in the spirit* (John 11:33). Of the changeableness of the soul it is written: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death* (Matt. 26:38). According to the flesh he hungered, thirsted, was wearied, and the like.

Inviolate: because *the uncircumcised and unclean* did not *pass through it* (Isa. 52:1). For of it Isaias had foretold, 35:9: *No lion shall be there, nor shall any mischievous beast go up by it.* The lion is pride, which had no place in the most humble Virgin. The mischievous beast, avarice or lust, which did not violate the Virgin, the mother of mercy. For beasts do three principal things in a garden: they trample it with their feet, they devour its greenness, they foul it with dung. These three likewise the demons do in a sinful soul. The dung is lust; the trampling, avarice; pride, as Gregory says, grazes off the whole body of the virtues. Abbot Eckebert to Mary: "Thou art a garden enclosed, Mother of God, into which the hand of the adulterer never entered to deflower it."

Chapter 1 (continued): On the Properties of the Garden

§ 10

Secure: because it does not lie open to evil-doers, that is, to demons and vices, so that they could violently drag thence those who have fled to it. *For there is none that can deliver out of thy hand* (Job 10:7). Therefore it is said of Mary, Isa. 4:6: *It shall be for a shade in the daytime from the heat, and for a security*, etc. On the text of Cant. 6:9, *Terrible as an army set in array*, blessed Bernard says: "She does not fear visible enemies." (Look above under the heading on the name Mary.)

Stable in the fullness of her virtues and delights, which do not wither, are not corrupted, do not fail, do not grow old. Ezech. 47:12: *Their leaf shall not fall off,* (p. 628) *and their fruit shall not fail … because the waters thereof shall issue out of the sanctuary*, etc. In the same place: *Every month shall they bring forth first-fruits*, etc. Apoc. 22:2: *Yielding its fruits every month.* And in Isaias 58:11 it is said to Mary: *Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail.*

Fruitful: because when the south wind blows, that is, made fruitful by the breathing of the Holy Spirit, through whom it yields manifold fruit. Fruitful, I say, in the greenness of its herbs, in the beauty of its leaves, in the variety of its fruits, in the fragrance of its spices, in the shade of its boughs, in the melody of its birds, in the running of its fountains, and the like. And of this fruitfulness we have Cant. 4:13: *Thy plants are a paradise of pomegranates with the fruits of the orchard.* In these words the fruitfulness of this garden is shown: for the emissions and productions of the Virgin are said to be a paradise with all fruits and trees, herbs, spices and perfumes: and by the paradise the Church is signified, and above all by the pomegranates the whole assembly of the saints and the whole paradise are designated: for as in the pomegranate a little cell is assigned to each grain, and nevertheless many grains are ordered in one cell, and at length all are contained under one rind: so in eternal happiness, although the brightness of the saints is unequal and the reward of some unequal, yet the dignity is one and the joy of all is one. Well therefore is it said to Mary: *Thy plants*, etc., because from her the whole paradise is said to have proceeded, as fruit from the flower: because she afforded the beginning of salvation and grace.

Again, the fruitfulness of this garden has shown us three benefits as it were a threefold fruit. The first, that it removed the yoke of the ancient captivity. The second, that it appeased the wrath of the divine indignation. The third, that it blotted out the brand of human iniquity. For you were held captive, O man; through Mary you have been freed. You had incurred the offense of God; through Mary you have been reconciled. You had been unjust and a sinner; and through her you have been justified. For what is sweeter than liberty after captivity, and justification after impiety, reconciliation after offense? To Mary therefore the whole life of the just, devout desires, holy meditations, just works, frequent thanksgivings and the rest of this kind ought to

look, that by all these she may chiefly be honored, who before all the other saints has wrought for us the cause of eternal salvation.

Come then, you who breathe again in so great benefits of Mary, turn to her also your vows and desires, and let it be sweet to you always to seek out this fruitfulness, and to rest in the shade of this garden, you who, wasted by a long famine of spiritual goods, have labored until now in the long weariness of a wicked journey. Let him who is still far off draw near to her; let him who has already laid hold of her hold her fast by love and spiritual service, and not let her go (Prov. 4:13; Cant. 3:4).

Full of delights, namely flowing and abounding with all spiritual, nay even bodily, delights. Hence, Cant. 8:5, she is said to be *flowing with delights.* Blessed Bernard: "What should I call delights but the glory of virginity with the gift of fruitfulness, the mark of humility, the dropping honeycomb of charity, the bowels of mercy, the fullness of grace, the prerogative of singular glory?" Because of such delights the Church sings to her: "Thou art made beautiful and sweet in thy delights," that is, in those befitting thee alone. Because *many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all* (Prov. 31:29).

Again, the delights of Mary are the virtues and privileges which befit her alone, by the merit of which she has been transferred from the delights of all the saints to the delights of the king and Lord of the Angels. And well are her virtues delights: because they drew not only the gazes of men and Angels, *(p. 629)* but even the divine gaze. Hence also it is said of her, Jer. 6:2: *I have likened the daughter of Sion*, that is, Mary, *to a beautiful and delicate woman.*

Otherwise: delights are delicate foods and drinks: and she with the most delicate honeycomb of her charity, with the most delicate milk of her breasts, nourished the Son of God and her own. Hence also her Son, Cant. 5:1, glories, saying: *I have eaten the honeycomb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk.* (Look a little below, where this garden is called satisfying.)

§ 11

Generous, which is plain from this, that most liberally she invites all to her delights, saying with her Son, Matt. 11:28: *Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you*, namely with my glorious fruit, which is Christ. Or, with my fruits, that is, with my generations, of which she herself says, Ecclus. 24:26: *Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits.*

Inexhaustible. Therefore on that text, *Hail, full of grace* (Luke 1:28), Master Hugh of St Victor says to Mary: "Rightly art thou called full of grace, from whom has arisen the fountain of grace." (Look under the heading *Full of grace*, near the end of the chapter.) Therefore she says, Ecclus. 24:14: *Unto the world to come I shall not cease to be*, namely to show mercy to the wretched. For this it is said to her, Isa. 58:11: *Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail*, namely mercy, compassion, piety and the like.

Satisfying. Hence she says: *Be filled with my fruits* (Ecclus. 24:26), as above. For the generosity of Mary, who is this garden, invites Christ and his friends to her fruitfulness and fullness, Cant. 5:1, where she says: *Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat the fruit of his apple trees* (Cant. 5:1; 4:16). For the mother had heard herself called a garden in the authority above, where Christ had said: *Arise, O north wind* (Cant. 4:16), that is, O thou, Satan, do not lie upon the Church to press her down, but withdraw and give place to the Holy Spirit; *and come, O south wind*, that is, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; *blow through my garden*, that is, breathe continually into my mother the abundance of graces, that from her the remedies of benefits may flow abundantly and unfailingly to the sick. And these words seem to have been said to the evil spirit and to the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of Mary from original sin. And when she had heard such words the blessed Virgin, mindful of that fig tree which was cursed because it did not feed Christ seeking fruit on it, at once invites the beloved to her delights, saying: *Let my beloved come into his garden*, that is, let him descend into

me by the mystery of the incarnation, *and eat the fruit*, that is, let him delight in the fruit *of his apple trees*, that is, in the works of the virtues which he planted in me. And note that the blessed Virgin invites her Son to the fruit as a child: because *a child is born to us* (Isa. 9:6); and she sends to him as it were four messengers, that he may come quickly to dine with us. These four messengers are meditation, which seeks the Lord; contemplation, which finds him sought; prayer, which invites him found; humility, which brings him invited. Hence she says, Cant. 1:11: *While the king was at his repose, my spikenard sent forth the odor thereof*, that is, humility poured forth its prayer, that it might call and bring the bridegroom to feast with us on earth, who was feasting with the Father and the Angels in *(p. 630)* heaven. And note that this bridegroom most gladly eats these dishes, which are cleanness of life and true penance. Of the first, Cant. 2:16: *Who feedeth among the lilies.* And this dish ought to come before all other dishes; without it the rest would have no savor. Of the second Rebecca said to her son Jacob, Gen. 27:9: *Bring me two kids of the best*, as far as *which he gladly eateth.* And because she prepared these two dishes for Christ in the present, she will be fed by him with two others, namely grace in the present and glory in the future.

And the beloved of Mary, rejoicing to be invited, as one hungry is at once present, and commends himself for the good refreshment, saying: *I am come into my garden, O my sister, my spouse* (Cant. 5:1). And a few words being put between, he describes his refreshment, saying: *I have eaten the honeycomb with my honey*, etc. As if he said, after the likeness of one coming into his garden that he may take his pleasure there after labors: so I, from those who give me labors by their iniquities, that I might take my pleasure in the merits and virtues of the blessed Virgin, *am come into my garden*, that is, into her, by the mystery of my incarnation.

The food of Christ: the fulfilling of the Father's pleasure. Hence he says, John 4:34: *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me*, etc.

As to the soul, the contemplation of the divinity, from which food he never fasted. Hence he says: *I set the Lord always in my sight* (Ps. 15:8). For the mind of the man assumed from its origin at once enjoyed fully and perfectly the vision of God, seeing truth itself immediately in itself.

Holy Scripture: from this also he never fasted. Matt. 4:4: *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.*

The conversion of sinners: for this he fasted on the cross: because there he incorporated only a single thief. Hence he says: *And I covered my soul in fasting* (Ps. 68:11), that is, I did not exercise my power by avenging myself on my crucifiers.

Bodily food, from which he fasted forty days and forty nights, as it is said, Matt. 4:2.

The delight which he had in the virtues of his mother, namely in the active and the contemplative life, of which he says here: *I have eaten the honeycomb with my honey*, etc. Where he shows that in both lives the mother pleased him: for the melted honey designates the sweetness of pure contemplation; the honeycomb, which shows rough wax outwardly and hides honey in its cells, figures the active life, which, though it appears rough in its works, yet through the several cells of its works contains the sweetness of rewards.

Otherwise: *I have eaten the honeycomb with my honey.* Honey, which comes down from the air, signifies the sweetness of the contemplative life. But the honeycomb is a certain thing worked by bees, having sweetness in the honey and light in the wax, and signifies the active life, which is in labor, and has the sweetness of honey in conscience as regards God, and light in outward conversation as regards the neighbor. Hence, Matt. 5:16: *Let your light shine*, etc. Mary therefore ministered to the Son of God the honeycomb with the honey: because she held the primacy in both lives.

There follows: *I have drunk my wine with my milk.* And he joins wine, in which is inebriation, to milk, in which is sweetness: because he drank inebriation in his mother's milk. For he who, before he had drunk his mother's milk, judging strictly, punished with severity, after he took flesh of the Virgin and drank of her

milk, so changed severity into mercy that, as if made drunk by his mother's milk, he seems to have forgotten our sins.

And drinking. But what Christ drank in this refreshment he next *(p. 631)* shows, saying: *I have drunk my wine with my milk.* Which is to say: I have been fed in my merit and suckled at virginal breasts, of neither of which has it ever befallen anyone to glory. Therefore, although it is said of Mary: *Thy name is as oil poured out* (Cant. 1:2), yet it is not said that the breasts are poured out: because the Son of God alone was suckled from them; but the grace of the name is poured out to all. And the rest as expounded above. For he who because of the iniquities and sins of the world *was touched inwardly with sorrow of heart* (Gen. 6:6), so that he prepared for the world a flood of eternal punishment, after he drank milk from the Virgin, as if drunk with wine and gladdened in heart, as forgetful of the sadness which the wickednesses of the world had brought on, turned himself from punishments to the benefits of mercy. (You will find this better noted under the heading on the breasts of Mary.)

Again, of this inebriation she says, Ecclus. 24:42: *I said: I will water my garden of plants.* (You have this expounded under the heading that Mary is a conduit.) There follows: *And I will water abundantly the fruits of my meadow*—literally, *I will inebriate the fruit of my meadow.* The fruit of the meadow is the Son, who is called fruit because he refreshes: and because with his whole self he feeds the soul, because he is *all lovely* (Cant. 5:16). For he is *manna coming from heaven* (Exod. 16:14), *bread having in it all that is delicious* (Wis. 16:20). He says *fruit of the meadow*, that the singular birth of the Virgin may be noted: because the Virgin's birth had fruit, not loss; delight, not pain. For Eve bore with pain and with loss of her own substance: for pain is the sense of the division of continuous things, and such cannot be without loss of substance. But the blessed Virgin bore without pain: and in this the singularity of the birth is shown. For it was said to Eve: *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth* (Gen. 3:16). But the birth of the blessed Virgin was fruit: because without pain, that is, without hurt of natural things. For which reason it was said to her: *Ave*, that is, without *vae*, woe.

This fruit she inebriates as with a threefold wine, that he may forget the injuries brought upon him by sinners. And he can easily be inebriated: because he is a little one (Isa. 9:6). She inebriates him first with the wine of compassion, by having compassion on sinners. Secondly, with the wine of devout prayer, by praying for them. Thirdly, with the wine of gladness and exultation, by rejoicing with those who make progress. The first wine is from the vineyards of Engaddi (Cant. 1:13), which is interpreted "eye of temptation": for from this, that she has an eye to human life, which is nothing but temptation—hence, Job 7:1, another reading says: *The life of man upon earth is a temptation* (the Vulgate has, Job 7:1: *The life of man upon earth is a warfare*)—from this she must needs have compassion. The second wine is the wine of Libanus. Osee 14:8: *The memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Libanus*: because devout prayer is born of whiteness and cleanness of mind, and from this, that she has a most clean mind, she can pray devoutly, compassion moving her. The third wine is that which *cheereth God and men* (Judges 9:13). With the first wine he shows himself inebriated, Cant. 2:14: *Show me thy face.* And afterward: *Let thy voice*, namely of devout prayer, *sound in my ears.* And this, *for thy voice is sweet*, that is, inebriating me. Hence, as one inebriated, he says, 3 Kings 2:20: *Ask, my mother*, etc. With the third wine he says he is inebriated by rejoicing the more with the congratulation of the blessed Virgin and multiplying grace. Again, Cant. 8:2, the mother shows with what kind of cup she gave her beloved to drink, where she says to the Son: *I will give thee a cup of spiced wine, and new wine of my pomegranates.* Spiced wine she calls charity seasoned with the honey of devotion and the spices of good works. Pomegranates she calls the fellowships of good works contained under the little cells of the several virtues; and the sweetness proceeding from them is called the new wine of the pomegranates. And significantly is added *my*: because to her pomegranates *(p. 632)* no others are compared.

Having seen how God was refreshed and given drink in this garden, it is to be seen how he, being satisfied, wishes others to be satisfied from the same. He says therefore to his intimates and to the friends of his mother: *Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved* (Cant. 5:1). For it might have

seemed that Christ had appropriated to himself all things that could delight in this garden, since he had added to each a pronoun signifying appropriation, saying: My honeycomb, my wine, and the like. But although he has certain special delights in the Virgin, as he who knows her prerogatives, which the human mind does not grasp, nevertheless every faithful soul, according to the measure received, finds in the blessed Virgin what to eat and what to drink. He finds whereby he may be fed and confirmed in good; he finds that his heart may be gladdened; he finds whereby he may be inebriated, so that what he had before loved in the world he may not henceforth bring back to memory. He says therefore: *Eat, O friends*, that is, delight in the fruits of this garden; *drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved*, with the wine which that vine pours out for you which says, Ecclus. 24:23: *As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor.* Who also says, in the same place, verse 26: *Be filled with my fruits.* Nay, who more expressly says, in the same place, verse 29: *They that eat me shall yet hunger, and they that drink me shall yet thirst.* As if she said: He who shall have tasted my sweetness in the present will desire to experience still more of it.

Mary feeds her guests. First and in the worthier manner with her glorious fruit, which is Christ, whom we receive in the sacrament, which fruit is sweet above honey and the honeycomb, in which is full and true refreshment as regards those in the Church militant, true and eternal enjoyment as regards those triumphant; and for both Christ says, John 6:56: *My flesh is meat indeed*, etc.

Secondly, with her virginal flesh. Hence she says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger*, etc. Likewise in the sacrament where the flesh of Christ is received: because the flesh of Christ and the flesh of Mary, as the flesh of mother and son, are one flesh. Hence the Apostle, speaking of the mother and the Son, 1 Cor. 6:16: *They shall be*, he says, *two*, that is, Christ and the Virgin, *in one flesh.* Adam said the like, Gen. 2:24. It is a most delicate dish to eat the virginal flesh.

Thirdly, with her words set down in the Gospel, which are the words of God, and which the Spirit of truth taught her: because *not in bread alone doth man live* (Matt. 4:4), etc. For this it is said of her, Ecclus. 15:3: *With the bread of life and understanding she shall feed him*, that is, her lover, that is, with the teaching of the word of God, which gives understanding to believers; and this in the present; and in the future with the bread of Angels, that is, with the enjoyment of God. Of which bread it is said, Luke 14:15: *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.* Or, *with the bread of life*, that is, with the sacrament of the Son, who is *the living bread which came down from heaven* (John 6:51), conferring here the life of grace, in the future the life of glory. For she procures for her lovers the grace of celebrating and communicating worthily. And at once is added of the effect of that bread, Ecclus. 15:3–4: *And he shall be made firm*, namely he who communicates worthily, *in it*, namely in that bread, because this is the bread that strengthens the heart of man in grace and virtue. *And he shall not be moved*, that is, he shall not yield to temptation or tribulation or heretical depravity. *And she shall hold him fast*, that is, she shall keep him in the unity of the Church with the other faithful. *And he shall not be confounded*, that is, he shall not be frustrated of his desire. Or, he shall not be confounded in the day of judgment with the wicked. *And she shall exalt him among his neighbors*, namely the Angels and the blessed men.

Chapter 1 (continued): On the Properties of the Garden

(p. 633) Fourthly, with certain most delicate dishes, the examples of her most holy and most virtuous conversation. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:29: *They that eat me*, that is, who incorporate her conversation into themselves, *shall yet hunger*: because it does not beget weariness, but desire. For the holy conversation of anyone which is drawn into example is spiritual food refreshing and fattening. Hence it was said to Peter, John 21:17: *Feed my sheep*, namely by the example of an honest conversation. Much more therefore does the conversation of the Virgin feed and refresh, since she is *bread having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste* (Wis. 16:20). Therefore she herself says, Cant. 5:1: *Eat, and you shall be friends: and drink, and be inebriated, and you shall be most dear.* And the imitation of her works is twofold. Either,

after her example to work well, and this is to eat: because in chewing one labors. Or, after her example to extinguish in oneself wicked concupiscences, and this is to drink, in which thirst is quenched.

Fifthly, she feeds herself as it were totally. For to eat her is to refresh her spiritually with love and devotion. For he eats her as a honeycomb of honey who delights in her eloquence, saying to her: *How sweet are thy words to my palate* (Ps. 118:103), etc.! Again, he who, very often recalling her virtues and benefits to mind, breaks forth into a voice of confession and praise, so that in the voice of exultation and confession there is the sound of one so feasting. For this that belongs to her which is said of the heavenly Jerusalem, Isa. 51:3: *Joy and gladness shall be found therein*, namely by those who eat her: *thanksgiving, and the voice of praise.* For this also it is said, Ecclus. 49:2: *As honey shall his memory be sweet in every mouth, and as music at a banquet of wine.*

Sixthly, she feeds with every delicate and savory food: because *the meat of all was in her* (Dan. 4:9). For she is the ark, of which God the Father said truly to Noe, that is, to the Son about to take flesh, Gen. 6:21: *Thou shalt take unto thee of all food that may be eaten, and thou shalt lay it up with thee.* She indeed refreshes us with the bread of life, as was said; with the flesh of the spotless lamb (Exod. 12:5 ff.); with first wheat, if we shall have been dove-like (Ezech. 27:17); with the fish of faith, the egg of hope, the bread of charity, with fragrant fruits of holy reputation, with dried grapes, that is, the memory of the passion, with pomegranates in which under one rind many grains are orderly disposed, making us keep and love the unity of brotherhood. For it is she who by her prayers *maketh men of one manner to dwell in a house* of the Church or of religion; with roasted fish ministering to us the grace of fraternal compassion. For a fish is roasted when a pious affection is burned by another's misery. So the Apostle was roasted when he said, 2 Cor. 11:29: *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?* For this the Lord ate a piece of a broiled fish (Luke 24:42–43), because the pious affection of those who have compassion tastes sweetly to him. She also feeds us with the honey of devotion, and makes our faces glad with the oil of spiritual joy.

Again, since she is the dispenser and cupbearer of graces, nay the vine and the wine-cellar. Hence she says, Cant. 2:4: *The king brought me into the cellar of wine*, or *into his storerooms*, where she is not only given drink by her beloved but also, drawing, pours out for her friends, who *of her fullness all receive, and grace for grace*; she gives her lovers and guests to drink with wine and manifold drink, and bestows differences of drinks according to the differences of the drinkers. And that she is the cupbearer of the saints she shows, Prov. 9:5, saying: *Drink the wine which I have mingled for you.* And, Cant. 5:1, she says to her guests: *Drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.* That she is also the cupbearer of the Lord she says, Cant. 8:2, where she speaks *(p. 634)* to the beloved: *I will give thee a cup of spiced wine*, etc., as above.

This cupbearer offers strong and hot new wine, spiritual grace, to those tasting it for the first time, by which, heated and taken out of themselves, they sweetly kindle into the love of the mother and of the Son: for by drinking the poor man takes upon himself horns, which are the love of Christ and of Mary, or the love of God and of neighbor. Isidore says that must is wine taken at once from the vat. And it is believed to be called must because it has in it mixed slime and earth, which is called *mus*, whence *humus*. But wine is so called because its drink quickly fills the veins with blood: for the ancients called wine *venenum* (poison), but after a venom of deadly juice was found, this was called wine, that poison. Hence Jerome in the book on Virginity: "Let the virgin of Christ flee wine as poison, lest for the fervent heat of age she drink wine and perish."

The wine of compunction to those mourning in penance, who can say to her: Thou hast given us to drink, O Mary, the wine of compunction.

The wine of spiritual joy to those who conceive hope of obtaining pardon through her help: of which it is said: *Wine cheereth the heart of man* (Ps. 103:15).

Mixed wine of devotion to those who invoke her from the heart. This ought not to be drunk without the water of tears, lest it make a man presumptuous: and of this she said to the Son: *They have no wine* (John 2:3). And

this is drunk at the wedding of Christ and of the penitent soul returning to him: and to such she says, Prov. 9:5: *Drink the wine which I have mingled for you.*

Clarified wine to those struggling against vices. For must is always in motion until the pure is separated from the impure, and until the impure is below, so that the lees lie underneath. So ought reason to set itself above sensuality and the flesh and any vices and sins. Therefore the Lord said to Cain, Gen. 4:7: *The lust thereof shall be under thee*, that is, of sensuality or of sin, *and thou shalt have dominion over it.*

The wine of spiritual doctrine to those gladly learning the wisdom of the Son, which is true. This is *the wine that maketh virgins to spring* (Zach. 9:17), that is, remaking virgin again minds formerly corrupted. This wine she offers, revealing to whom she will the hidden mysteries of the Scriptures.

The wine of hard rebuke to certain who sin horribly. This wine she offered to Theophilus, whom she austerely convicted of his impiety, but she added the oil of consolation, lest he despair of the mercy of the Son, and so into his spiritual wounds she poured oil and wine (Luke 10:34).

Aminaean wine, that is, white, from *a*, which is without, and *minium* (red lead), to those studying chastity. And this is *the wine that maketh virgins to spring* (Zach. 9:17), that is, virginal thoughts and affections. A sprout is the beginning of a growing thing: and humility always says: *Now have I begun* (Ps. 76:11); therefore in the sprout humility is noted.

Rose-colored wine, which namely reddens as a rose, to those fervent with charity. And this is that wine or blood in which Juda washes his robe and his cloak (Gen. 49:11).

The wine of human redemption to those suffering thirst of justice. To this wine she invites with the Son, Isa. 55:1, saying: *All you that thirst*, etc. *Come, buy without money … wine and milk*, that the redeemed may be able to say that of Cant. 5:1: *I have drunk my wine with my milk.*

Most pure wine, the sacrament of her Son, to those receiving it worthily, of which, Deut. 32:14: *And that he might drink the purest blood of the grape.* This wine is properly called *vinum passum*: because it is pressed from the dried grape, that is, from the body of Jesus Christ.

(p. 635) Flowered wine to novices beginning to serve her and the Son.

Rasped wine of humility to those trampling the lees of sins. Or, their own lees, that is, those who have their sins before the eyes of the heart. Who say with the Psalmist, Ps. 50:5: *My sin is always before me.*

Iron-flavored wine to those narrowing their life for her honor and that of her Son.

Clove-spiced wine aromatizing to those who praise her and the Son savorily and sweetly.

Pigment seasoned with heavenly spices to those who think of her sweetly and pleasantly. And it is called pigment as it were a pure taste of the mind.

Most savory claret to those who devoutly recall the passion of the Son and her compassion, and who have compassion both with the Son and with the mother with their whole affection. And claret is made of most precious spices and of the best wine which is carefully strained through them. Two strainers for this God the Father gave us. One was the body of Christ Jesus, the other the heart of Mary. The wine of this claret: either the blood of Christ who is the grape, of which it is said: *And that he might drink the purest blood of the grape* (Deut. 32:14). Or, the teaching concerning the Lord's passion: of which wine, Prov. 31:6: *Give wine to them that are sad in mind*, namely from compassion with Christ suffering. The aromatic spices of this claret are the several and all the circumstances of the passion, namely sadness, mourning, fear, weariness, the bloody sweat, the betrayal of Judas, the binding of the hands, the covering of the face, the blows and the slaps, the spittings, the scourges, the threats, the insults, the nails, the lance, the thorns, the tears, the gall and the vinegar and the wine mingled with myrrh, and the rest of this kind. And whatever of pain and sorrow passed

through the body of the Son, passed through the soul of the mother according to the sentence of Simeon, Luke 2:35: *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce,* etc. For this the body of the Son and the soul of the mother can rightly be named two strainers. And not only strainers, nay also storehouses of all aromatic spices, that is, of all virtues, graces and gifts. For these spices were bruised and crushed small in the little mortar of most humble passion, by diverse tribulations, as by certain pestles, when Christ *was bruised and ground for our crimes* (Isa. 53:5). And this was the whole powder of the perfumer, that is, of Christ, of which mention is made, Cant. 3:6 and Exod. 30:35. (Look below on this matter, under the heading on the spices of the enclosed garden.)

This cupbearer offers old and sweet-smelling wine to those persevering in her love. Of this wine it is said: *A new friend is as new wine: it shall grow old, and thou shalt drink it with pleasure* (Ecclus. 9:15).

Aromatic rose-wine to the perfect, who desire to be dissolved and to be with her. For from most fervent charity, which is figured in the rose, which is of most intense redness, such desire proceeds.

Wine of honor at the wedding of Assuerus and Esther, that is, of Christ and the Church, to those sitting at table. This is the chief and abundant wine, of which we read, Esther 1:7. And it is called of honor: because it is presented to princes and to the powerful for the sake of honor: and this wine, Isa. 25:6, is called a vintage refined from the lees: because it is drunk without mixture of anything contrary. At these nuptials the blessed Virgin ministers, to whom that of Luke 12:37 belongs: *He will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them*: and she herself urges them to eat and drink, saying that of Cant. 5:1: *Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.*

That the blessed Virgin is the cupbearer of the Son himself she shows, Cant. 8:2, where she promises her beloved, saying: *I will give thee a cup of spiced wine, and new wine of my pomegranates,* as we have expounded above.

(p. 636) Again, that she is the cupbearer of the just she shows, Prov. 9:5, saying: *Drink the wine which I have mingled for you.* Therefore she is designated by Rebecca, Gen. 24:18 ff., who from her pitcher gave Eliezer and the camels to drink, that is, Christ and the just.

Again, that she is the cupbearer of the blessed she shows, Cant. 5:1, where she says as speaking to the blessed themselves: *Drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.* She can also be called the cupbearer of those who are in purgatory, and of those who are punished in hell.

Of the mother also can be said that which is said of the Son in Ps. 74:9: *There is a cup in the hand of the Lord of pure wine, full of mixture. And he hath poured it out from this into that,* etc. A cup is so called from the Greek *kalon*, which is wood in Latin: because of old cups were made of wood, not of metal. This cup can be said to be whatever is justly repaid by the mother and the Son to each one. Or this cup commonly is whatever is offered by them to drink. It is called a cup in the hand of the Lord or of the Lady, that is, in the power, of pure wine of eternal gladness as regards the blessed, where nothing of sadness is mixed. Prov. 14:10: *The heart that knoweth,* etc., unto *in his joy a stranger shall not intermeddle,* that is, any fear or motion of sadness. With this pure wine she inebriates those who eat at the Lord's table, who *are inebriated with the plenty of the house of God,* which is she herself: and *with the torrent of thy pleasure they are made to drink* by her (Ps. 35:9). For there she sets before her guests the chief and abundant wine at the wedding of Esther and Assuerus, who is interpreted "blessed", namely of Christ and the Church, as, Esther 1:7, is said of the feast which Assuerus made. This cup therefore of pure wine is as regards the saints who are in the fatherland.

But this cup is said *full of mixture* as regards the saints who are still on the way, and as regards those who are still punished in purgatory, for whom she has mingled wine: because although they hope, yet they are afflicted while they wait: for *hope that is deferred afflicteth the soul* (Prov. 13:12), and *laughter is mingled with sorrow* (Prov. 14:13) of the hope of vexation. Therefore this cup is said full of mixture. Or therefore full

of mixture: because the present tribulation can be turned to a reward, and to torment.

But how it is mingled, the Psalmist adds when he says: *And he hath poured it out from this into that*, namely from one vessel into another vessel. But sometimes a vessel containing one wine or one liquor is poured into a vessel containing another wine. For so the Son and the mother pour for their servants into the cup of tribulation the cup of eternal gladness, where there are many good kinds of consolation for the troubled, by pouring in from the consideration of the retribution. And this those who devoutly serve Mary have often experienced. Those also who had carefully served in this life, she is believed mercifully to visit in purgatory, and either a word of comfort, or the gladness of her vision, or some breath of a pleasant odor, or something of this kind by which they may be refreshed and bear more lightly, is piously believed to be imparted to them. But those most wretched drinkers who cannot now be separated from the golden cup of Babylon, of which we read, Jer. 51:7, and who will not now drink of the mixture by doing penance, when all that is delightful has been drunk up, at length in hell will drink forever only the lees. Therefore there follows: *But the dregs thereof are not emptied out* (Ps. 74:9). The dregs of this cup are the pain of hell, which cannot be emptied out, because it is perpetual.

And this is what follows: *All the sinners of the earth shall drink*, from that cup. This name, sinner, often sounds with a certain antonomasia: and therefore those who sin directly against Mary, as heretics, Jews, blasphemers, and any who think ill of her, ought to be called antonomastically sinners, since one cannot easily sin more gravely than against the mother of the Savior. But such she will give to drink of the aforesaid lees, which appeared plainly of Julian the Apostate, *(p. 637)* whom, blaspheming her Son and threatening her servant blessed Basil, the soldier Mercurius, raised at her command, slew with a lance.

So therefore from this cup those who are above, namely the blessed, drink what is above, that is, the pure and unmixed. Those who are in the middle, that is, the just, and those who are being purged, that which is in the middle, that is, the mixed. And so for the damned who are below there remain only the lees which go down below in the cup so often mentioned.

Playful, so that to this garden in a good sense seems to belong that which is said, 1 Cor. 10:7: *The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play* (cf. Exod. 32:6). For she is designated by the ark of the testament, of which we read, 2 Kings 6:14, that David, bringing it into Jerusalem, *danced with all his might before the Lord, girt with a linen ephod*, or a stole of fine linen, as it is said, 1 Paral. 15:27. Likewise one must dance and trip before the blessed Virgin without fiction. Which is noted by this, that it is said that David danced with all his might. Which is also noted in the exultation of John in his mother's womb (Luke 1:44). And this by those girt with a linen ephod and a stole of fine linen, by which are signified cleanness of flesh and of spirit, without which mother and Son cannot be honored. And one must strike upon organs hanging from the shoulder, by which good work is figured, and the ox and the ram must be sacrificed, that is, wantonness and sloth. He plays therefore in this garden or before this ark who, attending to the great things which have been done in Mary, for joy of congratulation breaks forth into a voice of exultation. Isa. 51:3: *Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of praise.* And he praises well who can say with David: *I will play and I will make myself more vile*, that is, I will be humbled in my own eyes (2 Kings 6:22). And who has uncovered himself by confession with the scurrilous, and with those whom the world mocks.

Again, in this garden or before this ark we make as many leaps as we say salutations to her on bended knee, or as many venias as we take before her altars or images.

Chapter 2: On the Delights of This Garden

My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed (Cant. 4:12), etc. Since in an enclosed and fruitful garden many delightful things are wont to be found, by which the faithful soul can be refreshed in each of its members and senses: therefore under brief speech we have gathered, not in the whole but in part, the delights of this

garden, which by the following verses can the more easily be committed to memory:

Fountain, odor, herb, greenness, leaf, flower, branch, and tree, Shade, coolness, melody, delights, dew, Fruit, temperateness, abundance, drink, and food, Secret, rest, sleep, enclosure, fair weather, Cleanness, hiding-place, safety, medicine, playfulness.

Chapter 2 (continued): On the Delights of This Garden

(p. 638) All these things the glorious Virgin was to the Son of God, and all these things she is to us: because *she became all things to all, that she might gain all* (cf. 1 Cor. 9:22).

Of these delights we have touched on a part in what was said above, and another part we shall touch on in this chapter.

The first, then, and one of the greatest delights was the cooling shade: because *the power of the Most High overshadowed* Mary, and through the flesh taken from her prepared her as a shade for the Church, so that she can deservedly be called both overshadowed and overshadowing; to whom, when the Angel announced the Son, it was said, Luke 1:35: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.*

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee: because thou shalt conceive of the Holy Ghost. You who hear that Mary conceived of the Holy Ghost, understand it faithfully thus: As the Word of God is the image of the Father, so the soul of Christ is the image of the Holy Ghost. Nor do I now speak of that image by which man is said to have been made to the image of God (Gen. 1:27). In bodily things that is said to be the image of something which expressly has the form of that of which it is the image. And as bodily things have their forms, so also spiritual things. Now the form of the Holy Ghost is sevenfold grace, not a form which is in the Spirit, but which is from the Holy Ghost: as the brightness which is on a wall is called the brightness of the sun, not as being in the sun, but as being from the sun. The man Christ therefore was conceived of the Holy Ghost: because he received excellently the form of the Holy Ghost, that is, sevenfold grace. So that not materially but formally Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost: not as one to whom the Holy Ghost brought the matter of seed, but as one on whom, among all creatures, he more finely impressed the form of holiness.

Again, *the Holy Ghost shall come upon* thee. The Holy Ghost came to the Virgin by election, hastened by sanctification, drew near by address, coming upon her at length—that is, *super-ve-niens*, "coming over the woe"—by that ineffable operation of the incarnation. For a threefold woe had been inflicted on all the daughters of Eve for the demerit of her transgression. The first, corruption of the flesh. The second, privation of grace. The third, the pain of damnation: until the Holy Ghost, coming upon Mary—that is, *super-ve-liens*, "lifting off the woe"—took away from her all that woe, so that neither corruption of the flesh should make her impure, nor prevarication of mind guilty, nor damnation wretched.

And note that in human nature there was before a twofold infirmity. One proceeding from a superabundance of humors, that is, of carnal desires. The other from coldness, which was despair of the heavenly promises. These two infirmities the Holy Ghost, the physician, healed by their contraries, namely the cold by the hot, and the moist by the dry. The hot in the blessed Virgin was the ardor and desire of heavenly things, by which the cold of despair was cured. The dry was the purpose of continence and virginity, by which the moist of all carnal concupiscence was cured. Therefore there follows: *And the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee*; that is, from the heat of carnal desires, which it will extinguish, it will afford thee coolness in thee.

But since the power of the Most High, that is, the Son of the Father, is *light inaccessible* (1 Tim. 6:16), and the Sun of justice, and the Daystar or morning star, it seems that he ought rather to have said *shall shine upon* than *shall overshadow*: since things which are bright are wont to minister brightness rather than shade. Which perhaps would be true, unless we could weigh the miracles of God also after the form of natural

things. For every shadowy body in the nature of things casts its shadow on that which is opposite to that from which the brightness proceeds. By likeness attend here to this overshadowing. The thing from which the brightness *(p. 639)* proceeded was the divinity of the Word. Opposite to this splendor, the frailty of our mortality. The true humanity of Christ in the conception by a single word received into itself the splendor of the divinity, and so, being set between the divinity and our frailty, it overshadowed not only Mary but the whole world, so that you may understand the overshadowing as the mediation of the assumed flesh. And as the ray of the sun's beam sends the shadow of the bodies opposite it to different places, so Christ the sun of justice extended the overshadowing of his humanity to different parts of the Church at different times. To the east he cast a shadow when in his conception, coming down from heaven and taking the form of a servant, he gave an example of humility. To the west, when in the passion he bestowed the remedy of sin. To the north, when, descending into hell, he bit it. To the south, when, ascending, he carried the witnesses of his glory over into heaven.

Again, *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.* First he will come by the sanctification of the Virgin; he will come upon her by the sanctification of the virginal conception. *And the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.* Understand it of that power of which it is said in Ps. 76:15: *Thou hast made thy power known among the nations,* etc. And of which the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 1:23–24: *We preach … Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* This power overshadowed Mary. Hence the Father says to her, Isa. 51:16: *I have protected thee in the shadow of my hand.* The hand of the Father, through which he worked, is the Son. And this shadow was the infirmity of the flesh assumed, by which the splendor of the divinity was so tempered and at once overshadowed that in this obscurity the womb of the Virgin could hold him whom in his brightness the amplitude of all things could not hold. Of this shadow it is said, Cant. 2:3, in the person of Mary: *I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired.* But the shadow which overshadowed us was the ignominy of the passion, when loftiness appeared changed into lowliness, beauty into deformity, power into infirmity; when he who was *beautiful above the sons of men* was made deformed and shadowed, and *his look was as it were hidden* (Isa. 53:3), so that he was livid with stripes, smeared with spittle, pale in death, and filled with every manner of reproach. For this change about him was our overshadowing. And though there were many changes about him, this alone overshadowed us. For his loftiness had been changed into lowliness when he took the form of a servant; infirmity into majesty, when in the transfiguration he appeared glorified; mutability was changed into eternity, when he rose from the dead.

Again, on that word of the Angel, Luke 1:35: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, blessed Bernard says: "Above she was said to have been full of grace; and now how is it said: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*? Could she be filled with grace and not yet have the Holy Ghost, since he is the giver of graces? But if the Holy Ghost was already in her, how is he still promised as about to come upon her anew? Or perhaps therefore he did not say simply, *shall come into thee*, but added *upon*, because before indeed he was in her by much grace, but now he is announced to come upon her because of the fullness of more abundant grace which he is to pour out upon her? But since she is already full, how will she be able to hold more? And if she can hold something more, how is she to be understood to have been full before? Or had the former grace filled only her mind, while the following is to flood also her womb, that the fullness of the divinity, which before dwelt in her spiritually as also in many of the saints, might begin to dwell in her also bodily as in none of the saints? For he says: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High* (p. 640) *shall overshadow thee.* What is *and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee*? He that can take, let him take. For who, except perhaps her who alone most happily merited to experience this in herself, could grasp by understanding, discern by reason, how that inaccessible splendor poured itself into virginal bowels, and so that she could bear the inaccessible one approaching her, when from a little portion of that same body which he tempered to himself, he made a shade for the rest of the mass? And perhaps for this it was said, *shall overshadow thee*, because the thing was surely a mystery, and what the Trinity alone by itself willed to work in the Virgin alone and with the Virgin alone, it was given to know to her alone to whom alone it was

given to experience. Let it be said therefore: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, who by his power will make thee fruitful; *and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee*, that is, that manner in which thou shalt conceive of the Holy Ghost, the power of God, the wisdom of God, Christ (1 Cor. 1:24), will so cover and hide by overshadowing in his most secret counsel, that it may be known only to himself and to thee. As if the Angel answered the Virgin: Why do you ask of me what you will soon experience in yourself? You shall know, you shall know, and happily shall you know, but with him as teacher who is also the author. I have been sent to announce the virginal conception, not to create it. Nor can it be learned except by her who receives it."

Otherwise: *shall overshadow thee.* For the Lord mingled water with wine, as it is said, Prov. 9:5, that is, he united divinity to humanity in his person, and tempered the flash of the divinity with the cloud of humanity; otherwise human sight could not have borne so great a flash. Hence blessed Bernard: "The brightness of the eternal sun not even the gaze of that singular eagle, that is, of the blessed Virgin, could have endured, unless it had been overshadowed by the cloud of the flesh." Isa. 33:14: *Which of you can dwell with devouring fire?* etc. Deut. 4:24 and Heb. 12:29: *Our God is a consuming fire.* Therefore, Matt. 17:5, the Father appeared in a cloud, which has shade against splendor, coolness against heat.

Again, *shall overshadow thee*, by protecting against every tribulation: because as by a shade one is covered from the heat of the sun that it may not harm, so the grace of the Holy Ghost protected the Virgin from every assault. Hence the Interlinear Gloss: "I will give thee a shade against every tribulation."

Again, *shall overshadow thee*, by not hurting, as a shadow neither hurts nor weighs down, but affords coolness. Bede: "The power quickening, the shadow cooling: the Holy Ghost made her fruitful, the power kept her from corruption."

Again, *shall overshadow thee*, that is, from thy flesh he will temper to himself a body as it were a shade.

Again, *shall overshadow thee*, that is, he will work this secret generation with thee alone aware. Blessed Bernard: "To her alone it was given to know," as above.

Again, *shall overshadow thee*, that is, he will prepare thee through the flesh taken in thee as a shade for the Church.

Again, *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.* Bede: "The Holy Ghost coming upon the Virgin showed in her the efficacy of his divine power in two ways. Because he both so cleansed her mind, as far as human frailty allows, from every filth of vices, that she might be worthy of a heavenly birth; and in her womb by his sole operation created the holy and venerable body of our Redeemer, that is, without any intervening touch of man he formed from the flesh of the Virgin the most holy flesh from the undefiled. For him whom before he openly called the Holy Ghost, he now again named the power of the Most High." Of which, Luke 24:49: *Stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high.* And the power of the Most High overshadowed the blessed Mother of God: because the Holy Ghost, when he filled her heart, *(p. 641)* tempered the heat of the concupiscence of the flesh, cleansed it from temporal desires, and with heavenly gifts consecrated at once her mind and her body.

And the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. Bede: "A shadow is wont to be formed by light and a body set against it. The power of the Most High therefore overshadowed thee, Mary, when the incorporeal light of the deity took in thee the body of humanity." From this it is plain that the Holy Ghost is said to have overshadowed the blessed Virgin for this reason: because by his power the deity was united to the form of a servant, as a dark thing is set against light, so that the darkness may be referred to the form of a servant and the brightness to the deity.

Again, *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, etc. Master Hugh of St Victor: "Mary conceived of the Holy Ghost, not because she received the seed of the offspring from the substance of the Holy Ghost, but because

through the love and operation of the Holy Ghost nature ministered substance for the divine offspring from the flesh of the Virgin. For because in her heart the love of the Holy Ghost burned singularly, therefore in her flesh the power of the Holy Ghost did wonders. And he whose love in her heart received no partner, that is, no other love, his operation in her flesh had no example. Therefore it was said: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.* For the Holy Ghost came upon the Virgin, that by his operation the flesh of Christ might be formed from the flesh of the Virgin. And the power of the Most High overshadowed her, lest, ministering the substance of flesh, she should be burned by carnal concupiscence. And so it seems that it is to be understood that Mary is said to have conceived of the Holy Ghost."

Again, because the redemption of the world was from kindness. And kindness is attributed to the Holy Ghost. Therefore the Son of God, about to come into the world, is said to have been incarnate of the Holy Ghost. Or, *of the Holy Ghost*, that is, of the goodness of God. Or thus: *Shall come upon*, that is, above all mortals he shall come into thee. Again, *shall come upon*, that is, he shall come above merit. Or, *shall come upon*, that is, he shall come upon thee above other women: because thou shalt conceive a virgin. Hence, *shall come upon thee*, that he may swallow up in thee all that is carnal, and make thee wholly spiritual. Hence also she is called soul, not flesh. Prov. 25:25: *As cold water to a thirsty soul*, that is, to Mary, etc. Or, *shall come upon*, because from above. Or, *shall come upon*, because above merit, above thought, above hope, above desire, and above petition. For she could not have merited, would not have dared to think, nor hope, nor desire, nor ask, that the Son of God should be incarnate in her.

And the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: because he shall receive a shadow in thee, that is, flesh light and immune from sin. For a shadow has the figure of the body, but not of corruption. Or, *shall overshadow thee*, that is, shall make a shade for thee, by wholly extinguishing the tinder of sin in thee. For the Lord was in the conception *a powerful protector, a strong stay, a defense from the heat, and a cover from the sun at noon* (Ecclus. 34:19). For the Lord was a powerful protector to her through the Holy Ghost, and for this specially Gabriel was sent to her, who is interpreted "strength of God". He was a defense from the heat to her in the conception, because she conceived without fault: for by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost the fire of all lust was extinguished in her, nay even the ashes, that is, the tinder of sin, were lulled to sleep, so that no itching could be stirred up in her. He was also a strong stay in the birth: because she did not labor in bringing forth. He was a cover from the sun at noon to her in the passion. (Look for this in her tenth privilege, where her martyrdom is treated.)

Again, *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, that is, from above, from the Father of lights, he shall come into thee. And as is done in a kiss, the Father will breathe his spirit into thee, as thou hadst asked, saying of the Father: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. 1:1).

(p. 642) And the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee—thee, as it were for thee, that is, for thy honor, that he may honor thee with the name of Mother of God. *The power of the Most High*, that is, the Son of God the Father, who is called the power and the arm of the Father, *shall overshadow thee*, that is, shall make a shade: for by taking flesh from the flesh of the Virgin he made a shade for the divine nature, and under the shadow of the flesh covered the splendor of the divinity.

Again, *the Holy Ghost*, that is, the love of the Father and the Son, came upon the Virgin, that, *prevented with blessings of sweetness* (Ps. 20:4), she might taste the sweetness of the divine will. *And the power of the Most High overshadowed her*, that she, a woman and a fearful virgin, against the years of tender age, against the frailty of the female sex, might not fear to be received into the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Holy Ghost came upon her, that by his fruitful descent she might experience that *the Lord is sweet to all* (Ps. 144:9), but to her surpassingly; and that *his tender mercies are over all his works*, but over her incomparably. *And the power of the Most High overshadowed her*, that, the veil of the assumed flesh being set between, she, made the receiver and the conceiver of majesty, might in no wise be overwhelmed by the glory. And

therefore she herself said, Cant. 2:3: *I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired.* And because of the fruitful and sweet coming of the Holy Ghost she adds: *And his fruit was sweet to my palate.*

Again, the Holy Ghost first came into the Virgin, that she first under the law, against the curse of the law, might vow to God the unfading flower of virginity. Secondly, he came upon the same, that she alone of all women, a virgin, might conceive and bear God and man, and remain a virgin. The power of the Most High also overshadowed her, that it might shut off from her affection and from her sight, for love of heavenly things, all the sheen of temporal glory, all the favor of flattering fortune. It overshadowed her again, that from every incentive of carnal allurement it might, I do not say temper her, but render her insensible, above her former state, above the human manner, after the likeness of angelic purity. In the coming of the Holy Ghost therefore *she tasted and saw that the Lord is sweet* (Ps. 33:9), that is, the Holy Ghost, of whom she conceived; in the overshadowing of the power of the Most High she understood the power and wisdom of God, that is, the Word itself which she was conceiving: otherwise how should she conceive bodily of the Spirit, unless she were first touched spiritually and sweetly by his love? or how should the Word descend into the womb of the virgin, unless the virgin herself were rapt in mind to the understanding of the Word? First therefore wisdom was made in her mind, before flesh was made in and from her flesh: first she had conceived the Spirit in her spirit, before she conceived of him in her womb.

Chapter 2 (continued): On the Delights of This Garden

Another delight is light that illuminates in a tempered way. Isa. 19:1: *Behold the Lord will ascend upon a light cloud,* that is, he will assume flesh, covering the sun of eternal light like a cloud, and tempering it to the bleared eyes of mortals. *Light,* that is, without that weight of which it is said, Heb. 12:1: *Laying aside every weight*: for sin is a talent of lead, of which, Zach. 5:7: *Behold a talent of lead was carried.* The talent which delights is of lead: because by its weight it sinks the soul into hell. And what Isaias calls a cloud, Solomon calls a mist, 3 Kings 8:12: *The Lord said that he would dwell in a cloud.* And as it were explaining himself, he adds a little after, verse 27: *Is it then to be thought that God should indeed dwell upon earth?* Again, Luke 1:35: *The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.* This power is Christ, *the power of God and the wisdom of God* (1 Cor. 1:24). Of which power it is said in Ps. 76:15: *Thou hast made thy power known among the nations.* This power overshadowed Mary, and this shadow was the infirmity of the assumed flesh, by which the splendor of the divinity *(p. 643)* was so tempered and at once overshadowed, that in this obscurity the womb of the Virgin could hold him whom in his brightness the amplitude of all things could not hold.

Again, it is said in the person of Mary, Cant. 2:3: *I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired,* etc. This shadow is the coolness of the grace of God. Otherwise: a shadow is dark, and the mystery of the Lord's incarnation is of such darkness that no human gaze avails to penetrate it by understanding, not even John the Baptist himself, saying: *I am not worthy to loose the latchet of his shoe* (John 1:27).

Another delight: the running of waters and the watering of fountains, that is, the streams of the sacred Scriptures. Hence, Luke 2:19: *Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.* And a little after it is said, ibid., verse 51: *And his mother kept all these words.* For she was the bookcase of the Scriptures. (You will find this fully under the heading on the wisdom of Mary.) With these streams the whole Church, which is the garden of the Lord, is still watered; nay and every faithful conscience, in the teaching of the Evangelists and of the other saints, with whom she conversed familiarly about the incarnation, the deeds and the miracles of the Savior.

Another delight is the good odors of Mary's virtues, which strengthen the inner spirits of her lovers, and in which the young maidens run after the queen, saying, Cant. 1:3: *Draw me: we will run after thee to the odor of thy ointments.* For the faithful soul asks to be drawn by Mary chiefly for three reasons: either because its own heaviness holds it back; or because the sweetness of this world draws it back; or that its speed in

arriving may be increased. Or therefore the faithful soul asks to be drawn by Mary: because, as the Son says of the Father, John 14:6: *No man cometh to the Father but by me*: so in a certain way he seems to say of the mother: No man can come to me unless my mother draw him by her prayers. Or thus: *Draw me after thee*, that is, do violence to my flesh, that although it resist, yet by the desire of my mind I may follow thee. Or thus: *Draw me after thee.* Draw me unwilling, that thou mayest make me willing. Draw me sluggish, that thou mayest render me running. Or thus: *Draw me after thee*, either by terrifying with threats, or by exercising with scourges, or by coaxing with benefits. Or thus: *Draw me after thee*, that by the infusion of grace free will may follow thee.

There follows: *We will run to the odor of thy ointments. We will run* in the plural: I, namely, and others whom as far as I can I will inflame to thy love. For no one is a curtain of the tabernacle, that is, of the Church of God, who does not as far as he can draw others to the worship of God and of Mary. Hence, Apoc. 22:17: *The Spirit and the bride say: Come. And he that heareth, let him say: Come.* The odors of Mary, namely the fragrance of her virtues; the ointments, that is, imitation of her; or her works and manners, which like ointments are fragrant and sweet-smelling, soothe sorrows, heal wounds, and are as it were fragrant to those who follow.

Again, her virtues are her ointments, which we ought to hunger for by desire. Of such ointments it is said again to Mary, Cant. 4:10: *The sweet smell of thy ointments above all aromatical spices.* In the same place, verse 11: *The smell of thy garments as the smell of frankincense.* Ointments are medicinal and fragrant. Frankincense signifies prayer: for nothing is more medicinal to a sick soul, nothing more fragrant to a delicate soul, than that the blessed Virgin intercedes with the Son both for the just and for sinners. Therefore he is said to be crowned *from the dens of the lions* (Cant. 4:8). These lions are the demons, whose dens are sinners, for whom she prays assiduously, and thence she is glorified by every rational creature.

Again, the odors of Mary are her virginal *(p. 644)* humility and humble virginity, whose vow she first uttered, by which most sweet odor she both enticed the Son of God and wholly ravished him: who, enticed and wholly ravished, leapt from the bosom of the Father into the womb of the mother. And finding not only in her womb the odor of virginity, but also in her mind the odor of humility, and mingling with these odors the odor of his deity, he made of the handmaid a spouse, and of the creature a mother.

Again, the most fragrant ointments of Mary are three principal ones. The first, heavenly wisdom. The second, spiritual grace. The third, unfading glory. For by her words and examples she teaches her own true wisdom: because *she is the teacher of the knowledge of God* (Wis. 8:4). For sinners she obtains grace, as is plain in Theophilus; to those who honor her she promises glory. Hence she says, 1 Kings 2:30: *Whosoever shall glorify me, him will I glorify.* For this threefold advantage we must run to the odor of her ointments. And so also the Holy Spirit must be entreated by us: *Come, O south wind, blow through the garden* of Christ, that is, Mary, *and let the aromatical spices thereof flow* (Cant. 4:16).

Another delight, for the spiritual eyes: greenness that strengthens, tempered light that does not scatter the sight, beauty of flowers gladdening the gaze, variety of fruits arousing the appetite, and the like.

Again, of this garden Christ said, Cant. 6:10: *I went down into the garden, to see the fruits of the valleys*, etc. And we, humbling ourselves, ought often to go down into this garden by recalling the virtues of Mary, that by them our affection may be fed and our understanding enlightened.

Another delight: the concert and harmony of the birds, who were the Apostles and Prophets, who with consonant voice spoke both of her who brought forth and of the virgin birth: for what the Prophets foretold as to come, this the Apostles preached as fulfilled. When we eagerly inquire of these things in the Scriptures, and devoutly attend to those preaching them, we draw from this garden for our spiritual hearing a delight by which we are quickened. Isa. 55:3: *Hear, and your soul shall live.* Therefore also she promises her hearers, Ecclus. 24:30: *He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded*, etc. For *blessed are they that search his*

testimonies, namely those which can be drawn from the Scriptures concerning her, *and that seek him with their whole heart* (Ps. 118:2). Wis. 8:2: *Her have I loved, and have sought her out*, etc.

Another delight: the sweet smell of spices and herbs, of flowers and fruits, of trees and roots, all of which delight the smell of the soul, and quicken the soul itself to run, as above.

Another delight: the taste and savor of fruits, and the sweet drink of fountains. Of which Mary says: *They that eat me shall yet hunger, and they that drink me shall yet thirst* (Ecclus. 24:29). Therefore also she says, Cant. 5:1: *Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.* The principal, nay the singular fruit of this garden is the body of her Son, which is received in the sacrament, who says, John 6:56: *My flesh is meat indeed.*

Again, the devout invocation of the name, and frequent remembrance, diligent imitation, and sweet salutation are as it were certain dishes, certain delights not carnal but spiritual, certain aromatic spices by which we are refreshed in this garden. But their savor is not perfectly perceived unless they are chewed for a longer time, as is plain in aromatic spices. For this reason indeed the middle syllable of this name, *Maria*, is long, that one may dwell longer in naming it. But note that while something aromatic is being chewed, the mouth ought to be shut, lest the sweetness of the aromatic be heedlessly lost. Likewise, if you desire fully to taste the sweetness of these delights, have *(p. 645)* your mouth shut to shameful things, and by regular silence set a guard on your mouth. Ecclus. 28:28: *Make doors and bars to thy mouth*, namely to thy ears. In the same place, verse 29: *Melt down thy gold and silver, and make a balance for thy words*, etc. Again, Ecclus. 21:28: *The words of the prudent shall be weighed in a balance.* Again, open your mouth, that is, the desire of the heart. Hence: *I opened my mouth, and panted* (Ps. 118:131). The taste of the fountains of this garden delights, by which is signified the foretaste of the graces of Mary.

Another delight: the soft and aromatic touch of flowers, whose fragrance and sweetness of odor make the touch sweet. Which is done especially when, for the praise and glory of Mary, you work with all earnestness whatever good you can. Ecclus. 24:30: *They that work by me shall not sin.*

Another delight: to walk through this garden with bare feet in the dew. Which is done when, with affections stripped of wicked concupiscences, you ask of her the dew of her mercy. Or, when you hasten diligently to her monasteries or altars to obtain from her the dew of her grace.

Another delight: to rest upon green grass: which is done when, on bended knees, by humility, before the image of the mother you call upon her patronage with the Son, and by the benefit of her prayers you rest from the labors of sins. For this it is said of the just, who are the sheep of Christ, Ezech. 34:14: *There shall they rest on the green grass.*

Again, of such delights Abbot Eckebert says to Mary: "A garden of delights to us is thy most holy womb, O Mary: because from it we gather the flowers of manifold joy, as often as we recall in mind how great a multitude of sweetness has flowed out thence to the whole world." Since therefore this garden abounds with so great a fullness of delights and is laid open to all, nay even, what is more, invites to its fullness, saying, Cant. 5:1: *Eat, O friends*, etc., wretched is he who does not hunger, sick he who loathes, stinking or dead he who does not perceive its odors, squeamish he to whom it has no savor; so that those who are such seem to say with the wretched Hebrews, Num. 21:5: *Our soul now loatheth this very light food.* In the same, 11:6: *Our eyes behold nothing else but manna.* They are like also that most wretched captain of whom we read, 4 Kings 7:19–20, who heard of the plenty which Eliseus foretold would follow on the morrow, and did not believe. So there are many who hear of the fruitfulness and the plenty of Mary's benefits, but do not believe: and therefore they do not eat of them. Samaria, which is interpreted "watch", is the Church, which guards Christians, whose gate is the blessed Virgin: for by her merits, prayers and examples we enter the Church not only in number but also in merit. At this gate a measure of fine flour, that is, Christ, is given for one stater, that is, for the least. That wretched captain who first heard of this plenty but did not believe, afterward saw it

but did not eat of it, designates the unbelieving and the rich of the world, whom worldly cares trample in the present, and consequently they are trampled also by the demons, and die eternally. Of such unbelievers it is said, Ecclus. 2:15: *Woe to them that are fainthearted, who believe not God: and therefore they shall not be protected by him.*

Chapter 3: On the Spices of This Garden; and There Are Few Chapters Here

(p. 646) My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed (Cant. 4:12), etc.

Of the spices and aromatic species of the enclosed garden it is said, Cant. 3:6: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?* These are the words of Solomon in the person of the whole company of Angels and of blessed men. It can also be the voice of the heavenly powers astonished at so solemn and wonderful an assumption of the human race in the blessed Virgin, when almost the whole human race had gone down into hell: because *the fire of hell hath devoured* almost all *the beautiful places of the wilderness*, that is, of the world, as it is said, Joel 1:19. These beautiful places are clerics, monks, knights, virgins, and the like. They say therefore in wonder: *Who is she*, etc.?

Note that this question is made three times in the Canticles: *Who is she that goeth up*, etc.? First, Cant. 3:6, as here. And here the question is put in wonder at her sanctification. Hence there follows: *Of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense*, etc. And this her first ascent was in her nativity. The second is made concerning her conversation in the progress of her life, Cant. 6:9: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising*, namely in her nativity, *fair as the moon*, in the progress of her life, *bright as the sun*, in her glorification? The third is made, Cant. 8:5, concerning her glorification, where the Angels say in wonder: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?* The first, of the magnificence of grace. The second, of the magnificence of merit. The third, of the magnificence of glory.

Or thus: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert*, that is, through the world, by the pre-eminence of grace; *cometh forth* by progress of life; *cometh up from the desert*, that is, from the world, by the excellence of glory? It is said therefore: *Who is she?* This question is made in wonder, not in doubt. *Who is she*, that is, how wonderful, how beloved, how surpassing all creatures, with how great praises to be extolled, how most worthy of great admiration, that she pours round about not only the whole world but also the whole heaven with an odor of inestimable sweetness.

Who is she? The first Gloss: How worthy, or how wonderful. And those who ask this wonder at four things in the Virgin. The first is the purity of innocence, which she had so great that she did not feel concupiscence, which is above custom. The second, the superabundant grace which she had so great that it sufficed copiously for herself and for the whole world. Hence she was called *full of grace*, and this above merit. The third, the fruit of her womb: because, nature wondering, she bore her own begetter, namely God, which was above nature. The fourth, the glory of her ascending, which was above all reason. For who could grasp the delights of her ascending? Hence, Cant. 8:5, she is said to be *flowing with delights.* Or the delights to which she ascended, which *eye hath not (p. 647) seen, nor ear heard*, etc. (1 Cor. 2:9).

That goeth up. It is to be noted that Eve went down, but Mary went up. Hence also the verb of going up is fittingly attributed to her. For Eve went down in three ways. First, by the fault of disobedience, obeying the serpent more than God. Secondly, by the curse. Hence it was said to her: *I will multiply thy sorrows, and in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children* (Gen. 3:16). Thirdly, by subjection. Hence: *Thou shalt be under thy husband's power*, etc. But Mary went up: against the fault by grace, against the curse by the blessing of the fruit, against servitude by most entire liberty. For she was made queen of the Angels.

That goeth up, as it were by five steps. The first is seen in this, that she was sanctified in her mother's womb. Hence: *The Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle* (Ps. 45:5). The second, that being sanctified she

was filled with grace. Hence: *Full of grace.* Blessed Bernard: "What wonder if full of grace, with whom God was?" The third, that being filled with grace she went forward from virtue to virtue, that is, from the active to the contemplative life, and conversely, so that she could truly say: *The grace of God in me hath not been void* (1 Cor. 15:10). The fourth, that going forward she was made fruitful: for because her works, and above all the vow of virginity, pleased the Lord more than all the works of others, therefore the Son of God came down into her, and made her fruitful by the work of the Holy Spirit. The fifth, that being made fruitful she was exalted above all the choirs of the Angels.

Otherwise: *That goeth up,* namely from original sin to sanctification. Again, *that goeth up*: because *in her heart she hath disposed to ascend by steps, in the vale of tears* (Ps. 83:6–7). Again, *that goeth up,* as it were by steps advancing herself from virtue to virtue, surpassing each order of the saints in beatitude and grace, continually profiting from good to better, within by contemplation and holy desires, without by good works and the examples of the virtues. Again, *that goeth up* from grace to merit, from merit to reward. Or better: *that goeth up* from the grace of virginity to the glory of a mother—and not of anyone, but of God. Again, *that goeth up* from the humility of a handmaid to the dignity of a queen. Or, *that goeth up* from the barrenness of virginity to the fruitfulness of a mother, persevering a most pure virgin.

There follows: *By the desert,* that is, through the world, which is called a desert because of the abundance of a twofold evil, namely of fault and of pain, and because of the want of spiritual good. Or, *by the desert,* that is, by the forsaking of the world, which she held for a desert, whose concupiscences and delights she despised and cleaved to spiritual delights; designated by the vine, the fig tree and the olive (Judges 9:8 ff.), which would not be promoted among the trees. Or, through heaven itself, which the sinning Angels forsook. Hence also it is called the desert through which she went up in her assumption, passing over all the orders of the Angels and saints, going up even to the right hand of him who sits on the throne. Hence she is designated by Bethsabee, for whom a throne was set beside her son king Solomon, and she sat at his right hand (3 Kings 2:19). Or, *by the desert,* as some will, and by this, that she herself was a desert according to many properties of a desert. (Look under the heading on the earth, where Mary is called a desert.) In the following discourse you will find many other things about this desert.

Chapter 3 (continued): On the Spices of This Garden

She goes up, I say, *as a pillar of smoke,* that is, after the likeness of a rod and of smoke. Or, after the likeness of smoke rising on high, slender and straight, having the figure of a rod. And a pillar of smoke is a fragrant exhalation rising from spices; and she was a pillar of smoke by the vapor everywhere diffused *(p. 648) of myrrh,* that is, of her chastity. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:20: *I yielded a sweet odor like the best myrrh*; *and of frankincense,* that is, of her charity. Hence also it is said, Cant. 4:11: *The smell of thy garments as the smell of frankincense.*

Again, *as a pillar of smoke*: of smoke, I say, given off from the spices of myrrh and frankincense set alight. These spices are the virtues, fragrant in themselves and in the soul in which they are contained, as a box containing spices which make a good odor, as can be seen in the vessels of apothecaries. Or, *of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense,* intransitively, that is, from myrrh and frankincense, which are spices, that is, from the mortification of the flesh, which is designated by myrrh, and from the devotion of prayer, which is designated by frankincense. Of smoke given off also from the spices *of all the powders of the perfumer,* that is, ground or made up by the perfumer, that is, by the Holy Spirit, of whom it is said, Ecclus. 38:7: *The apothecary shall make sweet confections, and shall make up ointments of health.* By myrrh, which kills worms and keeps dead bodies from rotting, is designated penance, which mortifies wicked motions and preserves the minds of penitents from the corruption of sin; and it consists in two things, in the chastising of the flesh and in the exercise of good works. For in both ways carnal affection is mortified in us.

Or, by myrrh, which is of bitter taste, the multitude of bitternesses which she suffered in mind in the passion of the Son. By frankincense, the devotion of the virginal mind sighing toward the Son and desiring to follow him. Hence also she said, Cant. 5:8: *Daughters of Jerusalem*, that is, O you angelic powers inhabiting the heavenly Jerusalem, *tell my beloved*, that is, my Son, *that I languish with love.*

And of all the powders of the perfumer. By all the powders of the perfumer is designated the totality of the other virtues. By this, that he says *all*, it is hinted that no virtue was lacking to the blessed Virgin: not the purity of the Angels, nor the faith of the Patriarchs, nor the knowledge of the Prophets, nor the zeal of the Apostles, nor the patience of the Martyrs, nor the sobriety of the Confessors, nor the innocence or humility of the Virgins. Or, by myrrh is designated action, in which Mary had no equal: because all the works of piety which are wont to be shown to other poor, she showed to her poor Son. Of which you will find on the text: *Jesus entered into a certain town* (Luke 10:38), etc. By frankincense, devotion. By all the powders of the perfumer, contemplation is figured. And in these three virtues, namely action, devotion and contemplation, understand all the others, of all of which there was every manner of fullness in the glorious Virgin. Nor is it said, *of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense*, and of other spices, but *of all the powders of the perfumer*, as if the spices themselves were reduced to a certain powder by humility. It is said *all*, therefore, because of the multitude of those things from which contemplation rises, which are many more than those in which action and devotion consist. Or also therefore he says *of all the powders of the perfumer*, because as aromatic species and pigments reduced to powder avail for a confection and give out a breath of good odor: so the virtues, when they do not lift up the mind, but are reduced as it were to powder and as it were to nothing in respect of him who has them, lead to perfection and give out the fame of good repute. Or therefore it is said *of all the powders of the perfumer*: because Mary made claret of wine and aromatic species, with which she gives the Son to drink and the heavenly guests. Hence also she is fittingly called the cupbearer of glory. Hence, Cant. 7:9, the bridegroom says to her: *Thy throat like the best wine.* And she answers: *Worthy for my beloved to drink, and for his lips and his teeth to ruminate.* Again, Cant. 8:2, she says to the beloved: *I will give thee a cup of spiced wine*, etc. She also, gladdening the heavenly guests, says to them, Cant. 5:1: *Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved. (p. 649)* The perfumer is Christ, who bestows the virtues, and by whose grace they are acquired. Or according to the moral sense, the perfumer is the man who gives his labor to acquiring, keeping and exercising the virtues. And Christ is called the perfumer of all the powders, that is, of perfect humility: because by word and example he taught us every degree of humility, namely to subject oneself to a greater, to an equal, and to a lesser. For he was subject to the Father, to whom he is equal—subject according to the humanity. He was subject also to Mary and Joseph, who were far inferior to him. Therefore he says, Matt. 3:15, to blessed John: *So it becometh us to fulfill all justice*, that is, to show in ourselves every degree of humility. Therefore he says, Matt. 11:29: *Learn of me*, etc.

Again, all the powder of this perfumer is the totality of the virtues, all of which must be reduced by humility to the finest powder. Hence it is said, Exod. 30:36: *And when thou hast beaten all into very small powder*, etc. And the more finely they are ground and crushed by every manner of humility, of which it is said, Ecclus. 7:19: *Humble thy spirit very much*, etc., the sweeter the fragrance of odor they give out in the nostrils of the Lord: and so they are beaten by patience, which is noted by the beating, and by humility, which is noted by the powdering. So Abraham was powdered, calling himself *dust and ashes* (Gen. 18:27). Likewise David, saying: *I have been humbled, O Lord, exceedingly: quicken thou me* (Ps. 118:107), etc. As Christ himself, saying: *I am a worm, and no man* (Ps. 21:7). So also the blessed Virgin, as is plain.

Morally, this question, *Who is she*, etc.? is that of the Prophet himself, namely of Solomon, or of the Angels wondering at the progress of the penitent soul. Nor do they ask *of what kind* she is, or *how great*, but *who*: because of her kind and greatness, as regards the glory to which she goes up, the very vision by which it is given them to see her makes them certain. But that a creature so vile as man, who had denied his Creator and

subjected himself to the devil, and, having cast away the ornaments of the virtues, had defiled himself with the filth of sins, should be taken up to so great glory, they wonder, and say: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert*, that is, by penance? For as the children of Israel came through the desert from Egypt into Jerusalem, so from the world one goes up by penance into heaven. And afterward they determine the manner of going up, when they say: *As a pillar of smoke*, that is, most slender by poverty, most straight by intention, light without the weight of sins, upright by desire of eternal things, proceeding *from aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer*, that is, from the mortification of the flesh, the devotion of prayer, the perfection of humility. These three make the penitent soul fit for going up, and remove every hindrance. For by the first the plagues of the body are healed, by the second the plagues of the mind, as Jerome says. By the third the soul is conducted before God. Hence, Ecclus. 35:21: *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds: and till it come nigh he will not be comforted: and he will not depart till the Most High behold.*

Mary is called smoke: because slender and fine by the purity of innocence, and always making herself slender by the highest humility. Hence, when she was chosen as the mother of the Lord, she offered herself as a handmaid (Luke 1:38). Slender also by poverty: because she despised all temporal things; or if at any time she had them, she gave them out largely. Slender also by the thinning of the flesh: because although she never sinned, she always remained in penance. She was also slender because thinned by heavenly disciplines, and fine in the contemplative life. Slender also that without obstacle she might pass through *(p. 650) the narrow way*, and enter *the gate that leadeth to life* (Matt. 7:14).

Because freely seeking the heights by the fineness of contemplation and the uprightness of intention. For *standing on the earth she reached unto heaven* (Wis. 18:16).

Because nimble: for with light course, with light leap, like Idithun, that is, leaping over all the thorns of the vices, she leapt over the mud and the pits. Nimble also by readiness to serve, when she betook herself to visit blessed Elizabeth. Nimble also by obedience, carrying the Son to the temple, and fleeing with him into Egypt.

Because light, that is, without the heaviness of sin: and therefore she was continually borne upward by the desire of eternal things.

Because pliant: by humility as regards herself, by obedience as regards God, by compassion and piety as regards the neighbor.

Because a rod, by the lessening of humility, which most of all works together for going up: because *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke 14:11).

Because dark, by the multitude of tribulations which she suffered for the love of her Son. Hence she says, Cant. 1:5: *Do not consider me that I am brown, because the sun*, that is, my Son, *hath altered my color.* (Look under the heading on her beauty.)

Because aromatic, by good repute and the fragrance of devotion. Hence there follows: *As a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices*, etc. (Cant. 3:6).

Because hot, by love. Hence also she is called a pillar of smoke, which proceeds from fire: because desire comes from love. For she, kindled by the ardor of the Holy Spirit, so advanced in grace by going up, so went up in glory, that it exceeds all human knowledge. Therefore she is called a pillar of smoke, which naturally goes up, and as it were secretly: because, going up visibly, it vanishes in a moment. Likewise she too vanished, because how far she went up human reason does not grasp, but savors. The manner also of her going up was hidden: because whether she went up in the soul alone, or in soul and body together, the Church has preferred piously not to know rather than rashly to define anything.

Because the more it goes up, the more it is thinned and refined. So also the faithful soul, the more it profits in virtue, the more it is humbled in itself, as is plain in Mary, who, when she was sought as the mother of the Lord, which was the highest dignity for her, offered herself as a handmaid, which was the highest humility. An example of Abigail (1 Kings 25:41). Likewise the more one goes up in the knowledge of God, the more he becomes nothing in his own eyes. Which is plain in Abraham, who after the Lord appeared to him called himself dust and ashes (Gen. 18:27). Job 42:5–6: *Now my eye seeth thee: therefore I reprehend myself*, etc.

Because smoke provokes tears, and the loving remembrance of Mary tears of devotion. Hence faithful souls say in Ps. 136:1: *We wept, when we remembered Sion*, that is, Mary.

Again, the smoke rising from kindled spices is thanksgiving for the virtues given her, which were kindled with the fire of charity, which she ascribed not to herself but to the grace of God. Or, in the going up of smoke toward heaven her right intention can be figured. And note that it is not said here that she was a rod of insensible and hard wood, but *of smoke*, which has appearance but has not substance. For when it is seen, it seems to be something; when the hand is put to it, nothing is found. So the blessed Virgin seemed to be here by the appearance of the flesh, but she was not here by love. Likewise neither is the just man: because *his conversation is in heaven* (Phil. 3:20).

Again, Cant. 8:5, the Angels say: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved? (p. 651)* And they wonder at three things which they observed in the Virgin, namely at the going up, at the abundance of delights, and that she leaned on the beloved. The first wonderful, the second more wonderful, the third most wonderful. The going up is wonderful: because few go up. Hence, Ps. 23:3: *Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord?* etc.; and he notes the rarity: for *few are chosen* (Matt. 20:16); but almost all go down. Hence, Isa. 5:14, where he speaks of hell: *Their strong ones … and their high and glorious ones shall go down into it*, etc. The second more wonderful: because fewer go up flowing with delights: because almost all with muddy feet, that is, affections, go down at least into purgatory. The third most wonderful, namely that she leaned on the beloved: which was given to no other creature; who namely is the Son, *above all Principality and Power*, and *under whose feet* the Father *hath subjected all things* (Eph. 1:21–22). And in this leaning three things are noted: the reverence of the mother, the excellence of the Son, the familiarity of both. As if a king should lean on some knight, the knight bends his shoulder, and so on his part reverence is paid to the king, and on the king's part excellence, on the part of both familiarity: because a king leans only on one very familiar.

Leaning upon her beloved. And note *upon*, as it were higher than the beloved: for the Son does whatever the mother commands. Hence also we say to her: "Pray the Father, command the Son." And in this all the Scriptures agree, although certain evil men speak against it.

Again, by this that it is said, *leaning upon her beloved*, it is hinted that the Son was present: otherwise he would not seem to have fulfilled that of Exod. 20:12: *Honor thy father and thy mother*, etc. But he *began to do and to teach* (Acts 1:1). *Leaning upon her beloved*: for the Son repays the mother in turn: for the Son of God, leaning upon the mother, came down to earth in the incarnation. Hence, Isa. 19:1: *The Lord will ascend upon a light cloud, and will enter into Egypt*, etc. And the mother, leaning upon the Son, went up into heaven in her assumption. Or thus: The beloved leaned upon her when he took flesh in her, formed and growing together in her womb; and she upon the beloved, when she said of the Son conceived: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49), etc.

The first little part of this authority, namely *Who is this that cometh up from the desert?*, you have sufficiently expounded in the discourse above. Again note that first it is said, *flowing with delights*, and afterward, *leaning upon her beloved.* For lest she should lose the flowing delights, she leaned not on her own merits but on the grace of him who bestows grace and merit in the present, and in the future will add the reward.

Otherwise: *Who is this,* etc. And they wonder at five things in this Virgin. First, at her dignity. Hence: *Who is this?* The Gloss: that is, how worthy. Secondly, at the glory of her going up, in the words *that cometh up.* Thirdly, at the place or state from which she goes up, in the words *from the desert.* Fourthly, at the delights of her going up, in the words *flowing with delights.* Fifthly, at the fullness of love by which she is lifted up, in the words *leaning upon her beloved.*

Who is this? It can be answered: the dining-hall of the Trinity. (Look under the heading on buildings, where she is called a dining-hall.) *That cometh up*: expound as noted in the discourse above about the desert. The desert can be called the human race, horrible and overgrown with the thorns and thistles of sins. Or properly, the desert is the state of poverty, which is deserted by all. For poverty is the inseparable companion of every man in his coming in and going out: because *we brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out* (1 Tim. 6:7); but poverty itself is deserted by all in the course between: for it is a hated good, etc. *(p. 652)* Yet in the desert of poverty is built the ladder of humility, which stretches up to the height of charity and reaches to the loftiness of majesty. From this desert by this ladder the glorious Virgin went up.

Otherwise: two things can be understood by the name of desert, namely the world, or conversation, that is, the state of the saints, which is *a land desert, where there is no way,* etc. (Ps. 62:3): which conversation namely is called a desert because of four virtues which are deserted by all. The first, humility, which the apostate Angels, that is, the demons, deserted. The second, obedience, which our first parents deserted. The third, poverty, which above all ambitious clerics desert. Hence Jerome: "Flee as a plague the cleric who from low-born has become glorious, from poor rich." The fourth, patience, which religious desert: for the martyrs have done us an injury, who carried all patience into heaven, so that scarcely anyone is found on earth who, if he be dishonored in anything, is not at once moved to anger. These four virtues the glorious Virgin had, in whom was true humility, which God *regarded,* that is, approved. Again, full obedience: because she fulfilled the law in her espousal, in the circumcision of the Son, in the legal purification, in carrying the Son to the temple with offerings. She was also most poor, who had not even a lodging when she brought forth. Hence she gained the kingdom of God, which is of the poor (Luke 6:20). She was most patient: because she was a sheep and the mother of the lamb, who, seeing her Son crucified, endured patiently, nor murmured nor contradicted, although the sword of the Son pierced her soul.

Again, by the name of desert can be understood the world, in which she was in body, although in mind she was in heaven: because *standing on the earth she reached unto heaven* (Wis. 18:16); from which, as is believed, she went up bodily in her assumption. Or the world can be called a desert because of the fewness of rational men and the abundance of irrational. Hence, Eccles. 1:15: *The number of fools is infinite.* For very few are those who use reason so as to be spiritual; many are carnal and brutish. Again, because of the lack and want of spiritual foods: because in many there is neither faith, nor the teaching of truth, nor the pasture of good works.

There follows: *Flowing with delights.* The word *flowing* notes the abundance of delights. Hence, Eccles. 1:7: *All the rivers,* namely of spiritual delights, *run into the sea,* that is, into Mary. These delights are the gifts of spiritual charisms, or the spiritual consolations of the Holy Spirit by which the Virgin was refreshed, or the privileged works of mercy by which she refreshed the Lord, and which she showed him from her own substance. Or these delights are those chief perfumes of which it was spoken, as above, near the beginning of *the garden enclosed.*

There follows: *Leaning upon her beloved.* Note that Henoch pleased God and was translated into heaven (Gen. 5:24); Elias went up into heaven by a whirlwind (4 Kings 2:11); Paul was as it were violently caught up into heaven (2 Cor. 12:2); but Mary went up leaning upon her beloved. By these four are signified four conditions of charity by which we are transferred into heaven. In the first is signified fraternal charity. Hence, 1 John 3:14: *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.* In the second, charity fervent to rebuke sins. Hence Elias says, 3 Kings 19:10: *With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord*

God of hosts, etc. For he was a zealot for the law. In the third, love burning in desire of eternal things, such as Paul was, saying: *Having a desire to be dissolved* (Phil. 1:23), etc. In the fourth, sweet love *(p. 653)* leaning upon the beloved by contemplation: such a one puts all things after, and cleaves to the beloved alone. The first state is of beginners, the second of those making progress, the third of the perfect, the fourth of the most perfect.

Chapter 4: On the Flowers and Herbs of This Garden

My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed (Cant. 4:12), etc.

Having seen of the spices of this garden, it remains to see of the flowers, by all and each of which Christ the Lord is figured; and not only Christ, but also Mary and every just man, but principally Christ himself. We must see, therefore, of the properties of flowers and of the kinds and varieties of flowers; which properties of flowers can more easily be committed to memory by the verses written below. As Peter Comestor says, a flower has a sevenfold property: because it is slender, tender, soft, beautiful, light, fragrant, and very useful. For nothing is slenderer than a flower when it is pressed; nothing tenderer when it is rubbed; nothing lighter when it is carried; nothing softer when it is handled; nothing more beautiful when it is looked on; nothing more fragrant when it is smelled; nothing more useful when the fruit is considered. So also Christ is slender in scourges, tender in miseries, light in precepts, soft in endurances, beautiful in examples, fragrant in promises, useful in rewards. Again, slender toward severity, tender toward compassion, light toward dominion, soft toward meekness, beautiful toward comeliness and joy, fragrant toward promise, useful toward retribution.

Christ is a flower; he flowered in his nativity. Hence, Isa. 11:1: *A flower shall rise up out of his root.* He lost his flower in the passion, when *there was no beauty in him, nor comeliness* (Isa. 53:2). Therefore it is said: *The flower of Libanus fadeth away* (Nahum 1:4). Mary is Libanus. Hence she compares herself to *Libanus not cut* (Ecclus. 24:21). He flowered again in the resurrection according to the human nature, in which he had lost his flower. Hence he says: *And my flesh hath flourished again* (Ps. 27:7).

Christ the flower:

Clean, aromatic, slender, tender, and beautiful, Hollow, of every color, of springtime, soft, watery, Fruit-bearing, bowing, light, exposed, healing, And delicate, and having a mother without a father. He feeds the bees, and ministers to them wax with honey; He receives the sacred Breath; unseen he scatters his odor; He does not violate his mother; he adorns the head, he graces temples.

Clean, by immunity from sin. Hence he says: *But I have walked in my innocence* (Ps. 25:11). Again, John 10:36: *Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, (p. 654)* etc. The like in Ps. 14:2: *He that walketh without blemish*, etc. Again, it was said to Mary, Luke 1:35: *The Holy which shall be born of thee.* Shall be born by conception in the womb, and by nativity from the womb. (Look above, where the garden is called wonderful.) To designate this cleanness he was conceived in Nazareth, which is interpreted "holy" or "cleanness". For it was fitting that in it should be conceived he of whom it is said, Dan. 9:24: *And the saint of saints may be anointed,* etc. And that he should be conceived in cleanness who alone was conceived without uncleanness, that he might cleanse the uncleanness of our conception. Blessed Bernard: "The Lord willed a virgin to be his mother, from whom, immaculate, he might come forth immaculate, to purge the stains of all."

Aromatic, by the fragrance and odor of good and holy repute. Luke 4:14–15: *The fame of him went out through the whole country …, and he was magnified by all*, etc. Cant. 1:3, the young maidens say: *We will run to the odor of thy ointments.*

Or, aromatic in promise: because by the odor of hope he refreshes us on the way, but in the fatherland he will satisfy us with the fruit. Hence the Psalmist says to him, Ps. 16:15: *I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall*

appear.

Or, aromatic, like certain flowers which, the more they are crushed, smell the sweeter. So also when the alabaster box of the Lord's body was broken on the cross, *the house*, that is, the Church, *was filled with the odor of the ointment* (John 12:3).

Slender in a threefold substance. Of spirit and soul, by humility: because *he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil. 2:7). Of the blessed flesh, in which he did penance for us on the cross, where he appeared so lean and thin that all his bones were made such as could be numbered, as he himself says in Ps. 21:18: *They have numbered*, that is, made numberable, *all my bones.* Nor could the stretching of his body on the wood be better described, as the Master says in the Gloss. Of earthly substance: because he had not where to lay his head. Matt. 8:20: *The foxes have holes*, etc.

Tender, literally, which appeared in the tearing by the scourge, when *he was bruised for our sins* (Isa. 53:5). This flower is tender because of love: because he loves us most tenderly, so that he seems to say of every faithful soul, as David of Jonathan, 2 Kings 1:26: *As the mother loveth her only son, so did I love thee.* Which is plain: because for love of us he deigned to die. Hence he compares himself to a jealous one who is easily offended and hurt. Exod. 20:5: *I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous*, etc. The Gloss: "Not bearing that the soul espoused to me should be marked with any suspicion." Again, Wis. 1:10: *The ear of jealousy*, that is, of God who is jealous and requires chastity, *heareth all things*: because jealousy rouses him to hear. Tender by piety and compassion toward sinners, after the example of a child who has compassion on a hurt companion. Hence he says of sinners, Jer. 13:17: *If you will not hear this, my soul shall weep in secret for your pride.* For therefore, seeing Jerusalem, he wept over it (Luke 19:41), which he foreknew would fall, which signifies the soul to be damned for ever. Tender by meekness. Hence he is signified by David, 2 Kings 23:8: *He was like the most tender little worm of the wood.* (Look above, § 12.)

And beautiful, by the honorableness of holy conversation, on whom *the Angels desire to look* (1 Pet. 1:12), and whose beauty the sun and moon admire. And in Ps. 92:1: *The Lord hath reigned, he is clothed with beauty*, that is, with immunity from sin. Also *(p. 655)* as regards the form of the body he was *beautiful above the sons of men*, which beauty namely he showed to his three friends in the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1 ff.). Of the beauty of the Lord's face Aelred says: "I believe that in that most beautiful countenance there shone so great an elegance of heavenly grace that it turned the gaze of all upon itself, raised up the hearing, stirred up the affection." But the comeliness or beauty of this flower consists chiefly in two things, namely in whiteness and redness. For the native color of this flower, and as it were the white, is his holy conception. Hence, John 10:36: *Whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world*, etc. For then the Father sanctified the Son, when he appointed him to be incarnate with holiness for the salvation of the world. And for this it was said to Mary, Luke 1:35: *The Holy which shall be born of thee*, etc. Well he says *sanctified, and sent*: because the sending did not precede the sanctification.

And of this flower it is said, Wis. 7:26: *For she is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror*, etc. Or, as it were his native color is virginity and innocence, which two are signified by whiteness. Hence he calls himself a lily (Cant. 2:1). But to this whiteness was added the redness of the rose, that is, of martyrdom in the passion. And this is plain in the flowers of certain trees and herbs, which at first appear white, and at length turn to redness. For he remained white in the nature of the divinity, although according to the human nature he reddened in the passion. By this twofold beauty the Church commends her bridegroom, Cant. 5:10: *My beloved is white and ruddy.* White according to the deity: because he is *the brightness of eternal light, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of God* (Wis. 7:25–26), which is to say, most luminous and most clean. But ruddy, that is, flaming and most glowing: because he is the son of the charity of the Father himself; and as God from God, so charity from charity. 1 John 4:16: *God is charity*; which can be understood both of the Father and of the Son. Or, white by his most clean and most holy entrance into the world, ruddy in his going out from the world: because then he was reddened with his own blood. Hence, Apoc. 19:13, he

who sat upon the white horse *was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood*, that is, with flesh reddened with his own blood. Hence, Isa. 63:2: *Why then is thy apparel red?* etc. Or, white by the purity of holiness and innocence, ruddy by most fervent charity. And these two colors are most pleasing to lovers. Or, white as regards the cleanness of the humanity, ruddy as regards the splendor of the divinity, which is signified in gold, which shines and glows. Cant. 5:11: *His head is as the finest gold.* And *the head of Christ is God* (1 Cor. 11:3). This twofold beauty he showed in the transfiguration (Matt. 17:2). Hence it is said there that *his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow.* By the face, the deity, of which it was said to Moses, Exod. 33:20: *Thou canst not see my face: for man shall not see me and live.* By the garments the humanity is signified: because *in habit he was found as a man* (Phil. 2:7).

Again, this flower, by which the beloved of the Church is signified, is commended for a twin comeliness, where the bride says to him: *Behold thou art fair, my beloved, and comely* (Cant. 1:15), etc. *Fair* (*pulcher*) is said as it were "strong in adornment" (*pollens cultu*); which pertains to the exterior man, namely as regards the maturity of his motions. *Comely* (*decorus*) is said as it were "the grace of the heart" (*decus cordis*): as regards the interior, and it designates purity of heart.

Again, of the comeliness of this flower the Prophet says, speaking to the bridegroom: *Thou art beautiful above the sons of men* (Ps. 44:3). But *(p. 656)* on the contrary, Isa. 53:2, it is said: *There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness.* Solution: What Isaias says is understood of the ignominy of the passion. *Beautiful*, I say, *in form*, that is, in light, whiteness and habit. In light: hence, Ecclus. 43:10: *The Lord enlightening the world on high.* In whiteness: hence, Wis. 7:26: *For she is the brightness of eternal light*, etc. In habit: hence, Isa. 63:1: *This beautiful one in his robe.* And elsewhere: *Clothe thyself with beauty* (Job 40:5). And not only beautiful, but most excellently most beautiful. Hence, *above the sons of men*: because of his fullness all have received: because he is the author of beauty (Wis. 13:3). For he could have said *above the Angels*, because he is more beautiful also than the Angels; but because he was commending him according to the humanity, he better said *above the sons of men.* And the sign of his so great beauty is that *the Angels desire to look on him* (1 Pet. 1:12).

Again, it is to be noted that the Lord hid his comeliness from the Jews. Hence, Isa. 53:2–3: *We have seen him … despised.* He signified it to the disciples in the transfiguration (Matt. 17:2 ff.). He showed it to the Angels in the ascension, and thereafter. Hence, seeing him ascending, they said, Isa. 63:1: *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe*, that is, in the habit of the humanity? He promised it to be seen by the elect. Isa. 33:17: *His eyes shall see the king in his beauty*, namely those of each of the blessed. He is said therefore *beautiful above the sons of men*: because in all others there is fault. Rom. 3:23: *For all have sinned*, etc. But he *did no sin* (1 Pet. 2:22).

Again, of this twofold beauty the Psalmist says, Ps. 44:5, to Christ: *With thy comeliness and thy beauty.* Comeliness is referred to the divinity, beauty to the humanity. Hence the bride says to him, Cant. 1:15: *Behold thou art fair, my beloved, and comely.* He says therefore: O most mighty, *set out*, that is, look upon man perishing, *with thy comeliness*, that is, with the mercy of the deity, which is signified by comeliness, *and thy beauty*, that is, with the humility of the humanity. Exod. 3:7–8: *I have seen the affliction of my people*—behold mercy; *and I am come down to deliver them*—behold humility. And he commends him for two things: for mercy, hence *Set out*; for humility, hence *proceed prosperously*, that is, proceed from the womb of the Virgin, of which proceeding we have it there: *He, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber* (Ps. 18:6). *Prosperously*, that is, to our prosperity and profit, because he has bestowed all good things on us: *and reign*, namely over thy children whom thou hast freed from the devil.

Hollow, by the virtue of humility, as the flowers of the lily, the rose and the violet and the rest are hollow, as is plain. And in the hollowness of his humility or humanity he brought to his little bees the honey of his divinity, that is, to us, if he shall have found in us the properties of the little bee.

Of every color. For he is of purple, airy, hyacinth, and livid color like the violet. Of purple, inasmuch as king and martyr: because purple befits kings, and blood, by which martyrdom is signified, is of purple color. Airy, because of the virtue of contemplation. Hyacinth, which is the heavenly color, because he came down from heaven: hence also he is designated by the sapphire. Livid also and discolored he lay in the sepulchre, *by whose bruises we are healed* (Isa. 53:5).

Again, he is white as the lily. Hence, Cant. 2:1, he says: *I am the lily of the valleys*; within and without by a twofold innocence, as was said above. Again, he is red as the rose, by surpassing charity, by virginal modesty, by *(p. 657)* singular patience, by the shedding of his own blood. He was also as it were of saffron color by the virtue of charity: because, as saffron turns into its own color the things with which it is mixed, and as leaven turns the sprinkled flour into its own savor, so also his charity is the form of all the virtues. Or also the saffron color designates wisdom. For *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. 2:3).

In another way also this flower can be called of every color, namely from its effect. And therefore as it were generally he calls himself a flower, but does not determine of what kind, Cant. 2:1, where he says: *I am the flower of the field*, etc.: and this because he does not flower in one manner in the field of the Church, but is red in martyrs, green in confessors, white in virgins, pale in penitents, dark in the humble, pale in the despised and the patient, glowing in doctors, and the rest of this kind. For as *star differeth from star in glory* (1 Cor. 15:41), so the field of the Church in the variety of its flowers. For Christ reddens some by imitation of his passion, whitens others by the holiness of chastity, makes others green with the greenness of faith or of patience, others pale with the pallor of penance, others glowing with the splendor of wisdom, and the like. And therefore as from one Christ comes so great a variety of colors or beauties, so from one sun so great a luminousness: hence it is the same to say, *I am the flower of the field*, as to say, *I am the light of the world* (John 8:12). For as when the sun is taken away the whole world remains dark, so when this flower is taken away nothing of beauty remains in the field of the Church.

Moreover, what smells sweetly, or tastes sweetly, or shines delightfully in each of the saints, but this flower? Hence, 2 Cor. 2:15: *We are the good odor of Christ unto God*, etc. Augustine: "In the neighbor nothing is loved but God. And that alone which is loved smells sweet, tastes and shines in the field of the Church."

Again, because of such various colors the bridegroom is compared to the apple tree (Cant. 2:3), and among precious stones to the topaz, which is called as it were *topandion*, that is, of every color. (Look under the heading on trees and on precious stones.)

Chapter 4 (continued): On the Flowers and Herbs of This Garden

Of springtime. For this flower was announced and conceived in the time of flowers, that is, in spring. Hence, Cant. 2:10–11, the word is directed to Mary, who was to conceive the Son of God: *Arise, make haste, my love … and come: for winter is now past*, etc. And a little after, verse 12: *The flowers have appeared in our land.* And a little after, verse 14: *Show me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears.* After winter, namely in spring, Christ was conceived by the Virgin, who showed her face when at the voice of the Angel she was abashed and troubled: her voice sounded in the ears of the Lord when she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38). And by this word she conceived. And in this honeyed answer God was inestimably delighted: and therefore there follows there, Cant. 2:14: *For thy voice is sweet*, etc. This flower was also conceived and nourished in Nazareth, which is interpreted "flower". And it was fitting that a flower should be conceived with a flower, and be born of a flower, and be nourished in a flower, and be announced in the time of flowers, that is, in spring. He is also conceived spiritually by those in whom he finds the three properties of a flower: namely beauty, that is, honorableness of conversation; fragrance, that is, the odor of good repute; the hope of fruit, that is, the intention of eternal retribution. Blessed Bernard: "The flower from the root of Jesse loves a flower-bearing country: he reckons you a flower, and turns aside

to you as to Nazareth, if there be not lacking to you either honorableness of conversation as the beauty of a flower, or the odor *(p. 658)* of good repute as the fragrance of a flower, or the intention of eternal retribution as the hope of fruit."

Again, this flower is of springtime: because conceived in spring, which is the time of renewal, when in a certain way all things growing on the earth grow young and are renewed, birds and animals bring forth and rear their young, trees and shrubs flower and bud. It was a time altogether fitting for the renewal of human nature, that when the other rods were flowering, the rod from the root of Jesse should also flower: and thence should rise up Jesus of Nazareth, who is at once flower and fruit. Hence the mother says of him: *My flowers are the fruit of honor and riches* (Ecclus. 24:23). And well she says *my flowers* in the plural, not *my flower*, although she brought forth a single flower: because he is the lily by chastity, the violet by humility, saffron by charity, the rose by singular patience, and the like.

And note that the hope of fruit is not had without this flower, nor was this flower had without this rod: therefore without this rod neither the flower is had, that is, hope, nor the fruit of eternal life.

Soft, that is, sweet to touch, by kindness and meekness, which is most plain in the justification of sinners and the remission of sins. He calls back sweetly those turned away from him. Isa. 30:21: *Thy ears shall hear the word of one admonishing thee behind thy back*, etc. He waits for them patiently. Isa. 18:4: *I will take my rest, and consider in my place*, which is mercy, etc. He receives the returning joyfully: the example of the prodigal son and the father receiving him (Luke 15:20 ff.). He forgives sins liberally. Blessed Bernard: "That he does not condemn in avenging, does not confound in reproaching, does not love less in imputing." Of the first, Ezech. 18:32: *I desire not the death of the sinner*, etc. Of the second, James 1:5: *He giveth to all abundantly*, that is, more than they know how to ask, namely remission, grace and glory. Of the third: *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin* (Ps. 31:2).

Watery, that is, juicy: whose juice is piety, compassion and tears. Hence, Luke 19:41: *Seeing the city of Jerusalem, he wept over it*, etc., as above. Likewise in the passion, praying and pleading for his crucifiers. Heb. 5:7: *Who in the days of his flesh*, etc.

Fruit-bearing. In the flower is had the hope of fruit: and in Christ the hope of every good, present and future. Hence he says, Ecclus. 24:25: *In me is all hope*, namely of the ancients and of the moderns. Hence it is said in Ps. 61:9: *Trust in him, all ye congregation of people.* Well he says *in me*: because *cursed be the man that trusteth in man* (Jer. 17:5). *Of life*, namely eternal, *and of virtue*, of the way, by which one fights against the vices.

Again, without the flower fruit is not had, nor without the grace of Christ is any good to be hoped for: because that would be the worst presumption.

We must hope in Christ: because he is most generous. Esther 2:18: *Assuerus gave gifts according to princely magnificence.* Because he can give temporal and eternal things. Prov. 3:16: *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and glory.* Because he exhorts us to ask. Matt. 7:7: *Ask, and it shall be given you.* John 16:24: *Hitherto you have not asked anything.* Because he is wont to give more than is asked, as is plain in the thief crucified. Therefore also the Psalmist says, Ps. 24:6: *Remember, O Lord, thy bowels of compassion.*

Bowing, in which is signified the humble obedience of Christ, who *humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross* (Phil. 2:8). For the flowers of the rose, *(p. 659)* the lily and the violet are always bowed to one side. This obedience Christ hinted at when, *bowing his head, he gave up the ghost* (John 19:30).

Light, by immunity from sin, which by its weight presses the soul down into hell. Whose flesh is called a *light cloud* (Isa. 19:1). *Who did no sin* (1 Pet. 2:22), etc. Or, light by the running about of preaching. Or, light

by the fulfilling of obedience. Because *he hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way* (Ps. 18:6), namely of the Father's commandments. By this lightness he was continually borne upward by the contemplation of the divinity.

Exposed. Hence he calls himself the flower of the field, not of the garden (Cant. 2:1). (You will find this below.) For he is exposed to all who will, to look on with delight, to smell sweetly, to gather profitably.

Healing, that is, medicinal. For in him has been found the medicine of the human race, in which *from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head* (Isa. 1:6), before this flower appeared, there was no soundness: but it was healed by the juice, the beauty and the odor of this flower, namely by the juice of water and blood, the beauty of his conversation and the odor of his repute.

And delicate. Hence David says of Solomon, that is, God the Father of Christ, 1 Paral. 22:5: *Solomon my son is a young child*, etc.

And having a mother without a father. The mother of the flower is the earth, or the tree or herb, from which the flower rises without intercourse, without a male, without seed. So also Christ according to the humanity had a mother without a father, as according to the deity he had a father without a mother.

He feeds the bees, and ministers to them wax with honey. For the flower, although it appear barren, yet has a blessed but secret fruit, sweet and wholesome, hidden from the unclean, the sluggish and the fat. For the bees, nimble virgins and fruitful, know where to seek what they should choose, what they should commit to the throat, what to the legs: they know what befits the wax, what the liquid, what is apt that it may give light to all who are in the house, what that it may be carried over into the spice-cellar, etc. Be you also therefore a bee: take the wings of the virtues, fly from the earth by contempt of temporal things. Choose and gather in this flower and from this flower whereby you may make honey, what you may store in summer-time, whereby you may live in the winter, until *the winter is past, the rain is over and gone* (Cant. 2:11).

Again, from this flower comes honey-making, fruit-bearing, food, drink and medicine. For from it come honey and wax. From the honey, the inebriating drink of eternal security: for from honey certain drinks are made. From the honey, the refreshment of inward satiety: because honey fills and refreshes when it is eaten. From this medicine, the health of everlasting incorruption. From its wax, the splendor of eternal brightness; and in its honey, the sweetness of unfailing happiness.

He receives the sacred Breath. Hence, Isa. 11:1–2: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The spirit of the Lord*, transitively or intransitively, that is, the spirit which is the Lord, *where is liberty* (2 Cor. 3:17): because *God is a spirit* (John 4:24). Who rested most fully in Christ alone: because he remained and never withdrew. John 1:33: *He upon whom thou shalt see*, etc. Again, because in him grace could neither increase nor decrease: because *God doth not give the Spirit by measure* (John 3:34). He rested also in him: because *(p. 660)* Christ was without the trouble of any sin. 1 Pet. 2:22: *Who did no sin*, etc. In him also he rested: because in him alone *dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead corporeally* (Col. 2:9). But in us smoke and the dripping roof and a bad wife (Prov. 27:15) often drive the spirit out of his house, or trouble him.

Unseen he scatters his odor. For the odor of a flower is perceived although the flower be not seen. For the odor of this flower, many nations coming between, that great patriarch Isaac perceived beforehand in his son Jacob whom he was blessing. Hence also with wonder he breaks forth into these words, Gen. 27:27: *Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed.* (You will find this authority expounded under the heading that Mary is a field.) For our Jacob, that is, Christ our wrestler, is the son of Isaac, from whose stock Mary descended. And she is the field full of every sweet smell of the virtues as of little flowers, to whose odor is compared the odor of the Son, who, born of the most clean, is wholly clean, and of the most sweet, wholly sweet.

He does not violate his mother, but rather marks out, ennobles, graces her, and renders her commendable. His mother, that is, the earth or the herb or the tree from which he rises. Likewise Christ was conceived without his mother's deflowering, carried and born without hurt of the mother's womb; and from his conception, birth and motherhood comes the whole honor and glory of Mary. Hence, Osee 9:11, it is said of Christ and of Mary: *Their glory from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception,* in reversed order. From the conception without hurt of virginity, from the womb without heaviness of the belly, from the birth without pain of her who bore.

He adorns the head: because from flowers are made garlands and crowns which are worn on the head. And *sertum,* garland, is said from *inserere,* to insert: because there flowers are inserted. For Christ is the crown of his elect, which is not had without contest. 2 Tim. 2:5: *He is not crowned except he strive lawfully,* that is, perseveringly and with due end. Isa. 28:5: *In that day the Lord of hosts shall be a crown of glory, and a garland of joy to the residue of his people,* etc.

He graces temples. Hence around the altars roses and lilies are wont to be set. Hence it is sung of the blessed Virgin, who is the special temple of Christ: "As the days of spring, flowers of roses and lilies of the valleys surrounded her." Each of the just also are temples of Christ, to whom it is said, 1 Cor. 3:17: *The temple of God is holy, which you are*; whose whole spiritual or interior beauty is from this flower.

Cant. 2:1, the bridegroom says to the bride: *I am the flower of the field,* which is properly the violet, etc. Above, the bride had invited the bridegroom to rest and embraces by the greenness of the little bed, saying, Cant. 1:15: *Our bed is flourishing*; and by the beauty and magnificence of the house, saying, ibid., verse 16: *The beams of our houses are of cedar,* etc. But the bridegroom calls her to the vigor of the contest and to the labor of spiritual husbandry, saying: *I am the flower of the field.* As if he said: O bride, you delight in rest, you wish to flower with secret virtues, and you love this beauty: but I seek another, namely the beauty of piety and the salvation of many. I desire to make my odor known to the whole world, which cannot be done unless, putting aside the rest in which you delight, you take up the office of preaching: which you ought to do gladly, because I am the flower of the field.

I am the flower of the field, that is, the comeliness and glory of the world, in which one must fight. I who by nature am God am *the flower of the field,* that is, the Son of the Virgin. For a field is untilled, and yet it brings forth a flower: *(p. 661)* so also the blessed Virgin, untouched and inviolate, bore Christ.

Fragrant with all sweetness, comely to the sight, sweet to the taste, soft to the touch, delightful to the smell—but not of the bed or of the garden, nay of the field.

To be won by victory in the contest: because I am the prize for those running in the stadium, the crown set before those contending in the field. Isa. 28:5: *In that day the Lord of hosts shall be a crown of glory, and a garland of joy to the residue of his people.* 2 Tim. 2:5: *He is not crowned except he,* etc. 1 Cor. 9:24: *One receiveth the prize.*

That he who desires to have me may not flee the field of the contest.

Not of the bed, that is, flowering unfailingly and clean, naturally cleaving to the roots of my origin: because, proceeding from the Father, I am not divided from him; but the flower of the bed is withered, because separated from the root.

More sweetly fragrant, more joyfully flowering for those who fight more strongly for me and labor more fruitfully; that is, of those who by charity are stretched out toward others, and by justice exposed on both their sides. For in them—with the leave of the contemplatives—the bridegroom flowers more fruitfully, smells more sweetly and widely, flowers more readily by faith, hope and charity for those running; in the future he will be the fruit of the bed for those who arrive. *So run that you may obtain* (1 Cor. 9:24).

To be won by contest, to be gathered by labor, at length ripened into fruit, in the eternal rest, which is the most spacious bed, to be eaten always without weariness.

Not of the garden: because exposed to all who will, to look on with delight, to smell sweetly; not shut in to be possessed singly in a bed or in a house. This is said against those who think that salvation lies only in the leisure of contemplation, not in the labor of action or in the solicitude of prelacy, as if only the bed of contemplation were flowering, and the whole field of active conversation were foul.

Promising to those who labor the hope of fruit: for in the flower fruit is hoped for. Nor does he say *I am*, or *I was*, or *I shall be*, but without tense, *I flower of the field*, to hint that he is always with those who labor. Matt. 28:20: *Behold I am with you all days*, etc. As if he said to the bride: Do not seek me in the hidden place of the chamber or in the narrowness of the little bed: because I show myself openly to all, to be known, found and obtained, as the flower of the field, than which nothing is more exposed.

That is, I alone give to the field of the Church its spring-greenness, flowering and odor; which is a field because of the evenness of justice, because of the breadth and extension of charity. But how is he the flower of the field? As an aromatic spice is the odor of the nose, as gold and precious stones are the riches of the vessel containing them. The Church is called a field for two reasons. First, because it is the place of contest. Secondly, because it is the place of labor, as a little field, a vineyard. Ecclus. 2:1: *Son, when thou comest to the service of God*, etc.

That is, I who am the fruit of heaven as God am the flower of the field, that is, of the world, as man. As if he said: He who wishes to be satisfied with the fruit by enjoyment, let him smell the flower by imitation.

That is, a virgin born of a virgin. Other virgins are flowers of the garden, that is, born of a mother who was corrupted: because a garden is tilled by human exercise, which Mary was not. Or he says this against the presumption of those who excel in loftiness of knowledge or holiness of life. As if he said: I am the flower of the field, not only of the mountains, that is, of those lofty in life and knowledge, but also of the field, that is, of the simple. Or, I am the flower of the field, not only of the mountain of Judea, which as a mountain first received the rays of faith, but also of the field, *(p. 662)* that is, of the Gentiles, in which, as in a field, the devil ran about freely and without hindrance.

And the lily of the valleys, that is, the honor and glory of the humble, who are ready to suffer, to whom I reveal the brightness of my humility which I bore in my humanity, being born and dying; to whom also I reveal the splendor of the eternal Godhead more than to the mountains, that is, to the wise of this world, as is said in Matt. 11:25; and James 4:6: *God resisteth the proud*, etc.

Christ is the lily of the valleys, that is, born in the valleys. As if he said: As the lily is born in the valleys, so I was born of the humble; that is, the honor and comeliness of the Gentiles and of all who received into themselves the filth of vices as valleys do: for *I came not to call the just, but sinners*, namely to penance (Matt. 9:13).

Or, the valleys of the Lord are the humble peoples. For those valleys are called *convalles* which join mountains, or are joined to mountains. So the peoples of the humble laity, as it were between two mountains, are between the cloistered and the secular clergy, receiving as rays the light of doctrine from the one, the light of example from the other. From both mountains, too, they are watered by doctrines as by rivers coming down. Hence: *Between the midst of the hills the waters shall pass* (Ps. 103:10). Specially, then, the bridegroom calls himself the lily of these valleys and is silent about the mountains, so that conjugal chastity too may be reckoned a sharer in the lily. According to one exposition, then, the field and the valleys are the same, namely the assembly of the simple; but it is called a field from the evenness of justice or the extension of charity, and valleys from the overtopping of the mountains standing around.

All the elect too may be understood by the valleys, as by the field: for they are a field because of the evenness of justice and the breadth of charity, valleys because of the humility by which they wholesomely keep themselves low and subject themselves one to another. Rom. 12:10: *With honor preventing one another.* It pleases Christ, then, in the elect that they are a field; but it pleases him specially that they are valleys, humble with a twofold humility, interior and exterior. And therefore with the general name of *flower* he praises the field, saying, *I am the flower of the field*; but with the special name of *lily* he exalts the valleys, saying, *and the lily of the valleys*. As if he said: Justice and charity please me, but especially humility. Hence he is said to have regarded not Mary's charity but her humility; of which also he spoke specially on earth, Matt. 11:29: *Learn of me,* etc. The bridegroom names himself a lily for this reason: because in the lily the flower itself is the fruit. So Christ, flower and fruit, is the same: but flower to those who look on, fruit to those who enjoy. Hence it says: *My flowers are the fruit of honor and riches* (Ecclus. 24:23).

Mary is a flower according to almost all the properties assigned above to her Flower, which is Christ.

Clean, by virginity and innocence of every kind: because *no defiled thing cometh into* that flower (Wis. 7:25), from the time she was cleansed in her sanctification.

Aromatic, by her sweet-smelling repute. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 1:3: *We will run after thee to the odor of thy ointments*; her odor consists chiefly in three things: in virginity as to the flesh, in humility and devotion as to the soul, in both as to the indwelling of the Godhead. Because of this threefold odor she says of herself, Ecclus. 24:20: *I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm,* etc.

Slender, in a threefold substance: bodily, by temperance and the mortifying of the flesh; spiritual, namely in the soul, by the highest humility; earthly, by voluntary poverty, or by generous giving away of temporal goods, if she ever had any. *(p. 663)* Hence that of Proverbs 31:20 is understood specially of her: *She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor.*

Tender, by meekness, by pity, by compassion for sinners, by love, loving most tenderly the body and members of her Son, that is, the Church and all the faithful. (Look under the heading of Mary's love for her neighbors.)

And comely, that is, full of every beauty of love: because she shares superlatively in the beauty of all the saints. Hence, Cant. 6:9, she is called *fair as the moon,* that is, as the universal Church: because whatever beauty the other saints have in part, she has in whole. (Look under the heading of her beauty.)

Hollow, by humility. In this hollowness, that is, by the merit of her humility, which God regarded, that is, approved, she brought us the honey of the Godhead. By humility and the vow of virginity she pleased the Lord, but by faith she conceived. Hence she is said to have conceived through the ear, that is, through faith in the words spoken: because *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17). Therefore it is said to her: *Honey and milk are under thy tongue* (Cant. 4:11). (Look under the heading of her sweetness.)

Of every color. Hence also among stones she is specially compared to the topaz, which is called as it were *topandion*, that is, of every color, and is the most precious of all gems.

Light, by meekness and kindness. Hence the Church sings to her:

Virgin singular, Meek above all, etc.

For sinners do not find her harsh. (Look under the heading of her kindness and meekness.)

Light, that is, without the weight of sin. Hence also she is called *a light cloud* (Isa. 19:1). Light also by the multitude of virtues, which are of a fiery nature.

And healing. For in Mary's flower, which is Christ, the medicine of the human race was found. Hence, Ecclus. 38:4: *The most High hath created medicines out of the earth,* namely of the virginal flesh.

Fruit-bearing. Hence it was said to her, Luke 1:42: *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* (Look above.)

Bowing, by obedience, according to the teaching of the Spirit, who had said to her, Ps. 44:11: *Incline thy ear*, etc. For all flowers, or nearly all, bow toward one side, as is plain in the lily, the rose and the violet.

Refreshing by beauty and odor the head, that is, the chief part of the mind, of those who devoutly meditate on her.

Fine, as is plain in the flowers of the vine and the hazel: for so fine was her fruitful virginity that the devil could not search it out, nor man comprehend it.

Watery, that is, full of sap; her sap is the pity and compassion of her heart, or the abundance of graces, or her tears at the time of the Lord's passion and after the ascension of her Son.

And delicate. Hence she is signified by Susanna, which is interpreted *lily*, of whom it is said, Dan. 13:31, that she *was exceeding delicate, and beautiful to behold.* Jer. 6:2: *I have likened the daughter of Sion to a beautiful and delicate woman*, that is, Mary.

Common: because exposed at all times to whoever will take her, to look on with delight, to smell sweetly, to gather profitably. Hence, as the Son glories and calls himself *the flower of the field* (Cant. 2:1), as was said above, so she too can glory singularly and say: *I am the flower of the field*; because in the world she did not lose her flower, since she was neither a nun nor a recluse, reckoning it more glorious to flower in the world, which is here signified by the field, than in a garden or a desert.

Bedewed: for she received the Son of God *(p. 664)* in the incarnation as a honey-flowing dew; and therefore she was made wholly dewy and honeyed.

She feeds the bees, that is, contemplatives and those devoted to her, with devotion as with a honeyed sweetness, as was said above of Christ. And she ministers to them wax with honey, that is, the human nature of Christ with the honey of the Godhead.

She glorifies her mother, that is, the herb or tree or earth from which she springs. And the blessed Virgin is the glory, praise and honor and joy of her mother. Hence, Cant. 6:8: *She is the only one of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her.*

Unseen she spreads her odor: for although faithful souls do not see her at present with bodily sight, yet *the young maidens run* to her odor (Cant. 1:3).

She receives the holy Spirit: for by the merit of humility and virginity *the Holy Ghost came upon her* (Luke 1:35).

She adorns the head: because she clothed and arrayed Christ our head with glorious humanity. Hence, Cant. 3:11: *See king Solomon in the diadem*, etc.

She graces temples. Hence it is sung of her: "Whose glorious life lights up all the churches," namely the militant and the triumphant.

Mary is of white color like the lily, by virginity and innocence and freedom from sin. (Look below under the heading of the lily.) Or else whiteness signifies the glory of immortality.

Of red, like the rose, by natural beauty, by virginal modesty, by surpassing charity, by singular patience and the desire of martyrdom. (Look below under the heading of the rose.)

Of purple, like the violet: because befitting the King of kings; for purple befits kings. Or purple by the martyrdom of the soul: because blood, by which martyrdom is signified, is of purple color. (Look below under the heading of the violet.)

Of hyacinth, which is a heavenly color: because *her conversation was in heaven* (Phil. 3:20).

Of the color of the air, by reason of her contemplation: for *standing on the earth she reached even to heaven* (Wis. 18:16).

Livid: because she suffered with her suffering Son in mind. Hence she says, Cant. 1:5: *I am black, because the sun hath altered my color,* that is, my Son suffering the eclipse of death.

Of saffron, by wisdom and charity, which are signified by gold: for the crocus has golden threads. (Look below under the heading of the crocus.)

Of azure, by voluntary poverty: because likewise it is a heavenly color, since the kingdom of heaven is the reward of poverty (Matt. 5:3). For unless it be voluntary, it is not of heavenly color but of earthly; and as the color of azure is beautiful and most precious, so is poverty before God.

Green, by the greenness of faith, which did not wither in her at the time of the Lord's passion as it did in all others, as Ambrose says. Therefore it is said of her, Prov. 31:18: *Her lamp,* that is, faith, *shall not be put out in the night,* namely of the Lord's passion.

Cant. 2:2: *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*

These are the words of Christ about Mary, or the faithful soul. The lily by reason of its whiteness signifies innocence and freedom from sin: because Mary, from the time she was sanctified from original sin, is believed not to have sinned. And *lilium* is so called as if *lacteum,* milky, because of its milky color.

Mary is called a lily. Because, as the lily is beyond comparison more excellent than the thorns among which it is born, so is Mary than the Jews of whom she was born. Hence, as the thorn bears the rose, so Judea bore Mary. Nay, in comparison with her, holy souls and angelic powers are reckoned thorns: because, as is said in Job 25:5–6: *Behold even the moon doth not shine, and the stars are not pure (p. 665) in his sight: how much less man that is rottenness, and the son of man who is a worm!*

Because, as the lily keeps its whiteness among thorns, and the more it is pricked by them the greater fragrance of odor it gives forth: so Mary, while she was pricked by the wicked Jews in her Son, always kept innocence of mind, not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing; nay, when the sword of the passion pierced through her soul, where she was wholly pierced, so that she could say with Susanna, which is interpreted *lily*: *I am straitened on every side* (Dan. 13:22), then she seemed most truly to have said that of the Canticle 1:11: *While the king was at his repose,* that is, in the humiliation of the cross, *my spikenard sent forth the odor thereof.* Thence also to the whiteness of this lily was added the redness of the rose: because the compassion of the virginal heart is reckoned to the Virgin for the highest martyrdom. And according to this, the sense of the text *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters* can be this, that the Son says: As I, who am the lily, that is, innocent, was among thorns, that is, among the Jews, who *surrounded me like bees, and burned like fire among thorns* (Ps. 117:12) with the fire of anger and hatred against me: so my love, that is, Mary, is among the daughters, that is, among the synagogue and the Gentiles who crucified me—the synagogue by authority, the Gentiles by ministry—and who pierced, tore and pricked the soul of my mother.

Because, as the lily sends up to the top all that it has of odor and comeliness, fruit and pleasantness, and places it in its head: so Mary attributes to God the Trinity whatever good she has, saying: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49), etc. As if she said with the Apostle that of the first epistle to the Corinthians 15:10: *By the grace of God I am what I am.* And she does this by the example of her Son, who attributes all to the Father, from whom he has his origin; hence he says, John 17:10: *Father, all my things are thine.*

Because, as the lily soothes pains and quenches burnings, so Mary by her prayers and examples restrains in us sinners, and most of all in her servants, harmful concupiscences and quenches them, and soothes the pains of the soul, pouring into it the consolation of grace, so that it may most truly be said to her: *According to the*

multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts, O Mary, *have given joy to my soul* (Ps. 93:19).

Because the lily has in the middle of the flower saffron and as it were golden grains, which are borne up on seven little stalks; by which is signified the sevenfold grace that filled Mary's flower, that is, Christ, above all (Isa. 11:2). By the golden grains are signified also the beginnings of good works, and *the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* which were hidden in this flower (Col. 2:3). Or, the golden grains in the middle of the flower are the Son of God, God and man, in the womb of the Virgin.

Again, in the lily the flower is the fruit. So also in the Virgin, her flower, that is, Christ, is her fruit. Hence she herself says, Ecclus. 24:23: *My flowers are the fruit of honor and riches.* For Christ is a flower to those who wait, fruit to those who enjoy; a flower on the way, fruit in the homeland. Mary is a lily also, that is, her virginity alone bore fruit beyond nature.

Again, the root of the lily, which lies hidden under the earth, signifies the faith of the Virgin, because faith is of hidden things; the stalk, which rises on high, the Virgin's hope of heavenly things; the flower, white within and without, virginal innocence; the golden grains, charity: because, as the hollow of the flower contains these grains, so the humble innocence and innocent humility of Mary's heart was full of the love of God and neighbor. The club that bears up those grains signifies fear, which, if it be filial or chaste, is next to charity.

(p. 666) Morally: This club has a white handle and a saffron or as it were golden head. For on the side of the one who strikes there ought to be the whiteness of innocence, that is, lest he burden another out of anger or hatred or for some other unjust cause, or lest he himself be guilty of the sin for which he rebukes another. On the side of the one struck there ought to be the saffron of charity, lest he hold in hatred the one who rebukes him, or say, "My master burdens me out of malice," but let him attribute the fault to himself, and the justice to God who scourges, *who justly scourgeth every son whom he receiveth* (Heb. 12:6), or to the master who rebukes with justice. But nowadays all religious do the opposite.

Again, in this lily four things are to be considered which make it commendable. Namely the root, that is, Mary's illustrious descent from the seed of Abraham, sprung from the tribe of Judah, noble from the stock of David. From the root, the stem, in which are four things. Slenderness rising up: temperance; for so it behooved, that that Wisdom might dwell in her which *is not found in the land of them that live in delights* (Job 28:13). Again, it is even, by justice: for she renders *to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's* (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25); for she gave back God to the world, and does not cease, as far as in her lies, to give back the world, that is, the lovers of the world, to God. And through her more specially God was made the world's and the world God's. Again, solid: in this, fortitude; because she carried him *under whom they stoop that bear up the world* (Job 9:13). Again, lofty: in this, prudence; for the fulness of knowledge of the Cherubim, praising her, marvels at her. On this stem are many leaves. The first, patience, in that she patiently heard the angel greeting her; hence: *She thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be* (Luke 1:29). The second, prudence, in asking: *How shall this be done?* etc. The third, humility, when she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.* The fourth, greatness of faith: *Be it done to me according to thy word.* And so with her words in order.

Again, from the stem the flower at the top, in which are the whiteness of chastity, which rises from temperance; the redness of charity, which from justice; the firmness of perseverance, which from fortitude; the odor of sweetness, which from prudence. For this virtue smells things far off: in things present the things to come, in earthly things heavenly, in lowly things lofty, in sorrow joy, and in labor the reward. For this flower is fragrant: because the fragrance of her fame is spread far and wide, while it is sung in heaven and on earth and on the sea: *I yielded a sweet odor like the best myrrh* (Ecclus. 24:20), etc.

Again, the lily's flower—what is more wonderful—with the four little tongues mentioned above bent back, looks toward its root, and rising on high does not forget its lowest part. This is the humility of Mary, who

exulted vainly neither in her noble root, nor in her royal or priestly tribe, nor in the cardinal virtues, nor in charity, nor in chastity or commendable repute, or bodily beauty, or fulness of grace, or the angelic salutation, or the ministry of angels, or the conception of the Lord; but because the Almighty regarded her humility, according to that of Ecclesiasticus 3:20: *The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things.*

Again, although this flower seems barren, it is fruitful. (Look for this above, where Christ is called the flower that feeds.)

Again, generally in the lily, flower and stalk, are noted: in the whiteness, purity and innocence; in the odor, devotion and good fame; in the greenness, unfading freshness is signified.

Again, morally, the lily's flower has six white leaves. The six leaves are chastity of heart and of the five senses. And there are six things which chiefly keep chastity uncorrupt, namely sobriety, work, roughness of dress, guarding of the senses, modesty of speech, avoiding occasion of sinning, namely of place, time and person. Of the first, 1 Pet. 5:8: *Be sober and watch (p. 667) ye.* This leaf the thorn of gluttony tears, as is plain in Lot, who when drunk committed incest (Gen. 19:33 ff.). Therefore, Rom. 13:13: *Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities.* Of the second, John 9:4: *I must work*, etc. This leaf the thorn of idleness tears, as is plain in the Sodomites. Ezek. 16:49: *Behold this was the iniquity*, etc. For idleness is the road to lust. Therefore it is said, Ecclus. 33:28–29: *Send thy slave*, that is, the body, *to work, that he be not idle: for idleness hath taught much evil.* Of the third, Matt. 6:25: *Be not solicitous*, etc., as far as *put on*. Again: *Having food*, etc. (1 Tim. 6:8). For excessive adorning of clothes is the road to lust. Of the fourth, Isa. 33:15: *He that walketh in justices, and speaketh truth*, etc. This leaf is torn by curiosity in seeing vain things, hearing new things and the like; and this is the road to lust, as is plain in Dinah (Gen. 34:1 ff.). Jer. 9:20–21: *Teach your daughters wailing … for death is come up through our windows.* Of the fifth, Ecclus. 22:33: *Who will set a guard before my mouth?* etc. Again, a maiden ought to say: *I set a guard to my mouth, when the sinner stood against me* (Ps. 38:2). This leaf talkativeness tears, because it is the road to lust. Hence, Prov. 7:21–22: *She entangled him with many words*, etc., *immediately he followeth her*, etc. 1 Cor. 15:33: *Evil communications corrupt good manners*, or very wicked conversations. Of the sixth, 1 Tim. 5:11: *Avoid the younger widows.* For opportunity of place is the road to lust. Hence Tamar was corrupted by Amnon, because she was alone with him alone (2 Kings 13:10 ff.). Therefore it was said to Lot, Gen. 19:17: *Neither stay thou in all the country about*, namely of Sodom.

Again, within the lily's flower are six golden grains, which figure charity, by which God is loved in three ways, namely sweetly, wisely, strongly; and for three causes: for the temporal things he gives, for the spiritual things he pours in, for the heavenly things he promises. Of the first, Jer. 5:24: *Let us fear the Lord our God, who giveth us the early and the latter rain in due season: who preserveth for us the fulness of the yearly harvest.* Of the second it is said, Ps. 80:11: *Open thy mouth wide*, namely the mouth of the heart for desiring and the mouth of the body for praying, *and I will fill it*, namely with the gifts of graces. Of the third, 1 Cor. 2:9: *Eye hath not seen*, etc.; and it is taken from Isaiah 64:4, according to another edition.

As the lily among thorns (Cant. 2:2), etc. Note that the lily is threefold: the lily among thorns, the lily beneath thorns, the lily above thorns. The lily among thorns: virginity assailed by temptations, which are very sharp thorns. The lily beneath thorns: virginity subjected to crimes, which are the worst thorns. The lily above thorns: virginity above temptation and assault, such as is the virginity of Mary. Of the first, Lam. 1:4: *Her priests sigh, her virgins are in affliction.* Of the second, Deut. 32:25: *Without, the sword shall lay them waste, and terror within, both the young man and the virgin.* Of the third, Apoc. 14:4: *These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins*, etc. The first lily is the foolish virgins, having lamps without oil, that is, bodies intact without charity. The second is the wise virgins, who with the lamp of virginity, having taken the oil of charity, wearied by temptations, slumbered (Matt. 25:5). The third, the same virgins when, every slumber overcome, they went in with him to the marriage. Again, the first lily is the dancing daughter of Herodias (Mark 6:22). The second, blessed *(p. 668)* Agnes, who endured martyrdom

rather than serve the marriage bond. The third, the blessed Virgin, who never felt any sting of lust.

Again, there is a threefold kind of thorns. The first, carnal concupiscences. Hence, Gen. 3:17–18: *Cursed is the earth*, that is, the flesh: *thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.* The second, worldly cares. Hence, Matt. 13:7, the seed fell among thorns. The third, evil companions. 2 Kings 23:6: *Transgressors shall all be plucked up as thorns.* Again, Mic. 7:4: *He that is best among them is as a brier, and he that is righteous as the thorn of the hedge.* The holy soul, then, with pure faith, holy hope, solid charity, whole among the stings of carnal concupiscences, unhurt among pricking cares, good among the malignant, peaceable among the quarrelsome—what else is it but a lily among thorns?

Again, *As the lily among thorns.* The lily feels the pricking of these thorns, that is, of temptations: beneath it, when it is tempted by riches, which choke the word of God (Matt. 13:7); around it, perverse brethren who disturb the peace—Nah. 1:10: *As thorns embrace one another*, etc.; beside it, carnal pleasures—Gen. 3:17–18: *Cursed is the earth … thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee*; within it, evil thoughts and wicked desires—Prov. 24:30: *I passed by the field of the slothful man*, etc.; above it, the suggestions of demons—Isa. 7:24–25: *Briers and thorns shall be in all the land. And all the hills*, etc. Again, of the first thorns the Psalmist says, Ps. 31:4: *I am turned in my anguish*, that is, into the yoke of the first servitude, which I had cast off in baptism, *whilst the thorn is fastened*, namely carnal concupiscence, even to consent. As if he said: While carnal concupiscence is driven in even to consent, I am brought back into my former servitude, as if my strength had been handed back to the enemy, as Augustine says on the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 7. Or, *I am turned in my anguish*, that is, into penitential sorrow and lamentation, while the thorn of carnal concupiscence is driven in even to consent. Of the second, an example in the moon, where a man is seen burdened with a bundle of thorns, yet wounded by no wound. So is the holy soul under the cares of the active life: from these thorns it receives many prickings, yet not any vices of guilt. Of the third, Phil. 2:14–15: *Do ye all things without murmurings*, etc., *among whom you shine*, etc.; that is, be as white lilies unhurt among thorns.

Again, the lily is pricked by these thorns in the root, when one is tempted about faith; in the stalk, when they wish to break hope; in the flower, when to violate chastity; in the grains, when to corrupt charity through dissension among brethren; in the club, when to banish fear, by asserting God’s mercy, promising long life, making light of sins. These are the three lances which Joab, that is, the devil, thrust into the heart of Absalom (2 Kings 18:14).

Again, there is the lily of the valleys, of virginal chastity; of the thorn-thicket, of conjugal chastity; of the field, of widowly chastity. Of the first, Cant. 2:1: *I am the lily of the valleys.* Of the second, in the same place, v. 2: *As the lily among thorns.* Of the third, Matt. 6:28: *Consider the lilies of the field.*

As the lily among thorns. He does not say *among lilies*: this is against those who abhor living with sinners, like the Pharisees saying of the Lord, Luke 15:2: *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* To live well among the good is good; but to live well among the evil, and to keep innocence, and *with them that hate peace to be peaceable* (Ps. 119:7), is perfect.

Again, this is against certain people who despise the weak, who suffer the thorns of temptations, when they themselves do not feel such things, as is read in the Lives of the Fathers of a certain hermit. But let them hear that the soul cannot be the friend of the bridegroom unless it be *(p. 669)* a lily among thorns. Therefore, lest the bride should fear she was less loved in the midst of thorns than in a soft bed, he joined the name of *love* to the company of the thorns. And lest she should think herself less comely from the prickings of the thorns, he therefore calls her *a lily among thorns*. As if he said: Neither the grace of love, nor the fragrance of odor, nor the springtime freshness of comeliness is lessened in the bride by the nearness or the pricking of thorns, but rather increased.

Again, he does not say, *As the lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters*, but *my love*, as if by this he said openly: The soul that bears for my sake the thorns of temptations, tribulations and cares, proves itself evidently to be my love. And thus the love of the bride toward the bridegroom is noted here, and the love of the bridegroom toward the bride. For he who wishes to gather a lily among thorns necessarily suffers the stings of the thorns, as is plain in the bridegroom: for gathering this lily from the midst of the thorns, that is, of the reprobate, he suffered many stings, the manifold bitings of sinners, when he gathered the elect by preaching, himself and through others. Eccles. 10:8: *He that breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him.* This hedge is the synagogue of sinners. For the Lord did as a hunting dog, which, pursuing a wild beast, thrusts its head and body into the thorns, not fearing wounds, so that it may take the prey. The beast hiding among the thorns is the Church among the reprobate; to draw her out, he endured many prickings from the reprobate, who are thorns, even to the shedding of blood. Hence also, to signify this, he bore to have his head crowned with thorns. Hence, 2 Kings 23:6–7: *Transgressors shall all be plucked up as thorns, which are not taken away with hands; and if a man will touch them, he must be armed with iron and with the staff of a lance*, that is, with invincible patience and unbending long-suffering. There is noted also in this word the bride's compassion for the weak: for a lily among thorns is easily wounded and pierced, and the members of the Church among weak brethren ought to be pierceable by compassion. Hence this is the voice of the lily among thorns: *Who is weak*, etc. (2 Cor. 11:29).

Again, in this word three things are noted, namely the orderliness, the sociability and the humility of the bride. It is not said, *As the lily above thorns, so is my love among the daughters*, but *among thorns* and *among the daughters*: behold orderliness and sociability. Again, he does not say, *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the sons*, but *among the daughters*: behold humility. For these three are necessary to the faithful soul, that it may be the bride of Christ and that it may be called his love: orderliness as to itself, sociability as to the neighbor, humility as to God.

Having seen of the lily, we must see of the rose. And note that Christ is a rose, Mary is a rose, the Church is a rose, the faithful soul is a rose. Of this rose it is said, Ecclus. 24:18: *As a rose plant in Jericho*, that is, a certain plant of the rose. Jericho is interpreted *moon*, or, as some say, *its odor*: because the mouth of every Christian ought to be aromatic, resounding the praises of Mary, as the mouth is made aromatic by chewing aromatic spices. The moon is white, the rose red: the rose in the moon, redness in whiteness. The rose plant in Jericho, then, is the desire of martyrdom and passion planted in the whiteness of virginity. Therefore it is elegantly said, Luke 1:27: *And the virgin's name was Mary.* (You will find this more fully under the heading of Mary's martyrdom.) It is said that in Jericho grow most beautiful roses having a hundred and fifty petals. Mary, then, is called as a rose, not any one, but of Jericho, that is, most beautiful, and most of all with regard to the passion of her Son, with whom she suffered in mind. For the rose color is as it were blood-red, and blood signifies martyrdom. And well *as a rose*: for Christ was the true rose, reddened with his own blood. But she was reddened not with her own blood but with the blood of her Son, *(p. 670)* and therefore *as a rose*: for as much as the Son suffered in the body, so much did she suffer with him in the depths of her heart. For she was the rose in Jericho, which means *failing*, because she suffered with her Son when faith had failed in all except her.

Otherwise: Mary was planted and firmly rooted in the want and the stings of poverty. Hence, as one most poor, she had not wherewith to cover her new-born Son sufficiently, or where to lay him decently; and from this want and these stings she rose up into the odor and comeliness of a most beautiful rose.

Otherwise: Christ is the rose, Jericho is failing: for he was planted *by the running waters* (Ps. 1:3) in the day of his passion, that is, by the failings of our mortality. Or, Jericho is *its odor*: because, when the alabaster box of his body was broken on the cross, the house, that is, the Church, was filled with the odor of the ointment (John 12:3), namely the odor of hope and of grace. For the rose, when it is planted in the bud, hardly appears, but afterwards grows and flowers. So Christ in his passion, when he clung more deeply rooted to the earth,

that is, to the Church. Isa. 53:2: *We have seen him, and there was no sightliness.* For then he was *a hidden God* (Isa. 45:15); but afterwards this rose flowered, that is, his flesh, which had been steeped in his rosy blood in the passion, flowered again in the resurrection.

Mary is a rose. Because the rose is bowing and lowly in stature, by humble obedience, according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit saying to her: *Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear* (Ps. 44:11), etc. Aromatic. Hence, Cant. 4:10: *The sweet smell of thy ointments above all aromatical spices.*

Mary is a rose because of natural beauty. Hence, Cant. 4:7, the bridegroom says to her: *Thou art all fair, O my love*, etc.

Virginal modesty. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 4:3: *Thy cheeks are as a piece of a pomegranate*, etc. (Under the heading of her beauty.)

Singular patience: for it is of purple or blood-red color, and in blood martyrdom is signified, because she suffered in mind with her Son; and the intensity of that sorrow is signified in the rose by the intensity of its redness.

Charity toward God and neighbor. For the rose is of fiery color, and by fire charity is signified. Luke 12:49: *I am come to cast fire on the earth.* The rose is also of most intense redness, in which is the highest perfection of love. It is also cold, in which is noted the exclusion of all wicked love; which well befits the blessed Virgin, who says, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me.* This perfect love she had in Jericho, that is, in mortal creation.

Jericho is failing.

Its cold petals are her words. Hence she declared: *Because I know not man* (Luke 1:34). Cold also in its petals by effect: because by her prayers, merits and examples she cools the heats of evil concupiscences, and most of all in her intimates.

Abundant, especially the rose of Jericho: because manifold mystery or understanding or doctrine lies hidden in her words. (Look under the heading of Mary's wisdom.)

Hot: because her seed, Christ the Lord, is charity.

Bitter, and this by effect: because her seed, that is, her words and examples, makes bitter in her imitators the harmful pleasures of the world. For she is signified by the book which John devoured, Apoc. 10:10, which was sweet to the taste and bitter in effect.

Saffron-colored: in which are signified the affections of her inmost charity. For *she hath care of all* (Wis. 6:8). As if she said that of the Apostle, Phil. 1:8: *God is my witness, how I long after you all in the bowels of Christ*, my Son.

Earthly, by voluntary poverty, *(p. 671)* or by generous giving away of temporal goods, if she ever had any.

Spiritual, namely in the soul, by the highest humility.

Bodily, by temperance and the mortifying of the flesh.

Astringent, that is, restraining the flux of the head, by which wordiness is signified. For she is *a wise and silent woman* (Ecclus. 26:18), and by her example she restrains in her imitators the flux spoken of above. As if she said: *Do not multiply to speak lofty things, boasting* (1 Kings 2:3). She also restrains by her prayers and examples the flux of any vice, especially in those who love her; and she is called *a scarlet lace* (Cant. 4:3).

Strengthening the head. By the head understand the mind. For she strengthened Basil when he feared Julian the Apostate, and Theophilus when he was already almost despairing, when she spoke to his heart. Therefore she is called a rose in Jericho, which is interpreted *failing*: because often, unless she strengthened sinners,

they would fail.

Clearing the eyes: for rose-water is made from roses.

Soothing pain.

Seasoning drinks after the manner of the clove: for rose wine is made from roses. For the more finely the dignity of the Virgin is set forth, the more savory and fragrant the wine of preaching is made.

Queen: for it is of purple color, and purple befits kings. Other flowers are beautiful, other women are good; but she is the queen of virgins and the glory of women, as the rose is of flowers.

Most beautiful to look upon. For she is *the most beautiful among women* (Cant. 1:7), as the rose among flowers; to whom the Son says, Cant. 2:14: *Shew me thy face*, etc., *for thy face is comely.* Again, Cant. 6:12, the whole Trinity says to her: *Return, return, O Sulamitess*, etc., *that we may behold thee.* And in this word, *that we may behold thee*, it is shown that the whole Trinity desires to behold her beauty.

Most sweet to the touch. For the rose is born of the thorn, yet is not thorny. And Mary was born of the Jews, who were as thorns; hence, "As the thorn the rose," etc. But sinners do not find her thorny or harsh, because she is sweet to all. Blessed Bernard: "Why should human frailty tremble to approach Mary? There is nothing harsh in her, nothing terrible; she is all sweet, offering to all milk and wool."

Most delicate to smell. Hence the young maidens say, Cant. 1:3: *We will run after thee to the odor of thy ointments.* And because of this beauty and this sweetness the Church says to her: "Thou art made beautiful to behold, and sweet to touch and to smell."

It clings to thorns, though wholly unlike them. And Mary clings by pity and compassion to sinners, who are thorns, though wholly free from sin.

Closed at first, it opens to the ray of the sun. For when by vowing virginity she had closed the consent of her mind to conception and generation, yet she opened to the Sun of justice when she understood that she could conceive and bear the Son of God remaining a virgin. Hence she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me*, etc. (Luke 1:38). Hence also she says, Cant. 5:5: *I arose up to open to my beloved*, etc.

When it has grown perfectly, it spreads open upward and bends downward on every side: because, raised to the perfect growth of heavenly exultation, she is both spread open with all her power to receive the divine light, and bent down on every side, by compassion, without respect of persons, to the help of mortals; and equally, that is, in common, *she hath care of all* (Wis. 6:8).

It is plucked before it withers: because before her most blessed flesh could wither in corruption, she is believed to have been taken up from the world to the immortality *(p. 672)* of both robes: for the Lord did not *give his holy one to see corruption* (Ps. 15:10). Augustine: "We believe that the flesh never rotted on earth whose part is glorified in heaven."

Mary is a violet. Hence she says with her Son, Cant. 2:1: *I am the flower of the field*, etc., which properly is the violet, as some say. According to Isidore it is named from the strength (*vi*) of its odor; its flower, appearing before all other flowers, signifies the coming fair weather of the season, because it springs at the beginning of springtime. So Mary, who first made the vow of perpetual virginity, appeared as it were at the beginning of the newborn Church, and in springtime, when all things born of the earth are in a manner renewed. For the restoration of the world began from her; and afterwards she was as it were dyed purple in the passion of her Son, whose sorrow is counted to her for martyrdom, which is figured in purple.

Mary is a violet: because the violet is a little flower, by humility.

Bowing, by obedience.

Clinging to the earth, that is, to earthly sinners, by compassion, pity and the affection of mercy.

Of fine and sweet odor, by sweet-smelling repute, delighting God, angels and men. Therefore because of the strength of its odor it is called *viola*.

Of temperate complexion, by modesty of every kind, since she was ruled by every restraint of reason.

Of purple, airy and hyacinth color, and also livid. (All this you had above, where Mary is called a flower of every color.)

It represses the heats of fevers, that is, of tempting vices, especially in her intimates. Heat is temptation of the flesh, or wrath of the mind; cold is avarice, sloth, idleness, torpor and despair.

It purges harmful and corrupt humors: because by her prayers and examples she banishes evil morals and forms excellent ones.

It moistens dried and withered limbs: because she supplies to those who love her the fatness of devotion and charity.

From it violet syrup is made: because her intercession is medicinal for each of the sicknesses of sinners.

It is properly called the flower of the field (Cant. 2:1), because it springs from untilled earth; and also because of its commonness and the other properties which we assigned a little above to Christ, who specially calls himself the flower of the field. She too was born of the Jews, untilled and squalid through vices and sins.

The crocus has golden threads. And Mary is golden by wisdom about divine things. Cant. 4:14: *Spikenard and saffron,* etc. According to Isidore it is brought from Corycus, a town of Cilicia, where the better crocus grows, and it took its name from Corycus. The crocus grows elsewhere too than in Cilicia, but never as good. The best is that which is fresh, of good odor, with little whiteness, of long stretched-out length, whole, not crumbled into fragments, of good scent, gently sharp, staining the hand if it is plucked. Without these properties it is either old or adulterated.

Mary is a crocus: because the crocus has a solid root, and nothing else hard. The root of the Virgin is her humility or her faith, whose most solid constancy appeared in the passion of her Son.

It has grassy threads, long, slender and golden. These threads are virginal thoughts green with faith, because grass is wont to be green; slenderness is poverty, length is the long-suffering of perseverance, golden color is wisdom about divine things.

A most beautiful flower, golden and red, comely and precious, fragrant and of the best odor. And Christ is Mary's flower: golden as to the Godhead, red as to the shedding of blood, comely as to both natures, of *(p. 673)* excellent odor; hence he compares himself to balsam, myrrh and cinnamon.

It colors the foods of nobles and makes them savory. Those are nobles who do the will of God the Father, as is said in the Gospel (cf. Matt. 7:21; 12:50; Mark 3:35; John 9:31), whose foods are the words of the Lord; which foods the blessed Virgin colors and marks and makes more savory.

The marigold (*solsequium*) is so called from the fact that it follows the sun, as if bowing to it; or because it bows itself with the sun as it sinks. These are Mary and just men, who humble and bow themselves after the example of Christ saying, Matt. 11:29: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.*

The marigold, crushed and laid on a wound, or eaten, is good against poison and the bite of a venomous animal.

Boiled in water, it is said to take away warts if that water is drunk; or if the herb is put in a poultice and laid on the warts.

It flowers at the summer solstice; it turns its leaves round with the motions of the sun; when the sun rises it opens its flowers; when the sun has set it closes itself. Apply this to Mary and to the faithful soul.

The hyacinth is an herb having a purple flower, and it took its name from a certain noble boy who was found slain in a glade among purple flowers. In flower and root it is like the violet. In this flower can be signified Mary's compassion and contemplation: because purple signifies compassion, the hyacinth color contemplation.

The color of the lily signifies Mary's perfect innocence when she was sanctified in the womb; which innocence she kept continually, saying with Job: *Till I die*, namely by death, *I will not depart from my innocence* (Job 27:5), etc. Or, when she first made the vow of virginity. Hence Christ says of her: *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters* (Cant. 2:2). For as much as the flower of the lily surpasses the flowers of thorns, so much does her chastity surpass the virginities and chastities of all women.

Mary is called a flower. First, of the rose, when, the angel having come in to her in the form of a man, she was abashed, and her face is believed to have been suffused with rosy redness. Or she reddened most like a rose when she suffered in mind with her suffering Son. Hence she compares herself to the rose plant in Jericho. For she was *as the flower of roses in the days of the spring* (Ecclus. 50:8), namely when the Son suffered in spring for the renewal of the world.

Of the violet, which is lowly and bowing, when, having understood that she could conceive and bear remaining a virgin, she answered most humbly and with bowed head: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38).

Of wheat, as to the fruit of her motherhood: for the flower of wheat produces the grain of wheat. And she bore that grain which testifies of itself, John 12:24: *Unless the grain of wheat*, etc.; with which grain we are fed in the sacrament of the Son.

Of the grape, as to the special privilege of putting serpents to flight from the vineyard of the Lord, that is, the Church or the faithful soul. Or otherwise, the flower of the vine or grape is the virginity of Mary: because as the flower of the vine produces the grape, so Mary's virginity produced that grape in whose wine or blood Judah, that is, he who truly confesses, washes his robe or his cloak (Gen. 49:11): because by the blood of Christ, by which our penance is sanctified, our interior garment, signified by the robe, and our exterior, signified by the cloak, are washed.

Of the pomegranate, whose flowers show cleanness and innocence inasmuch as they are white, charity and patience inasmuch as they are rosy, compassion for neighbors and the desire of suffering for Christ inasmuch as they are purple. These flowers also produce pomegranates, in which under one rind *(p. 674)* many grains are contained, set in order. Such flowers the blessed Virgin had when she persevered with one mind in prayer with the disciples of her Son and the women, as is read in Acts 1:14.

Of the herbs of the enclosed garden. *My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed* (Cant. 4:12), etc.

Since in fruitful and solitary gardens many medicinal, powerful and aromatic herbs are wont to be found, we must see of the herbs of this garden.

Mary is a myrtle. Because it is named from the sea (*mare*), since it is a tree or herb of the shore. Hence the poet:

And myrtles loving the shores.

In Greek it is called *myrtene*: for it grows gladly on the shores of the sea. And Mary, which is interpreted *bitter sea*, came to the glory of spiritual martyrdom when she suffered bitterly with her suffering Son; and so she grew beside the sea.

According to the physicians it is suitable for many needs of women. And the blessed Virgin for all the needs of faithful souls.

It restrains vomiting: because by her prayers, merits and examples she holds men back, and especially those devoted to her, lest they return to their vomit, that is, lest they repeat the sins which they had vomited out by confessing: because then Christ would vomit them out of his mouth (Apoc. 3:16).

It restrains the flux of concupiscences, and the desire of temporal things, and the vomiting of gluttony which follows intemperance.

It restores and strengthens weary or palsied limbs, according to the command of the Son, Isa. 35:3: *Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees*, etc.

It is said to have a power of repressing lust, and for this reason the poets fable that the myrtle is a tree dedicated to Venus. Therefore Mary and the saints are well signified by the myrtle, who pursue the corruption of lust first in themselves and afterwards in others.

It makes those who suffer from acute fever sleep: because she cools those burning with carnal desires or earthly concupiscences, granting them sleep, that is, quiet of heart, the virtue of chastity, contempt of temporal things, the sabbath or leisure of contemplation.

It is of temperate complexion, and from it is made myrtle drink, which is good for breaking the stone: because by her childbearing idolatry was broken; for which it is sung to her: “Rejoice, Virgin Mary: thou alone hast destroyed all heresies in the whole world.” And this was signified when, as she entered Egypt with her Son, the idols of Egypt fell down (Isa. 19:1).

Short of stature, by humility; of cold nature, by virginity.

It is aromatic. For she is, in those who are saved, *the odor of life unto life* (2 Cor. 2:16).

Incorruptible, as they say: because she is without envy and desire of temporal things, which rot the hearts of those who love them.

It is rooted and grows in the depth of humility, lowliness and abasement. Of this depth it is said, Zech. 1:8: *I saw by night*, that is, not by a clear vision, which will be in the future, *and behold a man*, that is, Christ, *riding upon a red horse.* The horse is Christ’s flesh, which he ruled well, curbing it with the bridle of temperance and urging it as with spurs, which signify the two comings. And this horse was red, because reddened on the cross with his own blood. *And he stood among the myrtle trees*, that is, among just men, ready to help them, as Stephen saw him standing (Acts 7:55), that is, ready to help; who are like the myrtle, that is, tranquil in conscience. And assign the other properties to them. And these are the comforters of the Church. Or, Christ stands among the comforters of the Church, because he delights in the company of such and comforts such. *Which were in the bottom*, namely of humility and usefulness and abasement, as was said. *And behind him*, by imitation, *(p. 675) were red horses*, that is, martyrs, who follow his footsteps more expressly; *speckled*, adorned with virtues and good works, and as to such the Church is said to be *surrounded with variety* (Ps. 44:10), or because of the variety of torments; *and white*, by innocence and chastity.

The mandrake is an aromatic herb, cold and dry; it is rooted very deep in the earth and rises little above the earth; its root has the form of a human body, except the head; it has red and fragrant apples, like pomegranates. It is prized by physicians, because it is of such power that it grants sleep to the sick who suffer from the trouble of wakefulness; it induces also so deep a slumber that if its bark, mixed with wine, is given to a sick man to drink, he can be cut without feeling pain. Again, it heals those who so suffer from nausea that they can neither keep food down nor take pleasure in taking it: for it strengthens the taste and excites the appetite.

Mary is a mandrake. Because she is cold and dry by virginity, etc.

Aromatic to God, angels and men by repute and by every kind of virtue. Hence it is said to her, Cant. 4:10: *The sweet smell of thy ointments above all aromatical spices.*

Rooted most deeply by love and contemplation in the land of eternal stability: because *she hath chosen the best part* (Luke 10:42).

Rising above the earth as to the angels and holy souls, but not as much as Christ as man, who is the head of all creation.

Like to Christ made man of her, by humility, which was her root, but not by divinity: for *the head of Christ is God* (1 Cor. 11:3), that is, the Godhead.

Her apple, that is, Christ, is red by the shedding of his own blood, and fragrant: because when the alabaster box of his body was broken, the house, that is, the Church, was filled with the odor of the ointment.

Like also to the pomegranate: because, broken on the cross, he appeared white by innocence, and ruddy by charity and patience, and full of grains, that is, of all virtues.

She is prized by physicians, that is, preachers, and by sinners themselves who desire to be healed of the languors of vices: because, as was said of the myrtle, by her prayers, merits and examples she grants sleep to them of whom it was said before, Prov. 4:16: *They sleep not except they have done evil, and their sleep is taken away unless they have made some to fall.*

Her bark, that is, the example of her manner of life, mixed with the wine of preaching and devoutly received by the hearers, puts a man to sleep so deeply by contemplation and imitation of her that he feels neither injury to his own body nor losses of his household goods: for by grace she breathes into their hearts that *the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in* them (Rom. 8:18).

To those who loathe the word of God out of disgust she furnishes a remedy.

Chapter 5: On the Things Which at the Incarnation of the Son of God Came Down from Above into the Enclosed Garden

(p. 676)

Sun, Word of the Father, light, splendor, wind, and air, Snow, shower, rain, vapor, fire, manna, honey, and dew, Angel, bird, bee.

My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed (Cant. 4:12), etc.

Rightly is the blessed Virgin called a garden enclosed: as into an enclosed garden nothing lowly or earthly can enter, but only those things which come from above, so it was done in Mary. For into this garden no mere man entered, since she is *a land through which no man passed* (Jer. 2:6), and since she is *the closed gate through which no man passed* (Ezek. 44:2); nor beast nor creeping thing, by which carnal and spiritual vices are signified.

By the verses written above, those things can briefly be committed to memory which came down into her at her sanctification, at the filling with grace, at the coming upon her of the Holy Spirit, at the unspeakable conception of the Son of God; by all of which are signified the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or the Son of God himself, or *every best gift, coming down from the Father of lights* (James 1:17). Of these we must see one by one.

§1: Christ the Sun

Christ is the sun for many reasons. For it is called *sol* as if *solus lucens*, alone shining; or as if bestowing its own (*sua*) on all; or because it lifts upward: because it draws to itself the waters of the sea and the moistures of the earth, that is, those set low in humility, whom it moistens with its grace; it draws them upward and removes them from the world. Master Hugh of St Victor: "The sun alone has light of its own, and it alone was made of fire. All the other stars, like the moon, were made of airy matter, and they only reflect light, and do not shine." He also says that God made the sun from that primal light which is believed to have been created in the place where the sun rises, or from fire, bettering it in form and splendor.

This visible sun is the eye of the world, the light of creatures, the mirror of the Creator; than which no creature is more beautiful, none more useful; while it shines, the other lights are as if they were not, and cannot be seen. Hence, Job 25:5: *The moon doth not shine, and the stars are not pure in his sight*, etc. And note that Christ is called *the sun of justice* (Mal. 4:2); which justice the Gloss calls charity, for this reason, that he scourges and chastises whomsoever he loves. Or he is called the sun of justice *(p. 677)* because he does not shine except for those who keep justice.

It is to be noted, then, that the sun excels all the lights of heaven in five privileges. So Christ the Lord excels all the orders of the saints: because *there is none holy as the Lord is* (1 Kings 2:2). First, in greatness. The Egyptians say that it is eight times greater than the earth; Plato, Macrobius and Aristotle, twenty-seven times. This greatness of the sun signifies the humility of Christ, to which the humility of no saint can be compared, and which is the mistress of all the humility of the saints. Hence he says, Matt. 11:29: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.* For according to the virtue of humility the Lord measures the whole size of the soul. Hence, Matt. 18:4: *Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.* Blessed Bernard says that he called himself a little child. Secondly, in heat: for it is hotter than the earth would be if it were all on fire; for however great the sun is, it is nothing but fire, and therefore the fountain of heat. Heb. 12:29: *Our God is a consuming fire.* This heat is the charity of Christ, which made him become incarnate, die and be crucified. Hence he says, John 15:13: *Greater love than this no man hath*, etc. For charity is the fire which the Lord came to cast upon the earth (Luke 12:49): upon the earth, namely, of the human heart, wishing it to be vehemently kindled, so that henceforth it should not be earth, but, set on fire with the love of God, should tend upward, like fire, whose place is not below. Thirdly, in brightness: for the sun is brighter than the moon and all the stars. Tully: "Sol, as if *solus lucens*," that is, beyond the other lights of heaven. This brightness of the sun is the purity of Christ, *who did no sin* (1 Pet. 2:22), etc., who is *the unspotted mirror* (Wis. 7:26). Fourthly, in power. Hence Ps. 135:8: *God made the sun to rule the day.* Because the sun tempers the year: rising it makes day, setting, night; approaching, summer; receding, winter; it gives life and growth to all herbs and trees. Hence Tully calls it the mind of the world. Fifthly, in usefulness: for the sun is more useful than all the creatures that are under heaven; for from it the earth has to bring forth *the green herb, and such as may seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit* (Gen. 1:11), and the like. More useful than the sun, then, is Christ's mercy, than which nothing can be more useful.

Again, by the sun the Father is often interpreted; by the ray or splendor of the sun, the Son, who is *the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance* (Heb. 1:3); by the heat, the Holy Spirit, of whom it is said: *There is no one that can hide himself from his heat* (Ps. 18:7). For the Holy Spirit is the love of the Father and the Son. And as the ray or splendor of the sun, from the time the sun was, proceeded from the sun and proceeds and always will proceed, so the Son proceeds eternally from the Father. And as the heat proceeds eternally both from the sun and from the ray, so the Holy Spirit from both, that is, from the Son and the Father. Hence the Son says, John 15:26: *When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father.*

Otherwise: in the sun, because it goes round the frame of the world, is signified the power of the Father; in the splendor, which lights the whole, the wisdom of the Son; in the glow, which warms the whole, the benevolence of the Holy Spirit. By reason of the first, *sol* is said as if *solus*, alone: because God alone is said

to be truly mighty. By reason of the second, *sol* is said from *solon* or *salon*, which is common: because he *enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world* (John 1:9). By reason of the third, *sol* is said as if surveying the paths (*semitas*) of all: because he lights up and quickens all things with benevolence. Eccles. *(p. 678)* 1:6: *The spirit goeth forward surveying all places round about*, etc.

Again, in Christ the true sun, roundness is the eternity of the Godhead, brightness the purity of the soul, heat the charity with which he so loved us, as above.

Again, Christ is the sun: because as the material sun fills the world with the rays of its brightness, so Christ fills both worlds with the rays of his mercy. Hence: *O Lord, thy mercy is in heaven* (Ps. 35:6), etc. Again: *The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord* (Ps. 32:5). And this world he fills with the rays of examples and of doctrine; the twelve rays of this sun are the twelve Apostles.

Again, this sun lay hidden and hid himself under the cloud of the flesh in the Virgin's womb. Hence it is said to him, Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God.* And that saying: "The sun lay hidden under a cloud." He rose in his nativity, suffered eclipse on the cross. Again, he rose in the resurrection. Hence, Mark 16:2: *They come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen*, that is, Christ raised again. *Nor shall it go down any more* (Isa. 60:20). Therefore of this sun it is said, Eccles. 1:5–6: *The sun riseth*, that is, Christ in his nativity, *and goeth down*, in his passion. Hence, Amos 8:9: *In that day … the sun shall go down at midday*, that is, in the fervor of his charity, which made him suffer. *And returneth to his place*, in the ascension, that is, to the right hand of the Father. *And there rising again*, that is, coming from heaven at the judgment. *Maketh his round by the south*, that is, considers good works. *And turneth again to the north*, that is, considers evil works. *Surveying all places*: because there is nothing hidden that shall not there be revealed, when he will be the searcher of hearts, that is, of what each has thought, and of reins, that is, of the things in which each has taken delight in the present.

Otherwise: the sun rises for those below and sets for those above; and this when his body was laid in the sepulchre and his soul went down to hell: for then, to the holy fathers *that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen* (Isa. 9:2). Then he returns to his place, a magnificent conqueror, having snatched away the prey of his own, to the place, namely, of his Father's throne and glory, to sit at the right hand of his Father.

Otherwise: *The sun riseth*, that is, Christ in his nativity. Hence, Zech. 6:12: *Behold a man, the Orient is his name. And returneth to his place*, that is, as has been explained. *And there rising again*, supply, effectively: because he makes us be born again by grace and the Holy Spirit. *Maketh his round by the south*, that is, the Jews, through whom he is well said to go round as in a circuit: because he began from them, and from them was transferred to the Gentiles, and at length will return to them. *And turneth again to the north*, that is, to the Gentiles, to whom he is well said to turn aside: because he was not principally sent to them. Hence he says, Matt. 15:24: *I was not sent*, etc. *Surveying all places*: because he *hath concluded all in unbelief, that he may have mercy on all* (Rom. 11:32), etc.

Again, Christ is the sun: because, as from one and the same sun some things are lighted, as the eyes; others ripened, as fruits; others burst forth from the earth, as herbs; others melt, as wax, ice and snow; others are dried and hardened, as earthen vessels; others are blinded, as certain night birds; some grow black, and others red, some pale and others white, as certain fruits—and this according to the act and effect of the sun: so from the enlightening of this sun, which is grace, one puts forth the herb, as the penitent; another grows and buds, as one advancing in good; another is ripened and made perfect, as the perfect man; another melts by abundance of tears; another is dried by abstinence; another grows black by humility; another is white by chastity; another grows pale by love or penance; another reddens by the shedding *(p. 679)* of blood; another is enlightened by wisdom and faith; another is blinded by this light, as the heretic, and is in darkness in this sun. And so this sun *is set for the resurrection of many*, and for the fall of some (Luke 2:34).

Again, this sun makes for us a threefold day: the day of nature, which is common to good and evil; the day of grace, which is only for the just who turn to him; the day of glory, which is only for the blessed. And as long as the sun shines over the earth, day lasts for us. Likewise, as long as that sun shall shine over the land of the living, the day of eternity will last for the blessed. Isa. 60:20: *Thy sun shall go down no more*, is said to the Church triumphant.

Again, day is the sun shining over the earth. If, then, the sun, that is, the love of God, burns and shines in your heart over the earth, that is, over the love of earthly things—that is, if the love of God overcomes in you all transitory love—then it is the day of grace in your soul. But if the love of earthly things overcomes in you the love of God, then it is night in your soul; and this is a sure sign for you. Again, if you have the sun before your eyes, which are the intellect and the affection, so that you firmly believe and love, so that you can truly say that of Jonah 1:14: *We beseech thee, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life*—for faith and love are the salvation of the soul—then you have the shadow, that is, shadowy things, namely temporal things, behind you; and conversely.

Again, if you have the shadow of temporal things before your eyes, loving nothing but temporal things, or loving temporal things more than eternal, and *putting your hope in the uncertainty of riches* (1 Tim. 6:17), then you have put the sun, that is, Christ, behind your back, as he complains of certain men, Jer. 2:27: *They have turned their back to me, and not their face.* And of such the Psalmist says to him, Ps. 20:13: *For thou shalt make them turn their back; in thy remnants*, that is, in temporal things.

Again, as when the sun is removed the whole world grows dark, so when the light of the true sun is lost, that is, when grace is lost through sin, the whole interior man grows dim; and this is what the damned say, Wis. 5:6: *We have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us.*

Again, the sun, from the time it rose in the morning, stands all day before the door, ready to enter: if you open to it, it will enter; and according as you open to it, more or less of its brightness will enter. If you do not open to it, it will not enter, and it is not to be blamed for this, because it was not its fault: for it did what was its own. But if you do not open to it before it has set, and after the sun's setting, namely when night is coming, you open for the first time, you do it for nothing: you will not recover its brightness as long as the night lasts. The sun standing at our door is Christ, mercifully waiting for us to do penance. Hence he says, Apoc. 3:20: *I stand at the gate, and knock: if any man … open to me the door, I will come in to him*, etc. For as the ray of the sun offers itself to all things, ready to serve them, and it is not owing to it that they are not lighted, but to the obstacle that is set against it: so divine grace, unless it be hindered by the bar of sin. Your door is your mouth. By this door, if you open it wrongly, the devil enters. Against which we must pray: *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips. Incline not my heart to evil words* (Ps. 140:3–4), etc. When you detract from your brother, when you judge your brother, when you murmur against God, when you excuse your sin, and the like, then you shut to God and open to the devil. Conversely, when you open your mouth to confess truly, to ask pardon, to praise the Creator, to console the poor, to instruct the ignorant, and the like, and shut it to sin, then the light of the sun, that is, the grace of God, enters into your soul and lights up your mind. And according as you open your mouth wider in these and other good ways, and also the mouth of your heart, that *(p. 680)* is, your desire, the Lord lights up your mind with greater grace. Hence the Psalmist says, Ps. 80:11: *Open thy mouth wide*, in the twofold way that was said, *and I will fill it.* Abundantly, then, are the grace and mercy of the Redeemer to be desired: because as much as you desire, so much will you receive. Hence: *To the just their desire shall be given* (Prov. 10:24). And this is what he says: *Open wide, and I will fill.* But where empty vessels are lacking, that is, hearts gaping with desire and emptied of the love of temporal things, the oil of grace must stop, as blessed Bernard says.

Again, of the opening of the door and of the windows or gates of our house the bridegroom says to the bride, Cant. 5:2: *Open to me, my sister, my love*, etc. The chief door of the soul, as was said, is the tongue, by which

death and life enter the soul most abundantly. Hence, Prov. 18:21: *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*, that is, in its operations. The windows or gates are our other senses. Windows: hence Jer. 9:21: *Death*, that is, sin and the devil, *is come up through our windows*, that is, the senses, *it is entered into our houses*, that is, our consciences. Gates: hence it was said to Abraham, Gen. 22:17: *Thy seed*, that is, just men, *shall possess*, that is, shall carefully guard, *the gates of their enemies*, that is, the five senses, through which, as was said, demons and sins enter. The windows, then, that is, the senses, are to be opened to the true sun: which is done when you look with pity on the poor, when you mourn your own sins or those of others, and, what is more, when you turn away your eyes lest they behold vanity (Ps. 118:37).

Again, the ears are opened to this sun when you stop them lest they hear evil, when you gladly listen to the word of God and to the cry of the poor man—nay, of Christ in the poor man; and so of the other senses. Whoever, then, should open all the exterior senses to this sun, the sun of justice would abundantly light up his house with the brightness of his pity and grace. And this is what he says: *If any man … open to me, I will come in to him* (Apoc. 3:20). He is opened to when the mouth is opened to confess, to pray and the like. He comes in to those whom his grace makes worthy; he sups with those in whose services he delights. And so the Lord *standeth behind our wall* (Cant. 2:9): as long as we turn a deaf ear to him, he looks mercifully into the houses of our consciences *through the lattices*, that is, through the windows of the senses.

But note that unless you open to this sun as long as the day of the present life lasts for you, at your death the sun, that is, the grace of God, will set for you. Hence Gregory: “The Redeemer’s mercy by no means frees after death those whom grace does not reform for pardon before death.” As long as the eternal night lasts you will not recover its brightness. And if afterwards you cry with the foolish virgins, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, he will answer you: *Amen I say to you, I know you not* (Matt. 25:11–12). Therefore of the sinner who did not open to the sun standing at his door it is said in Psalm 48:20: *He shall never see light.*

But it is further to be noted that if you open the door or window, or any opening, on the side of the sun, as was said, the sun will at once enter and light up the house of conscience. The side of the sun I call spiritual business, the business of the soul. If you open your senses toward the opposite side, that is, to earthly and carnal things, the sun does not enter, nor does the grace of the Saviour light you. And note that he says, *I who am a giant of twofold substance* (Ps. 18:6), who am King of kings and supreme Emperor, for whom the opening of the little door is not enough, unless the gate be opened by the widening of charity. And note that first the little door is opened by compassion for sinners, afterwards the gate, that the prince may be brought in.

(p. 681) Otherwise: *I stand at the gate, and knock* (Apoc. 3:20). In these words the Lord admonishes to penance, and gives confidence of obtaining pardon to those who repent, and promises them his help, saying: *I stand*, ready to help. Acts 7:55: *Stephen saw Jesus standing*, etc. *At the gate* of the heart, *and knock*, with the word of preaching and with the hand of bounty. Cant. 5:2: *The voice of my beloved knocking*; to whom therefore it is most of all to be opened, because he opened to us the door of his body on the cross, that there the dove might take refuge from the face of the hawk, that is, of the devil. John 19:34: *One of the soldiers with a spear opened his side.*

Again, Apoc. 3:20: *If any man shall hear my voice*, that is, shall receive the preaching, which he does not hear who does not receive it, *and open to me the door*, namely of the heart, by the consent of free will, or by faith, *I will come in to him*, that is, I will go within by the enlightening of grace, and will give help, and will make grace prosper. Or, *shall open*, by preparing himself. *And will sup*, that is, will delight, *with him*, by his justification. Prov. 8:31: *My delights*, etc. *And he with me*, namely shall sup, that is, delightfully, by the joy and security of a clean conscience. Prov. 15:15: *A secure mind*, etc. And because they are few, therefore he says, *If any man open to me.* Jer. 8:6: *I attended, and hearkened*, etc. Nor does he say *I will dine*, as one going away again, but *I will sup*, as one remaining with him; and in this he hints that the good which is begun in the world by charity is perfected in heaven by beatitude, and always continues through eternity; nor does

another succeed to it by the changeableness of time.

Again, the ray of the sun entering a house makes the tiny motes visible and perceptible, which without the light of the sun are imperceptible. So if the ray of grace lights up our conscience, then we discern our omissions and imperfections, faults and weaknesses, as motes. Hence it is said of Christ, Job 12:22: *He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth up to light the shadow of death.*

Again, the sun shining over the earth makes day for us. And Christ, appearing in the flesh, announced to us the day of eternity. And as when the sun is absent it never dawns, so unless Christ had appeared in the flesh, the day of eternity would never have shone on the faithful.

Again, the sun, the most beautiful of the creatures of God that are under heaven, does not disdain to serve the vilest element, which is the earth. Behold the humility of the Saviour, who, *being the brightness of the glory and the figure of the substance* of the Father (Heb. 1:3), deigned to serve the disciples even to the washing of feet; nay, the vilest sinners whatsoever: to redeem whom he was sold, to loose whom he was bound, to free whom he was held, to clothe whom he was stripped, to absolve whom he was crucified, to give life to whom he died and was buried; and therefore he bought so dearly that he alone might possess, as Augustine says.

Again, the sun communicates whatever it has, as far as in it lies. Behold the generosity of the Saviour. Hence, Matt. 5:45, the Son says of the Father: *Who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad*, etc. Because Christ is common to the good as well as the evil: for to the evil he grants grace; for the just he preserves and increases grace, and at length after grace will bestow glory. And therefore *sol* is said as if bestowing his own on all. Because of this bounty Dionysius says of Christ: “He is the substantial good, extending his goodness to all things, as the sun its light, lighting all things through himself.”

Again, as long as dust flies about the house without a sunbeam it does not appear; but in the ray of the sun entering the house the motes appear. So without the grace of Christ we do not discern the evils of our consciences, for *who can understand sins?* (Ps. 18:13). Therefore of this sun it is said elsewhere: *The sun giving light hath looked (p. 682) upon all things* (Ecclus. 42:16), that is, by his light made all things visible. In his wisdom our soul has shone, and he has lighted up our ignorances.

Again, the sun in summer dries what is moist, in winter melts what is frozen. And Christ made firm Magdalen, who was loosened by vices, so that while Martha served she sat at the Lord’s feet, and when the disciples went away from the tomb she did not go away; but Zacchaeus, bound as with the frost of avarice, he melted and as it were made to flow, so that he gave half of his goods to the poor and restored fourfold if he had defrauded anyone.

Again, the sun in its heat draws up the tiny salt drops of the sea, and, sweetened, pours them out over the earth in sweet rain, and by them makes the earth fruitful. These stinking and salt sea waters are worldly sinners, who, if they recognize the stench and saltness of their life, and through humility reckon themselves drops of the sea, that is, something vile, insipid and small, will easily be drawn by the charity and mercy of God to his worship, and by their example others will be made fruitful unto penance.

Again, the sun, passing through unclean places, contracts no uncleanness from them. So neither is Christ in any way defiled in passing sacramentally through the mouth of a sinner.

Again, the sun, much greater than the earth, is veiled by a small cloud and made invisible to us. Likewise Christ is covered in the sacrament by the very small form of the host. Hence Isaiah says to him, Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God.*

Again, the sun, although it has lighted and fed the eyes from the beginning of the world, is not lessened. So also Christ, who feeds souls in the sacrament. Hence Augustine: “Eyes are fed by the light of the sun, and the sun is not lessened; the faithful are fed by the flesh of Christ, and it is not lessened.”

Again, the sun turns glass and air into its own brightness—glass, I say, without any tint except that which the sun itself makes, which properly is whiteness, which signifies chastity; but not so those who redden by credulity or lust, or grow black by hatred or avarice, or grow pale by hypocrisy and envy.

Again, the sun can be stayed by prayers, as is read in Josh. 10:12–13 and Ecclus. 46:5; and so one day was made two days without a night between: because *the Lord will give grace and glory* (Ps. 83:12). Which the Lord hints, saying, Jer. 7:16: *Pray not for this people … and do not withstand me,* etc.; and such violence pleases him much. Hence he laments, Isa. 64:7: *There is none … that riseth up and taketh hold of me.* Again, Ezek. 22:30: *I sought for a man … that might stand in the gap before me in favor of the land, that I might not destroy it.*

Again, to whatever filth the material sun is applied, it does not disdain to pour its rays over it. So neither does Christ disdain the vilest sinner. Hence he touched the leper, Matt. 8:3, saying: *I will. Be thou made clean.* Nor will he shine upon anything, however precious it be through riches or honors or wisdom, unless it be subject to him: which is done when we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and, asking mercy like that leper (Matt. 8:2), lay open to him by confession and prayer the hidden things of our heart.

Again, the sun is harmful to sick eyes, not by its own fault but by the fault of the eyes. Hence, Luke 2:34: *Behold this child is set for the fall,* etc. Hence Augustine: "To sick eyes light is hateful," as is plain in the Scribes and Pharisees; "but to sound and not bleary eyes its light is glorious." Hence, Eccles. 11:7: *The light is sweet, and it is delightful for the eyes to see the sun.* And this is what Gregory says of the Lord: "He, remaining unchangeable in himself, is perceived now one way, now another, in the thought of men, *(p. 683)* according to the quality of their vices; as light is hateful to sick eyes but pleasing to sound ones—by their change, that is, not his own." And this is what the authority says: "God, according to the diversity of those who taste, savors to some of justice, but to others of mercy."

Again, the sun, passing through glass, lights it and makes it from bright brighter, but neither by its entry nor by its going out does it break it. So the Son of God by his entry lit up the blessed Virgin with fuller grace, and from pure made her purer, and entering or going out did not break the seal of her maidenhood. Hence blessed Anselm on that of Luke 10:38: *Jesus entered into a certain town,* etc.: "For Jesus saves, does not violate; makes broken things whole, does not break whole things; as his name is, so is his work." Hence also someone says in prose verse:

As the sun's ray Enters harmlessly The window of glass, So the Son of God, Nay, more finely, The virginal hall.

And it is taken from the words of Augustine.

Again, the sun passing through glass newly painted and marked with pure colors shows in itself the appearance of the color it finds. Likewise Christ, who made the Virgin such as he willed to be made of the Virgin, was born pure of the pure, humble of the most humble, meek of the meek, sweet of the most sweet, and a Virgin of a Virgin. By colors understand the virtues with which the soul is painted. For truly the Virgin's body was as it were of glass: because, although it was of the ash of human nature, yet that ash, many times strained through the fire of the Holy Spirit, passed as it were into the splendor and purity of glass, especially from the time she received the sun of justice in the incarnation. For she is that city of which it is said, Apoc. 21:18: *The city itself pure gold, like to clear glass.*

Again, Christ is the sun under whose rays, that is, under the enlightening of his mercy, the moistened crystal sparkles. By the moistened crystal understand the sinner bathed in tears or in grace, who before, while the north wind stood, that is, while the devil tempted, had been frozen. Hence, Ecclus. 43:22: *The cold north wind blew, and the water was congealed into crystal.* But at the regard of the sun of justice the crystal, before hard and cold, sparkles, when the sinner, bathed in the tears of compunction, brings forth, as it were glittering

sparks, works of piety, shining and fiery, by which he invites others to the like.

Again, the sun cannot by any means be seen by us unless it first lights our eyes. Hence Augustine prays: “Lord, may I know myself, may I know thee.”

Again, the sun dries up what is moist, namely the streams of concupiscences, as was said of Magdalen; or the two streams which were born in the sin of Adam, which overflowed into all posterity and was the fountain of all perdition. One stream was of iniquity, and the other of infirmity. The stream of iniquity he dried up and consumed, not drinking of it, but suffering for our iniquities out of the exceeding fervor of charity; but of the stream of infirmity he drank in passing. Hence *he shall drink of the torrent*—not of the torrents—*in the way* (Ps. 109:7). Of these two torrents the Psalmist says, Ps. 17:5: *The torrents of iniquity troubled me.*

Again, the sun is the king of the stars. And Christ is king of all the saints, who are those stars of which the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 15:41: *Star differeth from star in glory.* Again that of Ecclesiasticus 43:10: *The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven*, that is, of the Church; that is, the differences of the saints.

Again, of this sun, of Christ, it is said, Ecclus. 43:3–4: *Keeping a furnace in works of heat*, that is, preparing the fire of hell for sinners for their sins. *The sun three times as much burneth the mountains*: because he always punishes for sin of thought, word and deed; either by inflaming *(p. 684)* with the fire of penance, of contrition, confession, satisfaction; or in purgatory or hell. *Breathing out fiery rays*, that is, sending forth the words of his preaching, shining and inflaming to love, as the blast of the smith’s bellows kindles the fire. *And shining with his beams*, that is, with miracles and doctrines, *he blindeth the eyes* of the unbelieving Jews. Hence he says, John 9:39: *I am come into this world, that they who see not may see*; and conversely.

Or thus: Christ was the sun in his nativity, when, born pure from sin of the Virgin, he lighted up the shepherds. Hence, Luke 2:9: *The brightness of God shone round about them.* And when the star going before led the Magi (Matt. 2:2 ff.). He was shining in the progress of his life, in the working of miracles as in the pouring forth of rays, and in the transfiguration. But he was *in his power* (Apoc. 1:16) in his passion, where he conquered the devil; and shining in power when he occasionally blinded the Jews. Therefore, Ecclus. 43:4, the sun is said to burn in a threefold manner, as above.

Again, the sun literally shines in its power at midday, where it is not darkened by the gloom of clouds: in which it is noted that the Church is purged in tribulation. In the sun shining in its power at midday are signified also the four endowments of the bodies of the blessed. For then it has the fulness of light and heat: behold clarity and agility. Again, it pierces and scatters the clouds: behold subtlety. By the fact that it is fixed for ever, as the Gloss says, impassibility.

§2: Christ the Word of the Father

Christ is the Word of the Father. Hence, John 1:1: *In the beginning was the Word*, etc.

By the name of *Word* is signified the Son of God, who in his incarnation came down into this garden. And note that a word is twofold, mental and vocal. The Son before the incarnation was the mental word: because as the mental word lies hidden within and cannot be brought forth except by the voice, so the Son, who before lay hidden with the Father, was made manifest to the world by the incarnation.

The Son of God is called the Word for many reasons.

The first reason: because as a word shows the mind, which in itself is invisible, so the Son manifested to the world the Father, who in himself is invisible. Hence, Exod. 33:20, the Father says: *Man shall not see me and live.* 1 John 4:12 and John 1:18: *No man hath seen God at any time.* Of which manifestation Christ says, John 17:6: *I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou hast given me*, etc.

The second reason: because as the word proceeds visibly from the heart or mind, so the Son incomprehensibly from the Father. Hence blessed Bernard, speaking of Christ: “He came from the heart of the Father into the womb of the Virgin mother.” And note that the heart is higher, the womb lower; and in this can be noted the descent of the incarnation. Hence also the Father says: *My heart hath uttered a good word* (Ps. 44:2). The heart here can be called the secret of the Godhead. Hence the Father says to the Son: *From the womb*, that is, from the secret of the Godhead, *before the day star I begot thee* (Ps. 109:3). Again, this is what the Church sings: “Born of the Father’s heart,” etc. The word, then, proceeded from the mind or heart, and without hurt to the mouth came into the mouth in the incarnation, that is, into the blessed Virgin, who is called the mouth of the Church: because she prays and pleads continually for the Catholic Church.

The third reason: because as a word, in order to show the mind, puts on a voice, so the Son of God, in order to show the Father, took flesh. The word going out from the heart or mind puts on the human voice in the mouth, and Christ, proceeding *(p. 685)* from the Father, put on human flesh in the Virgin, who is the mouth of the Church, as above. Well is Christ’s flesh called a voice: because whatever he did in the flesh preaches to us and teaches us what we ought to do. Augustine: “Every action of Christ is a lesson for the Christian.” Of this voice John says, Apoc. 1:12: *I turned to see the voice that spoke with me.*

The fourth reason: because as a word puts on a voice by means of the office of the tongue, so the Son put on flesh by means of the operation of the Holy Spirit, who appeared in tongues of fire vehemently. Hence it is said: “Conceived of the Holy Spirit,” that is, by the work of the Holy Spirit. Again: *My tongue is the pen of a scrivener* (Ps. 44:2).

The fifth reason: because as a word in the mouth, having taken a voice, proceeds from the mouth itself without hurt to the mouth, and if the word itself be good it makes the mouth commendable: so the Son of God, taking flesh of the Virgin, proceeded from her in his nativity without corruption and pain. Hence it is said: *As a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber* (Ps. 18:6). Hence also the blessed Virgin is on this account proclaimed by every generation. And as a good spice that has stayed long in the mouth makes the mouth itself aromatic, so Christ, who calls himself cinnamon and aromatic balm, made his mother fragrant. Hence also she is called the rose planted in Jericho, which is interpreted *odor of the mouth*, or *its odor*. Again, as a voice or word enters an enclosed place and goes out from it, so the Son of God the Virgin’s womb. Again, as when the voice passes the word remains, so when the Son’s flesh passed through death the Godhead remained impassible.

The sixth reason. As three things are required for the forming of the voice, namely the palate, the tongue and the teeth, so three for the incarnation of the Son. The Father and the Holy Spirit wrought the incarnation together with the Son himself, but for the Son alone, because the works of the Trinity are inseparable. By the palate can be understood the Father: because as from the palate both tongue and teeth come forth, so from the Father the Son proceeds by generation, the Holy Spirit by procession. By the tongue, the Holy Spirit, who appeared in tongues and makes eloquent those whom he fills. By the teeth, the Son: because as the teeth have their root in the flesh, yet are not flesh and rise above the flesh, so the Son, having his root in the flesh, knew not the vices of the flesh, and surpasses all flesh, that is, every man. And as there are two rows of teeth, the upper immovable, the lower movable, so there are two natures in Christ: the higher, that is, the divine, immovable—hence Boethius:

And abiding still, gives all things to be moved—

the lower movable and mortal.

The Word was made flesh for many reasons. The first reason Ambrose assigns, saying: “The Word, that is, the Son of God, was made flesh, that flesh might become God.” Hence, John 1:12: *As many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name.* For by receiving the Son of God through faith, we carnal men are made sons of God.

The second reason: because man was made to the image and likeness of God according to the soul. The Son of God was united to our flesh. Hence the Apostle says, Phil. 2:7: *Being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man*: so that man might be like his Creator both in flesh and in soul, and be saved in both.

The third reason: because the image had been deformed and blotted out in man through the sin of Adam, who, *when he was in honor*—since he was created to the image and likeness of God and was a citizen in paradise—*did not understand: and therefore he is compared to senseless beasts* (Ps. 48:13, 21), etc.; it was needful that the wax of human *(p. 686)* nature, warmed by the consideration of God's benefits—hence it is said, 1 Kings 11:9: *Tomorrow you shall have relief, when the sun shall be hot*—should be stamped again with the seal of the Father, that is, with the Son, of which seal the Father says to the Son at the end of Aggeus 2:24: *I will make thee as a signet, for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord.* The seal, then, is the Godhead, the wax the humanity. Blessed Ambrose: "The Image came, that is, Christ, to him who was made to the image; and the Image sought him who was to his likeness, that he might seal him again, that he might conform him again." In order that you may be perfectly formed to this seal, you must be pure by innocence, or purified by penance; softened by love and kindness; kneaded by tribulation and patience; applied wholly to the seal by entire justice—which are signified by the saints whom the Church celebrates after the Lord's nativity.

The fourth reason: because we are carnal and love the flesh, the Word was made flesh: because every like naturally seeks its like; and therefore he was made like us according to the flesh, that we might seek him and love him.

The fifth reason. Christ was made tender flesh, that he might be the food of infants, who in his Godhead was the refreshment of angels. Hence blessed Bernard: "The food of man changed itself into the food of a beast, when man had been changed into a beast," namely Adam and his own. Hence: *Man when he was in honor* (Ps. 48:13), etc., as above. And therefore it is said that *man ate the bread of angels* (Ps. 77:25).

The sixth reason. As solid food is chewed by the nurse and reduced to a liquid substance, that it may pass into the nourishment of the child, so the blessed Virgin, our nurse, softened him for us and made him eatable, and as it were cooked him with the fire of her charity.

The seventh reason. The Son of God came covered with the cloud of the flesh, that he might be seen and known by us, and that he might burn the cloud of his flesh in the heat of the Father's anger: which was done in the passion. Hence also he is signified, Apoc. 10:1, by the angel who appeared *clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was on his head.* Blessed Ildephonsus: "How Christ entered into the Virgin, no one knows; how he went out, the going out alone knows. God enters, so to speak, without a garment; he goes out, to speak surely, clothed with flesh," etc. Again, note that as this Word once came to us and was made flesh that he might dwell in us, so daily he comes to us in spirit, that he may dwell in us. Prov. 8:31: *My delights*, etc. For this reason also he says, Ecclus. 24:11: *In all these I sought rest*, etc.

The Word was made flesh (John 1:14). This Word was active: because *all things were made by him* (John 1:3). Passive: because he suffered for us on the cross. Deponent: because he laid down on the cross our sins, which *he bore in his body upon the tree* (1 Pet. 2:24), as Micah had prophesied, 7:19: *He will put away our iniquities*, etc. For at the judgment *he will put down the mighty from their seat* (Luke 1:52).

Otherwise: because by dying he laid down his single oldness, namely of punishment, and our double, namely of guilt and punishment. The oldness of guilt he laid down when he bore our sins in his body upon the tree. But the oldness of punishment he will lay down when he *will reform the body of our lowness* (Phil. 3:21), etc. Of the neuter gender: because neither mere God nor mere man. Common: because God and man.

Again, because a word is begotten when it is spoken, therefore he says here *Word*. Note that the Father said this aloud of the Son at the baptism (Matt. 3:17) and in the transfiguration, Matt. 17:5. *The Lord hath said to me:*

Chapter 5, §2 (continued): Christ the Word of the Father

(p. 687) Thou art my Son (Ps. 2:7), that is, the Father begot me his Son. For a word is begotten when it is spoken. Therefore the Son says, Ecclus. 24:5: *I came out of the mouth of the most High.*

Otherwise: *The Lord hath said to me*, that is, of me, etc. Again, it is expounded thus of the temporal generation of Christ: *I*, a notable person, says the Father, *this day*, that is, in time, *have begotten thee*, that is, I created thee in the Virgin's womb according as thou art man. Hence he says, Isa. 45:8: *I the Lord have created him*, namely the man. But this fits rather the eternal generation of Christ. Again, the Lord said, *This day have I begotten thee*, so that by *this day* he might mark that that generation has not passed, and by *have begotten* that it has not lately begun; and the sense is: *This day have I begotten thee*, that is, from eternity thou art of one substance with me. Mic. 5:2: *His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity.* From the beginning, that is, from the Father, who is the beginning not from a beginning; the Son is a beginning, but from a beginning. *In the beginning was the Word* (John 1:1), etc.

Again, of this generation the Father says to the Son in another psalm, Ps. 109:3: *From the womb before the day star I begot thee.* Here the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father is shown. Hence the Father says: *From the womb*, that is, from my secret substance, *before the day star I begot thee*, that is, before every creature, so that by synecdoche the whole may be understood from a part. And the Father shows that the generation is singular when he says *I begot*; that it is natural when he says *from the womb*; and that it is eternal when he says *before the day star*. And this is what uncreated Wisdom, that is, the Son, says, Ecclus. 24:5: *I am the firstborn before all creatures.* What is said a little above, *The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand* (Ps. 109:1), ought to be understood thus: that the Prophet puts *said* after our manner, that man may be instructed; for the Father did not utter this with the mouth, but with affection, or by eternal disposition. Hence it ought to be understood thus: *The Lord said to my Lord*, that is, the Father begot the Son, through whom what follows was to be done. For by the same reason by which the Son is called the Word, his generation is called a saying. And this is what the Father says: *My heart hath uttered a good word* (Ps. 44:2), that is, the Son. Or, *said*, that is, eternally disposed, *to my Lord*, that is, to the Son. Nor does he say, *My Lord said to the Lord*, but *The Lord said to my Lord*: because the Son alone was made Emmanuel (Isa. 7:14); for though the Father is our Lord by kingship or rule and power, yet the Son alone is our Lord by sharing of nature. *Sit at my right hand*, that is, in equality, inasmuch as he is God. John 17:10, the Son says to the Father: *All my things are thine*, and conversely. Or, inasmuch as he is man, *at the right hand*, that is, in my better goods.

Sit, I say, *until I make thy enemies thy footstool*; and *until* is taken inclusively, that is, until I fully subject them, either adopted or conquered, to *thy feet*, as to the Godhead and as to the humanity. The Godhead is the foot that sustains and bears all things; but it is said *feet* in the plural, because it sustains in many ways. *I make*, namely as to manifestation: because they were already put there as to power. Hence he says, Ecclus. 24:11: *By my power I have trodden under my feet the hearts of all the high and low.* Again, human nature is a foot, because it is the lower in Christ; and it is said *feet* because of body and soul. Hence, Isa. 41:3: *The path*, namely of sin, *shall not appear in his feet*, that is, in body or soul. Under these all things are put, which will be done chiefly at the judgment. Hence: *I have trampled on them*, that is, I will trample, *in my wrath* (Isa. 63:3).

The Word was made flesh (John 1:14). Three things are noted. *(p. 688)* The first, the truth of Christ's incarnation, against the Manichean, who says that Christ took a phantom body: therefore it is said *flesh*. Again, humility—not any humility, but the lowest: because he does not say, *The Word was made soul*, or *man*, but *flesh*; and he took the lower part. Again, he does not say, *The Word was made man*, though he would have said it well, because he did not take sin. Nor does he say, *The Word was made soul*, because he did not take ignorance. But *flesh*, because he took the defects of the flesh. Thirdly, usefulness is noted where it is said: *And dwelt among us.* First, that he might take away the reproach of the flesh: because through the

sin of Adam *every man is made a liar* (Ps. 115:11). And iniquity: because *none is good but God alone* (Luke 18:19). Therefore it is said *Verbum*, as if *verum bonum*, true good, against malice; *flesh*, against falsehood.

Otherwise: *Verbum* is said as if *verberans aerem*, beating the air, that is, the powers of the air. Again, this Word was shortened, as the Apostle says, Rom. 9:28: *A short word shall the Lord make upon the earth*: because the Father shortened the Son. Again, Isa. 10:23: *The Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption … in the midst of all the land*, that is, in Jerusalem, which is called the navel of the earth (Ezek. 38:12). And in Psalm 73:12: *He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.*

Or, the only-begotten and immeasurable Word of the Father, enclosed within the narrow bowels of the virginal womb, can be called the shortened consumption, or the shortened word, which *shall overflow with justice* (Isa. 10:22), when he bowed himself to John to be baptized, Matt. 3:15, saying: *For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice.*

Otherwise: *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us* (John 1:14), so that he may now be called not only Emmanuel, that is, *God with us*, but may also be named *God in us*: for *in* sounds more expressly than *with*, because *with* says communion or fellowship, but *in* says union. And note that John significantly says, *The Word was made flesh*, namely of the flesh of a woman, which is specially called the flesh of the Word of God. And he does not say, *The Son was made flesh*, nor does he say, *The Word was made man*. The reason of this is as follows. For when John says, *The Word was made flesh*, he shows the eternal generation of the Son: because a word is coeval with the mind; and although the mental word goes out to the knowledge of men, yet it does not depart from the mind. The word too which a man has in his mind does not come to the knowledge of men unless it be in some way embodied. And the Word of the Father, that he might come to the knowledge of men, since he could not be embodied in a voice, was made flesh. By the name of flesh is signified human nature, consisting of body and soul. And therefore he said *flesh* rather than *man*, to signify that he took the whole nature of flesh from one flesh: lest, if he said *was made man*, his flesh should seem to have been begotten of a twofold flesh, as that of other men. The creating Word came, then, to create a created word, namely man: for every creature is a word, as is said in Isa. 39:2: *There was nothing that Ezechias did not shew them in his house.* The natural Son came too, to prepare sons for adoption. Omega came to alpha, that he might fly back to omega. The first came to the last, that the last might be exalted to the first. For among rational beings God is first, man last. The beginning and the end came, that so by perfecting man he might bring him to his end and make him a beginning. The splendor of glory came to the stone of darkness and the shadow of death. The figure of the substance, or the seal with which the Father sealed, came that he might reform the impress of the likeness. The vapor of the power of God came to the ice or crystal that had frozen from the water (Ecclus. 43:22), that by his vapor he might melt *(p. 689)* the frost. Whiteness came into blackness, because *the faces of them all are as the blackness of a kettle* (Nah. 2:10). The unspotted mirror came to the spotted face. The way came to the wandering, the truth to liars, the life to mortals, and the like. And all this was furnished to us through Mary.

§3: Christ the Splendor

Splendor. Hence the Apostle, Heb. 1:3, where he commends the Son of God for many things, says: *Who being the brightness of his glory*, etc., that is, the splendor of the Father: because as the splendor of the sun is born of the sun, and is coeval with it, and shows it, so the Son of God is born of the Father, coeternal with him, and shows him and makes him known. *And the figure of his substance*, that is, of the Father's. Not only his figure, but the figure of his substance, that is, of the Father. And *figure*, that is, the mirror and image of the Father: for in him the Father is and is known, as a thing is said to be in its image and to be seen in a mirror. But there is much difference: because a thing that is known in its image or in a mirror is not the same substance as its image or mirror; but the Son, in whom the Father is and is known, is the same substance with the Father. Hence the Apostle, speaking with care, did not say only that the Son is the figure of the Father,

but rather the figure of his substance, namely of the Father. As if he said: He is so the figure of the Father that he is of the same substance with the Father.

Again, of this splendor Isaiah speaks, 62:1, where he treats of the twofold nativity of Christ, namely from the Father, which is eternal, and from the mother, which is temporal, saying: *For Sion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest*, that is, for the honor of the militant and triumphant Church, *till her just one come forth*, that is, be made manifest by the fleshly nativity, *as brightness*, that is, Christ, who by antonomasia is called the Just, and who justifies the militant and before justified the triumphant. And Christ is called splendor: because as splendor goes forth from the whole sun and is coeval and of one substance with it, so the Son goes forth from the Father and is consubstantial with the Father. *And her saviour*, namely of both Churches, *be lighted as a lamp.* Note that to have or make splendor, oil is put in the lamp and fire in the oil. So it was done when the Godhead was put in the glass of our frailty by means of the oil of charity; for then the woman, that is, the Wisdom of God, *lit a candle* that she might seek the lost groat (Luke 15:8); and so the everlasting splendor was had, by which the world was lighted.

§4: The Wind

Wind, that is, the Holy Spirit: the wind, namely the south wind, which blew through this garden. Cant. 4:16: *Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow.* This the Lord seems to have said to the Holy Spirit at the Virgin's sanctification.

Again, Christ's charity can be called the south wind. Hence, Hab. 3:3: *God will come from the south*, etc. Because for his exceeding charity with which he loved us he deigned to become incarnate. And this south wind melted the frost of the north wind with the heat of his charity.

Again, of this wind it is said, Osee 13:15: *The Lord will bring a burning wind (p. 690) that shall rise from the desert, and it shall dry up his springs, and shall make his fountain desolate: and he shall carry off the treasure of every desirable vessel. The Lord will bring*, that is, the Father, *a burning wind*, that is, the Holy Spirit, who, in that he is wind, cooled the Virgin from the wicked heat of all concupiscence; nay more, he quenched in her the tinder of sin, as a breath of wind puts out a candle. And note that a burning wind drinks up moisture and dries up the earth, the veins of wicked humor, of death. The Holy Spirit, then, in that he is burning, first dried her up, and filled her, dried, with the ardor of perfect charity.

Note that Eve disbelieved God threatening death, Gen. 2:17: *In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death*; and believed the devil promising life: *No, you shall not die the death* (Gen. 3:4). And from these two veins flowed all sin, which Christ, made man in Mary, dried up in us. For she could not have been inflamed, that is, made pregnant with our God, who is *a consuming fire* (Heb. 12:29), unless she had first been dried up by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Isa. 51:10: *Hast not thou dried up the sea*, that is, Mary, *the water of the mighty deep?* But by the ardor or burning of perfect charity she was worthy to conceive him who is fire. Hence blessed Bernard: "Because Mary loved more than all, God the Father wrought a singular miracle in her."

From the desert, that is, from heaven, which the sinning angels deserted, which is called the desert (Luke 15:4). Hence it was said to Mary: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, that is, shall come from above into thee (Luke 1:35). For *every best gift … is from above* (James 1:17).

That shall rise, by its effect, that is, making the blessed Virgin herself rise by the winding stair of humility and the steps of merits even to the Lord of majesty seated on the throne.

And it shall dry up his springs, that is, the springs of death, of which it is spoken above: *O death, I will be thy death* (Osee 13:14). For the Holy Spirit dried up in the Virgin, at her sanctification, the threefold vein of sin: the vein of pride, by pouring in the grace of surpassing humility; the vein of avarice, by pouring in perfect

contempt of worldly prosperity and love of poverty; the vein of carnal concupiscence, by pouring in the desire and love of perpetual virginity. And these three are the roots and beginnings of all evils (1 John 2:16).

And shall make his fountain desolate, that is, the tinder of original sin, which is the fountain of all sins.

Otherwise: the Son of God is called a burning wind, whom the Father brought into the world when he appointed him to become incarnate *from the desert*, that is, from the Virgin's womb, as Aquila glosses; which womb of the Virgin is called a desert because it is a way untrodden by men, because tilled by no human work, because sown by no human seed. (Of this desert you will find under the heading of the delights of this garden.) *That shall rise*, into the knowledge of men. Or, the desert is called the synagogue deserted by God, from which he rose, that is, withdrew. Or, the desert is the cross, where the Apostles deserted him, from which he rose into heaven. *And it shall dry up his springs, and shall make his fountain desolate*, as was expounded above. He also dries up in us by his grace the springs of death, that is, mortal sins and the three concupiscences, and this in the present; and he will make desolate the fountain, that is, the tinder, in the future.

And he shall carry off, namely at his coming, *the treasure of every desirable vessel*, namely Paul, who was *a vessel of election* (Acts 9:15), Dionysius, and the rest. Hence, Luke 11:21: *When a strong man armed*, etc. And this through the teaching of the Apostles. Hence:

Chapter 5, §4 (continued): The Wind

(p. 691) Thou driedst up the Ethan rivers (Ps. 73:15), that is, of the devil: because *Ethan* is interpreted *strong*. He too is called the burning wind. (Look a little below.)

Christ is wind. Because invisible in his majesty. Hence, John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12: *No man hath seen God at any time.* Exod. 33:20: *Man shall not see me and live.* Job 9:11: *If he come to me, I shall not see him.*

Because light in his humanity, that is, without the weight of sin. Hence his flesh is called *a light cloud* (Isa. 19:1).

Because cooling and quenching the burning of sin and of the tinder at his first coming, as is plain in the blessed Virgin, as above. Hence: *The power of the most High shall overshadow thee* (Luke 1:35). In us too by his grace he cools and quenches the heats of wrath and the burnings of lust and gluttony.

Because vehement at his second coming, when he will cast down into hell the proud, who are as towers, when God will break all that is proud. Job 1:19: *A violent wind came on a sudden.* Apoc. 18:21: *A mighty angel took up a stone, as it were a great millstone.*

Because it sinks ships in the sea: which will be at the judgment, when *with a vehement wind he shall break in pieces the ships of Tharsis* (Ps. 47:8), casting them down into everlasting bitterness.

Because very moving in its effect, as is plain in Mary, who, having conceived him, at once *went into the hill country with haste* (Luke 1:39), etc.

Because it is laid by a little rain. So also the anger of Christ by a little shower of tears. Hence it is said to him: *When thou art angry, thou wilt remember mercy* (Hab. 3:2).

The burning wind, which is said to rise from the desert: because nothing ought so to burn up carnal concupiscences in us as the memory of the passion, where all except the Virgin deserted him. Therefore the just man asks: *Burn my reins and my heart* (Ps. 25:2).

§5: The Air

And air. The air is the grace of the Holy Spirit overshadowing her. Or, Christ is air. Job 37:21: *On a sudden the air*, that is, Christ according to the Godhead, *will be thickened into clouds.* In that he says *on a sudden* is noted the hastening of the incarnation. Ecclus. 43:24: *A present remedy of all is the speedy coming of a cloud.* In that he says *will be thickened* (*cogetur*, will be compelled), it is noted that pure charity, mere pity, superabounding mercy as it were compelled Christ to take the cloud of the flesh, of which it is said, Isa. 19:1: *Behold the Lord will ascend upon a light cloud*, etc.

Christ is air. Because as air is the life of the body, so Christ is the life of the soul. And as the body does not live without air, so neither the soul without the grace of Christ. Therefore it is said, Lam. 4:20: *The breath of our mouth, Christ the Lord*, etc. Acts 17:28: *In him we live, and move, and are.*

Because when it is drawn in it is not seen, because in us it takes on that by which it may be seen. Likewise Christ entered invisibly into the Virgin, from whom he took flesh, in which he appeared visible. Bar. 3:38: *Afterwards he was seen upon earth*, etc.

Because if it be pure it is drawn in without corruption, held without weight, sent forth without corruption. So Christ was conceived by the Virgin without hurt to chastity, carried without burden of the womb, born without pain of the one bearing; and this because he is pure, that is, without sin.

(p. 692) Because it is the dwelling of birds, that is, of contemplatives, who fly with the wings of virtues: for *in him we live, and move, and are* (Acts 17:28), as above.

Because all places not open to it are stinking and corrupt. So all souls stink without the grace of God.

Because in the summer of his preaching he was delightful and clear. Hence, John 6:69, Peter says to him: *To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

Because in the winter of his passion he was dark. Isa. 52:14: *His visage shall be inglorious among men*, etc. The same, 53:2: *We have seen him, and there was no sightliness*, etc.

Because cloudy air signifies rain. For, being about to take the cloud of our flesh, he came down *like rain upon the fleece* (Ps. 71:6).

Because, although cloudy and dark of itself, yet, lighted by the sun, it is made wholly bright like the sun. Understand this of the man assumed into one person with the assuming Word. The man assumed is the cloudy air; the assuming Word is the sun, turning this air into its own brightness and color.

§6: The Snow

Snow. Isa. 55:10–11: *As the rain and the snow come down*, etc., *so shall my word be*, that is, the Son, says the Father. Ecclus. 43:14: *By his commandment he maketh the snow to fall apace*, that is, in his elect a cooling against the heat of tempting vices.

Christ is snow. Because it has a native and most pure whiteness. Ecclus. 43:20 it is said literally of the snow: *The eye admireth at the beauty of the whiteness thereof.* Wis. 7:26: *He is the brightness of eternal light*, etc. Cant. 5:10: *My beloved is white and ruddy.* For he was born of the most pure Virgin wholly white and pure. Isa. 35:2: *The glory of Libanus is given to it*: of Libanus, which is interpreted *whiteness*.

Because it comes from above. John 3:31: *He that cometh from above is above all.*

Because it comes down small. Phil. 2:7: *He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant*, etc. Again, Ps. 8:6: *Thou hast made him a little less than the angels*, who are not of flesh and cannot die.

Because on the cross he covered the uncleannesses of the earth, that is, the sins of earthly men, lest they should appear before the Father for vengeance. Hence, Ps. 84:3: *Thou hast covered all their sins*, namely with the mantle of mercy, or of the crucified flesh. Hence also he says, Ecclus. 24:6: *As a cloud I covered all*

the earth.

Because it dazzles the sight.

Because it is cold, and cools those who touch it. For the most blessed flesh of Christ did not feel the kindling of human flesh. Hence his garments—that is, the members of which he says to his mother, Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh*—appeared as snow in the transfiguration (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:29). Christ also cools from the heat of vices those who touch him by true love and pure prayer. Hence it is said of Christ, Ecclus. 43:14: *By his commandment he maketh the snow to fall apace*, that is, a cooling against the heat of vices.

Because by the heat of the sun and the warmth of sweet water it quickly melts into water. For charity, which is meant by the sun, and pity, by the warmth, made Christ suffer, who in his passion *was poured out like water*, as he says in Psalm 21:15.

Because, melted into water, it never becomes snow again. For wax melted is wax again; likewise lead melted is lead; frozen water is water again; but snow melted into water will never be snow again. So Christ, poured out like water in his passion, rising from the dead *(p. 693) dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him* (Rom. 6:9). According to this property, virginity, which once lost cannot be repaired, is signified morally by snow.

§7: The Shower

Christ is the shower, of whom it is said, Osee 6:3: *He will come to us as the early and the latter shower.* (Look under the heading that Mary is the dawn.) Isa. 55:10–11: *As the shower and the snow come down*, etc., as far as *so shall my word be*, that is, the Son.

Christ is the shower. Because it tempers the heat of the season. For before the coming of Christ the whole world burned with the scorching heat and fire of sin. To allay this heat the Lord sent first the flood of the deluge; secondly the rain of the preaching of the prophets and of his own; thirdly water and blood from the fountains of his body. Isa. 12:3: *You shall draw waters with joy out of the saviour's fountains.*

Because it allays the wind, namely the wind of the worldly state and of diabolical temptation; and this by his teaching and the example of his manner of life. Ecclus. 43:25: *At his word the wind is still*, that is, the snares of the devil; of which wind it is said, Ezek. 1:4: *A whirlwind came out of the north*, from which *every evil shall break forth* (cf. Jer. 1:14).

Because it makes the earth fit for human uses; which, when it is split for lack of rain, does not allow itself to be tilled, and seed cast into it is choked. It is split by the divisions and cracks of anger and hatred; it does not allow itself to be tilled by the plough, namely of the word of God, because of its hardness. The seed, that is, the grace of the Holy Spirit, is choked in it, because it does not bear due fruit. But Christ, who at his coming came down as shower and snow from heaven, brought a threefold medicine against these three troubles. Hence it follows in the text that the shower *soaketh the earth* and pours into it, against the first, namely the cracks; *and maketh it to spring*, against the second; *and giveth seed to the sower* (Isa. 55:10), against the third, which untilled earth cannot do. Hence it follows: *So shall my word be*, that is, the Son, says the Father, coming down as shower and snow, and *as rain upon the fleece* (Ps. 71:6). Ezek. 34:26–27: *I will send down the shower in its season; and the tree of the field shall yield its fruit, there shall be showers of blessing, and the earth shall yield her increase.*

Again, of this shower it is said in Psalm 71:6: *He shall come down like rain upon the fleece.*

§8: The Rain

Christ is rain. Hence, Ps. 71:6: *He shall come down like rain upon the fleece*, etc. Isidore says in the book of *Etymologies* that *pluvia*, rain, is so called as if *fluvia*, from flowing: because Christ, going forth from the highest heaven in the incarnation, flowed into the virginal womb. Therefore it is said: *He shall come down like rain upon the fleece.* Note three things. First, why Christ is rain as to the incarnation. Second, why Mary is the fleece. Third, why the manner of the incarnation is compared to the fleece.

He says, then: *He shall come down.* The word of coming down hints at humiliation: for to come down is as it were to let oneself down from on high; and this belongs to the emptying of that majesty. Phil. 2:7: *He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. (p. 694)* Isa. 19:1: *The Lord will ascend upon a light cloud.* This ascent was a descent, because heaven is higher than the cloud. (Expound it, and look under its own heading.)

Again, in the word of coming down the pride of the devil is confounded, who willed to ascend, and therefore fell, *and shall not rise again* (Amos 5:2). Isa. 14:12–13: *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer*, etc., *who saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven*, etc. In this too our pride is confounded, who wish rather to imitate the devil than God. Blessed Bernard: “Come now, follow your leader,” etc.

The Son of God also came down—every action of whom is a lesson for us—that by his example we might learn to come down by humility. Hence, Isa. 47:1, it is said to the sinful soul: *Come down, sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon*, etc. (You will find this very well expounded in our treatise on humble penance.)

Again, he came down to satisfy the petition of the Church, of which the prophet says to him in the person of the Church, Isa. 64:1: *O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down: the mountains would melt away at thy presence*, that is, the proud would be humbled!

Again, he came down to show us the compassion with which he suffered with us. Exod. 3:7–8: *I have seen the affliction of my people … I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians*, that is, of the demons.

Again, he came down to us because we could not ascend to him, as a compassionate physician comes to a sick man lying in bed. For we are sick in Capharnaum, that is, in the world, through the love of earthly things. Therefore his incarnation is called a visitation, in Luke 1:78: *The Orient from on high hath visited us.* And Dan. 4:10: *Behold a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven.* The Son came down, then, because he who wishes to raise one who is lying must come down from his height, so as to bend from his position. Therefore Christ came down, the healthy to the sick, the physician to the wounded.

He shall come down like rain, etc. It is to be noted who it is that came down: surely the Son of God, to whom the Church cried, Isa. 64:1: *O that thou wouldst rend the heavens*, etc., as above. Again, Ps. 143:5: *Bow thy heavens, and descend*, etc. Whence did he come down? From the bosom of the Father into the womb of the Virgin mother. John 16:28: *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world*, that is, the Virgin’s womb, which can emphatically be called a world.

For what did he come down? For many causes, namely, as above. Whither did he come down? *Upon the fleece*, that is, into the virginity of Mary, by the merit of her humility. How did he come down? *Like rain upon the fleece*, that is, gently into the gentle, quietly into the quiet, sweetly into the sweet, without noise into the peaceful, secretly into the hidden, kindly into the kind, joyfully into the joyful, profitably into the most profitable, and fruitfully into the fruitful. For he is not said to have come down in any manner whatever, but *like rain upon the fleece*.

Like rain: because he came with all fulness and abundance of graces. Hence, Ezek. 34:26: *There shall be showers of blessing*, etc. (Look above, §7, where the garden is called rained upon.) Therefore the incarnation is called *the fulness of time* (Gal. 4:4). Again, Ezek. 1:28, where he speaks of the coming of the Son into flesh, it is said that his appearance was *as the appearance of the rainbow when it is in a cloud on the day of*

rain.

And note that this rain fulfilled all its properties in the mind of the Virgin, which is meant by the fleece, and in her flesh, which is signified by the earth. And note that rain signifies the Godhead or grace, the drops the totality or multitude of gifts. Again, of this rain, in Psalm 67:10: *Thou shalt set aside for thy inheritance a free rain, O God,* etc. O God the Father, *thou shalt set aside,* that is, thou shalt give pure and set apart from evil. Heb. 7:26: *For it was fitting,* etc., as far as *separated from sinners. To thy inheritance, (p. 695)* that is, to the Gentiles, of whom it is said in Psalm 2:8: *Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance. A rain,* that is, thy Son; *free,* because he was incarnate of mere grace, and *was offered because it was his own will* (Isa. 53:7). *And it was weakened,* that is, Judea: *but thou hast made it perfect,* that is, thou wilt make it perfect at the end. And it is a prophecy of the future. Isa. 10:21: *The remnant shall be converted.* Deut. 4:30: *In the latter time thou shalt return to the Lord thy God.*

For rain washes wool for cleansing, waters the earth for fruitfulness. So the one water of saving wisdom, that is, one and the same grace of the Saviour, by one descent first cleansed the Virgin's mind to the highest purity, and made her womb fruitful for a most excellent offspring, and this afterwards. And as blessed is the fruit of the womb, so glorious is the purity of the mind. Nor did it only cleanse the mind and make the flesh fruitful, but one and the same grace of the Saviour cleansed both and made both fruitful. It wiped away all ignorance of the mind, quenched all concupiscence of the flesh, made the flesh fruitful for offspring and the mind for every virtue; it rendered one and the same mind empty of vices and full of virtues; on one and the same flesh it bestowed the fruit of fruitfulness and preserved the flower of virginity. And although it ought to be said and believed that the grace of God wrought these two things in the Virgin together and at once, yet according to that order it first poured into the mind alone and made it fruitful toward its end, and afterwards made the flesh alone fruitful for offspring: faith in the mind alone, offspring in the flesh alone; first faith, afterwards offspring. And unless faith in the conception had gone before, the fruitfulness of offspring would not have followed at all. Faith went before, the offspring came, and faith withdrew: for it was no longer fitting for her to believe, but to know, what she had proved by the experience of the thing. Rightly, then, it has been said that, according to the petition of Gideon (Judg. 6:37 ff.), in a certain respect the dew first poured upon the fleece of the virginal mind alone, and again afterwards, in a certain respect, upon the ground of the virginal flesh alone.

Like rain, he says, that is, with all fulness and abundance of graces, as was said above.

Like rain. Cassiodorus the Senator: "As rain comes down in the deepest silence and soaks and fills the fleece laid out for it, so the Godhead of the Word filled the virginal body and possessed the virginal mind, when the Virgin, laying herself wholly open to him, answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me,*" etc. (Luke 1:38). And as rain soaking a fleece keeps it whole and unharmed, so the Godhead kept the Virgin whole and unharmed equally at his entry and likewise at his going forth. For as he found her whole, so in being born he left her whole. For the secret of her birth-giving remained closed and spotless, nor were the mother's bowels shaken; as a fleece is not torn or spoiled when it is filled with rain or emptied of it.

And as showers falling gently upon the earth (Ps. 71:6). Cassiodorus: "For the Godhead of the Word, coming down into the Virgin as showers falling gently upon the earth, made her bring forth the shoot of life, namely that delightful shoot, and from nowhere else than from her own flesh, namely through the pouring in of the divine majesty, as we say that the earth brings forth by means of showers. For what else were the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, the fulness of grace, the fervor of faith, virginal chastity, than certain showers of graces coming down into her, that this earth might yield its fruit?"

And note that by the rain coming down upon the fleece he did not express the nature of springing from the fleece, but the manner of going forth and being born from the Virgin. Again, with this sentence agrees that of Isaiah 55:10: *As the rain cometh down,* etc. (Look above, *(p. 696)* where Christ is called the shower.) *So shall*

my word be, that is, my Son. For if so great a force and nature of rain is so powerful that it does these things for this visible earth, much more could the Word of God, namely the Son of the Father, fill and soak the virginal bowels to bring forth, so that the Son, signified by the shoot, should burst forth from her into fruit, and the wholeness of the earth remain unharmed. Hence also it is said, Isa. 45:8: *Let the earth bud forth a Saviour.*

Like rain, not like fire. Christ came like rain at his first coming, as above; but at his second he will come as fire to tow, that is, to consume the carnal. Of whom, Ecclus. 21:10: *The congregation of sinners is like tow heaped together.* To whom it is said, Isa. 1:31: *Your strength shall be as the ashes of tow, and your work as a spark: and both shall burn together, and there shall be none to quench it.* Therefore the Psalmist says, Ps. 96:3: *A fire shall go before him, and shall burn his enemies round about.* Again, Ps. 49:3: *A fire shall burn before him, and a mighty tempest shall be round about him.*

Like rain, that is, without noise and for fertility; not like hail, which comes down with noise and for barrenness: for so he will come down at the judgment upon the reprobate. Hence, Wis. 5:23: *Thick hail shall be cast upon them from the stone-casting wrath.*

Like rain. Jerome: "The heavenly shower plainly poured itself with a gentle gliding into the virginal fleece, and the whole wave of the Godhead betook itself into flesh, when the Word was made flesh; and then, wrung out through the gibbet of the cross, it poured out saving rain upon all lands, and furnished showers of grace to human minds."

Like rain upon the fleece. For at his first coming Christ came to clothe himself with the garment of our humanity; and because truly every kind of garment is made of wool and linen or silk, therefore he came down *like rain upon the fleece*, so that from the fleece he might take for himself a clean tunic; and therefore it was necessary that Christ, who was to be clothed with the wool of human flesh, should first cleanse the wool itself. Ovid:

The clothes you wear were once dirty wool.

But rain cleanses wool.

And as showers falling gently upon the earth, so that the linen with which he would clothe himself might spring from the watered earth. 2 Kings 23:4: *As the grass springeth out of the earth by rain.* Therefore it is said of Wisdom: *She hath sought wool and flax* (Prov. 31:13), etc. Again: *Fine linen and purple is her covering* (Prov. 31:22). Behold in the Lord's garment wool and linen and silk. For *byssus* is Egyptian linen; purple is a kind of silk befitting kings. By the wool, then, is understood the exterior garment, that is, the humanity, and the humility joined to the humanity, which wool curls back upon itself; by the linen, interior virginity.

Otherwise: the fleece is Mary's virginity, into which Christ came down as rain, to make it bear fruit. Her earth is her humility; the rain is grace or the Godhead; the showers are the abundance of graces and gifts which came down into her by the merit of her humility. Therefore it is said *upon the earth*, which is the lowest element and signifies humility, which is called as if *humi latens*, lying hidden on the ground.

Christ is rain. Because from the clouds, that is, from the holy Patriarchs and Prophets—of whom, Isa. 60:8: *Who are these that fly as clouds?*—he came to us through the Virgin. Isa. 45:8: *Let the clouds rain the just.*

Because by occasion, not by cause, he made the Jews slippery, whose way was made *darkness and slipperiness* (Ps. 34:6). Luke 2:34: *Behold this child is set for the fall*, etc.

Because he washes away the filth of sins, pouring in the grace of compunction, as is plain in Magdalen. Isa. 4:4: *If the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Sion*, that is, of the Church, etc.

Because he binds together the earth, that is, the earthly sinner, who is dust, so that he may be able to hold *(p. 697)* grace: for *the heart of a fool is like a broken vessel* (Ecclus. 21:17).

Because he cools the heat of concupiscences. Dan. 3:50: *He made the midst of the furnace*, etc. For before his coming the world was as it were *an oven heated by the baker* (Osee 7:4), that is, by the devil.

Because in the earth of the Church, or in the conscience of the faithful soul, he brings forth the plants of virtues, and supplies the power of bearing fruit. Hence: *And the Lord will help them* (Ps. 36:40), etc.

Because he gives drink to those who thirst for justice: which will be at the consummation. Hence: *The wild asses shall expect* (Ps. 103:11). Hence, Ecclus. 15:3: *With the water of wholesome wisdom she shall give him to drink*, that is, the just man. Again, John 7:37: *If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink.* For this he cried out when made man.

Because it belongs to God alone to rain. Again, because he sometimes rains, sometimes does not rain. Job 36:27: *Who lifteth up the drops of rain, and poureth out showers like floods.*

Because on some he rains, on others he does not rain. Amos 4:7, he himself says: *I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city.*

To quench the thirst of the ancients and their desire, of which it is said in Psalm 103:11: *The wild asses shall expect in their thirst.* Therefore he cried, John 7:37: *If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink.*

To quench the fire of sins. Dan. 3:49–50: *The angel of the Lord went down with Azarias*, etc., *and made the midst of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing dew.*

To make the earth, that is, earthly men, bear fruit. Isa. 55:10: *As the rain cometh down*, etc., as far as *soaketh the earth, and watereth it, and maketh it to spring, and giveth seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.*

To wash away the filth of sins. Hence for this he many times shed tears, sweat and blood.

Again, note that there are as it were four principal evils in us: emptiness in the mind, heat in the flesh, dryness in the affection, and barrenness in work. Against these four, Christ, coming down as rain or shower, brought as it were four antidotes. Because he as it were flooded our emptiness: for abundance of rain sometimes makes rivers, streams and marshes overflow. He cooled the heat of concupiscences: for rain and shower bring cooling. He watered the dryness of affections and prayers, namely by supplying devotion. He made fruitful the barrenness of minds and works. Hence: *And giveth seed to the sower, and bread to the eater* (Isa. 55:10). These four effects appear in the annunciation of the Son of God to the Virgin. Being greeted she was cooled, when it was said to her: *Hail* (Luke 1:28 ff.), that is, without woe of guilt and punishment. Refreshed, she was satisfied. Hence: *full of grace*. And a threefold fulness is noted. Of the mind: hence, *full of grace*. Of the womb: hence, *the Lord is with thee*. Of the flesh: hence, *blessed art thou among women*. Satisfied, she was strengthened. Hence: *Fear not, Mary.* Strengthened, she was made fruitful. Hence: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, etc. And therefore, as it were brought into the wine cellar and made drunk, she assented to the messenger, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me*, etc.

He shall come down like rain upon the fleece. Cassiodorus: “The fleece is the Virgin Mary, sprung and shorn from the sheep of Israel, that is, from most just parents, who were as sheep, that is, innocent and simple, meek and gentle, kind in themselves and profitable to others.” Read the book *On the Infancy of the Saviour*.

Mary is the fleece. Because the fleece is wool cut from the flesh and taken from the body: behold the virginal breast, far removed and very much a stranger to carnal desires and to the base passions of the body. Precious is the fleece of the virginal mind: clean thoughts, *(p. 698)* chaste affections of the virginal breast. For this fleece is the adornment of all virtues, a joyful clothing. To be clothed with the fleece of Mary is to be *surrounded with variety* (Ps. 44:10). Whoever is not clothed with this fleece is shamefully covered with dirty carnal hairs, like goats’ hair. The hairs of this fleece—lofty, fine, stretched far, soft and curling back—are

virginal thoughts and affections. From this is every adornment of virtue, the heap of all grace and of universal glory.

Because as a portion is taken from the fleece that a garment may be made of it, so from the substance of the Virgin, as from a fleece, the Holy Spirit, the craftsman, took a little wool, a portion, from which by ineffable craft he wove a tunic, with which the Son of God was clothed. And therefore Christ is said to have been incarnate of the Holy Spirit. Just as from the body of Adam while he slept a portion was taken, from which Eve was formed. And note that this garment was a tunic without seam, namely as it were *of one piece*, as the French say: because of the substance of the mother alone. But our tunics are sewn as it were from parts: because partly from the father, partly from the mother. Note also that Mary made a twofold tunic for Christ, and both were without seam. John 19:23: *Now the coat was without seam*, etc.

Because as the fleece is taken from the sheep without hurt to it, that a garment may be made of it, so without hurt to her virginity Mary conceived Christ in her womb, that is, from an intrinsic cause, and bore him without pain, the glory of virginity remaining.

Because, as Jerome says (Sermon on the Assumption of the Blessed Mary), the fleece, though it is of the body, knows not the passions of the body. So Mary's virginity, though it was in the flesh, knew not the vices of the flesh, nor felt carnal motions, and remained free from every carnal stain. Ps. 17:31: *As for my God, his way is undefiled.* Behold that virginity is signified by the fleece.

Because the fleece is pressed into a small space, in which humility is noted, and yet nothing of its quantity is lost thereby. Because *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke 14:11).

Because the wool of the fleece, nay the fleece itself, is very absorbent, and takes in rain or water in great quantity, and what it has taken in it gives back again at the lightest pressing. So Mary's humility is very thirsty and absorbent by desire of grace, of which she drew the more abundantly the more she humbled herself; and without loss of her fulness she gives back that grace most easily to all, as often as she is pressed by devout prayer. Hence she is compared to a fleece or a sponge. (All this you will find much better explained above, §6, where the garden is called thirsty.)

Because the fleece clothes and surrounds the sheep. Christ is the sheep. Isa. 53:7: *He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter*, etc.; who was clothed with virginal flesh when *a woman compassed a man* (Jer. 31:22). Hence also he says to his mother, Job 10:11: *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh.* Of which garment it is said to Christ, Isa. 63:2: *Why then is thy apparel red?* Morally: Mary clothes with virtues and surrounds with protection the sheep, that is, the simple and innocent.

Because it is most soft to the touch. So Mary by pity and kindness, whom sinners do not find harsh. Blessed Bernard: "Why should human frailty tremble to approach Mary? There is nothing harsh in her, nothing terrible; she is all sweet, offering to all milk and wool. Behold, she is the sheep that bore the Lamb of God."

Because the fleece curls back, having in itself hairs much longer than they appear: behold virginal humility, by which she named herself handmaid.

Because the fleece, however much it is shorn, always grows again from the flesh. Understand this morally: because the cause of our humiliation always proceeds from our flesh. Hence, Mic. 6:14: *Thy humiliation*, that is, the cause of humiliation, *shall be in the midst of thee.*

Chapter 5, §8 (continued): The Rain

(p. 699) (Look in our treatise on humility, near the beginning.)

Mary is wool. Because shining, full of the sap of pity. Judg. 6:38: *Wringing the fleece, he filled a vessel with the dew*, that is, the humble.

The clothing of the sheep, that is, the protection of the innocent and simple. Hence, Prov. 31:21: *All her domestics are clothed with double garments*, namely with a twofold robe. Or, because she clothed with virginal flesh Christ, who is called a sheep because of innocence. Isa. 53:7: *He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter*, etc.

It does not feel. Jerome: "The fleece, though it is of the flesh, knows not the passions of the body," etc.; "so neither did Mary know carnal motions."

Struck, it does not sound. For her charity was not provoked in the passion of her Son, nor did she murmur back or gainsay, although the sword of her Son pierced her soul. 1 Cor. 13:5: *Charity is not provoked.*

Shaggy, that is, rough and keeping itself together: because her hair was not dressed, nor was it *the outward plaiting of the hair* (1 Pet. 3:3). Acts 1:14: *All these were persevering in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*

Soft in its hair, that is, in loving thought: because she *thinks thoughts of peace* toward us (cf. Jer. 29:11).

Absorbent of the word of God, *keeping all these words in her heart* (Luke 2:51).

Ready to be dyed: because she was modest. Hence *she was troubled at his saying* (Luke 1:29). For though she was most white like the lily, she is believed to have been suffused with rosy redness at the sight of the angel appearing in the form of a man.

And note that this wool was as it were dyed several times. First, as it were from black to white, and this in her sanctification. Secondly, from white to red, when the angel appeared to her, as was said above. But you will find this more fully under the heading of her cheeks, where the coloring of the cheeks is treated. Thirdly, she was dyed as it were into purple, when the Son of God took flesh from her. Hence Jerome, in the letter *Cogitis me, o Paula*, etc.: "When the Holy Spirit had come to her, as the very same wool, when it is steeped in the blood of the shellfish or murex, is turned into purple, so she too was turned without intercourse into a mother, so that she should no longer be what she had been, but a most true purple, most fittingly dedicated by God for the clothing and glory of the highest King, so that thenceforth it was lawful for no one to use her in a woman's use except God." So far Jerome, in the place above. Fourthly, she was dyed most preciously by the martyrdom of her soul in the passion of her Son. Likewise the garment of the Son also, that is, the humanity which he wove for himself from this wool, was most white by virginity and innocence, and began to be dyed, but not so fully, in the circumcision and the bloody sweat; at length it was perfectly dyed in the passion itself, the dye being had abundantly from the five wounds. Hence also it is said to him, Isa. 63:2: *Why then is thy apparel red?* etc. And Cant. 7:5: *The purple of the king bound in the channels.* And Prov. 31:22, of Wisdom: *Fine linen and purple is her covering.* And to signify this he was clothed in purple (Mark 15:17). *And they put a scarlet cloak about him* (Matt. 27:28).

Good handmaids comb and card this wool, that is, faithful souls spread abroad her praises and glory: for carded wool is spread out. Ecclus. 24:3: *In the midst of her people she shall be glorified.*

Subtle preachers spin it. Exod. 35:25: *They gave what they had spun*, that is, they preached what they had thought out, and what they had studied, and what they had refined.

Long prayers weave it. Tob. 2:19: *Anna went daily to weaving work.*

It is said that it drives away cold, namely *(p. 700)* of unbelief. Hence it is said to her: "Thou alone hast destroyed all heresies."

That it adorns: for she is Dorcas, who clothed the poor (Acts 9:39). *Dorcas* is interpreted *she-goat* or *doe*. This is the blessed Virgin, whose breasts are compared to *two young roes* (Cant. 4:5).

The Son of God came down, then, *like rain upon the fleece*. For rain coming down upon a fleece cleanses in it whatever it finds to be cleansed, and whatever is dirtier is wrung out of it. Likewise Christ, coming down into the Virgin, made her from pure much purer, and then took from her a most pure flesh, though like to sinful flesh.

And as showers falling gently upon the earth. For the whole wave of the Godhead, the whole fulness of gifts, poured itself into the blessed Virgin as into a fleece. Hence she was called *full of grace*. And of this fulness the other saints, who are called earth, although they received abundantly, yet are said to have received as it were small showers in respect of her fulness. Again, of those showers which come down from this fulness it is said elsewhere: *In its showers it shall rejoice in springing up* (Ps. 64:11).

Morally: Daily Christ comes down into the souls of the just *like rain upon the fleece*, that is, secretly. Hence, Job 9:11: *If he come to me, I shall not see him*, etc. And profitably. Hence, Isa. 55:10: *As the rain and the snow come down*, as above. But this rain of grace does not come down except upon the fleece of sheep, that is, into the soul of the simple and innocent; not upon the fleece of the goat by lust, or of the lion by pride, or of the fox by deceit, or of the ass by sloth, or of the camel by the hump of avarice, or of the wolf by rapacity, or of the dog by detraction, or of the bear by gluttony, or of the cow by sloth, or of the calf by wantonness, or of the horse by discord, and so of the others. *And as showers falling gently upon the earth.* Coming as rain, he sends in consolation. Coming as showers falling upon the earth, that is, upon the sinner, when he sends fear for sins, but threatens them. Hence, Ezek. 21:2: *Drop toward the sanctuaries*, that is, toward the clergy. Hence, terrified, they sometimes do penance, but rarely.

Of this fleece Gideon says to the Lord, Judg. 6:37: *I will put this fleece of wool on the floor: if there be dew in the fleece only, and it be dry on all the ground beside, I shall know that by my hand, as thou hast said, thou wilt deliver Israel.* And this signifies that the descent of the Son of God into the Virgin, as of dew upon a fleece, made her fruitful, while Judea remained in dryness of grace. Or, the fleece is the heart of the blessed Virgin, rained upon with the rain of the Godhead, but the floor remained dry, because her flesh was not watered with moisture from without. Or, full of the moisture of grace, dry of the moisture of guilt.

§9: The Vapor

Vapor, that is, the Son of God, of whom it is said, Wis. 7:25: *She is a vapor*, that is, the heat, *of the power of God*, that is, of the Father, to whom power is attributed. As if he said: As heat is from fire, so the Son is from the Father. And the Son is called heat from the Father, because he drives out the cold of our unbelief and warms us to the love of God.

Again, because, as is said in Ecclus. 43:22: *The cold north wind blew, and the water was congealed into crystal*: because by the blast, that is, by the temptation of the devil, by which he seduced our first parents, he had frozen the human race from water into ice or crystal. Therefore the Son of God came as a vapor to melt this ice or crystal.

(p. 701) And a certain emanation of the glory of the almighty God, that is, a brightness flowing from the almighty God, that is, from God the Father; that is, light from light. He says *a certain* to note the impropriety with which a creature is compared to the Creator, or to note the incomprehensibility of that eternal emanation by which the Son flows from the Father, as is said in Isa. 53:8: *Who shall declare his generation?*

And note that here the Author subtly shows the descent of Christ into the world and to hell, and his ascent to heaven: for a stream flowing from a fountain tends downward, but vapor coming from fire rises upward. Therefore by *emanation* the Author gave to understand the descent to earth and to hell, by *vapor* the ascent into heaven. Eph. 4:10: *He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens*, etc. As if he said: He who is the emanation, he is the vapor.

Again, in the vapor of fire is understood the enlightening of ignorance, in the emanation of the fountain the washing away of guilt: for, coming down to us in his incarnation, he both lighted up the darkness of our ignorance and washed the stains of guilt; which two the Psalmist noted, Ps. 35:10, saying: *With thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light we shall see light.*

Pure, without any admixture, actual, potential or intellectual. And therefore, Wis. 7:25: *No defiled thing cometh into her*: for nothing is acted upon except by what is like or unlike; but there is nothing like or unlike to Wisdom, since it is simple with every kind of simplicity; for which reason it can be acted upon by nothing, and therefore it is undefiled, and therefore *no defiled thing cometh into her.* And truly she is pure: for *she is the brightness of eternal light* (Wis. 7:26), namely Wisdom, that is, Christ, through whom the eternal light, that is, the Father, is seen. John 14:9: *Philip, he that seeth me*, etc. In this too that he is called *the brightness of eternal light*, the coeternity of the Son with the Father is noted: for brightness or splendor is coeternal with light; and therefore, if the light is eternal, the brightness also is eternal. *And the unspotted mirror of God's majesty*, that is, of God the Father, *and the image of his goodness*, that is, the full representation of him, that is, like him in all things.

And note that the Son is called both mirror and image of the Father—whereas in lower things the image is in the mirror—to note that the mirror and the image are the same. And as in lower things the image of a thing is seen in a mirror, and the thing through the image, so in the Son and through the Son the Father is seen: in the Son, because he is the mirror; through the Son, because he is the image. Again, the Son is not called simply a mirror, but a mirror *without spot*, to make a difference between this mirror and other mirrors. For there are three mirrors of God. One is the human mind, made to the image and likeness of God; but it is not without spot. Another is any creature in which shines a trace of the whole Trinity, as Augustine says: in being, power; in mode, wisdom; for God made all things most powerfully out of nothing, most wisely, beautifully, most kindly, usefully, as blessed Bernard says. Of this mirror it is said, 1 Cor. 13:12: *We see now through a glass in a dark manner.* The third mirror is Christ, and this is wholly without spot.

§10: The Fire

Fire, that is, the Son of God, who is called *a consuming fire* (cf. Deut. 4:24), and this at the end; who fulfilled his properties in the Virgin.

Christ is fire. Because dry in effect, who dried up in her every moisture of carnality. Osee 13:15: *The Lord will bring a burning wind*, as above of the wind, *(p. 702)* which signifies the Holy Spirit.

Hot, when he kindled her to faith, who was as it were cold through fear, the angel saying: *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God* (Luke 1:30).

Moving, when, having conceived him, she went up *into the hill country with haste* (Luke 1:39), and afterwards fled with him into Egypt.

Light, when, the cares of the world being despised through his grace, he lifted her up to heavenly desires. Soph. 3:8: *With the fire of my jealousy*, that is, in the fervor and vehemence of my love with which I loved Mary, *shall all the earth be devoured*, that is, all love and appetite of earthliness.

Fine, when, the dullness of sense being removed, he filled her with wisdom.

Sharp, when, the slowness of sense being taken away, he made her *keep all these words in her heart* (Luke 2:51) that were spoken.

Inflaming: for the Son of God inflamed the heart of his mother with surpassing charity. Hence the Father to the Son, Ezek. 10:2: *Go in between the wheels*, that is, into the heart of the Virgin. For the heart is in the middle. It is said *of the wheels* because of the knowledge of the two Testaments which she had. *And fill thy hand with the coals of fire, and pour them upon the city.*

Enlightening, because he put to flight from the virginal mind the cloud of all ignorance.

§11: The Manna

Manna. Christ is the manna, of which, namely manna, it is said, Num. 11:9: *When the dew fell in the night upon the camp, the manna also fell with it.* By the camp is meant the blessed Virgin, who is terrible to demons *as an army set in array* (Cant. 6:9); by the dew, the Holy Spirit, of whom she conceived; by the manna, the Son of God. For when the heavens dropped dew upon her from above, and the Holy Spirit came upon her and the power of the most High overshadowed her, she conceived the Son of God, who is figured by the manna, who says of himself, Apoc. 2:17: *To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna.* For then he will give the hidden manna to him that overcomes, when he will give *that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard* (1 Cor. 2:9), etc. Or, the hidden manna is the hidden Godhead, because *no man hath seen God at any time* (John 1:18); which he will give us when the glory of his Godhead shall satisfy us. This manna was hidden under the tunic of our nature when the Godhead was united to our flesh. Which manna he will give us then, when we shall know the union of the Word with the flesh, and when it shall become clear what was the begetting of the Begotten. Or also the hidden manna is his body veiled under the forms of accidents. And this is chiefly wont to be expounded of the sacrament of the altar, and according to this we shall proceed.

Christ is manna. Because it was given from heaven. Hence, Wis. 16:20: *Thou didst feed them with bread from heaven, prepared without labor, having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste.* And this sacrament is *every best gift* (James 1:17). Gift: because here the Son of God is given to us daily, both by the Father and by himself and by the Holy Spirit. And it is best: because without Christ nothing else would avail. And it is *every*, that is, the sufficiency of all things. *And it cometh down from the Father of lights.* John 6:32: *My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*

Because it is white (cf. Exod. 16:14 ff.), in which is the purity and cleanness of Christ, who is *the brightness of eternal light* (Wis. 7:26), and who entered the world without spot; which is signified in the whiteness of the host.

Chapter 5, §11 (continued): The Manna

(p. 703) Because it was small (cf. Exod. 16:14). And in this is noted the humility of Christ, who, so immense, hides himself under so small a form of bread and wine. Therefore it is said, Exod. 16:14, that the manna, coming down upon the face of the earth, appeared *in the wilderness small*: because his humility was singular.

Because fine: because the manner is incomprehensible to us now and in the present life; for we are commanded to believe this sacrament, forbidden to discuss it, as Ambrose says.

Because as it were *beaten in a mortar* (Num. 11:8), in which is the patience of Christ, who *was bruised for our sins* (Isa. 53:5): for he was passible and mortal, which is signified in the husk or chaff of the manna. But this chaff was removed and separated from him in the mortar of the cross. In which also it is hinted that this sacrament befits those who truly suffer. And note that in the pounding the grain is made smaller, because in tribulation we ought to *humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us* (1 Pet. 5:6), etc.

Because it was *like unto the hoar frost* white *on the ground* (cf. Exod. 16:14). The whiteness signifies the purity and cleanness of Christ, which two are supremely necessary to one who wishes to communicate. Of hoar frost too, which is cold: because in this sacrament worthily received a tempering of spiritual cooling is had against the kindlings of lust and vices. Against guilt: because this sacrament worthily received weakens the tinder and crushes the first motions and temptations, so that such a one can say: *We have passed through fire and water* (Ps. 65:12), etc. Against punishment: the mystical flesh of Christ, that is, the unity of the Church, to whose members belongs that saying: *The just man, if he be prevented with death* (Wis. 4:7), etc.

Hoar frost also kills harmful herbs; so too this sacrament concupiscence. It makes the earth fertile, because it makes the conscience fruitful in good. It covers the mud, because the charity of Christ in one who receives worthily *covereth a multitude of sins* (1 Pet. 4:8).

Otherwise: hoar frost is water made solid by cold, which is white and makes the earth white. This water was our mortality and defect, fluid before the passion; but made solid by the cold of the passion and by the glory of immortality, which, if it falls upon the earth of our mind by consideration, makes it white and comely.

Because it was *like coriander seed, white* (cf. Exod. 16:31), that is, of a cheap pot-herb, *and of the color of bdellium, and the taste of bread tempered with oil* (cf. Num. 11:7–8).

Because Christ deigned to suffer for us every kind of lowliness and poverty. Hence he says, Ps. 21:7: *I am … the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.* And because of the humility of this sacrament it is despised by many. Again, a pot-herb is the food of the weak, as is said in Rom. 14:2; and this sacrament sustains our weakness.

Because it had the sweetness of honey: hence, Exod. 16:31, it is said that *the taste thereof was like to flour with honey*; in which is noted the sweet meekness of the sufferer, because he prayed for his crucifiers. The fine flour too, which is the purest and whitest meal, signifies the humanity of Christ, in which is full refreshment. Hence, John 6:56: *My flesh is meat indeed.* The honey signifies the Godhead, in which was the perfect fulness of sweetness, with which we shall be satisfied when his glory shall appear. This manna we have now for refreshment, but in the future for enjoyment. Again, Num. 11:8, it is said that it was *of the taste of bread tempered with oil*, that is, fried in oil; and it had a taste *like to flour with honey*, that is, the purity of the humanity with the sweetness of the Godhead; and *as bread tempered with oil*, because of mercy.

Otherwise: the whiteness is the cleanness of Christ's flesh, the fine flour the Godhead, the honey the humanity. In the *(p. 704)* joining of the honey with the fine flour, the union of the humanity to the Godhead. Bdellium is found in the land of Hevilath, and is interpreted *from the beginning*, and signifies the humanity of him who is the beginning from the beginning. And bdellium, as Pliny says, is an aromatic tree of the size of an olive, whose tear is shining, bitter to the taste, and of good odor, but more fragrant when wine is poured on it. And this tree signifies the humanity of Christ, which is of the sweetness of myrrh, pouring down examples upon us, and olive-like by mercy; the tear of whose passion is shining, and bitter to those who imitate it, of good odor in itself, but more fragrant by the pouring in of wine, that is, of the Lord's blood: because the benefit of the incarnation is sweet, and is made more fragrant by the price of the blood which he who was made man shed on the cross.

Because it tasted in the mouth of each one as he wished, especially of the good, as is said in Wis. 16:21, as above. For in the receiving of this sacrament there is full sweetness, unless one has a palate corrupted by sin: for as much as one loves, so much does it taste to him.

Because the manna was called the bread of angels. Hence, in Psalm 77:25: *Man ate the bread of angels*: because that bread was created by the power by which the angels subsist, signifying this, that he was to come from heaven who would feed his elect spiritually. Hence also the manna first came from heaven on the Lord's day, to the satisfying of the people of the Hebrews; and Christ was born on such a day.

Christ is manna. Because it was hardened at the fire, as is said in Exod. 16:23: *Whatsoever work is to be done, do it*—among which the manna was reckoned. So the humanity of Christ was hardened and strengthened by the fire of the Godhead or of tribulation. Hence he says after the passion: *My strength is dried up like a potsherd* (Ps. 21:16). The Holy Spirit too is a cook, and cooks this sacrament in his own ineffable manner.

Because it melted at the sun, as is said in Exod. 16:21. Wis. 16:27: *For that which could not be destroyed by fire, being warmed with a little sunbeam presently melted away.* For Christ subjected himself for us to

changeableness of this kind. Hence, Luke 22:44: *His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.* The sun is the heat of tribulation. Hence, Ps. 120:6: *The sun shall not burn thee by day*, etc.

Because on the sixth day it was gathered double (Exod. 16:22). So Christ in the sixth age was gathered doubled: because God and man; hence also he is called Emmanuel. So Thomas gathered him, saying: *My Lord and my God* (John 20:28). So also God and man is received in the sacrament.

Because it came down with the dew and was always gathered (cf. Exod. 16:13–14 and Num. 11:9). So also Christ in this sacrament ought to be received with the dew of grace: for he who receives otherwise *eateth and drinketh judgment to himself* (1 Cor. 11:29).

Because it was gathered in the morning before sunrise (Exod. 16:21). So literally each one ought to rise in the morning of the day to Mass, where the true manna, that is, the body of Christ, is represented, and is received by the priest in the person of all the faithful. Likewise, when the night of sin has been put to flight, while the keenness of the wit is fresh, sacred Scripture, which is signified by the manna, is to be learned, that the firstfruits of age may be offered to the Lord. As also it is said, Mark 16:2 and Luke 24:1 ff., that the women came very early in the morning to the tomb to seek the body of Christ. In which, as Bede says, great fervor in finding the Lord is shown; and in this an example is mystically given us, that, the darkness of vices being shaken off, we should approach the body of the Lord, and in the morning, that is, when the newness of the spiritual life has now begun, *(p. 705)* which is day. Hence, Eph. 5:8: *You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord.* The altar signifies the tomb of the Lord, in which the mysteries of his flesh and blood are celebrated. The spices which they bring signify the odor of virtues and the sweetness of prayers, with which we ought to draw near the altar.

Because it was gathered in the measure of one gomor for every head (Exod. 16:16). So also every priest ought to be content with one gomor a day, that is, to celebrate only once, lest he eat and drink judgment to himself. *Gomor* is interpreted *consolation* or *perfection*: because this sacrament is for us now for consolation, lest we fall; in the future it will be for perfection.

Because he who gathered more manna had no more, nor he who gathered less, less (Exod. 16:18). So it is with the body of Christ, received under the smallest particle of the host, or under the form of the greatest bread.

Because, kept until the morning, it putrefied and was full of worms (Exod. 16:20), because they acted against the command of Moses. For to those Christ will be as a gnawing worm who teach otherwise than they think, or live otherwise than they teach. Hence Christ says, Osee 5:12: *I will be like a moth to Ephraim, and like rottenness to the house of Juda.* Again: *Behold this child is set*, namely Christ in the sacrament, *for the fall* (Luke 2:34), etc., of those who approach against his institution. And by this it is manifest that the manna was of another kind than the Eucharist is: because it swarmed with worms when kept until the morning, but the Eucharist remains incorruptible, and makes those who receive it, if they approach worthily, incorruptible; and this because the manna was bodily food, the Eucharist is spiritual food. And as the manna refreshed the body, so the Eucharist fattens the soul within. Or better, because the Godhead, united to the flesh in the three days of burial, preserved it from rottenness and worms. Hence, Ps. 15:10: *Nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption.*

Because, *when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another: Manhu! which signifieth: What is this?* (Exod. 16:15). And the answer was *manna*, which is interpreted *What is this?* or *How is this?* And so the question was not ended by a question. *And Moses said to them: This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.* And it always remained to ask, *What is this?*, until the highest Master solved this question at the supper, saying: *This is my body* (Matt. 26:26). As if he said: Do not ask or doubt any longer what this is, or how this is in this sacrament of the altar: because I who am the Master determine and say: *This is my body.* And his disciples ought to believe this Master. If you assent to this solution by the consent of true faith, it

will become for you the bread of life; otherwise it will become for you the judgment of death: because according to the diversity of those who receive, this most holy dish is to some an electuary, to others a poison. Hence, Luke 2:34: *Behold this child is set for the fall*, etc., as above. *Man* is interpreted *What?* or *How?*; *manna, What is this?* or *How is this?* Num. 11:9: *When the dew fell*, etc. In the falling of the dew is the incarnation of the Son, at which all can marvel and say: *What is this?*

Again, this manna because of its effects is called *the bread of angels which man ate* (Ps. 77:25). Hence, Ps. 77:24–25: *He had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the bread of heaven*, that is, bread sent from the heaven of the air, or prepared by the ministry of angels. *Man ate the bread of angels. (p. 706)* For that food produced in part what the food of angels does. For Josephus and the Jews say that as long as they ate this bread they never grew weak. So far Josephus. But the Hebrews say that it preserved them in the same state; hence it was given not for the restoring of what was lost but for the preserving of what remained. Hence Caleb said, Josh. 14:11, that he was of the same strength as he had been when he was sent to spy out the land of promise. And therefore it is called the bread of angels, who are never sick, or corrupted, or grow old. Or it is called the bread of angels because it was prepared by the ministry of angels. Or because it signifies Christ, who is the bread of angels.

Again, of this manna it is said, Apoc. 2:17: *To him that overcometh I will give*, freely—expound it as you have it under the heading where Christ is called the tree—*the hidden manna*, that is, the sweetness of inward and eternal delight. *Manna* is interpreted *What is this?*; and the saints received into eternal beatitude, and *inebriated with the plenty of the house* of God (Ps. 35:9), will marvel so much that, as if astounded, no spirit will remain in them, after the example of the queen of Saba (3 Kings 10:4–5), who, having seen the wisdom of Solomon, had no more spirit in her for wonder. *Hidden.* Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God.* Of this hiding it is read, Exod. 16:34, that the manna was so hidden in the ark that not even the priest entering the sanctuary could see it. In which it is signified that however much a man raises himself by contemplation to things above, yet he does not see God as he is in his glory. Exod. 33:20: *Man shall not see me and live.*

Otherwise: the Lord at Pentecost, pouring upon the Apostles the sweetness of the Holy Spirit, gave them the hidden manna, which *he prepared in his sweetness for the poor* (Ps. 67:11); of which elsewhere, Ps. 30:20: *O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee*, that is, hast reserved; as a mother hides and keeps for her son an apple, or honey, or something she wishes to give him. This is the sweet fig, Judg. 9:11, under the heading of the trees. This sweetness Peter had felt, Matt. 17:4, and as if drunk, not even wishing to move himself from the place where he had tasted it, said: *Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles.* So ought those to do who either have sometimes tasted, or would wish to taste, this manna: to stay gladly in the cloister or the cell, that they may more often be made drunk, after the example of the blessed Virgin staying in her chamber when the angel came to announce: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:35), etc. Because of this it seems that abbots and monks who ride about so often for light causes have never tasted of this sweetness of God. This manna makes some drunk, makes others fat; and so it tastes to each as he desires, as that manna did to the children of Israel. Hence, Wis. 16:20: *Prepared bread*, etc. Or, by the manna is signified eternal glory, which will be given in the future, as was said above.

Again, on that place, *I am a worm, and no man* (Ps. 21:7), Augustine says that Mary can fittingly be called manna, because she is fine, shining, sweet and a virgin; who, as if coming from heaven, flowed as a food sweeter than honey to all the peoples of the churches. And he who has neglected this food, as the Jews loathed the manna, will not have life in himself, but this food will be turned for him into judgment.

Again, from this manna the little worm (cf. 2 Kings 23:8) was produced when Christ was being made flesh in the Virgin.

Chapter 5, §12: The Dew

(p. 707)

And dew. The dew is the Holy Spirit, coming upon the Virgin chiefly at the conception of the Son of God, and so wholly quenching the tinder in her that afterwards she could in no way sin, as blessed Augustine says. According to Isidore, dew (*ros*) is so called because it is rare (*rarus*), that is, transparent and not thick like rain. Of this dew it is said, Ecclus. 18:16: *Shall not the dew assuage the heat?* etc. This dew also made her fruitful for offspring, and she conceived of this dew. Hence, Num. 11:9: *When the dew fell upon the camp, the manna also fell with it.* By the camp is signified the blessed Virgin, who is called *terrible as an army set in array* (Cant. 6:3, 9).

By the dew, the Holy Spirit. By the manna, the Son of God, whose incarnation the Church asks, saying, Isa. 45:8: *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above*, etc.

Again, Christ is the dew who made the Virgin fruitful: for the works of the Trinity are inseparable. For he is *the dew of Hermon* (Ps. 132:3), which is interpreted *light lifted up*: because Christ, who is the true light, was lifted up first on the candlestick of the cross in the passion, secondly in the ascension to heaven; *which descendeth upon mount Sion*, that is, upon the blessed Virgin in the incarnation, who is that mountain sustaining and supporting the city of the Church, which is meant by Sion. Matt. 5:14: *A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid*, etc.

For Christ is dew most of all as to the first coming. Hence he says, Osee 14:6: *I will be as the dew: Israel shall spring as the lily.* In this text two things are noted, namely the kindness of Christ and the dignity of Mary. The kindness of Christ is noted where he compares himself to the dew. Hence, Ps. 84:13: *The Lord will give goodness.* And this kindness consists in two things. The first is the condescension of humility; hence he says, *I will be.* The second is the compassion of pity; hence, *as the dew.* The dignity of Mary, where she is compared to the lily. And note that he says, *I will be as the dew*, quenching, namely, the tinder in her wholly, or so weakening it that thenceforth it should not rise up against her. *And Israel*, that is, the blessed Virgin bathed in this dew, *shall spring as the lily. Israel* is interpreted *prince with God*: for Mary alone holds princedom with God in heaven and on earth. It is interpreted also *watching with God*, as Jerome says: because she continually watches with her Son for the guarding of the Christian people. *Shall spring as the lily.* For the lily is not propagated by sowing, but a portion is taken from the substance of the lily and planted, and becomes a lily. So the blessed Virgin propagated offspring from herself: because the Holy Spirit took a certain portion of her flesh, and formed it into a lily, that is, into the Son, who says, Cant. 2:1: *I am the lily of the valleys.*

Again, in this text the dignity of the Virgin is noted in three things. First, in the excellence of humility, when he says *Israel*, which is interpreted *prince with God*: because *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke 14:11). Secondly, in the prerogative of fruitfulness: hence, *shall spring.* Thirdly, in the privilege of wholeness: hence, *as the lily.* And these three she received from a threefold state, which is noted in Ecclus. 24:13: *Let thy dwelling be in Jacob*, who acquired by wrestling this name *Israel*.

Again, of this dew, Isa. 45:8: *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above*, etc. Which ought to be expounded thus: *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a saviour.* In these words Isaiah expresses the desire of the holy fathers desiring the coming of Christ in the flesh; and in these words are contained three petitions *(p. 708)* in which Christ is asked for. He asks, then, dew from the heavens, rain from the clouds, a shoot from the earth. By the heavens, the angels; by the clouds, the prophets; by the earth, the blessed Virgin. He says, then: *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above.* As if he said: Let Gabriel come and drop dew, that is, announce the dew. For the coming in the flesh is signified by the falling of dew for many reasons. The falling of dew is secret and hidden. How the dew comes down upon the lily is not seen; but that by its falling the flower of the lily is made more beautiful is known. For the Lord came down into the Virgin, the wholeness of virginity remaining, as dew comes down

upon the lily without corruption of the lily. How he came down the mind of man does not grasp, because *who shall declare his generation?* (Isa. 53:8). But that he came down into the Virgin I believe and confess, and that by his coming the Virgin's flower grew whiter. Hence, Osee 14:6: *I will be as the dew*, etc., as above.

Again, dew cools. Hence it is said that the angel, that is, Christ, *made the midst of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing dew* (Dan. 3:50).

And let the clouds rain the just. The clouds are the prophets, who thunder, rain, lighten; but here he says, *let the clouds rain.* As if he said: We cannot bear the lightnings or hear the thunders; O clouds, rain Christ, that is, announce him as rain, which strikes with a light blow, and in striking waters. For this cloud lightened, saying, Deut. 32:41: *If I shall whet my sword as the lightning*, etc. The lightning is the vengeance of the Lord, who breaks the proud, burns the avaricious with fire, makes the lustful stink. *Let them rain*, I say, *the just*, that is, let him come who may do justice on the devil the seducer, as he did on man the seduced. For man was justly held, but the devil held him unjustly: because man had done nothing to the devil for which he should harm him. Hence the Lord, Isa. 52:5: *My people is taken away*, namely by force, *gratis: they that rule over them treat them unjustly*, etc.

It follows: *Let the earth be opened, and bud forth a saviour.* This earth is the blessed Virgin. (Look under the heading that Mary is the earth.) But since the blessed Virgin is called three times the closed gate (cf. Ezek. 44:2), that is, before childbirth, and in childbirth, and after childbirth, how does the prophet say, *Let the earth be opened*? He uses the word of opening for this reason, because the blessed Virgin was *apocrisa*, that is, hidden and shut in: for she had shut herself in, because, as is said in Ecclus. 28:28, she had made doors for her mouth and bars for her ears, and *had made a covenant with her eyes, that she would not so much as think* of a man (cf. Job 31:1). But she opened her ears to hear the word of the angel, her heart to believe and consent, her mouth to express consent and to pray that what was promised might be done to her. Hence she said: *Be it done to me* (Luke 1:38). Therefore she said, Cant. 5:6: *I opened the bolt of my door to my beloved: but he had turned aside, and was gone.* The door is consent: unless one consents to the word, the word does not enter the heart. The bolt is discretion: because one must not consent unless discretion goes before. For Eve so opened to the devil that she broke the bolt, because she consented to his word before she judged the word with reason going before. But the blessed Virgin opened the bolt, did not break it, saying, when she had long thought beforehand *what manner of salutation this should be* (Luke 1:29): *How shall this be done?* And after this she expressed consent, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me* (Luke 1:38). So, then, the earth was opened that it might bud forth a saviour; and before she had said these words, the beloved had already turned aside, namely that he might become a servant, because the son of a handmaid; *and was gone*, that is, had entered through the door of consent. Therefore she said: *I arose up to open to my beloved* (Cant. 5:5). For she arose when she humbled herself, saying: *Behold (p. 709) the handmaid.* She opened when she said: *Be it done to me.* This earth, then, was closed to consenting until she understood that she could conceive and bear remaining a virgin. For the Word of the Father would not have been made flesh in her unless she had consented. Hence she was figured by Rebecca, who expressed her consent to marry Isaac (Gen. 24:58).

Again, the invisible dew is the grace which enlightened Mary before the sending of the angel; but the cloud rained the just one when the angel announced the Son who was to become incarnate. The earth opened itself when Mary believed and consented and budded forth the saviour, that is, conceived of the Holy Spirit, that is, by the operation of the Holy Spirit. And note that the Virgin budded as grass. Hence, 2 Kings 23:4: *As the grass springeth out of the earth by rain.* She flowered as the lily, Isa. 35:1: *The wilderness shall rejoice, and shall flourish like the lily.* She bore fruit as the vine, Ecclus. 24:23: *As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor.* In the budding of the grass, greenness; in the flower, odor and comeliness; in the fruit, savor and odor.

And note that the Godhead of Christ was properly as dew, which came down invisibly. John 3:8: *Thou knowest not whence he cometh, and whither he goeth.* Job 9:11: *If he come to me, I shall not see him*, etc. But his flesh was visible rain, whose drops of water and blood watered the dry world.

Christ is dew by reason of origin: because from heaven. John 3:31: *He that cometh from heaven is above all.*

By reason of property: for dew comes down secretly and gently; and the incarnation of the Son of God was so secret that many angels did not know it. Hence they marvelled at his ascension, saying: *Who is this that cometh from Edom?* (Isa. 63:1). Again, secretly and imperceptibly. Hence, Isa. 53:8: *Who shall declare his generation?* John 1:27, John the Baptist says: *I am not worthy to loose the latchet of his shoe*, that is, to unfold the union of the Word. Again, Isa. 24:16: *My secret to myself*, etc. Again, gently: because *the Lord is sweet to all* (Ps. 144:9). For he glided sweetly into the virginal womb, so that nature marvelled, and the mother was made pregnant without deflowering.

By reason of operation: for dew waters, and in its manner makes drunk and fruitful the earth. And according to this two signs were given to Gideon, Judg. 6:37 ff., because the floor was watered and the fleece was made drunk. Isa. 55:10: *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven*, etc., as far as *soaketh the earth, and watereth it, and maketh it to spring.* Behold three things: making drunk, watering and making fruitful. Again, dew in its manner enlightens. Hence, Isa. 26:19, it is said to Mary, to the Church and to the faithful soul of Christ: *Thy dew is the dew of the light.* The dew of light, that is, Christ, making fruitful the affection inasmuch as he is dew, and enlightening the intellect inasmuch as he is light. Otherwise: the dew of night is the grace of God coming to help in tribulation. Again, where we have *Thy dew is the dew of the light*, the Seventy say: "The dew which is from thee is their healing," namely the dew of the incarnation. Again, dew either quenches or tempers the heat of the season. Ecclus. 43:24: *A dew*, that is, Christ, *meeting it*, namely the devil, *coming from the heat*, that is, from the burning of hell, where he dwells; or *from the heat*, that is, from the desire of doing evil, where he dwells and whence he comes to tempt us, that he may burn us with himself in the furnace of hell: for he kindles sinners by guilt and burns them with himself by punishment. *Shall make it humble*: because Christ, suffering on the cross, humbled the slanderer. Hence, Ps. 88:11: *Thou hast humbled the proud one, as one that is slain*, that is, the devil; that is, thou hast lessened his power. Hence, Luke 11:22: *But if a stronger than he*, etc.; not as one slain, because he still has a hand that draws; but at the end *with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked* (Isa. 11:4). *And he shall slay the whale that is in the sea* (Isa. 27:1). For *(p. 710)* this also Christ came as dew in his incarnation, that he might quench the heat of sin with which the world was burning.

Christ is dew. Because sweet. For wonderfully and ineffably he gladdens the conscience which he inhabits by grace. Ps. 144:9: *The Lord is sweet to all.*

Because nourishing. For his grace is the nurse of all good. Hence, Wis. 16:25: *It served thy grace, the nurse of all.*

Because of the night. And Christ was made flesh for *the people of the Gentiles that walked in darkness* (Isa. 9:2), namely when *they were all bound together with one chain of darkness* (Wis. 17:17).

Because shining. Isa. 26:19: *Thy dew is the dew of the light.* In this is noted the privilege of Christ, who was without the cloud of any sin. Hence also he says, John 8:12: *I am the light of the world.*

Because cold. And by this quenching in his elect the heat of temptations, and cooling the burning of concupiscences. Hence: *The angel of the Lord went down with Azarias and his companions into the furnace … and made the midst of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing dew* (Dan. 3:49–50).

Because it is spherical: for by his grace he leads to eternity, whose appetite or desire is signified in the spherical figure.

Because it has small droplets in which it comes down. Wis. 11:23: *As a drop of the morning dew, that falleth down upon the earth.* Job 38:28: *Who is the father of rain, or who begot the drops of dew?* And this smallness signifies humility.

Because of the morning. Osee 6:4: *Your mercy*, that is, Christ, given to us of the pure and mere mercy of the mother, *is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth away in the morning.*

Because, as if contemptible at the first coming, he now suffers himself to be trodden down by all. Hence he says, Ps. 55:3: *My enemies have trodden on me all the day*, that is, all the time of grace. But at the judgment he will come as hail, and will hail upon his adversaries. Hence, Wis. 5:23: *Thick hail shall be cast upon them from the stone-casting wrath.*

Again, dew takes away barrenness, that is, the lack of the word of God. Hence *the little ones asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them* (cf. Lam. 4:4).

It brings forth fertility. Therefore the time of grace is called *the fulness of time* (Gal. 4:4): for then were fulfilled whatever things the prophets had foretold, and then the fulness of the Gentiles began to enter into the faith through the preaching of the Apostles.

It increases the green herbs, that is, the greenness of the virtues. Heb. 6:7: *The earth … that drinketh in the rain*, namely of doctrine, *and bringeth forth herbs*, that is, the greenness of faith and good works, *meet for them by whom it is tilled*, that is, for the preachers.

It fattens the fruits: because the earth of the Church or of the human conscience was before *void and empty* (Gen. 1:2).

It comes down unexpectedly. Wis. 18:14: *For while all things were in quiet silence*, etc.

Sweet and gentle: for then the gentleness of God was shown, when *the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared* (Titus 3:4), that is, God kind and made man.

It cools: and then the cooling of grace was furnished against the heat of vices.

Or thus: *A dew*, that is, Christ, coming down gently from above to cool the burning of vices, *meeting it coming from the heat*, that is, from the heat of diabolical persecution, *shall make it humble*, that is, shall render it conquered, dying on the cross. Prov. 29:23: *Humiliation followeth the proud.*

Or thus: *A dew coming from the heat*, that is, Christ from the Father, in whom is the ardor *(p. 711)* of charity, *coming down, meeting it coming*, that is, the devil, *shall make it humble*, that is, he humbled his pride by the humility of the passion: which is signified in the Rogations by the dragon, which on the first two days goes before and on the third day follows as if conquered. Again, in Psalm 88:11: *Thou hast humbled the proud one, as one that is wounded*, that is, the devil, by thy humility. *As one that is wounded*, who has lost his strength in part: and so the devil, when Christ was wounded and had suffered, was weakened, so that he cannot conquer a man who wills to resist. Jerome: “Weak is the enemy who cannot conquer except one who is willing.” But he is not wholly destroyed, so that he cannot tempt him: all of which turns to the profit of man. Job 26:12: *His wisdom hath struck the proud one*, that is, the devil, whom the Lord struck not by power, lest he could complain of violence, but by wisdom. Hence, Eccles. 9:15: *There was found in it a man poor and wise, and he delivered the city by his wisdom*, etc. Again, Job 26:12: *His wisdom hath struck the proud one.*

Again, Christ is called dew for the consolation of the poor. For he feeds with dew the young of the ravens, whom they will not feed: for it is said that ravens do not feed their young until they see their feathers grow black. So the lovers of the world feed and embrace those who are like them with black feathers, and not those whom they see unlike themselves; but the Lord meanwhile feeds these with the dew of grace, while the world feeds on carcasses.

§13: The Angel

Angel, namely *of great counsel* (Isa. 9:6, Septuagint), who, coming down from heaven, entered into her. For Gabriel, sent to the Virgin, did not enter into her, but *in to her* (Luke 1:28); but Christ into her. Ezek. 44:2 it is said of the gate: *The Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it.* And there it is said of the same gate that it was shut *to the prince*, that is, to the Archangel himself; or *for the prince*, that is, for the honor of the prince, namely Christ; or *to the prince*, that is, to the devil, who is called *the prince of the world* (John 14:30). For the evil angel comes from below; he did not enter into this garden. Ecclus. 43:24: *A dew meeting it coming from the heat*, etc. Or *to the prince*, that is, to sin, which is prince in many; against which it is said, Rom. 6:12: *Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof.*

Again, Christ is the Angel. Hence, Job 33:23, it is said of man: *If there shall be an angel speaking for him*, etc. Angel, that is, Christ. Again, Isa. 63:9: *The angel of his presence saved them*: because the Son is the image of the Father, therefore he is called the angel of his face. (You will find much of this Angel in the Apocalypse. Look and expound.)

§14: The Bird

Bird, that is, a flying bird. Christ is a bird. *Avis* is said as if *sine via*, without a way: hence, Wis. 5:11, where it speaks of the bird: *Of whose way no trace can be found.* And Solomon says that he does not know *the way of a man in youth* (Prov. 30:19). Of this bird it is said, Isa. 46:11: *Who call a bird from the east, and the man of my own will from a far country.* For the Father called this bird, that is, Christ, from the east in the ascension: because Christ was always in the east of full knowledge and entire charity. *(p. 712)* Zech. 6:12: *Behold a man, the Orient is his name.* Again, the other Zachary, Luke 1:78: *The Orient from on high hath visited us.* The Father called him also from a far country, that is, from the world, which is far from God as to its lovers. *The man of my own will*: because the will of the Son agrees in all things with the will of the Father.

This bird had the Virgin's womb for a nest, where he was formed according to the humanity. Job 28:1: *Gold hath a place wherein it is melted.* This place is the virginal womb. The cross for a perch, which is called his resting place. Cant. 1:11: *While the king was at his repose*, etc. The tomb for a mew, where he laid down mortality and passibility as old feathers, and took immortality and impassibility as new feathers; and from there he ascended upon the Cherubim in his ascension, *and he flew; he flew upon the wings of the winds* (Ps. 17:11). (Below you will find of the birds of this garden.)

Christ is a bird. Because of the wings of virtues: because he had *the spirit of wisdom and of understanding* (Isa. 11:2), and all the rest.

Because of his flight on high. Eph. 4:10: *He ascended above all the heavens.* Ps. 17:11: *He flew upon the wings of the winds.*

Because of the eminence of his works. 1 Pet. 2:22: *Who did no sin.*

Because of lightness: because without the weight of concupiscence, of which, Wis. 9:15: *The corruptible body is a load upon the soul.*

§15: The Bee

Bee. Christ is the bee, having the sweetness of honey and the pricking of the sting. Who, like a bee, *feedeth among the lilies* (Cant. 2:16), dwelling in the flowery homeland of the angels. Who flew to the sweet-smelling flower of virginity in Mary at the incarnation, conceived in Nazareth, which is interpreted *flower*; there he settled, there he clung. Whose honey and sting he does not ignore who sings to him *mercy and judgment* (Ps. 100:1). Yet coming to us he brought only the honey and not the sting, that is, mercy and not judgment. Hence, when the disciples once urged him to command that the city which would not receive

him should be consumed by fire, he answered that he had not come to destroy but to save (Luke 9:54–56). This bee has two comings. Coming to save in the first, he was seen to have brought honey only and as it were to have left the sting. Coming to judge in the second, those who will not be saved, he will be seen to do the contrary. He had as it were laid down his sting when, suffering such unworthy things, he showed mercy and not judgment. But do not sin in hope, do not hope in iniquity. For at some time this bee will take up his sting again, and drive it in very sharply into the marrow of wicked men: because *the Father hath given all judgment to the Son* (John 5:22).

And note that this bee settled first on the flower of virginity in the incarnation, secondly on the tree of the cross in the passion. From the flower, that is, from the virginal flesh of Mary, he wrought the first honeycomb, that is, the wax of the humanity containing the honey of the Godhead. From the tree of the cross, the second: for the passion was as a honeycomb, our redemption as the honey. Of this bee it is said, Ecclus. 11:3: *The bee is small among flying things, but her fruit hath the chiefest sweetness.* The smallness is humility; the flying things are men and angels. For his humility is greater than man's. Hence, Luke 22:27: *For which is greater, he that sitteth at table, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at table? But I*, etc. Isa. 41:4 and Apoc. 1:8: *I am the first* in dignity, *and I am the last* in humility. Greater also than *(p. 713)* the angels'. Hence: *Thou hast made him a little less than the angels* (Ps. 8:6), who are not flesh, nor can die.

This bee settled on the flower of virginal cleanness, and drew from it the material of his work, neither violating nor corrupting its odor and beauty. His fruit is his work, namely the redemption of the world and the freeing of captives. This is the fruit which the Lord, ascending the triumphal tree, laid hold of. Cant. 7:8: *I will go up into the palm tree*, etc. This is the work of which, Isa. 28:21, he says twice: *His work is strange to him … his work is strange to him.* There Gregory: "Because it did not befit the Godhead to be scourged, spat upon, crucified, and the like." Of this work it is said, Ecclus. 42:16: *Full of the glory of the Lord is his work.* The work, then, which he did in the world was the suffering of scourges and reproaches. By this work lost life was given to us. Hence it is said of Christ, Prov. 10:16: *The work of the just is unto life*, etc. To this work the work of every just man ought to be likened. Hence, John 12:26, Christ says: *If any man minister to me, let him follow me.* Again, in the same place, 13:15: *I have given you an example*, etc. And the fruit of this bee *hath the chiefest sweetness*: because no punishment or bitterness can prevail over it. Again, because it purged the first bitterness which the taste of the deadly apple had brought in, namely when he blotted out punishment and sin. And well is it called the beginning (*initium*) of sweetness, because here it is felt in hope and in inward consolation. Hence it is signified by the vinegar of Ruth (Ruth 2:14): because it makes any morsel savory and wholesome, and does not let one be broken by labor, nor be too much terrified, nor be wearied by a long journey.

Christ is a bee. Because of hot nature: for by charity he deigned to be made flesh for us, to be crucified and to die. Hence, Eph. 2:4–5: *God, who is rich in mercy, for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ*, etc.

Because of small stature by humility. Hence: *The bee is small among flying things* (Ecclus. 11:3), etc., as above.

Because it carries honey in its mouth by sweetness of words. Hence, Ps. 118:103: *How sweet are thy words to my palate!* John 6:69: *Thou hast the words of eternal life*, Peter says to him.

Because it has a sting in its tail, because of the justice which he will exercise at the judgment, which will be at the end of the world, saying: *Depart from me, you cursed* (Matt. 25:41), etc.

Because sparing in food, by abstinence. Hence the Church says of him: "And he was fed with a little milk," etc.

Because busy about its work. Hence it is said of Christ, Ps. 103:23: *Man shall go forth to his work*, etc. The man is Christ, whose work is our redemption, to which he went forth in his incarnation. Hence he says, John 16:28: *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. His work*, I say, for which no other would have sufficed, and because the redemption of the human race belonged to him.

Because it makes honey for others, when he brought to us, his little bees, the honey of his Godhead shut up in the wax of his humanity.

Because it makes its house six-cornered, giving them the grace of ruling the heart and the five senses, which he deigns to inhabit.

Because clean: for it does not settle on dung or on stinking flowers. And of Wisdom it is said, Wis. 1:4: *Nor dwell in a body subject to sins.*

It feeds on flowers. Hence, Cant. 2:16: *Who feedeth among the lilies.*

Nimble: because he *rejoiced as a giant to run the way* (Ps. 18:6), namely of the Father's commandments.

(p. 714) Fine: which appears plainly in the house which it makes six-cornered.

Because it frequents the box tree, namely little ones by humility, always green by faith and continual holiness, thick in leaves by divine praise, by assiduous prayer, by consolation of the faint-hearted, and the like, and seeking the greenness of eternal things. Job 39:8, of the wild ass: *He searcheth for every green thing.*

Because it lives in a cell. For Christ lay hidden nine months in the cell of the virginal womb. He lies hidden also in the cell of the Scriptures.

Because it hangs its work on wooden crosses, as above. For he settled on the wood of the cross for this, that he might make the honeycomb of his honey, which was the redemption of the human race. The wax signifies bodies, the honey souls.

Because, going away from its little house, that is, from the humble conscience—which happens when the just man sins—it is called back by the soft whistling of confession and prayer. For this reason the Lord is said to be in *the whistling of a gentle air* (3 Kings 19:12).

Because it is said to perceive from afar the odor of the rose. And Christ from heaven the odor of Mary. Hence she says, Cant. 1:11: *While the king was at his repose, my spikenard sent forth the odor thereof.*

Wrathful and warlike: which will be at the judgment, when he will take up his sting again. Of his wrath, Wis. 5:23: *Thick hail shall be cast upon them from the stone-casting wrath.* Of his fight against the reprobate, Apoc. 2:16: *I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* Which will be when he is about to say: *Depart from me, you cursed* (Matt. 25:41), etc.

He fights also with wasps, that is, heretics, who have nothing like the bee; and with strange bees, namely those heretics who have received baptism; and with idle bees, that is, those faithful who do not do the works of the faith which they have professed, and who *receive the grace of God in vain* (2 Cor. 6:1).

Chapter 6: On the Trees of This Garden

Vine, olive, bramble, cedar, also palm, cypress, Libanus, and plane tree, cinnamon, myrrh, and storax, Galbanum, onycha, drop, and balsam, and terebinth, Tree, or wood, shrub, little rod, rod, Pomegranate, or Punic apple, fig, almond, Mulberry, sycamore, and fir, willow, wild olive, Pine, chestnut, laurel also, box, and elm.

My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed (Cant. 4:12), etc. Since in an enclosed garden many trees, and especially fruit-bearing trees, are wont to be found, we must see of the trees of this garden. Eccles. 2:4–5,

Solomon says: *I planted vineyards, I made gardens and orchards, and set them with trees of all kinds*, etc. For Mary is the garden or orchard of the Lord, planted by the hand of Wisdom with every kind of tree, that is, with virtue of every kind; the names of which trees can easily be committed to memory by the verses written above.

Chapter 6, §1: The Vine

(p. 715)

Mary is called a vine; nay, she names herself a vine, Ecclus. 24:23, saying: *As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor, and my flowers are the fruit of honor and riches* (*honestatis*). Note that some manuscripts have *of odor*, but the corrected text has *of honor*.

These words can be expounded thus of Wisdom, so that she says: *I have brought forth*, that is, in bearing fruit I have given, *a pleasant odor*, that is, sweet and fragrant doctrine. For sweetness holds. John 6:69: *Lord, to whom shall we go?* says Peter, *thou hast the words of eternal life.* Odor draws. Isa. 2:3: *Come and let us go up*, etc. Or thus: *I have brought forth*, that is, in bearing fruit I have given, *the sweetness of odor*, that is, the sweetness of doctrine proceeding from odor.

As the vine. Behold the manner of bearing fruit: how I bear fruit, *as the vine*, which turns rotten water into wine. And Wisdom, or Christ, or doctrine bears fruit when from the love of pleasure it turns to the wine of love, *which cheereth men* (Judg. 9:13) *and maketh virgins spring forth* (Zech. 9:17). The Lord too changed the water of the Law into the wine of the Gospel, which was signified, John 2:7 ff., at the wedding.

And my flowers, that is, the virtues of the saints, which proceed from me, are fruits already had in the present: because to the virtues is joined delight and joy or serenity of conscience. Prov. 15:15: *A secure mind*, etc. *Of odor* in fact: because they draw others by example, as one curtain draws another. *And of riches* (*honestatis*) in hope: for *honestas* is the state or stability of honor, which is now had in hope: because *now we are the sons of God* (1 John 3:2). Or, the fruits of honor are the virtues: because they deserve to be honored, and because they are fruits of honesty, that is, full of honesty.

Of Mary thus: *As the vine.* In this she shows that her fulness overflowed into others by the example of reading and study. For *she kept all these words* (Luke 2:51), etc. For she compared the words of the angels, of the shepherds and of Simeon with the words of the Law; nor could the mother of the Word be ignorant of the created word.

As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor. The odor can be called the Law: because, spiritually understood, it delights the spiritual nostrils, and its use was in perfumes. The sweetness, of the Gospel. Matt. 11:30: *For my yoke is sweet*, etc. He says *of odor* generally, not adding *sweet* or the like, in which is understood the Law, whose inner things are sweet, its outer things heavy in many respects. In the Lord's vine water becomes wine; and the blessed Virgin, by reading in the Law and the Prophets, made the fruit of the Gospel. Therefore she says: By reading in the Law and the Prophets *I have brought forth*, that is, I have made fruit, which fruit is the end of the Law. And this *as the vine*, by changing the hardness and tastelessness of the Law into the sweetness and pleasantness of the Gospel, namely by preferring the fruit of the mind to the fruit of the womb. For she was a valiant woman, who despised the flesh, vowing virginity against the Law, which curses the barren; and despising the world against the Law, which promises temporal things. And she was also above the Law, which brought no one to perfection. And these flowers are the sentences of the Gospel, which in the time of spring, that is, of grace, flowed forth from the meadows of the Scripture of the Old Testament, which had been closed in the time of winter, that is, of the Law. Prov. 27:25: *The meadows are open*, etc. For such sentences are her flowers, strengthening the spiritual sight; and fruits, refreshing the affection. Matt. 11:28: *Come to me*, etc., as far as *I will refresh you.* And they are fruits *(p. 716)* of honor, because they teach inner cleanness; and of honesty, because they teach outward cleanness.

Otherwise: *I*, says Mary, *as the vine have brought forth a pleasant odor*, that is, the sweet odor of holy conversation and repute, with the joy of mind which is signified in the wine or the vine (Judg. 9:13). *And my flowers*, that is, the virtues—namely the violet of humility, the rose of charity, the lily of virginity—*are the fruit of honor and honesty*: because they refresh and fatten spiritually those who imitate me in these virtues, and therefore they are fruit.

Or thus: *My flowers*, that is, the comeliness of honest conversation and the fragrance of good repute, *are the fruit of honor and honesty*, because they satisfy and refresh those who take example from them. Or, *fructus* can be of the genitive case, so that the sense is: *My flowers of fruit*, that is, which bring forth from themselves the fruit of eternal life, and confer honor and honesty. Or, *fruit of odor*, in another reading, because they entice to run after me: which is plain in the young maidens, who, refreshed by such fruits and enticed by such odors, say to her: *We will run to the odor of thy ointments* (Cant. 1:3).

Or thus: *I have brought forth a pleasant odor*, that is, a most sweet odor to the heavenly bridegroom, by which I drew him to me from heaven. For the odor drew him, the sweetness held him. Cant. 1:11: *While the king was at his repose*, etc. Or, I have brought forth sweetness of conscience as to myself, and the odor of holy repute as to my neighbor.

Or thus: Mary says here that she bore fruit as the vine brings forth the sweetness of odor: because as the sweetness of odor proceeds from the vine without hurt to it, and the same odor spreads far and wide, so from the Virgin, without hurt to her maidenhood, proceeded the Son of God, whose sweet repute fills the world. Luke 4:14: *The fame of him went out through the whole country.* And well is Christ called fruit and the sweetness of odor, whose sweetness is now felt on the way as odor, but in the homeland will be tasted as fruit and perfectly savored. Hence in his person Job seems to have said, 9:26: *My days have passed by as ships carrying fruits.* Which ships, namely, carrying fruits over the water, spread the odor of the fruits as they pass, but give no taste of their savor. So we, while we pass over the sea of this world, feel indeed the odor of the divine sweetness by a certain contemplation of exile; but when we shall see God face to face, then we shall enjoy the divine sweetness with full taste.

And note that she says: *I have brought forth a pleasant odor.* For a fragrant thing both sends out odor from itself and keeps very much odor in itself. So the blessed Virgin sent forth a sweet odor in bringing forth her fruit, which is Christ; whom yet she kept excellently in herself: he remained in her according to the Godhead who went forth from her according to the humanity.

It follows: *And my flowers are the fruit of honor and honesty.* A wonderful word: *my flowers are fruit*—and the flower is wont to go before the fruit, the fruit to follow. What is it, then, that she says, *my flowers are fruit*, as if in one instant? To this it is to be noted that in other women, after the conception of a child, the flesh is formed first, after some time the soul is poured in; and so, growing, the child stays in the mother's womb until the time of birth comes. But it was not so done in the blessed Virgin: because at once at this word, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me*, etc., Christ was conceived full man in flesh and soul; yet so that then the outlines of the body could not be discerned by human sight. And so she conceived the fruit with the flower, so that the flower refers to the conception, the fruit to the perfect humanity. And therefore she says: *My flowers are fruit.* And of what the fruit is, she at once adds: *of honor and honesty.*

(p. 717) Note that the work of the flesh in marriage is shameful, outside marriage damnable. Hence Elizabeth, having conceived John, *hid herself five months* (Luke 1:24), because she blushed at the birth at her age, as the Gloss says there, lest she should seem in her old age to have given herself to lust. Which lust, namely, even in married people ought not to be exercised except in youth and for the sake of offspring. Hence, Gen. 18:12, when the conception was announced to Sara, she answered: *After I am grown old, and my lord is an old man, shall I give myself to pleasure?* The fruit of the blessed Virgin, then, was of honor, because without the blush of matrimonial union; and of honesty, because without the guilt of any carnal

mingling. Or, Christ, the flower of Mary, is the fruit of honor and honesty: because from him and toward him is all the honor of the world and all honesty of morals.

Otherwise: *My flowers are the fruit of honor and honesty.* After she had spoken of that privileged fruit which she brought forth as the vine, she adds of the fruit of prerogatives, merits and rewards, which fruits the manifold variety of flowers produced. She says, then: My flowers have made fruits of odor, through which namely I spread a good odor, *and of honesty*, that is, of abundance and wealth. For *honestas* is used for wealth. Ecclus. 11:23: *It is easy in the eyes of God on a sudden to make the poor man rich* (*honestare*). And a little before, v. 14: *Poverty and riches* (*honestas*) *are from God.* Or she says *my flowers are fruit* for this reason: because good works done in the present, bursting forth from the love of her, are flowers indeed now, whose fruit is eternal life.

Again, it is to be noted that in this vine or vineyard was fulfilled that of Isaiah 5:1–2: *My beloved had a vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place. And he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a winepress therein.* But what follows, *And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes*, and the rest that follows, this cannot befit the blessed Virgin. Again, that of Jeremiah 2:21 is said to her by the Lord: *Yet I planted thee a chosen vineyard, all true seed.* But what follows cannot be expounded of her literally. Mystically, however, it can be said that, as the Son was set for the fall of many by occasion, so she too was turned into bitterness for the unbelieving Jews by occasion, not by cause.

She was planted by the Lord in her conception. Isa. 5:2: *He planted it with the choicest vines.* The like, Jer. 2:21. And she was planted *in the mountains of Samaria* (Jer. 31:5), that is, in the eminence of the Church. *Samaria* is interpreted *custody*, and signifies the Church, which guards Christians. But as a mountain rises above the land lying near it, so Mary rises above every saint for the guarding of the faithful of the Church. Again, *Samaria* is interpreted *keeper of the Lord*, or *joining with the Lord*: because she truly kept the Lord for herself. Hence she says: *I held him, and I will not let him go* (Cant. 3:4). She kept herself also for the Lord, saying, Cant. 2:16: *My beloved to me, and I to him.* Again, Cant. 7:10: *I to my beloved, and his turning is toward me.* She also by her prayers joins us to the Lord, who were before separated from him by sin, if only, as penitents, having put away sin, we flee to her.

She was planted in her roots, that is, in the ancient fathers. Hence, Ps. 79:10: *Thou plantedst the roots thereof, and it filled the land.* And well is it said *it filled*: because she brought us the fulness of every good, that is, Christ, who is the sufficiency of all things, as is said in 2 Cor. 3:5. And at her nativity began the time of fulness, of which it is had in Gal. 4:4. And to figure this she was born in the month of September, *(p. 718)* when the fulness of fruits is had. She was cleansed of stones and of evil herbs growing up, in her sanctification. Isa. 5:2: *He picked the stones out of it.* And then properly she was *a chosen vineyard, all true seed* (Jer. 2:21). For by the stones and harmful herbs can be signified both original sin and the tinder and the tickling of sin.

Spiritually she was rooted in those ancient fathers by imitation of their virtues, as had been commanded her by the Lord, Ecclus. 24:13: *Take root in my elect.* In Abraham, faith and obedience; in Isaac, hope and patience; in Jacob, charity; in David, humility. And these are the spiritual roots of Mary.

She came forth from the root in her nativity, namely when she began to bud outwardly. Isa. 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse*, etc.

She kept close to the ground by all the modesty and simplicity of infancy: which she still does, solicitous for the salvation of sinners, who are earth.

She grew and increased by daily bettering. Hence, Ezek. 17:6: *And when it was sprung up, it grew into a spreading vineyard of low stature, whose branches looked towards it, and the roots thereof were under it: so*

it became a vineyard, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. Therefore also Jerome says of her in the apocryphal book of her *Infancy*: “For she was constant and unmoved, and one who daily passed on better and better.” And she grew always from virtue to virtue, and was as it were of perfect greatness when it was said to her: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee* (Luke 1:28), etc.

She was covered, like the vine, with a cheap and thin bark, of poor color and clinging little to her, in the quality of her outward dress. For she is not believed to have had changes of raiment, nor precious ones, nor well dyed, but rather, after the example of her Son, to have been in rags, she who wrapped her newborn in poor little cloths (Luke 2:7). For it is likely that if she had had better cloths she would most gladly have wrapped her Son in them or with them; which Son Julian the Apostate and the other mockers afterwards called the ragged Galilean. But it is certain that, whatever her outward dress was, she clung to it with no love, no pleasure, no glorying. For she knew, being a great prophetess, that the prince of the Church would at some time say to women: *Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel* (1 Pet. 3:3), etc. She knew also that the wise man had said: *Glory not in apparel at any time* (Ecclus. 11:4). Again, 1 Tim. 2:9: *Not with plaited hair*, etc.

This vine, above the other little trees, was tended more diligently and as it were continually by the operation of the whole Trinity. Its special tillers were also divine inspiration, the wisdom of the Son, the discipline of the Holy Spirit, angelic protection, her own diligence, the teaching of father and mother, and the like. (Look in the third section on the garden, where the garden is called tilled.)

She was dug about by the enriching of each of the gifts. Hence it is said to Christ, Ps. 64:10: *Thou hast inebriated it; thou hast many ways enriched it*, that is, thou hast enriched it in many ways. Mark 12:1: *A certain man planted a vineyard*, etc.

She was pruned by the cutting away of every kind of superfluity from her heart, members and senses. Cant. 2:12: *The time of pruning is come.*

She was shut in by a most secret manner of life. Hence the angel found her in a closed room (Luke 1:28). (Look on the enclosures of the garden, in the first section, and you will be able to adapt it to this vine.)

Chapter 6, §1 (continued): The Vine

(p. 719) She was dug by the love of true poverty and humility: for humility deepened her mind, that it might become capable of all goodness; the love of poverty shut out from her the appetite of all earthliness; and both virtues made her capable of all the divine bounty, of which it is said, James 1:17: *Every best gift*, etc. But because a vineyard is dug not once only but even twice or three times, this vine was dug in many ways by compassion in the heat of the passion, when the sword of her Son pierced her soul: namely when, as she looked on, the crucifiers dug the hands and feet of her Son with legions of nails, and when the point of the cruel lance entered his bowels. Hence it can be said that this vine was then dug as it were three times. First, when she grieved for him held, beaten and mocked. Secondly, when she groaned over him hung up and nailed. Thirdly, when she wept that he had given up the spirit. For, as blessed Bernard says, she could not see her Son crucified without the feeling of a mother’s grief, even though she hoped that he would rise again and overcome death.

She was propagated and spread out, *putting out her hand to strong things* (Prov. 31:19): for any vine folded upon itself is low, and spread in breadth or stretched on high is long and lofty. Therefore of her can be expounded that of Psalm 79:12: *It stretched forth its branches*, that is, prayers, benefits and examples, *unto the sea*, that is, to those who are in any bitterness.

Otherwise: by the sea are signified those who have the bitterness of contrition for their sins; also those truly patient, who *suck as milk the abundance of the sea* (Deut. 33:19), that is, the tribulations of the world. By the

river, namely the Jordan, all those who are anxious to keep or recover baptismal innocence, and who truly humble themselves before the Lord and, confessing truly, judge themselves without pretence. For the Lord was baptized in the Jordan; and *Jordan* is interpreted *humble descent* or *stream of judgment*. To such the Virgin extends her benefits. Do you wish to hear of her propagation? *Behold*, she says, *from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed* (Luke 1:48). For she never ceases to be propagated and spread abroad; and a certain propagation of her is the emulation of her virginity after her example, since now there is no number of the young maidens running in her odor.

Or also, a certain propagation of her is the countless building of churches in her name and honor, or the shining forth of her benefits. Of her height, in Psalm 79:11: *The shadow of it covered the hills*, that is, the saints, *and the branches thereof the cedars of God*, that is, the angels. Or thus: *The shadow of it covered the hills*, that is, she surpassed in every virtue those highest in virtues; *and the branches thereof*, that is, its outgrowths, *the cedars of God*, that is, those strong in good working and aromatic by holy repute, and however deeply rooted in humility, faith and charity: *because there was not found the like to her* (Ecclus. 44:20).

She was lifted from the earth by continual contemplation of heavenly things, saying that of Job 7:15: *My soul rather chooseth hanging.* And Wis. 18:16: *Standing on the earth she reached even to heaven.* Again, she *sat solitary and held her peace, and lifted herself up above herself* (cf. Lam. 3:28). And therefore she could truly say with the Apostle: *Our conversation is in heaven* (Phil. 3:20).

She was most diligently guarded by God the Trinity, who says of her under the name of a vineyard, Isa. 27:3–4: *Night and day I keep it. There is no indignation in me.* She was guarded also by the angels, as the Psalmist says to her, Ps. 90:11: *He hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee.* Therefore it is said of her, Cant. 8:11: *The peaceable had a vineyard … he let out the same to keepers*, etc. *(p. 720)* But her chief keepers were Gabriel and John. (Look under the heading of the enclosed garden, where the garden is called guarded, in the second section, and adapt it to this vineyard.)

And note that a vineyard is destroyed chiefly in as it were five ways: by the spoiling of the little foxes, that is, of the first motions breaking in by stealth—hence, Cant. 2:15: *Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines: for our vineyard hath flourished*; again, by the flooding of waters, which signifies abundance of temporal things; again, by hail, which signifies lust; by frost, which signifies avarice; by mist, which signifies pride. From the first she was preserved by the quenching of the tinder; from the second, by poverty; from the third, by virginity; from the fourth, by generosity; from the fifth, by humility.

This vine was visited in the angelic mission, according as the Psalmist prayed, Ps. 79:15–16: *Look down from heaven, and see, and visit this vineyard, and perfect the same which thy right hand hath planted*, that is, thy Son or thy propitiation. For then Gabriel, given her as keeper, visited her. Hence: *The angel Gabriel was sent* to Mary (Luke 1:26), etc. Her husbandman visited her, that is, the Son of God, who is the Wisdom of the Father. Hence a little after it is added, v. 28: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.* Nor only then; nay, the Lord looked continually upon her as upon a thing most dear. Hence he says, Cant. 8:12: *My vineyard is before me.* For the Lord always visits her, *and his eyes are on it from the beginning of the year unto the end thereof* (Deut. 11:12)—which is said of the land of promise in figure of the blessed Virgin.

She was adorned with the breadth of leaves in the weightiness of her words. (Look under the heading of her words.)

She was described as in flower in the Gospel narrative, as it were with the flower of the lily, by which virginity is meant. Hence, Luke 1:26: *The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth*, which is interpreted *flower, to a virgin*: behold the flower of the lily. And note that the flower of the vine is finer, more delicate and rarer than other flowers, and therefore more pleasing and more gracious. This is the flower of virginity, which, the rarer it is on earth, the more pleasing and gracious it is to God and

the angels. Hence, Matt. 19:12: *He that can take, let him take it.* The flower too of this vine and its fruit alike is Christ the Lord. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:23: *My flowers are the fruit,* etc., as above.

She was shown to be enriched in the fulness of grace. Hence, Luke 1:28: *Hail, full of grace,* etc. And a little after, v. 30: *Thou hast found grace with God,* etc.

She was staked in the Lord's companionship. Hence: *The Lord is with thee,* as a stake to support thee. Therefore it is said, Cant. 8:5: *Leaning upon her beloved*: for she conceived through faith the Son of God, who is the power of the Father. And then was fulfilled the promise of the Father, who had promised of the Son, Isa. 22:23: *I will fasten him as a peg in a sure place,* that is, in the heart of Mary and in her womb.

In another way too this vine was staked, by compassion: namely when her cluster was fastened to the stake of the cross, and she stood by the cross, fastened in mind with her Son to the stake of the cross. And this had been prefigured, Num. 13:24–25, in the cluster which two men, that is, the two Testaments, carried on a staff, that is, in figure, on the cross. Again, the same had been prefigured, Num. 21:9, in the brazen serpent set up on a pole, which, when those bitten by serpents looked upon it, they were healed.

She was bound to her stake as it were with certain withes, which are called tendrils (*caprioli*), from catching (*capiendo*) trees, or little curls or hooks: by faith, hope and charity, which is *the bond of perfection* (Col. 3:14), if it be *from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith* (1 Tim. 1:5). *(p. 721)* For faith, hope and charity are *a threefold cord, which is not easily broken* (Eccles. 4:12). As if she said that of the Canticle 3:4: *I held him, and I will not let him go.* Again, that of Psalm 72:28: *It is good for me to adhere to my God,* etc. Because, as the Gloss says there: "God lets no one fall who clings to him with true love." For this reason she said to her Son: *Thou hast held me by my right hand* (Ps. 72:24), etc. (Look under the heading of her holiness.)

She was shown as raised up by the stake, when there was added in the salutation: *Blessed art thou among women* (Luke 1:42), that is, above all women, as Jerome glosses. And then was fulfilled what the Father had foretold of her, Ezek. 17:24: *I have exalted the low tree,* etc. For the vine of itself falls to the ground, but by means of the stake it climbs upward. For she fell as it were to the ground by humility when she answered the angel: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* (Luke 1:38). But she showed herself raised up by this stake when she said: *All generations shall call me blessed, because he that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:48–49).

She was shown to be fragrant in the profession of virginity, when she said: *How shall this be done, because I know not man?* (Luke 1:34). Her odor is virginity, and still the young maidens run after her in this odor. How the odor of the vine puts serpents to flight you will find a little below.

She was made fruitful by the heavenly dew or rain in the coming upon her of the Holy Spirit. Hence: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* (Luke 1:35), etc.

She was preserved as it were from excessive heat in the overshadowing of the power of the most High. Hence: *The power of the most High shall overshadow thee.* (Of these two you have a manifold exposition under the heading of the first delight of the enclosed garden.)

Her fruit was commended in the angelic witness. Hence: *The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God* (Luke 1:35). Again, Cant. 8:11: *A man bringeth for the fruit thereof a thousand pieces of silver.*

She was as it were bent down by obedience and humbling. Hence a little after she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me* (Luke 1:38). And in this word she conceived; and then, like a vine, she humbled herself under her branch, that is, the Son of God whom she was conceiving.

And note that a small vine gives a more precious and stronger wine; and this vine in the smallness of her humility brought forth that wine *which cheereth God and men* (Judg. 9:13). And of the power of this wine it is said, Joel 2:22: *The fig tree and the vine have yielded their strength.* For since she was the humblest among all the little trees of paradise, that is, of the Church, there was given her by grace a more precious fruit.

Again, the vine in high and stony places, where it has the fulness of light and heat, brings forth the strongest wine. The stony places are the firmness of patience; the height, the eminence of contemplation and of life; the brightness and heat of the sun, the fulness of knowledge and the kindling of charity.

Her fruit grew and was as it were ripened in every kind of perfection. Hence, Luke 2:40: *And the child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in him.* And a little after, v. 52: *And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men.* Behold the ripeness of the cluster and the fulness of the wine, by which wisdom and grace are signified.

Again, this vineyard or this cluster was harvested in the seizing of her Son, when in a manner her cluster was taken from her and carried to the press, that is, to the winepress of the cross. Isa. 53:8: *Because he is cut off out of the land of the living.* Christ too was harvested as a vineyard or as a cluster in the passion. As a vineyard, when his disciples left him and fled (Matt. 26:56). As *(p. 722)* a cluster or olive, when he was seized to be trodden on the cross. Therefore, Lam. 1:12, the Son says of the Father: *For he hath made a vintage of me, as the Lord spoke in the day of his fierce anger.* Again, Lam. 2:20, the Son says to the Father: *Behold, O Lord, and consider whom thou hast thus gleaned.* And note that this cluster was neither harvested before ripeness, nor left as it were to rot on the vine. And this had been foretold, Jer. 31:5: until the time come *they shall not gather the vintage.* This also is what he himself had foretold, John 2:4: *My hour is not yet come.*

Again, this cluster was put in the winepress, that is, it was pressed in the press of the cross in the passion; and thence was pressed out the precious new wine of our redemption, that the sons of the passion might *drink the purest blood of the grape* (Deut. 32:14). For then had come that hour of which the Son had told his mother beforehand when she asked for wine at the wedding, John 2:4: *My hour is not yet come.* As if he said: The grape has not yet come to the winepress; Judas has not yet *lifted up his heel against me* (Ps. 40:10), nor greatly supplanted me; it is not yet time to give the wine of my blood to drink.

Again, from this vine was born a honeyed grape of sweetest savor, against the grape of gall and the most bitter cluster (Deut. 32:32), and against the sour grape which Adam and Eve our parents ate; whence *the teeth of the children are* still *set on edge* (cf. Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2). But the savor of this grape is *sweet above honey* (Ecclus. 24:27).

Mystically: the fathers are prelates who make temporal things part of themselves by love, which are as a sour grape, that is, unripe and not fit to eat; and therefore the teeth of the children, that is, the affections of the lesser ones, are set on edge, not judging of things as they should be judged, but they suffer weariness of spiritual goods and burn with love of temporal things. But hot loaves, that is, the examples of the saints, who are the loaves of proposition, because they ought to be set forth to others for example, take away this numbness. Hot, because they proceeded from the fervor of charity, which made them despise temporal things; and such ought to be placed on the altar of the heart, that is, continually pondered in the mind; and this on the sabbaths, that is, in quiet of mind; and so the setting on edge of the teeth goes away, and the taste is restored to taste *that the Lord is sweet* (Ps. 33:9).

Morally: the sour grape is fruit before its time, and signifies present happiness in wealth and the joy of temporal pleasures, which happiness, namely, was to be awaited in heaven. But for those who eat these the teeth are set on edge, because sense fails them in chewing the Word of life.

Again, in the wine or blood of this grape Judah, namely the true confessor and true praiser, *washes his robe and his garment* (Gen. 49:11). In the robe is signified the interior conversation, and in the garment the exterior.

Again, this cluster was pressed in the winepress of the cross, that he might give us his blood to drink, that like the pelican he might raise up his young, that he might feed the young of the eagle, that he might dye the wool of our conversation. Therefore he says: *I have trodden the winepress alone* (Isa. 63:3), that is, in the winepress of the cross I let myself be trodden, I who am the grape, that the sons, that is, the imitators of my passion, might drink the purest blood of the grape.

Mary is a vine. Because the mother of joy: because her cluster or wine, that is, Christ, *cheereth God*, namely the Father, *and men* (Judg. 9:13); for she is signified by Sara, who bore Isaac (Gen. 21:2), namely Christ, who is our laughter and joy.

Lowly of stature, as was sufficiently set out above.

It bears fruit quickly: hence she is believed to have conceived about her fourteenth year. Hence Solomon, Prov. 30:19: *The way of a man (p. 723) in youth*, that is, in the young Virgin, he says that he does not know.

Pliant, by obedience as to God and by pity as to the neighbor: because she is the mother of mercy. Hence also she is very often compared in Scripture to a rod, which bends very easily. Therefore Isidore calls the vine a supple tree, that is, flexible.

It makes scourges for beating demons: because the power and might of God is in her fully, to vanquish, overcome and torment the powers of the air for us. Isa. 28:18: *When the overflowing scourge shall pass, you shall be trodden down by it*; for Assur, that is, the devil, struck with this rod, flees.

It hates dung, that is, sin and temporal things: because she would not be fattened with temporal things, choosing poverty rather after the example of her Son.

It hates goats, that is, the lustful, stinking and abominable, who make her as it were sick at heart, she who by the merit of the virginity which she first vowed was worthy to conceive the Saviour.

It hates brambles, that is, sins, which prick and bloody the soul.

It loves the mountains, that is, the saints; and there it grows better. But if they are stony, that is, founded upon Christ, and bright from the sun of justice and burning with charity, in such places the vine is wont to bring forth the best wine, that is, to give such great devotion.

It was cut with tears when she was wounded even to the heart in the passion of her Son: for then she was cut, when her Son, who is the true vine, was cut with spittle and blows, nails and lance.

It is full of pith, having the bowels of a mother’s pity, as will be said below of the cedar.

It gives most pleasant shade, since it is very broad in leaves, like the plane tree. And of this overshadowing it is said, Mic. 4:4: *Every man shall sit under his vine*, that is, shall rest, and shall be secure through the protection of the blessed Virgin, who is given to those who act virtuously for protection and refreshment. And this was signified in 1 Macc. 14:12, where it is said that in the time of Simon *every man sat under his vine and under his fig tree: and there was none to make them afraid.* Simon, the obedient, is Christ the Lord. Again, of this overshadowing it is said, Ecclus. 14:27: *He shall be protected*, namely the servant of Mary, *under her covering from the heat, and shall rest in her glory.* The glory of Mary is her mercy. Hence, Osee 14:7: *His glory shall be as the olive tree.* For the olive signifies mercy. (Of the overshadowing of Mary, look under the heading of the garden, §9, and under the heading that she is called a tabernacle; and in the twenty-second cause look for her protection.) In the shadow too, that is, in the imitation of Mary, is the life of the soul. Hence it is said to her, as to the Son, Lam. 4:20: *Under thy shadow we shall live among the*

Gentiles.

With her cluster she feeds the hungry: because the fruit which she bore is full refreshment for those who hunger spiritually. Therefore the faithful soul says of this fruit, Cant. 2:3: *His fruit*, namely Mary's, *was sweet to my palate*.

With the blood of her grape she gives drink to the thirsty, which blood, namely, *is drink indeed* (John 6:56).

Those who are healthy she delights in many ways: by odor, greenness, sight, taste, food, drink, shade, protection, hiding, medicine and refreshment, and in many other ways which the tongue is not able to tell.

She comforts and refreshes the weary and languid; for she spurs on those who are loath to work well.

She sustains her burden-bearers and tillers everywhere by grace in the present, but in the life to come she will reward them most generously. And note that in this vine there are as many layers as there are virtues in Mary. The imitators of her humility work in the layer of pity; and so assign the others.

By the odor of her flowers she puts to flight serpents and venomous things. The chief flowers of Mary *(p. 724)* are virginity, poverty, humility; and by the benefit of this threefold flower Mary, by word and example and help, puts to flight and destroys from those who love her the threefold kind of serpents which Moses touches on, Deut. 8:15, where he reproaches the Jewish people that the Lord had freed them from serpents, saying: *Who was thy leader in the great and terrible wilderness, wherein there was the serpent burning with his breath, and the scorpion and the dipsas, and no waters at all.* The great and terrible wilderness is the world, which is called a great wilderness because of the great lack of virtues and good works, terrible because of the horror of vices. In it is the serpent burning with his breath, namely the basilisk, which by its breath casts down and kills birds in flight. This is pride, which often spiritually kills and casts down into hell just men flying on the wings of virtues and contemplating heavenly things. The scorpion, flattering with its head but stinging with its tail, is lust, whose delight flatters in guilt but will sting in punishment; and it is called *scorpius* as if without pity of heart. The dipsas, which by another name is called *situla*, because those whom it stings it kills with thirst, is insatiable avarice; because in this wilderness there are no waters at all that can satisfy the mind of the avaricious. The flowers, then, of Mary the vine destroy and cast out these three kinds of serpents: humility the spirit of pride, virginity lust, poverty and contempt of earthly things avarice. The nectarous odor, then, of this vine—that is, the general repute of the virginal blessedness and of her virtue of every kind—in those who run in her odors breaks pride, checks lust, bridles avarice, and in general stifles the plagues of all vices.

Again, Christ is the vine. Hence he says, John 15:1: *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.* And a little after, v. 5: *I am the vine, you the branches*, etc. In this series of words God the Father is compared to a husbandman, Christ the man to the vine according to his humanity—who also himself is the husbandman according to his Godhead—whose vine's single branches are the single faithful of the Church. And God the Father is called the husbandman by likeness. For the husbandman rises in the morning, hires workmen, sends them into the vineyard, and in the evening gives them their wage. And God the Father is the householder who, as is said in Matt. 20:1 ff., *went out early in the morning*, at the third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hour, *to hire laborers into his vineyard*, and in the evening gave them their wage.

Again, the husbandman plants a vineyard, and fences it, and picks out the stones from it, builds a tower in it, sets up a winepress, and patiently waits for the wine. All this is read in Isaiah 5:1 ff., thus: *My beloved had a vineyard … And he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.* What these signify mystically we shall say below.

Again, the husbandman takes away the unfruitful branches and casts them into the fire, prunes the fruitful, that they may bear more fruit; and these things God the Father works in us, as is found in the present Gospel.

God the Father, then, is the husbandman for the reasons given.

The vineyard or vine is Christ according to the humanity, as here: *I am the true vine* (John 15:1).

The blessed Virgin. Hence, Ecclus. 24:23: *As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor.*

The elect of the synagogue. Hence, Jer. 2:21: *Yet I planted thee a chosen vineyard, all true seed.*

The reprobate of the synagogue. Hence, in the same place: *How then art thou turned unto me into that which is good for nothing, O strange vineyard?*

The elect of the Gentiles. Hence, Ps. 79:15: *Look down from heaven, and see, and visit this vineyard.*

The universal Church. Hence, Matt. 20:1: *(p. 725) Who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard.*

Any faithful soul. Hence the bride invites the bridegroom, Cant. 7:12, saying: *Let us get up early to the vineyards,* that is, to till faithful souls. There are many other meanings of the vine to be found in Scripture.

I am the true vine (John 15:1). The Lord calls himself not only a vine but the true vine, to distinguish from that lying and most wicked vine, namely the synagogue, or any sinful soul, which *he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*

Christ is the vine, which is the lowliest tree: because like a vine he humbled himself as it were under his branches, that is, the Apostles, when he washed their feet (John 13:5 ff.), because he *came not to be ministered unto, but to minister* (Matt. 20:28).

Because, as the vine supplies life to its branches, so he, because he is the life (John 14:6), to those who can neither live nor bear fruit unless they abide in the vine (John 15:4). Therefore he is called *vitis,* as if holding the branches by force (*vi tenens*), or as if holding the life (*vitam tenens*) of the branches. He is called also the true vine, because it is impossible for branches abiding in this vine to be barren. If, then, you are barren of good working, know that you do not abide in the vine. And note that he says: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life* (John 14:6). The way, because from the earth through the vine the sap rises to the branch. The truth, which belongs to his saying, *I am the true vine* (John 15:1). And the life, as above.

Because in winter it is the most unsightly among trees. So also Christ in the passion seemed to have no beauty or comeliness (Isa. 53:2), because then *his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not* (Isa. 53:3).

Because in summer it is the most beautiful of all trees. So also Christ in the resurrection and thereafter. Hence, Ps. 92:1: *The Lord hath reigned, he is clothed with beauty.* Again: *My flesh hath flourished again* (Ps. 27:7).

Because, as a branch cut off from the vine is good for nothing but the fire, so neither is a Christian cut off from Christ by mortal sin, except to be fuel for the fire of hell. Hence, Ezek. 15:2: *Son of man, what shall be made of the wood of the vine, out of all the trees of the woods that are among the trees of the forests?* and much else.

Because whatever it has it gives to its branches, and receives nothing from them. Hence the Interlinear Gloss says there: "*I am the vine,* giving you all, receiving nothing from you: for he has no need of our goods." Job 22:3: *What doth it profit God if thou be just?* etc.

Because without him we bear no fruit. John 15:5: *Without me you can do nothing.*

Because, as by means of the vine water is changed into wine, so Christ did literally at the wedding (John 2:7 ff.). He also changes the water of carnal sense into the wine of spiritual understanding. He will change too the water of tribulation and present misery into the wine of joy and eternal gladness, when the true Assuerus,

according to royal magnificence, will give at his wedding choice and abundant wine (cf. Esther 1:7).

Because, as wine from the vine, so from the side of Christ blood, which is consecrated under the species of wine on the altar.

This vine was planted in the incarnation. For as a shoot is taken from a vine and planted and becomes a vine, so, nay more finely, in the incarnation of the Son of God a portion was cut by the hand of heavenly Wisdom from the most clean flesh of the most holy Virgin Mary, who says, Ecclus. 24:23: *As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor*; from which portion, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, ineffably *(p. 726)* and above all human understanding the flesh of Christ was formed; and so from a vine another vine was made, when *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us* (John 1:14).

It grew in the advance of virtues. Hence, Luke 2:52: *Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men.*

It put forth leaves in preaching. Hence, Luke 4:22: *All wondered at the words of grace that proceeded from his mouth*, that is, of Jesus.

It gave odor in the spreading of his fame. Hence, Luke 4:37: *The fame of him was published into every place of the country*, etc.

By its odor it put serpents to flight in the casting out of demons. Hence, Luke 4:41: *Devils went out from many*, etc.

It was dunged in the accusation of blasphemies and of false witnesses, as is read in Matt. 26:60 ff.: for blasphemies are dung. Hence, Ecclus. 22:2: *The sluggard is pelted with the dung of oxen.*

It was bent down in humiliation even unto death. Hence the Apostle, Phil. 2:8: Christ *humbled himself*, when he was made for us *obedient unto death.*

It was staked in the crucifixion. Hence he was signified by the brazen serpent set up on a pole (Num. 21:9).

It was dug in the fastening with nails. Hence, Ps. 21:17: *They have dug my hands and feet.*

It was watered in the shedding of blood. Hence, Isa. 63:3: *Their blood is sprinkled upon my garments*, etc.

It gave odor also in the passion, when, the alabaster box, that is, the body of Christ, being broken, the house, that is, the Church, *was filled with the odor of the ointment* (cf. John 12:3).

It flowered in the resurrection. Hence, Ps. 27:7: *My flesh hath flourished again.*

It bore fruit in the redemption of the human race. Hence, Cant. 7:8: *I will go up into the palm tree*, that is, into the cross, *and will take hold of the fruit thereof*, that is, men redeemed.

This fruit refreshes us in daily receiving. Hence, John 6:56: *My flesh is meat indeed*, etc.

It was pruned in the sending away of the branches, that is, of the disciples. For this it had been foretold, Cant. 2:12: *The time of pruning is come.* Matt. 26:56: *Then the disciples all*, etc. Zech. 13:7: *Strike the shepherd*, etc. Job 6:13: *My familiar friends have departed from me.* Again, Job 19:13: *My acquaintance like strangers have departed from me.*

It was staked in the binding to the pillar as to a pole, as when the brazen serpent was set up on a pole (cf. Num. 21:9).

It was dug in the fastening with nails, as with mattocks. Hence, Ps. 21:17: *They have dug my hands*, etc. 4 Kings 3:16: *Make the channel of this torrent full of ditches.* His body is the channel of the torrent of wisdom.

It wept in sweat, literally on the cross, as a vineyard is said to weep.

It sent out layers in the stretching out of the hands. Isa. 65:2: *I have spread forth my hands all the day. It stretched forth its branches*, that is, its benefits, *unto the sea* (Ps. 79:12), that is, to the thief, embittered for his sins and set in the bitterness of the cross and of torment.

It flowered in bleeding: for wounds are called rosy flowers; for then he was the rose planted in Jericho (Ecclus. 24:18).

It bore fruit in the sending forth of his soul, when he gave up the spirit as the price of our redemption.

By its odor it puts serpents to flight: because the remembrance of the Lord's passion is the remedy and armor against the onset of every temptation. Hence, 1 Pet. 4:1: *Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought.*

It furnishes the refreshment of shade. Hence the bride, Cant. 2:3: *Under his shadow (p. 727) whom I desired, I sat*, etc. And Lam. 4:20: *The breath of our mouth, Christ the Lord, is taken in our sins: to whom we said: Under thy shadow we shall live among the Gentiles*, etc. For to sit under the shadow of this vine is to rest under the remembrance of the Crucified. Or, to take delight under that shadow is to imitate the Lord's passion itself, whereby eternal delights are acquired.

It furnishes food to the hungry. Hence it follows in the Canticle, 2:3: *And his fruit was sweet to my palate.*

It pledges drink to the thirsty. Hence the Lord, John 6:56: *My blood is drink indeed*, namely to those who thirst after justice.

It restores health to the sick. Hence in Lamentations, 4:20: *To whom we said: Under thy shadow we shall live*, etc.

It delights the healthy, namely those who delight in the example of Christ and after his example pass over to better things.

It refreshes the weary: because it spurs on those who are loath to work well.

Christ himself is compared not only to the vine but also to the cluster, as the bride says of him, Cant. 1:13: *A cluster of cypress my love is to me*, etc. And the blessed Virgin, who says, Ecclus. 24:23: *As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor*, bore this cluster, which, pressed in the winepress of the passion, poured out the wine of our redemption; of which winepress the Lord says, Isa. 63:3: *I have trodden the winepress alone*, etc. That winepress is the passion or death, which presses souls out of bodies, as the winepress presses wine from the grapes. But the Lord, when he was pressed in the winepress, pressed the winepress itself, that is, death, pressing out of it for us a wonderful wine, and drawing out of his death for us life everlasting.

The wine of compunction, of which Ps. 59:5: *Thou hast made us drink the wine of compunction.*

Of correction. Hence the Samaritan *poured in oil and wine* upon the wounds of the wounded man (Luke 10:34).

Of spiritual doctrine. Hence, Prov. 9:5, Wisdom says: *Drink the wine which I have mingled for you.*

Of inward gladness, of which Prov. 31:6: *Give strong drink to them that are sad, and wine to them that are grieved in mind.*

Of eternal happiness, of which Isa. 25:6: *The Lord of hosts shall make unto all people in this mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wine, of fat things full of marrow, of wine purified from the lees.*

I am the vine, you the branches (John 15:5). In this glorious vine, namely Christ, the single branches are the single just men, who draw from him the sap of grace, as the branch draws nourishment from the vine. Of these branches it is fittingly and sufficiently treated in the homilies on this Gospel and in the Glosses; and therefore we pass over in silence what has been sufficiently expounded.

I am the true vine. From this most glorious vine the whole of that vineyard has been propagated and brought forth, namely the universal Church, of which it is said, Isa. 5:7: *The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel*, that is, the household of all believers. Of this vineyard, Isa. 5:1–2: *My beloved had a vineyard … And he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a winepress therein*, etc. He fenced it with the guard of the Angels: because every one of the faithful has an Angel appointed for his guard. He picked out the stones, that is, the stumbling blocks of vices. The winepress is the cross of Christ, in which he poured out the blood of our redemption from the grape of his body, which the young of the eagle lick up, that is, receive with desire—that is, the imitators of Christ. The tower is the calling upon the name of the Lord, to which the just man flees and is saved (cf. Prov. 18:10). Every one, then, who belongs to Israel is a branch of this vineyard, and receives nourishment from Christ the true vine.

(p. 728) For whatever good we have, we have received from him: because *every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights*, as is said in James 1:17. And the Lord in this same Gospel, John 15:5: *Without me*, he says, *you can do nothing.* This vineyard, namely the Church, is spread through the world and raised up even to heaven, and moreover it stretches out its branches above heaven, which, resting upon eternity, have been made eternal, and receive sap and fruitfulness from the beauty of the root. This part of the vineyard is so well tilled that it does not need to be tilled further. To till the part which is still on earth every one of the faithful ought to labor, in himself and in another, and at least in himself if he cannot in another. But, alas! there are many today who do not till this vineyard in themselves or in others, but destroy it in themselves and in others: in themselves by depraved works, in others by pernicious examples, as are all evil prelates and all who sin mortally. Of whom the Lord says through the Prophet to his vineyard: *Thy builders are come: they that destroy thee and make thee waste shall go out of thee* (Isa. 49:17).

Because of the uselessness of the wood cut off, which is good for nothing but the fire: so a man cut off from the Church by excommunication is good for nothing but the fire of hell. Ezek. 15:2: *Son of man, what shall be made of the wood of the vine?* etc. (Look back.)

This vine bears fruit through torment, namely through the digging of the earth, through the cutting away of useless branches. But if it is left in peace, then it degenerates and does not bear fruit. Therefore the Lord says of his vineyard, Isa. 27:4: *I will march against it in battle.* As if to say: It bears little fruit in prosperity; I will send adversity upon it, that it may bring forth more fruit. John 15:2: *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he will take away: and every one that beareth fruit, he will purge it*, namely the Father, *that it may bring forth more fruit.* And this appeared in the primitive Church. In Auvergne and in certain places vines sometimes so multiply that they degenerate into woods, and then they are burned, and afterwards they bear fruit excellently.

It alone makes wine: because the Catholic Church alone has sound doctrine. Matt. 7:16: *Do men gather grapes of thorns*, that is, of heretics, or Jews, or pagans? etc.

From fattening, namely with temporal things, the wine, that is, devotion, is made worse: and thence the vineyard runs riot in its branches, namely clerics and monks and the like.

Rooted among rocks and in the ray of the sun, it makes better wine. The rock is the hardness of penance, the heat of the sun the ardor of charity. These two, namely penitents and those fervent with charity, teach better. Doctrine is wine.

It is held up by staffs and stakes, that is, by the help of the saints: and if it is tied to them, it is kept upright. Heavenly desires are the ties. Ecclus. 6:31: *Her bands are a healthful binding.*

There is also another vine, namely any disciplined religious order, than which, after the likeness of the vine, nothing in winter seems more sour or more despised, but in summer nothing earthly is found more pleasant,

or more comely, or more precious, or more beautiful, or more fruitful. Of this it is said, Isa. 5:7: *The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.* Now fittingly by the name of winter is designated the misery of the present life. For as in winter the days are short and there is great inclemency of the air, so also in the present life the days are short and evil. Hence, Job 14:1: *Man born of a woman, living for a short time*—behold the shortness of days—*is filled with many miseries*—behold the inclemency of the air. But in summer the days are lengthened and made clear. So in the summer of the world to come there will be great length of days. Hence, Ps. 83:11: *Better is one day in thy courts*, etc. And then there will be a clearness of light which no darkness will trouble. The cloistered life, then, in this winter seems dry and despised: for it is hard *(p. 729)* to be clothed in rough and dry garments. But the harder this life is at present, the more glorious will be the future reward. Hence on that saying of the Apostle, Heb. 11:35: *That they might find a better resurrection*, the Gloss says: "The more one suffers for God, the more gloriously will he be crowned." Again, in tilling a vineyard there is need of great labor, and the observance of holy religion needs great exercise: and this vineyard is enclosed, dunged, pruned, layered, trenched, stripped of leaves; in it a tower is built and a winepress set up, and the like.

This vineyard is enclosed when the life of cloistered religious is fortified by the guard of regular discipline. Of this enclosure, Ecclus. 36:27: *Where there is no hedge, the possession shall be spoiled.* For seculars, who are restrained by no hedge of discipline, whatever good they possess for the hour, easily lose by the incursion of evil spirits. Again, Eccles. 10:8: *He that breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him.* For whoever passes beyond the state of discipline by transgressing it, into him the old serpent, that is, the devil, pours the venom of his malice. Let it terrify seculars, then, that without a hedge the possession is spoiled. Let it terrify cloistered religious that the breaker of the hedge is bitten by the serpent. The vineyard, then, that is, the cloistered life, is hedged when it is chastened by discipline. Therefore of well-disciplined cloistered religious it is said, 1 Par. 4:23: *These are the potters that dwell in plantations and among hedges … and they abode there.* And it is a sign of the greatest wrath of God when discipline is lacking in the cloister, and in consequence the possession of all good is spoiled by vices and demons. Hence the Lord threatens the barren vineyard, Isa. 5:5: *I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted*, etc.

It is dug when the fear of the Lord is struck into it. This digging the Psalmist desired, saying, Ps. 118:120: *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear*, that is, my carnality, so that it may not be able to draw my reason to consent to sin.

It is dunged when, for the increase of fear and humility, the filth of the past life is called back to memory, so that the head of Goliath may be cut off with his own sword (cf. 1 Kings 17:54). The head of Goliath is the goad of an old temptation. His sword is mortal sin, by which the soul is slain. With this sword the devil's head is cut off when a new temptation is cut back by the remembrance of the old life, etc.

It is pruned when whatever vanity mingles itself with cloistered religious is cut away by the knife of correction. Hence: *Every branch*, that is, every subject, *that beareth fruit*, namely of good works, *the Father*, that is, the abbot, *will purge, that it may bring forth more fruit* (John 15:2).

It is layered when the worship of religion is widened in the number of merits and of persons. But woe to the vinedressers and husbandmen of the present time, who are more eager to join field to field and house to house than to prepare Christ's vineyard, by words and examples, to be fit for spiritual fruit!

It is trenched when the weakness of infirm brethren is strengthened by the support of consolation, that that saying of Isaiah, 35:3, may be fulfilled: *Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees.*

It is stripped of leaves when superfluity of words is cut back by silence: and so the cluster of inward devotion receives the rays of the sun more fully, while it shuts itself within and does not pour itself out by words. Of this silence it is said, Isa. 30:15: *In silence and in hope shall your strength be.* In the same, 32:17: *The worship*, or guardian, *of justice is silence.* Lam. 3:26: *It is good to wait with silence for the salvation of God.*

Again, of the cloistered religious it is said, Lam. 3:28: *He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace.*

Again, in the vineyard a tower is built when in the cloister the preeminence of the virtues is raised on high. But next to this tower a winepress must be built: because with eminence of life *(p. 730)* the humility of penance must be joined. And rightly by the winepress is penance figured: because as in the winepress the wine is pressed and, being pressed, is stored in the cellar, so by penance the filth of sins is cast out, but the fervor, or wine, of compunction and devotion is laid up in the mind. And that next to the tower there must be the winepress of penance, Malachi shows, 3:2–3, speaking of the Lord: *For he is like a refining fire, and like the fuller's herb: and he shall sit refining and cleansing the silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi.* The sons of Levi are cloistered religious, who, as is said at the end of Deuteronomy, 33:9, *said to their father and to their mother: I do not know you; and to their brethren: I know you not: and their own children they have not known.* Who with Abraham have gone forth out of their country, and from their kindred, and out of their father's house (cf. Gen. 12:1), to come into the place which God had shown them; who have renounced all that they possessed, and naked have followed the naked Christ. If, then, the sons of Levi need purifying in this way, it is plain that next to the tower the winepress must be built. This again is what the Lord says through Isaiah, Isa. 50:3: *I will clothe the heavens with darkness, and will make sackcloth their covering.* By the name of the heavens are designated cloistered religious, who can say with the Apostle: *Our conversation is in heaven* (Phil. 3:20). The heaven, then, is clothed with darkness and covered with sackcloth when the devout cloistered religious uncovers his sin and takes up the sackcloth of penance.

There is also a fourth vine, namely every faithful soul, which is called a vine by many likenesses. For as the vineyard is dry in winter but flowers and bears fruit in summer, so holy men, despised in the present life, are glorious in the future. By winter the present life is designated, as above. Again, one who does not know the power of the vine reckons it of no account in winter: as the rich man who was clothed in fine linen and purple thought nothing of Lazarus lying at the gate (cf. Luke 16:19 ff.): because then the rich man was in his summer, Lazarus in winter. But afterwards Lazarus was in summer, laid in the bosom of Abraham; but the rich man in winter, buried in the fire and frost of Gehenna, when not a drop could be found for him by which his burning tongue might be cooled. So it will be with the powerful and the great who possess earthly things and love the world, but deride and despise the poor. Of whom it is said, Job 20:4–7: *This I know from the beginning, since man was placed upon the earth, that the praise of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. If his pride mount up even to heaven, and his head touch the clouds, in the end he shall be destroyed like a dunghill, and they that had seen him shall say: Where is he?* And so it is said, 1 Macc. 2:62–63: *The glory of a sinful man is dung and worms: today he is lifted up, and tomorrow he shall not be found, because he is returned into his earth, and his thought is come to nothing.* For on the day of judgment, as is said, Osee 13:3, *the wicked shall be as a morning cloud, and as the morning dew that passeth away, as the dust that is driven with a whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.* For then, as is said, Wis. 6:6–9: *A most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule. For to him that is little, mercy is granted: but the mighty shall be mightily tormented … but a greater punishment is ready for the more mighty.* But the poor and humble who are now in winter will then be in perpetual summer. Hence John the Evangelist, 1 John 3:2: *Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God: and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is,* that is, face to face. For then *the just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father* (Matt. 13:43).

Again, the vine is good for nothing except for two things, *(p. 731)* either to bear fruit or to be burned. Hence the Lord in Ezekiel 15:2 ff.: *Son of man, what shall be made of the wood of the vine,* namely the useless vine? *… As the vine tree among the trees of the forests, which I have given to the fire to be consumed, so will I deliver up the inhabitants of Jerusalem,* that is, of the Church or of the cloister. *They shall go out from the fire, and the fire shall consume them.*

Again, the vine requires great labor and perishes very easily. Hence it is commonly said that “the vine wants a servant, not a master.” So our heart and body are tilled with great labor of fasts, vigils, disciplines and the like. But by a single mortal sin the whole is scorched, and flower and fruit perish altogether. Every faithful soul, then, is a vineyard. The field in which this vineyard is planted is the human heart. The branches of this vineyard are good thoughts, the leaves good words, the flowers good examples, the clusters good works; the husbandman is the rational spirit, or the prelate of the Church or of the cloister. And every one of the faithful in tilling his vineyard ought to keep the likeness of the husbandman. For the husbandman wishing to plant a vineyard first prepares the ground. For if he planted the vineyard before he prepared the ground, or cleansed it of harmful things, he would never gather fruit from it. The ground which you have undertaken to till is you yourself, according to that saying: “Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.” If, then, you wish to receive fruit from your ground, keep the likeness of the husbandman. For the skilled husbandman first cleanses his ground of stones and thorns, pulling up the thorns and turning out the stones. First, then, cut down the thorns and turn out the stones. The thorns are sins, which prick the conscience and inflict a deadly wound on the soul. Hence: *I am turned in my anguish, whilst the thorn is fastened* (Ps. 31:4). Hence Augustine says that if anyone saw the wounds of the soul, he would judge them far more grievous than any wounds of the body: but because they are not seen, therefore they are not feared except by those by whom they are felt, namely by those who return to the heart and say: *I know my iniquity* (Ps. 50:5), etc. The stones are sins drawn into habit, which are rightly called stones, because they make the heart of man stony. Hence, Job 41:15, of the devil and his members: *His heart shall be as hard as a stone.* For the habit of sin is like a stone laid over the narrow mouth of a very deep well, at the bottom of which the unhappy sinner lies and rots like a beast in its dung, and stinks with evil habit. For man is *a spirit that goeth* (cf. Ps. 77:39), that is, going down by himself into sin, but not returning by himself except by the grace of God. Do you, then, cut down the thorns from the field of your heart and turn out the stones by contrition, and cast them outside by confession. For the thorn, because it raises itself up, signifies pride; because it tears and holds fast, it signifies cupidity and avarice; because it pricks, it signifies lust. And these three vices are the roots of all sins. Cut down, then, the thorns and turn out the stones: lest, if you plant upon stones, the vineyard wither; or if among thorns, it be choked by them.

And note that thorns are not only to be cut above the ground but also to be rooted out, lest they sprout again. For the thorn is cut above the ground when only the depraved deed is removed, while the root remains in the ground, that is, the will to sin in the hidden part of the heart. One must therefore pull out the root, that is, root out altogether the will to sin. Blessed Bernard: “If you shave sin off on the surface and do not root it out within, be sure that it will sprout more abundantly,” etc. So, then, before the vineyard is planted the conscience must be cleansed of sins.

This vineyard is planted in conversion: because then first one is deservedly made a son of the Church, when he forsakes all sins in deed and in purpose. Hence, Ps. *(p. 732)* 91:14: *They that are planted in the house of the Lord*, that is, in the Church, through faith and love, which are the two roots that support the whole tree, *shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God.*

It is uncovered in confession. For workmen uncover this vineyard when by a pure confession they cast out the earthiness of evil works and depraved desires and of worldly allurement from the root of the vine itself, that is, from the secret of their heart, from which proceeds every act, whether good or evil. To which Solomon invites, Prov. 16:3, saying: *Lay open thy works to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be directed.*

It is dug a second time when whatever earthiness has been contracted through evil and disordered speech is driven out by penance and confession.

It is dug a third time when the stains of depraved thoughts and evil desires are uncovered by confession and penance.

It is dug in many ways in penitential tribulation. For fasts, vigils, disciplines and the like are as it were mattocks, which tear and break up the ground of our bodies.

It is dunged by the remembrance of past sins. For the dung of sins and crimes must be laid next to the root of the vine, that it may be made fruitful. For from frequent memory and assiduous going over of sins, not for delight but for detestation, fear is born; from fear compunction; from compunction love, which is the fruitfulness of the vine, without which it could not bear fruit. For the penitent ought to sit with Job on the dunghill, that is, to dwell in the consideration of his own vileness. For the bitter recollection of sins is the fruitfulness of the virtues, as a certain authority says.

It is pruned by the circumcision of all the members and senses. For a cutting away must be made of superfluous outspreadings and outgoings, both in the members and in the senses. To which Jeremiah invites, saying, Jer. 4:4: *Be circumcised to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, ye men of Juda.* Let the eye, then, of the cloistered religious or of any of the faithful be circumcised, lest it look upon what by sight corrupts chastity; the ear, lest it hear what softens the rigor of the mind; the tongue, lest it vomit forth poison, which *inflameth the wheel of our nativity* (James 3:6); the taste, lest it eat what, once tasted, brings death; the hand, lest it touch unlawful things; the foot, lest it go to shameful things; the heart, lest it send forth from itself the stench of evil thoughts; and the like.

It is staked, in the vine, by the consideration of Christ and of the saints. For Christ is the stake, as is said, Isa. 22:23: *I will fasten him as a peg in a sure place*, etc. For as the stake holds up the vine, without which it would at once fall to the ground, so Christ mercifully holds up the soul that leans upon him, without whom it would at once decline into sin. To this Augustine invites, saying: “Cast yourself upon him wisely: for he is not so cruel as to withdraw himself and let you fall.” The examples of the saints too are stakes, on which we ought to prop and lean ourselves. Hence Seneca: “We always have need of someone by whom our morals may raise themselves up. For unless by a rule, you will not straighten what is crooked,” etc.

This vineyard is tied to the stakes and cleaves to them, that is, to Christ and the saints, by true love. For charity, as the Apostle says, Col. 3:14, *is the bond of perfection.* In this way the Lord was bound, Ps. 72:28, when he said: *But it is good for me to adhere to my God.* And God lets no one fall who cleaves to him with true love, as the Gloss says there.

It is layered in the multiplying of the virtues. For to layer this vineyard is to stretch oneself out, by the increase of the virtues, to that which is not yet due. Hence the Apostle, Phil. 3:13: *Stretching forth myself to those that are before. (p. 733)* And: *The saints shall go from virtue to virtue* (Ps. 83:8).

It is bent in the humbling of the heart. To which Solomon invites, Ecclus. 3:20, saying: *The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God.*

It is raised up by the suspension of the mind to heavenly things. Hence, Job 7:15: *My soul rather chooseth hanging.* And the Apostle, Col. 3:1: *Seek the things that are above*, etc.

It is watered by the shedding of tears. For as rain makes the vineyard fruitful, so the shedding of tears waters the conscience for working well.

It is cleansed by the rooting out of evil thoughts, which, like harmful weeds growing up, hinder the vineyard from the heat of the sun, and so hinder the soul from the coming of the grace of God. Hence, Wis. 1:5: *The Holy Spirit shall withdraw himself from thoughts that are without understanding.*

It is stripped of leaves by the cutting back of superfluous words, as above of the vineyard of cloistered religious.

It is enclosed by the restraint of the five senses. For the eyes must be closed lest they look upon unlawful things, etc., as above concerning pruning. The vineyard must also be enclosed with the ditch of humility,

with the water of tears running round it, with the hedge of penitential affliction, with the wall of chastity or of good working.

It is preserved from the attack of the threefold enemy. To which Solomon invites, Prov. 4:23, saying: *With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it.*

It is visited by Christ in the bestowal of more abundant grace: which the Psalmist prayed for, saying, Ps. 79:15–16: *Look down from heaven, and see, and visit this vineyard, and perfect the same*, etc.

It puts forth leaves in the exposition of sacred doctrine to others: for the leaves of the just man are sacred words. Hence that of Ps. 1:3: *And his leaf shall not fall off*, etc.

It flowers in inward devotion. Hence, Prov. 17:22: *A joyful mind maketh age flourishing.*

It gives odor in the spreading of good fame to the neighbor. Hence the Apostle, 2 Cor. 2:15: *We are the good odor of Christ unto God, in every place, in them that are saved*, etc. And Seneca: "The repute of him whom I cannot see feeds me."

By its odor it puts serpents to flight in the driving out of vices from itself and from others. Hence, Mark 16:17–18: *They shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents.* The new tongue is confession, which renews the soul and takes away from the heart the serpents of vices.

It bears fruit in good working. Hence, Ps. 103:13: *The earth shall be filled with the fruit of thy works*, that is, the earthly man.

This cluster ripens in the perfection of the virtues. To which the Lord invites, Matt. 5:48: *Be you therefore perfect*, etc.

It is gathered in the vintage when it is invited to the joys of paradise, and so is spiritually carried into the Lord's cellar: but often it must first be pressed in purgatory.

It is gathered in the vintage in death.

It is pressed in the tribulation of purgatory.

It is laid up in the cellar in glorification. Hence the bride, Cant. 2:4: *The king brought me into the cellar of wine.*

This vine is destroyed by the little foxes, that is, by first movements breaking in stealthily and secretly. Of which Cant. 2:15: *Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines*, etc.

By the flooding of waters, that is, by abundance of temporal things.

By hail, that is, lust.

By frost, that is, avarice.

By mist, that is, pride.

The vinedressers are poor; and just men are poor with spiritual poverty. Hence, Ps. 87:16: *I am poor, and in labors from my youth.*

(p. 734) They labor for a living; and these for eternal life. Hence, Job 3:21: *As they that dig for a treasure*, etc.

They labor in their season. And we, *whilst we have time, let us work good to all men* (Gal. 6:10), etc.: first to ourselves; secondly, *but especially to those who are of the household of the faith* (ibid.); thirdly, generally to every man, especially to the Christian.

Chapter 6, §2: The Olive

Mary is the olive. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:19: *As a fair olive tree in the plains*—supply: *I was exalted*—because of mercy and pity.

We must see, then, why or how she is an olive, and how or where fair. Rabanus says that *olea* is the tree, *oliva* the fruit, the liquor or juice of which olive, namely, is called *oleum* in Latin, but in Greek *elaion*. But *oliva* is often put for the tree, as there: *But I, as a fruitful olive tree in the house of God* (Ps. 51:10), etc.

Mary is the olive. Because the olive is bitter in the root: because the blessed Virgin had the bitterness of original sin in her conception, for which reason her conception is not celebrated by many.

Sweet in the fruit, that is, in the Son, who says: *My spirit is sweet above honey* (Ecclus. 24:27).

Fragrant in the flower. Her flower is her Son, who *like cinnamon and aromatical balm gave a sweet smell* (Ecclus. 24:20).

Her fruit, as far as in her lies, she shares with all. Which appeared when she brought forth her Son on the way, so that he could be taken by every passer-by, and those passing might say: *A son is given to us* (Isa. 9:6). But note that this fruit is not found except by those who pass over. Hence of the shepherds, who said: *Let us pass over to Bethlehem*, etc., it is said a little after: *And they came with haste, and they found*, etc. (Luke 2:15–16).

A leafy and branching tree, whose leaves and branches are her lovers, and in a certain way grafted in by faith, hope and charity: because love is a certain spiritual union of the lover and the beloved. Hence such a one can say: *It is good for me to adhere to her, and to put my hope in her* (cf. Ps. 72:28): because to such she supplies the nourishment of grace. But most of all her imitators in pity and in twofold mercy, namely in affection and in effect, are grafted into her.

She is hoary through wisdom. Wis. 4:8: *The understanding of a man is gray hairs*, etc. And: *In the ancient is wisdom* (Job 12:12).

She is a sign of peace. Hence at her childbearing it was sung: *Peace to men of good will* (Luke 2:14): for through her was ended the war which Eve had made between God and man, between man and Angel, between man and man, between body and soul. (This you will find at the beginning of this book.) She is that dove which, when the flood ceased, brought an olive branch in her mouth to Noah in the ark (cf. Gen. 8:11), showing God reconciled to the human race: and so she is designated by the olive, which is the sign of peace, and by the dove, which is a peaceable bird.

She keeps her foliage a long time, that is, faith, hope and charity. Or, the foliage is virginity, to which the aureole is due. Hence Mary is painted crowned. This foliage she kept continually: because she was a Virgin before childbirth, in childbirth and after childbirth.

Her leaves are bitter: because her words invite to penance. Or, her leaves are the words of the Gospel preaching, *(p. 735)* by which she taught the Apostles and the sons of the newborn Church. Her leaves too are medicinal (cf. Ezek. 47:12; Apoc. 22:2), because they heal the canker; and the example of her words heals detraction and other foul speech. The canker eats away the mouth and the tongue: and in Wis. 1:11 it is said: *Refrain your tongue from detraction.* Therefore in Apoc. 16:10–11 it is said of detractors and blasphemers: *They gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven*, etc.

It bears rich fruit in the cold: because literally she brought forth the Saviour in winter. Mystically, when charity had grown cold and iniquity abounded.

It is green in summer and winter. The greenness of the soul is faith and perseverance, which did not wither in her because of the winter of the Lord's passion, as it did in all the disciples. For then every holy one failed. Therefore it had been foretold of her, Prov. 31:18: *Her lamp*, that is, faith, *shall not be put out in the night*, namely of the Lord's passion. Otherwise: winter is the present life, bound by the cold of mortality and driven

by the winds of temptations. Summer is the brightness of the future life, at whose coming the clouds of sorrow pass away and the days of eternal life shine with the brightness of the sun. But Mary, our olive, steeped in the moisture of grace, did not wither in the time of this life, but in glory received the delight of eternal life among all the daughters of Eve.

It nourishes cantharides, which gladly eat the flowers of the olive: and cantharides are flies, stinking and shining, which signify clerics and monks or canons shining in habit and tonsure but stinking in life. Whereas Augustine says that we should not study so much to please by our clothes as by our morals. These the blessed Virgin nourishes with her benefits.

It is a distinguished tree: and Mary is glorious in nobility of birth, more glorious in uprightness of morals and in the whole range of graces, most glorious in the dignity of her Son.

It has pliant branches: because by devout prayer she can very easily be bent, so that her fruit, which is Christ, may be had.

It is very abundant in fruit. Hence she says: *But I, as a fruitful olive tree in the house of God* (Ps. 51:10), etc., that is, in the Church: because her fruit is every good, the highest good, who *became all things to all men, that he might gain all* (cf. 1 Cor. 9:22): and he in the future will be *all in all* (1 Cor. 15:28), that is, the sufficiency of all. She is also the olive, that is, the fruit: because she is full of the fatness of divine grace and mercy, of the light of wisdom, and of the cheerfulness of a good conscience.

There follows: *Fair in the plains* (Ecclus. 24:19). Fair in the bud and in the liquor, that is, in the Son; in the flowers of holy desires; in the leaves of words; in the foliage and branches of works: because she had in herself the works of the active and of the contemplative life. Of the active: because it was given to her to show all the works of the active life to the Son of God himself, as Anselm shows, where it is said that *a certain woman named Martha received him into her house* (Luke 10:38). All the works of the contemplative life, namely to incline the divine ears to sinners by her prayers, to be present at the divine secrets, and the like. But because of the multitude of her mercy and pity she is most of all called fair: because *her mercy is fair in the time of affliction* (Ecclus. 35:26). (Look for all these under the heading of her mercy, about the middle of the chapter, and you will find much there.)

Or, fair because of every kind of beauty: bodily, which lies in the disposition of the members, and spiritual, which consists in the virtues of the soul. (Look under the heading of her beauty.)

Or again, fair in the plains from the effect: because she bestows beauty and virtue *(p. 736)* abundantly on her familiars, especially if they have in themselves the properties of a plain, so that they are flowery through chastity, tilled through penance, fruitful through good working, and gladly supply their fruits for her honor to one suffering need. (Under the heading of the earth you will find the properties of a plain, where Mary is called a plain.)

Or, *in the plains*, that is, in untilled sinners, to whom she supplies grace by her prayers, examples and merits, that they may be tilled and bring forth fruit. Or, by the plains is figured the breadth and wideness of the broad way *that leadeth to destruction* (Matt. 7:13): and she is a fair olive in the plains, that is, in those who follow the breadth of their depraved will and run about through the plains of license like stallions unbridled, not held back by the bridle of fear or of divine love or of worldly shame, or by the bonds of the divine commandments—when, repenting with their whole heart, they take refuge in her. For she is called fair in the plains because of the commonness of her pity and mercy, which she shows to all, as far as in her lies, without respect of persons, as you had above under the heading of her mercy. Therefore she is called fair in the plains, not in the mountains, not in the gardens, not in the woods, not in the waters, or the like. For if he had said in the gardens, which are enclosed, it would not seem that her mercy lay open to all or always. By the mountains understand the proud, who drive away from themselves the mercy of the mother and of the Son,

because swelling drives back what is poured in. In the woods there grow trees fruitful not for men but for swine and wild beasts, that is, for demons and vices. The brightness of the sun too, that is, the pity of the mother and the Son, is shut out of the woods because of the density of the trees, branches and foliage. So also sinners, wild in their ways, murky, by the darkness of their vices shut out from themselves the sun of justice, and nourish the thorns and briars of vices. In the woods too lurk cutthroats and robbers, serpents and scorpions, that is, the multitude of vices and demons: because the cultivation of justice now appears very rarely.

If, then, you wish to share in the fatness of this olive, you must cut away in your very mind the tall trees, that is, the haughtiness of pride, and the thickets of vices, so that you may thus drive from you the cutthroats, thieves and venomous things—namely demons and vices, which slay, rob and poison souls—so that the face of a plain may appear in you, the vices being cut back. Assign the whole order of spiritual husbandry. And so you will share in the fatness of this olive; nay, it will be planted in you, and you will be able to be grafted into it as the wild olive into the olive, that you may become a partaker of its root and of its fatness.

Mary, then, is exalted as an olive through the mercy which she teaches by words and shows by deeds. As an olive through the effect of mercy, fair through the affection. For the effect of mercy is worth nothing unless it be from affection: for as fruit from the olive, so the work of merits from affection. And the olive is fair when it bears fruit, and there are affections of mercy when it shows the effect. Therefore in Jer. 11:16 it is said of her: *The Lord called thy name a plentiful olive tree, fair, fruitful and goodly*, etc. A plentiful olive through the affection of mercy, fair through the purity of the affection, fruitful through the effect of mercy, goodly through the abundance of the effect. *The Lord called thy name*, namely through the Angel saying: *Hail, full of grace* (Luke 1:28). And after, the person being changed, he adds: *At the noise of a word, a great fire was kindled in it, and the thickets thereof are burnt* (Jer. 11:16). A great word, when out of the greatness of her faith she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me* (Luke 1:38), etc. The fire is Christ, who at this word was kindled, as once in the bush. *And the thickets thereof are burnt.* The thickets which spring up from below in the olive are *(p. 737)* the movements of the flesh proceeding from sensuality, which were devoured by this fire coming down into her, if by chance there were any in her, as a great pyre devours the fire of a candle.

Christ is called the oil. From this olive is had the oil which is the liquor of the olive, namely Christ, who is the oil of grace to the infirm, forgiving sins. Isa. 10:27: *The yoke shall putrefy*, namely of the devil, by which the sinner is burdened, *at the presence of the oil*, that is, at the presence of the grace of God, which alone justifies the sinner. Again, the oil of wisdom for instructing catechumens. With this oil the empty vessels are filled (cf. 4 Kings 4:4): the valleys, that is, the humble, abound with the corn of wisdom, of which is made the bread of life. Again, from her we have the oil of gladness for anointing kings and priests, that is, for gladdening spiritual men. Hence: *God hath anointed thee* (Ps. 44:8), etc. And because, the evil being healed, he instructs in good, he gladdens in both. He heals sinners by the oil of gladness, instructs those entering by the oil of wisdom, gladdens those advancing and the perfect by the oil of gladness, which is in the security of conscience. Hence, Prov. 15:15: *A secure mind is like a continual feast.*

Christ is called the fruit of the olive.

Otherwise: Mary is the olive, that is, the *olea*, so that the fruit may be taken for the fruit-bearing tree. From this *olea* came forth and was born the true *oliva*, that is, Christ, who is our peace, our mercy, our light, without whom we do not see, who gave us both life and mercy, as is said, Job 10:12; who reconciled us to the Father, because *he is our peace, who hath made both one* (Eph. 2:14). And this fruit was small through humility, bitter at the beginning through manifold suffering of tribulation. Hence, Lam. 3:15, he himself says of the Father: *He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath inebriated me with wormwood.* But at the last most sweet, when *we shall see him as he is* (1 John 3:2). Christ was also late-ripening: for the fruit of the olive ripens late. And Christ came at the end of the times. Gal. 4:4: *When the fulness of the time was come, God*

sent his Son, made of a woman. Prov. 16:15: *His clemency is like the latter rain.* After the likeness of the grape he is pressed in the winepress. Joel 2:24: *The presses shall overflow with wine and oil*; which was fulfilled in the passion, as was said above of the cluster.

He himself is also the oil of this olive. Hence, Cant. 1:2, it is said to him: *Thy name is as oil poured out.* To whom the Psalmist says, Ps. 44:8: *God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness.* He is called oil, then, because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, whom he did not receive by measure as others, but *above his fellows*, that is, the other saints, that is, fully. Poured out, not dropped: because he was full of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out abundantly on the day of Pentecost upon the disciples and others, as he had promised through Joel: *I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh* (Joel 2:28).

Again, of this oil Job says: *The rock poured me out rivers of oil* (Job 29:6). O sweet outpouring of oil, inebriating the Angels, satisfying the saints, quickening the dead, justifying sinners, gladdening the sorrowful, scattering the powers of hell, redeeming the world, opening heaven!

This is the olive which would not leave its fatness, which gods and men make use of, to be promoted among the trees (Judg. 9:9): because she would not be exalted in the world, nor leave the grace given her from on high, which men use as the oil of mercy in the remission of sins and the bestowal of graces; by which too the ruin of the Angels has been repaired. *Gods and men*: Angels and just men. And she, the mother *(p. 738)* of the king of justice, has been made queen of mercy, that the justice of the king himself may be tempered by the queen of mercy.

Wisdom is called an olive. Of wisdom thus: *As a fair olive tree in the plains.* They are the words of Wisdom (Ecclus. 24:19). As a fair olive grows in tilled and fruitful plains, so I, wisdom, grow and become fair in minds well tilled and filled with the fruits of good works. The olive is a sign of peace and mercy. And of wisdom it is said, James 3:17, that it is *first chaste, then peaceable.* And a little after it is said to be *full of mercy and good fruits.* Again, the olive is rich, and wisdom full of devotion. Again, the olive nourishes cantharides, which devour its flowers. These are flies, stinking and shining, which designate vainglory, which often and in many consumes the fruit of wisdom itself and stains its fatness. Eccles. 10:1: *Dying flies spoil the sweetness of the ointment.*

Again, the *olea* is the Church, whose single olives are the single just men. Which olive tree, namely, illumines the plains of the whole world with beauty, and sanctifies them by spiritual grace through the anointing of chrism. The fruit of this olive is late, because the just man awaits from God a future reward, not a present one. But the wicked wish to be blessed here: therefore they are hurt by the tribulations of the world. Hence, Job 15:33: *He shall be blasted as a vine in its first flower*, etc. The flax, burning through vainglory and putting forth the bolls of pride, and the barley green, were hurt: but the wheat and the spelt were not hurt, because they were late (cf. Exod. 9:31–32).

Again, the ripe fruit of the olive grows black: because the just are despised by worldly men. Hence the faithful soul says, Cant. 1:4: *I am black*, in the opinion of worldly men, *but beautiful*, in the eyes of my bridegroom.

Morally, they are the words of the just man: *As a fair olive tree in the plains* (Ecclus. 24:19). And these words belong chiefly to those saints who excelled others in mercy, such as were Laurence, Nicholas, Martin, Giles and the like, in whose person it is read, Ecclus. 50:11: *As an olive tree budding forth*, etc.

The just man is an olive. Because the olive is always green. The greenness of the soul is holiness, which greenness he loses who is dissolved by summer, who is broken by winter, who is shattered by adversity.

Flowering, in a great mist it loses its flower, as is said, Job 15:33: *He shall be blasted as an olive tree casting its flower.* A soft mist strikes the olive in flower so hard that it takes away the fruit. This mist is the love of worldly glory, or the appetite for transitory praise: which two take away the fruit of eternal reward. Or, the

darkening mist is flattery or human favor, as Gregory expounds, which makes the flower to be cast off, that is, a good purpose to be abandoned. And this mist darkens the understanding. Or, to cast the flower is to turn aside from a good undertaking.

In its leaves it is more like the willow than all trees, so that he who wisely hopes in the mercy of God may reckon himself barren, not fruitful. Luke 17:10: *When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants.* The leaves of the olive also are bitter, that you may utter bitter words of your barrenness in confession. Job 6:3: *My words are full of sorrow.*

A sign of peace, that you may keep peace towards God by contrition and confession, towards your neighbor by satisfaction, towards your soul by subjecting sensuality to it; and so may be to others a sign of peace by example.

Its fruit is oil, and your fruit is the works of mercy. Nor should you keep your temporal fruits for yourself, as neither does the olive, but distribute them generously to others. Likewise also *(p. 739)* spiritual ones, namely desires and prayers and the like.

It has a bitter root. For the beginning of justice is the bitter remembrance of sins and bitter contrition. The outward bitterness too, in fasts, disciplines and the like, ought to bring forth sweet fruit in works of mercy and pity, that is, in affection and effect. Or the root is compassion. Job 30:25: *I wept heretofore for him that was afflicted, and my soul had compassion on the poor.* The hard wood or trunk is the firm purpose of showing mercy with fortitude of mind. Strength of the secular arm too is sometimes necessary. Job 29:17: *I broke the jaws of the wicked man, and out of his teeth I took away the prey.* The outer bark is the example of mercy, or patience towards the importunity of the poor. But now the Lord complains in Joel 1:7 of the barking of his trees: *He hath barked my fig tree*, etc.

It covers its sweet fruit with bitter leaves. The leaves are words. Luke 17:10: *When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you*, etc., as above. The branches are the various works of mercy spread round about. The spreading of the branches is the diversity of works. The little flower of the olive is kindness of heart and of mouth preceding the work of mercy, such as is pity, a sweet answer, a kindly hearing, a loving look and the like.

This olive refused temporal lordship and excused itself sufficiently, which the bramble did not (cf. Judg. 9:15). For the just man, after the example of his master, ought to shun temporal kingship for love of the eternal kingdom, and go to meet his crucifiers, that is, the tribulations of the world, and say with Lot, Gen. 19:19: *I cannot be saved in the mountain.* And in Ps. 55:4: *From the height of the day I shall fear.* Yet Lot with his daughters in the mountain committed incest with the firstborn, that is, with pride, which is *the firstborn death* (Job 18:13). And with the younger, namely carnal concupiscence. And note that the bramble, that is, those who are rough with vices, shaggy and prickly, gladly accepted the kingdom. So, then, the just man is an olive through mercy, fair through example, in the plains because of a commonness without respect of persons, sharing with all his temporal and spiritual fruits, believing himself born not for himself alone but for the whole world. Hence, 1 Cor. 10:33, the Apostle says: *I in all things please all men, not seeking that which is profitable to myself, but to many, that they may be saved.* And he at once adds, 11:1: *Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.* Again, Ecclus. 24:47: *See ye that I have not laboured for myself only*—so say Wisdom, Christ, and Mary, and the wise man himself—*but for all that seek out the truth.*

In the plains, which signify the breadth of charity and of joy, in which mercy ought to be planted. Because of such properties, supremely necessary to the just man, the just man says: *But I, as an olive tree*—as if not material but spiritual, expressing in justice its good properties.

Again, *as an olive tree* against obstinacy, which is contrary to mercy; *fruitful* against barrenness; *in the house of God* against heresies and schisms; *I have hoped* against despair; *in the mercy of God* (Ps. 51:10), *which is*

for ever and for ever and ever. As if to say: I have not sought temporal mercy, of which Osee 6:4: *Your mercy is as a morning cloud.* Yours, that is, which you seek. There follows, Ps. 51:11: *I will praise thee*, against greatness, *and I will wait*, through perseverance, against the over-hasty.

Chapter 6, §3: The Bramble

Mary is the bramble. And she, or her conception, is that great sight which Moses desired to see as it were close at hand, *(p. 740)* saying: *I will go and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt* (Exod. 3:3), etc. This sight is great because of its singularity: because *she has seen none like her before*, etc. Because of its usefulness: because there can be no greater usefulness.

Because of the greatness of the thing, namely that a Virgin conceived not a mere man but the Son of God.

Because of the newness of the thing. Jer. 31:22: *The Lord hath created a new thing*, etc.

Because of its signification: because it showed both a present miracle and the incarnation, in which it also foreshadowed the perpetual integrity of the virgin mother.

Because it represents a great mystery.

But what did Moses see? A flame of fire, that is, the Son of God, who is called a flame of fire, that is, the brightness of eternal light, because *our God is a consuming fire* (Heb. 12:29), coming forth from the midst of the bush, that is, of the virginal womb. And it is said there, Exod. 3:2, that the bush was burning and was not burnt: because a virgin conceived a son and was not violated; she became pregnant but was not weighed down; she was relieved in childbirth, but neither felt pain nor was emptied.

Or, by the flame understand the grace of the Holy Spirit. When the Lord appeared in the bush, the flame did not harm the bush: because when the Son of God took flesh in the Virgin overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, her virginal modesty remained unharmed.

Or thus: the fire in the bush is Christ in the virginal body, who burned there because he kindled fruitfulness and did not consume virginity: and in this was the great sight, that though he is a consuming fire, he did not consume. Isidore seems to hold that the bramble is a certain shrub which in French is called *bolomer*, and it is called *rubus* because its fruit or twig is red (*rubet*); and therefore the Lord willed to appear in the bramble, because images could not be made of it.

Mary is the bramble. The bramble is a little tree. So Mary was little through the highest humility and through contempt of herself, which is humility.

Rough through the exercise of the virtues against softness and dissoluteness.

Green through faith or perpetual holiness, or through virginity; or because her body did not wither by corruption.

Flowering through virginity. Or because, as in the flower is the hope of fruit, so in her is the hope of every good. Hence she says: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue* (Ecclus. 24:25).

Fragrant through holy repute. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:20: *I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm*, etc.

Prickly through the piercing of manifold tribulation: and this most of all in the passion of her Son. For the bramble is a kind of thorny shrub.

Again, Christ is the bramble. The roughness of the bramble is the mortal flesh which he took from the Virgin; the fire is the love which he had towards us. The bramble seemed to be burned, and yet was not burned: this is the flesh of Christ, which, dead through love and buried, seemed given over to corruption, though it rose again more glorious.

Morally: the unburnt bramble is the faithful soul proved by temptation and not consumed. Hence it is said of the just, Wis. 3:6: *As gold in the furnace the Lord hath proved his elect.* What is pure there is not diminished but is made purer. Which appeared in the children cast into the furnace, who were cast in pure and came out purer, as Jerome says in the prologue to Habakkuk. Or, the unburnt bramble is malice rebuked, not consumed. Hence, Jer. 6:29: *The founder hath melted in vain, for their evil deeds are not consumed.* Or, the reprobate soul scourged by God but not amended. Hence, Jer. 2:30: *In vain have I struck your children, they have not received correction.*

Chapter 6, §4: The Cedar

(p. 741) The cedar also. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:17: *I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus*, which is interpreted whiteness, which is the purest of all colors. The cedar is so called because by the Greeks it is called *kedros*, as if the moisture of a burning tree. And Libanus is a certain mountain signifying Christ, the mountain on the top of the mountains, who is *the brightness of eternal light* (Wis. 7:26). For the other mountains, that is, the saints, are white, not whiteness itself, but they grow white from that whiteness: because by him they are cleansed, and of his fullness they receive. On this mountain, before all others, the blessed Virgin has been exalted above men and Angels, as the chief member in the body under the head.

She says, then: *I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus*, that is, in Christ, in the world, in heaven, in the Cistercian order: because all the churches of that order are dedicated to her. And well does she say *exalted*: because from a lowly handmaid she became queen of heaven, from a daughter of God the mother of God.

Otherwise: *in Libanus*, which is interpreted whiteness, is signified the whiteness of virginity. From Libanus too, namely from that tree, comes the frankincense which is burned in sacrifices for an odor of sweetness. And Mary is the tree Libanus: hence she calls herself Libanus, saying: *As Libanus not cut I perfumed my dwelling place* (Ecclus. 24:21). Whose Son as frankincense was burned in the fire of the passion, and God the Father was delighted in the fragrance of such a victim.

Again, the cedar puts serpents to flight by its odor. Well then is it said: *I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus*: because by the whiteness of her virginity and by the odor of the frankincense she bore and of her name, spiritual serpents and demons are put to flight.

Mary is the cedar: because the cedar is a tall tree and most eminent above all trees. Hence by some it is called the king of trees. And it well befits the dignity of Mary, who, in that she was made mother of God, *has seen none like her before, nor has any to follow.* Therefore she says: *I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus*: because, as blessed Bernard says: “This is the singular glory of our Virgin and the excellent prerogative of Mary, that she was found worthy to have one and the same son in common with God the Father.”

Otherwise: Mary was tall: because like Saul she was *higher than all from the shoulders and upward* (cf. 1 Kings 10:23), surpassing all the saints. From the shoulder, in which is good working: because from her own substance she showed all the works of the active life to the Son of God. From the neck, through which the voice passes, in which is understood the efficacy of prayer, or wisdom in words. From the head, in which is the perfection of the senses and the ripeness of wisdom, after the likeness of the material head, in which the perfection of the outward senses is found. Or, the height of Mary is her humility: because *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke 14:11; 18:14). Or, her height was her withdrawal from the spiritual earth and her drawing near to heaven. The spiritual earth is earthly pleasure, earthly wealth, earthly glory. From the first she withdrew through virginity, from the second through poverty, from the third through humility. And through these three, above all creatures, she drew near by merit to heavenly and eternal things.

Otherwise: by the shoulder is signified good working done in harmony, by *upward* contemplation. In these two *she has seen none like her before*, etc.

A tree of many years: for though at the beginning of the New Testament and in the conception of her Son she was a young girl, yet in the figures of the Old Testament and in the prophecies she was as it were old and full of years. Hence she is signified by the old cistern, *(p. 742)* Gen. 37:22–24, because into her the true Joseph was sent in the incarnation. Isa. 9:8: *The Lord sent a word into Jacob,* that is, his Son into Mary. Therefore too in temples the panelled ceilings are wont to be made of this wood because of its durability.

A tree full of pith. Hence, Ezek. 17:3: *A large eagle,* etc., as far as *and took away the marrow of the cedar.* So also Mary is full of pith through the fatness of charity and the richness of pity.

It grows gladly near waters. Num. 24:6: *As tabernacles which the Lord hath pitched, as cedars by the waterside.* Because spiritually the blessed Virgin grew beside the waters of the Scriptures and of the graces of the Holy Spirit. Hence she says of the Father: *He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment* (Ps. 22:2), etc.

It was the material of the temple, that is, of the Lord's body, which, as Damascene says, was built of her most pure blood by the hand of the wisdom of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit. Of which temple John 2:19: *Destroy this temple,* that is, you will destroy. Ezek. 43:10: *Son of man, shew to the house of Israel the temple,* etc.; in which temple, namely, *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally* (Col. 2:9). Therefore she says: *Like a cedar,* that is, as the mother of Christ. But because *holiness becometh the house of God,* it was fitting that she should conceive without corruption, which befits the cedar, which does not rot. Therefore it was said to her, Luke 1:35: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,* that is, he will come in a way beyond other women: because a virgin you will conceive. Because of this she is exalted like a cedar, that is, as mother and virgin, *in Libanus,* namely remaining in the whiteness of virginity. Therefore Christ says of her, Cant. 2:2: *As the lily among thorns.* And because of this she excels all women, as the cedar all trees. Hence: *Many daughters have gathered together riches* (Prov. 31:29), etc.

Mary is the cedar. Because the cedar has great and deep roots and is rooted very deeply: hence it can grow so immensely. Her roots are her forebears, from whom she sprang according to the flesh, namely Abraham, Jesse, David, who were great both in the world and before God. Therefore it is said, Isa. 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse.* Her spiritual roots are the most excellent virtues, all of which she had in the superlative degree. And because through humility she was rooted so deep in them, therefore she grew so immensely, namely even to the conception of the Son of God, *who was in the bosom of the Father* (John 1:18). Therefore too in the assumption she was exalted above the choirs of Angels.

Of choice odor, that is, of fame and repute: because she is continually praised by both Churches, and yet she is greater than all praise, and in her praise every tongue stammers. Whose twofold odor, namely of virginity and humility, drew the Son of God from heaven into her womb. Cant. 1:11: *While the king was,* etc. (Look under the heading *The Lord is with thee,* after the middle of the chapter.)

By its odor and sap it puts to flight and destroys serpents. Her odor is namely that she is Virgin and mother of God, or that she is anointed with all spiritual gifts. From this odor the demons flee and leave their prey, that is, the sinners whom they had despoiled. Blessed Bernard: "They do not so tremble," etc. (Look in the second chapter on the angelic salutation, where the power of her name is treated.)

Again, her sap is her pity, by which in her familiars she destroys depraved concupiscences, as certain serpents. For her odor is to the faithful unto life, namely in those who are saved, but in those who perish unto death (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15–16), namely the pagans, Jews and heretics, whom she winnows out from the Church of God.

Otherwise, as the Jews testify, Mary *(p. 743)* was the most beautiful of virgins: and never did anyone looking on her desire her wrongly, though many other good women were wrongly desired, such as Sarah, Rebecca, Susanna, Judith, Agnes, Lucy and the like. And this grace was poured into her in her singular sanctification,

as a certain breathing or exhalation of the odor of cedar, to kill in those who looked on her the carnal concupiscences and movements which creep in the flesh like venomous serpents. And therefore she says that she was exalted like a cedar in Libanus. And note that a fervent lover would greatly wish that no one should desire his beloved. Therefore perhaps Christ, who calls himself *jealous* (Exod. 20:5), who desired the beauty of Mary as the Psalmist had foretold, Ps. 44:12: *And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty*, had conferred this privilege on her in her sanctification: because whatever he worked in her was *a new thing upon the earth* (Jer. 31:22).

Incorruptible through virginity, which preserves the flesh from rottenness and corruption. Hence virginity is signified by myrrh. For two sins chiefly are called rottenness in Scripture, namely lust and envy. Of lust, Joel 1:17: *The beasts have rotted in their dung.* Of envy, Prov. 14:30: *Envy is the rottenness of the bones.* (Of incorruptibility you will find better under the heading of the ark, where the properties of the setim wood are described.)

Mary is the cedar. Because the cedar is unburnable, through voluntary poverty. For the love of temporal things, if it is excessive, *is a fire that devoureth even to destruction* (Job 31:12). Unburnable too through meekness, which preserves from the fire of anger.

Unwithering: because she always remained incorrupt and without the withering of vice or sin. Or she is unwithering because in the winter of persecution, when the Jews persecuted her in her Son, she did not cast off her leaves, returning a curse for a curse, nor was she hurt by the blight of detraction or the mildew of flattery. Amos 4:9: *I struck you with a burning wind and with mildew.* Nor were her flowers, that is, the purpose of virginity or the beginnings of good works, in any way killed, so that they vanished or were made void of fruit. Nor was the pith of charity and pity and holy intention emptied out by those who as it were dried her up or sucked her with the lips of praise, so as to wither from her inmost greenness. Nor did the cold of evil fear hinder her fruitfulness, nor the blight or ardor of concupiscences and of worldly desires. For she was as it were an unwithering flower, which neither dries up in heat nor shrinks in cold, nor droops. Again, a part of the witheringness is sloth. Eccles. 10:18: *By slothfulness a building shall be brought down.* But of her it is written that, having conceived the Saviour, *she went into the hill country with haste* (Luke 1:39).

Without worms and the kindlings of the depraved movements of concupiscence. Therefore Mary says of her own body and of the body of her spouse, Cant. 1:16: *The beams of our houses are of cedar,* etc. For she is the cedar house of David, that is, of Christ, of which it is read, 1 Par. 17:1 ff.

It is always green through virginity, which is the greenness of the begotten; or through the unwithering quality of faith. Hence she is compared to the jasper and the emerald. (This you had above under the heading of the properties of the olive.)

It grows in Libanus, which is interpreted *whiteness*, and signifies innocence of mind and the whiteness of twofold chastity: and because Libanus is a mountain, it signifies the eminence of the virtues and contempt of the world. And in these four consists spiritual growth.

It grows continually, as some say, whereas other trees have a fixed *(p. 744)* growth, that is, a limit or end of their growth. Likewise the praiseworthy memory of Mary receives continual increase: because, as is said, Ecclus. 39:13: *The memory of him shall not depart away, and his name shall be in request from generation to generation.* For her path, *as a shining light, went forwards and increased even to perfect day* (cf. Prov. 4:18).

Its resin, which, bursting from within, appears outwardly in the bark, and signifies the cleanness of virginity, and is called *cedria*, preserves books from age and moths if they are anointed with it: because the blessed Virgin preserves sacred Scripture from moths, that is, heretics, and from age: because she bestows grace especially on those who love her, by which sacred Scripture is understood better from day to day, and *many shall pass over, and knowledge shall be manifold.* For she *discovereth deep things out of darkness* (Job

12:22). And since she is the teacher of the discipline of God, she makes friends of God and prophets, that is, the wise (cf. Wis. 8:4; 7:27): and so she does not allow sacred Scripture to grow old.

Otherwise: our books are our consciences. Hence, Dan. 7:10 and Apoc. 20:12: *The books were opened.* Lust is the moth which is born of the garment of the flesh and corrupts it. Hence, Job 27:18: *He hath built his house as a moth.* These books she preserves by her prayers and examples from age and moths.

According to some, it was a part of the cross, namely the upright wood on which the whole of the Lord's body was stretched: because she stood as it were fixed beside the cross of her Son (John 19:25).

The sap of the cedar consumes the worms of ulcers. The ulcer running with matter is the vile flux of lust. The worm of this ulcer is the ardor or desire of pleasure, or the very movements toward pleasure. The sap of the cedar is the inward fatness of spiritual gifts, or the pity of Mary herself, which both kills worms of this kind and heals these ulcers.

Again, the sap of the cedar preserves bodies anointed with it from the stings of flies. *Dying flies* (Eccles. 10:1), namely wicked and stinging thoughts which pursue hearts and bodies steeped in delights, which likewise the pity of Mary drives back and keeps off, and she places the thoughts of her servants with the Most High (cf. Wis. 5:16).

Again, they are the words of Wisdom: *I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus* (Ecclus. 24:17). As if to say: As the cedar grows on high in Libanus, which is a certain mountain and is interpreted whiteness, so I, wisdom, grow on high and advance in a heart white through cleanness and raised from the earth through contempt of the world. And wisdom is called a cedar: because as books anointed with the resin of the cedar fail neither by moth nor by age, so the saints anointed with wisdom waste away neither by the moth of pleasure nor by the age of cupidity. Christ is the cedar. Hence, Cant. 5:15: *His form as of Libanus, excellent as the cedars,* that is, like the cedars, that is, holy men, lofty in wisdom and virtues. In Ps. 64:5: *Blessed is he whom thou hast chosen and taken to thee.* Matt. 12:18: *Behold my servant whom I have chosen* (cf. Isa. 42:1). For he is chosen by the choice of predestination: but he was chosen for this according to his manhood, that he might be *the Son of God in power* (Rom. 1:4), that is, in the nature and might of the Godhead. Or, *excellent as the cedars* in the privilege of incorruptibility. Hence it is said of him especially: *Nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption* (Ps. 15:10), that is, the rotting of the flesh. Or, *excellent as the cedars* in the firmness which shone in the passion, in the incorruptibility which shone in the resurrection, in the height which shone in the ascension, in the sweetness of odor, that is, of good *(p. 745)* fame, which shone in the sending of the Holy Spirit: for through these his fame sprinkled the whole world like an odor of sweetness. Or again, the odor belongs to the passion: because, the alabaster box of his body being broken, the house, that is, the Church, was filled with the odor of the ointment (cf. John 12:3); nay, the storehouse of all spiritual gifts was laid open. For when his body was crushed in the passion, so great an odor of sweetness went up to the nostrils of God the Father, that it sweetened the power of the Father's anger, which none can resist (cf. Job 9:13), and which no one for fear of it can number, and not only overcame but even wiped away the stench of the sins of all the predestined. Of this odor Isaac had foretold, Gen. 27:27: *Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed.*

Again, the cedars are the holy Doctors, who by their doctrine and by the odor of good examples kill the serpents, that is, the venomous heretics and others who poison: and their doctrine is incorruptible, because it is neither for vainglory nor for gain. And such men are exalted by their doctrine if they are in Libanus, that is, in the whiteness of chastity. Such men also exalt Libanus, that is, Christ, who is *the brightness of eternal light* (Wis. 7:26): because through their doctrine he is magnified; and this when they attribute all things to him and say that of Isaiah 26:12: *Thou hast wrought all our works for us,* etc.

Chapter 6, §5: The Palm

The palm. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:18: *I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades.* Cades is interpreted holy, changed, or transferred.

She says, then: *I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades.* The fullness of holiness lies in two things. One is contempt of what is changeable; the other the perfect love of the unchangeable God. Through these two she deserved to be exalted, because she perfectly despised temporal things and perfectly loved God; which perfect love is signified in the most intense redness of the rose, of which there follows in the same place: *And as a rose plant in Jericho.* Or, *exalted in Cades,* that is, in those who have been transferred from evil to good, or changed from good to better.

Otherwise: she says she was exalted in Cades, which is interpreted *changed* or *transferred*: because she was cleansed from original sin in her sanctification, and afterwards transferred from virginity to fruitfulness. Of which change or transfer Jerome writes thus to Paula and Eustochium: "When the Holy Spirit came upon her, as one and the same wool, when it is dyed with the blood of the shellfish or the murex, is turned into purple, so she too was turned without intercourse into a mother, so that she is no longer what she had been, but the truest purple, most fittingly dedicated by God to the vesture and glory of the supreme King, so that it was not lawful for anyone thereafter to use her in womanly use, save God." She was also as it were changed in the assumption from a lowly handmaid into a sublime queen, when she was transferred from the Church militant to the triumphant, and changed from obscurity into brightness, and when she was transferred from the misery of exile to the delights of the fatherland: in which fatherland, namely, which is fittingly designated by Cades, the saints dwell confirmed in holiness, and the souls of the elect, transferred and changed from the oldness of guilt and punishment into newness of life. Hence, 1 Cor. 15:52: *And we shall be changed.*

Otherwise: *I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades.* And it is a good theme for the assumption of blessed Mary. The palm, narrow in its lower parts, *(p. 746)* rises to the upper parts by spreading out. Cades is interpreted *transferred.* The transfer of the blessed Virgin is her assumption today, who today has been exalted like a palm: of which transfer it is said, Cant. 6:9: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?* etc. For she, sanctified in the womb, shone in her nativity like the dawn; confirmed by grace in the conception of her Son, she shone like the moon; glorified today, she shone like the sun. And so, growing from a lesser brightness and spreading out, she has been exalted like a palm.

Again, the palm in the shape of its body, as those say who have seen palms, is like the sprinkler of holy water. The water is the grace of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the great priest according to the order of Melchisedech, took hold of this sprinkler, that is, the blessed Virgin: because in her *he took hold of the seed of Abraham* (Heb. 2:16); and filling this sprinkler with the aforesaid water, whence she is called full of grace, he sprinkled the people on every side, as he had promised, Ezek. 36:25: *I will pour upon you clean water*—from the effect, namely, because *of his fulness we all have received* (John 1:16). This water they receive who, as the custom is, attend to the priest with the head uncovered: that is, who, laying bare the head of the man, that is, the synderesis, *mind the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God* (Col. 3:1).

At a hundred years it bears red fruit, as it were after old age has been despaired of; and the blessed Virgin, though young in age of time, yet full of years in the figures and prophecies, bore blessed and sweet fruit, and red upon the cross, awaited by the faithful through five thousand years.

A girded tree. So also she, through the vow of virginity. Hence, Prov. 31:17: *She hath girded her loins with strength.*

It is most bitter and rough in the root, and therefore most sweet in the fruit: for it is said that it is the nature of trees that the more bitter the root, the sweeter the fruit. Mary indeed had the bitterness of original sin in her conception; she came forth too from the root of the Jews, which to its God was a most bitter nation, as is said, Jer. 2:19: *Know thou and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God,* etc.

And a little after, according to another translation, v. 21: “How art thou turned unto me into the bitterness of a strange vine?”

Lasting in its leaves, that is, in words: because her words set down in the Gospel will never fail from the Church of God, nor did any word of hers fall away to temporal things, as is said of Samuel (1 Kings 3:19).

Beautiful in the flowers of examples and virtues: because the flowers of the palm are abundant and pleasant. And the flowers of Mary are *the flowers of honor and riches* (Ecclus. 24:23).

Sweet in its fruits: for her fruits which we gather in the present are the sweetness of her compassions. Or, her fruit is the sacrament of her Son, which is a most sweet dish to one who receives worthily. Hence the bride, Cant. 2:3: *His fruit was sweet to my palate.*

A victorious tree and one signifying victory: because she overcame the world by poverty, the flesh by virginity, the devil by humility. And not only the sign but also the cause of victory: because she both fights for us against invisible enemies, and by her help we triumph over them. Again, before her victory never appeared: but all, as vanquished, were thrust into prison. Hence Job in the person of the ancients: *I have made my bed in darkness* (Job 17:13). Her womb too can be called the tree of victory, from which our champion came forth to save (cf. Isa. 63:1).

Victors are given the palm and are crowned.

Chapter 6, §5 (continued): The Palm

(p. 747) Hence it is said to Mary, Isa. 62:3: *Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.* With the fruit of this palm too those who overcome will be fed. Hence, Apoc. 2:7: *To him that overcometh I will give to eat*, etc.

The more it is pressed down below in the root, the more it is exalted above in its foliage and branches: and because she with her Son *drank of the torrent in the way* (Ps. 109:7), with whom she died by compassion, therefore she lifted up her head in her assumption.

Narrow, slender, shaggy and rough below. For *the Lord gave her strait bread and short water* (Isa. 30:20). Behold the narrowness, the slenderness, the poverty: because she was at once rich in spiritual things but poor in temporal. Shaggy, because untended: or shaggy, because afflicted by the passions and miseries of her Son. Rough and as it were wrapped in certain dry barks, because *for the sake of the words of the Lord’s lips* (Ps. 16:4), that is, of both Testaments, she kept hard ways. Or, the rough barks are the roughness and cheapness of her clothing. On the contrary, in the upper parts, namely the branches, foliage and top, it is spread out, thick, smooth and beautiful. Of the first she says: *And I walked at large* (Ps. 118:45), etc. For she sought the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth (cf. Col. 3:1–2). Of the second, Prov. 13:7: *One is as it were rich when he hath nothing, and another is as it were poor when he hath great riches.* Of the third, Cant. 7:6–7: *How beautiful art thou, and how comely, my dearest, in delights! Thy stature is like to a palm tree*, etc. Which, as Gregory says, is slender at the bottom, but near the fruit, that is, in its upper parts, grows thick. For she, at first most humble, is now most glorious, set at the right hand of her Son. All its branches are raised upward: because whatever good she had she attributed to God, saying: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me* (Luke 1:49). Therefore its branches are called the *elatae* of the palms. Alan of Lille: “The *elatae* of the palms are the longer branches: sometimes of a rosy color, curling, and always reaching to the heights, and never losing their greenness.” And *elatai* in Greek is the same as *abietes*, firs, in Latin. And the spathes of the palms are called *elatae* because of their straightness, since firs are lofty and straight trees. And they are not raised upward unless they are pressed down below. An example is Jeremiah, who the more he was afflicted because he preached, the more steadfastly he spoke. Again, Exod. 1:12: the more the Israelites were afflicted by the Egyptians, the more they multiplied and increased.

Again, the palm has spathes for leaves. And the *spata* is an instrument of war, whose diminutive is *spatula*, as if a little sword. Leaves are words. The spathes of the palm are the humble words of Mary, by which, as far as in her lies, she cuts away from us by her example superfluity and boastfulness of words. As if to say: *Do not multiply to speak lofty things, boasting: let old matters depart from your mouth* (1 Kings 2:3).

Again, its branches, that is, the virtues, are swords with which she fought against vices, and left us an example of fighting. Hence the poet: Fight for your fatherland—namely the heavenly. Ecclus. 4:33: *Strive for justice for thy soul, and even unto death fight for justice: and God will overthrow thy enemies for thee.*

It spreads its branches round about: because she protects us against the anger of her Son and the heat of concupiscences.

It also in a manner expresses in its foliage the likeness of a human hand, and perhaps the palm is named from the human palm because of the likeness. Or because the palm, that is, the hand of the victor, is wont to be adorned with a palm branch. For *she hath opened her hand to the needy* (cf. Prov. 31:20) through generosity, and her palms to the poor: nor is her hand closed into a fist for striking, but stretched out like the foliage of the palm for giving: for *she giveth to all abundantly* (James 1:5), as far as in her lies. *(p. 748)* Therefore it can be said of her as it is said of wisdom, Wis. 8:18: *In the works of her hands is honesty without fail*: because the works which she showed to the Son of God have honesty unfailingly, and likewise the works of mercy which she never ceases to bestow on wretched sinners.

It always bends, as they say, to one side: because she chose for herself not the left but the right and *best part* (cf. Luke 10:42).

Its fruit is the date, outwardly soft and red, but containing within a hard stone. The fruit of our palm is Christ, who outwardly showed a flesh as it were soft, that is, like the flesh of sin, but within hid the strength of the Godhead. Isa. 45:15: *Verily thou art a hidden God.* Which flesh, namely, soft through the kindness which compelled him to become incarnate—whence he is said to be *incarnate of the Holy Spirit*—was at last reddened in the passion with his own blood. Hence it is said to him, Isa. 63:2: *Why then is thy apparel red*, that is, thy flesh? But the power of the stone of this date, by which the Godhead of the Son is figured, brained the devil: which was signified, 1 Kings 17:49, in the deed of David, who with a stone threw down Goliath. And the dates growing at the very top of the palm are sweeter, riper, larger and more savory. Such a fruit is Christ the Lord. Isa. 4:2: *The fruit of the earth*, that is, of Mary, *shall be high.* Whoever, then, will reach this fruit must climb into the palm. Hence, Cant. 7:8: *I will go up into the palm tree*, that is, into the cross, by synecdoche, part of which is said to have been of palm, *and will take hold of the fruit thereof*, which is the son of the Virgin. For she is the palm, and the cross is a palm. But the palm, that is, Mary, entrusted her fruit to the palm, that is, the cross, in the passion. To those, then, who all day long seek her fruit from the blessed Virgin, she can answer, and rightly: I have entrusted my fruit to the cross; if you wish to have it, go, climb into the palm, and gather it there. And he climbs higher into the palm who does longer and sharper penance, and exposes himself to greater tribulation for the Lord.

Otherwise: whoever wishes to gather this lofty fruit in the present through grace must set all temporal and worldly things under his feet by contempt, and make of the whole world a footstool. Apoc. 12:1 it is said of the blessed Virgin: *The moon under her feet*, that is, all changeable things under her affections: and therefore she had this fruit.

From the stone of the date, when planted, a palm springs up: and so from the palm comes not a bare stone but a date. So the power of the Godhead gave the beginning of existence to the blessed Virgin, of whom was born *Jesus, who is called Christ* (Matt. 1:16), not mere God, but God and man.

I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades (Ecclus. 24:18). They are the words of wisdom; that is, as the palm grows on high in Cades, which is interpreted holy, changed, or transferred: so I grow on high in saints

changed by grace from the oldness of guilt into newness of life, if they are transferred from love of the world to love of God: which is signified in the translation of Enoch (Gen. 5:24).

Again, wisdom, like a palm of a hundred years, bears fruit: because *in the ancient is wisdom* (Job 12:12). And: *The understanding of a man is gray hairs* (Wis. 4:8).

Again, wisdom, after the manner of the human palm, has branches: because it teaches to act reasonably.

Again, after the contests of the present life it announces that the just are to be crowned: but all these things are had only in Cades, that is, in *(p. 749)* the transfer described above and in holiness of life.

Christ is the palm. Below it is rough and contemptible and wrinkled. So also Christ in the present life bore many hardships and miseries, and was contemptible. Hence he calls himself *the reproach of men and the outcast of the people* (cf. Ps. 21:7). Likewise also on the cross. Hence, Isa. 53:2–3: *We have seen him, and there was no sightliness*, as far as, *and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows.* Behold the wrinkledness, etc. But in the resurrection and ascension his beauty appeared: which was the top of this palm.

The more the root of the palm is burdened, the more richly it bears fruit. So also Christ in the passion, where he was more burdened with mockeries, scorn and scourges, bore fruit for us more fully and most of all.

He expressed the likeness of a human hand in the foliage: because he was *in habit found as a man* (Phil. 2:7).

The lastingness of the leaves. Hence it is said of him: *And his leaf shall not fall off* (Ps. 1:3). For he always treated of heavenly things, not of earthly.

It crowns victors. For he himself will be the reward of those who have subdued the threefold enemy to themselves.

Morally: *The just shall flourish like the palm tree* (Ps. 91:13), that is, after the example of the palm, which does not bear fruit until after a hundred years, which are at the most the sum of human life, as is said, Ecclus. 18:8. Hence to Abraham Isaac, that is, laughter, was born only when he was a hundred years old (Gen. 17:17). For *it hath not yet appeared what we shall be* (cf. 1 John 3:2). Prov. 31:25: *She shall laugh in the latter day.* We must therefore wait with long-suffering. Job 11:17: *When thou shalt think thyself consumed*, etc. James 5:7: *Behold, the husbandman*, etc. For after this life the just await their reward. To hint at this the ark was built through a hundred years, which number, namely, passes from the left hand to the right according to the reckoning of Bede. For through the whole of this life we ought to build for ourselves the house of our eternity.

The just man is called a palm. Because the palm is bitter in the root, but most sweet in the fruit. So also the holy man, whose root is discipline and chastisement of the flesh, from which is born for God the fruit of eternal reward. Therefore it is said, Heb. 12:11: *Now all chastisement for the present indeed seemeth not to bring with it joy, but sorrow*—behold the bitter root—*but afterwards it will yield to them that are exercised by it the most peaceable fruit of justice*—behold the sweet fruit. And this was signified in Judg. 4:5, where it is said that Debbora, which is interpreted bee, sat under a palm. The bee has the pricking and bitterness of the sting and the sweetness of honey. And it is read of the king of the bees that he sends the bees to the sea, to bring back from it salt drops of the sea and put them with the sweetness of the flowers, and thence they make honey from bitter and sweet. And this is what the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 9:27: *I chastise my body.* Behold the bitter root. 2 Cor. 11:29: *Who is weak, and I am not weak*, namely by compassion? Behold the sweet fruit. Below it is narrowed, that is, as regards the care of the body. 1 Tim. 6:8: *Having food.* Rom. 13:14: *Make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences*—he does not say in its necessities. For the just man ought to lead a hard life, and bear with equanimity the contempt of the world, and seek slenderly, that is, sparingly, the necessaries of this life, according to that which Solomon prays, Prov. 30:8: *Give me neither beggary nor riches*, etc. Because, as the Psalmist says, Ps. 36:16: *Better is a little to the just than the great riches of the wicked.*

Above it is spread out, that is, in spiritual things which belong to the soul. Isa. 54:2: *Enlarge the place of thy tent.* The understanding *(p. 750)* is spread out by thinking of eternal things, the affection by loving them, and by rejoicing with the good of the neighbor and having compassion with his evils, so that the meditation of his heart may be always in the sight of the Lord, and all his desire before him. These are spiritual things: prayers, devotions, vigils and the like, that the just man may say: *And I walked at large* (Ps. 118:45).

It is firmly rooted in the earth of eternal stability: and so it is not moved by the blast of temptations.

Rough in its bark. The bark is the flesh, which ought to be made rough and as it were calloused by the roughness of penance, which works gentleness of conscience. 1 Cor. 9:27: *I chastise my body*, etc.

The sprinkler of holy water, that whomever it can, it may water with the waters of wisdom.

Sharp leaves, penetrating words. Eccles. 12:11: *The words of the wise are as goads*, etc.

Spathes for branches, that he may cut away superfluous things, first from himself and afterwards from others, as he is able. Ezek. 5:1: *Son of man, take thee a sharp knife*, etc. Isa. 49:2: *He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword*, that through confession and preaching I may cut away from me and from my sons the swellings of vices. Because of this it is said of the saints: *Two-edged swords in their hands* (Ps. 149:6). Swords in the hands, words in works.

It is always green by persevering in holiness. Job 29:18: *I shall die in my nest, and as a palm tree shall multiply my days.*

Pleasant in the flowers of examples, namely leafy like a human hand. And these flowers are discreet works, which are like rounded hands.

The fruit of this palm is soft through kindness, red through compassion; a date, which is interpreted *finger*, through discretion, because the date has the shape of a human finger; a hard kernel, perseverance in good work. John 15:16: *And your fruit should remain.*

Otherwise: the fruit which is gathered from this palm, red in the reward: behold perfect charity in the fatherland, because *his furnace is in Jerusalem* (Isa. 31:9). Sweet: because then the hidden manna is given to the victor. The solidity of the kernel is impassibility. The durability of this fruit is the eternity of the reward. Behold how fittingly the reward will answer to the merit. This fruit hangs very high, that the just man may lay up treasure in heaven. Matt. 6:20: *Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven*, etc., not on earth, *where thieves break through and steal.* The leaves of the palm are the signs of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Let false Christians take heed to themselves, who in Baptism receive the cross but do not make for Jerusalem, but rather for Babylon. The palm has distinct sex, and the fruit of the female palm does not ripen unless, a breeze bearing it, it receives the vapor of the male set opposite it; nor does our free will make the fruit of ripe work unless through the vapor of grace.

Again, the palm, the more it is burdened, the more plentifully it bears fruit, etc., as above. An example is the children of Israel (cf. Exod. 1:12). One ought, then, to take up the burden of penance, and to bear patiently the burden of tribulations. Our root is our earth: because it must be burdened by recalling what earth we are: rocks, because hard and insensible; sand, because barren. And this burdening is made by humility: and these make a man weighty, so that the devil, tempting him, cannot throw him down or move him from his state.

It has knots in its trunk, by which one can climb it. These are nakedness, scantiness of food, length of vigils and the like, by which one reaches the fruit of the palm, which is Christ. Apoc. 1:9: *Partaker in the tribulation, and in the kingdom, and patience.* Note the order of the words.

Again, the palm signifies the cross, a certain part of which is believed to have been of palm, namely the crosswise wood to which the Lord's hands were fastened. Hence Christ says, *(p. 751)* Cant. 7:8: *I will go up into the palm tree*, that is, I shall be exalted on the cross.

Again, *He shall flourish like the palm tree*, he who is written in the title of the cross of Christ, which is: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Jesus, salvation; Nazarene, flowering; Jew, confessing. As the palm, then, bears fruit, so he who for the salvation of the soul confesses his own sins and the praises of the Lord represents in himself the Lord's passion. He says, then: *The just shall flourish like the palm tree*, setting down the future with prophetic certainty. For the just are here only in greenness, which is in a manner the hope of flower and fruit; he will flourish after the winter of the present life, as it were after a hundred years, which are at the most the sum of human life, as is said, Ecclus. 18:8. And this is just, namely that in spring and the new season good trees should flower: for the present life is designated by winter. Again, he will flourish here with the flower of the virtues, that in the future he may bear fruit. Or, he will flourish in the future in the robe of body and soul. Hence the Church sings: "The just man shall spring up as the lily, and shall flourish before the Lord." And it is taken from Osee 14:6.

Chapter 6, §6: The Cypress

The cypress. Hence she says: *And as a cypress tree on Mount Sion.* Mount Sion is the Church, so that Sion may signify the Church militant, in which God is seen through a glass in a dark manner, and Mount Sion the Church triumphant: for Sion is interpreted *mirror* or *watchtower*. The blessed Virgin, then, is exalted on Mount Sion, that is, in the eminence of both Churches: because *all generations shall call me blessed*, namely of Angels and of men. Eph. 3:15: *Of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named.*

Or, *on Mount Sion*, that is, in the eminence of contemplation.

Otherwise: the cypress is a tree fit for healing bodies. Sion is interpreted *mirror*, which namely gives back to a man his image. Man had been deformed through sin, which had taken from him the image of God to which he had been made. But through the blessed Virgin, who is the fountain of grace, the image of God has been re-formed in man through grace. Hence it is well said, *a cypress on Mount Sion*, since through her the image of God is re-formed in the soul, and through the medicine of the resurrection health will be restored to sick bodies. Again, the cypress has a power almost next to the cedar. The ancients too were wont to set cypress branches near the funeral pyre, so that the odor of the corpses while they burned might be overwhelmed by the pleasantness of its odor; and among the pagans it was consecrated to the dead: because after the manner of a man, once cut down it does not sprout again.

Mary is the cypress. Because the cypress is a medicinal tree: because she bore the salvation of the souls of the faithful, namely Christ, the physician of our wounds. Hence, Ecclus. 38:4: *The Most High*, that is, the Father, *hath created*, etc. Hence he says, Isa. 45:8, of the Son: *I the Lord have created him*, a man from the earth, that is, from the blessed Virgin, a medicine, that is, Christ, who bore our infirmities. (You will find this better under the heading that Mary is called the earth.)

It consolidates ruptures, by which inward parts descend downward; and the examples of Mary consolidate us, that we may not through cupidity cast our inward parts into the earth. Ecclus. 10:10, of the covetous man: *While he liveth he hath cast away his bowels.*

Of warm complexion through the love with which she loves her Son and his creatures, as you had under the heading of her love.

Bitter in taste: because she was much *(p. 752)* embittered in the passion of her Son. Hence that of Ruth 1:20 befits her: *Call me not Noemi* (that is, beautiful), *but call me Mara* (that is, bitter), *for the Almighty hath quite filled me with bitterness.*

Reddish in color. For the flesh of Christ was reddened by his bloody passion. Hence he was signified by the red horse. And she is reddish through compassion: for she suffered spiritually in her Son.

Fragrant, as above of the cedar.

Straight through love. Hence: *The righteous love thee.* Straight also, because she was never bent by love of worldly things or by any sin. Or, straight through poverty, which is the straightness of the soul, whereas riches make it crooked.

It has hard fruit, namely Christ, who is hard in the sacrament to those who approach unworthily. John 6:61: *This saying is hard.*

It hardens and strengthens soft limbs. Hence we pray to her: "Holy Mary, succour the wretched, help the fainthearted," and the like.

It stanches a flow of blood. And Mary is the cypress of the soul that suffers a flow of blood: because she dries up the veins of death.

By no blow, by no comeliness does it lay down its foliage, that is, the virtues with which she adorns Christ her head, attributing all to him, as when she says: *He that is mighty hath done great things to me.* For neither did happiness lift her up nor affliction cast her down.

Mary is the cypress. Because its foliage tapers into a cone. Hence the cypress is called *conifera.* For in Greek the cypress is called *konos*: because its head rises from roundness to a point and imitates the shape of a cone; and its fruit is called *conus.* By this foliage too is designated the virginity of Mary, to which the aureole is due: hence she is painted crowned.

Otherwise: the cypress is so called from this, that, gathering its branches from round to a point, it makes as it were a cone at the top. And Mary did not scatter the branches of her virtues for vanity, but gathered them to the one sublime thing which God is, according to that of Ecclus. 30:24: *Gather together thy heart in his holiness.* One thing she asked of the Lord, knowing that one thing is necessary.

Its wood and fruit and leaves are medicinal: but in the fruit, by which Christ is signified, that is, in the apples, chiefly consists the power of the medicine: because he *hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.*

Her leaves too, fruits and foliage, that is, words, works and examples, are for medicine through the example of her wisdom; they are for food in the sacrament of her Son; they are for shade and protection as regards the foliage, in which she has the comeliness of virtuous examples.

It is said to have been a certain part of the Lord's cross, namely the wood set in the rock which bore the whole cross.

Necessary for many uses: for from it are made tablets for writing, handles of knives for cutting, and the like. So she too helps and profits us in divers necessities. For she *became all things to all*, that, as far as in her lies, *she might gain all.*

Most fit for bearing burdens: because it cannot be broken and never yields to burdens, but under them endures in perpetual stability. Likewise Mary never yielded to the burdens of the tribulations which she suffered in her Son. But through charity, which *beareth all things*, she tirelessly and as it were unbreakably bears and supports the burdens of human infirmity in us, according to that of the Apostle, Rom. 15:1: *We that are stronger ought to bear the infirmities of the weak*, and so on.

Again, these can be the words of wisdom: *I was exalted like a cypress tree on Mount (p. 753) Sion.* As the cypress is exalted and grows on high on Mount Sion, which is in Jerusalem, so wisdom is exalted in the contemplative. Ezek. 1:21: *When the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels also were lifted up together, and followed them.*

Again, the cypress is medicinal in its foliage and leaves, and wisdom has medicine in its words. Ezek. 1:20: *For the spirit of life was in the wheels.* In the same, 47:12: *The fruits thereof shall be for food, and the leaves thereof for medicine.*

Again, these are the words of Christ: *I was exalted like a cedar*, etc., and, *like a cypress tree on Mount Sion.* The cypress lays down the comeliness of its foliage under no blow; in which is signified the ancient conversation of the doctors, who lay it down neither for praise nor under any blow of temptation; and therefore they are fit to be exalted, if only they are *on Mount Sion*, that is, in the eminence of contemplation, through caution against vices. Habakkuk 2:1: *I will stand upon my watch.* And Christ is exalted *like a cypress*: because he is magnified through their constant working, when it is attributed to him.

Chapter 6, §7: Libanus

Libanus. Hence, Ecclus. 24:21, Mary says: *As Libanus not cut I perfumed my dwelling place*, etc. Note, as the Canterbury writer says, that *hic Libanus* is used for the mountain, *haec Libanus* for the tree. But by metonymy the author has put the name of the mountain for the tree growing on the mountain. Therefore above he says of the tree, *Libanus not cut*, when he should have said *Libanus non incisa.* Libanus is a certain mountain of the Phoenicians, the boundary of Judaea towards the north, whose trees excel the timber of other woods in tallness, beauty and strength. By this mountain the blessed Virgin is signified because of the eminence of her virtues. For it bounds Judaea, which is interpreted *confession*, against the north, by which the devil is signified: because she mercifully keeps him away from the minds of those who truly confess. And as the trees of this mountain surpass all others in tallness, beauty and odor, so the virtues of the Virgin surpass all the virtues of the other saints. In the tallness the virtue of contemplation, or holy desires; in the beauty virginity, or holy examples; in the redness charity, strong as death; humility supporting every virtue, and the virtue of patience, are figured. And Libanus is sometimes taken for the mountain, as has been said, sometimes for the tree growing on the mountain, as above; and in both senses it is interpreted *whiteness.* But sometimes it is taken for frankincense: because *Libanus* in Greek is *thus* in Latin; for frankincense is the gum of that tree which is called *Libanus*; and of the three we shall treat in order.

By the name of Mount Libanus, then, is designated the so noble loftiness of Mary, which the excellence of her childbearing gives her. And by what is said of the tree Libanus, *as Libanus not cut*, her unblemished virginity. By what follows, *I perfumed*, the fruitfulness of the mother is designated. She says, then: *I perfumed my dwelling place*, that is, the humanity of Christ, in which he dwelt with men; I breathed it forth after the manner of an aromatic vapor. For as the earth or a garden breathes out vapor, and by such an exhalation is not torn or corrupted, so the blessed Virgin bore the Saviour, that virginity might be kept unblemished in her. Or, *I perfumed*, that is, I begot him who is the vapor of the power of God. Or, *I perfumed*, that is, I brought him forth without injury: because, as vapor proceeds from hot water or *(p. 754)* some other thing, the thing itself remaining whole, so Christ, designated by Abel, who is interpreted *vapor*, proceeded from the Virgin. Wis. 7:25 it is said of Christ: *She is a vapour of the power of God*, etc.

Otherwise: Libanus not cut is frankincense whole: which, if it is touched by fire, sending its vapor upward, makes its dwelling manifest. So the blessed Virgin, as it were inflamed by love as by fire, by working through love and by referring to God the works both of precept and of counsel, showed that her conversation was in heaven, through a pure intention. Hence she says above: *I dwelt in the highest places.* Through pure intention. Hence too she says, Cant. 3:4: *I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and I will not let him go.* As if to say: I seek nothing else.

Or thus: *I perfumed my dwelling place*, that is, Christ, who is my dwelling. For Christ was the dwelling of the Virgin actively and passively. Actively: because he dwelt bodily in her for nine months. Passively: because the blessed Virgin, like all the just, dwelt in him spiritually. Hence, Acts 17:28, the Apostle says: *For in him we live, and move, and are.* Or, *I perfumed*, he says: because, as a vessel of the apothecaries savors and smells of the aromatics it contains, even when the aromatics themselves have been removed, how much more did the womb of the blessed Virgin breathe the fragrances of all the virtues, in which womb he who is every good lay for so many months and never departed from her mind.

Or thus: *I perfumed my dwelling place*, as if she said: Those who are my dwelling, namely the humble and chaste, inhabited by grace, I make fragrant and aromatic and delightful.

Otherwise, of Libanus: Libanus is the tree of frankincense, from which is born *colibanum*, that is, the brightest incense, and it is interpreted *whiteness*, and signifies the whiteness of virginity. And Christ, who was offered to the Father, kindled by the fervor of the passion into an odor of sweetness, is designated by the gum of this tree. And the chastity of Mary is called *Libanus not cut*: because without injury to her virginity she conceived and bore the Saviour. For the chastity of other married women, Libanus, is cut: because they conceive by the work of a man. But Mary, like Libanus not cut, brought forth her gum, her Son, without being cut.

Or, *Libanus*, as they say, is a tree in Arabia, like the laurel in bark and leaf, sending out sap in the manner of the almond, which is gathered twice a year, namely in autumn and in spring. But the autumn gathering is prepared by cutting the bark in the heat of summer, a rich foam springing out, which when solidified grows thick: and this is the white frankincense. But when the tree is not cut, the frankincense is solidified in it, most sweet, and keeps its odor in itself. Mary says, then: *As Libanus not cut I perfumed my dwelling place*: because I gathered a holy conversation in the mind: I did not let it out through the cutting of flattery or of pride, but I hid it, solidified within me, that I might sweetly perfume the dwelling of the mind to the Lord, and not shamelessly publish it to the people.

Again otherwise, Libanus is the name of a mountain which is rich in pasture and fertile in grasses: and there the calves were fed for offering in sacrifice. Hence: *And shall break them in pieces as a calf of Libanus*, that is, he will humble them so that they are ready to be offered for Christ, who before through pride were as it were cedars. That mountain also was watered by springs and planted most thickly with aromatic trees, which, if they were cut, the mountain would be deprived of odor. She says, then, *as Libanus not cut*, while it still sprouts and is fragrant with aromatic *(p. 755)* trees. *I perfumed the dwelling* of my mind, so as to offer to the Lord a sacrifice sweetly fragrant.

Or, because *Libanus* in Greek means *thus*, frankincense: and frankincense placed whole in the fire gives back a greater abundance of smoke than if it is cut and broken. By the smoke of this frankincense is signified in the Virgin the action of thanks for the benefits bestowed on her, and the rightness of her intention: because smoke rises upward.

Or, these can be the words of Christ, who is Libanus, that is, *the brightness of eternal light*: who whitens by grace black sinners: who is called *not cut*, because he was offered for us of his own will on the cross, as is said, Isa. 53:7. Hence he says, John 10:18: *No man taketh my life*, etc. For in cutting violence is used. *I perfumed*, that is, I have made fragrant and delightful *my dwelling place*, that is, the womb of the Virgin, which is my bridal chamber; or the Church, which is my hall; or the soul in which I dwell through grace, which is my seat and throne: for the hearts of the saints are as it were fragrant censers, from which the odor and smoke are sent forth from the hand of the Angel, that is, of Christ. This vapor too is prayer, which fattens the virtues, and without which they are dry.

Again, of this Libanus it is said, Cant. 5:15: *His form as of Libanus, excellent as the cedars.* Libanus is whiteness: because Christ according to his Godhead is *the brightness of eternal light.* Or, *as of Libanus*, which is the tree of frankincense, which tree indeed is very lowly and modest: and all that flows from it is good for medicine and for the honor and worship of God. So too whatever flowed from Christ in the passion, namely sweat, tears, blood and water, was a medicine for the human race and an honor to God the Father. Or, *as of Libanus* the mountain, whose form this is, that it surpasses the whole land of promise, and that its summit is perpetually snowy, and that from that same mountain perpetually flow down streams watering the land of promise. Hence it is said, Cant. 4:15: *Which run with a strong stream from Libanus.* Of these two, Jer. 18:14: *Shall the snow of Libanus fail from the rock of the field? Or can the cold waters that gush out and*

run down be taken away?

Libanus also has cedars higher than the other trees. This is the beauty of the bridegroom, whose summit, that is, mind, is snowy with the whiteness of perpetual virginity, whose height surpasses the whole land of promise, that is, the Church of the saints; from whom the streams of graces and of doctrines coming down water and fill the whole Church of the saints; and of whose fullness all receive. The most lofty cedars in Libanus are the most eminent virtues in Christ. One may however understand by the snowy summit his entry into the world, snowy with the whiteness of incorruption. For others, vicious by the law of being born and of begetting, have as it were a bloody entry: but he snowy with the entire purity of holiness. Or, in the snowy summit, the purity of his intention in all things.

There follows: *As a cedar.* (Look above under the heading that Mary is the cedar.)

Chapter 6, §8: The Plane Tree

And the plane tree. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:19: *As a plane tree by the water in the streets was I exalted.* Wisdom is the plane tree, which because of the breadth of its foliage, that is, of its words, is named from *platys*, which means *broad.* And its leaves are good for making shields: because the words of sacred Scripture are shields against the darts of heretics and of temptations. Hence the Lord, *(p. 756)* to each of the devil's temptations, opposed the authorities of sacred Scripture as shields. Therefore Jerome says: "Love the sayings of the Scriptures, and you will not love the vices of the flesh." And wisdom is exalted in the streets: because, as is said, Prov. 1:20: *Wisdom*, that is, Christ, *preacheth abroad*, that is, openly and plainly. Hence, Isa. 45:19: *I the Lord have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth.* Or, *abroad*, that is, through all creatures. Hence Augustine: "Thy nod, O Lord, is all the beauty of creatures: for all cry out, God made us." And Job 12:7: *Ask the beasts*, etc.

She uttereth her voice in the streets, that is, in the breadth of the common people, calling back from the broad and spacious way which leads to destruction. There follows: *At the head of the multitudes she crieth out*, that is, in a place frequented by men, not once but often she cries out.

Christ too, like the plane tree, has broad leaves: because, spread out on the cross, he makes shade for sinners. Or, the Gentiles are signified by the thief: because in his shadow he was saved. Lam. 4:20: *To whom we said: Under thy shadow we shall live among the Gentiles.* For on the cross he spread out the leaves of sacred Scripture, and the words of his passion are shields and protect, as has been said above. Hence, Lam. 3:65: *Thou shalt give them, O Lord, a buckler of heart, thy labour.* Which is done when the passion of the Lord is preached. Soft too through pity, and tender through compassion, most of all in the leaves, that is, in the words: because *the law of clemency is on her tongue.* And it is as it were a small and broad tree, ready to receive and refresh all who are inflamed by an evil fire. Hence he says, Matt. 11:28: *Come to me, all you that labour*, etc. *In the streets*: because he gave hope to the despairing, saying, Ezek. 18:32: *I desire not the death of him that dieth, but that he be converted and live, saith the Lord God: return ye and live.* Or, the streets are subjects, who widen the Church, and who are namely designated by doctrine through water. Hence, Nahum 3:14: *Draw thee water for the siege*, that is, the doctrine of sacred Scripture: because you are besieged by enemies.

Mary too says: *As a plane tree by the water in the streets was I exalted.* The plane tree, making shade with broad leaves, outwardly refreshes, and water inwardly. Now man is heated in two ways: outwardly by tribulations, inwardly by temptations and concupiscences. That the blessed Virgin, then, might show a full refreshment, she is called a plane tree *by the water*: because she affords a remedy against the heat of outward tribulation and of inward concupiscence or temptation. And for this she is worthy to be exalted and praised *in the streets*, that is, among the peoples.

Mary is the plane tree. Because the plane is called *platys* in Greek, which is *latus*, broad, in Latin. Or, because it is a spreading tree, which with its branches spread out makes rich shade, and affords a fit shelter for those wearied by the excessive heat of the sun. The sun is Christ, whose sun-heat is the anger of his justice and vengeance, which anger namely she tempers by her prayers for sinners who devoutly and faithfully entreat her. She shows herself none the less spreading to sinners, all, as far as in her lies, ready to receive them under her protection, and to refresh the wicked burnt by fire. And note that where the leaves are broad, there the shade is great; and great is the shade of her protection: for she protects against carnal concupiscence, because a virgin; against the wind of worldly vanity, because most humble; against the temptations of riches, because most poor; against the heat of the sun, because mother of the sun of justice. Love Mary, then, and serve her, that *the sun may not burn thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

Otherwise: the shade of this plane tree can be called the incarnation of the Word of God in her, whom the *(p. 757)* Holy Spirit overshadowed for this, that he might prepare her as a shelter for the Church. For shade is from light, and an opaque body set against the light. And then the plane tree gave back most abundant shade, when the light of the incorporeal Godhead took the body of our humanity in her.

A tree barren of fruit. And Mary, vowing virginity, preferred barrenness to fruitfulness by intercourse. Hence of her it is said, Wis. 3:13: *Happy is the barren and the undefiled*, etc., *she shall have fruit*, etc.

Like the vine in its leaves. And Mary in her ways is like her Son, who is the vine. Hence the cloud which went up from the sea is said to have had *as it were the footstep of a man.* Osee 10:1: *Israel a vine full of branches*, that is, Mary: *the fruit*, that is, Christ, *is agreeable to it.*

Again, from the plane tree cups are made, with which wine is pledged: which is the most pleasant preaching that is made of the blessed Virgin.

A soft tree and tender in its leaves: because she is loving and compassionate to sinners, whom she instructs by words and examples in the spirit of gentleness: because *the law of clemency is on her tongue.* (Look under the heading of her wisdom.)

It is planted beside the waters by the affection of mercy, that is, beside sinners flowing away to vices. For she is near to all who call upon her in truth. And she is near to all who are troubled in heart. And well, *by the waters*, that is, by the flowing peoples, whom she is always ready to help: because, as is said, Ecclus. 40:16: *The greenness above every water.* And note that a tree beside water copiously draws moisture, from which it receives greenness: and she does not wither in these streets, so as to withdraw, affected by weariness of sinners, the protection of her foliage or branches, that is, of her prayers and patronage.

Otherwise: she says she was exalted *by the water*, not in the water: because she was married, but did not use marriage. *In the streets* of cities, or of churches.

Otherwise: *I was exalted* from earthly to heavenly things, *by the water*, that is, according to the doctrine of her Son, which taught humility, Matt. 11:29, saying: *Learn of me*, etc.: by which, namely, I was exalted by the water of heavenly wisdom; *in the streets* of Jerusalem, the city on high: because he who humbles himself after my example will be exalted.

There follows: *In the streets.* The streets are their hearts widened by charity. Tob. 13:22: *All its streets*, namely of Jerusalem, *shall be paved with white and clean stones.* Water in the street is grace in a heart broad through charity and level through simplicity. And in such a heart Mary is exalted.

Otherwise: *I was exalted in the streets*, namely among those reprobates who are set in the broad ways which lead to death. Lam. 4:8: *They are not known in the streets*, that is, they are eternally reprobate: because in such streets, the frailer they are, the more they need a fuller mercy. And in these streets she is as it were a plane tree, protecting them with copious mercy, lest they be at once snatched into hell; but they are mercifully awaited for penance, lest the devil prevail to overthrow them as much as he would wish.

Or, she says she was exalted *in the streets*, that is, in manifold breadth: because a Virgin with virgins, a widow with widows, married with the married. Hence she says, Ps. 118:45: *And I walked at large.*

Or otherwise: the plane tree, as has been said, has broad leaves. And Mary is the plane tree, because abounding in doctrine. For since she *kept all these words* which were said of her Son, *pondering them in her heart*, and out of the abundance *(p. 758)* of the heart she could speak prudently and securely. She is exalted, then, *in the streets* of the city, that is, of the Church, that is, in the Apostles, who were all common, procuring the usefulness of all. Hence Paul says, 1 Cor. 9:22: *I became all things to all men.* The streets too are trodden down, in which is the humility of the disciples of him who says, Matt. 11:29: *Learn of me*, etc. The streets too are the way for others, and the Apostles were the way for all by example. Hence they are called *the salt of the earth*, because they furnished the seasoning of life to all. Tob. 13:22: *All its streets shall be paved with white and clean stones.* In these streets the blessed Virgin was exalted through the abundance of her doctrine, by which she taught them, as a plane tree beside the water, literally: for she opened her mouth to declare the secrets of wisdom. (Look under the heading of her wisdom.)

Or again, she is called *a plane tree by the water* for this reason: because, as the branches or trees planted beside the waters help those who are drowning in the waters to get out, so she too helps to get out of the waters of carnal concupiscence and of other sins, by her prayers, merits and examples. She helps, I say, if they lay hold of her by faith and love, and by the hands of good working for her honor and glory, which is good for those who do it.

Chapter 6, §9: Cinnamon

Cinnamon. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:20: *I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm: I yielded a sweet odour like the best myrrh.* Cinnamon is a tree so called as if *cannamomum*: because its bark is round after the manner of a reed. *Canna* in Hebrew is *calamus*, reed, in Latin. And when it is broken, it sends out a breath after the manner of a mist or of dust. Myrrh grows in Arabia, and is like the thorn which they call *acanthus.* The Arabs feed their fires with its twigs, whose smoke is so harmful that, unless they ran to the odor of storax, they would very often contract incurable diseases. But the Troglodyte myrrh is named from an island of Arabia, where the better and purer is gathered. And where we have *as cinnamon*, another reading has *aspaltum* for cinnamon. And *aspaltum* is a moderate and fragrant tree, red or of a ruddy color, with white thorns, from whose root an ointment is made. Mary says, then: *I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm*: pity and humility, which two are figured in the cinnamon and balm. Whoever stinks, let him run to Mary, that he may be scented by her. And cinnamon is sometimes taken for the tree, sometimes for the bark of the tree. Let us see first of the tree, secondly of the bark.

Again, the cinnamon tree grows in foreign and distant regions, namely in India or Ethiopia, literally. By which is signified that even to the remotest regions the veneration of the glorious Virgin is held, as she herself says, Luke 1:48: *All generations shall call me blessed.* Mary is also honored by those who were shamefully wicked sinners, and through her mercy wishes to be honored by them. Mystically, the foreign region is the life of the sinner, as is said of the prodigal son, Luke 15:13, that he *went abroad into a far country*: for the life of the sinner is a region foreign to God and to the human condition: because man was not made for sinning, but for serving God, who *hath commanded no man to do wickedly, and he hath given no man licence to sin.*

Of two cubits: and this property *(p. 759)* befits the mother and the Son equally. For as he was the Son of God and remained the Son of God, and began to be man, so that he could truly say: I am what I was, namely God; and I was not what I am, namely man; now I am called both, namely God and man; so Mary after childbirth can say: I am what I was, namely a virgin; and I was not what I am, that is, a mother; now I am called both, that is, mother and virgin. And these are the two cubits by which the dignity of Mary is measured, namely virginity and fruitfulness. Therefore it is said, Ecclus. 26:19: *Grace upon grace*, etc. The grace of fruitfulness

upon the grace of virginity. And note that both always came from a special grace of the Holy Spirit. Look for the concordance in the doubled cloak. But that she was made the mother of God is above every grace: and this the preposition *upon* figures.

Medicinal: because from Mary was taken the flesh of Christ, by which the human race was healed. Ecclus. 38:4: *The Most High hath created*, etc. Hence on that saying of the Apostle, Heb. 7:2, where it is said that Levi was tithed in Abraham, the Gloss says that Christ did not draw from his mother the fever of the wound, but the matter of the medicines.

It is said to have very thin and fine twigs, reaching upward, which as it were fold back upon themselves, by which are designated the thoughts of the Virgin, spiritual above all other saints, sublime and fine, and tending to God. These twigs were folded back upon themselves: because the thoughts of Mary were turned back upon herself through her discussion of herself. Hence she said: *Behold the handmaid,* etc. Behold the folding back. Again, Luke 2:19: *Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.* Behold the gathering of the twigs.

Otherwise: the thinness and uprightness of the twigs designate in her the thinness of poverty and her uprightness from earthly things.

Again, the bark of cinnamon is strong, by which is designated in the Virgin the virtue of patience, which is set against the tribulations of rains, hail and winds, lest the spiritual greenness wither. Assign the patience of Mary. And this bark is said to be of three colors, namely ashen, or blackish, or according to the natural philosophers citron-yellow. The color of the Virgin was as it were ashen, that is, despised, either because of poverty, or because she was reckoned corrupt by the Jews. Hence they said of her Son, Matt. 13:55, contemptuously: *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?* etc. And she was blackish in the afflictions which her Son endured before the passion; but reddish or as it were citron through compassion in the passion of her Son.

Round and fine: because Mary was round through heavenly conversation, and fine of substance through the maceration of the flesh, poverty, humility and contemplation. (Look under the heading of the rose.)

Wrinkled: in which is signified the frugality of the Virgin: because wrinkles come from lack of food. And frugality is the knowledge of avoiding superfluous worship and expense.

Of ashen color, which is cheap and despised: in which is signified the love of poverty and contempt of the world: for through these two she chose rather to grow cheap in the world than to shine, to be despised than to be prized. And therefore she says she *gave the odor of cinnamon*: because she gave an example of despising whatever is glorious in the world: for truly she was poor in spirit through poverty; and, as blessed Bernard says: "The truly humble man does not wish to be proclaimed humble, but to be reckoned vile."

Otherwise: the ashen color is a dead color: but under this color a living savor lies hidden in the cinnamon. And Mary was dead to the world, and therefore she savored, nay, tasted the aromatic sweetnesses of paradise. Again, by reason of the ashen color it signifies those who say with Abraham: *I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes. (p. 760)* For Mary, the daughter of Abraham, felt and spoke the same of herself.

It tastes sharp with sweetness. Hence she is read to have rebuked Theophilus: behold the sharpness; and she consoled him: behold the sweetness.

Of intense sweetness: because her conversation, as long as she was in the world, was sweet to imitate, and is still most sweet to recall.

The thinner and finer it is, the sweeter, dearer and more fragrant. So Mary, the more slender through humility and the finer through abstinence and poverty, the more pleasing to God through merit, and the more fragrant to the world through example.

At the heat of the sun it is separated from the trunk: because for the love of the Sun of justice she was separated from the love of her flesh, which is signified by the trunk, nay, from all flesh. Hence she is called not flesh but *soul*, where the theme in the Annunciation is read: *As cold water to a thirsty soul*, that is, to Mary, *so is good news*, that is, Gabriel sent to her, *from a far country*, that is, from heaven.

When it is broken it sends out a visible breath: because when the prerogative of Mary is opened, its effect is felt as it were visibly and manifestly: as when a clove is chewed, both the one tasting is refreshed and those standing by are revived by the odor.

The more it is rubbed, the greater fragrance of odor it sends out. And the more Mary was afflicted in her Son, with the greater fragrance of odor she scented both Churches: because thus she was made not only a martyr, but even more than a martyr.

It spices wine. And Mary spices the wine of preaching, the wine also of compunction and of tears: for through her they hope to come to the mercy of her Son.

It is medicinal, and avails much against syncope, that is, failure of heart: which was designated at the wedding, John 2:3, when she obtained the wine from her Son. Which she also does daily, when she supplies to the tepid the fervor of devotion that is creeping away.

It consolidates wounds. The consolidation of spiritual wounds is the security of hope and the pardon of sinners. These two she did for Theophilus.

It stays a flux, namely that flooding of which it is had, Osee 4:2: *Cursing and lying*, as far as, *have overflowed.*

It strengthens those who taste it, as appears in the great father Basil fearing Julian the Apostate, and likewise in Theophilus.

It gives savor to the confections to which it is mixed. For there is no discourse which is not the sweeter if mention of her is made in it. Hence, Ecclus. 49:2: *His memory shall be sweet as honey in every mouth.* Therefore too she is aromatical cinnamon: because everywhere she spreads the odor of her pity and mercy and of all her virtues.

It makes the mouth of one eating and chewing it fragrant. An example is Jostius the monk, in whose mouth, eyes and ears five roses of choice color and odor were found when he died, who every day most devoutly sang five prayers of the blessed Virgin. And this happened in the abbey of St Bertin at Saint-Omer.

Again, by the fact that Mary compares herself to cinnamon, she shows that she perfectly despised the world, and left us an example of perfect contempt of the world. For the cinnamon tree, as has been said, has very thin and upright twigs; and in the thinness is noted the thinness of poverty, and the uprightness from earthly things: because the twig is upright; in the ashen color the love of that poverty, which does not wish to shine in the world, as neither does ash shine, but rather to grow cheap like cheap ash. Therefore, then, she says she is *like cinnamon* for three reasons: because she gave a perfect example of despising everything worldly.

(p. 761) Christ is cinnamon. Because of ashen color: because he took from the Virgin flesh like that of a sinner. For the ashen color is despised, and such was the presence of the Saviour among the Jews: whence some said, Mark 6:3: *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?* etc. *And they were scandalized in his regard.* Or rather, in the passion there was no beauty in him nor comeliness. And he was dead in body, but lived in his Godhead, as in cinnamon there is a dead color, and under it a living savor lies hid.

The more he was rubbed for our crimes, the greater fragrance of odor he sent out: because, the alabaster box of his body being broken on the cross, the house, that is, the Church, both Churches, was filled with the odor of the ointment.

Broken on the cross, he sent out a visible breath as it were a mist of the odor of sweetness to appease the anger of the Father. Hence, Wis. 18:21: *For a blameless man made haste,* etc. Which is read literally of Aaron, but is properly interpreted of Christ alone. And then, as he himself said, Ecclus. 24:6: *As a cloud I covered all the earth* from the anger of the Father, as from the heat of the sun. As also a cloud, setting itself against the heat of the sun and receiving it, is scattered, so also his flesh in the passion. (That his flesh is designated by the cloud you had under the heading of the garden, §7.)

Sacred Scripture is cinnamon. Because sacred Scripture, or also wisdom, when it is broken by manifold exposition, spices the wine of doctrine and the wine of compunction, giving hope to the despairing. Ezek. 18:32: *I desire not the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: return ye and live.*

It is of ashen color, imprinting on our hearts the memory of the end. Hence Plato: "This is the highest philosophy, the continual remembrance of death." Ecclus. 7:40: *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.*

Sweet and medicinal: for it heals the languors of souls, and promises future reward, and stays the incentives of vices. Jerome: "Love the sayings of the Scriptures, and you will not love the vices of the flesh." Wisdom also says: *I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon.*

Cinnamon is of ashen color, by which is understood fear, which makes vile and reduces to ashes. As if wisdom said: I gave them the fear by which they are fragrant, so that their spirit is raised up from evil. For fragrant things comfort, and most of all those which restrain.

Again, holy men are properly called cinnamon, who, living in the ashes of penance, mindful of the Lord's passion, in which *he hath set his tabernacle in the sun,* when he exposed his body to the heat of the passion, for love of the Sun of justice are separated as it were from a fourfold trunk: from the world, from their own and domestic flesh, that is, from carnal friends, from their own sense and their own will; from such trunks they must be separated who wish to do fruitful penance and to imitate the Lord's passion.

Chapter 6, §10: Myrrh

I yielded a sweet odour like the chosen myrrh. Myrrh is a tree in Arabia growing five cubits high, fragrant, like the white thorn, which distils a certain drop, green and bitter: which drop is likewise called myrrh, sometimes when the bark is cut, sometimes without cutting of the bark. Which also is of such *(p. 762)* power that it is said to preserve dead bodies anointed with it from rottenness, worms and stench. That which flows of its own accord is more precious, and is called *the chosen myrrh.* But that which flows out through cutting of the bark is cheaper and of less efficacy. This drop also is medicinal.

And wisdom is compared to the chosen myrrh: because it teaches the spontaneous mortification of the flesh, the Apostle saying, Col. 3:5: *Mortify your members,* etc. It teaches also perfect continence, which is the chosen myrrh, if it be voluntary: for penance and continence are the common bitternesses for the depression of the flesh. And these two give odor to others, because they edify: yet they do not give the sweetness of odor unless they are chosen myrrh, that is, penance and continence that are voluntary.

Mary also says: *I yielded a sweet odour like the chosen myrrh.*

Mary is myrrh: because myrrh is a tree in Arabia, which is interpreted *evening* or *setting.* Myrrh is interpreted *bitterness.* Mary is a bitter sea because of the many bitternesses which she endured in her Son. And she was a myrrh tree in the evening of the passion of her Son: for she had been a tree of gladness when she said: *My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.* But of bitterness, when the Sun of justice set.

It is a tree of five cubits, by which it grows on high. These cubits are her cleansing in the womb, whence some celebrate this feast, the nativity, the annunciation, the purification, the assumption; so that the first cubit is the interval of time between the cleansing and the nativity, and so of the others.

Like a thorn. By thorns are understood sinners. Hence Mary appeared as it were a thorn when she observed the law given for women who had conceived of men, and the custom.

It distils a drop which is green and bitter. That drop is Christ, the Son of Mary, green, which color is referred to heavenly things: because Christ came from heaven into the Virgin; bitterness is referred to the passion.

Christ is the drop of myrrh: because this drop by the sharpness of heat is caught as with birdlime about its tree: because Christ by the virtue of surpassing love clung to his mother who brought him up. Hence, Luke 2:51: *He went down with them, and came to Nazareth*, etc.

This drop is precious, by whose price we have been redeemed. Job 28:13: *Man knoweth not the price thereof.* Of this price the cross was the balance: and because it outweighed sin, sin being taken away, the passion went down into the earth. Amos 9:6: *He hath founded his bundle upon the earth.* He outweighed also the debt of the detention of many in hell. Hence, he descending to death, burial and hell, they were raised up from hell. Therefore of the cross it has been excellently said:

“Made the balance of his body, it bore away the prey of Tartarus.”

The drop flowing of its own accord is more precious than that drawn out by a wound of the bark. And Christ came out at his nativity from the Virgin’s womb closed and sealed. Of his own accord also he offered himself to the passion for us. Hence, John 18:4, he went forth to meet those coming to take him. Therefore he is compared to the camel: because of his own accord he bowed himself to bear the burdens of our infirmity. Luke 18:25: *It is easier for a camel*, etc.

This drop is bright within: because Christ kindled the light of the Godhead in the shell of our mortality: and therefore it is darkened outwardly like a shell.

It preserves the bodies of the dead anointed with it from rottenness, worms and stench: which is done when after his example we do penance. Rottenness is avarice, the worm pride, the stench lust. Pride: Augustine: “The worm of riches is pride.”

Chapter 6, §10 (continued): Myrrh

(p. 763) It is of choice odor. Hence it is said here: *I yielded a sweet odour like the chosen myrrh*, against that odor of which the harlot says, Prov. 7:17: *I have perfumed my bed with myrrh and aloes*, etc. This harlot is vanity or pleasure. The bed is worldly delight. But the just ought to attend in this myrrh not to the delight, nor the odor, but the bitterness of the punishment that follows. For all pleasure is sprinkled with myrrh: because *laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy.* But the myrrh of the passion of Christ was most bitter to Christ suffering it: but it is most sweet and of choice odor to the Christian recalling it. For nothing is sweeter to a captive than if he hears the price of his redemption counted out: which is done when the articles of the passion are distinguished. The taste of myrrh, then, is bitter and its odor sweet.

The drop of myrrh is round: because through it the entry into eternal glory has been opened to us.

This drop is hot and dry. For Christ was very hot when he said: *I thirst.* Hence, as the sun draws up a bitter drop, so Christ then drew the thief to himself and sweetened him.

This drop is medicinal in at least four ways. First, because it stays the humors flowing from the head: because the memory of the Crucified crushes thoughts of presumption, as appears in Peter, who, recalling Christ suffering, had his cross turned. Second, because it avails against tightness of the chest. By the chest knowledge, by the tightness narrow knowledge, which the passion of Christ wonderfully widened. Third, because when chewed it takes away the stench of the mouth, which is to speak lofty things, boasting. Hence, Isa. 43:26: *Put me in remembrance, and let us plead together: tell if thou hast any thing to justify thyself.*

Fourth, because it consumes the rottenness of wounds, which is the repetition of sin. Hence: *My sores are putrified and corrupted*: because those who fall again crucify again to themselves the Son of God.

According to what has been said above, Mary is the myrrh tree, whose drop is Christ the Lord: yet because according to the letter this is read of the blessed Virgin, the blessed Virgin is compared to the drop of myrrh. It must be noted, then, that the myrrh tree designates Judaea because of the bitterness of sinners, to whom it is said, Jer. 2:21: *How then art thou turned unto me into bitterness*, where our other reading has *into that which is good for nothing?* This tree in Arabia was at the time of the blessed Virgin in failure, because it was tending to failure. The five cubits of this tree were made by the kingdom and the synagogue, which synagogue, as Gregory says, was divided into four, after the four corners of the house of Job's sons: the princes of the priests, the scribes, the elders of the people, and the Pharisees: and all these were like a thorn through the many prickings of sins. From this tree flowed the blessed Virgin like a drop of myrrh, so that she can say: *I yielded a sweet odour like the chosen myrrh.* The rest is gathered according to this process from what was said above.

She is called, then, *the chosen myrrh.* And that myrrh is chosen which flows from the tree without a wound: and it designates that bitter mortification of the flesh which the soul wounded by no wound of sin brings forth. Such myrrh the blessed Virgin distilled, who, though she had no wound of sin, yet took care to mortify herself in many ways. And such mortification, or myrrh, is chosen because of God. Hence she says, Cant. 5:1: *I have gathered my myrrh*, etc. And this myrrh is first *most approved*, as is said in the same place, v. 5; and *chosen*, as above. Less precious is the penance of sinners than the penance of the just. And note that the Lord reaped this myrrh in her assumption: *(p. 764)* and therefore it was just that her assumption should be celebrated in the month of August, when the crops are reaped.

Again, Mary is compared to myrrh. Because, as myrrh preserves bodies anointed with it from corruption, so Mary by the grace of her merits, examples and prayers preserves her familiars from the corruption of lust. Myrrh is approved conjugal chastity, more approved the continence of widows, most approved virginal chastity, which she before others chose, in the extermination of the law which held virginity in reproach. Therefore she says, Cant. 5:5: *My fingers*, that is, my discreet thoughts and affections, *were full of the choicest myrrh*: because I think of virginity. And therefore she gave not only the odor through the example of virginity, but the sweetness of odor, so as to entice many to the purpose of virginity. For it is not the odor that entices, but the sweetness of the odor. Hence, Ps. 44:15: *After her shall virgins be brought to the king.*

Chapter 6, §11: Storax

And storax. Ecclus. 24:21: *As storax, and galbanum, and onycha, and stacte.* To these four the blessed Virgin compares herself because of the four cardinal virtues, in which she instructs us by example. In the storax is her fortitude, which appeared in the passion of her Son. For storax is a tear which is gathered in the dog days, by which the fervor of persecutions is figured: and then the purgations are painful: because Christ, with whom his mother suffered with compassion, suffering on the cross, purged the diseases of our souls: and then the fortitude of Mary appeared most manifestly. For she was that strong woman whom Solomon sought but did not find, saying: *Who shall find a valiant woman?* But Simeon found her when he said to her, Luke 2:35: *Thy own soul a sword shall pierce*, etc. (Look under the heading of her martyrdom, the tenth prerogative.)

Morally: by the storax is signified the patience of the saints, which is manifested in the fervor of their charity, by which namely patience they themselves are purged, though its nature is most troublesome. Luke 21:19: *In your patience you shall possess your souls.*

Otherwise: according to Isidore, the storax is a tree of Arabia like the quince, whose little twigs, within the dog days, are hollowed and pour out tears; which tear, falling to the ground, is unclean: but when it clings to

its own bark, or to a reed, and keeps itself up, then it is clean. And this tear is properly whitish, at length becoming tawny by the action of the sun. And this drop is called *storax calamites*, which is preserved in a reed: and it is rich, resinous, moist, of pleasant odor, and sending out as it were a honeyed liquid. And it is called *storax* because it is the drop of a tree flowing out and congealed. For the Greeks call a drop *stiria*: in Greek *styrax*, in Latin *storax.* Hence the verse:

"And the white icicle hangs from the spreading branches."

Mary is called storax. Because storax is a tree of Arabia, which is interpreted *of the plain*: because a plain is fruitful and broad and diligently tilled. Likewise the blessed Virgin was tilled by the diligence of the Holy Spirit the husbandman, and brought us that precious corn by which men and Angels are fed in the sacrament. John 12:24: *Unless the grain of wheat*, etc. She is broad too through a multitude of pity and bowels of mercy. (Look under the heading of the earth, where the properties of a plain are described.) The drop of this tree is at first white, afterwards made dusky by the heat of the sun. This drop is Christ the Lord, white through innocence and purity of soul: *(p. 765)* because he did no sin; but by the heat of the sun, that is, the fervor of the passion, he was made as it were tawny, and as it were reddish in their sight. Hence the bride says: *My beloved is white and ruddy*. Likewise also the blessed Virgin is white through virginity, but in the passion of her Son she was made tawny and as it were reddish through compassion. Hence she says, Cant. 1:5: *I am brown, because the sun hath altered my colour*, that is, Christ, with whom I suffered in mind.

She is called *calamites*: because so great a grace of the mother of the Son is preserved in the reed of perfect humility.

She is rich through the devotion which she supplies to her servants. Hence the mother with the Son promises this richness to those who obey them, Isa. 55:2: *Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good: and your soul shall be delighted in fatness.*

Of honeyed liquid. Hence the mother says with the Son: *My spirit is sweet above honey*, etc.

Of pleasant odor: because both are, in those who are saved, the odor of life unto life.

Moistened by watering others with benefits and doctrines.

A drop flowing forth: because it is congealed and compacted, effectively giving perseverance.

Outwardly as it were dark, but within as it were bright, as was said above of myrrh.

It drips in the heat of summer: because *not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us*, God. Or because out of charity he preached the Gospel to us. Ezek. 21:2: *Son of man … drop toward the sanctuaries.*

This tear flows hollowed out by the cutting of the bark: because Christ, cut on the cross, with five wounds poured out from the hollow of his body water and blood for us, and the sacraments of the Church.

Being cold, it warms. And Mary is signified by Abisag, who warmed the cold David.

It takes away superfluous things. So also Christ, saying, Luke 11:41: *That which remaineth, give alms.*

It softens hard things. Ezek. 36:26: *I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh.*

It is said to cure bleariness of the eyes: and this by bestowing the virtue of discretion.

It is said to cure cough and rheums, that is, superfluous thoughts and cares.

It is said to make firm loose teeth, that is, the virtues by which the soul is fed after its manner.

It softens at the fire like wax.

Those who burn an urn of myrrh feel an intolerable and dangerous stench, unless they are helped by the smoke of the same storax.

Morally: the tear of storax falling to the ground is unclean. These are the sordid tears of hypocrites: because they are poured out for the cupidity of earthly things or for the praises of worldly men. But the tears of the just, weeping for the watered land above and out of divine love, are clean. And of them the Psalmist says, Ps. 55:9, to the Lord: *Thou hast set my tears in thy sight*, as good wine before great men.

Chapter 6, §12: Galbanum

According to Isidore, galbanum is the sap of the fennel-giant. Others say that galbanum is born in Syria, like the herb which is called *ferula*, and sends out a drop like resin, which heals wounds and puts serpents to flight. On Exodus 30:34 the Gloss says that galbanum is the sap of the *ferula*, and the best is born in Syria, *(p. 766)* cartilaginous and less woody, by whose odor serpents are put to flight. And the *ferula* is a herb which, because of the seeds contained in its pods, makes a great rattling when it is moved: but it does little harm if anything is struck with it. The *ferula* also has a likeness to fennel, but a thicker and longer stalk.

Others say that galbanum is the drop of a certain shrub, from which shrub a liquid bursts forth, which is condensed about the shrub, and becomes galbanum: in which is signified the temperance of the blessed Virgin. The shrub is the human body, from which in summer, that is, in the fervor of charity, the liquid of purity bursts forth, that is, the love of temperance: because when charity exists in the soul, temperance is produced in the flesh: and this drop is condensed about the stalk, that is, the flesh: in which is noted perseverance in this virtue.

Galbanum signifies humility: because it heals abscesses.

It signifies hope: because it avails against cold passions: and hope cures the fear of evils, despair and the like, which are the cold passions of the soul. For Christ, who alone is properly the giver of virtues, and the blessed Virgin, who by praying commands virtues for us from him, give to the saints the odor as it were of galbanum, that is, the hope by which they persevere in adversities and shut out the fear of evils and the like. For hope is a prudent trader, which changes human ability into the ability of God. Isa. 40:31: *They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength.* For by the virtue of hope perseverance is had, which as it were puts one in possession even while the suit is still pending: because *man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.*

Chapter 6, §13: Onycha

The onycha is the same as the *onica*, which in Greek is called *unguis*, the nail. For *onyx* in Greek is *unguis* in Latin, and it has the shape of a human nail. And in the nail prudence is noted. Mary, then, gave odor *as onycha*: because the example of her prudence overflows to others. For she is the wise Virgin, who, having received the lamp, that is, outward honest conversation, took oil with her, that is, the testimony of a good conscience. She was also a prudent trader: because the love of creatures she wholly changed into the love of the Creator. For she had the prudence of the serpent, in exposing all for the head.

Again, the human nail is clear, so that it in a manner supplies the place of a mirror: which also befits prudence.

Again, the onycha purges scab, and by this signifies the virtue of abstinence.

Again, the nail is the end of the animal, because it is had in the feet, and signifies the consideration of the threefold end. The end of temporal things, which desert a man in death: and here it ought to instruct a man that the love of temporal things should not cling to him. The end of the pleasures and glory of the world, which namely pleasures for sinners are changed into torments, and glory into ignominy. Of these two, Apoc.

18:7, of the sinful soul: *As much as she hath glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her*. This is a definitive sentence. The end of one's own animal life, because man knows not his end, etc. Eccles. 9:1: *Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.* Christ, then, and the blessed Virgin give to the elect the sweetness of odor, so that they are as it were onycha through the consideration of this threefold end. Deut. 32:29: *O that (p. 767) they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end.* Ecclus. 7:40: *In all thy works*, etc. Lam. 1:9: *Her filthiness is on her feet*, etc.

Chapter 6, §14: The Drop

Now *drop* is a general name. But here that is called *drop* (*gutta*) which by another name is called *emoniaca*, and drips tears in the sands. Clinging to the sands it is useless; but when free of sand it cures all hardnesses: which well befits justice, which makes all things equal, rendering to each what is his own. And the justice of the Virgin, diligently considered, softens hard hearts, and from her fullness justice overflows by example. For she gave back to Gabriel, the messenger of God, a discreet answer, saying: *How shall this be done?* She gave praise to God, saying: *My soul doth magnify the Lord*, etc. She gave sufficient instruction to man, saying, John 2:5: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.*

Again, the drop, because it cures any hardness, signifies the humiliation of the heart, which annihilates man. Hence Abraham, Gen. 18:27: *I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes.* For by hardness resistance is signified, but the humble man resists no one. Jer. 10:17: *Gather up thy shame out of the land*, that is, from your body the matter of shame, that you may be humbled. Micah 6:14: *Thy humiliation*, that is, the cause of your humiliation, *shall be in the midst of thee*, that is, in a belly full of filth.

Chapter 6, §15: Balsam

And balsam, that is, the *balsamum*, which is not put in the verse. *Balsamus* is the tree, *balsamum* the liquor. Note that the blessed Virgin twice compares herself to balsam, Ecclus. 24:20 and 21: first, when she says: *I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm*; secondly, when she says: *My odour is as the purest balm.* And in this the virtue of perseverance is noted. And of the two we shall assign alike.

By *aromatical balm* the charity of the Virgin. For as the odor of balsam exceeds all odors, so her charity exceeds the virtues of all the saints taken together; and after the manner of balsam it extends the odor of her charity far, to things above, namely through the perfect desire of eternal things; to things below through perfect mercy and compassion for sinners. And because of this she is called *a pillar of smoke*, and her charity is the fire which Christ came to send upon the earth, that is, into the blessed Virgin. And the fire of the bush which Moses saw. The fire in the bush, charity in frail flesh. Because of this, since the blessed Virgin is the storehouse of each and all the virtues, and has the fire of most fervent charity, she must needs spread her odor far: and therefore her charity is called *aromatical balm.*

Again, charity is well called balsam: because Mary's charity never fell away, as balsam preserves bodies from rottenness and makes them durable. Also well is this balsam called aromatical: because charity *(p. 768)* works in the other virtues, which are as it were its matter. Bernard also says: "I gave odor, I did not sell it, wishing that all should taste her odor freely, and run in the odor of her ointments." Therefore she says with wisdom, Prov. 9:16: *Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me*, etc. She says also with the Son, Isa. 55:1: *Come, buy without money*, etc.

And this is: *I gave a sweet smell*, etc.

Mary is signified by balsam, as has been said: because her odor exceeds that of all Angels and saints, as balsam the odors of all spices. *Not mingled*, but most pure: because she had no admixture of contrariety. For through her and in her was made the exclusion of the whole curse which Eve brought into the world. Hence it

was said to her: *Hail.* And through her and into her came the fullness of the whole blessing. Hence she was called *full of grace*: and of that fullness *we all have received.* And if we do not receive, it stands not through her, but through us.

The odor, then, of Mary, that is, the delightful and pleasant repute of her holiness, is compared to unmingled balsam, nay, most pure. Balsam is mingled and corrupted and adulterated with cyprus oil or honey. So the holiness of life is corrupted when it is carried on for the oil of human praise. But Mary said with David: *Let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head.* Or, for acquiring the honey of carnal or worldly delight, which is that harlot of whom it is said, Prov. 5:3: *The lips of a harlot are like a honeycomb dropping,* etc. But Mary, despising all carnal and worldly delights, clung only to spiritual delights.

Again, therefore she compares her odor to balsam: because as balsam makes a dead body, if it is anointed with it, seem as it were alive, and permits it to be corrupted by no rottenness: so the odor of the mercy, virtues and examples of Mary makes those dead through sin breathe again in the hope of pardon. She says, then: *My odour is as the purest balm.* As if to say: Whatever virtue pure and unmixed balsam has for preserving the body, my odor has for quickening the soul and preserving it from the rottenness of vices. She also leads her lovers and servants to the glory of the resurrection, which will give true incorruptibility to dead bodies.

Christ also compares himself to balsam: because he preserves from the rottenness of vices. And because balsam is more precious than every temporal thing: and Christ is above all, *God blessed* forever, and more precious than all riches, and all the things that are desired are not to be compared with him; nay, for his sake all things are to be reckoned as dung, as the saints did, that they might gain him. He too is mixable with no liquor except honey, or oil, that is, human creatures, which will come upon other creatures. Understand this of spiritual admixture, which is made through grace, of which the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 6:17: *He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit* with him, namely by a union of love and grace. Nor was the humanity taken up by the Godhead mixed with the Godhead, but in the unity of person both natures were kept in their purity. Hence the Church sings of him: “One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.”

Christ, then, or wisdom, says: *My odour*, that is, the odor of my doctrine, is in the saints *as the purest balm*, that is, as the odor of unmingled balsam. And doctrine is here called *odor*: because it gives to the work what makes it fragrant. For unless the work agrees with the doctrine, it is not *(p. 769)* fragrant. Matt. 23:3: *All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do*, etc. Balsam is compared too because of its choice odor. John 6:69: *Thou hast the words of eternal life*, says Peter to the Lord. Cant. 1:3: *We will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments.* And the doctrine of Christ is called *ointment*: because it heals by threatening, and soothes by promising. It is compared too to unmingled balsam: because it is without error of heresy, without dissimulation of hypocrisy, without the swelling of lying philosophy. It is a well because of its unreachable depth. John 4:11: *The well is deep.* The well of one seeing and living. Of one seeing, because it enlightens the intellect: of one living, because it kindles the affection. Balsam also, because it preserves dead bodies from all corruption, designates the glory of the future resurrection, which Christ himself is to give to his faithful.

Isidore says thus of balsam: “The balsam is a tree like the vine in stock, with leaves like rue, but whiter and always remaining.” The tree is called *balsamum* or *balsamus.* Its wood is called *xylobalsamum*, its fruit or seed *carpobalsamum*, its sap *opobalsamum.* Which is therefore signified with the addition: because, struck with iron nails, the bark of the wood distils through hollows drops of choice odor: for *opos* in Greek is called a hollow. Its drop is adulterated by the admixture of cyprus oil or honey: but the genuine is proved apart from honey, if with milk it curdles; apart from oil, if poured into water or mixed with it it is easily dissolved. Again, if woolen garments are stained with it, they are not stained. But the adulterated drop of balsam neither curdles with milk, and floats on water like oil, and stains the garment. He also says that balsams, if they are pure, have such force that if they have been heated in the sun, they cannot be held in the hand.

Again, others say of balsam that it is cultivated by Christians under the lordship of the Saracens, and by Saracens its cultivation is barren: it remains: and under their cultivation it disdains to bear fruit. It is said also that in the field of Babylon there are six springs, and in one of them the blessed Virgin is said to have bathed her Son, with which springs that field is watered; otherwise it does not bear fruit. Again, balsam grows only two cubits, is like the vine, a fragrant tree, tilled after the manner of a vineyard.

The balsam is notable for its foliage, an incorruptible tree, and puts rottenness to flight, and is held up by props.

It keeps youth, kills worms, of the highest odor, simulates the taste of wine, bitter to the taste.

It removes a recent spot from the eye; it is cut with sharp stones or bone knives.

It has a red seed, it shuns the touch of iron. The branches are cut, but not completely, and thence the drop flows, etc., as above.

Its oil soothes pain of the head, and avails against serpents.

It softens hardnesses, avails to take away scars, and against quartan fever, and against defects of the ears and teeth; it rejoices in waters, loves to be pruned, and when cut with iron it dies.

Its wood is precious, but more the bark, more the fruit, more the tear.

Chapter 6, §16: The Terebinth

And the terebinth, of which it is said, Ecclus. 24:22: *I as the turpentine tree have stretched out my branches, and my branches are of honour and grace.* The terebinth is a short and medicinal tree. And it is called as it were a black oak. The resin of this tree is most dear and best, and is born in greater Syria, having flowers in clusters like the olive, and pressed-down leaves, sending forth animals, that is, gnats, from whose bark resin *(p. 770)* flows abundantly. But in Macedonia this tree is short, but fruitful. There are two terebinths, male and female. The male is unfruitful; of the female there are two kinds: one has a red fruit of the size of a lentil, the other has a pale fruit of the size of a bean and pleasant in odor. And the terebinth avails against diseases of the ears.

Wisdom, then, says: *I as the turpentine tree have stretched out my branches*, the authorities, distinctions and sentences of Scripture, by manifold understanding and exposition. Dan. 12:4: *Many shall pass over, and knowledge shall be manifold.* Wisdom also purges the evil of the ears, which is disobedience.

And my branches are of honour and grace, conferred in the present and in the future: or because wisdom makes its lovers more honorable and more gracious.

Otherwise and more finely: I, wisdom, or I, Christ, have stretched out in the saints the branches of preaching. The branches of preaching are the Apostles, through whom doctrine was spread far and wide. Matt. 28:19: *Going therefore, teach ye all nations*, etc. The branches, that is, the Apostles, spreading the word of God. From these branches came forth leaves, that is, medicinal words, and flowers strengthening the spiritual sight, that is, the intellect, and fruits refreshing the affection. And the doctrine of the Apostles is compared to medicinal leaves in so far as they are for the expulsion of vices, to flowers in so far as for the confirmation of converts, to fruits in so far as for their sustenance. For through the Apostles the river of paradise was divided into four heads, that is, Scripture watering paradise, that is, the Church. Through them the fountain went forth from the house of the Lord, that is, the Church. Joel 3:18: *And shall water the torrent of thorns*, that is, sinners. Through them has been made a fountain open to the house of David throughout the whole world.

I have stretched out through the whole world *as the turpentine tree*, that is, like the terebinth. As the Gloss says, there are two terebinths, male and female. The male, that is, those who presume of themselves, bears no fruit: but the female, that is, the humble. And the Lord, who resists the proud and gives grace to the humble,

made fruit through the humble. 1 Cor. 1:28: *The contemptible things of the world hath God chosen*, etc.

And my branches, that is, the Apostles, are *of honour*, while by their ministry they cleanse the people, and so make them honorable; *and of grace*, while they adorn that people with virtues. The honor of man is that he was made to the image and likeness of God: and then man is honorable when he keeps in himself the image and likeness of God to which he was created: and this the Apostles taught. Therefore of them it is said, Abdias v. 21: *And saviours shall come up*, etc., cleansing from sin: *and the kingdom shall be for the Lord*, namely through grace. Or, *the branches*, that is, the Apostles, are *of honour* through the honesty of their conversation, *and of grace* through the working of miracles. Of their conversation, Isa. 60:8: *Who are these, that fly as clouds?* Of the working of miracles, Matt. 10:1: *He gave them power*, etc. Acts 4:33: *With great power*, that is, with miraculous works, *did the Apostles give testimony of the resurrection.*

Christ is the terebinth. Because the terebinth is a small tree, and signifies the humility of Christ, who is the tree of life, and was made a little one for us: so that man may not further magnify himself upon earth, as blessed Bernard says.

A kind of oak, which is a tree bearing fruit for swine; and Christ chiefly in the passion bore fruit for sinners, for whom he died. Hence, 1 Pet. 3, *(p. 771)* 18: *Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust*, etc. *Once*, that we too may die to sins once, that is, perfectly, not repeating them. *He died for our sins*: for washing, healing, destroying them, etc. *The just for the unjust*, that he might call the unjust to justice, *that he might offer us to God* the Father: *being put to death indeed in the flesh*: that, as a member or body that is dead cannot do a carnal work, so we too may be dead to carnal works. *But enlivened in the spirit*: that, as the Spirit pours life into all the members, so we too may live by working, and by setting all our members to the service of justice.

It distils the best resin. The best resin which flowed from this terebinth is blood and water, sweat and tears. Rightly the best: because that water alone could wash the world, that blood alone could refresh the likeness of God in the soul, that sweat alone could cure the languid, those tears alone could wash away sins.

Its leaves and odor put serpents to flight. The leaves of Christ are the words of the crucified one. His odor is the repute or memory of him. Hence the authority: “The memory of the Crucified crucifies vices.” Serpents are vices, which bite and poison, and take away the twofold life of grace and of glory. Wis. 16, throughout, to this sense: “In the memory of thy words the serpents were exterminated, and they were swiftly healed.” Or, the serpents are the demons, whose whole study is to poison souls. Again, serpents are depraved movements, from creeping. Hence, Gen. 3:14, it was said to the serpent: *Upon thy breast and belly thou shalt creep*, that is, in thought and delight.

A lowly tree, contemptible and rough. Hence, Isa. 53:2: *We have seen him, and there was no sightliness.* And he speaks of the time of the passion. The obedience of Christ too, which he showed to the Father in the passion, purged the disobedience of Adam. Hence the Apostle, Rom. 5:19: *As by the disobedience of one*, etc. Christ also stretched out his branches, that is, the sentences of Scripture, when after the passion he opened the understanding of his disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures.

There follows: *I have stretched out my branches*, that is, my arms on the cross. For as fruit grows on branches, so the fruit of our redemption in the arms of the Saviour. *And my branches*, that is, the outstretched arms, are *of honour and grace* conferred: because no greater honor could be devised than that for love of a vile little worm the King of glory and Lord of majesty should die. *And of grace*: because man could not merit so great a benefit, but by sole and pure grace he could thus be saved. Hence the authority: “The passion of the Lord is a work without example, grace without merit, charity without measure.” And the greater the price that was given for us, the more he complains, who therefore bought so dearly, that he might alone possess, if he sees the price which he gave for us lost through our sins. Hence he complains of some, saying: *They repaid me evil for good, to the depriving me of my soul*, which I laid down for them.

Again, the terebinth is a small and lowly tree, and is born in Damascus of Syria. Syria is interpreted *lofty*, and signifies pride. Damascus, *a bloody sack.* In blood is designated sin, in the sack of our flesh the misery in which we are clothed as in mournful haircloth, that here in this exile and grief we may be called forth to temporal mourning. As, then, the terebinth is born of Damascus and of Syria, a lowly and medicinal tree, so the blessed Virgin, born of sinners, is holy, and humble from the proud, and from herself she brought forth her Son as the medicine of our sorrows.

Mary is called the terebinth: because it is a small tree. And this smallness signifies her humility. Assign of her humility, *(p. 772)* and assign how she is the tree of life in the midst of paradise, that is, of the Church.

A kind of oak: because she bore fruit chiefly for sinners. Hence of the fruit, that is, the Son, it is said to her, 1 Pet. 3:18: *Christ also died once for our sins*, as above.

It sweats the best resin, that is, Christ, who is the medicine of languishing souls. Note *sweats*: because, as sweat comes out of the flesh, the flesh remaining whole, so the Son of God was born of her, her flesh remaining whole. And as sweat is medicinal for human flesh, so the Son made flesh is the medicine of our flesh and soul. Hence he is called the river Dioryx, which is interpreted *the medicine of the generation.*

Its leaves and odor, that is, the invocation of her name and the repute or imitation of her virtues, put to flight from her servants the serpents of vices. Or, its leaves, that is, prayers, when she prays for her servants to her Son. Hence, Apoc. 12:16: *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth*: because the dragon was striving to devour the woman's offspring. Or, the odor of three principal virtues, namely virginity, poverty and humility, puts to flight those three serpents of which it is read, Deut. 8:15. (Look above under the heading that Mary is the vine.)

Lowly, contemptible and rough. Such Mary appeared in the passion of her Son. *I have spread* or *stretched out my branches*, that is, the examples of her works, for overshadowing sinners and refreshing them against the incentives of vices, and most of all against the heat of lusts. On the branches the fruit grows, and from the imitation of her examples the fruit of our redemption and salvation. *And my branches are of honour and grace* conferred, and of grace here, of honor in the ages of the ages. Because from the childbirth of the Virgin and from her virtues all the honor of the world, and the grace given to the whole world.

Again, on the branches the fruit grows. Two principal branches, that is, two privileged virtues of the blessed Virgin, are virginity and humility: for by the merit of humility she pleased the Most High; by the merit of virginity, which she first vowed, she deserved to have, and Christ was made in her the Son of virginity: and on these two grew the fruit of life, Christ. She says, then: *My branches are of honour and grace*: of honor as to humility, because she who before was a humble handmaid is now adored as a sublime queen; of grace as to virginity, which is properly a gift of grace. Wis. 8:21: *And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it.*

Its odor puts to flight the serpents of vices, and the serpents, that is, the demons, are put to flight by its leaves, that is, by her words, when namely she prays for sinners; and also the remembrance of her name in those who run by the way of the commandments of God in the odor of her. Hence blessed Bernard: "They do not so fear," etc. (Look above, the twenty-fifth cause.)

It avails against the evil of the ears. Because the obedience of Mary, when she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, purged the disobedience of Eve, who consented to the devil promising: *You shall be as gods.*

Again, by the fact that Mary compares herself to the terebinth, she gives us the form of praying. The terebinth is a short tree and fruitful: this is prayer, which, if it is short in words, is often more useful. Hence, Matt. 6:7: *When you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens.* Its leaves are dense, and frequent is prayer. The female, not the male, bears fruit: because that prayer is fruitful which is born of the knowledge of

one's own infirmity. The blessed Virgin extended to us the branches of her prayer proceeding from the fountain of pity, when by her example she teaches to pray briefly, humbly and trustfully. Briefly, when she said: *They have no wine.* Humbly: because she did not say: Son, give them *(p. 773)* wine: but she was content to tell the necessity of others, leaving it wholly to his judgment. Trustfully, when she said to the servants: *Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.* These three she taught likewise in Luke 1:38: *Be it done to me*, etc. *Be it done*: behold the brevity. But first she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*: behold the humility. Trustfully: *according to thy word.*

And my branches, etc. The branches of her mercy are *of honour*, because she has found grace; *and of grace*, because she suffers no repulse in asking. 3 Kings 2:20: *Ask, my mother.* Esther 5:3: *What is thy petition?* etc.

Morally: I, as the turpentine tree, have stretched out my branches.

The just man is the terebinth. Because it is a fruitful tree. Assign whence its fruit comes, namely from the earth, and from its fattening, which were the usefulnesses of the passion where it was planted; assign.

Small through humility: assign of the humility of the just man.

A kind of oak. The oak in a good sense is the best for building: because durable through perseverance, and it cannot grow soft. For there are certain trees, like the beech, which easily grow soft. These are the lustful, of whom the moth is born which corrupts them and eats away all their manliness without their knowing it. Hence: *My heart hath been inflamed*, etc., as far as, *I knew not.* Such wood is not fit for the building of the Lord. Hence of Ephraim it is said, Osee 7:9: *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knew it not.* Again, the oak in a good sense, because as far as in it lies it bears fruit by word, example, counsel, doctrine, prayer, for swine, that is, sinners. The swine is the lustful man, said in some way. Again, many are found bearing fruit for swine, that is, for demons, bringing much acorn and fattening, that is, the barren works which are food neither of Angels nor of men, but of demons only, as Jerome says.

Lowly and contemptible and rough as to the present state: lofty, precious and delightful as to the future.

He ought to sweat resin. Sweat comes from labor.

The medicinal resin is penance, which heals bodies and souls. The best resin is voluntary penance. Or, the resin of the terebinth, which is best, is the tear for the desire of things above. Hence: *I have poured out my soul in me.* Again: *Thou hast set my tears in thy sight.* For it is said that the tear of the terebinth avails for making precious ointment; it joins things disjoined, consolidates things joined, preserves things consolidated. So does penance. It joins you to God, from whom you were disjoined by sin. Hence, Isa. 59:2: *Your iniquities have divided between you and your God.* You, joined and reconciled, it consolidates in good; consolidated and confirmed, it makes to persevere in good.

He ought, by the leaves of words and the odor of examples, to put to flight the serpents of vices from others: but many by their words and counsels bring in these serpents, which namely seduce simple souls, and by the odor, or rather the stench, of their examples provoke others to sin. The odor of death unto death to others, whose days have passed away *as ships carrying fruits.* Assign.

He ought to stretch out his branches, that is, his works, upward, to the right, etc., that they may be branches *of honour and grace*: that he may seek in his works honor to God, and grace for himself and his neighbor, and may confer benefits freely, namely without hope of return, and attribute all the virtues to his grace, saying, Isa. 26:12: *Thou hast wrought all our works (p. 774) for us.* And this is the honor due to the bestower of the virtues.

Thus far has been spoken of the trees of which it is read, Ecclus. 24:17 ff. Now we must see of other trees having good properties, by which they may designate Mary.

Chapter 6, §17: The Tree

The tree designated by the tree which Nebuchadnezzar says he saw, Dan. 4:7–10, which he describes thus, saying: *I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was exceeding great. The tree was great and strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven: the sight thereof was even to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were most beautiful, and its fruit exceeding much, and in it was food for all. Under it dwelt cattle and beasts, and in the branches thereof the fowls of the air had their abode, and all flesh did eat of it.* It is read, Gen. 30:37–39, that the sheep of Laban conceived in the contemplation of the varied rods, which were partly barked and partly kept their bark. Now, then, the bark remaining in what follows, let us bark this part, that as according to the bark of the letter it is understood of Nebuchadnezzar, so according to the inner whiteness of spiritual understanding it may be adapted to the blessed Virgin. For although the things that follow do not suit the blessed Virgin, nothing prevents these from being understood of her: and in this barking some will be able to conceive the grace and love of the Virgin.

Behold, he says, *a tree in the midst of the earth*: because the blessed Virgin is in the midst of the Church, common to all without respect of persons. Which her image at the right of the Crucified in the middle of the church indicates. For she is the tree of life in the midst of paradise.

And the height thereof, that is, humility, *exceeding great.* Height is common to upward and downward. Hence, John 4:11: *The well is deep*, that is, profound. The height, then, or depth, is her exceeding humility. For she was deeply rooted: and therefore from the moisture of grace she had more, and stood more firmly.

Hence there follows: *The tree was great and strong.* Great in merits: because he that is mighty did great things to her. Strong in good works. Lofty in faith and humility, great in charity, strong in patience, tall in hope. Or, great for doing good things, strong for bearing evil things, tall for contemplating sublime things.

Hence there follows: *And the height thereof reached unto heaven*, namely by hope and by heavenly conversation. For standing on earth she reached to heaven, while in a human body she led an angelic life. Such was this tree in itself.

But what it is towards us, is added: *The sight thereof*, supply: was, *even to the ends of all the earth*: for her merciful eyes do not despise even the last sinners, but kindly look upon them, as appears in Theophilus. And her eyes are even to the ends of all the earth: because she especially delights in them, and looks on them, in whom all earthliness is finished and ended, as in saints and the poor in spirit.

Its leaves most beautiful, that is, her irreprehensible words. (Look under the heading of her words.) Hence she says, Prov. 8:8: *All my words are just: there is nothing wicked nor perverse in them.* Most beautiful also, that is, full of mystery. Hence, Apoc. 22:2: *The leaves of the tree were for the healing*: because the words and examples of Mary work salvation for sinners: for whoever is justified is healed. Similarly, Ezek. 47:12: *Its leaves for (p. 775) medicine.* The beauty of the leaves, then, is the discretion of words.

And its fruit exceeding much: because him whom the whole world does not contain, the bowels of that one enclosed, being made man.

And in it was food for all, that is, for Angels and men: because through her man ate the bread of Angels: and from her both men and Angels eat at the table of the altar, as it were in one refectory, the sacrament of her Son.

Under it dwelt cattle and beasts: because however animal and bestial through sin anyone has been, if he has fled to her with his whole heart, she will protect him from the heat of the sun, that is, the anger of the Son, and from the fire of Gehenna, and from the fervor of carnal concupiscences and from desire of worldly things.

And in the branches thereof the fowls of the air had their abode, that is, spiritual men, whose conversation is in heaven. Her branches are virtues and examples, of which she says: *My branches are of honour and grace*, above, concerning the terebinth. The humble have their abode in the branch of humility, the merciful in the branch of pity, and so of the others.

And all flesh did eat of it: for he is richly nourished by her who gave food to all flesh, nay, he who gave food to those who fear him.

And note that first it is said: *The height thereof*, that is, exceeding humility. And afterwards it is added: *Its fruit exceeding much*: for the humbler, the more fruitful. But perhaps someone will say: What is that fruit to us? perhaps she does not share it. Hear what she herself says: *Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits.* For she brought this fruit for us, not for herself. Hence, Ps. 66:7: *The earth hath yielded her fruit*: she gave it; she did not avariciously keep it for herself. From which also our earth is, ours is her fruit: and therefore, as one most generous, she invites all to her, saying: *Come over to me, all*, etc.

And note that this single tree has manifold apples. The first apple, beautiful delight. The second, fear. The third, acknowledgement. The fourth, holy hope, which is a loftier fruit: and therefore sweeter. Of these four you have there: *I am the mother of fair love*, etc. Which if you cannot reach this fruit, because you are little, through fear, which is a sourer fruit, she brings forth for you another, namely grace. Hence she says: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth.*

This is the most beautiful tree of which it is read, Lev. 23:40: *You shall take to you the fruits of the fairest tree*, etc. This is the tree, a virgin, to whom it is said by the Son, Cant. 4:7: *Thou art all fair, O my love*, etc. Whose manifold fruit is Christ the Lord, who in the sacrament is the fruit of men and of Angels, who enjoy it and do not weary of it. Which fruit is all things to all, that is, the sufficiency of all: and therefore it is not said: You shall take to you the fruit, but *fruits* in the plural: because he is the manna of every savor.

There follows in the text of Leviticus 23:40: *And branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook: and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God.* These spathes are the examples of the virtues, which are scattered far and wide, which are chiefly enjoined on Christians for imitation, who ought to be ruled and directed to the example of her image. For she is the rod of direction, and the rod of the kingdom of God: because she directs the faithful by words and examples, and leads them into it. A spathe is also so called from *spata*, the sword, which is a polished instrument, with which one fights against the enemies. (Look for all this above under the heading of the palm.)

(p. 776) There follows: *And boughs of thick trees.* Thick foliage keeps its greenness longer and is corrupted with more difficulty; that is, the condensing of good works in the greenness of faith and perseverance, with which we ought to go to meet Christ with the children of the Hebrews.

There follows: *And willows of the brook.* The willow is a barren tree, most of all in these parts. And the blessed Virgin, vowing virginity, preferred barrenness to fruitfulness by intercourse. Hence it is said of her, Isa. 54:1, and Gal. 4:27: *Rejoice, thou barren*, etc. And we likewise, however fruitful we have been in good working, which is the fruit of a just man, ought to reckon ourselves barren, according to that of Luke 17:10: *When you shall have done all*, etc. And this sacred Scripture teaches, which is understood by the brook. Hence it is said: *Willows of the brook.* And he who has fulfilled this command of the Lord in the present will rejoice before the Lord his God in the future.

Hence there follows: *And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God.*

Chapter 6, §18: The Wood

Or the wood. Note that *arbor*, a tree, is properly so called as long as it is green and clings to the earth: but *lignum*, wood, properly when cut off and dried from moisture. Job 14:7: *A tree hath hope: if it be cut*, from

the love of earthly things, *it groweth green again*, through grace. But Christ, Mary and the just are trees, green and verdant, namely through incorrupt holiness: and they are wood, because dried from harmful moisture. Yet more often in Scripture green wood is spoken of, as Christ says of himself, Luke 23:31: *If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*

Mary, then, is wood and tree. Wood: because through contempt of the world cut off from the earth, and through virginity and abstinence dried from all harmful moisture. And a tree, because of the greenness of virginity, the moisture of grace, the pith of pity, the leaves of sacred words, the foliage of good works, the flowers of holy desires, the fruit of the Only-begotten of God, the shade of refreshment for sinners who burn with evil heat, the root of humility, faith and charity, the loftiness of hope, and the eminence of contemplation.

Of this wood it is said, Gen. 1:11: *Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed.* (Look under the heading of the nativity of Mary, in the first sermon.) There follows: *And the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, which may have seed in itself upon the earth.* The wood of which in Ps. 1:3: *He shall be like a tree which is planted*, etc. And Mary is called wood for the solidity of her constancy; *planted* for stability; *near the running waters* for wisdom, or grace, or Scripture. *Waters* in the plural, not of one water, for the greatness of wisdom, for the multitude of graces, for the diversity of the Scriptures. *Which shall bring forth its fruit*, unique and singular; *its own*, that is, fitting for her alone (this is said for fruitfulness); *shall give*, not render back, for virginity; *in its season*, for special grace, because from her sanctification the time of grace began. The fruit-bearing tree, whose apple is Christ the Lord, against the poisonous apple of disobedience, and against the sour grape, which, or which apple, at the suggestion of the devil the first parents ate, of which it had been foretold to Adam, Gen. 2:17: *In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.* Of which grape it is said, Ezek. 18:2, and Jer. 31:29: *The fathers have eaten a sour grape*, etc. But in this apple is found the theriac, by which that poison has been put to flight, and the sour grape now *(p. 777)* does not set the teeth on edge. Therefore the Church sings of this apple: “Adam would not have been seduced if he had tasted of this.” And this apple is most beautiful to see, delightful to behold, most sweet to smell, healthful to taste, healing in effect. (Look under the heading of the fruit of Mary, where its manifold commendation is set down.) This apple the blessed Virgin conceived by the obedience of faith, by which was taken away from the midst the harm of that noxious apple. Rom. 5:19: *As by the disobedience of one man*, etc. There you will find much of this matter.

There follows: *Yielding fruit after its kind.* Well does she say *yielding*: because the Virgin made Christ man by consenting, that of her substance the Word might be made flesh, and very Son of God, very man. *Fruit*, unique and singular, as has been said. *After its kind*, that is, blessed, blessed. For she was blessed among women: and therefore worthy to bear that fruit, *who is over all things, God blessed.* Or, *after its kind*, that is, all fair, most fair; all sweet, most sweet; all fragrant, most sweet-smelling; all savory, most savory; all delicate, most delicate; all colored, most colored; all life-giving, most life-giving; all medicinal, most medicinal. (Look under the heading of the fruit of Mary.)

There follows: *Whose*, namely of the wood, *seed may be in itself upon the earth.* For the seed of other trees, that is, of other women, from which the fruit is made, is not in itself but in another, that is, in the man: because the fruit, that is, the child, in a man is born of the seed of both: but this blessed wood had in itself, that is, in itself alone, both the seed and the fruit, namely her Son: which seed is in every way *upon the earth*, that is, our human nature: and that exceeds all human sense. Therefore it is said, Isa. 53:8: *Who shall declare his generation?* that is, of Christ, or hers, of Mary, namely how she bore him who made her: *who shall declare?* As if to say: No one fully. So, then, the glorious Virgin is called herb and wood, and her Son is called seed and fruit. The seed by which we are sown on the way and grow in grace. The fruit which we shall enjoy in the fatherland, and by which even now in the present we are refreshed in the sacrament of the altar.

Again, of this wood it is said, Gen. 2:9: *The Lord God brought forth of the ground all manner of trees, fair to behold, and pleasant to eat of: the tree of life also in the midst of paradise, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.* In this word many things can be noted which specially suit the blessed Virgin, and it is a good theme for her nativity.

First, the dignity or authority of the one working. Hence it is said: *The Lord God*, whose special and principal work the blessed Virgin is. For though all the works of the Lord are called *very good*, yet the work which was done in Mary, namely the incarnation of the Son, ought to be called good, better, best, exceedingly. Ecclus. 42:16: *Full of the glory of the Lord is his work.*

Second, the manner of working. Hence it is said: *Brought forth*, that is, made to be born and grow in the womb of her mother, wonderfully sanctified. Or, *brought forth* in the nativity from the womb of her mother according to the body, according to that of the Canticle, 6:9: *Who is she that cometh forth?* etc. Isa. 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse*, etc. Num. 24:17: *A rod shall spring up from Israel.* Zech. 13:1: *There shall be a fountain open to the house of David*, etc. Therefore she herself says to God: *Thou art he that hast drawn me out of the womb*, etc. Again, Ps. 72:24: *Thou hast held me by my right hand, and by thy will thou hast conducted me.*

Otherwise: *Brought forth* in the present life through the virtue of humility, by which she ascended even *(p. 778)* to him who sits on the throne of the Lord of majesty. For through this virtue she touched the heavens, standing on earth. Therefore her whole life in the Canticles, 6:9 and 8:5, is called a *going forth* or an *ascent*, according to that of Job 5:11: *Who setteth up the humble on high*, and it speaks of the Lord. For humility, if it is true, which lets itself be trodden by all like the ground, is as it were a silver thread, which by thinning is lengthened: and therefore the glorious Virgin by this virtue was inestimably lengthened and drawn out.

Otherwise also: *Brought* her *forth* God, that is, led her far from all earthiness according to the soul through love of poverty, by which she reckoned all the things of the world as dung, that she might gain Christ. Behold of the bringing forth.

Third, whence he brought her forth, namely *of the ground*, that is, of the mother's womb, or of the ground of paradise. For her most holy mother Anne, who alone was found worthy to bear so great a daughter, though a Jew, yet belonged to the Church, which is paradise. And deservedly she is called Anne, that is, grace, by this special grace. Hence many good men who are devoted to the mother are devoted to the daughter, on certain days making memory of her, and celebrating her feast on the morrow of blessed James in August, that by the mother's intercession they may come to the grace of the daughter, and through mother and daughter to the mercy of the Son.

Fourth, the work itself performed. Hence there follows: *All manner of trees, fair to behold, and pleasant to eat of.* Indeed the blessed Virgin is designated by every tree fair to see and sweet to smell and taste, of which trees namely the multitude is innumerable, the shade healing, the fruit incomparable, the diversity unspeakable, the savor supremely delightful: from which or of which we have the fruit of fruits, in which is the savor of all savors, the fullness of all virtues, and the countlessness or totality of graces.

Fifth is the place where this fruit is found, namely *in the midst of paradise.* The wood, as has been said, is the blessed Virgin, whose fruit, that is, Christ, is life. John 14:6: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.* The life of grace in the present, the life of glory in the future. (Of this you will find a little after, where this is expounded of Christ.) *In the midst of paradise* on earth, namely of the Church militant, or in the midst of the heavenly paradise, which is the Church triumphant.

In the midst in three ways. First, in the midst because of community: because the blessed Virgin bore Christ in common to all, namely to Angels, to men detained in limbo, past, present and future. To signify this she brought forth on the way and in a common house or stable. And also she brought her fruit while still most

tender, on the fortieth day, to the temple, to which the whole world used to come, as if wishing to put the whole world in possession of him: and at the gaze of the whole world Simeon took him into his arms. For the mother knew that Isaiah 9:6 had foretold of her fruit, as in the person of the whole world: *A child is born to us,* in so far as man, *and a son is given to us,* in so far as God. Or, *in the midst of paradise*: because she excludes no one from her kindness. For she became all things to all through charity, that as far as in her lies she may gain all, saying with her Son, Matt. 11:28: *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you,* namely with my fruit. Which her image signifies, holding her Son as if offering him to all. And because this wood is described to be in the midst of paradise, therefore her image is wont to be placed in the midst of the church beside the image of the Crucified. Or, *in the midst*: for Christ is at the top, we at the bottom: she, who is greater than every man but less than Christ alone, is well described as being *(p. 779)* in the midst, as it were sharing with both extremes, and as it were our mediatrix to the Son. For the mother of Christ by nature, the mother of the Christian people by grace: whence she is called *the dawn,* which is set between night and day. Again, another reason: as the tree of life was greener than the other trees, so Mary was holier than the other saints: because greenness designates holiness. For grace was not given to her by measure, but there was given to her so surpassing a whole, whatever could be given to a pure creature.

There follows: *And the tree of knowledge of good and evil.* Note that the tree of knowledge was so called not because of a nature which it had in itself, but because through it it was known whether that first man would be obedient or disobedient. By this tree of the knowledge of good and evil are signified those doctors who teach well but live badly, whose leaves, that is, words, but not fruits, that is, works, the Lord does not forbid to be eaten, that is, to be taken into use of living. Hence, Matt. 23:3: *All things whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not.* What they say, do: but what they do, do not.

Again, she is the wood by which the bitter water was sweetened. Hence it is said, Ecclus. 38:5: *Was not bitter water made sweet with wood?* This bitter water is the manifold misery or tribulation with which the first mother sprinkled the whole world: and the bitterness of our perdition the glorious Virgin turned into the sweetness of eternal salvation through the mediation of her Son.

She is also the wood *planted near the running waters,* that is, beside flowing sinners: because *the waters are peoples,* beside whom, firmly rooted in the affection of compassion and mercy, as with the Apostle, nay, more truly than the Apostle, she can say that word of the Epistle, 2 Cor. 11:29: *Who is weak,* etc. Or, these runnings of waters are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And well *runnings*: because of rivers with violence. Hence it is said of her, Ps. 45:5: *The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful. Of waters* in the plural for the multitude of gifts, as above. Or, these runnings are breathings and inspirations. (Look towards the beginning of the chapter.)

Again, of this wood it is said, Ezek. 47:12: *By the torrent on the banks thereof on both sides shall grow every fruit-bearing tree.* There follows: *Their leaf shall not fall off,* that is, her word will never be void, but every word full of truth and wisdom. Or, *shall not fall off,* that is, flow downward: because she is never read to have spoken of earthly things, nor is she believed to have prayed to the Father or the Son for them. 1 Kings 3:19: *There fell not one of all his words to the ground.* If this is true of Samuel, much more strongly of the Virgin. Or, *their leaf shall not fall off,* that is, her word from the truth through lying, or from necessity through superfluity, or from efficacy through emptiness, or from intention through vanity. Nor had she a leaf, that is, a word which the wind of vainglory carries away.

There follows: *And the fruit thereof shall not fail,* that is, Christ, who is immortal, and who remains whole, though he is eaten daily sacramentally. An example is the sun, which has fed the eyes from the beginning of the world, and yet has remained whole and unconsumed.

There follows: *Every month they shall bring forth first fruits. Mensis,* month, from *mene,* which is a failing, and she, through each month, that is, each failing, supplies our failings *(p. 780)* as far as in her lies: for since

she is the mother of perfection and fertility, to every failing of ours she brings forth a fitting fruit. *First fruits* he says, that by the word he may indicate that the supplying of our spiritual failings is to be sought first and principally from the Son and the mother: who for the need of temporal and bodily usefulness, but of spiritual wretchedness, in which they much more gladly provide for the just than in bodily or earthly things. For the Lord gives temporal things when angry, as Augustine says.

Morally: the just man each month brings forth first fruits, when for each failing which he has suffered in sin, he renders to God the first fruits of good work.

There follows: *Because the waters thereof*, that is, of the gifts of graces, *shall issue out of the sanctuary*, that is, from the blessed Trinity, which is the heavenly sanctuary: or, *out of the sanctuary*, that is, from heaven, from which *every best gift and every perfect gift* comes down.

There follows: *And the fruits thereof shall be for food*, namely for Angels and men in the sacrament. *And the leaves*, that is, words, namely prayers, consolations and examples, being green, *for medicine*. They will be also for shade and refreshment of those who burn with evil heat. With these agrees what is said of the wood, Apoc. 22:2: *On both sides of the river was the tree of life*, etc. This is expounded of Christ, as will be shown below, and could be expounded of the Virgin.

Again, she is the wood transplanted over the waters, which towards the moisture of the waters which it sought sent out its roots, that is, intellect and affection: and therefore she did not fear the heat of concupiscences, nor the drought of eternal fire, nor ever ceased to bear the fruit of pity and mercy, giving us daily the fruit of her womb on the way, giving also that fruit to Angels and the blessed in the fatherland. Hence she is to be besought continually: Our mother, who art in heaven … give us this day our daily bread, which is thy fruit.

She is also the wood whose root, that is, the intention of the heart, was worked beside the waters of the Scriptures: because she kept in her heart whatever was said of her Son. She is the blessed wood, through which justice was done to the devil and to heretics. Hence it is sung to her: “Rejoice, Virgin Mary, thou alone hast destroyed all heresies,” etc. For through her fruit the captives held in limbo by the devil, though unjustly, were set free, and the reprobate justly damned. Hence too all the faithful bless both the mother and the Son. Or, that wood is the cross, through which justice was done to the devil.

Again, she is the little wood through humility, to which men ought to commit their souls, that is, the life of nature and of grace, that so passing over the sea, that is, the world, through her who is the ship, they may be freed from the shipwreck of sin without the deluge of sins. For she is the ark of Noah, of which this is literally read, Wis. 14:5: *Men trust their lives even to a little wood, and passing over the sea by ship are delivered.* For through this wood, that is, the ark, the human race was justly saved in the time of the deluge, namely in Noah and his sons, who in the whole world were found the only just, when that deluge was flooding.

She is also the lowly wood of which the Lord says, Ezek. 17:24: *I have exalted the low tree*, namely the cross, or Mary, who was exalted by the merit of her humility into mother of the Lord and queen of paradise. *And I have brought down the high tree*, that is, the devil, who in his pride wished to be exalted, which is impossible: because, as is said, Prov. 29:23: *Humiliation followeth the proud*, that is, abjection; *(p. 781) but glory shall uphold the humble of spirit.* There follows in Ezekiel 17:24: *And I have dried up the green tree, and have caused the dry tree to flourish.* Lucifer was before the green wood: because *full of wisdom and perfect in beauty*. Mary, vowing virginity, was in a manner as it were dry wood. Isa. 56:3: *Let not the eunuch say: Behold I am a dry tree*, etc. But he was dried up, and the rod of Aaron put forth leaves and flourished.

Again, she is the tree of life to those who have laid hold of her as with the double hand of good working, that for her, that is, for love of her, they may exercise themselves in good works to the honor of God and the

example of the neighbor. And whoever has held her, as with two arms of reverence and service, that he may persevere in both and never let her go, is blessed here in hope, in the future in reality. (Look in the twenty-fifth cause, and you will find it well expounded.)

Again, she is the wood which the man of God cut, namely Eliseus, who signifies Christ, who was made man in her, and, in so far as God, cut her off from the love of carnality and earthliness, as is read, 4 Kings 6:6; and sent it into the river, that is, into the flowing of the human race, not as to guilt but as to punishment, when it pleased him that a virgin should be born in the world; and by means of her as by a handle he drew up the iron, that is, man, before hard, cold and black through the loss of the likeness of God. Jerome by this iron understands the human race, which from the forbidden tree fell into the depth of misery. But from that depth it returned upward through the wood of the cross. Or better: the iron is human nature itself, the handle by which it was held by the Lord was innocence: but from this handle, the first parents sinning, it fell into the water of manifold misery, but through the wood of the cross and through the blessed Virgin it returned to its handle, that is, to its innocence.

Again, she is perhaps the wood and incorruptible, which the wise artificer chose, of which namely wisdom built herself a house.

Having seen how Mary is figured by wood in many ways, we must see why Christ himself is compared to wood, and most of all to the tree of life: for Christ gives life to the world as his fruit, and therefore he is called *the tree of life.* It must be noted, then, that wisdom, Christ the Lord, the blessed Virgin, the cross itself, and sacred Scripture are commonly called *the tree of life.*

Wisdom incarnate. Hence, Prov. 3:18: *She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her.* In this tree there are four things: the leaves, medicinal words; the fruits, the sacraments and examples, which two supply the life of grace to the souls of the faithful; the bark, the flesh taken from the Virgin.

The substance of the tree is God himself, Christ man, whose fruit to the human race is the life of justice and of glory. Hence he says, John 10:10: *I am come that they may have life*, namely of justice in the present, *and may have it more abundantly*, that is, the life of glory in the future. Therefore of him it is said, Deut. 30:20: *He is thy life, and the length of thy days.* Again, Prov. 13:12: *A tree of life is desire that cometh*, namely he who came into the flesh, of whom it is said, Aggeus 2:8: *And the desired shall come*, etc.

The blessed Virgin, whose fruit is called *life.* John 14:6: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*

The cross on which hung he who is the life. Deut. 28:66: *Thy life shall be as it were hanging before thee.* For through the cross life is given to men.

(p. 782) Sacred Scripture: because it keeps the words of God, in which is the life of the soul. Matt. 4:4: *Not in bread alone*, etc. John 8:52: *If any man keep my word, he shall not taste death for ever.*

And a distinction of the words must be noted. The tree, that is, Christ, gives the fruit. Hence: *Which shall bring forth its fruit*, etc. The blessed Virgin bears the fruit. The fruit hangs from the tree, that is, Christ from the cross. The fruit is taken from the tree, that is, spiritual refreshment from sacred Scripture. According to any of these ways the tree of life is in the midst of paradise: because any of these is common to all who approach it with true faith and pure intellect.

Again, this tree is in the midst of paradise, exposed to all, lest any should die. Hence of it it is said, Isa. 65:22: *As the days of a tree, so shall be the days of my people.* Therefore the Lord's sacrament is given to all and exposed, lest they die spiritually. And since the Church is paradise, and this tree of life is described to be in the midst of paradise, therefore the Lord's body is to be reposed in its vessel in the midst of the Church in a more eminent place, as behind the altar.

Again, as the tree of life was of such a nature that, eaten at the proper time, it would continue for man the life of nature: so the fruit of the tree of life, which is Christ, worthily taken, continues for man the life of grace and of glory, that is, makes the life of glory succeed at once after the life of grace. Therefore he says, John 10:10: *I am come that they may have life*, namely of grace in the present, *and may have it more abundantly*, as above.

Again, on that text of Genesis 2:9, Strabo says that the wood of the tree of life was such that by taking it it would keep man immune from all misery, and he would never become old, nor would any inconvenience happen to him, and at last it would confer the true beatitude. But Augustine says plainly that from the wood, not from his own nature, man had the power not to die. For the fruit of that tree, tasted a number of times, could more efficaciously and more lastingly than the others produce life, or, taken at a certain time, pass over into full immortality. Again, as the wood of the tree of life was greener than the other trees, so Christ is holier than the other saints: because, as is said, 1 Kings 2:2: *There is none holy as the Lord is.* And because of this he is called *the holy of holies.* For in greenness holiness is figured. This wood also is described to be in the midst of paradise: because it shares itself with all for the use of the way, for the enjoyment of the fatherland, without respect of persons. (The other expositions assigned above to Mary you can easily appropriate to this wood.)

Of this wood it is said in Ps. 1:3: *He shall be like a tree which is planted*, etc. In these words the temporal life of Christ is commended. The wood is known by its fruit-bearing. Hence, Matt. 7:16: *By their fruits you shall know them.* But before it bears fruit, it must be planted. For the Son of God was planted in the garden of the virginal womb, when he was united to human nature. James 1:21: *With meekness receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls*, that you may be worthy to take its fruit.

Planted also, it bore fruit. Prov. 3:18: *She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her*, etc. Apoc. 2:7: *To him that overcometh I will give to eat*, etc. Ezek. 17:22: *I will crop off a tender twig, and I will plant it on a mountain high and eminent*, namely the blessed Virgin.

Near the running waters, that is, beside the defects of our mortality, which are hunger, thirst, cold, heat, weariness and the like.

Which shall bring forth its fruit, that is, his flesh to be eaten, *shall give*, in the supper. Note, *shall give, (p. 783)* not *shall sell.* Assign this against those who sell for a small price what is priceless. The flowers and leaves went before this fruit, namely the typical lamb, because the legal things went before the sacraments of the new law. Or, *its fruit*, that is, the sending of the Holy Spirit. John 16:7: *If I go not*, as the flower first departs than the fruit comes: *the Paraclete will not come to you.* Or, *in its season*, namely of the passion, of which he says, John 7:6: *My time is not yet come.* Or, *in its season*, that is, in the time of grace.

Morally, of the just man: *He shall be like a tree.* Assign of the root, and of the trunk, and of all the particulars of this wood. *Which is planted near the running waters*, of graces, of tears, of the Scriptures. To be planted is to be rooted in charity, faith and humility. Many seem to be planted in the Church. Hence elsewhere: *They that are planted in the house of the Lord*, etc. But they are not; nay, they are fixed like stakes, which, because they are not rooted, can quickly be pulled out, or if they remain there, they dry up: and therefore they are fit for hedges, that is, for keeping possessions, as appears in many: of whom it is said, Wis. 4:4: *And if they flourish in branches*, that is, in some works, *for a time, yet standing not fast, they shall be shaken*, namely by temptations, *by the wind, and through the force of winds*, that is, of tribulations rising up, *they shall be rooted out.* And note that it says *for a time they flourish*, because for a time they believe, *standing not fast*, because in time of temptation they fall away. Assign well. And such stakes are there in number, not in merit, nor do they have roots: which appears from this, that for a time they believe, and *in time of temptation they fall away.* Such are those who say: Let me first go and do this or that. And these bear no good fruit any more than a hog, about whom the Lord will say, Matt. 20:14: *Take what is thine*, that is, you have had what you sought,

and go thy way into eternal fire. Matt. 25:41: *Depart from me, ye cursed.*

For only a tree planted and rooted puts forth leaves, flowers, bears fruit. Hence there follows: *They shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God.* The courts, namely of the outer house, are the Church militant and also religion ordered.

There follows: *Which shall bring forth its fruit.* For he who grows in the virtues through that threefold water ought to bear fruit in works. Therefore he says: *Which shall bring forth its fruit*, namely of good work, not only the bud of thought, or the flower of purpose, or the leaves of words; *its own*, that is, in himself, not only in others. Isa. 66:9: *Shall not I that make others to bring forth children, myself bring forth?* He will *give* willingly, not by compulsion. 2 Cor. 9:7: *Not with sadness, or of necessity. Shall give*, against hypocrites, who sell for praise: *in its season*, namely the fitting one, that is, in the present life, when it is the time of meriting: because after death it is the time of receiving. Eccles. 9:10: *Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly: for neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge shall be in hell*, etc. *I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh*, that is, the time after death, *when no man can work.*

Of the leaves of this wood, that is, of Christ, it is said in Ps. 1:3: *And his leaf*, that is, his word, *shall not fall off.* Ezek. 47:12: *Their leaf shall not fall off.* Behold how his words are eternal. John 6:69: *Thou hast the words of eternal life*, says Peter. For he was not of the earth: and therefore he did not speak of earthly things. John 3:31–32: *He that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh. He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth. (p. 784)* For he was figured by Samuel, of whom it is said, 1 Kings 3:19: *There fell not one of all his words to the ground.*

The word of Christ will not fall away from truth through lying. John 17:17, he says to the Father: *Thy word is truth.*

From necessity through superfluity: because he had no leaf, that is, word, which the wind snatches away, namely the wind of empty glory.

From efficacy through emptiness. Isa. 55:11: *My word which shall go forth from my mouth shall not return to me void.*

From intention through frustration. Ps. 88:35: *The things that proceed from my lips I will not make void.* All these can be expounded of Christ, as they were expounded above of the blessed Virgin. The words also, that is, the leaves of this wood, are commended for their medicinal power. Hence, Ezek. 47:12: *The fruits thereof shall be for food, and the leaves thereof for medicine*, that is, words, *for medicine*: because by word alone he cured every infirmity. Apoc. 22:2: *The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*, that is, of those living as Gentiles: because he converted sinners to the faith.

Again, of this wood it is said, Apoc. 22:2: *On both sides of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* By this river can be understood the flowing of mortal life and the fluidity of sins. Beyond the river are the Angels, incorruptible and immortal; on this side men still subject to the defects of corruptible life. Or, on this side those still living in the flesh, beyond those already departed from this life. The tree of life is Christ the Lord, who refreshes those still living by the participation of his sacrament: but in heaven, that is, beyond the river, he will make the Angels and the blessed blessed by the contemplation of his Godhead and of his glorified humanity. And because the twelve Apostles preached this, therefore they are called *twelve fruits.* Every month he gives back the tree of life its fruits: because Christ continually refreshes his elect in the world and in heaven: in the world with the fruit of justice, in heaven with the fruit of glory. Or, because a month is a completion of days. Hence it is said, Isa. 66:23: *And there shall be month after month*, that is, the completion of glory from the completion of grace. By the twelve months are signified the twelve contemplations of

graces. Or, because a month is called from *mene*, which is a defect, but the number twelve is perfect. The tree of life brings twelve fruits: because, for each of our defects, as far as in him lies, he in a manner supplies in this life, since he himself even in the present is all in all, that is, the sufficiency of all. The leaves are the precepts of Christ, which heal the nations, preserve the fruits, and afford refreshment. For the precepts of the Lord, when they are fulfilled, work justice: and whoever is justified is healed. And well after the fruit he adds the leaves: because it profits nothing, nay, much harms, on occasion to receive the sacrament of Christ, unless the receiver studies to fulfill his precepts.

Otherwise: Christ is the tree of life: because he gives the world the life of nature here and the life of grace, about to give in the future the life of glory to those who love cleanness. The two sides of the river are the present life before the judgment, the life of the saints after the judgment. One on this side of the river, the other beyond, in which the Lord with the saints will reign for ever and beyond. In this life, that is, on this side of the river, we have the life of grace; beyond, that is, in the future, we await the life of glory in the sacrament, as has been said above. *Every month*, that is, through every age he gives back his fruit, which refreshes and heals those serving him. Or, *every month*: because to the sinner converted, for each defect of sinners he gives back each perfection of the virtues. Hence the Psalmist asks, Ps. 17:29: *O my God, enlighten my darkness*, that is, drive out my sins, and for each sin *(p. 785)* give back the opposite virtues. On this side of the river, that is, in the present life, the tree of life is had in the sacrament. *Bearing twelve fruits*, which the Apostle enumerates, Gal. 5:22–23: *The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy*, etc. Or, these twelve fruits are twelve dishes to be had in the future, which, passing, he will minister to us at the table of eternal refreshment in the kingdom of his Father.

Or, the tree of life is the cross itself, which bears for us all the goods of paradise, which are understood by the twelve fruits: because the number twelve consists of the parts of seven, which is the number of universality, whose parts are three and four. *Yielding its fruits every month*: because for each defect which the saints have endured here for the Lord, it renders to them glorious fruit. Wis. 3:15: *The fruit of good labours is glorious.* And then there will be month after month in the fullness, that is, of full reward, *of month*, that is, for the month, that is, for each defect which is endured here for the Lord. Or, according to the Gloss, each side of the river signifies those saved under each Testament. Hence Moses led Israel up to the river Jordan: but Joshua led them into the land of promise. Or, *on both sides of the river*, that is, of Scripture, old and new, is Christ: but in the old in figure, in the new in reality. *Bearing twelve fruits*, that is, the twelve Patriarchs in the Old Testament, the twelve Apostles in the new, who every month gave back fruit by preaching the faith of the Trinity through the four climates of the world. The months are the Apostles; Christ the lamb, as he is the day, they the hours of the day.

And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. After he has spoken of the eating of the wood, he speaks of the leaves: because after food medicinal things are wont to be set out, which do this, namely for healing and for the conservation of health, and the expulsion of what is harmful. Of the first he says: *And the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations.* Of the second he at once adds: *And there shall be no curse any more.* These leaves are the precepts of Christ and the doctrine which heals the nations, that is, sinners. Wis. 16:12: *For it was neither herb nor mollifying plaster that healed them, but thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things*: and these protect against falling back.

Again, of this wood it is said, Apoc. 2:7: *To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God. To him that overcometh.* It must be noted that he who overcomes fights: and he who fights thirsts and hungers for the victory of the fight, which is justice: whence the eating is well promised to such a one when it is said: *I will give to eat.* Matt. 5:6: *Blessed are they that hunger*, etc., as far as, *they shall have their fill. To him that overcometh*, either as to time, that he may always overcome and persevere; or as to the number of things to be overcome, that he may overcome whatever is to be overcome, namely the flesh, the world, the devil. These are the three kingdoms which the saints overcame by faith.

I will give, freely. This is said with respect to the root of merit, and not to merits. For the root of merit, which is grace, is conferred freely by God. Hence, Ps. 58:11: *His mercy shall prevent me.* Or, *I will give*. In this is noted that he rewards above merits. Hence: *Good measure, and pressed down*, etc.

And what will I give? *To eat of the tree of life*, that is, to be satisfied with the pleasant vision of Christ, God and man, who made himself wood, that he might be the matter of that fire which he came to send upon the earth, wishing it to be kindled. This is the wood which was cut and burned in death in the fire of the passion, that he might kindle in us the fire of charity, when namely he set his tabernacle in the sun, that is, in the fervor of the passion, that is, his body. But again it put forth leaves in the *(p. 786)* resurrection. Job 14:7: *A tree hath hope: if it be cut, it groweth green again, and the boughs thereof sprout.* The wood is Christ, as above. Luke 23:31: *If in the green wood*, etc. It has hope of glory after death. Or, it is therefore said, because the Apostles had hope of him that he would rise after the passion, as he himself had foretold, in which hope however they afterwards wavered.

This wood was planted in the incarnation, as above, cut off in the passion. Isa. 53:8: *He is cut off from the land*; it lived again in the resurrection. Hence, Ps. 27:7: *And my flesh hath flourished again.* And its branches, the Apostles and the faithful, sprout. For as Ambrose says: "When Christ rose in the body, the disciples rose in the soul." Or, they sprout, growing in number and virtue. Hence, John 15:5: *I am the vine, you the branches.* And again, Job 14:8–9: *If its root be old in the earth*, that is, if preaching and faith were despised among the earthly Jews, *and its stock be dead in the dust*, that is, the body among the evil who are dust; *at the scent of water it shall spring.* The Gloss: because by the power of God the flesh returned to life. *And bring forth leaves*, namely in the Apostles as its head, by rooting. *As when it was first planted*, in their faith, and much more strongly without comparison.

There follows, Apoc. 2:7: *Which is in the paradise of my God*, that is, in the Church militant through bodily presence in the sacrament of the altar, and through spiritual presence: because God is everywhere, and through conversation. Matt. 28:20: *Behold I am with you*, etc. Prov. 8:31: *My delights were to be with the children of men.* And the Church is called *paradise* as a place of delights. Or, *in the paradise of my God*, that is, in the Church triumphant, where he offers himself to manifest and open vision face to face.

Again, this is the wood of which Jerusalem, that is, the Church, is built, as a city: because it is the foundation of the Church, as it was given as an example of poverty, abjection and vileness. Again, it is the wall through the conferring of gifts. Hence, Eph. 4:8: *He gave gifts to men.* It is the roof, in so far as it consummates us and perfects us in good. 1 Pet. 5:10: *He will perfect, he will confirm, he will establish*: which he will chiefly do in the future, and already does, feeding and giving drink to us in the present with his flesh and blood. Therefore it is said, Isa. 40:20: *He hath chosen strong wood, and that will not rot: the skilful workman*, that is, Christ, namely himself, that he might build himself a house, that is, the Church.

Chapter 6, §19: The Little Rod

The little rod. Note that in the nativity of Mary it is said, Isa. 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod*, etc., that is, Mary will be born with a body thick and full. But in the assumption she is said to go up *as a pillar of smoke*, with a body thinned and made fine by glorification. For there are two things in a little rod: the outer bark, which signifies the flesh, and the inner wood, which signifies the soul; and by these words her assumption with the body seems to be expressed, as the wood of the rod with the bark. (Of the pillar of smoke look in the third part of the enclosed garden.)

Chapter 6, §20: The Rod

The rod. Isa. 11:1: *There shall come forth a rod.* Num. 24:17: *A rod shall spring up from Israel.* Ps. 109:2: *The Lord will send forth the sceptre of thy power out of Sion.*

Chapter 6, §20 (continued): The Rod

(p. 787) Mary is the rod. Because, coming forth from the root, she had in herself the newness of all cleanness. For she was sanctified in the womb: and therefore she was born wholly holy. Therefore her nativity is compared to the excellence of a star that has risen. Num. 24:17: *A star shall rise*, etc. But we are born as it were most dark clouds, deformed and obscure through original sin. For we are all born *children of wrath.*

Coming forth from the root, she rises straight upward. For since she was born wholly holy, she is not believed to have been bent through sin or love of earthly things, though before the conception of her Son she could have sinned: therefore it is said, Num. 24:17: *A rod shall spring up from Israel.*

She occupies little of the earth: in which is noted her poverty, which she chose after the example of her Son. (Look under the heading of her poverty.)

Covered with a very thin bark. (This you had under the heading of the bark of the vine, and under the heading of the poverty of her garments.) Or otherwise: for she was as it were covered with bark through love of secrecy and of solitary life, designated by Sarah, the wife of Abraham, hiding in the tabernacle, and by that virgin Sarah, who said, Tob. 3:17: *Never have I joined myself with them that play*, etc.

Content with a little sap for her nourishment. In this, her abstinence. (Look under the heading of her abstinence.)

Trembling: for she feared the Lord filially and chastely. Hence, Prov. 31:30: *The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.* She feared when she heard the angelic salutation. Hence a little after the Angel said to her: *Fear not, Mary*, etc. And this fear prepared a place for the Holy Spirit, according to that of Isaiah 66:2: *To whom shall I have respect*, that is, upon whom shall my Spirit rest, *but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?* And all these were in Mary. For she was humble, quiet, poor, and filially fearing.

Little in respect of a great tree, and this through humility. Hence the Angels and the Prophets say of her, Cant. 8:8: *Our sister is little*, etc. Because of this too she is called *a pillar of smoke.*

Light and raised upward, in which is the contempt of temporal things. For every thing, the more it partakes of earthly quantity, so much the more easily it inclines to the earth: because earth is the heaviest of the elements: and therefore the love of earthly things makes a man heavy. But the less, the more easily it raises itself on high. For the love of God is called fire, which naturally tends upward. But worldly love, like an earthly humor, draws downward. Because of these two our rod was light, and to the things that are above she continually raised herself. Because of this it is said, Lam. 3:41: *Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord*, that is, the affections of the mind with good works. And this is what is said in the Mass: "Lift up your hearts," etc. It can also be said that she was light and raised upward through the love of God: because fire naturally rises upward, and draws its matter upward, as is seen to be in flame. Therefore it is said to all the just: *Lift up your heads*, that is, your minds to God.

From the time she begins to grow, she grows continually until she comes to perfect growth. So she too always grew from virtue to virtue. Hence, Ezek. 19:10: *Her fruit and her branches grew out of many waters*, that is, out of the multitude of spiritual gifts, which are designated by waters. (Look above concerning the growth of the vine.) Then too she was of perfect growth, when she was called *full of grace*: then also when she was made mother of God, remaining a virgin. And this her perfection is designated in the words of Elizabeth, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished*, etc. In her *(p. 788)* assumption also she grew vehemently, when she was crowned and made queen of paradise. Hence, Ps. 44:10: *The queen stood on thy right hand*, etc. Yet she will never cease to grow as to reverence, praise and love from the memory of her benefits: because, as is said, Ecclus. 39:13: *The memory of him shall not depart away, and his name shall be in request from generation to generation.*

She has fewer leaves than a tall tree, but sometimes larger and broader, sometimes smaller. The other trees are the other saints; leaves are words. But her leaves, that is, her words, are fewer than those of the other trees through humility, and larger in another respect through the depth of wisdom, but very few have yet understood them. (Look under the heading of her words.) For we read very few words of hers in the Gospel, namely seven, and brief as to utterance, but truly inscrutable as to depth of meaning. She was, then, as has been said, modest in clothing, sparing in food, discreet in word, but immeasurable in growth.

Uniform in stature: because not knotty, not spread in branches here and there: because then it would be more a tree than a rod: and by this uniformity is designated the concord of her ways. Ambrose: “This is the rod to which neither knot nor bark has clung”—namely the knot of mortal sin, nor the bark of venial. Or, this uniformity was in her the firmness of purpose: because as she began, so she persevered. Which is noted in this, that although she had heard from the Angel that she would conceive the Son of God, she constantly answered: *I know not man.* Therefore she is designated by Anne, whose countenance was not changed into divers forms.

Even and smooth. This for innocence. On that word of Numbers 24:17: *A rod shall spring up from Israel*, the Gloss says: To which no shoot of sin has clung. For if there were a shoot on the rod, it would now not be a rod, but rather a branch, or a shrub. And whoever wishes to make a rod from a branch cuts away the shoots and twigs from it. So the whole Trinity did in Mary, when she was sanctified in the womb. Because of this, of those three whom we read to have been sanctified in the womb, namely Jeremiah, Mary, John the Baptist, it is said, Ecclus. 3:30: *The shoot of sin shall be rooted out in them.*

Firm and solid through constancy of mind in good, not empty within like straw, a reed, or a cane shaken by the wind. For in the purpose of virginity which she had vowed she stood most solidly, saying: *I know not man.* Nor because of any promise which the Angel made her did she ever waver from it. Hence it is said of her, Ecclus. 26:23: *As golden pillars upon bases of silver, so are the firm feet upon the soles of a steady woman.*

Pithy and moist. For a rod has more pith than a tree, and abounds more in moisture from top to bottom according to its dimension than any tree whatever. Therefore she was called *full of grace* more excellently than all the saints, who are trees in the garden of the Lord. According to the lower part, the sanctification in her mother’s womb. According to the upper, the conception of the Son of God, or also her assumption. According as it were to the right, contempt of prosperity. According as it were to the left, patience in adversity. According as it were to the back, thanksgiving for graces already received. According as it were to the front, the vehement desire of receiving more fully; and this is properly of humility. She was moist, then, inwardly with the fullness of spiritual gifts, but in her inmost, that is, in her heart, most pithy with bowels of pity.

Slender throughout, but at the top most slender. Slenderness is humility. For as the Son of God took the form of a servant in her and from her, so she too by the gift of the Son received the form of a handmaid. This rod, then, is slender throughout: because she was humble throughout. (This we have assigned under the heading of her humility.) But at her top she was *(p. 789)* most humble, as a rod at its top is most slender. Therefore she is called, Ecclus. 43:7: *A light that decreaseth in its perfection.* And this appeared well in her answer to the Angel announcing the conception of the Son of God: that which was the summit of her excellence, then she appeared most slender, that is, most humble, when, having heard such praises, she answered: *Behold the handmaid*, etc.

Flexible and always upright, that is, wonderfully flexible, as to God through obedience, as to herself through humility, through compassion as to sinners, as appears in Theophilus. Indeed obeying she answered: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*: because it is the handmaid’s part to obey. As if to say: Whatever has pleased him, let it be done of his handmaid. By the light breeze of devout prayer the rod is bent every way, by the light

touch of good working it draws itself to us, that it may share its fruit with us, and make her Only-begotten placable to us. And whence is this? Wholly from this, that the rod, full of moisture, is slender as long as it is in greenness, in whatever direction it can be bent most easily, which a tree cannot. And Mary, most slender through perfect humility, and continually green with perpetual holiness, and copious with the moisture of unspeakable pity, namely favorable to our petitions, if they are just, admitting them, and if we ask her in the name of her only-begotten Son. John 16:24: *Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name.*

And note that a flowering or fruit-bearing rod, if it is bent downward, inclines with itself its flower or fruit. Study, then, to bend this rod to the earth, that is, to you, who are earth, by love and service, and be secure: because it will without doubt incline its flower with itself. But for this it is necessary that you too through obedience be bent to the good pleasure of both.

It is noted also in the flexibility the mercy of the heart for hearkening to the prayers of the wretched. Be, then, you too flexible with pity, if you wish to incline Mary with her loving Son to you. But how, if she is bent, does this rod remain upright? Certainly through justice. For she knows so finely how to bestow mercy on the wretched that she never departs from the right of justice. And this can be seen in an upright rod, which, however much it is bent here and there, always returns to its uprightness. Of which Boethius, speaking of the rod, says that it looks to heaven with a straight path. Likewise also Mary through contemplation, saying with her Son: *I set the Lord always in my sight*, etc.

Smooth, not rough, through pity and compassion, meekness and kindness. (Look of each under their headings.)

Tall and upright. For freely and without obstacle, seeking things above with fine sublimity of contemplation: because she reached the heavens, standing on earth. Therefore she is called *a pillar of smoke.* Or, her tallness is so persevering long-suffering in good. But her uprightness is charity, and ours likewise. For every love other than this is curved and bending. Curved, because it turns back upon itself and bends to these temporal things. But that love which directs man to God for his own sake, and inclines him to the neighbor for God's sake, is upright from its effect. Hence, Cant. 1:3: *The righteous love thee.* But the curved hate you. Or, so great was the uprightness of Mary that she had her intention fixed on heavenly and eternal things. This rod also, that is, the glorious Virgin, was upright through poverty, which she chose after the example of her Son. (Of spiritual uprightness you will find under the heading of the servants of Mary.) She was also upright through intention.

Mary is the rod: because in comparison with the other dimensions it is very long. So the blessed Virgin was long through perseverance of faith *(p. 790)* in the time of the Lord's passion. (This you will find under the heading of her faith.)

Without angles and round. Roundness is simplicity, which is called as it were *simplex unitas*, a single unity, that is, without a fold: because in every fold there is doubleness, and every angle has doubleness, because it is composed from the meeting of two lines. (This you will find well under the heading of heaven, where heaven is called *orbicular*.) Or, in the roundness of the rod is figured the desire of heavenly things, as you will find there.

By its tallness, transcending the greening things that live on earth, it was made green. And she by her dignity transcends whatever is green, namely the Angels and the blessed. Hence it is sung of her: "Rising over the streams of waters." (Look in the eleventh privilege.) Of which green things, because of their unwithering glory, and because our spiritual sight is sweetly refreshed by the recollection and desire of eternal things, as green things comfort the eyes, by which our sight is blunted by the brightness of the flashing Godhead. Again, of her tallness blessed Bernard says: "O Virgin, sublime rod."

As a mediatrix she is between her root and her fruit. The root of Mary is the human race: because she came forth *from the root of Jesse*. Her fruit is *Jesus Christ*, who cannot be had by us except through her mediation: for as the Son is the mediator of God and men, namely between us and the Father, so she is our mediatrix to the Son. Hence blessed Bernard says to her: "Thou mother of the king, thou mother of the exile; thou mother of God, thou mother of man; thou mother of the guilty, thou mother of the judge." Since, then, you are mother of both, of God by nature, and of man by grace, you cannot bear discord between your sons. If, then, you do not dare to approach Christ by yourself, approach by this rod as mediatrix. For she is the golden rod of Assuerus, by whose mediation access was had to him. Therefore she is called *our advocate.* Because of this the just man says, Cant. 7:8: *I will go up into the palm tree, and will take hold of the fruit thereof.* He approaches the palm who by faith working through love draws near to Mary. But as it were he climbs into the palm who in whatever way he can advances in the love and service of her. But he gathers the fruit of the palm with the palm as mediator, who by the prayers of the mother obtains from the Son his pardon, grace and salvation.

Of her own substance, not from the commingling of seeds, she conceived her flower and her fruit. Hence, Gen. 1:11, it is said of the wood of paradise: *Which may have seed in itself upon the earth*, as we have expounded of the wood near the beginning of the chapter. Yet by the benefit of dew and rain the rod was made fruitful, and by the heat of the sun its fruit was ripened. The rain is the Son of God. Hence, Ps. 71:6: *He shall come down like rain upon the fleece.* The dew is the Holy Spirit. Hence, Isa. 45:8: *Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above.* Of which she is said to have conceived, that is, by whose ministry, so that *of* is not material but formal. For, as Ambrose says: "Not of the seed of man, but by a mystic breathing the Word of God was made flesh, and the fruit of the womb flowered." Therefore it was said to her, Luke 1:35: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, that is, upon that which can be said to come, that it may not only be in the mind, but may operate in the flesh. Therefore the Angel had said to her above, v. 31: *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb*, that is, from within, namely from an intrinsic cause without admixture of extrinsic. For other women conceive from something received from without, which she never did. Or, by the rain and dew understand the Holy Spirit. Hence it is said, Ezek. 34:26–27: *There shall be showers of blessing, and the tree of the field shall yield its fruit.* (Look under the heading of the earth.) The heat of the sun, by which the fruit is ripened, is the charity of God the Father, who so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, a man made for the world. Behold how the whole *(p. 791)* Trinity, whose works are inseparable, worked the glorious conception of our rod.

She bears her flower without burden: both because the flower is light, and because it is single. Therefore the Prophet, wishing to hint that she was pregnant without burden: *A flower*, he says, *shall rise up out of his root.* He did not say *flowers.* Blessed Bernard: "The yoke of the Lord is light: Mary could be made pregnant, not weighed down." (Look in her third privilege.)

She brings forth her fruit without her own dissolution. And from this the argument is taken that she bore her Son without pain, that is, without harm to her natural parts. (Look in her fourth privilege.) These three things, then, which belong to the conception, the carrying and the bearing of the Virgin, we ought to venerate with full faith; all the other things, as far as we can, to imitate.

The fruit of the rod too is in a manner more perfect, sweeter and more savory, or more delightful than that of a great tree. So the fruit of Mary is the fullness of all goods, whose taste is sweet above honey and the honeycomb, whose savor is the affluence of all delights. For the fruit of her full one was sufficient for the redemption of the world and for the eternal refreshment of the elect. But since the other saints, much lesser, Mary designated by the most excellent trees, namely cedars, cypresses, olives and others of the kind, how is Mary, excelling all, so properly figured by the rod, as has been assigned? Certainly by reason of humility. For she knew by divine inspiration that *the last shall be first.* Hence to her too there can most fittingly be adapted what Jerome says of blessed Paula: "She was the least of all, that she might be greater than all; and

the more she cast herself down, the more she was raised up by Christ." Blessed Bernard: "Rightly was she made the last first, who, first of all, made herself the last." To hint at this she is named by blessed Luke in the last place.

Again, another reason, as Peter the Eater says: because often the rod is wont to be taken from the wood, where there are wild trees, which bear sour, rustic and insipid fruits: and in the garden, transplanted, a shoot of a good tree is inserted into their trunk, that it may bear pleasant and sweet fruits. So the blessed Virgin, taken from the wood of Gentility, namely of Rahab of Jericho and Ruth the Moabitess, was transplanted in the garden of the Lord, that the best shoot of a tree might be inserted into her. Abraham saw three Angels in the figure of the Trinity and of the unity of the Godhead. The unity is the good tree. The three Persons as it were three shoots, one of which was inserted into the trunk of our rod, that it might bear sweet and pleasant fruits to be eaten. And he who before was life became the tree of life and Emmanuel, that is, God with us. (Of this insertion look above, in the third § of the garden, where the garden is said to be *planted.*) This rod too, born in the desert of Judaea, but transplanted through faith into the garden of delights, namely the Church, where are the roses of the martyrs, the violets of the confessors, and the lilies of the virgins, there bore the fruit of life, fair to see, sweet to smell, sweet to taste, which whoever worthily tastes shall not see death for ever.

Again, another reason: because it is small, namely by the change of the last letter, from *virga*, rod, comes *virgo*, virgin. For in the very word *virga* and *virgo* differ little, namely only by the letter *o*, which literally you will form from *virga*, if the ends of the rod are joined, that is, the two heads of the rod. The lowest end of this rod is virginity, the highest the conception of Christ, or the assumption of the mother. For in whatever way you join the lowest end of this rod to the highest, you will find *virgo*: because a virgin sanctified, a virgin born, a virgin conceived, a virgin brought forth, *(p. 792)* a virgin before childbirth, a virgin in childbirth, and after childbirth, and a virgin taken up into heaven.

Again, note that small is the difference between these two names, *virga* and *virgo*, and almost an identity of these two names because of the identity of what is signified by them, in which they differ, namely *o, r, a.* Hence, Apoc. 1:8: *I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end.* And as these two letters are perfective of these two names, so the Son of God, who is *alpha* and *omega*, by his incarnation most of all perfected Mary, who is rod and virgin. Hence it was said to her, Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished*, etc. And it is to be noted by way of abundance that the Son of God calls himself *alpha* and *omega.* As if to say: I know all things, I have all knowledge. And he compares himself to letters: because he is that wisdom which makes men truly lettered. For he is the Word of God and the wisdom of God. He compares himself to *alpha*, which is interpreted *to seek*, that he may teach that from him wisdom is to be sought, as is said, James 1:5. He compares himself to vowels: because he came for this, that he might call us to the kingdom. Again, because he is that book in which there are no mute or liquid letters. Again, by the two he most calls us, namely by the consideration of our beginning and by the memory of our end. Therefore he compares himself to those letters which are the extreme and final ones. Again, to Greek letters and not Hebrew: because literally wisdom began among the Greeks. Again, that he may teach us that not only theological but also philosophical wisdom is from the Lord God. It is to be noted besides that this letter *A* is triangular, this letter *O* round. And this letter *A* signifies the threefold faith, namely of the three Persons in unity of substance, as *A* is one letter but has three angles. Or also these three angles signify the faith of the sacraments, of the testaments, of the articles. But the letter *O*, which is round and circular, signifies perfection. What then is the rod, or the rod the virgin, but the blessed Virgin perfect in faith?

And note that because a great thing cannot be sufficiently proved by one witness, the blessed Virgin descended not only from the Synagogue, which signifies Judaea, but also from Gentility through Rahab of Jericho and Ruth the Moabitess. Therefore of the double name, *virga*, *virgo*, the *A* is taken from Balaam the Gentile, who prophesying said among other things, Num. 24:17: *A rod shall spring up from Israel, and shall*

strike the chiefs of Moab. But the *O* is from Isaiah the Jew, saying, Isa. 7:14: *Behold a virgin shall conceive*, etc.

Again, it is to be noted that since the Prophet put *rod* simply and without any addition, wishing by *rod* the blessed Virgin to be understood, and said: *There shall come forth a rod*, without any addition he meant the perfect rod. It is the custom of sacred Scripture that whenever it makes a metaphor from any perfect thing to something irrational, or to an inanimate thing, if that thing is set forth in a general name, the most perfect thing in its kind is to be understood. For example, not all lilies nor all roses are of the same beauty or odor: therefore when it is said: *As the lily among thorns*, or, *As a rose plant in Jericho*, and the like, it is to be understood of the most beautiful lily and of the rose of the highest beauty.

Again, it is to be noted that always in a metaphor of imperfect things something is added which may hint at the evil, as when it is said, Isa. 56:10: *Dumb dogs not able to bark.* Or, *A silly dove*, and the like. Therefore when it is said: *There shall come forth a rod*, etc., one should not understand a curved rod, or rough, or wrinkled, or dry, but green, smooth, round and the like, *(p. 793)* which properties in her we have assigned above.

This is one of the rods which Jacob, that is, God the Father, barked, namely from the bark of original sin: and then it appeared most white, because most pure. (This we had above under the heading of the tree of Nebuchadnezzar.) The other two that were barked were Jeremiah and John the Baptist. Therefore it is said, Lam. 1:6: *From the daughter of Sion all her beauty is departed*, namely Anne, as above under the heading of the wood about the middle of the chapter.

This is the rod upon whose top Jacob dying is said to have adored God, *turning to the bed's head.* Note that in the text of the Bible this is not read, but Josephus and the Master in the Histories say that *upon the top of his rod*: and this rod according to some was the sceptre of Joseph, not that Jacob adored the sceptre of Joseph, but perhaps he held the sceptre of Joseph while he swore to him, and could have adored God leaning on the sceptre.

This is the rod of Moses by which he did signs in Egypt, and to which in every necessity he had recourse: because Christ through Mary did wonderful things in the world.

This is the pastoral rod, with which Moses drove his flock *to the inner parts of the desert*: because as sheep, the rod guiding, are driven, so by the example of Mary the ways of the faithful are corrected and as it were set in a certain order. Because of this Micah prays to the Lord, 7:14: *O Lord our God, feed thy people with thy rod*, etc. Again, Exod. 4:2, the Lord says to Moses: *What is that thou holdest in thy hand? He answered: A rod.* In this it is noted that this rod ought to be held in the hand by the likeness of works, not in the mouth only by invocation and praise, or in the heart by faith, which without works is dead. There follows, vv. 3–4: *And the Lord said: Cast it down upon the ground. He cast it down, and it was turned into a serpent, so that Moses fled from it. And the Lord said: Put out thy hand, and take it by the tail. He put forth his hand, and took hold of it, and it was turned into a rod.*

Again, of this rod the Lord commanded Moses, Exod. 4:17: *Take this rod in thy hand, wherewith thou shalt do the signs.* And a little after it is read, v. 20, that he carried the rod of God in his hand returning into Egypt. This rod, then, turned into a serpent, devoured the serpents of the Egyptians: because when Mary put on Christ with flesh, which was like the flesh of sin, the heresies by which the wicked Egyptians, that is, the world, were mocking, she destroyed both by the power of her offspring and by the example of her holiness. Which was fulfilled when, she entering Egypt with the Son, all the idols fell, as Isaiah had foretold, 19:1. Or otherwise: the blessed Virgin, with mouth opened to entreat the Son, devours and annihilates the serpents, that is, the cunnings of the demons and of the temptations that poison souls. Hence it was said to the serpent, Gen. 3:15: *She shall crush thy head.* Or also she devours the serpents, that is, the cunnings of the demons tempting, when with temptation she makes issue, according to that of Ps. 106:27: *And all their wisdom was*

swallowed up.

And here it is to be noted that this rod is sometimes called the rod of Moses, sometimes the rod of Aaron, as in this place. Hence some say that the rod of Moses was one, the rod of Aaron another. But Peter the Eater says that it is truer to believe that the same rod was of each.

Again, with this rod Moses struck the water of the river before Pharaoh and his servants, and the water was turned into blood, and the fish that were in the river *(p. 794)* died. Likewise also Mary by her prayers, merits and examples, to sinners converted and most of all to those who love her, turns worldly and carnal delights, which swiftly flow past like water, into abomination and bitterness as it were into blood which no one can drink: and so the river fish die, that is, vain curiosities.

Again, with this rod stretched out Aaron struck the dust of the earth. Exod. 8:17: *And there came sciniphs on men and on beasts: all the dust of the earth was turned into sciniphs through all the land of Egypt.*

Again, this rod stretched out towards heaven by Moses, Exod. 9:23: *The Lord sent thunder and hail, and lightnings running along the ground in the land of Egypt*, etc. In which it is hinted that this rod strikes fear into certain proud men, who do not fear God except when he thunders and lightens, and frightens them, giving grace to think of their evils: which happens chiefly when they consider how grievously she herself was punished in her Son, though she never sinned. Hence Simeon too had foretold to her: *Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.* For if in the green wood these things are done, what shall be done in the dry?

Again, this rod stretched out over the land of Egypt, Exod. 10:13–16, a burning wind brought up the locusts, which devoured all the grass of the land, and all the fruits of the trees, and left nothing green. By this greenness are designated the endowments and beauty of bodies, which swiftly pass away: because form is a fragile good, and is often devoured by the locusts of pride or of lust. But the blessed Virgin, giving grace to think that *favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain*, and that all outward greenness withers very quickly, and that the fruits of good works are easily devoured by vainglory, helps many to hold all these things cheap. These are the locusts which have over them a king, the Angel of the bottomless pit.

Again, the children of Israel departing from Egypt, and hemmed in on one side by the sea, on another by the mountains, on another by Pharaoh: for in front indeed was the sea, which could not be crossed; on the side lofty mountains, which they could not pass over; behind Pharaoh armed with his chosen men and all the arms of his princes, who could not turn aside, and despairing in perplexity that they could escape, the rod was stretched out over the sea, and at its lifting up that sea was divided, and through it at once a way was made as through dry land.

Morally: the Red Sea is the world, bloody with vices and sins. The mountains are the difficult hardships and miseries of this world, which do not allow many to undertake penance. Pharaoh, the prince of Egypt, is the devil, the powers of the air, and evil men. But from all, hoping in the help of our rod, we can easily be freed. And because of this, after the example of Moses, in every necessity we must have recourse to her and take refuge in her.

Again, morally: by the Red Sea is designated true and bitter contrition from the recollection of past sins, which are called *bloods*, there: *Deliver me from blood, O God*, etc. And this sea ought to be divided, that we may grieve for the sins of commission and of omission, for carnal and spiritual sins, for the substance and the circumstances of sins. Or, the division of the sea is the diminishing of temptation through the grace of our rod, which happens when through her help there is forbidden *(p. 795)* the flame of fire. But it is not enough that the sins, or the demons, who are the Egyptians, be drowned through contrition, unless you also cast them out on the shore through confession. Hence there follows in the same place, that the children of Israel *saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore*, etc. For these Egyptians, first drowned in the bitterness of contrition, die altogether when cast out as it were on the shore by the virtue of confession.

This is the rod of Moses with which he struck the rock, Exod. 17:6, and Num. 20:11: *Water came forth in great abundance, so that the people and their cattle drank.* The rock is Christ. 1 Cor. 10:4: *And the rock was Christ.* The hardness of this rock is the rigor or severity of divine justice. But he is never so severe and hard towards sinners that he will not pour out the waters of graces, or of indulgence, if this rod touches him with loving prayer. Because of this it is said, Num. 20:11: *When Moses had lifted up his hand, and struck the rock twice with the rod, there came forth water in great abundance,* that is, copious streams of mercy, *so that the people drank,* that is, the rational, *and the cattle,* that is, the beastly and the brutal. But this rock, namely Christ, is touched by this rod as it were twice, when first virginal purity, and secondly maternal dignity, is represented to him lovingly in prayers. And because of this the Son says to her, Cant. 4:9: *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart.* And this double wounding is the double striking of this rock. Or, as it were a double striking are prayer to the Father, and command to the Son. Hence we say to the mother: "Pray the Father, command the Son."

And note that Christ is well called *silex,* flint, from being silent (*a silendo*). For now he is silent, though he sees well our evils; but in eternity he will not be silent, as the Psalmist says. Hence he says, Isa. 18:4: *I will take my rest, and consider in my place,* namely in mercy and peace: because in them his place is made. *As the noonday light is clear,* etc. In the same, 42:14: *I have always held my peace, I have kept silence, I have been patient: I will speak now as a woman in labour.*

Otherwise: as Peter the Eater says, the rock signifies the hardness of the human heart, which is as it were inflexible, and most of all to obeying, because of a certain as it were inborn liberty in the human mind, so that it wishes to be over, not to be under. But this hardness this rod struck by her example, she who so easily obeyed the divine will, answering: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord,* etc., whose property it is to obey.

Otherwise: then the hardness of the human heart is struck by this rod, when the sinner, hardened in respect of grace, is touched mercifully by her, so that from him streams of tears may flow.

Otherwise: by this rod the Lord broke the rock, that is, the hardness of the human heart, in the desert, that is, in the unfruitful sinner, full of wild beasts, that is, of the monsters of sins, by which hardness broken he waters the sinners, that is, refreshes them with the waters of tears, which provoke the waters of graces. Hence the penitent says: *I mingled my drink with weeping.* As in a deep abyss. As if to say: They have much whence they ought to weep. Jer. 17:9: *The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable: who can know it?*

Again, it is to be noted that the rod works seven special usefulnesses, and sacred Scripture makes mention of seven more special rods.

Of the first it is read, Jer. 1:11, which can be called the rod of Jeremiah.

Of the second, of Jonathan, 1 Kings 14:27.

Of the third, of Moses, Exod. 4:2.

Of the fourth, of Assuerus, Esther 4:11.

Of the fifth, of Aaron, Num. 17:8.

(p. 796) Of the other two, Zech. 11:7.

In these seven are noted seven special and useful effects, which are found in the Virgin, and can be noted in this way.

The first is called the watchful rod, or the rod of watchings, according to a double reading. The watchful rod, that is, exciting to watchings, is the blessed Virgin. Indeed with a rod clerics are wont to be roused who are sleepy as they go to school, or who sleep in the schools themselves. Hence, Prov. 22:15: *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,* that is, in a childish heart, *and the rod of correction shall drive it away.* For God, seeing

the whole human race to be childish, and that *while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept*: they slumber when they frequently sin and rise again; they sleep when they continue in sins; they sleep obstinately and in sins dying. Seeing, I say, this, God sent us the watchful rod, that is, the blessed Virgin, that by her prayers, merits and examples she might rouse us from the sleep of sin, which often happens by meditating on her, praying to her, loving her, and serving her. No one is roused by the merit of any saint except through her he is roused. For she is the rod of discipline, that is, of awakening, to those whom she loves, procuring for us sometimes through her Son the discipline of present scourges, lest we run into perpetual ones. Hence, Wis. 10:12: *And gave him a strong conflict, that he might overcome*, etc. (Look in the thirty-sixth cause.)

And note that after Jeremiah said that he saw the watchful rod, he at once adds that he saw a pot boiling from the north: because he who has not watched at this rod is going to fall into the pot boiling, namely into Gehenna.

The second is the rod of Jonathan, on whose top he tasted honey, and his eyes were enlightened. For when anyone has awakened, he must open his eyes, that he may receive the light. Jonathan is interpreted *the gift of the dove*, which has a groan for a song, and the penitent groaning from the gift of the Holy Spirit for sins. The honeyed rod is the Virgin Mary, sweetened with pity, charity, kindness. Put, then, often to your mouth this rod, praying to her, praising, blessing, confessing, preaching her great things, and most often reciting that: "O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary": and so sometimes you will be able to feel her honeyed sweetness, and the eyes of your inner self will be enlightened, that is, the intellect and affection, to know and diligently love the mother and the Son.

But note that it was on the top of the rod that Jonathan tasted that honey: because at Matins and Compline, which are as it were two extreme services which are paid to the mother and the Son in the natural day, devotion is wont to be sought and found more frequently. If, then, you desire to be enlightened with knowledge by the enlightened one, that is, by the blessed Virgin, you must first rise from the sleep of sin, according to that of the Apostle, Eph. 5:14: *Rise, thou that sleepest*, that is, keep watch, *and arise from the dead*, that is, from sins, *and Christ shall enlighten thee*, by the prayers of his mother.

Otherwise: the honeycomb is Christ, in whom is the wax of humanity and the honey of Godhead: which if the top of this rod has touched, which happens when the glorious Virgin commands her Son and entreats the Father—for since she was made mother of God, which is the highest dignity and top—if, I say, the top of this rod has touched Christ, by interceding for you, at once from Christ into the rod and from the rod into you honeyed sweetness will distil, and the eyes of your heart will be enlightened, that is, the intellect and affection, that you may know and love her. Therefore it is said, Ps. 33:9: *O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet*, that is, the Son, and the Lady, that is, the mother.

The third rod is of Moses. Through awakening and enlightenment one must be cleansed from filth, and for this the rod *(p. 797)* of Moses is necessary, which touches the rock, that is, the hardness of the heart, that tears may flow for washing the stains of crimes. (This you had a little above.)

The fourth is the golden rod of Assuerus, of which Esther herself says, Esther 4:11: *All the king's servants, and all the people of the provinces that are under his dominion, know, that whosoever, either man or woman, cometh into the king's inner court, who is not called for, is immediately to be put to death without any delay, except the king shall hold out the golden sceptre towards him in token of clemency, and so he may live.* And this is the answer of Esther to Mardochai. Assuerus signifies Christ: because Assuerus is interpreted *beatitude*, and to enter to him and to see him is beatitude. The golden rod, by whose leading we enter to Christ and by whose mediation he is seen, is the Virgin Mary, who is not said to have been gilded as it were by outward appearance, but golden by true existence of virtues. For *there is one that humbleth himself wickedly*: but she was humble within and without. And so of the other virtues which are signified in gold.

And this rod was made by the hand of the heavenly wisdom as it were of a threefold gold.

Of the gold of Ophir, of which it is read, 3 Kings 10:11. Of the gold of Arabia, of which in Ps. 71:15. Of the gold of Hevilath, of which it is read, Gen. 2:11. Ophir is interpreted *infirmity*, and signifies virginity flourishing in infirm flesh: because virginity is called the greenness of the begotten. But her virginity was angelic, that is, solid as gold, from whose purpose she wavered at no promise, but constantly answered: *Because I know not man.* The gold of Arabia is interpreted *humble*, or western humility, which is chiefly born from the consideration of one's own setting. The gold of Mary and of her Son was given by the Magi of Arabia literally: because the humility of all greatly pleases both the Son and the mother. The gold of Hevilath is interpreted *bringing forth*, and signifies charity, from which all good things proceed as the Son from the mother bringing forth. And the gold of the land of Hevilath is said to be the best: because the glorious Virgin had charity pre-eminent. The gold of Ophir, then, is good, the gold of Arabia better, but the gold of Hevilath best.

Again, Mary is a golden rod to the Angels and the blessed, who see the queen in her beauty. A wooden rod to worldly men, to whom she brought the fruit of the tree of life: because it is the part of wooden rods to bear fruit. An iron rod to wicked men and to the demons themselves: because through her the heads of the wicked are broken. Hence it is said to Christ in Ps. 2:9: *Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

This Esther is the faithful soul set apart from the sights of the world: because Esther is interpreted *hidden*, who wishes to enter and entreat the true Assuerus. But after the example of that Esther, she must first fast for three days from the threefold concupiscence, namely with the heart from evil thoughts, with the mouth from depraved speeches, with the hand from depraved works. And this fast is called *three days'*: because so the soul receives the enlightenment of the virtues, which are days. Hence there follows in the same place in the text of the fifth chapter, v. 1: *On the third day Esther put on her royal apparel*, that is, of the mind, adorned with virtues, namely with faith, hope and charity, which are the royal garments, as the Gloss says there; and in this manner she obtained the retracting of the sentence of death given against the Jews, that is, the true confessors. And so the people of the Jews destined to death are reconciled through the mediation of the golden rod, and their enemy Aman, that is, the devil, is hanged and slain. Which reconciliation, namely, is designated by this, that it is read there, *(p. 798)* v. 2: *When Assuerus saw Esther the queen standing, she pleased his eyes, and he held out toward her the golden sceptre, which he held in his hand: and she drew near, and kissed the top of his sceptre.* The golden rod is the Virgin Mary. Esther is the faithful soul. The top of the golden rod is the most excellent dignity of Mary, from this, that she was made the mother of God. Whoever, then, rejoices with Mary over so great a privilege, kisses this top. And whoever is wary lest he offend the mother of mercy herself. Or if perhaps he has offended her in any way, he takes pains how he may be reconciled to her. For the kiss is the sign of love, from which comes rejoicing. It is a sign also of reconciliation and peace. By this example, then, it is evidently shown that no one avails to enter into that beatitude which is Christ, unless he be under the conduct of this rod.

The fifth is the rod of Aaron, which, to end the contention which some were raising against Moses and Aaron, budded, flowered, and bore fruit. The rod of Aaron is the Virgin Mary. The leaves of this rod are good morals, the flowers virtues, the fruits good works. Indeed this rod brought forth almonds, which are the food of the infirm: because the works of pity she showed to Christ, who says: *My strength is weakened through poverty*, of her own substance, nor does she ever cease mercifully to show such works to his members.

Otherwise: the rod of Aaron is the blessed Virgin, who, like that dry rod, without the moisture of man's seed brought forth the almond, that is, bore Christ. Who, namely, the rod flowered by consenting, budded by begetting, bore fruit by bringing forth. In the almond there are three things: the bark, fragile and as it were loose and deformed, the humanity of Christ, in whom in the passion there was no beauty nor comeliness, but

then he was reckoned as it were a leper. The shell, hard, the solidity of the Godhead. The sweet kernel, the food of the infirm, that is, of the truly penitent, who say with the Prophet Jeremiah, 17:14: *Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed.* But the full refreshment of the Angels who enjoy him. And with this kernel he feeds men in the sacrament of the altar.

Otherwise: the rod of Aaron is the Virgin Mary, about which rod a great figure of a great sacrament is noted. For this was the rod of Aaron, the high priest, and according to Isaiah 11:1 it is called *the rod of Jesse*, from which immediately the royal tribe had its rise: because Jesse was the father of David, and for prefiguring that Mary was to bear him who is king and priest. Hence the Psalmist said, Ps. 109:2, as speaking to Christ: *The Lord will send forth the sceptre of thy power out of Sion*; a little after, v. 4, he joined: *Thou art a priest for ever*, etc. Of this rod Augustine says in a certain sermon on the Incarnation: "This rod brought forth what it had not before, not rooted by planting, not dug with the hoe, not animated by sap, not made fruitful by seed. And when all the laws of nature were lacking to them, the rod brought forth what neither seed could supply, nor root," etc. And this he says against the Jew asking how the Virgin brought forth. But this rod brought forth above nature, and against nature, that is, against the accustomed course of nature, and not simply against nature: because, as some great theologians say, and well, nothing is more natural to nature than to obey the ordinance of its Creator. Hence Isidore in the eleventh book of the *Etymologies*, where he discusses portents: "Portents are not against nature, which come about by the divine will, since the will of the Creator is the nature of each created thing." Hence it is read, Apoc. 4:11: *Thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were, and have been created.* It brought forth, I say, almonds or nuts, as another translation says, *(p. 799)* by which, namely, the almonds or nuts signify many thousands of the just, whom she daily converts to newness of life by her example. Or, by the nut or almond is meant Christ, in whose person there is a threefold substance. The bitter rind is the flesh, which suffered the bitternesses of the passion. The sweet kernel is the soul, in which was the sweetness of fruition: for he was at once wayfarer and comprehensor. Hence he says: *I set the Lord always in my sight.* In the shell is the divinity united to both, in which is insuperable strength, which was hidden in the passion. For this reason, then, Isaiah calls this virgin a rod, to send us back to this figure.

The sixth and seventh rods are found in Zech. 11:7, where he says: *I took unto me two rods: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called a Cord, and I fed the flock.* And a little after, v. 10: *And I took my rod that was called Beauty*, etc. See that one of these rods was called both *decor* and *decus*. *Decor* is said as it were *decus cordis*, the beauty of the heart, and signifies the inward virtues and inner beauty. And this rod is discipline, namely the ordered correction of morals. But the rod of correction ought to come forth from the root of Jesse, which is interpreted *burning*, that is, from fear of the burning of Gehenna and from love of the heavenly burning, which is charity: because for fear of punishments and desire of joys we ought to correct. *Decus* is said as it were *Dei custos*, guardian of God: because for one who has all these things said above, nothing remains but that he keep God for himself and himself for God. And this rod likewise is discipline. Of the first, Prov. 27:18: *He that is the keeper of his master shall be glorified.* Of the second, Ps. 58:10: *I will keep my strength to thee.* Of both, Mary speaking of the beloved, Cant. 3:4: *I held him, and I will not let him go.*

The seventh rod is called the cord, with which land is wont to be measured. Hence Ps. 77:54: *He divided to them their land by lot, with a line of distribution.* Now the earth is fourfold, and we ought to measure it justly. The earth we see, namely the material earth. The earth we bear, our body. The earth we seek, paradise. The earth we flee, hell. For in the earth you bear, as much as you measure out to yourself of carnal pleasure, so much do you measure out to yourself of the land of misery or of hell. Apoc. 18:7: *As much as she hath glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her*; this is said of the reprobate soul. And as much as you measure out to yourself of penance in the earth you bear, that is, as long as you live in the world, so much do you measure out to yourself of glory and blessedness in the earth you seek, that is, paradise. Hence the Psalmist says of Christ, Ps. 93:19: *According to the multitude of my sorrows*

in my heart and in my body, *thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* But the blessed Virgin, because she measured out to herself almost nothing of bodily or earthly things, but much of poverty, much of affliction and penance, therefore measured out to herself all that is good and pleasant.

The first rod, then, is of awakening. The second, of enlightening. The third, of purifying. The fourth, of reconciling. The fifth, of governing. The sixth, of correcting. The seventh, of measuring. These rods Jacob, that is, God the Father, set in the channels, that is, in the mirrors of the Scriptures, that at the sight of them we may conceive various offspring, that is, various affections of the virtues.

This is the rod of divine power of which the prophet says to the Son of God, Ps. 109:2: *The Lord will send forth the rod of thy power out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thy enemies.* Which is expounded thus: O Christ, *(p. 800)* the Lord, that is, the Father, will send forth, that is, will send out, that is, will cause to be born, out of Sion, that is, out of the nation of the Jews, the rod of thy power, that is, Mary, in whom and through whom thy power will be made manifest in many ways. For through her the Lord has made his power known among the peoples, and has redeemed his people with his arm.

And note that the power of God is said to be threefold: the might of God, the mercy of God, and virtue infused by God. Of the first it is said: *Be thou exalted, O Lord, in thy own strength.* According to this Mary is called the rod of power: because in her the power and might of God worked wonders, namely that God is man, the Word flesh, the mother a virgin, and the like. For this reason it was foretold to her, Luke 1:35: *The power of the most High shall overshadow thee.* According to this she was signified by the rod of Aaron, by which God did wonders in the land of Egypt and in the desert, as was set out above. Of the second, that is, of mercy, the Psalmist says, Ps. 53:3: *In thy strength*, that is, in thy mercy, which is above all thy power. Hence in the Collect: "O God, who dost manifest thy omnipotence chiefly in sparing and showing mercy." *Judge me.* According to this Mary is the rod of power: because in her he wrought mercy for us by taking flesh from her, in which he died for us. Hence Luke 1:78: *Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us*, etc. And also by giving us Mary as advocate and mother of mercy, to obtain mercy for us. (Look under advocates, in the seventeenth cause.) According to this she was signified by the golden rod of Assuerus, which he held out to Esther as a sign of clemency, giving her confidence of obtaining her request. So too God has given us Mary, that through her mediation we may obtain from the Lord pardon, grace and glory. Of the third, that is, of infused virtue, it is said in Ps. 67:36: *He will give power and strength to his people.* Thus she was most fittingly the rod of power: because she was full of all grace and virtue. Hence she is called *full of grace*. And according to this she was signified by the rod of Aaron, which budded, blossomed, put forth leaves, and bore almonds. There follows: *Rule*, that is, thou shalt rule, *in the midst of thy enemies*. Either by converting them through Mary to justice, as is plain in Theophilus; or by punishing them in vengeance, as may be seen in Julian the Apostate. By reason of the conversion of sinners Mary is called in Ps. 44:7 *the rod of uprightness* and *the rod of the kingdom* of the Lord: because she directs penitents into the kingdom of the ages. But by reason of punishment Christ says of her, Isa. 10:5: *The rod of my anger*, etc. The like is found in Num. 24:17, in the prophecy of Balaam: *A rod shall spring up from Israel, and shall strike the chiefs of Moab*, etc.

Likewise Isa. 11:4: *He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth*, that is, earthly men, through Mary, whom he himself created, who says: *I came out of the mouth of the most High*, etc.

This is the rod of consuming, with the tip of which the Angel touched the loaves and the flesh of Gedeon, and fire rose up from the rock and consumed the whole holocaust, as is read in Judges 6:21. And you, if you hold this rod in your hand by likeness of works, and by discipline, which is a rod, and it touches your flesh, that is, you who are carnal, the fire of charity will come forth from the rock, which is Christ, and will consume in you whatever it finds to be consumed, by the help of this rod.

This is the rod of sustaining, as Peter Comestor says, which old men carry to support themselves, so that what they cannot do by their own strength they may do with the help of a rod. So the Ancient of days, whose going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity, *(p. 801)* could not of himself stand, walk, run about, hunger, thirst, or the like, which do not befit the Godhead: and therefore he leaned upon this rod, and was incarnate in her, and was carried by her, so that in the flesh which he had received from her he might be crucified and die, and so redeem the world.

This is the rod of defence, with which the faithful ought to defend themselves from the dogs, that is, from the bites of temptations, namely by calling upon her name: because she is the rod of power. But if she is had only in the mouth, as those have her who only praise or greet her, doing nothing for her honour, they do not defend themselves well by her. Let her therefore be taken up in three ways: in the heart by meditation and love, in the mouth by praise and greeting, in the hand by working and conformity of works: and so she will be most useful for every kind of defence. For this reason it is said, Mark 6:8: *And he commanded them* (Jesus) *that they should take nothing for the way, but a staff only*, that is, Mary, by continual meditation, for your defence.

This is the rod of fishing, by means of which, namely, fishes, that is, men, are drawn out of the mire of many waters, that is, of worldly and carnal pleasures, which are many; and any sinners whatever out of the depth of sins, and out of the sea, that is, out of the bitter sweetness of the world, when namely, by the example of Mary, despising riches, they embrace poverty. The line by which the iron clings to the rod is the whole course of her life. The bent hook is her prayer. The bait (*laache* in French), that is, the enticement, is all the good things that are ministered to us through her mercy.

This is the rod of assault, by means of which, namely, are hurled the authorities of sacred Scripture taken from the torrents of the Scriptures, that is, from the two Testaments. Hence Ps. 103:12: *From the midst of the rocks*, that is, of the two Testaments, *they shall give forth their voices*, disputation or preaching. They are hurled, I say, at the castles, that is, against heretics, who exalt themselves against the knowledge of God.

Or otherwise: by this rod as mediatrix the Lord hurls his benefits at us like living stones, that he may take and claim for himself the citadel of the human heart and the city of our soul.

This is the rod of measuring, which was given to John. Hence he says, Apoc. 11:1: *There was given me a reed like unto a rod, and it was said to me: Arise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that adore therein*, etc. And you, if you wish to belong to the temple of God and to the Lord's altar, must be measured by this rod through imitation. On the measurings, look in Ezechiel 40:3 and following.

This is the rod of uprightness and the rod of the kingdom of the Lord, which by her merits, prayers and examples directs all who enter into the kingdom of her Son; and from her direction and safe-conduct must be sought by prayer, so that it may be said to her as it is said to the Son: *Direct me*, O Lady, *in thy truth, and teach me*, for thou art my salvation and my saviour.

This is the rod of consolation, of which Ps. 22:4: *Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.* The rod is Mary, the staff the wood of the cross, by which two the shepherd brought back the lost sheep and cudgelled the devil. (Look under the title of the cross.) For as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation: so also Mary is the mother of mercy, and comforts us in our tribulations, unless our sins keep this good from us.

(p. 802) This is the rod of fragrance, that is, the fragrant rod, which renders fragrant all whom it touches through grace. Of which it is said, Cant. 3:6: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices*, etc.? (Look under the title of the spices of the garden enclosed.) Therefore she says, Ecclus. 24:21: *As the Libanus not cut, which is pure frankincense, I perfumed my dwelling place*, that is, those in whom I dwell through grace.

This is the rod of preaching, namely that which alone avails preachers to carry on the way. Hence Mark 6:8, the Lord commanded the twelve Apostles that they should take nothing for the way, *but a staff only*. For one who could have this rod as companion on the way of the present life would lack neither grace, nor teaching, nor anything needful.

This is the rod of ruling or of breaking, of which the Father says to the Son, Ps. 2:9: *Thou shalt rule them*, that is, the good, *with a rod of iron*, that is, with inflexible justice, which is plainly found in the examples of Mary, *and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel*, that is, whatever in them is of clay and earthenware, thou shalt purge. Otherwise: *Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron* is interpreted of the good, as has been expounded; of the wicked, what follows: *And shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel*, that is, the wicked, as in Julian the Apostate. And in this is noted the ease on the part of the one who breaks, and the irreparableness on the part of those broken. Isa. 30:13: *Suddenly, when it is not looked for*, etc. And this is what is said in Num. 24:17: *A rod shall spring up from Israel, and shall strike the chiefs of Moab*, that is, demons and wicked men. Likewise in this it is noted that those who will not now be ruled by the examples and words of Mary will in the future be broken by the power of her Son. Otherwise: Moab is interpreted *from the father*, and signifies the devil, of whom he says to the Jews themselves, John 8:44: *You are of your father the devil*, etc. He is king over all the children of pride. He is also the prince of the world, and has under him three chiefs, namely the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. The first chief the blessed Virgin broke by virginity, the second by voluntary poverty, the third by humility.

Morally: in the rod is signified correction, in the iron support: because those whom the justice of the Son corrects, the mercy of the mother sustains lest they fail, not always, but often.

Likewise, this is the rod of striking, of which it is said, Isa. 11:4: *He shall strike the earth*, that is, those who are united to the earth with excessive affection and have become as it were earth, *with the rod of his mouth*, that is, with the sentence of judgement which he himself will pronounce. Hence it is said, Ecclus. 43:18: *The voice of his thunder hath struck the earth.* Or the rod of his mouth may be called Mary, who says, Ecclus. 24:5: *I came out of the mouth of the most High*, by whose mediation, namely, he struck Julian the Apostate, who had abandoned the Catholic faith to gain the Roman principate.

This is the rod of provoking. For with a rod dogs are wont to be provoked and stirred to snarling and barking. For those who devoutly serve the blessed Virgin provoke the devil to anger and incite him to tempt, of which sort it is said, Job 3:8: *Who are ready to raise up a leviathan.* But he rises in contempt into scandals. Hence he is also signified by Holofernes, who commanded the aqueduct to be cut, by which the spring flowed into the city of Bethulia. (Look for the exposition under the title of the receptacles of waters, where Mary is called an aqueduct.)

Likewise, a rod carries three things, namely a goad, a hook, and birdlime, by which three animals, namely the ox, the fish and the bird, are captured, by which three Behemoth, that is, the devil, is figured. For the goad the ox *(p. 803)* compels to serve agriculture. The hook draws the fish out of the water or the river. The birdlime captures the bird in the air. And by these three is figured Christ, whom the Virgin Mary bore. Of the ox it is said to Job himself, Job 40:10: *Behold behemoth whom I made with thee, he eateth grass like an ox.* In the same place, v. 20: *Canst thou draw out the leviathan with a hook?* namely, from the waters of the human race. In the same place, v. 24: *Shalt thou play with him as with a bird?*

Christ is the goad. Hence he said to Saul, Acts 9:5: *It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.* The ox, then, that is, the devil, serves the husbandry of God, that is, the faithful of the Church, to whom it is said, 1 Cor. 3:9: *You are God's husbandry*, while he troubles them with temptations, and as it were treads them for their proving, not for their overthrow; and so by treading he makes them as it were fruitful and richer soil.

Christ is the hook, of which Job 40:19: *In his eyes as with a hook he shall take him.* The iron of this hook is the power of the divinity, the worm is the frailty of the flesh: the iron hidden in the worm, the divinity hidden

in the humanity. The hook cast into the sea is Christ sent into the world. Satan, who held dominion in the sea of the world through idolatry, who was called above Leviathan, sought this worm by death: but the power of the divinity hooked him. Hence someone says:

The Father is the fisher, the world the sea, the Son the hook,

The flesh the bait, the Godhead the line, man the fish.

Christ is the birdlime, whose softness is the sticky humanity, whose tenacity is the Godhead. A bird settling on a limed twig first presses the soft lime with its feet; and when these stick to the tenacious lime, it beats the lime with its wings, until they too stick to the lime. The wings of the devil were the Roman princes, who lifted the devil himself on high and caused him to be worshipped throughout the world. The feet are the lower peoples. For first the devil pressed down Christ's humanity by death through the lesser peoples crying before Pilate: *Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.* But when these lesser ones, at the preaching of the Apostles, by the power of the divinity clung to Christ by faith, the devil stirred up the Roman princes, as it were his wings, to persecute Christ in his members, until they too clung to Christ by faith as to birdlime; and so the devil was played with like a bird. Therefore the Lord says, Jer. 13:11: *I have made to cleave to me all the house of Israel*, that is, the people of believers. But since the devil still troubles us on earth, inasmuch as he is the ox, through love of earthly things; and in the waters, inasmuch as he is the fish, through the flowing of carnal pleasures; and in the air, inasmuch as he is the bird, through elation of mind: it is always necessary to take refuge by prayer in this rod, and in him whom the rod bore, who by the merit of poverty and humility always prevails to take the devil captive.

Likewise, from twigs are made certain vessels, which are called baskets or hampers, in which bread and fruit are brought to the table. So too the blessed Virgin is that admirable vessel, the work of the most High: through which we have Christ, who is the living bread that came down from heaven, and who is the fruit of fruits on the table of the altar, and whom we shall have on the heavenly table. In this vessel also we continually receive the best gifts, which come down from the Father of lights.

Likewise, by means of a rod, or with the help of a rod, the shepherd keeps, rules and directs his flock; and Christ, by means of Mary, the Christian people. Therefore Micheas prayed, Mich. 7:14: *O Lord our God, feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thy inheritance.*

This is the rod of striking. Isa. 30:31: *The Assyrian, struck with the rod, shall fear.* Because the devil fears the name and the imitation *(p. 804)* of the Virgin, by which he is struck and overcome; as a dog hurt by a stick flees when he sees the stick raised.

There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse. In these words is figured the twofold nativity of Christ and the twofold nativity of Mary, each of which is wonderful, venerable and unspeakable. Hence Isa. 53:8: *Who shall declare his generation?* And each is twofold. And although the nativity of the mother precedes in time the nativity of the Son, yet whatever the mother has, she has from the Son. We shall first set out the twofold nativity of the Son. When, then, he says: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse*, the nativity of the Virgin is noted. When he adds: *And a flower shall rise up out of his root*, the nativity of the Son is noted. But since a rod must come forth from a branch, not from the stock, and a flower likewise from a branch, not from the root, why did the Prophet use such words?

Of that nativity of Christ, then, by which he is born eternally of the Father, it is said, Mich. 5:2: *His going forth is from the beginning*, that is, from the Father, *from the days of eternity.* Likewise in Ps. 2:7: *The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.* This adverb *this day*, which is of the present time, removes an end from that generation. *Have begotten*, which is of the past, removes the past. The sense, then, is: I this day, that is, from eternity. Or *this day*, that is, without end and without beginning, have I begotten thee. Likewise Ps. 109:1: *The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand*, that is, the Father begets a Son equal to himself. And note that sitting belongs to pontiffs, judges and masters. And Christ is

pontiff and judge and master.

Besides that nativity from the Father, then, there is a twofold other nativity of Christ, namely in the mother and from the mother. Of the nativity of Christ in the mother the Angel said to Joseph, Matt. 1:20: *That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.* In which it is intimated that by that nativity which is in the womb he was born clean of sin. And for this reason it is said, Luke 14:16: *A certain man*, that is, a singular one. Likewise of this it is said, Jer. 23:5, and they are the words of God the Father: *I will raise up to David a just branch*, that is, from a clean branch, not defiled, nor subject to any sin. And therefore of Christ alone is the nativity in the womb celebrated. Likewise of the nativity of Christ from the womb it was said to Mary, Luke 1:35: *The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.* For the incarnate Son is called by antonomasia the holy one, and the holy of holies. In this word is noted the dignity of the virginal birth, and three things are touched. First, the truth of the human nature, by his saying: *Which shall be born of thee.* Second, the fullness of grace, by its being said: *Holy.* Third, the unity of the divine person, by its being said: *Shall be called the Son of God.*

He says, then: *Which shall be born of thee*, that is, of the truth of thy nature, by the operation of the Holy Ghost and the overshadowing of the Son, *Holy.* Dan. 9:24: *The Saint of saints. Holy, hagion*, without earth: clean, firm, consecrated and anointed. Hence he is called Christ, that is, anointed. *Shall be called the Son of God*: the very man who shall be born; because the same one is born in time of the Virgin and from eternity of the Father.

Each of these nativities, then, is wonderful: because the mother brought forth without pain him whom she had conceived with her flower unharmed. It is venerable. Hence the Angel to the shepherds, Luke 2:10–11: *I bring you good tidings of great joy… for this day is born to you a Saviour*, etc. Because of this threefold nativity of Christ three Masses are celebrated at Christmas. In the first, which is of the nativity of Christ from the Father, there is said: *The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee*, as was expounded above. *(p. 805)* In the second, which is of the nativity of Christ in the mother, there is said: *A light this day*, and the future is put, namely *shall shine*, because the nativity from the womb was to follow the nativity in the womb. In the third, which is of the nativity of Christ from the mother, there is said: *A child is born to us.*

Likewise, of this threefold nativity it is said, Gen. 1:3: *God said*, that is, the Father begot the Son: for the Father's saying is begetting the Word, because a word, when it is spoken, is begotten. *Be light made*, that is, let the Son be born in the womb of the Virgin. *And light was made*, that is, the Son was born from the womb of the mother. And it is well said: *Be light made, and light was made*: because all others but Christ are born by the nativity in the womb children of darkness and of wrath, and also by the nativity from the womb, except those three who were sanctified in the womb. Because, as the Apostle says, Eph. 2:3: *We were by nature children of wrath.*

Likewise, of both these nativities of Christ, namely in the womb and from the womb, it is said, Isa. 62:1: *For Sion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest*, that is, for the honour of the Church militant and triumphant, *till her just one come forth*, that is, be made manifest through the carnal nativity, *as brightness*, that is, Christ, who by antonomasia is called the just one, and who justifies the militant and earlier justified the triumphant. And Christ is called brightness: because as brightness goes forth from the whole sun, and is coeval and consubstantial with it, so also the Son is from the Father, and is consubstantial with the Father. *And her saviour*, namely of both Churches, *be lighted as a lamp.*

Note that to have or make brightness, oil is put in the lamp; as was done when the divinity was put in the glass of our frailty by means of the oil of charity. For then the woman, that is, the wisdom of God, lit a candle to seek the lost groat: and so was had the everlasting brightness, by which the world was enlightened.

And all these things that have been said of the twofold nativity of Christ belong to the rising of the flower from the root of Jesse. Hence there follows: *And a flower shall rise up out of his root.* In these words is crushed the heresy of those who said that Christ had not a true body but a phantasmal one; and also the heresy of those who said that Christ took a body for himself from the heavenly air, and not from the substance of the Virgin, and so passed into the virginal womb and was born of her: whom Isaiah plainly refutes, saying: *And a flower shall rise up out of his root.* Likewise the Apostle, Gal. 4:4: *God sent his Son, made of a woman,* etc. And this is what blessed Bernard says, expounding that word: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root.* He says, then: "In this prophecy the Holy Ghost meets the blasphemy of certain men who, striving to estrange the flesh of Christ from us, asserted that a new flesh was created in the Virgin, which Christ assumed, and not taken from the Virgin. Therefore the Prophet said: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse*, etc. For he could truly have said, *and a flower shall rise up out of the rod*; but he preferred to say *out of the root*, to show that the flower, that is, Christ, drew his origin from the same source as the rod, that is, Mary." Hence the Apostle, Rom. 9:5: *Whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.* For this reason also Augustine says, as though speaking to Mary: "The Son of God, beaten with scourges, given gall to drink, and fastened to the gibbet, in order to show you to be his true mother, showed himself a true man by suffering."

There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse. Having seen the threefold nativity of Christ, it remains *(p. 806)* to see the twofold nativity of the Virgin, namely in the womb and from the womb. In the womb she was conceived in original sin, as were all others. Hence Ps. 50:7: *Behold I was conceived in iniquities*, etc. But soon after, as is believed, *the stream of the river*, that is, the abundance of the Holy Ghost, *made the city of God joyful*, that is, the blessed Virgin, when *the most High sanctified his own tabernacle*, that is, the Virgin herself, in whom he dwelt bodily for nine months: he cleansed her from original sin while she was still enclosed in her mother's womb. And note that as one is first begotten carnally and afterwards spiritually regenerated in baptism, which is called the laver of regeneration and renovation: so the blessed Virgin can be said to be conceived in her sanctification. And under this respect her conception can be celebrated, otherwise not. (Look under the title of her sanctification.) And therefore by her nativity from the womb she was born wholly pure. Hence also her rising is compared to the rising of a star, Num. 24:17: *A star shall rise out of Jacob*, etc.

There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse. Since other rods are wont to come forth from the stock or from the branches, why this one is said to come forth from the root, there is a twofold reason. The first is for the exclusion of heresy. The second pertains to the commendation of the Virgin. For there was a threefold error about the nativity of the Virgin. Certain men said of her that she was an incarnate Angel. But this error is crushed by its being said *out of the root of Jesse*, whose root was the ancient fathers, of whom an Angel is not. And in Heb. 2:16 it is said that Christ nowhere took hold of the Angels, that is, the angelic nature, *but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold*, that is, of human nature from the seed of Abraham in Mary.

Another heresy said that a new nature was created in some birth, and that the Virgin was not born of the first, corrupted seed of Adam. But this is crushed by his saying *out of the root*, that is, as it were from the first principle. Augustine: "Nothing was lacking to the people of Israel in clothing or footwear as long as they were in the desert, as is said in Nehemias, or 2 Esdras 9:21. In which God did not create a new creature, but preserved for himself what had been created." Which is to say: God preserved human nature, he did not create a new one.

The third heresy says that the whole nature of Adam was not corrupted, but that some vein remained immune and incorrupt, which by succession was passed wholly from one to another down to the Virgin, and from that the flesh of Christ was formed. But they plainly lie: because then the flower would not have risen out of the root of Jesse, but out of the rod only. These too are confounded by its being said *out of the root of Jesse*,

which is interpreted *burning*, that is, out of the flame of concupiscence rooted in the whole human race.

The second reason looks to the commendation of the Virgin, and she is commended on three counts. First, by its being said: *There shall come forth a rod*, that is, shall go out, *out of the root of Jesse*, which is interpreted *burning* and signifies original concupiscence, is noted the uprooting of original sin.

Second, by its being said: *Out of the root of Jesse*, which in another sense means *burning*, because fire is the root of burning, the Virgin is commended in this, that by the burning of the most fervent charity which the Father had for the human race, the nativity of the Virgin was given to us for salvation and example. Hence the Apostle, 2 Cor. 9:15: *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.* For the immense charity of God was the original cause of so great a benefit. For since the Father, for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, as is said in Eph. 2:4, gave us his Only-begotten, it is clear that from the same charity he gave us the mother, without *(p. 807)* whom it was impossible to have the incarnate Son: because to this Virgin alone was such a privilege owed. Hence the Father says, Isa. 42:8: *My glory*, that is, my Son, because *a wise son is the glory of his father*, according to another reading, *I will not give to another* than Mary. For this is the best part given to Mary, which shall not be taken away from her to be given to another. Therefore in these words the Prophet teaches us that the love of the Father alone, by which he so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, namely incarnate of the Virgin, and not any human merit, was the original cause of this benefit.

Third, she is commended in this, that a rod coming forth from the root is higher, straighter, slenderer, moister, more pliant, greener, fairer and smoother than one coming forth from the stock or from a branch. So the blessed Virgin is higher in holiness of life, straighter in charity, slenderer in humility, moister in tenderness, more pliant in obedience or compassion, greener in faithfulness, fairer in chastity, smoother in simplicity, than all the other saints. And therefore she says, Ecclus. 24:8: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven.* For the souls of the other saints go each to its own mansion, but she through the whole of heaven. Hence she says, Cant. 1:3: *The king hath brought me into his storerooms*, etc. For God did not give her a cup or a pint of grace, but laid open the whole to her, as is said in French, *elle fut mise ameesine*. Therefore she also says, Cant. 7:13: *All fruits, the new and the old*, etc. (Look under her eighth privilege.) For all the gifts or charisms which the other saints had in part, she had in whole.

Likewise, *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse. Shall come forth*, that is, shall be born. Note that, as great wise men say, it is proper to a spring or a river to go forth from the earth or a mountain. Gen. 2:10: *A river went out*, etc. And she was born for this, that like a river of the streams of graces of blessing she might water the whole world. Hence she says, Ecclus. 24:41: *I, like a channel of a river*, etc. And Cant. 4:15: *The fountain of gardens*, namely, a watering one. (Look under their titles.)

Out of the root, that is, out of the stock, *of Jesse*, the father of David. And note that it is not said *out of the root of David*, though he would have spoken truly; but he preferred to say *out of the root of Jesse*, lest he should seem either to honour the rich or to despise the poor: because Jesse was as it were a poor man in comparison with his son, while David was a king, powerful and rich. But because God does not cast away the mighty, since he himself is mighty, as is said in Job 36:5, Christ in the Gospel is named the son of David.

Likewise, in its being said: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse*, four things are especially intimated about the Virgin. First, the truth of her humanity. Second, her nobility. Third, the immense charity of God. Fourth, her most excellent humility. In its being said, then: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse*, those heretics are confounded who said that she had neither father nor mother, but angelic flesh, as we touched on a little above. And this perhaps they took from the fact that her genealogy is not set out, but only that of Joseph: since it is not the custom of sacred Scripture to set out the genealogies of women. But John Damascene supplies this, who says that Mary descended from David through Mathan. For he says that Mathan begot Panther, Panther begot Barpanther, and he begot Joachim, the father of Mary. For in no way would the Angel have said to Mary, Luke 1:36: *And behold thy cousin Elizabeth*, etc., unless she

had been her kinswoman, either on her father's side or on her mother's. Or perhaps the father of Mary is not named in the Gospel for this reason: because she had forgotten her father's house, according to the teaching of the Holy *(p. 808)* Ghost, who had commanded her to forget her people and her father's house, etc.

Likewise, in its being said: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse*, the nobility of Mary is noted: because from Jesse the royal tribe had its rise immediately. Hence in Ruth 4:22 and Matt. 1:5 it is said: *And Jesse begot David the king.* Otherwise also, by its being said *out of the root of Jesse*, nobility is noted here: because the patriarch Judas was the chief principle of that tribe of which Jesse was; not Adam, not Abraham, not Isaac, not Jacob, but Judas: because each of the twelve patriarchs was the principle of his own tribe. And it is the same to say *out of the root of Jesse* as *out of the tribe of Juda*, which was more worthy than all the tribes. Hence the Apostle, Heb. 7:14: *It is evident that our Lord sprung out of Juda*, etc. Likewise: Judas, who was the strongest among his brethren, out of his stock princes sprang.

Likewise, by its being said *out of the root of Jesse*, while the Prophet does not set down the name of the root of Jesse, that is, Obed, who begot Jesse, it is shown that Christ was to be born not only of the Jews but also of the Gentiles, through Rahab of Jericho and Ruth the Moabitess, who were taken into the nation of the Jews out of poverty and humble stock. And this so that the humble Gentiles should not despair, and the proud Jews should not glory in vain that the Lord was incarnate of their nation only. Matt. 1:5: *And Salmon begot Booz of Rahab, and Booz begot Obed of Ruth, and Obed begot Jesse.* And these four were above all the carnal root of Jesse himself.

Likewise, by its being said: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse*, the immense charity of God is noted, as was set out above. There is noted also the humility of Mary, which is certain from its being said that she comes forth not from the stock but from the root, which lies hidden below: because humility (*humilitas*) is said as it were *humi latens*, lying hidden in the ground. For as from the root comes all that the tree has, so all the virtue and excellence of Mary proceeded in a manner from the humility which God regarded. Hence she also says: *He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid*, as it were the root: *for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*

Likewise, what is said: *There shall come forth a rod*, is what is said in Num. 24:17: *A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a rod shall spring up from Israel*, etc. For as by no heavenly body could the Virgin be better figured than by a star, so by no earthly body better than by a rod, as has been shown in many ways above. And in this appears the immense wisdom of God. Mary is also called a rod because of the fitting of the thing to the figure: because she was prefigured in many ways by the rod. Manifold too is the likeness between a rod producing a flower and a virgin bringing forth Christ.

There follows: *And a flower shall rise up out of his root.* This you have had expounded above. Note that the Jew, expounding this of his Messiah, takes the rod and the flower for the same. So also certain Glosses take Christ as the rod and the flower: in the rod, the might of one reigning; in the flower, the fragrance of the virtues. For he was a rod to the swollen, because he restrained the contumacious and rebellious; a flower to the meek, whom he now refreshes with the fragrance of grace, and to whom he promises the fruit of glory in the future.

Christ is a rod. Because he is pliant through humble obedience. Phil. 2:8: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death.* Luke 2:51: *He was subject to them.*

Slender through poverty. Therefore his mother wrapped him in swaddling clothes, not in silk or purple or grey furs.

Trembling through the fear of sensuality, or *(p. 809)* natural fear, by which Christ feared to die with a propassion, but not a passion. Therefore it is said, Mark 14:33, that he *began to fear and to be heavy*; this with regard to the propassion: and therefore it is said *began*.

The more it grows and rises, the humbler it is at the top. So Christ at twelve years of age is read to have humbled himself to his mother and Joseph; at thirty years, to John for baptism. But at the end of his life he humbled himself even to the death of the cross.

There follows: *And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,* that is, upon this flower. *Spirit of the Lord* taken transitively, or intransitively, that is, the spirit who is the Lord. John 4:24: *God is a spirit,* etc. Or the spirit of the Lord, where there is liberty, as the Apostle says: who rested most fully in Christ alone: because he remained and never departed. John 1:33: *He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining,* etc.

Likewise, because in him grace could neither increase nor decrease: because the Lord did not give him the spirit by measure.

Likewise, because without the annoyance of any sin whatever: because he did no sin, etc. For in others smoke, dripping, and a bad wife often drive the Holy Ghost from his house, or annoy him.

Or, in him rested the spirit, the Lord or of the Lord: because in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead corporeally. In the Gospel of the Nazarenes, which is written in Hebrew, it is found thus: “It came to pass, when the Lord had come up out of the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, and said to him: My Son, in all the prophets I was waiting for thee, that thou mightest come and I might rest in thee: for thou art my rest, thou art my first-begotten Son, who reignest for ever.” Now these Nazarenes were those first faithful, for whose need the Apostles made collections in Jerusalem, who had one heart and one soul. They wrote a most true Gospel of the deeds of the Lord, but because of our sacrament it was not received with the others. These were specially called Nazarenes from Jesus the Nazarene, while in general all the faithful were called disciples: because the name of Christian had not yet been found, which was found afterwards at Antioch. In another way men are called Nazarites according to the law that is found in Num. 6:2 and following.

Then he shows of what kind or who that spirit is that rested in him, through its manifold effect.

The spirit of wisdom, namely the giver, *and of understanding. The spirit of counsel,* the giver, *and of fortitude. The spirit of knowledge,* the giver, *and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord,* that is, by which the Lord is feared. This exposition the Gloss on Isaiah intimates, which says: “As the word of God, that is, the Son of God, is called light and life and resurrection, so is he called the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and fortitude, of knowledge and godliness, and of the fear of the Lord; not that he is divided according to the differences of the names, but he is one and the same fount of all the virtues.” Hence 1 Cor. 12:4: *There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit.* Then Jerome adds in the Gloss: “Without Christ, then, no one is wise, nor understanding, nor a counsellor, nor strong, nor learned, nor godly, nor full of the fear of the Lord.” For these are the seven eyes upon one stone. These are the seven women *(p. 810)* who took hold of one man. These are the seven lamps of the candlestick. These are the seven stars in the right hand of the son of man, whom John saw clothed with a garment down to the feet. These are the seven lamps burning before the throne. These are the seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb that was slain, and the seven spirits sent forth into all the earth.

Or intransitively: *The spirit of wisdom and of understanding,* that is, the spirit which is understanding, that is, spiritual wisdom and intelligence, not worldly, not devilish, not animal. *The spirit of counsel and of fortitude,* that is, spiritual counsel and fortitude, not carnal, of which it was said above, Isa. 5:22: *Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness. The spirit of knowledge and of godliness,* that is, spiritual knowledge and godliness, not mercenary or carnal. *And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord,* that is, with spiritual fear, not servile, of which the Apostle, Rom. 8:15: *You have not received,* etc., as far as *Abba* (Father). But how was Christ full of fear? For it is certain that he did not have initial fear: because perfect charity casteth out fear. Likewise, filial fear is that by which one fears to offend a father, or

to be separated from him. It is certain that Christ feared in neither of these ways. How then did the spirit of the fear of the Lord fill him? Solution. To this some say that he was filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord in his members: with initial fear in the imperfect, with filial in the perfect. For nothing, then, does the Gloss except servile fear: because he has this fear in many. Unless perhaps it be said that those who fear servilely are not members, except rotten ones. Or it can be said that filial fear has a third use, namely to revere, and with regard to this use it was most fully in Christ. But how these seven gifts differ from one another or agree, Gregory says on Job 1:2, where he treats of his seven sons, in this way: “Wisdom refreshes the mind with the hope of eternal things; understanding enlightens the heart about things heard; counsel fills the reason, forbidding it to be headlong; fortitude gives confidence against adversities to one who trembles; knowledge drives out ignorance; godliness teaches the works of mercy; the fear of the Lord presses down the mind lest it grow proud of present things; the hope of things to come strengthens.” And below: “Wisdom is less if it lacks understanding; understanding is useless without wisdom. Counsel is worthless without fortitude. Fortitude without the restraint of reason rushes headlong to ruin. Knowledge is nothing without godliness. Godliness without the discretion of knowledge does not know how to show mercy. Fear without the others avails nothing: because, trembling at everything, it is sluggish in good works.” However, these things are better discussed in disputation.

Chapter 6, §21: The pomegranate

Malusgranata, or *punica*, which is the same according to Isidore: but it is called *punica* because its kind was brought over from the Punic region. *Malusgranata* is of the feminine gender, because within the roundness of its rind it contains a multitude of grains (*grana*). Its flowers are called in Greek *cytini*, in Latin *caduci*. But the flowers of the wild pomegranates are called in Greek *balaustion*, of which some are white, some purple, some like the rosy flowers of the Punic apple. Physicians deny that bodies are nourished by eating apples. But they think they should be used so as to seem to medicate rather than to nourish.

Christ is the apple tree. Hence Mary, or the bride, that is, the Church, says of him, Cant. 2:3: *As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, (p. 811) so is my beloved among the sons.* Because as the apple tree excels all the trees of the woods in look, taste and smell, so too does Christ excel all the saints. The flowers of this apple tree are the saints: white in chastity, purple in compassion, rosy in charity. Or Mary may be called the apple tree, whose flower is Christ the Lord, who was white in being born, purple in suffering, rosy, that is, most beautiful, in rising again, when his flesh flourished again. She too was white in virginity, purple in compassion, rosy in most intense charity, because the rose is of a most intense redness.

Likewise, the apple tree in spring and summer is beautiful with the loveliness of its flowers, in autumn fruitful with abundance of fruit, but in winter rough with the harshness of the cold. So too Mary was beautiful in her manner of life, fruitful in bearing the Son of God, but wrinkled and despicable in the winter of the Lord’s passion. She was also among the lofty trees, that is, among the other saints, small in humility; among the smooth, rough in poverty; among the even, thorny in compassion for her Son and in manifold suffering.

Chapter 6, §22: The fig

The fig (*ficus*) is so called from fecundity (*fecunditas*): because it is more fruitful than the other trees. For it is said to bear fruit seven times a year, and while one ripens, another springs up. Therefore its fruits are called *caricae*, from abundance. Others, however, say that *caricae* are the fruits of palms. The Egyptian fig is more fruitful; its wood, put into water, immediately sinks, and when it has lain there a long while, it rises to the surface of the water, contrary to the habit of other woods. It is useful for boxers to eat, because it increases their strength. Taken often as food by old men, it is said to smooth out their wrinkles. Not only on its branches but also on its trunk it bears fruit. It is of a hot nature. The shade of its leaves harms everything that

grows under it. It brings forth fruit before leaves. The fiercest bulls tied to its trunk are said suddenly to grow tame. It harms the voice, helps the dropsical; it is said to cool heat, though in itself it is of a hot nature. Its leaves with vinegar are said to avail against the bite of a dog.

Mary is the fig. Because of fruitfulness: because in every virtue and good work she is more fruitful than the other saints, who are the trees of paradise. Most fruitful also in childbearing: because although carnally she bore only one son, yet in him she was made the mother of a great multitude of sons, of whom he is the firstborn. As Sara in Isaac was made mother of the whole Jewish people, so too Mary in Christ is mother of the whole Christian people. (This you will find better under the title that Mary is *mother,* at the end of the chapter.)

Profitable for spiritual boxers to eat. These boxers are those fighting against the three principal vices. How she ought to be eaten you have in §12 of the garden enclosed, where it is distinguished how she feeds her guests.

From old men, that is, those grown old in their sins, she takes away before God the signs of their oldness, and the oldness itself and the spiritual wrinkledness of which it is said, Job 16:9: *My wrinkles bear witness against me,* etc. She takes it away, I say, if they have spiritually "enfigged" her into themselves. (Look where I taught what is said above.)

Of a most hot nature, like the Egyptian fig, through the vehemence of the charity with which she loves the creatures of her Son.

She bears most sweet fruits, which when ripened turn black; and this signifies Christ, who at the end of his temporal life lay black and discoloured in the sepulchre, who is a most sweet dish.

She feeds the fig-peckers with her fruit, namely certain birds so called from eating sweet figs.

The bulls, that is, the proud and wrathful, if they cling to her with love, she makes by her prayers *(p. 812)* and examples to be humbled and to grow tame; indeed all, so far as lies in her; therefore she says: *In me is all grace,* that is, all that makes one gracious.

She avails against dropsy, that is, against cupidity, by the example of poverty.

She cools heat, that is, the fervour of lust, by the example of virginity.

She restrains the voice, that is, much speaking and boastful speaking and foul speaking and the like, by the example of her silence.

Her leaf with vinegar is said to check the bite of a dog. The leaves are words; the vinegar is the sharpness of contrition; the dog is the devil.

This is the fig of which one reads in Judges 9:11, which would not forsake its sweetness and its most delicious fruits, that is, the sweetness of character and the sweetness of contemplation, to be promoted among the trees, that is, for temporal dominion or passing loftiness: the mother and imitator of him who fled into the mountain, not willing to be made king on earth, and who said in his passion, John 18:36: *My kingdom is not of this world.* This is the fig having *exceeding good figs*. For *ficus* in the feminine is used both for the tree and for the fruit; but *ficus, fici*, of the masculine gender, is a certain disease. Hence Martial:

> *We shall say ficus of those we know to grow on the tree;*
>
> *We shall say ficos, Caecilianus, of yours.*

The exceeding good figs may be called the generations of Mary, namely fair love, fear, knowledge, and holy hope, of which four she says she is the mother. (Look under the title that she is called *mother*.) This is the fig of which it is said, Prov. 27:18: *He that keepeth the fig tree,* that is, Mary, who because of the sweetness of her fruit is compared to the fig, *shall eat the fruit thereof*; for with the fruits of this fig those shall be fed who

keep Mary for themselves and themselves for her, that is, for her honour.

Chapter 6, §23: The almond

The almond, *amygdalus*, that is, *amygdalon* by its Greek name, whose fruit is called by the Latins *nux longa*, the long nut, by others *nucula*, as it were a lesser nut. This tree clothes itself with blossom before all the trees, and anticipates the trees that follow in bringing forth its fruits. Of these trees one kind is sweet, another bitter: but when the root of the bitter almond is bored, and a scion of that tree which the Greeks call *picen* and the Latins *picea* is grafted in, the almond lays aside the bitterness which it had in its sap.

Mary is the almond. Because she had the bitterness of original sin in her conception, but laid it aside by the gift of the Holy Ghost in her sanctification, and was made wholly sweet.

Because first of all the trees, that is, of the saints of the Old and New Testament, she blossomed by vowing virginity; she had a most tender blossom while she was still a young girl. But she had most solid fruits of perseverance, which ripened through good habituation.

Because she bore a medicinal fruit, that is, Christ. Hence Ecclus. 38:4: *The most High*, that is, God the Father, *hath created out of the earth*, of the virginal flesh, *medicines* for the human race, namely Christ. Isa. 45:8: *I the Lord have created him*, namely as man. Isa. 38:21: *Isaias commanded that they should take a lump of figs, and lay it as a plaster upon the wound of Ezechias, and that he should be healed.* See that the fig has medicinal fruits.

In hot places it is said to abound in fruit, in cold places to refuse fruit. The hot places are hearts fervent with charity; the *(p. 813)* cold places, malicious hearts. Jer. 6:7: *As a cistern maketh its water cold*, etc.

Milk made of almonds cools. Hence it is given to those suffering from acute fevers; and simple teaching about the blessed Virgin avails much for those burning with the heat of carnal passions or of any vices whatever.

The rind of its fruit is hard, rough and bitter, but the kernel is sweet. You will find this better above, where the rod is treated of, where the fifth rod, which was Aaron’s, is discussed.

From its fruit oil is made by art: because Christ is our mercy, as the Psalmist says, who by the art of the Holy Ghost was made man from her substance.

The almond, then, blossoms before the other trees, grows fat with oil, and by its fruit the sick man recovers. So Mary, before the other saints, blossoms in tenderness; before the others grows fat in charity; more through her than through the others do we enjoy holiness.

Of the first it is said: *The almond tree shall flourish.* Of the second it is added: *The locust shall be made fat.* Of the third, in the same place: *And the caper tree shall be destroyed.* And it is added in the authority: *Because man shall go into the house of his eternity*, that is, he shall return to paradise: and all this through Mary.

Otherwise: *The almond tree shall flourish*: because she brought forth of herself alone her flower, Christ, who is called the firstborn both of the Father and of the mother, at whose rising *the locust was made fat*: because the unstable Gentile world was made fruitful by grace. *The caper tree was destroyed*: because Judea, thorny with the prickles of sins, remained empty of spiritual fatness. And the caper is so called by the Greeks because it has round little heads of seeds at its tips.

Christ is the almond: because this tree blossoms before all others; and he is the first-fruits of them that sleep. Hence he says after the resurrection: *My flesh hath flourished again*, etc. And this is what he says: *The almond tree shall flourish, the locust shall be made fat*, that is, the faithful soul, by that flower, namely his flesh and blood, *and the caper tree shall be destroyed*, namely the corruption of our mortality, when this

corruptible shall put on incorruption. The caper is a herb which, taken as food, represses lust, and signifies the mortification of our flesh; and through this man will return to the house of his eternity.

Morally: the almond blossom, which precedes the other blossoms, is the good resolution preceding the fruits of good works. But because this blossom is most tender, it is quickly hurt in some. Job 15:33: *He shall be blasted as a vine when its grapes are in the first flower.* But the fatness of the oil is charity, from which we must begin whatever we wish to be meritorious.

Chapter 6, §24: The mulberry

The mulberry (*morus*), which according to Isidore is so called by the Greeks, but by the Latins *rubus*, because its fruit or its shoot is red. It makes wild fruits, by which the hunger of shepherds in the deserts is relieved. Its leaves thrown upon a serpent are said to kill it.

The fruit of the mulberry, which is Christ, is three-coloured: because first it is green, second it reddens, third it turns black; when ripe it grows sweet. Or else Mary herself, who can be compared to the mulberry fruit: green in holiness, white in virginity, red in passion or compassion, black, that is, despised, with regard to her Son in his passion. Or else Christ *(p. 814)* was black in his burial, when *there was no beauty in him, nor comeliness.* Or with regard to his mother, when she was reputed corrupt. Hence she says: *I am black but beautiful.* Or in the passion of her Son Mary was black, when the mother was discoloured with the discoloured one, and darkened with the darkened one.

On the leaves of the mulberry certain worms are said to feed which make silk; that is, the consciences of the humble, who by the teaching and examples of Mary weave for themselves in the present the wedding garment.

Likewise, the leaves, that is, the words and prayers of Mary, kill in her lovers the serpents of the vices, and bring to nothing the serpents, that is, the venomous persuasions of the demons. And note that Christ is a mulberry, the cross is a mulberry, Mary is a mulberry, whose words kill the devil.

Morally: the whiteness of the mulberry fruit is innocence; the green, faith; the swelling, hope; the red, charity; the ripeness, perseverance; the blackness, humility, which crowns every good, because it despises itself. Or the desire of death. Hence Phil. 1:23: *Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.* The gathering is bodily death: for dead bodies are wont to turn black, and the mulberry is gathered when it turns black.

Chapter 6, §25: The sycamore

Sycomor, that is, *sycomorus*, is a Greek name, so called because it is like the mulberry in its leaf; and by the Latins it is called *celsa* from its height, because it is not smallest like the mulberry. It is called *sycomorus* as it were the foolish fig: because Mary, by vowing virginity, was reputed foolish, as is read in the apocryphal book of her Infancy; but for this she was made for God a sweet fig. And for this Christ went up into this sycamore, that he might appear visible to us. Likewise also in the cross, which is a sycamore: because the punishment of the cross was seen by worldly men as foolishness. Hence 1 Cor. 1:23: *And unto the Gentiles foolishness.* For the cross nourishes believers, like the fig; but by worldly men and heretics it is reputed foolish. And for this Christ went up into the sycamore of the cross, to show us whither we must ascend, and whence he could be seen.

For this reason Zacheus, who is interpreted *justified*, by the grace of God enlightening him inwardly, because he was low of stature and could not see the Lord passing by for the crowd, climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus. And you, if you cannot see the Lord for the crowd of vices and the din of worldly disturbance, climb into the sycamore tree. And this is what the Apostle says, 1 Cor. 3:18: *If any man seem to be wise, let*

him become a fool, that he may be wise. For this reason it is said, 2 Paral. 1:15: *King Solomon made silver and gold in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars as sycamores, which grow in the plains in great multitude.* Jerusalem is the Church or religious life; Solomon is Christ. True cloistered religious, lofty in life and contemplation like cedars, are reputed by the lovers of the world sycamores of the plain: but to leave all things for Christ is a sweet folly, because through this they taste the sweetness of Christ and come to the everlasting vision of him. And this is what Zacheus said after he had come down from the sycamore which he had climbed, and had beheld Jesus: *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have wronged any man of any thing, I restore him fourfold.*

Chapter 6, §26: The fir

(p. 815) And the fir (*abies*), which according to Isidore is so called from going (*ab eundo*), because beyond the other trees it goes far up on high and stands out into the heights. Hence it is also said that it sets its head among the clouds. Its nature is free of earthy moisture, and therefore it is reckoned smooth and slippery, and not knotty like the other trees. Of this fir Christ says to the Church, which is a ship, Isa. 60:13: *The glory of Libanus shall come to thee, the fir tree, and the box tree, and the pine tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary*, etc.

Mary is the fir because of her lofty tallness: because her conversation is in heaven. Or because of the uprightness of contemplation: for she was always upright toward heavenly things, and never bent back toward temporal things.

Because it grows more gladly on mountains: so she too grew in the examples of the saints, who were mountains through eminence of life. She grows also spiritually in minds lifted up by desire toward heavenly and eternal things.

Because it has beautiful foliage, that is, the virtues, with which she adorns Christ her head, attributing all to his grace.

Because it is barren and fruitless, with regard to the resolve of perpetual virginity.

Because it is even and smooth, through kindness and the virtue of meekness, and because it is without the burden of sins.

Because it is without the moisture of any carnal concupiscence, and without love of earthliness.

Because by its help the sea of the present world is crossed, and the harbour of eternal happiness is reached.

Because it is so called from going: for she never stood still in the way of the Lord, but always went on from virtue to virtue. Hence it is said of her, Cant. 6:9: *Who is she that cometh forth*, etc.? For in the way of the Lord not to go forward is to go back.

Chapter 6, §27: The willow

The willow (*salix*) is so called because it leaps (*saliat*) quickly, that is, grows. It is a pliant tree, that is, flexible, and therefore suited for binding vines. Its seed, drunk in a cup, is said to work barrenness. With us it blossoms but does not bear fruit. We have seen, however, among the Albigenses, acorn-bearing willows; or perhaps they were other trees like willows.

Mary is the willow. Because she was wholly holy before she was born. See how she leapt up most quickly.

Because in vowing virginity she chose barrenness rather than the baseness of intercourse. See how she is fruitless with regard to the resolve of virginity. Wisd. 3:13: *Happy is the barren.* Isa. 54:1: *Give praise, O thou barren.*

Because it grows more gladly near waters, namely of graces and gifts. Hence her voice concerning the Holy Ghost, as Jerome says, Ps. 22:2: *He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment.*

Because she is of a cold nature through chastity; because slender through humility; because bitter through compassion, whence she was allotted the name of bitterness.

Because pliant and flexible: toward God in obedience, toward us in mercy, toward herself in perfect humility.

Because she binds, that is, ties, the vines, that is, the pliant, and supports them with a peg, that is, her Son, of whom the Father says, Isa. 22:23: *I will fasten him as a peg in a sure place.* (Look for other things about willows under the title that Mary is a *tree*, at the end of the chapter.)

Because its leaves are like the leaves of the olive: for she mercifully speaks good for us in the sight of her Only-begotten.

Because her seed, that is, her Son, by his preaching made many barren of carnal fruit, drawing them to the resolve of chastity.

Chapter 6, §28: The wild olive

(p. 816) The wild olive (*oleaster*) is so called because it is like the olive in its leaves, but broader: an untended tree, wild, bitter and fruitless; when a branch of the olive is grafted into it, it changes the force of the root and turns it into its own quality.

So too Mary was untended by human cultivation. Wild: because set apart from worldly conversation. Bitter and fruitless, as was said above of the willow.

Or these properties can be attributed to her with regard to her state before her sanctification; in which sanctification, as it were, the branch of the olive was grafted into her, that is, a share in divine grace, and she was made partaker of the fatness, that is, of the fatness of all the charisms and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Chapter 6, §29: The pine

The pine, of which the Lord makes promise to his Church, Isa. 60:13: *The glory of Libanus shall come to thee*, etc., as above. Of this pine can be expounded that of Isa. 44:14–15: *He planted the pine tree, which the rain nourished; and it was made for men to burn.* For God the Father planted in the garden of his Church this pine, namely Mary, and she was nourished by the rain, that is, by the abundance of graces. Hence she says of the Holy Ghost, as Jerome expounds: *He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment.* And because she is full of grace, therefore *she was made for men to burn*: because she is loved by every true Christian.

Mary is called the pine because of the height and eminence of her life, of the excellence of her contemplation, wisdom, hope and holy conversation. Mary is the pine because of uprightness and the sweet and manifold fruits of justice, which she held in various and ordered little cells, and as it were wove together with most solid shells, and as it were unbreakable, of unconquered fortitude.

Consider the pine cone, and you will see in what order its parts hold together, how for each of the kernels its own cell is provided, how the larger are assigned to the larger and the smaller to the smaller; and there will appear to you a wonderful order and uprightness of justice and coherence of its parts. Likewise for just men, whether in judging or in upholding justice, great fortitude is necessary, lest through love or hatred, prayer or price, they turn aside from the right: because by these as well as by others, in diverse ways, the devil lies in wait to devour its fruits, namely of justice. Prov. 15:5: *In abundant justice there is the greatest strength*, that is, virtue. Ecclus. 7:6: *Seek not to be made a judge, unless thou have strength enough to extirpate iniquities.*

Likewise, the pine is a girded tree. So too the blessed Virgin through the vow of virginity, and just men through continence of mind and flesh.

According to Isidore the pine is named from the sharpness of its leaves: for the ancients called the sharp *pinum*. The leaves are words; the sharpness of the leaves is the subtlety of words. Or because in speaking she treated of heavenly things, not of earthly.

Likewise, according to Isidore the pine is believed to benefit all things that are sown under it, just as the fig is said to harm all. So too Mary furthers and increases whatever good is begun by the faithful in imitation of her examples.

The drop flowing from it hardens into solidity by cold or warmth, and becomes like a gem or amber in the islands of Germany.

(p. 817) Hippocrates says that the kernels of pines are vehemently hot and stir lust, warm the stomach and the kidneys, purge the urine, and move the bowels when drunk with sweet wine: but these things cannot befit the Virgin.

Chapter 6, §30: The chestnut

Castanea is a Greek name: because its fruits, twin and round in the manner of testicles, are hidden within a husk, and when they are cast out they are as it were castrated. This tree, when cut, sprouts again like a wood. Its fruits are very strong, and when eaten are digested with difficulty; green, they bind, but cooked, less.

According as *castanea* is named from castrating, it can figure Mary, who in vowing virginity made herself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven: which castration she intimated when she answered the Angel: *I know not man.* Her fruit, which is Christ, was very prickly in its husks: because in his most blessed flesh he suffered the pricks of many tribulations. He himself also can be called the chestnut tree, which when cut sprouts most abundantly: because he is that wood of which it is said, Job 14:7: *A tree hath hope: if it be cut, it groweth green again, and the boughs thereof sprout.* (Look above under the title that Christ is *wood*, for the exposition.)

Chapter 6, §31: The laurel

The laurel too, which is named from the word of praise (*laus*), because of old the heads of victors were crowned with it amid praises. But Mary, in the Incarnation, crowned our champion for saving us, namely the Son of God, with the diadem of glorious flesh. Cant. 3:11: *Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see*, etc. (Look after the twelfth prerogative of Mary, and you will find it well expounded.) Nor did she crown Christ only; indeed she herself is our crown. Hence it is also said to her, Isa. 62:3: *Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.* But for this we must strive lawfully: because none shall be crowned but he that has striven lawfully. This tree too never lays aside its greenness, and therefore victors were crowned with it rather. This tree alone, too, is commonly believed never to be struck by lightning. The laurel also has fragrant leaves. So too the words of the blessed Virgin which are found in the Gospel are aromatic and supremely delightful to those who understand them, who are very few.

Chapter 6, §32: The box

The box, of which the Lord makes promise to his Church, Isa. 60:13: *The glory of Libanus shall come to thee, the fir tree, and the box tree*, etc. *Buxus* is a Greek name corrupted in part by the Latins: for in Greek it is called *pyxos*.

Mary is the box. Because it is of short stature: in which are signified the humility of the Virgin and her poverty.

Ever green through virginity, which is the greenness of birth. Or in the perpetual greenness, the unfading quality of holiness.

Barren, as above of the willow.

Of intense pallor, that is, of intense mortification of the flesh, which makes one pale. Or *(p. 818)* of intense love. Hence: “Let every lover be pale.”

Of intense greenness: because of unblemished virginity. (Look under the title of her virginity.)

Hard and strong, by which it is suited for making carvings. And Mary is hard to bear tribulations with her Son, and solid through constancy of mind in the vow of virginity. Hence she answered constantly: *I know not man.*

Clinging to rocks, that is, loving minds made firm in good.

Dense in leaves: because a manifold understanding is drawn from her words set down in the Gospel.

It does not lay aside its foliage in winter, nor she her virtues in tribulation.

It is frequented by birds, that is, by contemplatives, who are the birds of paradise.

By the smoothness of its material it is apt for the strokes of letters, as Isidore says. Isa. 30:8: *Now therefore go in and write for them upon box, and note it diligently in a book*, etc. Look for the exposition.

Chapter 6, §33: The elm

And the elm. Of this elm the Lord makes promise to the desolate world, Isa. 41:19: *I will set in the desert the fir tree, the elm, and the box tree together*, that is, I will cause to be born Mary, figured by these three trees.

According to Isidore the elm (*ulmus*) took its name from this, that it thrives better in marshy (*uliginosis*) and moist places. For in mountains and rough places it is less luxuriant. Now *uligo* is the natural moisture of the earth, never departing from it. So too Mary thrived on the moistures of the charisms and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Likewise, the elm, though barren in itself, is yet apt for supporting vines. And Mary, by merits and examples and prayers, supports those bearing fruit in good, indeed the whole Church, which is the vine.

Chapter 7: On the Birds of This Garden

Chapter 7, §1: The night-raven

A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, etc. Christ is the night-raven (*nycticorax*), which is called as it were the raven of the night: because this bird loves the darkness of the night; and in this it designates Christ, who compares himself to the night-raven, who desires not the death of the sinner, as he himself says, Ezech. 18:32.

Likewise, the night-raven flees the light, flying by night to seek its food: because the food of Christ is the justification of sinners; to flee the light is to turn away from the deceitful glory of the world. Hence Job 31:26: *If I beheld the sun when it shined*, etc. (Look for the exposition *(p. 819)* under the title that Mary is the *sun*, at the end of the chapter.)

Likewise, the night-raven stays among the ruined walls, that is, in ruins: because Christ was born of the blinded Jews, who were shortly to fall into ruin, and was crucified by them as vilely as if he were a raven of the night, that is, blackened with sins, and a leper, and struck by God, and afflicted. Yet among them he dwelt in a manner in his passion: because his mercy did not wholly depart from them, but he prayed for them on the cross. Now *parietinae* are the ruins of walls, namely where walls stand without roof and without inhabitants.

Chapter 7, §2: The eagle

Christ is the eagle. Deut. 32:11: *As the eagle enticing her young to fly*, etc. It is said that the eagle, when any wish to snatch its young, spreads its wings over them and stirs them up to fly. So Christ in his passion, when the devil was snatching away the human race, stretched out his arms like his wings on the cross, so that, leaving their sins, they might ascend from there to the height of the cross, to which the devil does not presume to reach: because there is hidden the strength of the Lord, by which in the air he overcame the powers of the air. But sluggish sinners, growing torpid in the nest of evil living, do not desire to fly up onto the branch of the cross. And for this reason they are snatched by the fowler, the devil, in the nest of evil living. Hence the devil, signified by Assur, says, Isa. 10:13–14: *I have pulled down as a mighty man them that sat on high. And my hand hath found the strength of the people as a nest.*

Christ is the eagle. Because the eagle is king of the birds, that is, especially of contemplatives. Hence, John 1:49, Nathanael says to him: *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel*, that is, of those who see God with the eye of faith and with love. For *is* is man, *ra* seeing, *el* God: hence *Israel*, that is, a man seeing God. They are well called birds: because on the wings of the virtues they rise to heavenly things, and their conversation is in heaven; and they tarry little on the earth, that is, in earthly things, namely only as far as necessity requires.

The eagle (*aquila*) is named from the keenness (*acies*) of its eyes, namely from the sharpness of its sight: because, inasmuch as he was man, he always enjoyed the vision of the Father, even when he was in his mother's womb and hanging on the cross. Hence he says, Ps. 15:8: *I set the Lord*, that is, the Father, *always in my sight.* Wisd. 18:16: *It reached even to heaven*, namely through contemplation, *standing upon the earth.* And this is to look upon the sun in its wheel, that is, with the gaze of the eyes unrepelled.

Likewise, because there is nothing hidden that is not revealed to him. Hence it is said, Ecclus. 23:28: *The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men*, that is, thoughts, desires, wills and works, *and the bottom of the deep*, that is, of the human heart, which is perverse and unsearchable. (Look for the exposition under the title *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb*.) Heb. 4:13: *All things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom our speech is.*

Isidore also says that when the eagle is borne over the seas on motionless wing, and is not open to human sight, from so great a height it sees the little fishes swimming, and, descending like a missile on its wings, draws its seized prey to the shore. So too Christ, abiding invisible on the throne of the Father's majesty, looked down from heaven with the eye of pity on the children of men wandering in the sea, that is, in the world, and came down as it were unexpectedly in his incarnation, to take as his prey those who had been made the prey of the devil, and *(p. 820)* to lead them to the shore of eternal life. Hence: *He led captivity captive.*

It flies higher than the other birds: because *there is none holy as the Lord is.* In the ascension also he *ascended upon the cherubim, and he flew upon the wings of the winds*, that is, above all the powers of the Angels, even to the right hand of the Father. And note that he says: *He ascended upon the cherubim*, which is interpreted *fullness of knowledge*: for no human knowledge can attain either to how great a glory, or how high he then ascended. *He flew*, that is, he ascended swiftly. Or *he flew*, that is, he flew away from human understanding. And note that it is not said that he flew or ascended upon the Seraphim, which is the highest order, although it was true of Christ as man and of the blessed Virgin, lest perhaps it should be thought that the humanity was made equal to the Godhead, according to which he is less than the Father: because above the Seraphim there is nothing but the *gyrochesia* [so the print], that is, the sacred order of the Trinity. *He flew upon the wings of the winds*, that is, above the dignities and rewards of holy souls, which are called winds. Job 28:25: *Who made a weight for the winds*, that is, a body for souls.

Christ is the eagle. Because the eagle nests on the heights. Hence the Lord says, Job 39:27: *Will the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest in high places?* And they are the words of the Father to Job. And it is a good theme for the Assumption. The high are those who stand out above others by the excellence of their life. In this we are instructed in what kind of hearts the Lord abides and dwells, namely in those who are lofty by the eminence of their life, and say with Job 7:15: *My soul rather chooseth hanging.*

There follows: *She abideth among the rocks*, that is, in those who are as it were a rock through firmness of faith, insensible and hard toward tribulations, who cannot be pierced by the arrows of temptations, dried up by penitential exercises, cold through continence and abstinence: and so assign the properties of the rock.

There follows: *And dwelleth among cragged flints.* Flint (*silex*) is so called because it is silent (*silet*), namely from wicked wordiness. The cragged are those who are separated in mind from worldly love.

There follows: *And stony hills, where there is no access*, that is, in those who are so high and exalted by eminence of life that the devil himself cannot approach them.

There follows: *From thence she looketh for the prey, and her eyes behold afar off.*

There follows: *Her young ones shall suck up blood*: because just men, who are her young, with eagerness and desire, which are noted in the word of sucking, think over his passion and the circumstances of the passion, saying with the bride, Cant. 1:12: *A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me: he shall abide between my breasts.* Heb. 12:3: *Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself*, etc.

It puts an amethyst in its nest. The amethyst is of two colours, namely purple and violet; it drives away serpents and poison, and is good also against drunkenness. For those Christ will set with himself in the nest of eternal blessedness, of which it is said, Luke 11:7: *My children are with me in bed*, who with royal power, which is signified in the purple colour, for purple befits kings, oppose vices in themselves and others; and from their kingdom, that is, from their flesh, members and senses, root out the evildoers, that is, evil motions and harmful ticklings, and punish and expel them; and who do austere and humble penance: which two are signified in the violet: penance by the livid colour, humility because the violet flower dwells near the ground. Who also from themselves and *(p. 821)* others, as far as they can, keep off and drive out serpents, and the venoms of the spiritual vices, which poison souls, and the drunkenness of carnal delights, which are drunk from the golden cup of Babylon. And this is what Jerome says on Isaiah, at the end: “He drives the ancient serpent from his nest who both mortifies his flesh and powerfully commands the motions of his soul.” By the nest understand the heart or the flesh.

It makes its nest most rich, placing in it, as has been said, an amethyst: because he enriches the conscience in which he dwells with virtues and good works and the like, which were noted above.

It provides excellently for its young with pheasants, partridges, hares and the like. So too Christ the peoples whom he hatched in his passion and gave life with his own blood, like the pelican its young, he feeds with most precious and most costly dainties, that is, with his flesh, which is meat indeed, which is received in the sacrament; and he gives them to drink his blood, which he shed on the cross, which those suck up by desire who are true young ones and do not degenerate from their father, as was said above. Deut. 32:14: *That he might drink the purest blood of the grape.*

It lives by plunder: because he incorporates into himself, and spiritually takes into the bowels of his body, which is the Church, those whom he snatched from the devil with his hand fastened to the cross; nor does he cease to snatch with the beak of love. Hence he says, Osee 11:4: *I will draw them*, that is, attract them, *with the bands of love.* He snatches some also with the beak of preaching, and some with the talons of tribulations, with which he holds them strongly, lest they escape after their concupiscences.

It sets its young one by one in the ray of the sun, and those who look at the sun keenly and with open eyes it loves, cherishes and nourishes; but those who, as it were half-blind, turn their eyes away from the sun, it

casts from the nest to the ground. So too Christ those who in him, who is the true Sun of justice, look unceasingly, as it were with the eye of fear, upon the fervour of his justice, as it were with the eye of love, upon the brightness and light of his mercy; who also fix the eyes of hope and love on heavenly things: these he keeps for himself, embraces and protects. But those who turn away their eyes, namely understanding and affection, from the brightness of the sun and of eternal things, he allows to fall to the ground, that is, into the cupidities of earthly things, where they are spiritually blinded, and afterwards into the land of misery and darkness. Of whom it is said, Ps. 20:13: *Thou shalt make them turn their back: in thy remnants thou shalt prepare their face.* Likewise Ps. 72:18: *Thou hast cast them down when they were lifted up.*

Wheresoever the carcass shall be, she is immediately there. Jerome says that eagles and vultures are said to scent carcasses across the sea, and literally to gather there. (This you will find below under the title of the vulture.) Whoever sins mortally becomes a carcass, and offers himself as food to the infernal ravens. But if you humbly show your carcass-state to this eagle through confession and prayer, and truly accuse yourself, immediately this eagle will fly to you, mercifully bestowing on you pardon and grace. These, namely pardon and grace, are the wings of this eagle. And it is well said *she is immediately there*: because the grace of the Holy Ghost knows no slow endeavours, as the Gloss says on that of Acts 2:2: *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven*, etc.

By laying aside its beak and its old feathers it is renewed and grows young again. So too Christ in the sepulchre laid aside as it were his old plumes and feathers, mortality and passibility, and as it were the curved beak, the complaints of human misery; and in the resurrection, made immortal and impassible, receiving as it were new feathers and beak, he was wholly renewed. Hence the Psalmist says to him, Ps. 102:5: *Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.*

(p. 822) Mary is the eagle. Because the eagle is queen of the birds: and Mary is queen of the Angels, of contemplatives and of virgins; who in her nest, that is, in her heart, placed the amethyst, namely the faith by which she conceived the Son of God. Luke 1:45: *Blessed art thou that hast believed*, etc. And by the excellence of her conception she was clothed in a purple garment, that is, in royal dignity. Hence it is said of her, Prov. 31:22: *Fine linen and purple is her covering.* She had also the colour of the violet, to which she was likened through humility, and through compassion she was made as it were livid in the passion of her Son. She also drove from herself the serpents and venoms of the spiritual vices, which were never able to enter her mind. For she was a woman that feared the Lord. And Ecclus. 1:27 says: *The fear of the Lord driveth out sin*, that is, does not allow it to enter. She drives out also from those who serve her serpents and venoms, according to that of Mark 16:17: *In my name they shall cast out devils.* Mary, namely, and the other saints. By the virtue of her perpetual virginity she guarded against the drunkenness of all carnal pleasures, and is able to guard her friends against it.

This eagle set her nest in high places, that is, her conversation in lofty virtues, and her heart among the cragged flints, that is, among the Angels, from whom the proud Angels were broken off: because her conversation was always in heaven. And from there she looked for her food, that is, the refreshment of her mind, namely God himself, that she might enjoy him. And therefore it is said of this eagle that *her eyes behold afar off.* And at the Lord's command this eagle was lifted up in her assumption, namely when she ascended upon the cherubim, that is, above the choirs of the Angels, and flew upon the wings of the winds, that is, above reason and above all human understanding. In lofty minds too, and lifted from the earth by contempt of the world, she loves to dwell through grace.

The eagle surpasses the other birds in flight and in looking upon the sun: and she surpasses the other saints in the flight of contemplation and in looking upon the Sun of justice, that is, her Son, *who inhabiteth light inaccessible*: which light, namely, was hidden in her, and which she made accessible to us; she contemplates it more nearly and more clearly.

She makes her nest most rich with virtues and the best gifts, in him whom she inhabits by grace, so that he who spiritually gives her hospitality can truly say that of Wisdom 7:11: *Now all good things came to me together with her*, etc.

She provides excellently for the spiritual children whom she adopts by grace, with the food of devotion, the wine of consolation and compunction, the bread of tears, and the like; and by this feeding she makes them worthy of the flesh and blood of her Only-begotten.

Looking mercifully upon carcass-like sinners who humbly call upon her, she flies to them on two wings, tenderness and compassion, as is plain in Theophilus, whom, as it were with the beak of the prayer which she poured out for him to her Son, and as it were with the talons of justice, she powerfully snatched from the jaws of the devil, restoring to him his bond sealed with his own ring. For this reason it is said of Mary: *The heart of her husband trusteth in her*, that is, in her faith and fortitude, namely of Christ, *and he shall have no need of spoils.* For she as it were enriches her spouse with those spoils with which, as has been said, she despoils the devil, the adversary.

Blessed John the Evangelist is the eagle. Hence Ezech. 1:10: *The face of an eagle over all the four*. John is the eagle. First, because on the heights above all he set his nest like the eagle, when he leaned upon the Lord's breast at the supper.

Chapter 7, §2 (end): The eagle

(p. 823) Second, because the eagle stirs up its young to fly, and teaches them to suck up blood. And John teaches his spiritual children, namely the faithful of the Church, to contemplate eternal things, and to seek the things that are above, and to imitate the Lord's passion, as is plain in what he writes to the seven Churches of Asia and to their Angels.

Third, because it puts in its nest the amethyst, which drives away serpents. The nest is the Church, the amethyst faith, the serpents the heresies against which he wrote spiritually.

Fourth, because it gazes upon the sun in its wheel: and he more especially contemplated the secrets of the Godhead. Hence he said: *In the beginning was the Word.* Others, as it were with weak eyes, saw the sun, that is, Christ, in a cloud, that is, veiled in flesh.

Fifth, because it renews itself in old age: because, whatever became of his body, manna was found welling up, in figure of what is said in Ps. 102:5: *Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.*

Of this eagle may be expounded that of Ezechiel 17:3–4: *A large eagle*, etc. An eagle, as has been said, large in virtue, in wisdom, in authority.

With great wings. Here four things are commended in John: the purity of a twofold virginity, and of understanding. By its being said *of wings*, these two are joined, because subtlety of intellect does not suffice unless cleanness of affection underlies it: for many are lifted up by the intellect but pressed down by the affection. Likewise, by its being said *great*, there are commended in him familiarity with Christ, and the authority of the later style.

Long-limbed. This pertains not so much to length of time or of body as to longevity of mind; namely, he whom the Lord approved for himself after all the others, that he might write later and supply the defects of the others. To what is said, then, *long-limbed*, pertains the authority of the later style. Hence Ecclus. 33:16: *I awaked last of all.*

Full of feathers, and of variety. For although he dwells chiefly on the divine nature, which is signified by its being said *of feathers*, yet he mingles in many things which pertain to the human, which is signified by its being said *and of variety*. For when he had set down first the sublime things of the Godhead, saying: *In the*

beginning was the Word, he added the lowly things of the humanity, saying: *And the Word was made flesh*, etc.

In the word which follows: *Came to Libanus*, the familiarity of Christ is intimated. Libanus is interpreted *whiteness*, and signifies Christ, who is the brightness of eternal light. John came most of all to this Libanus when he conformed himself to Christ in purity, and when, leaning upon his breast, he drank the waters of saving wisdom, which flow with force from this Libanus.

And this is what is added: *And took away the marrow of the cedar*, that is, the fatness and sweetness of the spiritual secret, hidden as it were under the sentences of mystical speech, or under the hardness of the bones.

He cropped off the top of the twigs thereof, that is, the excellence of heavenly eloquence: and therefore it is said *the top*, because he spoke more loftily than all, so that of him may be said that of Genesis 49:21: *Nephtali, a hart let loose, and giving words of beauty.* In the same place it can be said of him that he is the other eagle of which it is said, Apoc. 8:13: *I heard the voice of one eagle flying through the midst of heaven*, etc., which is noted in the tops of the twigs.

The just man is the eagle. Hence Job 39:27–31: *Will the eagle mount up at thy command?* namely the just man to contemplation. As if he should say: No, but at mine. *And make her nest in high places*, that is, the desire of the mind in things above, as *(p. 824)* he had done who said: *Our conversation is in heaven. Among the rocks*, that is, in the examples of the holy fathers and their sayings. Hence Ps. 103:12: *From the midst of the rocks they shall give forth their voices. She abideth*, that is, she is placed in the station of the mind. *And dwelleth among cragged flints*, that is, in the contemplation of the holy Angels, whose glory, while still placed on earth, he awaits with sighing; which Angels, namely, are whole in the quality of merit, but broken off in the quantity of number. *And stony hills, where there is no access*: the same as the cragged flints. Because to the heart of the sinner the brightness of the Angels is very inaccessible, much more that of him *who inhabiteth light inaccessible*. *From thence*, namely, when someone thrusts himself into the company of the Angels through contemplation, he ought not to stop there, but to contemplate him who is above them. Hence Cant. 3:4: *When I had a little passed by them, I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and I will not let him go. She looketh for the prey*, that is, Christ, who is the food of Angels and of men. For *man ate the bread of angels. And her eyes behold afar off*, namely understanding and affection, that he may see the king in his beauty. *Her young ones*, namely the eagle's, *shall suck up*: see the eagerness and desire; *blood*, that is, the passion of the Lord, they venerate with faith, hope and fervent charity. To suck up blood, as Gregory says, is to venerate the weaknesses of the Lord's passion. As if he should say: the eagle set her nest on high, because she feeds on the contemplation of the Godhead; but her young, that is, the lesser ones, not yet having the eagle's sight, are refreshed with the milk of Christ's humanity and the blood of his passion. *And wheresoever the carcass shall be*, that is, the Word made flesh, *she is immediately there*, the eagle, that is, the soul set free. Matt. 24:28: *Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together*, that is, where Christ as man shall be, there also his saints, according as he asked the Father, John 17:24: *Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me.* In the same, 12:26: *If any man minister to me, let him follow me: and where I am, there also shall my minister be.*

The just man is the eagle. Because he lives by plunder. Matt. 11:12: *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent*, that is, those who do violence to themselves, *bear it away.* And this violence is done to oneself in five ways: namely, by continence in youth, by abstinence in prosperity, by generosity in poverty, by patience in adversity, by humility in high station.

He nests on the heights, as was said above of Mary. For the just man ought to build his ascent in heaven, after the example of Amos, which is to dispose his ascents in the vale of tears; but he who builds an ascent, that is, the steps of one ascending, ought to distinguish the steps themselves, as after the example of the Lord's ascent, which he built in the incarnation and in the whole present life. The first step he had was of humility,

the second of obedience, and so on. Hence Phil. 2:8: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient*, etc.

In the nest of his heart he places the amethyst, that is, faith, that the Lord may deign to dwell there. Hence that Christ dwells by faith in our hearts; so that by the power of this stone he may shut out from himself the serpents and venoms of the spiritual vices and the drunkenness of the carnal, and may royally govern himself and oppose the vices, as to the purple colour, and humbly mortify his flesh, as to the violet.

He rears his young most affectionately, that is, his works, which follow their authors as chicks follow the hen.

He sets his young one by one in the ray of the sun, in which is signified the examination of our works. The rays of the sun are the enlightening of Scripture, at whose sight or scrutiny works ought to be judged. Or the rays of the sun are the works *(p. 825)* of Christ, which enlighten us, with which works, namely, ours must in a manner be compared, that we may hold them cheap. Hence Isa. 64:6: *We are all become as one unclean, and all our justices as the rag of a menstruous woman.* There Gregory says: "Often our justice, brought to the examination of divine justice, is injustice, and is filthy in the sight of the strict judge, which in the estimation of the doer shines."

Wheresoever the carcass shall be, she is immediately there. This the holy women fulfilled literally, coming dutifully to the Lord's burial, as the Lord had foretold, Matt. 24:28: *Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together.* And this just men do, hearing Mass in the morning where the Lord's body is offered.

Likewise, otherwise: the spiritual eagles, namely just men, ought to gather spiritually to those who are as carcasses, through compassion and prayer, so that, drawn away from the carcasses of sins, they may incorporate them into the Church of God, whose members they themselves are.

The eagle stirs up its young to fly, that is, its works, when it does them purely with regard to eternal things, not to be seen by men. But hypocrites do the contrary, and therefore receive their reward in the present. And then the just man carries his young on his shoulders, not in his bosom, when he turns away his eyes from the sight of them, so that he can say that of the Apostle, Phil. 3:13: *Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before.* He gazes upon the sun in its wheel, that is, Christ in his divinity, which lacks beginning and end, as it were with the twofold eye of understanding and affection, namely by believing and loving. For the voice of the just man is: *I set the Lord always in my sight.* And: *To thee have I lifted up my eyes, who dwellest in heaven.* And this is supremely necessary when one is tempted. Hence 2 Paral. 20:12: *As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee.* And for this reason the eagle is so called, either from the sharpness of its sight, or from the keenness of its eyes, which it fixes on the sun of justice and turns away from the desirable things of the world, according to that of Tobias 4:6: *All the days of thy life have God in thy mind: and take heed thou never consent to sin*, etc. For the second follows from the first. Hence Ps. 15:8: *I set the Lord always in my sight*: see the first; *for he is at my right hand*, etc.: see the second. As it is said, the eagle, weighed down by old feathers and unable to eat because of the curving of its beak, seeks a living spring welling up continually, and above the spring it rises straight up as far as it can, and comes so near the sun that its old feathers are burned by the heat of the sun; stripped of these it falls into the spring itself, and by the watering new feathers grow again, and so in place of the old feathers it receives new ones. Afterwards it strikes its curved beak against a rock, and, the excess cut off, it rises higher as far as it can, and, heated by the ardour of the sun, it is borne with great force into the sea, and there, plunged under, grows young again. The old eagle is the sinner grown old in vices. Hence Ps. 17:46: *The children that are strangers have faded away.* The old feathers are worldly levities, by which he was borne on high into elation. The curving of the beak is talkativeness about earthly things: because *he that is of the earth, of the earth he speaketh*; by which talkativeness, namely, one is much hindered from being able to eat fruitfully the food of Scripture or of the Eucharist. Therefore it is said, Ecclus. 32:12: *Hear in silence*, etc.

The living spring ever welling up is the mercy of God that never fails. Taking from this spring a certain holy boldness, the sinner who repents of having sinned ought to put on the new man.

Chapter 7, §3: “Come over to me, all ye that desire me”

(p. 826)

Come over to me, all ye that desire me, etc.

In these words the wisdom of God and the blessed Virgin, speaking with one mouth, invite us to themselves, wishing to share their delights with us, which they share liberally and without envy. But for the present we shall expound all this of the blessed Virgin, and in these words six things are noted concerning her.

The first is humility, when she says: *Come over*, calling us with her own mouth; and in this she shows herself to be one of those handmaids whom wisdom sent to call to the tower.

The second is familiarity, which is noted when she says: *To me.* Apply this from the things that are found with her. And in this are rebuked the despisers of the poor, who scorn their company, of whom it is said, Amos 2:7: *They turn aside the way of the humble.* And those who say to the poor man that of Isaiah 65:5: *Depart from me… for thou art unclean,* etc. Of this familiarity of the Virgin blessed Bernard says: “Why should human frailty tremble to approach Mary?” (Look under the title of her kindness.)

The third is generous liberality, when she says: *All.* For with her, as with her Son, there is no respect of persons. Let the just man come to her, then, to take his delight, that he may sit under the shadow of her whom he desired: for she is *a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and a security and covert from the whirlwind and from rain.* (Look under the title where she is called a *tabernacle*.) Likewise Mich. 4:4: *And they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, and there shall be none to make them afraid.* Which is to say: whoever comes to Mary, or comes over to her, who calls all to herself, will be safe by her help. Likewise, whoever is a sinner, let him come over to her, so that he may be able to fear nothing: because she is the city of refuge. (Look above in the twenty-fifth cause.)

The fourth is her manifold sweetness and pleasantness, to which we ought to aspire in every way. Which is intimated where she says: *That desire me.* For in her all our senses, each of them, find their own sweetness, pleasure and delight, as we set out under the title of her sweetness, at the end of the chapter.

The fifth is most abundant largesse, which is noted where she says: *Be filled.* For she gives to all abundantly, and upbraideth not: and when she opens her hand, all things are filled with goodness. For she is Rebecca, who from her pitcher gave drink to Eliezer and the camels, namely to Christ and all the saints.

The sixth is the preciousness of the thing promised, when she says: *Be filled with my generations.* Following this course you will be able to weave together your whole sermon.

Now let us see why the glorious Virgin said rather *Come over* than *Come* or *Approach*. Likewise, with what profit one comes to her; whence she says: *To me*. Likewise, what her generations are, of which she says: *And be filled with my generations.* Of these three we must see in order.

It is to be noted, then, that the blessed Virgin, wishing to make a feast for her friends, or of her friends, invites them. As is the custom of those wishing to hold a great solemnity or very great banquets, to invite their special friends by name, and through honest messengers, but not ribalds or vagabonds or minstrels, that is, lovers of temporal things or of vices. So does the blessed Virgin. And in her saying: *That desire* (p. 827) *me,* she intimates who are her special friends, namely those who desire her. *You desire*: with the understanding, by inquiry; with the affection, by love; with action, by imitation.

She intimates something else too in her saying: *Come over.* As if she should say: unless you are passers-over, namely Hebrews and Idithun, you will not be able to come to the solemn feast which I am going to make in

eternity. All, then, who long for the fountains of living waters, which are Christ and the blessed Virgin, ought to pass over, after the example of the harts longing to pass over to the fountain, and to leap over the thorny places of pride, malice and wickedness; the muddy places of lust, gluttony and sleepiness; the gaping places of cupidity, ambition and avarice: otherwise no access to the fountain of life will lie open to them. And for this reason it is said to them: *Come over.*

For there is a fourfold passing over. The first is from baptismal innocence to mortal sins, and this is the passing of sinners. Hence it is said of it, Ecclus. 26:27: *He that passeth over from justice to sin, God hath prepared him for the sword,* that is, for eternal punishment. This is noted in the going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. By this the devil passed over from the brightness of an Angel to the deformity of a devil. This is to pass over from chastity to lust, and from the seven principal virtues to the seven capital sins.

The second is contrary to this, to pass over from vices to virtues; and this is the passing of penitents, and it ought to be made through the fire of fervent contrition and the water of confession and penance, in which all filth is washed away, so that at length one may be brought into the refreshment of eternal life. Of this it is said, Mark 16:7: *He goeth before you into Galilee,* which is interpreted *transmigration*: *there you shall see him.*

The third is from good to better, and this is the passing of the just, who pass over from the works of justice toward themselves to the works of mercy for the sake of their neighbour. Of this it is said in Psalm 83:8: *They shall go from virtue to virtue,* etc., namely from a lesser virtue to the same virtue greater: because charity sometimes advances, sometimes fails; or from one virtue to another, or from the exercise of one virtue to the exercise of another virtue. Because, as a certain Gloss says there: one must not always study a single virtue, but one must go from virtue to virtue, until the God of gods be seen in Sion. Likewise of this passing it is said, Mich. 1:11: *Pass over for you, O beautiful dwelling.* As if he should say: you just, in whom God dwells by faith, who have been made beautiful by penance, pass over to the works of mercy to be bestowed on your neighbours, *for you*, by way of acquisition, that is, for your honour and reward.

The fourth is from better to best, or from merit to reward, or from the doubtful to the secure, or from the temporal to the eternal, or from faith to hope, from hope to the thing hoped for, from the spark of charity to the furnace: because here is the fire in Sion, but the furnace in Jerusalem. Or pass over from exile to the kingdom, from the world to God, from the shadow to the truth, from the middle to all fullness, and the like.

The first passing was figured by the going down of Israel into Egypt. The second, in the going up of Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea into the desert. Expound that diligently. The third, in the advance of Israel through the desert, by which is signified penance through the various stations, by which are signified the works of the virtues. The fourth, in the advance from the desert through the river Jordan to the possession of the land of promise.

Come over to me, all, etc. Note that the loftiness of the blessed Virgin is a certain great mountain, *a mountain in which it hath pleased God to dwell,* to which we ought to pass over like men, not like sparrows. For the sparrow, taking the mountain, does not pass through the valley, according to what the proud demons suggest to the sinner: *(p. 828) Get thee away to the mountain like a sparrow,* that is, like any bird whatever, and the species is taken for the genus. For through the valley of humility one must pass over to the mountain of the most humble Virgin: for there is no true loftiness of which humility is not the forerunner.

Come over to me. As if she should say: why do you run about through carnal pleasures and worldly vanities, which cannot satisfy you? In me is all grace, which I will supply to you if you come over to me. And this is what follows: *And be filled with my generations.* Wonderful is the folly of the sinner, who, if he loved some harlot who was across a river, and she cried out to him: Come over to me, and I will be wholly yours, would immediately, wretch, expose himself to death and drowning: but to the Lord's mother he turns a deaf ear. But let such beware lest at some time they hear from her that of Proverbs 1:24: *I called, and you refused: I*

stretched out my hand, to give you my Son, who is every good, namely that counsel of John 2:5: *Whatsoever my Son shall say to you, do ye*. For this is the whole and supreme counsel, namely to do what God commands. But because this counsel is despised by many, she adds, Prov. 1:26: *I also will laugh in your destruction*, and many other things.

Come over to me, all, not some, not a few. For after the example of her Son, who says, Matt. 11:28: *Come to me, all you that labour*, etc., and who says, Isa. 55:1: *All you that thirst, come to the waters*, the glorious Virgin calls all to herself: for she wills all to be saved, and wills no one to perish. In this too she shows us her largesse, her riches, her liberality, and the desire she has for the salvation of the creatures of her Son.

Likewise, when she says: *Come over to me, all*, she seems properly to speak to sinners who love the world, not her, and do not serve her: *to me*, that I may obtain for you the wine of compunction, because I am as the vine; the food of devotion, because my flowers are the fruit of honour and riches; the virtue of love, because I am the mother of fair love; the grace of the fear of God, because I am the mother of holy hope; all grace, beginning, advancing and consummating, because in me is all grace; the gifts of the Holy Ghost, because my spirit is sweet above honey; the glory of paradise, because my inheritance is above honey and the honeycomb.

Likewise, *Come over to me.* For I keep the married in matrimony, widows in their state, virgins in purity. For all these I obtain grace, and promise glory. For on earth the married are in place of the grape, the continent are pomegranates, virgins are sweet figs.

Come over to me. Note *to me*: for gladly ought the poor man to come to the rich woman, that he may be enriched;

the polluted to the fountain, that he may be cleansed;

the weak to the strong, that he may be strengthened;

the dead to life, that he may be given life;

the blind to the eye-salve, that he may be enlightened;

the sick to the medicine, that he may be restored to health;

the hungry to refreshment, that he may be well provided for;

the naked to the bountiful one, that he may be clothed by her;

the wretched to the merciful one, that he may obtain mercy;

the disfigured to her who refashions, that he may be reformed;

the captive to the redemptress, that he may be redeemed from prison;

the disinherited to the patroness, that he may be restored to his inheritance;

the servant to the lady, that he may be given liberty;

(p. 829) the soldier to the queen, that if he conquers he may be crowned;

the darkened to the light, that he may be called a child of light.

For all these things, and infinitely more, the glorious Virgin supplies to those who pass over to her. And therefore, before she invites them to herself, she sets down first in today's epistle: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth… Come over to me*, namely in three ways: by contemplating with the understanding, by clinging with the affection, by imitating in act or work. And three things chiefly help toward these. Her childbearing, which is the light of the world and enlightens our understanding. The grace which she found with God, by whose help our affection is inflamed to work well. Her most pure life, which directs our works

by its examples.

There follows: *That desire me*, namely you who wish to serve me and honour me; or who wish to be fully satisfied; or who desire my patronage in the present and the sight of me in the future. And three things can be assigned which ought to move us to pass over. The first is the toil of this world, to escape which one should hasten to her, in whom is rest. The second is the burden of the body and of sins, which should quickly be laid down. Of the first burden, Wisd. 9:15: *The corruptible body is a load upon the soul.* Of the second, Ps. 37:5: *My iniquities… as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me.* The third is the love of the mother and the Son, which ought to draw us to pass over, as one gladly passes over to a thing much loved.

There follows: *And be filled with my generations.* See with what fruit one passes over to her. Note that first she says: *Come over to me*, and afterwards adds: *Be filled with my generations.* As if she should say: those who wish to be filled with my generations must first imitate me. What her generations are she shows where she says a little above, Ecclus. 24:24: *I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope.* (This you have expounded in many ways under the title that she is called *mother*.)

Or these generations can be called her odours, which draw the affection, and her flowers, which delight the understanding, and her fruits, which refresh the soul. Therefore she is called a vine: because she had in the flower fragrance, in the fruit sweetness, in the juice of the fruit power. Her fruit is Christ the grape, the wine of which grape is the blood of Christ shed on the cross, which healed the languishing world, raised the dead, redeemed the captive, washed the filthy, and other things of the kind; and which gladdens and inebriates the mind of him who receives it worthily. Hence it is said to Christ, Ps. 22:5: *My chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it!*

These are the things that truly fill and satisfy the mind; but worldly and carnal pleasures empty it; and therefore she says: *Be filled.*

And note where you will find all the parts of this epistle. *I as a vine*, etc., as far as *riches* (*honestatis*): look under the title of the first tree of the garden enclosed. *I am the mother of fair love*, etc., as far as *virtue*: under the title of her names, where she is called *mother*. *Come over to me, all*, etc., as far as *be filled*: as above. *For my spirit is sweet above honey*, etc., as far as *honeycomb*: under the title of the sweetness of Mary. *My memory is unto everlasting generations*: look under the title of the things we owe her from the heart, in the chapter that we owe her remembrance. *They that eat me*, etc., as far as *shall thirst*: look in §12 of the garden enclosed, where it is treated how she provides for her friends. *He that hearkeneth to me*, etc., as far as *shall not sin*: under the title that we owe Mary obedience. *They that explain me*, etc.: under the title that we owe her explanation.

Chapter 7, §4: “The book of the generation”

(p. 830) The book of the generation, etc.

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ: supply, *this is*. But because what is expounded of Christ can be expounded of the blessed Virgin, as in many places, it can be said: *The book of the generation*, etc., this is; as it is said: *The vision of Isaias*, understand, *this is*. Now in its being said *of the generation*, the fruitfulness of Mary is noted; in its being said *of Jesus Christ*, the dignity or loftiness of the fruitfulness.

And because generation is twofold, good and evil, we must first see of the book of the good generation of Christ; second, of the book of the evil generation of Antichrist. A book is sometimes called that which contains, as it is said: This is the book of the *Topics*; or that which is contained, as it is said: I know the book of the *Topics*.

For Mary was a containing book. This is the great book of which it is said, Isa. 8:1: *Take thee a great book, and write in it with a man’s pen.* Note that the Holy Ghost often speaks to the Prophets, not that they

themselves should do what is enjoined on them, but that what the Holy Ghost is going to work may be designated. This book is Mary, who is called a book in the way the Apostle, 2 Cor. 3:2, names the Corinthians his epistle.

And this book is called great in dignity, in depth of knowledge, in manifold difficulty, in the unsearchableness of its sentences, and in every kind of usefulness. Or it is called great because it was composed by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Or great because it is written in large and legible letters. For the innocence of Mary is one large letter, and so also her humility, virginity, fruitfulness, poverty, charity, mercy, tenderness, patience and the like. For each of her virtues is a single letter of this book. For this reason the Lord said, Hab. 2:2–3: *Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he that readeth it may run over it. For as yet the vision is far off, and it shall appear at the end, and shall not lie.*

Isaias, then, is commanded: *Write in it.* This is what is said in Ps. 44:2: *My tongue is the pen of a scrivener.* With what instrument? *With a man's pen*, that is, intelligibly, openly and clearly. Note that a letter is said to be written when its shape is drawn out. So, then, the Holy Ghost wrote the Word, when by his co-operation the flesh of the Word was formed in the virginal womb. For the Holy Ghost writes in two ways: namely, with invisible writing, as in the hearts of the Prophets; and with visible writing, when the Word took flesh, and what had lain hidden in the hearts of the Prophets was revealed in the sight of the nations. So, then, this book was written. But with what colour? With the ink of our mortality. Hence in Ezech. 9:2 one reads of him who was clothed with linen, who had an inkhorn at his back, which is the lower part of man. This inkhorn Christ had at his back when, going forth from the highest heaven, he came down to the depths of our mortality, and there took the form of a servant under the garment of our mortality. For blackness is a sign of our mortality: because the bodies of the dead turn black.

So, then, the glorious Virgin is a great book and a great vision.

This is the sealed book, of which one reads, Isa. 29:11: *The vision of all shall be unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which when they shall deliver to one that knoweth letters, they shall say: Read this: and he shall answer: I cannot, for it is sealed*; namely this book, to the Jews, with seven seals, as is said in Apoc. 5:1. For they argue thus against the truth of this book: She was a virgin: therefore barren. She conceived: therefore she was corrupted. She carried, *(p. 831)* therefore she was weighed down. She brought forth: therefore with pain. She lay down: therefore she was weak. She was purified: therefore she was unclean. She circumcised the child: therefore the child had original sin. Therefore this book was placed in the side of the ark, that it might be for a testimony to the Jews, that is, for their condemnation. Now in this book there are as many letters as there are virtues: and he who has not the virtues does not know the letters, does not know how to read in this book. Hence Isa. 29:12: *And the book shall be given to one that knoweth no letters, and it shall be said to him: Read: and he shall answer: I know no letters.*

This is the book which John saw, Apoc. 5:1, in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, sealed with seven seals. For in this book is contained all the knowledge that pertains to salvation. Christ holds it in his right hand, not in his left: because the spiritual knowledge that lies hidden in it he opens to the good and closes to the wicked. He opens it to the good: therefore it is said to be held in God's right hand, as it were for opening. He closes it to the wicked: therefore it is said to be sealed. And note that John wept much: because no one was found worthy to loose the seals of the book but the Lamb alone; because no one knows the mother but the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal her, as Christ says of the Father.

The first seal: that without corruption she was made fruitful. Hence she is signified in the burning bush, which was not burnt.

The second: that without heaviness she was with child. Hence the flesh with which she clothed Christ is called *a light cloud*.

The third: that without pain she gave birth.

The fourth: that she could not sin, from the time she conceived the Son of God.

The fifth: that she alone of creatures can command God as her Son.

The sixth: that without shedding of blood she suffered a most bitter martyrdom, and was made mother of martyrs.

The seventh: that in her assumption she was exalted above all the orders of the Angels. And Isaias, attending to this, says of each of these, Isa. 66:8: *Who hath ever heard such a thing?*

There follows: *Sealed with seven seals*, that is, with all obscurities. Now this book no one of the Angels who are in heaven (hence *neither in heaven*), nor of men still living on earth (hence *nor on earth*), nor of those already dead (hence *nor under the earth*), was found worthy to open, that is, sufficiently to explain, nor to look upon, that is, to understand, nor to loose, that is, to unfold the union of the Word with the man assumed, but the Lamb alone, as is found in the text: because *who shall declare his generation?* For this reason the Lamb himself says of this book, Isa. 24:16: *My secret to myself*, etc.

Likewise, in the closing of the book its excellence is noted. Hence it is said, Apoc. 22:7: *Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.*

This is the little book open in the hand of the Angel, Apoc. 10:8, of which it was said to John: *Go, and take the book that is open from the hand of the Angel.* And a little after, v. 9: *And I went to the Angel, saying unto him that he should give me the book: and he said to me: Take the book and eat it up.* And a little after, v. 10: *I ate it up: and it was in my mouth sweet as honey, and when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.* This book, then, is sweet to the taste but bitter in effect. For the words of Mary, or speaking about Mary, are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb to the soul that loves her; but they make bitter the belly of John, that is, of him in whom is grace: because her memory and her examples, in her imitators, make bitter and rein in temporal delights and carnal pleasures. For the knowledge of this book is most sweet in preaching: but, *(p. 832)* as has been said, it makes bitter the belly, that is, the delights, in the carrying out of action.

And note that it is said: *Go, and take.* He goes who withdraws from the flesh and the world. He asks the book of the Angel who begs through prayer wisdom from God, and the grace of understanding the meaning of the book, that is, of Scripture. He takes it as it were in his hand who works according to the teaching and knowledge of the book.

And he said to me: Take the book, and eat it up. Take it by the understanding, eat it up by the affection. He did not say: chew it, by expounding or preaching; but eat it up, by enclosing it in the heart and keeping it in memory. For certain mysteries are hidden from the wicked, but yet are to be kept by the good. *And it shall make thy belly bitter*, that is, the memory or the sensuality. For *he that addeth knowledge, addeth also sorrow.*

Likewise, the words of this book in one respect are to be sealed, as is commanded to John, Apoc. 10:4; and this so that they may not lie open to enemies, and that pearls may not be scattered before swine. In one respect they are to be hidden under the veils of figures, in another to be fully made manifest. Hence again it was said to him, Apoc. 22:10: *Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book.*

This is the book of life of the Lamb. Truly in the book of life those alone are written who through grace attain to glory. This book is said to be of the life of the Lamb: because the heavenly good which the divinity predestined to be bestowed on the just, the humanity which he took from Mary will dispense.

This is the book written by our judge, of which Job says, 31:35 and following, as though longing for the rising of Mary: *Let him that judgeth write a book*, that is, the Son, to whom the Father gave power to do judgement. *That I may carry it on my shoulder*, that is, that I may order my life according to his teaching, and

subject my works to his mastery. *And put it about me as a crown,* that is, after I have striven according to his teaching, I may receive the crown which he promises. *At every step of mine I will pronounce it, and offer it as to a prince.*

This is the book which Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremias, who wrote from the mouth of Jeremias all the words of the book which Joakim the king of Juda had burned in the fire; and moreover there were added many more words than there had been before, as is read in Jer. 36:4. Baruch is the scribe, the Holy Ghost the scribe of the Father; Jeremias is the Father; the mouth of Jeremias is the Son; as if it were said by the whole Trinity: in the blessed Virgin the good things given to you, destroyed by Joakim the king of Juda, that is, by Adam, have been found again, and even more and better good things than before. For Mary was much more blessed than Adam; and whatever we lost through Adam has been restored to us through Mary, with great fervour of graces.

This is the book of which it is said, Mal. 3:16: *A book of remembrance was written before him for them that fear the Lord, and think on his name.* Mary is called the book of remembrance (*monumenti*): because she admonishes (*monet*) the mind (*mentem*) of her Son to mercy, and also our minds, that we may be mindful of God. And this book was written *before him,* namely before God, *for them that fear him and think on his name,* that is, those who beware of sin and do good.

This is the book of the Son, as the Son is the book of the Father. Hence we can say to the Son: O our protector, look on the face of thy mother; as we say to the Father: *Look on the face of thy Christ.*

(p. 833) This is the book of which it is said, Ecclus. 24:32, where, after the trees, herbs and spices by which Mary is figured have been enumerated, Jesus the son of Sirach adds (namely our Jesus bearing witness to his mother): *All these things are the book of life, and the covenant of the most High*; that is, the blessed Virgin contains in herself the likeness and reason of all these things we have spoken of, she who is the book of life, and the reading of which book teaches true wisdom. Or thus: *All these things are the book of life,* that is, the blessed Virgin, of whom he spoke under the metaphor of flowers and many other things, is the book of life for the blessed in the fatherland; and so she is the book of the blessed.

This is the book of which Ezechiel says, 2:9: *I looked, and behold a hand was sent to me, wherein was a book rolled up: and he spread it before me, and it was written within and without,* etc. Where the Prophet says *I looked,* he rejoices at the vision; where *behold,* he invites others to recall and attend to this. For nothing is more to be seen with spiritual eyes, or more attentively to be recalled, than that largesse which the whole Trinity showed us when, for the salvation of the world, the blessed Virgin was born, through whom we had our saviour, redeemer and champion, and advocate with the Father. And this largesse is that hand of which he says: *Behold a hand was sent to me, wherein was a book rolled up,* that is, Mary, of whom the world before knew nothing or little. *And he spread it before me,* which was done in the Apostolic preaching, and is done daily in the receiving of her innumerable benefits. *Which was written* indelibly by the finger of God, who is the Holy Ghost: *within,* with perfect knowledge; *and without,* namely with holy conversation and working. Or this book is called rolled up and written because in it were hidden all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom.

We ought, then, to read this book outwardly, that we may learn the knowledge by which we may know how to live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation after the example of Mary; and inwardly, that we may set the Lord always in our sight. Or let us read it outwardly for the imitation of good examples, inwardly for the contemplation of eternal things.

Otherwise: this book was written *without* as to the knowledge of the Old Testament. Hence she says: *As he spoke to our fathers,* etc. *Within,* the knowledge of the New, which as a mistress she taught the Apostles. Therefore it is said, Luke 2:19: *Mary kept all these words,* as a book. Or *within* for the exercise of the spiritual and perfect, *without* for the instruction of the simple and lesser. *Within,* that the secret of wisdom

may be hidden from the unclean; *without*, that the truth may be revealed to the clean.

But what follows in Ezechiel 2:9: *And there were written in it lamentations, and canticles, and woe*, does not wholly befit this book. For Lucifer in his nature wrote *woe*, and that indelibly; Adam in his nature *lamentation*, but delibly. But in this book is written indelibly the *canticle*, and that without woe and lamentation.

Likewise, in this book was written the fiery law, namely charity, which is called a law (*lex*): because it binds (*ligat*) us and binds us together with Christ, and comes and makes us cleave. For *he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit* with him, namely by unity of love and grace. Or it is called a law because it binds our members, lest we act like madmen; and because it reins us in from evil. *Fiery*, because it inflames us to the love of God and of neighbour. Likewise, Mary is called a book for this reason, because a book preserves ancient sayings and deeds. And Mary preserved the examples of the Patriarchs, the words of the Prophets, of the shepherds, of the Magi, of Simeon and Anna, and the words and deeds of her own Son, keeping them all in her heart like a book.

(p. 834) Likewise, the intention of this book is to make peace between the things that are in heaven and on earth, to reconcile sinners to her Son, to make known the will of God to sinners, and the like; and therefore she is called our mediatrix, and also our advocate. The matter of this book is the wisdom of God hidden from the ages. The reading of this book is the way to true knowledge. For as reading is the way to knowledge, according to blessed Bernard, so the looking into and recalling of the words, works and examples of the blessed Virgin is the way to that knowledge of which it is said, Prov. 19:2: *Where there is no knowledge of the soul, there is no good.* For this reason, in the epistles that are read of her, it is said: *A reading from the book of Wisdom.* And happy is he who daily commits to memory some reading, however small, from this book. And this is what this book says of itself: *He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded*: see the instruction and reward of hearers; *and they that work by me*, that is, according to what I teach, *shall not sin*: see the gain of those who do the precepts of this book; *and they that explain me shall have life everlasting*: see the reward of teachers. And in these consists the usefulness of this book. For this reason also it is said of the last book, the Apocalypse, Apoc. 22:7: *Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.*

This is the book of contemplatives, whom she instructs as it were with a threefold reading: namely by chastity, which they vow on entering the order, against lust; by poverty, through the renouncing of property, against avarice; by humility, through the vow of obedience, against pride. Happy is he who, by doing these things, remembers the readings of this book. (Look on this matter in the twenty-seventh cause.) This is the book of the blessed, as was said above, in which they read, hear and know the things which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man*, etc.

This is that exemplar according to which the books of our consciences are to be copied and corrected. Hence it was said to Moses, Exod. 25:40: *Look, and make it according to the pattern that was shewn thee in the mount.* And he was speaking of the vessels of the tabernacle, by which faithful souls are figured. The same is found in Heb. 8:5.

Chapter 7, §5: “A great sign appeared in heaven”

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

A general prothema for this feast. Although blessed Martha, as is read today throughout almost the whole Church, was most intent on how she might feed Christ and his companions (than whom no better guests, nor any equally good, were ever found), yet to her part, which had been good, is preferred the part of Mary, which is called the best by the Lord. Because if it is a great thing, through the works of mercy, to feed bellies that will die tomorrow, it is beyond all comparison, infinitely greater, to feed with the word of God souls that

will live without end with Christ.

But if anyone should say that the Lord no longer preaches on earth, let him hear that he said to his disciples and to all true preachers in the Gospel, Luke 10:16: *He that heareth you, heareth me.* And in Jer. 15:19 he himself says to the preacher: *If thou wilt separate the precious from the vile*, that is, the soul from the vileness of sin, *thou shalt be as my mouth.* And this testimony alone ought to suffice us for hearing the word of God, even if nothing else had been written.

A great sign, etc. These words are the words of blessed John, the groomsman of the mother *(p. 835)* of the Lord by nature, and of his own mother by grace, describing in brief speech the dignity of her assumption today by its excellence; and the points can be noted in order in the proposed text.

First, why Mary is called a *sign*, not only here but also in Isa. 7:14, where it is said to the Jews, or to the house of David: *The Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold a virgin shall conceive*, etc. (Look under the title of the virginal conception.) For a sign can fittingly be spoken of both actively and passively. Mary is a great sign passively: because she was signified in the works of the ancients, in the deeds of the Patriarchs, in the oracles of the Prophets: as in the ark of Noe, in the rod of Aaron, in the bush of Moses, in the ark of the testament, in the throne of Solomon, and the like.

Actively: because by her words, answers and works she signifies to us what is to be embraced, what to be shunned, what to be prized, what to be held cheap.

By reason of the giver, namely the Lord himself. Isa. 7:14: *The Lord himself shall give you a sign.* Note that it is said *the Lord himself*, as if no other: because no one can give such a sign but he alone. Or in its being said *the Lord himself* it is signified that through this sign neither did the divinity work without man, nor the humanity without the divinity of the Word. (All this you will find more fully under the title of the virginal conception.)

By reason of novelty. For it had never been heard or seen, it had never entered into the heart of man, that any pure creature, namely a human being, should be exalted above each and every order of the Angels.

By reason of the thing signified: for truly Mary is a sign, as was said above, great in grace and glory, in merit and reward. Or, to make a comparison: great, because a virgin; greater, because a mother; greatest, because the mother of God, beyond which there is no greatness of a creature.

By reason of immense usefulness: because before her assumption our advocate was separated from our judge, since he sat at the right hand of the Father, while she still remained on earth. It was most useful, then, for the wretched that she, as mediatrix between them and her Son, should stand immediately by the judge and entreat him for them from close at hand; which was done in the assumption, when that of the Psalmist was fulfilled, Ps. 44:10: *The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing*, that is, in a glorified body, so that she may be able to show him the womb in which she carried him and the breasts with which she nursed him: because the infant delights in the breast. Therefore we must often say to this infant: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee*, etc., so that by the remembrance of these he may more easily be moved to mercy. For most fittingly is the queen of mercy placed beside the king of justice.

By reason of the site or place in which she appeared. Hence it is said: *She appeared in heaven.* For truly great is whatever is heavenly, but least is whatever is earthly: because the earth is as it were the point or centre of heaven, while heaven is as it were a great vault spread out on every side.

Otherwise: a great sign is the virgin mother; nor was anything like it seen before or after. Or a great sign, because a virgin espoused. (Look under the title of the causes of her espousal.)

There follows: *She appeared.* But to whom, or to which? It must be answered: to the whole Church triumphant. Hence it says: “I saw the beautiful one, as a dove going up,” etc. To the triumphant, then, she

appeared through knowledge; to the militant, which believes these things, she appeared through faith.

If it be asked how she went up, it must be answered: *as a pillar of smoke.* (Look under the title of the spices of the garden enclosed.)

There follows: *In heaven.* The heaven is threefold. The aerial, in which the birds of the air fly, of which it is said, Ps. 8:9: *The birds of the air*, etc. The starry, in which the stars of heaven *(p. 836)* stand, of which it is said, Ecclus. 43:10: *The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven.* The empyrean, in which the Angels praise God. But she appeared neither in the first, nor in the second, nor in the third, since there is no doubt that she was exalted above all the choirs of the Angels. Hence: "Going up above the streams of waters." But in a higher heaven, if anything is higher, or in the higher part of the empyrean, where the throne of the divine majesty is, which is called the heaven of the holy Trinity. For nothing in heaven is believed higher than the seat of Mary, who is believed to sit at the right hand of her Son on the throne of majesty, as was prefigured in the mother of Solomon.

There follows: *A woman clothed with the sun.* See how she was assumed: namely not naked, that is, in her soul only, but *clothed with the sun*, that is, with a glorified body. Hence she is said to have stood at the right hand of her Son *in gilded clothing*, that is, in a glorified body; which glory, namely, the Lord showed to his disciples on Mount Thabor, and promised to all the faithful. Matt. 13:43: *Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* And this, it is truly believed, he has already given back to his mother; for if she were awaiting the glorification of her body until the day of judgement, not all things would now have been done in her, nor would she seem singular in all things. (Under the title that Mary is called a *good woman*. Look why she is called *woman*: for *mulier* is said as it were *mulcens herum*, soothing her master.)

Mary is clothed with the sun, that is, adorned, beautified and ennobled by such and so great an offspring. Blessed Bernard: "This is the singular glory of our virgin," etc. For all the saints put on Christ by faith and imitation. Hence the Apostle, Gal. 3:27: *As many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ.* And to this the same Apostle invites, Rom. 13:14: *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* And through glorification they are to be more perfectly clothed by him. But for Mary singularly this sun was made a garment, she who carried him singularly clothed in her flesh. For no grace of his on earth, no glory of his in heaven, is so clothed. And note that Mary was made the garment of the Sun of justice when she clothed him with her most pure flesh, and was clothed with that sun when, carrying her Son in her womb, she shone in her face like the sun, so that Joseph, as it is said, could not look at her face to face. (Look for this under the title of the bodily beauty of Mary.) Blessed Bernard to Mary: "This sun abides in thee, O Lady, and thou in him: thou clothest him, and art clothed by him. Thou clothest him with the substance of thy flesh; he clothes thee with the glory of his majesty. Thou clothest the sun with a cloud, and thou thyself art clothed with the sun." For she gave this sun a threefold garment: namely the mantle of zeal, the sack that stored the price, and the haircloth of penance. The mantle of zeal: because he is a jealous God. (Of this mantle you will find under the title that Mary is a *castle*, after the beginning of the chapter.) The sack in which was stored the price of our redemption; which sack was torn open on the cross with nails and lance, that the price might be poured out by which we have been redeemed; which price was that blood of which Peter says, 1 Peter 1:18–19: *Not with corruptible things,* etc., *but with the precious blood*, etc. Of this sack Job, in the person of Christ, Job 16:16: *I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin*, etc. In this sack also was stored the wheat with which Angels and men are fed at the altar; of which wheat, John 12:24: *Unless the grain of wheat*, etc.

Likewise, she furnished him a haircloth, that is, flesh with those hair-shirt hardships in which he did penance for our iniquities. Hence he says by the Psalmist, Ps. 68:12: *I made haircloth my garment*, etc. And in this haircloth he himself paid what he had not taken away, but what our first parents had. So the blessed Virgin was the garment of this sun in three ways.

(p. 837) Mary is clothed with Christ as iron is clothed with glowing fire: for *God is a consuming fire*. Who, then, could doubt that the heart of the Virgin was kindled with this fire, since it was clothed with such a covering?

As the moon is clothed with the light of the sun. Hence she is called *fair as the moon*. For otherwise the moon is not fair, except when it is clothed with the rays of the sun. As wax is clothed with the impress of a seal, wax namely shapeless and rough: for the Son is the figure of his substance, that is, of the Father's. Who, then, doubts that the heart and arm of the Virgin were impressed with such a figure, and so marked with the seal of the Father, which is the Son himself? And this is what the Son says both to Mary and to the faithful soul, Cant. 8:6: *Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm.* As pure and clear glass is clothed with the sun's radiance; as cloudy air is clothed with the sun's brightness and set on fire with its heat; as pure water poured into a cask of red wine is clothed with its colour, taste and smell; as pure and white wool is clothed with the colour of its dye; as white silver puts on the colour of its gilding. (These comparisons you will find under the title of the beauty of Mary, in the first chapter.)

Otherwise: *Clothed with the sun*: because she was free from all the darkness of sin, and this even in the present. Or *clothed with the sun*, that is, with a glorious body, which is said to be clothed with the sun because of the four endowments which the bodies of the elect will have; to which endowments, namely, four properties of the sun correspond.

For the sun shines most brightly. Most nimbly: for as soon as the first part of the sun rises in the East in our hemisphere, its light strikes the western sky of the same hemisphere; and so in the twinkling of an eye it passes over the most distant spaces of the earth. Most subtly, penetrating the solidity of glass and crystal. Impassibly: because the sun alone suffers no defect or corruption. For water does not soften it, nor stench corrupt it, nor fire burn it, nor sword cut it, nor glass withstand it; and so it is impassible.

It is, then, to say: *A woman clothed with the sun*, that is, with a glorified body with the four endowments signified in the sun. For in her assumption the sun, whom she had clothed with the glorious diadem of flesh, as is said in Cant. 3:11, when the Word of God was made flesh in her, distinguished her with his glorious brightness, so that the Son might repay the mother in turn.

There follows: *And the moon under her feet.* This is expounded in many ways, and pertains to the excellence of the place to which she was assumed. For the moon, as some assert, exists beyond all the lower visible creatures, and yet the Virgin is above it. For the moon (*luna*) is called as it were *lux aliena*, another's light: because it is both changeable and has its light from the sun; and it signifies everything that shines from elsewhere and is changeable in its own nature. So the Cherubim and Seraphim do not shine of themselves, but from God, who alone is the light that enlightens. And therefore the sun (*sol*) is called as it were *solus lucens*, alone shining. But the others are light enlightened. It is, then, to say: *The moon under her feet*, as if it were said: she was exalted above every pure creature; therefore it was also said to her: *Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all*; see how it is under her feet.

Otherwise: *The moon under her feet.* Note that the moon is one and singular, and sometimes appears horned; and therefore it signifies the Catholic Church, which is one. Hence Christ says, Cant. 6:8: *One is my dove*, etc. Its two horns are the Church militant and triumphant. That is to say, the one is described as being under her feet, because each Church, prostrate at her footsteps in thanksgiving, through her intercession as mediatrix *(p. 838)* desires and receives from the same sun a share of the true light. For what the triumphant Church already receives and obtains through Mary, the militant desires to obtain for itself through her.

Otherwise: *The moon under her feet.* This can be referred to her present state, so that by the moon is designated worldly glory, which, like the moon, never remains in the same state. This glory of the world the glorious Virgin spurned as contemptible, despised as useless, trampled as vile, pressed down with her feet as rebellious, passed by and leapt over as venomous and harmful; and in this the faithful soul ought principally

and first to imitate Mary. To this worldly glory the properties of the moon are most fitting. For this glory is vain, failing, transitory, shadowy and frail, cooling one from the love of God, moistening one with the love of this world, and never remaining in the same state. This Mary has under her feet, and every faithful soul too ought to have it so. Therefore it is said: *The moon under her feet.*

Otherwise: *The moon under her feet.* Of the devil it is said, Ecclus. 27:12: *A fool is changed as the moon. Stultus*, a fool, is said as it were *stans altus*, standing high. This is the devil, who would not be humbled with the other Angels, but said, Isa. 14:13: *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north*, etc. And this fool was changed like the moon, namely from the brightness of an Angel into the darkness of a devil.

Likewise, *luna* is from *mene*, which is defect. This is the devil, who fell from the fullness of the house of God into the lack of all good. But this fool, or this moon, is under the feet of Mary, because he is fully subject to her. Hence it was said to the serpent, Gen. 3:15: *She shall crush thy head*, etc. (Look under the title that Mary is a *valiant woman*.)

There follows: *And on her head a crown of twelve stars.* In these words is expressed to how great a glory or dignity she was assumed. These stars in the crown of Mary blessed Bernard interprets as twelve prerogatives in the Virgin, for which she is called *full of grace*. (Look for this in the treatise on her privileges and prerogatives, at the beginning of the treatise.) The head of the blessed Virgin may fittingly be called humility, by whose merit she was crowned queen in her assumption: because as in the human body all the senses have in a manner their origin from the head, so all the virtues of the Virgin had their origin from the excellence of her humility. And as in the body the head stands above all the members, so among her other virtues, all of which she had in the superlative degree, humility stood out. And as the other members are ruled by the head, so in the blessed Virgin humility was as it were the tutor of the other virtues.

Otherwise: these twelve stars are the twelve privileges which Mary has above all creatures, as we set out above. The first, that she was the first to lead in virginity. The second, third and fourth, that she was made fruitful without corruption, with child without heaviness, a mother without pain: and so of the others in order.

Otherwise, so that the exposition may properly fit the present solemnity: the stars are the saints. Hence Ecclus. 43:10: *The beauty of heaven*, that is, the Church, *is the glory of the stars*, that is, the dignities and excellence of the saints. And the Apostle, 1 Cor. 15:41: *Star differeth from star in glory*, etc. And in Dan. 12:3 it is said of the Doctors: *They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity.* Now the number twelve is the number of totality. The twelve stars, then, are the whole company of the saints, who through faith in the Trinity have been saved in the four parts of the world, and are saved through her. For from her they had him through whom they conquered, that is, Christ, by whose help they conquered the threefold enemy, and by whom they were crowned as victors. To all the saints also, Christ of God *(p. 839)* she bore, the power and the wisdom of God, who also taught them to fight with the ancient serpent, and, upheld by his protection, they triumphed over their enemies. They had no less, through her examples, the mastery or as it were the art of overcoming the threefold concupiscence of the world: namely by the example of poverty the concupiscence of the eyes, by the example of virginity the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life by the example of humility. To her, then, befits what is said of her Son, Apoc. 19:12: *And on his head were many diadems.* For through her they had Christ, through whom all victories are obtained. For which reason it is said, Zech. 6:10–11: *Thou shalt take of them of the captivity gold*, etc., *and thou shalt make crowns, and thou shalt set them on the head of Jesus*: because all the victories of the saints ought to be ascribed to him. Finally, as Paul calls the Philippians and the Thessalonians his crown in the Lord, because by his exhortation and instruction they persevered in the struggle of the contest: so Mary may not undeservedly call the whole congregation of the faithful her crown in the Lord, as was set out above. For all the saints in a manner crown her, ascribing to her their victories and crowns, since they know that through her mediation, and through her, after God, they have been crowned. And this is signified in Apoc. 4:10,

where John describes the twenty-four elders falling down before him that sat on the throne, and casting their crowns before the throne, as it were at the feet of him that sat on the throne. By the twenty-four, as also by the twelve, the whole company of the saints is figured. For there were twelve Patriarchs, namely the sons of Jacob, in the Old Testament, and twelve Apostles in the New, whom Christ our wrestler begot in his passion. Or, as is said in the Gloss, twenty-four is made by six and four multiplied together. Six is referred to the works of the six days, four to the Gospel. This is the Church which worships God in the New and the Old. The twenty-four elders, then, cast their crowns before the throne, as it were at the feet of him that sat on the throne, acknowledging that they were crowned not by their own merits, but through the passion of Christ, which he bore in the human nature, which is designated by the feet. And the same crowns they place on the head of Mary, from whom he took the human nature of all the crowned saints. Who, then, could worthily express with how great services or how great reverence all the saints honour and attend the blessed Virgin, since they are not unaware that they owe her their crowns?

Chapter 7, §6: “Thou art all fair, my love”

Thou art all fair, my love, etc.

In this authority, according as it befits the blessed Virgin and the present solemnity, her dignity and prerogative are noted in six things.

First, she is commended for her beauty of every kind, when it is said: *Thou art all fair.*

Second, for friendship and true charity, when it is said: *My love.*

Third, for purity of heart: hence there is added: *And there is not a spot in thee.*

Fourth, for the venerable calling of the whole Trinity: hence *Come* is said to her three times.

Fifth, for the multitude of her virtues and merits: hence mention is twice made of Libanus.

Sixth, for the glorious promise: because the crown of glory is promised: hence, *Thou shalt be crowned.*

It is said, then: *Thou art all fair.* (This you have expounded in many ways under the title of her beauty, at the beginning of the chapter.)

My love. (Look under the title that she is called the *friend* of Christ.)

(p. 840) And there is not a spot in thee. (Look where *Thou art all fair* is expounded.)

Come from Libanus, then, etc. And note that he calls her friend and spouse, and intimates queen where he says: *Thou shalt be crowned.*

He says, then: *Come,* my friend, that is, sharer in my secrets, that I may reveal to thee the secrets which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, etc. *Come,* spouse, to the bridal chamber of thy immortal spouse, that thou mayest no longer be separated from him. For on this solemnity Bethsabee went in to the king in his chamber, and Esther was brought to the chamber of Assuerus. Expound this. *Come,* humble handmaid, that thou mayest become a lofty queen. For he that hath been humbled shall be in glory: and to the handmaid is owed an exaltation so much the greater, and a place so much the loftier, as the handmaid herself is the humbler.

Come is said to Mary because of her threefold state, namely virginal, married and widowed. By reason of the first she is signified by Rebecca, by reason of the second by Esther, by reason of the third by Judith.

Because by humility she pleased God; by virginity the Angels, whose sister she was made; by mercy men. By the first she conquered the devil, by the second the flesh, by the third the world, whose lovers know not how to show mercy.

Because of the charity by which she was a friend, because of the simplicity by which she was a dove, because of the contemplation by which she was beautiful: hence it is said to her, Cant. 2:10: *Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come.*

Because the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost were calling her to the crown. The Father, to whom belongs power, that he might give her the reward of humility. The Son, who is wisdom, which does not dwell in a body subject to sins, the reward of virginity. The Holy Ghost, who is kindness, the reward of charity. And so *Come*, put three times, signifies the Trinity of persons calling her to the crown. Or else longing to see her who is described as all fair. Hence they say: *Return, return, O Sulamitess: return, return, that we may behold thee.* That the Father may honour the humble one, the Son the virgin, the Holy Ghost the merciful one.

Come from Libanus. Libanus is interpreted *white, shining white, whiteness, whitening*; as though the Virgin dwelt in the things signified by these four when she was called to the crown. For she was white and shining white through a twofold virginity, or through purity and innocence, which two are signified in whiteness. She was also *whiteness* substantively, not only adjectivally, because she is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror.

And from this whiteness whatever is white grows white: because, as Jerome says: “There is nothing of beauty, nothing of glory and of brightness, that does not shine forth from her.” She was and is *whitening*: because black sinners, who by sinning have lost the divine likeness, she mercifully whitens and makes white by obtaining for them from her Son the grace of compunction: which Isaias had foreseen, Isa. 1:18, when he made promise to such, saying: *If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow*, etc.

From Libanus. Note that Libanus is a certain mountain in the land of promise; Libanus is also the frankincense tree; and *libanus* in Greek is called *thus* in Latin. Inasmuch, then, as Libanus is a mountain, which is earth raised above earth, it designates the great heap of her merits and the excellence of her virtues and works. But our merits are both few and impure. Hence Isa. 64:6: *All our justices*, etc. Our virtues too, if we have any, are squalid and fetid *(p. 841)* from the neighbourhood of the vices. It is said, then, to the Virgin that she should come from mount Libanus, to receive for her great heap of virtues and merits a great heap of rewards.

Inasmuch as Libanus is the frankincense tree, to which she compares herself, Ecclus. 24:21, where she says: *As the Libanus not cut, I perfumed my dwelling place.* (Look for the exposition under the title of *Libanus*.) She is called to the crown because she was made a mother, remaining a most pure virgin. For in what is added: *Libanus not cut*, is designated the whiteness of unblemished virginity. In what is added: *I perfumed my dwelling place*, the fruitfulness of the mother, her virginity unharmed.

Inasmuch as Libanus is called frankincense, which, placed upon fire, smells sweetly, and designates the fragrance of her virtues kindled with the fire of charity, she is called to heavenly things, that by the sweet savour of her virtues she may gladden all the dwellers in heaven, and make the heavenly mansions more fragrant than they were in the first creation.

Otherwise: *Come from Libanus*, that is, from the whiteness of the world, which is wholly superficial and vain: because *favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain.* Or *from Libanus*, that is, from the whiteness of the virtues by which thou hast subdued the vices: namely the head of the serpent, that is, pride, by humility; the breast of the serpent, that is, devilish wisdom, namely avarice, by poverty; the belly of the serpent, which creeps on breast and belly, that is, carnal concupiscence, by virginity; that thou mayest receive the crown of glory, which is not owed except to the conquerors of vices: because none shall be crowned but he that has striven lawfully.

Thou shalt be crowned. For justice required that the mother should be crowned by her Son the king with the crown of glory in the kingdom, she who had earlier crowned the same Son with the diadem of glorious flesh in exile. Hence Cant. 3:11: *Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see king Solomon in the diadem wherewith his mother crowned him*, etc. (Look for the exposition of this authority in the twelfth privilege, near the end of the chapter.)